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# MAN AND NATURE: ESTABLISHING AN ALTERNATIVE ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS TO CONFRONT POLLUTION

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## ABSTRACT

Reforming the relationship between man and nature has become a fundamental issue that must be addressed and resolved today. The increasing degradation of the ecosystems upon which human life depends and the intensification of the environmental crisis have made it clear that economic and legal measures alone are no longer sufficient to resolve the problem of environmental pollution or to address ecological imbalances. We must also draw upon the human being's inexhaustible internal moral resources. Only by adopting an appropriate stance toward nature and establishing a new ethical relationship between humanity and the natural world, one in which we spontaneously love and respect nature, can we hope to solve the problems of environmental pollution and ecological disruption. Guided by this love and respect, we may indeed succeed in confronting the ecological challenges of our time.

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## KEYWORDS

Man, Nature, Environmental Ethics, Moral Values, Ecological Balance, Environmental Pollution

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## Introduction.

Today, man has become the principal accused of the degradation and pollution of the environment. He consumes more than nature can provide, and this overconsumption has profound and far-reaching adverse effects on the environment. The scientific and technological developments of the twentieth century and beyond have led to severe problems due mainly to the adverse impact of science and advanced technologies, mainly when applied across various scientific domains in the natural world. Although science has contributed significantly to expanding human knowledge, it has failed to avert its harmful consequences on the environment, resulting in damage and destruction. This situation has engendered a conflictual and contradictory relationship between man and nature, which in turn has given rise to numerous ecological and environmental issues such as the depletion of natural resources, the threat to biodiversity and species extinction, the pollution of rivers, seas, and air, and even exposure to deadly cosmic radiation. These developments have prompted philosophers and environmental scholars to raise fundamental questions concerning the relationship between human beings and the natural environment.

Man, in particular, has become the central focus of contemporary ethical questioning due to the dangers he has inflicted upon the environment and nature. In light of the principle that "not everything technically possible is morally permissible," it becomes evident that many of the actions science can undertake carry

significant harm to living beings. Consequently, a pressing need arises for ethical inquiry to accompany scientific progress and its technologies, requiring science to pause, reflect, and assess the negative impacts it has caused and continues to have on the environment and nature.

On this basis, an ecological discourse has begun to emerge, calling for the preservation of the natural environment, the search for solutions to overcome the ecological crisis and safeguarding humanity and nature. This discourse has been further reinforced by the rise of ecological philosophical doctrines and contemporary intellectual movements advocating for the reduction of nature's exploitation, the establishment of environmental balance, and the respect for nature as the original habitat of the human species.

Our contribution aims to highlight the importance of the environment as an ethical and philosophical issue. It also seeks to present the key ideas of the philosophical schools and intellectual movements that have called for a deeper examination of these problems and the search for viable solutions. These approaches advocate for transforming the traditional concept of our relationship with the natural world, which has long been perceived as external and separate from the human self. Furthermore, they seek to establish a philosophy that respects nature and preserves its resources without neglecting the rights of animals, plants, and even inanimate entities.

Accordingly, our discussion will revolve around a fundamental question:

**How can the relationship between man and nature be reformulated on new ethical foundations to confront increasing environmental degradation?**

**What roles can moral values play in achieving ecological balance and addressing pollution crises?**

Before attempting to answer these questions, it is necessary to understand the meaning of environmental ethics, as it constitutes the central focus of this inquiry.

## **1. Environmental Ethics: Concept, Emergence, and Development**

### **Concept:**

Environmental ethics is a branch of applied ethics that studies the relationship between human beings and their natural surroundings, including air, water, climate, and land. It emerged as a new system or philosophy based on this ethical relationship, grounded in the premise that man is the only being who, through his intellect, has been able to innovate tools and technologies that he has used to dominate nature.

To regulate this relationship, it is necessary to question the environment's future and transform the current dominant relationship into one of ethical inclusion. As it has been stated:

*"Environmental ethics is nothing more than a theoretical effort to construct and justify standards that no longer permit man to exploit nature in an abusive manner, aimed at serving the selfish interests of the individual or society, but rather enable the establishment of a new kind of relationship with it."*<sup>1</sup>

In seeking to understand this relationship, it is essential to return to its ultimate aims and to clarify the significance of the Earth, the environment, and living organisms within the framework of biodiversity, which forms the foundation of human existence and its environmental future.

