

Metaphysics as a Basis for Deep Ecology: An Enquiry into Spinoza's System

Abstract: Recently, Deep Ecology has gained a new impetus because of the current state of affairs threatening the planet and because of intellectual changes in the field. One of these crucial intellectual changes came about as theorists gained a better understanding of what Naess meant by the concepts 'Deep Ecology' and 'ecosophy' in his talk in Bucharest in 1972 – the first part will focus on this. The second part will focus on the use by Deep Ecology supporters of Spinoza's metaphysical system as a foundation to their own views, and it identifies problems and proposes solutions through an alternative reading of Spinoza's metaphysics, especially his concepts of monism and conatus.

METAPHYSICS AS A BASIS FOR DEEP ECOLOGY: AN ENQUIRY INTO SPINOZA'S SYSTEM

A Brief Characterization of Deep Ecology

The twentieth century was a crucial one for the field of Environmental Ethics. In 1949, Aldo Leopold published *A Sand County Almanac* and specifically the chapter "The Land Ethic", a landmark on environmental thinking that advocates harmony between human beings and the environment as well as the enlargement of the moral sphere. This represented a departure from traditional anthropocentric philosophical thinking. The next milestone was reached in 1962 when Rachel Carlson published her book *Silent Spring*, revealing the toll that agricultural pesticides, such as DDT, were taking on animals, plants, ecosystems, and human health. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, the first few articles focusing on environmental issues appeared in philosophy journals, and the first books, conferences, and courses in colleges and universities.

It was around this time, in the early days of development of modern environmental thinking, that Arne Naess proposed in 1972 the terms "Deep Ecology" and "ecosophy" in a talk in Bucharest (cf. Naess 1973). In this talk, Naess contrasted Deep Ecology with Shallow Ecology. The term "Shallow Ecology" stands for an environmental ethics that remains anthropocentric because it only

seeks to be normative and, as such, it does not inspire a change in the way people *perceive* the world around them - it only seeks to guide human action. By contrast Deep Ecology defends the position that a change of *perspective* and attitude is required.

For reasons of historical authenticity, it is worth referring to some of the early definitions of Deep Ecology as a way of demonstrating theorists' understanding of the term at the time. These early definitions are in direct contrast with more contemporary understandings of the term, and this is something that will become evident below. Fox (1984:204) explained his understanding of Deep Ecology in his paper "On Guiding Stars for Deep Ecology":

In seeking to change the way in which we experience the world (i.e. our state of being), deep ecologists place their *primary* emphasis upon changing our 'underlying perception of the way things are...rather than upon what we might term the 'conceptual fix' approach of 'bigger and better' ethics (in the sense of arguments that ultimately issue in particular codes of conduct...)

And Kohac (1997:159) provides another, similar definition of Deep Ecology in his "Varieties of Ecological Experience":

[Deep Ecology] sees the root of our environmental problem in our own conception of the place of humans in nature.

Such an understanding led to the following criticisms being raised against Deep Ecology. Firstly, the divide between Shallow Ecology and Deep Ecology is sometimes very tenuous; secondly, a debate exists as to whether Deep Ecology is, or would be, effectively practical since it does not primarily seek to be normative but to change our perception of reality. Needless to say that these were very serious criticisms, which have hindered Deep Ecology's progress. For instance, Godfrey-Smith (1980:24) says that "deep ecology...has an unfortunate tendency to discuss everything at once. Thus a social critique of deep ecology may be backed by such disparate authorities as Ginsberg, Castenada, Thoreau, Spinoza, Buddhist visionaries, and Taoist physics. With a cast of prima donnas like this on stage it is very hard to follow the script". And Ecofeminists such as Plumwood (1991:13) argue that "The problem...is the discontinuity between humans and nature that emerges as part of the overall set of Western dualisms. Deep

ecology proposes to heal this division by a "unifying process," a metaphysics that insists that everything is really part of and indistinguishable from everything else. This is not only to employ overly powerful tools but ones that do the wrong job, for the origins of the particular opposition involved in the human/nature dualism remain unaddressed and unanalyzed”.

