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Deep Ecology in Bucharest

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In early September 1972, Arne Næss attended the "3rd World Future Research Conference" in Bucharest with the paper "The Shallow and the Deep Ecology Movement." One year later he published "A Summary" of the lecture which—judging from subsequent citations—became one of the most famous articles in environmental ethics. Næss later expressed concern that the original paper was lost and others thought it "was confiscated by the Ceauşescu-regime" and that it was probably "preserved somewhere in the archives in Bucharest."[1] As it turns out, neither is the case. The organizers in Bucharest collected most of the papers so that they could translate them into Romanian, and the original manuscript is no longer in the Romanian National Archive.[2] Upon returning to Oslo without his manuscript Næss, used his notes to compile "A Summary" which he published as "The Shallow and the Deep, Long-Range Ecology Movements" in 1973.[3]

There are several reasons to revisit the original version, which has only survived in its Romanian translation. It is philosophically more refined. Næss discusses his theoretical framework as well as the "the shallow" ecological movement he disagrees with, material which was not included in the 1973 article. The original paper is also more faithful to Næss' earlier views than the somewhat abrupt 1973 publication. More important, after more than three decades, the time is ripe to start investigating the history of environmental ethics to understand the circumstances in which these debates took shape. Why Næss chose to launch deep ecology in Bucharest in 1972 and who he is referring to as the "shallow" ecological movement are hardly known even in intramural discussions about deep ecology.

The Bucharest conference was organized by the World Futures Studies Federation which was initiated by Johan Galtung at the Peace Research Institute in Oslo, which hosted its inaugural conference in 1967. Næss and Galtung had previously written a book together about Mahatma Gandhi,[4] and they travelled to Bucharest expecting to lead the Norwegian contribution to Future Studies. They were thus taken by surprise to find that the work of an entirely unknown, twenty-seven-year-old Norwegian solid-state physicist, Jørgen Randers, came to dominate the discussions. He was one of the co-authors of *The Limits to Growth,* a report for the Club of Rome. During the summer of 1972, he rose to world fame, thanks to a public relations firm, Calvin Kyle Associates, which, through clever marketing, managed to push the sale of the report to a total of nine million copies.[5] The PR stunt was financed by the industrialist Aurelio Pecci and the Volkswagen Foundation, funds which made sure the report dominated environmental debate after its release in March throughout the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm in June, 1972.[6]

Though *The Limits to Growth* predicted limits to natural resources, it did not predict limits to existing ethical or political systems. The MIT group behind the report was, in this respect, part of a larger trend of environmentalists looking for solutions to ecological problems within established moral and social thinking. Most prominent among them was the architect Richard Buckminster Fuller, whose widely read *Operating Manual for Spaceship Earth* (1969) did more than merely hint at an engineering and managerial answer to the ecological crisis. His assistant, John McHale, was a dominating figure in Future Studies circles, arguing that the world did not need a social, spiritual, or lifestyle revolution, but instead a technologically-driven design revolution.[7] The Romanian scholars were in majority both as presenters and in the audience, and they were vocal supporters of technocratic solutions to social and environmental ills. Licinius Ciplea, for example, gave a paper entitled "The Technological Parameters of Long Range Ecological Politics," in which he argued that better technologies and social management could mobilize enough natural resources for the whole world.[8] At the Bucharest conference, the technocrats thus had a leading role in setting up questions and formulating answers to the ecological crisis.

For Galtung and Næss, the time was ripe in Bucharest to hit back at what they saw as a "shallow" technocratic analysis of the environmental situation. Galtung spoke first with his paper "*The Limits to Growth* and Class Politics," a head-on attack on the lack of social analysis in the report. It represented an "ideology of the middle class,"

he argued, that was "politically blind" to the interest of the poor. Indeed, he believed that the recommendations by the Stockholm conference, which were informed by the Club of Rome report, were "staged by 'The International Union of the World's Middle Class'," and that one should "fight these cheap and dangerous solutions" in the interest of the workers of the world.[9] Galtung had Marxist sympathies. The backdrop to the stage on which he was speaking was a mural "to the glory of socialist labor," and the lecture was simultaneously translated to key East Block languages.[10] His class perspective must thus have been welcomed by the chief patron of the Bucharest conference, Romanian President Nicolae Ceauşescu, who saw class-based Future Studies as an integral part of the "Science of Social Management" on which he based his Marxist regime.[11]