Accordingly, environmental ethics constitutes a project aimed at defining the conditions under which it becomes legitimate to expand the moral community to include beings and entities toward which humans must acknowledge ethical duties ranging from the most primitive forms of animal life to all ecological systems that make up our natural environment, within the broader set of ecosystems that constitute our ecological world.<sup>2</sup>

Moreover, environmental ethics is universal in its scope, as the environmental crisis is a global problem. Environmental pollution does not respect borders, and no single country can resolve this issue on its own in order to overcome the global ecological crisis. Therefore, humanity must reach a consensus on specific shared values and coordinate personal, national, regional, multinational, and global efforts. The protection of our environment requires global governance. For this reason, any form of environmental ethics is, at its core, a global ethics one that falls within a planetary perspective.

### **Emergence and Development**

Environmental ethics emerged in the 1960s and 1970s, marked by the onset of an environmental crisis brought about by industrial civilisation. This crisis had multiple causes: environmental pollution (notably the pollution of the atmosphere, water, and soil, as well as toxic and chemical contamination and pollution from solid waste); resource scarcity (including shortages of energy, arable land, minerals, and freshwater); and

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<sup>1</sup> Nguyen Vinh-De, *What Is Environmental Ethics?*, *Philosophical Horizons* 9, no. 1 (Autumn 1998): 88.

<sup>2</sup> Hicham Stéphane Affeissa, *Environmental Ethics: Nature, Value, Respect* (Paris: J. Vrin Philosophical Bookstore, 2007), 9.

ecological imbalances (such as rapid deforestation, loss of biodiversity, accelerated population growth, and widespread desertification). The alarming forecasts generated by this situation evoked strong public concern and emotional response at the time.

Many historians believe that the environmental revolution began with *The Silent Spring* (1962) by Rachel Carson, a work in which she criticised anthropocentrism and which reached its peak impact during large-scale demonstrations. On Earth Day in 1970, Carson witnessed the mass killing of harmless birds and insects caused by toxic chemicals, which compelled her to advocate for protecting the beauty of the living world. Carson understood that the human and natural environments are deeply interwoven and that modern civilisation is poisoning humanity's habitat.<sup>1</sup>

When Earth Day was formally established in 1971, over two million people in the United States demonstrated against pollution and in defence of the planet. That same year, Greenpeace launched its campaign against nuclear weapons in favour of environmental protection. The first United Nations Conference on the Human Environment was held in Stockholm in 1972, marking a global awakening of environmental awareness; in the years that followed, national and international environmental legislation developed rapidly.<sup>2</sup>

These events paved the way for the emergence of environmental ethics, which began to take shape in the mid-1970s. In 1973, with the publication of three pioneering articles, environmental ethics announced its initial appearance. In the spring of that year, the young Australian philosopher Peter Singer published *Animal Liberation* in *The New York Review of Books*. In the summer of the same year, the Norwegian philosopher Arne Næss published his article *The Shallow and the Deep*, a foundational piece in the deep ecology movement, in the *Inquiry International Philosophy* journal. Meanwhile, another Australian philosopher, Richard Sylvan (then known as Routley), posed the question "Is There a Need for a New, an Environmental Ethic?" to his colleagues at the 15th World Congress of Philosophy in Bulgaria.

In 1974, Australian philosopher John Passmore published *Man's Responsibility for Nature*, emphasising the value of traditional Western ethics. Later, in 1984, Bryan Norton published the article *Environmental Ethics and the Weak Anthropocentrism*, distinguishing between felt and considered preferences. Mark Sagoff's *The Economy of the Earth*, published in 1988, highlighted the non-economic value of nature. Finally, in 1989, Eugene Hargrove's *Foundations of Environmental Ethics* argued that the aesthetic value of nature should form the basis for environmental protection.

All these works contributed significantly to the development and deepening of environmental ethics.

In the early 1980s, the search for solutions to environmental problems was well underway in most developed countries. However, environmental pollution and the broader ecological crisis quickly spread across the entire globe. Since then, environmental conditions in developing countries have continued to deteriorate, threatening the world with resource shortages, including those related to nuclear waste disposal, which now looms over many regions. Population growth also poses a risk of exceeding the Earth's carrying capacity. The rapid disappearance of species and forests is leading to the destruction of both human and non-human life. Meanwhile, the ozone hole and global warming have turned into a nightmare.