Recently, however, Deep Ecology has gained a new impetus for two reasons. The first reason is an obvious one and it is connected to the current state of affairs that threatens the planet. Humanity has spread itself all over the planet and has interfered greatly with the environment through the exploitation of natural resources, pollution of the earth, air and water, and through the required changes for turning environments into suitable milieus for human use as dwellings, agricultural land, sources of energy and so on and so forth (cf. Linkola 2009:169) The outcome of this extreme interference with our environment has led the scientific community to raise the alarm that the rich biodiversity of our planet is at risk, that there can be some climate and environmental changes that may lead to serious consequences to human beings and to the other forms of life on the planet, and that the exploitation of natural resources at current levels is unsustainable and will lead to a complete depletion of resources. (cf Boff 2007:93-99; Scherer 2009; Cobb 2009)

The second reason for this new impetus happened at the intellectual level as commentators realized that their understanding of Deep Ecology was mistaken and that they had misinterpreted Naess. This intellectual change and the clarification of Naess' views are still sifting through the literature and reaching the wider academic community (cf. Drengson and Devall's (2008) paper "Deep Ecology Movement and Related Topics", and Naess (1992) "The Three Great Movements"). According to this more enlightened understanding Deep Ecology is to be understood as one of the three great social movements of modern times, along with the peace movement, the social justice movement, and the environmental movement. People from all walks of life and backgrounds are franchised to these movements. As such, when Naess introduced the term "Deep Ecology" he was characterizing a *social movement* that bore great importance in modern times and he was not putting forward a particular ethical theory or philosophy, as various commentators held for some time. The heart of the problem lies in the fact that commentators were conflating the term Deep Ecology with Naess' ecosophy T and therefore when Naess

contrasted Deep and Shallow ecology in his talk in Bucharest in 1972 he was only contrasting two different approaches of environmental concern. In a later article, Naess provides a number of practical examples contrasting the Shallow Approach to Environmental issues to the Deep Approach, and for matters of illustration it is worth referring to one of these examples here, such as the one concerning pollution. Naess (2009:266) qualifies the Shallow and Deep Approaches to pollution as:

Shallow Approach: Technology seeks to purify the air and water and to spread pollution more evenly. Laws limit permissible pollution. Polluting industries are preferably exported to developing countries.

Deep Approach: Pollution is evaluated from a biospheric point of view, not focusing exclusively on its effects on human health, but rather on life as a whole...The priority is to fight the deep causes of pollution, not merely the superficial short-range effects.

Therefore, Deep Ecology must be understood as a *social movement with deep concern* for the environment. Directly connected to this is the term “ecosophy.” The term ecosophy refers to a life philosophy that drives people to join up or take part in the Deep Ecology movement. Strictly speaking, there could be as many life philosophies as people; that is, a person’s culture, religion, life history, philosophical views, and the environment itself will play a part in how a person forges his or her own life philosophy. Certainly, some common general principles would underlie all these life philosophies, and these are encapsulated in the well-known Deep Ecology eight-point platform (cf. Sessions 1984). Naess presented his own ecosophy, and he called it ecosophy T. The T in ecosophy T stands for the mountain of *Tvergastein*, where Naess had a mountain hut and where he spent much of his time working out his ecosophy T, but Naess did not advocate that his ecosophy T was right for everyone. Each individual should develop his or her own ecosophy and will join the Deep Ecology movement on the basis of this personal philosophy of life.

It is perhaps appropriate here to refer to Naess’ apron diagram, which is presented in a simplified form by Drengson (2007), and which helps considerably in clarifying the distinction between Deep Ecology as a movement and ecosophy as a life philosophy:

Level I T	Ultimate Life Philosophies	Taoism, Ecosophy
Level II DEM	Movement Platform Principles	Peace Movement,
Level III	Policy Formulations	A, B, C, etc.
Level IV	Practical Actions	w, x, y, etc.

At level I people have or forge their own life philosophies, be this something like an ecosophy, or Christianity, or Buddhism, etc. Their life philosophies franchise them to a grassroots social movement, such as the peace movement, social rights movement or deep ecology movement, and this occurs at Level II. At Level III those social movements help with the formulation of policies, such as through lobbying, and at the ultimate level, Level IV, practical actions take place, like. buying eco-friendly or carbon-neutral produce.