When it was Næss' turn to mount the rostrum in Bucharest, he too took an "anti-class posture," but would otherwise stay away from socialist lingo in presenting "The Shallow and the Deep Ecology Movement." It was immediately understood as an onslaught on the "shallow" technocratic perspective of *The Limits to Growth* and the Club of Rome. This "restricted movement which has many friends among the power elite," Næss argued, was in danger of consolidating the debate at the expense of "the deeper movement [which] finds itself in danger of being deceived through smart manoeuvres" (see below). That there thus were two ecological movements was controversial to Ceauşescu followers, who could only see one movement towards one future. Much of the debate at the conference would centre on this point. Næss would, as a consequence, change the title of his paper from "movement" to "movements" to emphasize pluralism of possible ecological perspectives, and he borrowed the words "Long Range" from Ciplea to indicate that the future could entail answers to ecological problems other than Ceauşescu's socialist technocracy. Strangely, no evidence suggests that the most original aspect of the paper, its eco-centrism, raised any interest in Bucharest.

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The Shallow and the Deep Ecology Movement

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[Translated from Romanian by Erling Schøller]

Theoretical frame

"Ecology" is a key term in today's research of the future. On the one hand, however, we find a restricted movement which has many friends among the power elite, while on the other hand, we find a deeper and wider movement with less numerous but powerful allies, and which enjoys a large following of people who question the policy of the big industrial nations. Both movements use the term "ecology" as a kind of slogan, but only the latter movement deserves our full attention and sympathy, as well as our collaboration. At the same time, this movement is directly inspired by the new scientific elite of researchers in the domain of ecology.

This article maintains that while the restricted movement concentrates on pollution and the depletion of natural resources in our contemporary world, the deep movement deals with causes and large-scale effects, and consists of at least seven themes: The system of thinking inspired by biology; universal egalitarianism; principles of diversity and symbiosis; the struggle against the ecologically relevant social domination inside and between nations; the struggle against pollution and depletion of natural resources; the struggle for local autonomy and the decentralization of cultural and economic life.

The term "ecology" has become a most powerful slogan. No wonder that numerous pressure groups of various kinds as well as power constellations seek to adopt it into their own policy.

We need to remind ourselves of the message of those who patiently study the ecosystems, the field researchers in the domain of ecology. They have inspired the deep ecology movement. At present, a shallower movement is supported by many governmental and non-governmental centres of power, while the deeper movement finds itself in danger of being deceived through smart manoeuvres.

Let us try to characterize the two movements.

The shallow ecology movement has just two objectives: Combating pollution and combating the depletion of natural resources. The

objectives are isolated from the broader problems concerning ways of life, economic systems, power structures and the differences between and inside nations.

The deep ecology movement has the two key objectives of the shallow movement, but uses them in a wider and deeper frame. The realization of these implies a change in the concept of life amongst the majority groups of the world's population. Such a change cannot materialize without reforms that will have consequences for all aspects of human life.

We could try to characterize the deep ecology movement through some basic principles and notions. To elaborate on these, we will, needless to say, have to turn to the already very rich ecological literature.

The Deep Ecology Movement

1. *The systemic orientation.* If we think in terms of biological systems where "the whole is greater than the sum of its parts," we are led to reject the concept of things, and parts of isolated things. Let us take an example: Economic policy has been inspired by abstract mechanics where the parts are assembled into a whole, and the behaviour of the latter always can be deducted with certainty through our knowledge of the isolated parts. Man is conceived as an object or as part of a greater object: The human environment.

