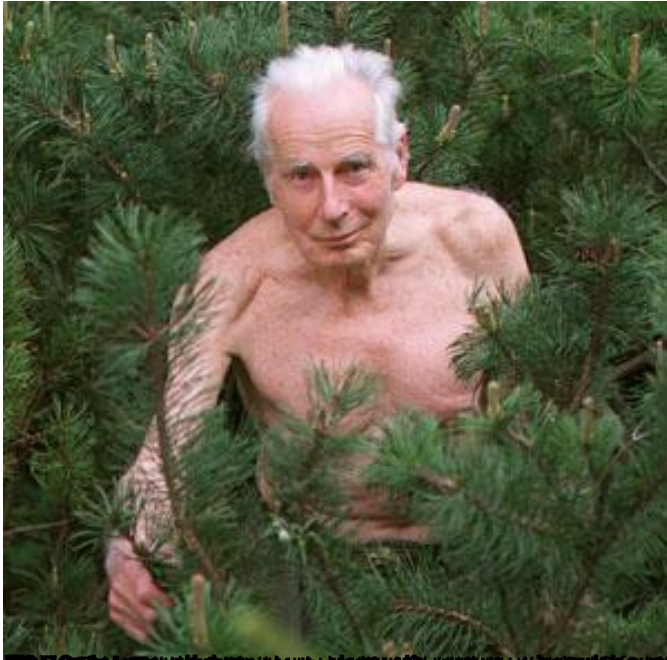




**Deep ecology** is a somewhat recent branch of **ecological philosophy (ecosophy)** that considers humankind as an integral part of its environment. The philosophy emphasizes the interdependent value of human and non-human life as well as the importance of the ecosystem and natural processes. It provides a foundation for the environmental and green movements and has led to a new system of environmental ethics.

**Deep ecology's core principle is the claim that, like humanity, the living environment as a whole has the same right to live and flourish.** Deep ecology describes itself as "deep" because it persists in asking deeper questions concerning "why" and "how" and thus is concerned with the fundamental philosophical questions about the impacts of human life as one part of the ecosphere, rather than with a narrow view of ecology as a branch of biological science, and aims to avoid merely anthropocentric environmentalism, which is concerned with conservation of the environment only for exploitation by and for humans purposes, which excludes the fundamental philosophy of deep ecology. Deep ecology seeks a more holistic view of the world we live in and seeks to apply to life the understanding that separate parts of the ecosystem (including humans) function as a whole.

## Development



### Scientific

Næss and Fox do not claim to use logic or induction to derive the philosophy directly from scientific ecology [6] but rather hold that scientific ecology directly implies the metaphysics of deep ecology, including its ideas about the self and further, that deep ecology finds scientific underpinnings in the fields of ecology and system dynamics.

In their 1985 book *Deep Ecology*, [7] Bill Devall and George Sessions describe a series of sources of deep ecology. They include the science of ecology itself, and cite its major contribution as the rediscovery in a modern context that "everything is connected to everything else". They point out that some ecologists and natural historians, in addition to their scientific viewpoint, have developed a deep ecological consciousness—for some a political consciousness and at times a spiritual consciousness. This is a perspective beyond the strictly human viewpoint, beyond anthropocentrism. Among the scientists they mention particularly are Rachel Carson, Aldo Leopold, John Livingston, Paul R. Ehrlich and Barry Commoner, together with Frank Fraser Darling, Charles Sutherland Elton, Eugene Odum and Paul Sears.

A further scientific source for deep ecology adduced by Devall and Sessions is the "new physics." which they describe as shattering Descartes's and Newton's vision of the universe as a machine explainable in terms of simple linear cause and effect, and instead providing a view of Nature in constant flux and the idea that observers are separate an illusion. They refer to Fritjof Capra's *The Tao of Physics* and *The Turning Point* for their characterisation of how the new physics leads to metaphysical and ecological views of interrelatedness, which, according to

Capra, should make deep ecology a framework for future human societies. Devall and Sessions also credit the American poet and social critic Gary Snyder —with his devotion to Buddhism, Native American studies, the outdoors, and alternative social movements —as a major voice of wisdom in the evolution of their ideas.