As a direct consequence of this we should not be using terms such as “Deep Ecologist”, rather, we should use “Deep Ecology supporter”. Drengson (1999) notes that for Naess and others someone who accepts the principles of the Deep Ecology Movement principles is a “supporter” of the movement, not a “deep ecologist” as “Naess feels that “deep ecologist” is too immodest, and “shallow ecologist” is unkind language”.

Spinoza and Deep Ecology

Deep Ecology supporters, such as Naess (1977, 1978, 1981), Mathews (1988, 1991), Jonge (2004), Fox (1990) Devall and Sessions (1985) have sought in some of Spinoza’s views support for their own personal *ecosophies*. And these theorists have developed their own particular personal *ecosophies* by privileging different aspects of Spinozism and combining these aspects with other philosophical perspectives and strands. However, there are some particular themes that are common to all these ecosophies. These themes are: i. *intrinsic value*, which could be defined as the view that everything has a value in itself and this value is not dependent on usefulness to human beings; ii. *biocentric egalitarianism*, which could be defined as the view that all entities, whether a cell, an entity, or an ecosystem such as the Amazon Basin or the planet Earth, have equal value; iii. *self-realisation*, which could be defined as the view that every thing seeks to self-realize itself, however self-realization is understood, such as

enduring for as long as it possibly could and/or as fulfilling its own purpose.

Deep Ecology understands that Spinoza's metaphysics provide support for those three themes underlying its core principles, namely intrinsic value, egalitarian biocentrism and self-realisation. Spinoza's monism provides support for the Deep Ecology supporter's views on intrinsic value and biocentric egalitarianism and Spinoza's thesis of conatus provides the cornerstone for the Deep Ecology supporter's views on the importance of self-realization. It is through these three themes that Deep Ecology supporters seek a change in human attitudes towards other entities in the universe, towards ecosystems, the planet and the universe itself. This change of attitude aims at rejecting anthropocentrism either as the notion that either grants human being with an unwarranted dominion over the rest of reality, or/and upholds the view that human beings are superior to the rest of reality.

This may appear strange to those not greatly acquainted with Spinoza's work or who have not truly grasped the spirit of his philosophy, and as a question could be asked here: how can a metaphysician from the 17th century provide support to the modern philosophical field of Deep Ecology? Deep Ecology supporters understand that given the nature of the universe, and given the nature of things in the universe, a particular kind of attitude is appropriate. That is to say, given that everything is a mode of the substance, given that everything, including human beings, are a modification of God or Nature, given that everything is *interconnected*, human beings should treat with an attitude of reverence the other modes of creation. Some of Spinoza's commentators, such as Lloyd (1980, 1994:155-158) question such readings of Spinoza referring to the tension between Spinoza's understanding of human beings as part of nature and of morality as directly connected to what constitutes the good for human beings; particularly problematic for the field of environmental ethics is Spinoza's rejection of animal rights as Lloyd (1994:155-156) notes:

His [Spinoza's] stress on a relation of integration rather than separatedness between human beings and the rest of nature does not yield any repudiation of the exploitation of animals...In relation to animals, we should consider our own advantage, use them at our pleasure, and treat them as is most convenient for us (ivP37S1). But this approval for dominance is very differently based from Descartes's....Spinoza's

version of dominance is...strongly connected on the recognition of difference...it is the differences that justify their [animals] exclusion from our moral concerns, our moral community...what is most useful to us is other human beings, living according to the guidance of reason (ivP35C2). The rational principle demands that human beings join forces with one another, not with the lower animals whose nature and affects do not agree with ours (ivP37S1). "Both the horse and the man are driven by a Lust to procreate; but the one is driven by an equine Lust, the other by a human Lust. So also the Lusts and Appetites of insects, fish, and birds must vary" (iiiP57S).

However, in reply to commentators such as Lloyd Naess (1980) he asserts that the complexities of Spinoza's doctrines makes it difficult, if not a mammoth task, for any philosophical movement to make full use of him as a patron but this does not mean that Spinoza's views may serve as "inspirations". In fact, Naess asserts that even if Spinoza himself could be said to be a Speciesist and devoid of environmental concern for animals and landscapes, that the complexities of his system do indeed entail the sort of environmental activism, concern and respect advocated by Deep Ecology.