Ecologists who are profoundly engaged in systemic thinking reject the concept of "man in environment" and declare themselves in favour a *"man-in-environment" picture, in relation to the totality of the field*. The organisms meet in the biospherical network or in the field of intrinsic relations. An intrinsic relation between two objects *A* and *B* implies that it is bound by the definitions or basic constitutions of both *A* and *B*. Without this relation, *A* and *B* are no longer the same objects. They lose their identity. This does not mean that A and B are independent entities. The total-domain model does not only dissolve the "man in environment" model, but also every "A in B" image—except when talking at a superficial or preliminary level of communication. In exchange, we obtain *AB* models, totalities with properties that cannot be deducted from the properties of A and B. The deduction does not give any results because A and B do not exist as separate entities.

The above succinct and condensed presentation of the relational concept, as opposed to the objectified concept, cannot feign to adequately express systemic ecological thought.

2. *Biospherical egalitarianism—in principle.* The "in principle" clause is inserted here because any realistic praxis today implies a degree of exploitation and repression.

The ecological field-worker cultivates a deep-rooted respect, a real veneration, for the ways and forms of life. He seeks an understanding from within, an understanding which most others reserve for a small group of people and for a limited set of ways and forms of life. To the ecological field-worker, the *equal right to live and to blossom* constitutes an evident and intuitively clear axiomatic value. Restricting this right to human beings is an anthropocentrism with detrimental effects upon the quality of life of humans themselves. This quality depends in part upon the deep satisfaction we receive from the close partnership, the symbiosis, with other forms of life. The attempt to ignore our dependence and to establish a master–slave role has contributed to the alienation of man from himself.

Ecological egalitarianism implies—to limit ourselves to one sole example—the reinterpretation of the future-research variable, "level of crowding," in such a way that not only *human crowding*, but also mammalian crowding *in general*, as well as the deterioration of their quality of life will be taken seriously. Incidentally, research on the high requirements for free space of certain mammals has disclosed that theorists of human urbanism to a large degree have underestimated people's need for life-space. Behavioural crowding symptoms (neuroses, aggressiveness, loss of traditions . . .) are probably, to a large degree, the same in mammals.

3. *Principles of diversity and of symbiosis.* Diversity enhances the potentialities of survival, the chances of new modes of life, the richness of life forms, but the so-called struggle for life and survival of the fittest should be interpreted in the sense of ability to coexist and cooperate in a system of complex relationships, rather than the ability to kill, exploit, and suppress. "Live and let live" is a more powerful ecological principle than "Either you or me."

The latter principle tends to reduce the multiplicity of forms of life and lead to destruction within the communities of the same species. Hence, ecologically inspired attitudes favour the diversity of ways of life, of cultures, of occupations, of economies. They support the fight against economic, cultural, and military domination, and they are opposed to the annihilation of seals and whales to the same degree that they are opposed to the annihilation of human tribes or cultures.

Social Darwinism and kindred concepts have misinterpreted the function of the predators within the framework of ecosystems. There exists a kind of harmony between the predators and those who "suffer" from their attacks. (Let us remind ourselves of the symbiosis between wolves and elk). Man, as predator, has sometimes annihilated other animals of prey although this annihilation did not serve anybody.

4. *Anti-class posture*. The diversity of human ways of life has been mentioned above, and it is realized in many places without exploitation or suppression on the part of certain groups. This is the conclusion of a social anthropological inquiry and of other materials in the centre of human ecology with respect to class status and differences. Exploitation and suppression exist, however. Sometimes they are maintained deliberately by way of brutal force, but mostly there is no underlying intention, they are supported by ignorance and passivity. The domination exercised by the industrialized and centralized countries all over the world generates exploitation and suppression, especially of the second type. The exploiter lives in another way than the exploited, but the master/slave relationship adversely affects the potentialities of self-realization of them both. The principle of diversity does not cover differences between ways of life. They are due only to the fact that certain attitudes or behaviours are forcibly prevented or blocked. The principles of ecological egalitarianism and of symbiosis support the hostile attitude to class dominance. The ecological attitude is in favour of the extension of all three principles to any group conflict, including today's conflicts between developing and developed nations. The three principles also favour taking extreme caution in any comprehensive plans for the future, except those consistent with a wide diversity, free from any class distinction.