The scientific version of the Gaia hypothesis was also an influence on the development of deep ecology.

## Spiritual

The central spiritual tenet of deep ecology is that the human species is a part of the Earth and not separate from it. A process of self-realisation or "re-earthing" is used for an individual to intuitively gain an ecocentric perspective. The notion is based on the idea that the more we expand the self to identify with "others" (people, animals, ecosystems), the more we realize ourselves. Transpersonal psychology has been used by Warwick Fox to support this idea.

In relation to the Judeo-Christian tradition, Næss offers the following criticism: "The arrogance of stewardship [as found in the Bible] consists in the idea of superiority which underlies the thought that we exist to watch over nature like a highly respected middleman between the Creator and Creation." [8] This theme had been expounded in Lynn Townsend White, Jr.'s 1967 article "The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis", [9] in which however he also offered as an alternative Christian view of man's relation to nature that of Saint Francis of Assisi, who he says spoke for the equality of all creatures, in place of the idea of man's domination over creation.

## Experiential

Drawing upon the Buddhist tradition is the work of Joanna Macy. Macy, working as an anti-nuclear activist in the USA, found that one of the major impediments confronting the activists' cause was the presence of unresolved emotions of despair, grief, sorrow, anger and rage. The denial of these emotions led to apathy and disempowerment.

We may have intellectual understanding of our interconnectedness, but our culture, experiential deep ecologists like John Seed argue, robs us of emotional and visceral experience of that interconnectedness which we had as small children, but which has been socialised out of us by a highly anthropocentric alienating culture.

Through "Despair and Empowerment Work" and more recently "The Work that Reconnects", Macy and others have been taking Experiential Deep Ecology into many countries including especially the USA, Europe (particularly Britain and Germany), Russia and Australia.

### **Philosophical – Spinoza and deep ecology**

Arne Næss, who first wrote about the idea of deep ecology, from the early days of developing this outlook conceived Spinoza as a philosophical source.[10]

Others have followed Naess' inquiry, including Ecce de Jonge, in Spinoza and Deep Ecology: Challenging Traditional Approaches to Environmentalism, and Brenden MacDonald, in Spinoza, Deep Ecology, and Human Diversity—Realization of Eco-Literacies

One of the topical centres of inquiry connecting Spinoza to Deep Ecology is "self-realization." See Arne Naess in The Shallow and the Deep, Long-Range Ecology movement and Spinoza and the Deep Ecology Movement for discussion on the role of Spinoza's conception of self-realization and its link to deep ecology.

### **Principles**

Proponents of deep ecology believe that the world does not exist as a resource to be freely exploited by humans. The ethics of deep ecology hold that a whole system is superior to any of its parts. They offer an eight-tier platform to elucidate their claims:[11]

1. The well-being and flourishing of human and nonhuman life on Earth have value in themselves (synonyms: intrinsic value, inherent value). These values are independent of the usefulness of the nonhuman world for human purposes.
2. Richness and diversity of life forms contribute to the realization of these values and are also values in themselves.
3. Humans have no right to reduce this richness and diversity except to satisfy vital human needs.
4. The flourishing of human life and cultures is compatible with a substantial decrease of the human population. The flourishing of nonhuman life requires such a decrease.
5. Present human interference with the nonhuman world is excessive, and the situation is

rapidly worsening.

6. Policies must therefore be changed. These policies affect basic economic, technological, and ideological structures. The resulting state of affairs will be deeply different from the present.

7. The ideological change is mainly that of appreciating life quality (dwelling in situations of inherent value) rather than adhering to an increasingly higher standard of living. There will be a profound awareness of the difference between big and great.

8. Those who subscribe to the foregoing points have an obligation directly or indirectly to try to implement the necessary changes.

## Movement

In practice, deep ecologists support decentralization, the creation of ecoregions, the breakdown of industrialism in its current form, and an end to authoritarianism.