Despite these contrasting views in Spinoza's scholarship I think it is fair to say that Spinoza must have been aware of the fact that metaphysics has implications for ethics, otherwise why would he call his major work, which is a substantial metaphysical work, the *Ethics*? Let me rephrase this: why should a work that discusses substance, attributes, modes, in short, a work that discusses the nature of reality be entitled the *Ethics* if Spinoza did not hold the view that the nature of reality impinges on morality?

The central point of Spinoza's *Ethics* is his argument in favour of monism. That is, his theory that only one substance exists and that God or Nature (*Deus sive Natura*) is a substance, and that everything is a modification of the substance. The thesis "everything is a modification of the substance" implies that the substance is to be understood as the totality of all forms of Being as well as being the highest form of Being. Prima facie, given that according to Spinoza everything is a modification of the substance and given that the substance is God or Nature then one can infer that the substance does not hold any sort of preference towards its modifications, because if the substance held any form of

preference towards any of its modifications it would be ascribed with a humanity that is alien to it. In fact, Spinoza holds that from the perspective of the substance nothing has value (cf. Appendix to Part I of the *Ethics*) as value is something that only exists from the perspective of the modifications of the substance; that is, only a mode can *value* another mode as something that increases its capacity to exist for as long as it possibly could (i.e. conatus), e.g. a human being valuing water or food as something necessary for its own existence. From the perspective of the substance it does not matter if its modifications are varied and include human beings or if its modifications are, say, all slugs.

However, Deep Ecology supporters seem to have chosen to ignore this aspect of Spinozism, that is, that the substance ascribes no value; and as a consequence of this Deep Ecology argues that from the perspective of the substance all its modifications possess the same value or standing, each modification possesses an intrinsic value in so far as they are all modifications of the substance, and this value is not in any way connected to their usefulness to human beings. Hence all modifications possess an equal intrinsic value because the substance holds no preference towards its modifications, all modifications count as the same. If the substance were to ascribe more value to one of its modifications than to others then the substance would be incoherent – it would become anthropomorphic.

The Deep ecology supporter's thesis of biocentric egalitarianism is derived from the thesis of intrinsic value; that is, given that all living modifications of the substance have an equal intrinsic value then all living entities, from a slug to a human being count as the same. Once again (and just as in the case of the substance holding no value), from the point of view of the substance it makes no difference if the universe is inhabited by slugs or amoebas or by rational entities like human beings. This is a very contentious claim and I shall come back to it below.

An important implication could be drawn here. Given that everything is a modification of the substance (i.e. God or Nature), then everything should be treated with some sort of reverence by human beings because they are modifications of the substance just as human beings are. It is from such a reading of Spinoza's monism that the Deep Ecology supporter infers his thesis of self-realization, which he then ground in Spinoza's thesis of conatus. The Deep Ecology supporter understands that everything should be able to self-realize itself, should be able to fulfil itself, its

purpose, its essence because everything is a mode of the substance, because the substance is ambivalent towards its modes. I will come back to the issue of self-realization below but before doing so I wish to refer to the following quote from Devall and Sessions (1985:67) where they explain well the interconnection between intrinsic value, biocentric egalitarianism and self-realization:

The intuition of biocentric equality is that all things in the biosphere have an equal right to live and blossom and to reach their own individual forms of unfolding and self-realization within the larger Self-Realization. This basic intuition is that all organisms and entities in the ecosphere, as parts of the interrelated whole, are equal in intrinsic value.