The principal aspect may be presented as follows: Let there be an ecosystem in which two groups of organisms manifest themselves through activities A, B and C. If a group by domination succeeds in manifesting itself through activities A, B, C and D, and the other group is constrained to reduce itself only to activities A and B, the natural diversity postulated by the principle of diversity and by the principle of symbiosis does *not* increase. The self-realization of the first group is prevented. The mere cessation or inhibition of activity C does not create a new variety of life. Group domination might develop a new variety of way of life, but if a strong master/slave interaction exists, the necessity of maintaining the positions of domination in relation to the subjugated party paralyzes, overcomes, and narrows the range of activities (and of other life manifestations). This feedback relation cannot be symbolized

as long as we only consider the differences between the series of activities A, B; A, B, C and A, B, C, D.

5. *Combating pollution and depletion of the natural resources.* In this struggle ecologists have found powerful supporters, sometimes, however, even to the detriment of their overall position. This happens when too little attention is paid to the deeper causes, to the effects with a large action radius, and to the differences between the poor and rich countries. Thus, if the price of life necessities increases because of the installation of anti-pollution devices, the class differences between nations deepen as well. If the purity standards which such countries as the German Federal Republic and the USA can permit themselves should be imposed on poor nations, their competitive capacity on the world industrial market would remain limited.

In general, the direct struggle against pollution and depletion of natural resources will lead to no solution of the problems if it is not seen in close correlation with the other aspects of the ecosystem, especially with the other six problems mentioned here.

An ethics of responsibility demands that ecologists not serve the shallow, but the deep ecology movement. This means that item 5 must not be seen separately; on the contrary, we must consider all seven points.

6. *Complexity, not complication*. The theory of ecosystems contains an important distinction between what is complicated without any "Gestalt" or unifying principles and what is complex, in the sense of being multilateral and having different causes and effects. A multiplicity of more or less legitimate, interacting factors may operate together to form a unity, a system. The ways of life and the interactions in the biosphere, in general, exhibit such a high level of complexity as to darken the general outlook of ecologists. This makes thinking in terms of vast systems inevitable and from this there originates a keen, steady perception of our present-day *profound human ignorance* of the biospherical relationships, including our ignorance of the effects of the deliberate, ever-increasing disturbances which take place all over the world.

The way in which we have used the models in physics, from Newton onwards, has given us a feeling of competence or even domination over the relevant physical problems we confront. Physical science and society have developed without acute crises of confidence: there has been no race whatsoever for theoretically justified questions (within the

framework of fundamental models) which could have created in us a feeling of profound ignorance. The models of special ecosystems and the immense system of the biosphere have created in us a feeling of ignorance which is completely new in Western culture and which makes the "buyers" of scientific knowledge feel frustrated and confused. And now we see *the scientists* pleading for restraints because of what they call our abysmal ignorance!

Applied to humans, the complexity-not-complication principle favours *division of labour*, *not fragmentation of labour*. It favours integrated actions, and due to this the human personality is integrally active and does not confine itself to mere reactions. It favours complex economies, the integrated diversity of means of living. (Combinations of industrial and agricultural activity, of intellectual and manual work, of specialized and non-specialized occupations, of urban and non-urban activities, of work in the city and recreation in nature, of recreation in the city and work in nature, etc.).

It supports an elastic technique and an "elastic-future research," less prognosis, more clarification of possibilities. More sensitivity towards continuity and live traditions, and most importantly—towards our state of ignorance. This suggests a combination of conservative and radical principles in a competent ecological politics.

7. *Local autonomy and decentralization.* The vulnerability of a form of life is roughly proportional to the weight of accidental influences from afar, from outside the region in which that form has obtained an ecological equilibrium. This lends support to efforts to strengthen local self-government and material and mental self-sufficiency.