Many scholars in environmental ethics are now approaching their discipline from new angles and exploring innovative pathways to deepen their research. Many are turning to postmodernism, feminism, pragmatism, phenomenology, and virtue ethics, which offer promising perspectives.

Furthermore, significant efforts have been made to identify and engage with the moral resources embedded within various cultural traditions, including Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, Confucianism, and Taoism. Each offers its understanding of environmental ethics. These frameworks are now being explored and developed from a global and multicultural perspective.

Finally, environmental justice has emerged as one of the principal themes within environmental ethics. Issues of environmental justice came to the fore in the late 1980s when researchers demonstrated that in the United States, communities living near landfills and waste incinerators were disproportionately composed of people of colour. Other studies revealed that economically or ethnically marginalised populations often suffer disproportionately from the consequences of environmental degradation, a pattern observable worldwide. As developed nations increasingly relocate their most polluting industries and ship billions of tonnes of toxic waste to developing countries, a growing number of environmental ethicists, particularly those in the Global South, have focused their attention on environmental imperialism and toxic imperialism.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Hafnawi Baali, *Introduction to the Theory of Feminist and Postfeminist Criticism* (Algiers: Ikhtilef Publishing, 1st ed., 2009), 316.

<sup>2</sup> Nguyen Vinh-De, *What Is Environmental Ethics?*, 28.

<sup>3</sup> Idem, 28–30.

Evidently, "these problems are, in part, scientific in nature; yet science and technology alone cannot resolve them. They are, in fact, questions of what ought to be done, and they can only be addressed through recourse to ethical values and principles, that is, through environmental ethics." Environmental ethics aims to reassess humanity's relationship with the environment to awaken human moral responsibility towards nature, define our duties, and strive for a qualitative environment. Improving the quality of the environment ultimately means improving the quality of human life.

Several currents within contemporary philosophical thought, particularly since the mid-twentieth century, have taken it upon themselves to analyse the philosophical dimensions required for environmental awareness. These schools of thought have sought, above all, to answer the following essential question:

**To what extent do we, as human beings, need a new understanding of our relationship with the natural world in this era of environmental degradation?**

### 3-Diverse Perspectives within Environmental Ethics

#### Animal Ethics: Peter Singer

The project of the Australian philosopher Peter Singer begins with a critical reflection on the meaning and significance of equality within ethical discourse. According to Singer, equality is a moral idea, not an empirical fact to be discovered. Differences in skin colour, intellectual capacities, or gender, for example, are not valid justifications for differential treatment. Singer insists that moral equality is grounded in considering an individual's interests.

If equality is to be taken seriously within ethical frameworks, it necessarily requires the consideration of interests. This applies to the treatment of any being capable of having interests. Here, interest becomes the central criterion for moral consideration, anchored in the principle of equality. Singer thus revisits the foundational utilitarian ideas of one of the eighteenth century's most renowned philosophers, Jeremy Bentham, who famously posed the question: *What is it that has interests?* In response, Bentham argued that the capacity for pleasure and pain gives a being moral standing.<sup>1</sup> To consider a person's interests or to act in their interest means to increase their pleasure or reduce their suffering. In other words, it promotes their well-being or utility.

Peter Singer maintains that Jeremy Bentham explicitly considered animals to be full members of the moral community. As Bentham states, "*The question is not, Can they reason? Nor Can they talk? However, Can they suffer?*" According to Bentham, a horse or a large dog may be far more rational and emotionally connected than a human infant on its first day, week, or month. Moreover, would it change anything, even if this did not happen? The essential criterion for both Bentham and Singer is not the capacity to think or speak but the capacity to suffer.

An objection might arise, suggesting that the ability to suffer is just another form of expression akin to speech. However, suffering, Singer argues, is ultimately the moral threshold, the dividing line between what can and cannot be considered ethically significant. Suffering and the capacity for pleasure are the basis for moral consideration, independent of intellectual ability or linguistic expression.

For Singer, it is a matter of not excluding or dismissing any interest. He further asserts: "*The capacity for suffering and experiencing pleasure is necessary; without it, a being can have no interests at all.*" While it is possible to ground animal ethics on foundations other than utilitarianism, Singer maintains that the utilitarian approach provides the most direct and coherent pathway.<sup>2</sup>

Suppose suffering is the decisive moral criterion for determining what should be done. In that case, the principle of equality must extend beyond all human beings regardless of skin colour, social background, gender, or ethnicity and apply to all sentient beings capable of experiencing pain. This includes both human and non-human animals. Those who, for instance, approve of poisoning animals to test food additives but would reject doing the same to human infants are, according to Singer, engaging in **speciesism**.<sup>3</sup> A discriminatory bias based solely on species membership.