The Deep Ecology supporter's notion of self-realization is directly connected to Spinoza's thesis of *conatus*, the thesis that every modification aims at enduring as it is for as long as it possibly can. Deep Ecology supporters have interpreted Spinoza's thesis of *conatus* as asserting that one should be able to fulfil oneself, as being able to fulfil one's *telos*, one's purpose (cf. (3P6) "everything in so far as it is in itself endeavours to persist in its own being"; and (3P7) "the endeavour wherewith a thing endeavours to persist in its being is nothing else than the actual essence of that thing"). It is interesting to note here that Spinoza holds that all modifications of the substance have a *conatus*, that is, all modifications of the substance aim at striving for as long as they possibly can as they are. And this leads Deep Ecology supporters to hold that all entities should be able to seek fulfilment, and here some would include everything, even ecosystems, mountains, the planet etc. (see for instance Lovelock's Gaia theory; Lovelock 1987; 1988). Following from this, Deep Ecology supporters affirm that human beings should interfere as little as possible with the self-realization of these other entities, because everything should be able to self-realize itself because everything has an intrinsic value and all life is held to be equal in value. The Deep Ecology supporter's argument can be summarized as follows:

(Proposition A) because it is in every entity's nature to strive to remain as it is for as long as it possibly could;

(Proposition B) and given that every entity has an intrinsic value and since all entities are equal in value (from slugs and amoebas to human beings, from mountains and rivers to whole ecosystems);

(Conclusion from A+B) then it follows that every entity should be able to strive for as long as it possibly could, and should be able to fulfill its essence.

Two questions are often raised against this argument. The first question is: what qualifies as “little as possible”? The Deep Ecology supporters’ answer here is always vague and as such faces a great deal of criticism. The second question is: should everything be able to fulfil itself? What about a virus that has the potential to kill all humanity? The Deep ecology supporter has two strategies in dealing with this question: the supporter will either avoid dealing with it or will rely on vagueness (cf. Bookchin 1988; Hargrove 2009: 181-183; and perhaps most interesting Naess 2009:271-273)

Criticisms to the Current Scenario in Deep Ecology

Questions could be asked concerning the Deep Ecology supporter’s interpretation of Spinoza’s thesis of substance and conatus. If we ignore the obvious textual evidence from Appendix of Part I of the *Ethics* where Spinoza asserts that the substance can hold no value, then it could be questioned whether the substance would indeed be so impartial, whether it would value an amoeba just as much as it values a human being; and connected to this, it could also be questioned whether all entities should be able and enabled to fulfill themselves, to pursue their *telos*, to strive and endeavour for as long as they possibly could. What happens when there is conflict between the conatus of one mode and of another mode? What happens when an entity’s striving to remain as a unity for as long as it could jeopardizes the striving of another? What happens, for instance, when the conatus of a virus conflicts with the conatus of its host human being? These are important questions that require some attention not merely for a better understanding of Spinoza but also for the field of Deep Ecology.

It is certainly true that Spinoza’s substance is the basis of all reality, and that everything is a modification of the substance. It is also true that the substance does not possess a *telos* since, if it did, there would be a time when reality would come to a standstill. And this is consistent with the Deep Ecology supporter’s interpretation. The weak point of their interpretation comes in connection with their understanding that Spinoza’s substance “does not hold any sort of preference towards its modifications or relative entities”. They interpret the substance as being totally impartial because to ascribe partiality to the substance would be to anthropomorphize it.

The question here is: is conferring partiality to the substance ascribing it with human features? The Deep Ecology supporter certainly thinks so. But one could still question this by referring to another two aspects of Spinoza's philosophy. The first aspect is that the substance is akin to an organism, and not to a mechanical apparatus since the substance manifests itself as both *natura naturans* or creator (i.e. the active force of nature) and *natura naturata* or creation (i.e. nature as produce). The second aspect is that Spinoza defends an idealism-realism or a realism-idealism since the substance encompasses both thought and extension, subjectivity and objectivity, which are irreducible attributes of the substance for Spinoza; and as such Spinoza is not merely defending some sort of realism or idealism as some commentators may have held in the past.

The implication of holding the substance as an organism, and of defending an idealism-realism or realism-idealism, are important here since the substance starts to share similarities with live and conscious organisms. That is, the substance as an organism is alive, and because the substance also possesses the features of thought and extension, subjectivity and objectivity, this also implies that the substance possesses some sort of consciousness. Thus, if the substance is understood as akin to some sort of conscious organism then it is possible to hold that the substance does hold some sort of preference towards some of its modes. For instance, I, as an organism, do not care much for the bits of skin that fall from my body continuously, but I do care about my limbs and my vital organs. In the same way, the substance may not care as much for its simpler modifications such as amoebas or slugs or viruses, but they may care more for a more developed mode or relative entity such as the human being.