The development of world trade, one of the values less questioned in the non-socialist industrialized countries, is becoming an extremely problematic issue:

The division of labour is beneficial when we consider the small communities, but when it comes to bigger entities, the ecological considerations become much more relevant and to a large extent arrive at negative conclusions. The principal argument in favour of world trade, i.e., that commodities must be produced where they can be manufactured in the most inexpensive way, was based on an economic science which until lately was not influenced by ecology.

Developing local self-government and self-sufficiency implies a decentralization effort. On the other hand, the struggle against pollution and depletion of the natural resources requires centralized authorities.

Local autonomy is consolidated when the connections between the hierarchal, "vertical," decision-making chain links are reduced. Even if a decision is taken on the basis of the majority principle at every stage, many local interests may be overlooked along the chain. Horizontal cooperation at the lower level is urgent.

In summary, then, it should, first of all, be borne in mind that the norms and tendencies of the deep ecology movement are not derived from ecology by means of logic or induction. Ecological insight and the life style of the ecological field-worker have *suggested, inspired, and reinforced* the perspectives of the deep ecology movement.

Many of the formulations in this seven-item study are rather vague generalizations, only tenable if they are stated more precisely in certain senses. All over the world, however, ecological field-workers have inspired remarkable convergences. The above survey does not pretend to be anything more than one of the possible condensed codifications of these convergences.

The most important points of dissension between the outstanding personalities of the ecology movement stem from priorities of value and from the theories and hypotheses about the consequences of certain political decisions within the domain of ecology. However, these disagreements seldom refer to the above mentioned convergences.

Secondly, it should be fully appreciated that the significant tenets of the deep ecology movement are clearly *normative*. They express a value priority system which is based only in part upon the results of scientific research (or upon the lack of results, cf. item 6). Today, the ecologists try to influence the policy-making bodies largely through threats, through predictions concerning pollutants and resource depletion, knowing that policy-makers accept at least certain *minimum standards* concerning health and a fair distribution. But it is clear that a vast number of people in all countries, including many persons of consequence, accept as valid the wider norms and values characteristic of the deep ecology movement. There is political potential in this movement which should not be overlooked and which has little to do with pollution and resource depletion. In plotting possible futures, the standards should be freely elaborated on and utilized.

The ecologists serve as irreplaceable sources of information in all societies no matter what the political colour of the society in question. If the ecologists are well organized, they should be able to refuse posts which would subject them to institutions or society planners with

limited ecological perspectives. In today's situation, the ecologists sometimes serve masters who deliberately ignore wider perspectives.

Thirdly, in so far as the ecology movement deserves our attention, its concepts are *ecophilosophical* rather than ecological. Ecology is a limited science which makes use of scientific methods. Philosophy is the highest forum for debating fundamental problems, descriptive as well as prescriptive, and political philosophy is one of its subsections. By an ecosophy I mean a philosophy of ecological harmony or equilibrium. A philosophy as a kind of *sofia*, wisdom, is openly normative, it contains norms, rules, postulates, value priority pronouncements, and hypotheses on the state of affairs in our universe. Wisdom is political wisdom, prescription, not only mere scientific description and prediction.

The details of an ecosophy will vary quite a lot due to significant differences as to the "facts" of pollution, resources, population, etc., but also as to value priorities. Today, however, the seven items listed above provide a framework for a diversity of ecosophical systems.

In general system theory, "systems" are mostly conceived in terms of causally or functionally interacting items. An ecosophy, however, is more like a system of the kind constructed by Aristotle or Spinoza. It is expressed verbally as a set of sentences with a variety of functions, descriptive and prescriptive. The basic relation is one between subsets of premises and subsets of conclusions, that is: a relation of derivability. The relevant notions of derivability may be classified in accordance with the logical and mathematical deductions of first rank, but also in accordance with the degree to which they are acknowledged implicitly to be good.

An exposition of an ecosophy must of necessity be only moderately precise considering the vast scope of the relevant ecological and normative (social, political, ethical) material. Presently, ecosophy might use models of systems, approximations of global systems. It is the global nature, not preciseness in detail, which distinguishes an ecosophy. It forms and integrates the efforts of a real ecological team, a team comprising not only scientists from an extreme variety of disciplines, but also students of politics and active policy-makers.