<sup>1</sup> Peter Singer, *Practical Ethics: The Survival of Man and the Natural Environmental System*, trans. Abdelkader Qennini (Casablanca: Afrique Orient, 2017), 29.

<sup>2</sup> Gérald Hess, *Ethics of Nature* (France: University Press, 1st ed., May 2013), 229.

<sup>3</sup> Peter Singer, "All Animals Are Equal," in *Environmental Philosophy: From Animal Rights to Deep Ecology*, ed. Michael Zimmerman, trans. Moein Shafiq Roumiya, vol. 1, *World of Knowledge* series, no. 332 (Kuwait: National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters, October 2006), 59.



Singer recounts the case of a chimpanzee held in solitary confinement in a wire cage despite having committed no crime. The only reason for its incarceration is that it is a chimpanzee.<sup>1</sup> Those responsible are, in effect, privileging a member of their species rather than considering the suffering inflicted upon the animal.

Singer affirms that animals have interests because they possess the capacity to suffer and to experience pleasure. According to the principle of equal consideration of interests, there is no justification for treating the pain felt by animals as less significant than an equivalent amount of pain (or pleasure) experienced by humans.<sup>2</sup>

However, this principle does not imply that everyone should be treated identically in every circumstance. For instance, substituting a healthy older adult for an infant would not be the same. The equal consideration of interests that every sentient being deserves does not imply that all suffering is identical or that all lives hold the same value. The quality of suffering, whether human or animal, varies according to context and may be influenced by specific cognitive capacities, such as memory or initiative. Likewise, the value of life may depend on attributes such as self-awareness, a sense of the future, or the ability to form social relationships.

Suffering, however, remains independent of these attributes. Singer notes: *"If we must choose between the life of a human being and the life of an animal, we ought to save the human life. However, there may be cases where the reverse is true when a particular human does not possess a normal human's typical capacities."* According to the utilitarian principle, promoting utility means giving weight to avoiding loss in every case.

Thus, equality in the consideration of suffering does not imply that the suffering or life of an animal and a human are to be valued identically, nor that humans and animals should be treated similarly. Instead, all beings should be treated according to their needs and characteristics.

Accordingly, if utilitarianism aims to promote the interests of all sentient beings to minimise suffering and/or maximise pleasure, then the practical outcomes of applying the suffering criterion may be limited and gradual. Although Singer's considerations do not lead him to outright reject the consumption of meat or the use of animals in experimentation, he insists that moral judgement must rest on the consequences of any decision or action concerning the maximisation of utility.

For advocates of animal rights, meat consumption is ethically problematic, as it presupposes the existence of industrial farming systems that inherently generate suffering. Thus, vegetarianism becomes, above all, a refusal to participate in food production that causes harm. Singer does not oppose animal experimentation in principle; instead, he expresses doubt as to whether it genuinely contributes to public welfare, such as lowering mortality rates or extending life expectancy.

Peter Singer's contribution is notable for shedding light on the contradiction in our stance toward animals. While we oppose racism and gender discrimination, we often simultaneously adopt speciesist attitudes toward animals without recognising that such discrimination belongs to the same moral hierarchy. Nevertheless, the criterion of suffering is not easy to apply in practice, as Singer himself acknowledges.<sup>3</sup> Within the utilitarian framework, the outcomes may not always favour animals.

Some, therefore, see Singer's approach as insufficient, as it does not rule out consequences derived from the utilitarian assessment of interests consequences, which, in the end, may justify the consumption of meat or animal experimentation. For others, such practices are ethically unacceptable regardless of their outcomes. This is precisely the position defended by several philosophers, most notably Tom Regan.<sup>4</sup>

Furthermore, how do we determine pleasure and pain in animals? Would we not be compelled to project our own human experiences of pleasure and suffering onto them in making such determinations? Where do we draw the line between sentient and non-sentient animals? And what about plants and the non-living elements of the natural environment, such as air, water, soil, and entire ecosystems?<sup>5</sup>

These questions led Aldo Leopold to propose a more comprehensive framework of environmental ethics, which he referred to as the **Land Ethic**. The following section will present this framework.