A possible reply by the Deep Ecology supporter would be to propose that every entity is *necessary* in the chain of *Being*, that is, that without smaller entities such as amoebas or slugs or viruses that Nature's development would come into a halt or be hindered. To argue this would be to give up on the notion that Nature has no *telos*, that things in nature *just happen*. To argue that there is a necessary chain of Being is to argue that Nature is pursuing a particular developmental avenue and this contradicts Spinoza's views that Nature has no *telos* because if it did then when it reached its *telos* reality would come into a halt. The thesis of nature having no *telos* has to be undermined first, which is a

difficult thing to do. The burden of proof here is with those who challenge this thesis.

Spinoza certainly never advocated such views openly (i.e. that the substance is conscious and that it may hold some sort of preference towards some of its modifications) but this reading is entailed and consistent with Spinoza's system – in fact, there is a long history of interpreting Spinoza's substance but this has been rejected by more modern commentators such as Curley (1969).. However, interpreting the substance as akin to conscious organism may prove problematic for Deep Ecology because it may just cast enough doubt on the Deep Ecology supporter's thesis of intrinsic value and biocentric egalitarianism; this is so because if the substance holds some sort of preference towards some of its modes then some modes may be viewed differently by the substance and this is damaging to intrinsic value (i.e. some entities may not have a value at all for the substance or absolute) and to biocentric egalitarianism (i.e. some entities are more valuable than others to the substance or absolute). This may present a major problem to Deep Ecology supporters, such as Naess, Devall, and Sessions since their views rely heavily on the issues of intrinsic value and biocentric egalitarianism, and as such this problem may render ineffective Deep Ecology's call for a change in human attitudes towards live beings, ecosystems, the planet and the universe.

A New Strategy for Deep Ecology

Despite facing this challenge not all is lost to Deep Ecology. Some of Spinoza's views may still provide support to Deep Ecology, if a different strategy is pursued. In general Deep Ecology supporters derive their views of self-realization from their views on the intrinsic value and biocentric egalitarianism. It is perhaps worth quoting the following passage of Devall and Sessions (1985:67) again here:

The intuition of biocentric equality is that all things in the biosphere have an equal right to live and blossom and to reach their own individual forms of unfolding and self-realization within the larger Self-Realization. This basic intuition is that all organisms and entities in the ecosphere, as parts of the interrelated whole, are equal in intrinsic value.

I have argued that there are some serious problems concerning the Deep Ecology's views on intrinsic value and biocentric

egalitarianism. However, I understand that it is possible to bypass or give up on intrinsic value and biocentric egalitarianism and still hold on to the thesis of self-realization by referring solely to Spinoza's thesis of conatus and by also referring to the *interconnectivity* of all things since everything is a mode of the substance.

Prima facie, Spinoza appears to be an ethical egoist, since he defends the view that one should pursue whatever would benefit one's conatus, one's pursuit of self-realization, one's striving to endure for as long as one possibly could. For Spinoza, it is true that human beings are primarily egoistic beings because each individual human being wants to preserve his or her own life for as long as possible (and to do so he must consider the consequences of every action to himself, i.e. ethical egoism). But in doing so, human beings realize that all other human beings are pursuing the same goal and in the same manner (cf. Lloyd 1996:74-76; Bennett 1984:299-307). This very fact, demonstrates that the best thing for a human being to do is to team up with other human beings. To do otherwise, would result in wars, violence and disputes, which would threaten, not enhance, one's existence. By working as a group, human beings are able to help each other to endure for as long as they possibly could. Therefore, that form of individualism that first strikes any commentator on Spinoza is fast replaced by a form of communitarian-ism once Spinoza's system is truly understood (cf. Guilherme 2009: 128-133; Lloyd 1996:74-76; Bennett 1984:299-307);. It is worth quoting the following passages of *Ethics*:

4P31 - In so far as anything agrees with our nature, thus far it is necessarily good.

4P35 - In so far as men live under the guidance of reason, thus far only they always necessarily agree in nature.