Deep ecology is not normally considered a distinct movement, but as part of the green movement. The deep ecological movement could be defined as those within the green movement who hold deep ecological views. Deep ecologists welcome the labels "Gaian" and "Green" (including the broader political implications of this term, e.g. commitment to peace). Deep ecology has had a broad general influence on the green movement by providing an independent ethical platform for Green parties, political ecologists and environmentalists.

The philosophy of deep ecology helped differentiate the modern ecology movement by pointing out the anthropocentric bias of the term "environment", and rejecting the idea of humans as authoritarian guardians of the environment.

## Criticism

### Interests in nature

Animal rights activists state that for something to require rights and protection intrinsically, it must have interests.[12] Deep ecology is criticised for assuming that plants, for example, have their own interests as they are manifested by the plant's behavior - self-preservation being considered an expression of a will to live, for instance. Deep ecologists claim to identify with non-human nature, and in doing so, criticise those who claim they have no understanding of what non-human nature's desires and interests are. The criticism is that the interests that a deep ecologist purports to give to non-human organisms such as survival, reproduction, growth

and prosperity are really human interests. "The earth is endowed with 'wisdom', wilderness equates with 'freedom', and life forms are said to emit 'moral' qualities." [13] It has also been argued that species and ecosystems themselves have rights. [14] However, the overarching criticism assumes that humans, in governing their own affairs, are somehow immune from this same assumption; i.e. how can governing humans truly presume to understand the interests of the rest of humanity. While the deep ecologist critic would answer that the logical application of language and social mores would provide this justification, i.e. voting patterns etc, the deep ecologist would note that these "interests" are ultimately observable solely from the logical application of the behavior of the life form, which is the same standard used by deep ecologists to perceive the standard of interests for the natural world.

### **Deepness**

Deep ecology is criticised for its claim to be deeper than alternative theories, which by implication are shallow. However despite repeated complaints about use of the term it still enjoys wide currency; deep evidently has an attractive resonance for many who seek to establish a new ethical framework for guiding human action with respect to the natural world. It may be presumptuous to assert that one's thinking is deeper than others'. When Arne Næss coined the term deep ecology he compared it favourably with shallow environmentalism which he criticized for its utilitarian and anthropocentric attitude to nature and for its materialist and consumer-oriented outlook. [15][16] Against this is Arne Næss's own view that the "depth" of deep ecology resides in the persistence of its interrogative questioning, particularly in asking "Why?" when faced with initial answers.

### **Ecofeminist response**

Both ecofeminism and deep ecology put forward a new conceptualization of the self. Some ecofeminists, such as Marti Kheel, [17] argue that self-realization and identification with all nature places too much emphasis on the whole, at the expense of the independent being. Ecofeminists contend that their concept of the self (as a dynamic process consisting of relations) is superior. Ecofeminists would also place more emphasis on the problem of androcentrism rather than anthropocentrism.

### **Misunderstanding scientific information**

Daniel Botkin [18] has likened deep ecology to its antithesis, the wise use movement, when he says that they both "misunderstand scientific information and then arrive at conclusions based on their misunderstanding, which are in turn used as justification for their ideologies. Both begin with an ideology and are political and social in focus." Elsewhere though, he asserts that deep ecology must be taken seriously in the debate about the relationship between humans and nature because it challenges the fundamental assumptions of Western philosophy. Botkin has also criticized Næss's restatement and reliance upon the balance of nature idea and the

perceived contradiction between his argument that all species are morally equal and his disparaging description of pioneering species.

### **"Shallow" View superior**

Writer William Grey believes that developing a non-anthropocentric set of values is "a hopeless quest" He seeks an improved "shallow" view, writing, "What's wrong with shallow views is not their concern about the well-being of humans, but that they do not really consider enough in what that well-being consists. We need to develop an enriched, fortified anthropocentric notion of human interest to replace the dominant short-term, sectional and self-regarding conception." [19]

### **Deep ecology as not "deep" enough**

Social ecologists such as Murray Bookchin [20] claim that deep ecology fails to link environmental crises with authoritarianism and hierarchy. Social ecologists believe that environmental problems are firmly rooted in the manner of human social interaction, and protest that an ecologically sustainable society could still be socially exploitative. Deep ecologists reject the argument that ecological behavior is rooted in the social paradigm (according to their view, that is an anthropocentric fallacy), and they maintain that the converse of the social ecologists' objection is also true in that it is equally possible for a socially egalitarian society to continue to exploit the Earth.