It would be wrong to claim here that the perspective of the deep ecology movement only depends on modifications of the structures of the political powers that be. A clear and informed international debate, normative and descriptive, constitutes in itself a central part of politics.

Notes

[1] Editorial comment by Andrew Brennan and Nina Witoszek in *Philosophical Dialogues* (Rowman & Littlefield, 1999): 7, note 1. Personal conversation with Arne and Kit-Fai Næss in 1997 and 2007.

[2] Arne Næss, "Miscarea ecolgică superficială si profundă," in *Viitorul comun al oamenilor: comunicări prezentate la cea de-a III-a Conferintă mondială de cercetare a viitorului, Bucuresti, septembrie 1972*, Mihai Botez and Mircea Ioanid (ed.) (Bucharest: Editura politică, 1976): 275-283. Marcel Dumitru Ciucă at the Romanian National Archive to Peder Anker, 9 Nov. 2006, personal archive.

[3] Arne Næss, "The Shallow and the Deep, Long-Range Ecology Movements: A Summary," *Inquiry* 16 (1973): 95-100.

[4] Johan Galtung and Arne Næss, *Gandhis politiske etikk* (Oslo: Tanum, 1955).

[5] Donella H. Meadows, Dennis L. Meadows, Jørgen Randers, William W. Behrens III, *The Limits to Growth: A Report for the Club of Rome's Project on the Predicament of Mankind* (New York: Signet, 1972). Jørgen Randers, *Conceptualizing Dynamic Models of Social Systems: Lessons from a Study of Social Change,* Ph.D. Dissertation (Cambridge: A. P. Sloan School of Management, MIT, 1973): 107-120.

[6] Wade Rowland, *The Plot to Save the World: The Life and Times of the Stockholm Conference on the Human Environment* (Toronto: Clarke, Irwin, 1973): 9-25. United Nations, *Report of the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment* (New York: United Nations, 1973). Charles T. Rubin, *The Green Crusade* (New York: The Free Press, 1994): 130-141.

[7] John McHale, "Future Research: Some integrative and Communicative Aspects," in *Mankind 2000,* Robert Jungk and Johan Galtung (eds.) (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1970; *The Future of the Future* (New York: George Baziller, 1969); *The Ecological Context* (New York: George Braziller, 1970). Richard Buckminster Fuller, *Operating Manual for Spaceship Earth* (Edwardsville, 1969).

[8] Licinius Ciplea, "The Technological Parameters of Long Range Ecological Politics" (abstract), in *3rd World Future Research Conference: Abstracts,* Helen Seidler and Cristina Krikorian (eds.) (Bucharest: Centre of Information and Documentation in Social and political Sciences, 1972): 21-22. Pavel Apostol, "English summary," *Calitatea vieţii şi explorarea viitorului* (Bucharest: Editura politică, 1975): 258-269.

[9] Johan Galtung, *Økologi og klassepolitik,* Therese Henrichsen (trs.), (Copenhagen: Christian Ejlers' Forlag, 1972): 12, 14, 22 (my translation). Johan Galtung and Fumiko Nishimura, *Kan vi lære av Kineserne?* (Oslo: Gyldendal, 1975).

[10] Jim Dator, "The WFSF and I," *Futures* 37 (2005): 371-385, quote on p. 373. G. F., "Third World Future Research Conference," *Futures* 4 (1972): 381-382. Irving H. Buchen, "Futuristic Conference in Romania," *The Futurist* 7 (Feb. 1973): 31-32. Bart van Steenbergen, "The First Fifteen Years: A Personal View of the Early History of the WFSF," *Futures* 37 (2005): 355-360.

[11] Nicolae Ceauşescu, "Opening Remarks," in "Management science and futures studies in Socialist Romania," *Viitorul Social*, special issue, anonymous (ed.) (Bucharest : Meridiane Pub. House, 1972): 7-18.