4P36 - The greatest good of those who follow virtue (*reason*) is common to all, and all can equally enjoy it. (*my brackets*)

4P37 - The good which each one who follows virtue (*reason*) desires for himself, he also desires for other men, and the more so the more knowledge he has of God (*Nature*). (*my brackets*)

As it is quite clear, these four propositions are concerned with the relations between human beings and the conditions for a mutually beneficial and sustained intercourse in community life. I quote Garrett (1997:227):

Spinoza holds, as a general metaphysical thesis, that whenever two things "agree in nature" they will, to that extent, be mutually beneficial, since the nature that each strives to benefit is the same (E4P31). Human beings necessarily "agree in nature" to the extent that they are guided by reason (E4P35). For human reason, as reason, is the same in all, and it aims at the same thing - namely, knowledge or understanding. Understanding, moreover, is a good that can be shared by all without diminishing anyone's enjoyment of it (E4P36). In fact, Spinoza holds, nothing is more useful to a human being than another human being who is guided by reason (E4P35c1). Hence, individuals who are virtuous, or guided by reason, will all seek, from their own self-interest, the same goods for others that they seek for themselves (E4P37). Indeed to the extent that if a community of human beings is guided by reason, its members can "compose, as it were, one Mind and one Body" (E4P18s) - that is, a complex individual, composed of like-minded human beings, that has its own endeavour of self-preservation.

Therefore, according to Spinoza, it is in a human being's interest, who is guided by reason, to associate with other human beings, since all pursue the same goals. That is, all human beings pursue self-knowledge and knowledge of the world in their attempt to live for as long as they possibly can. The Deep Ecology supporter could hold on to this view. They could argue that given that everything is *interconnected*, since everything is a mode of the substance, that it is in human being's best interest to establish the same sort of 'communitarian relationship', not only with other human beings, but with the whole of existing entities, with all the other modes of the substance. For instance, given that everything is *interconnected*, is it not problematic for human beings themselves if human beings destroy a particular species or ecosystem? Since everything is *interconnected*, if human beings do not establish a communitarian relation with the other entities, from the smallest modes to ecosystems, then there may be consequences that will come about due to such human behaviour. For instance, if an ecosystem is destroyed then its biodiverse richness is destroyed and with it the knowledge that it could yield, knowledge of animal species and animals' behaviour, knowledge of plant species, not to mention, for instance, the knowledge of the

chemical compounds that these species could yield, compounds which could yield new and more effective medicines against human ailments for instance. By linking the notions of interconnectivity and *conatus* which are found in Spinoza we can reach the conclusion that human beings should do their best to maintain equilibrium with all things because this is in their own interest.

It is interesting to note here that Spinoza has been criticised by commentators such as Bennett (1984:299-307) for defending egoism and for presuming a successful reconciliation in a form of ethical communitarianism; however, Lloyd (1996:75-76) asserts that:

Spinoza's ensuing discussion throughout Part Three, however, shows that he is well aware of the inevitability of conflict between human beings. To present his attempted reconciliation between egoism and collaborative morality as based on 'an indefensible doctrine of harmony through similarity' is to miss the dynamic character of Spinoza's striving for self-preservation. Bennett is too restrictive...in his interpretation...Spinoza's point is not that an individual necessarily pursues its own interests rather than theirs. It is rather that what it is to be an individual is to be both determined to act through the mediation of other modes and likewise to determine others. The fluctuations between acting and being acted upon provide a spectrum along which each individual will experience passions and their transformation in ethical life.

It is arguable that this position offers an alternative to the position argued for by most Deep Ecology supporters because it calls for a change in human attitude but it does not do away with human discretion for action. For instance, when faced with the dilemma of destroying an ecosystem for harvesting its wood, the human being will have to ponder whether it is worth destroying that particular environment for that purpose or whether it is more beneficial to harvest the wood somewhere else or even to replace the wood by another material; or when faced with the opportunity of killing a virus and saving the human host, let us say small pox, the human being will be able to decide for the human life with no qualms for the human life is a higher modification of the substance (within the reading that the substance holding a preference for its higher modifications) or simply because the human being's *conatus* calls

for it, the human being's striving for enduring for as long as it possibly could demands it. This outcome should appease those who are suspicious of views based on intrinsic value and biological egalitarianism for their high demands on human behaviour.

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