### **Links with other movements**

Parallels have been drawn between deep ecology and other movements, in particular the animal rights movement and Earth First!.

Peter Singer's 1975 book *Animal Liberation* critiqued anthropocentrism and put the case for animals to be given moral consideration. This can be seen as a part of a process of expanding the prevailing system of ethics to wider groupings. However, Singer has disagreed with deep ecology's belief in the intrinsic value of nature separate from questions of suffering, taking a more utilitarian stance. The feminist and civil rights movements also brought about expansion of the ethical system for their particular domains. Likewise deep ecology brought the whole of nature under moral consideration. [21] The links with animal rights are perhaps the strongest, as "proponents of such ideas argue that 'All life has intrinsic value'". [22]

Many in the radical environmental direct-action movement Earth First! claim to follow deep ecology, as indicated by one of their slogans No compromise in defence of mother earth. In particular, David Foreman, the co-founder of the movement, has also been a strong advocate for deep ecology, and engaged in a public debate with Murray Bookchin on the subject.[23][24] Judi Bari was another prominent Earth Firster who espoused deep ecology. Many Earth First! actions have a distinct deep ecological theme; often these actions will be to save an area of old growth forest, the habitat of a snail or an owl, even individual trees. It should however be noted that, especially in the United Kingdom, there are also strong anti-capitalist and anarchist currents in the movement, and actions are often symbolic or have other political aims. At one point Arne Næss also engaged in environmental direct action, though not under the Earth First! banner, when he tied himself to a Norwegian fjord in a successful protest against the building of a dam.[25]

Robert Greenway and Theodore Roszak have employed the Deep Ecology (DE) platform as a means to argue for Ecopsychology. Although Ecopsychology is a highly differentiated umbrella that encompasses many practices and perspectives, its ethos is generally consistent with DE. As this now almost forty-year old "field" expands and continues to be reinterpreted by a variety of practitioners, social and natural scientists, and humanists, "ecopsychology" may change to include these novel perspectives.

## Early Influences

- Mary Hunter Austin | Ralph Waldo Emerson | Aldo Leopold
- John Muir | Henry David Thoreau

## Notable advocates of deep ecology

- David Abram
- Judi Bari
- Thomas Berry
- Wendell Berry
- Leonardo Boff
- Fritjof Capra
- Bill McKibben
- Michael Dowd
- David Foreman
- Vivienne Elanta
- Warwick Fox
- Edward Goldsmith
- Félix Guattari



- Martin Heidegger (controversial: see Development above)
  - Derrick Jensen
  - Dolores LaChapelle
  - Pentti Linkola (controversial)
  - John Livingston
  - Paul Hawken
  - Joanna Macy
- 
- Jerry Mander
  - Freya Mathews
  - Terence McKenna
  - W.S. Merwin
  - Arne Næss
  - David Orton
  - Daniel Quinn
  - Theodore Roszak
  - Savitri Devi (controversial)
  - John Seed
  - Paul Shepard
  - Gary Snyder
  - Richard Sylvan
  - Douglas Tompkins
  - Oberon Zell-Ravenheart
  - John Zerzan
  - Vandana Shiva

## See also

- Anarcho-primitivism
- Coupled human-environment system
- Earth liberation
- EcoCommunalism
- Ecopsychology
- Environmental psychology

- EcoTheology
- Gaia hypothesis
- Growth Fetish
- Human ecology
  
- Neotribalism
- Negative Population Growth | Population Connection
- Pathetic fallacy
- Permaculture
- Systems theory | The Great Story
- Sustainable development
- The Revenge of Gaia
- Voluntary Human Extinction Movement

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