<sup>1</sup> Peter Singer, *Ethics in the Real World: 86 Brief Essays on Things That Matter*, trans. Ahmed Reda (Beirut: Al-Rafidain, 1st ed., 2020), 93.

<sup>2</sup> James P. Sterba, *Three Challenges for Environmental Ethics: Feminism, Multiculturalism, and Environmentalism*, trans. Joan Safir (Beirut: Academia International, 2009), 50–51.

<sup>3</sup> Gérald Hess, *Ethics of Nature* (France: University Press, 1st ed., May 2013), 231.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 231.

<sup>5</sup> Moein Shafiq Roumiya, *From Environment to Philosophy* (Damascus: Ma'abir Publishing and Distribution, 1st ed., 2011), 33.

### The Land Ethic: Aldo Leopold

Aldo Leopold was a practising forester and a professional ecologist specialising in wildlife, though not formally trained as a philosopher. As such, his contribution to the field of ethics is not framed in a rigorously theoretical or systematically argued manner. Nonetheless, it is profoundly insightful and highly influential.<sup>1</sup>

Initially, Aldo Leopold believed that traditional ethics emerged from the need for individuals to establish more just relationships among themselves. Throughout history, humanity has sought to justify the individual's relationship to society. Today, however, the land must be brought within the scope of ethical concern. Leopold referred to this as the **Land Ethic**, describing it as “a possibility for evolution and an ecological necessity [...] because the abuse of the land is not only unwise; it is wrong.”

However, what, exactly, does Leopold mean by “land”?

For Leopold, the term does not refer solely to soil or terrain but encompasses animals, plants, and water. The human being becomes a member of the “**land community**”, taking their place among other species and cooperating with them to become “a member and citizen among others in this community.” This vision insists on the respect of all members of the biotic community, as well as the community itself. It represents a call for re-reading human history informed by the ecological perspective.

The ecological interpretation of history highlights the inseparable bonds between human beings and their natural environment and the responses of other living elements to human behaviour. It helps us to understand that the traditional role of man in nature, that of a conqueror, is ultimately doomed to fail. According to Leopold, a successful conquest based on knowledge that enables mastery and control over the biotic community is insufficient. This is why the time has come for humans to become aware of their role as **citizens** within the land community to preserve its stability.<sup>2</sup> *The Land Ethic*, as Leopold conceives it, redefines *Homo sapiens*' role from conqueror of the land community to ordinary members and fellow citizens within it. This new role entails respect for fellow members and the community.<sup>3</sup>

Leopold seeks to fundamentally transform the human mindset regarding the land. He urges individuals to view themselves as citizens alongside all other members of the land community. In doing so, the notion of man as master, owner, or dominator of the land is rejected and replaced by the vision of man as an ordinary citizen.<sup>4</sup>

According to Leopold, the prevailing long-term perspective through which people approach the issue of land preservation is primarily an economic one tied to self-interest. Beyond this economic lens, the matter is often met with neglect, both by individuals and by governments.

Thus, Leopold calls for a new ethic that complements and guides our economic relationship with the land. He observes that the mental image most commonly employed in conservation education is that of the “balance of nature.” While this is a valuable concept, it does not, in his view, produce the desired outcome. The more accurate image, as proposed by Leopold in conservation education, is the one derived from ecology: **the biotic pyramid**. Its underlying structure is as follows:

Plants absorb energy from the sun, which flows through a cycle known as plant and animal life. This cycle can be represented as a pyramid composed of layered tiers. The base layer is soil, above which lies the plant layer; above the plants are insects, followed by birds and rodents that feed on the insects. This layering continues upward through various groups of animals, culminating in the top tier, which consists of the largest carnivores.

Initially, the pyramid of life was narrow, and the food chains were short and straightforward. Evolution gradually added layer upon layer, link upon link. Humanity is but one of thousands of additions to the height and complexity of this pyramid.

However, if we are to ask what the ultimate purpose of this biotic, pyramidal conception of the environment is, Leopold answers as follows:

<sup>1</sup> Born on 11 January 1887 and died on 21 April 1948, he was one of the founders of the environmental ethics movement, a significant influence in the conservationist movement, and the founder of the field of wildlife management. His most important work is *A Sand County Almanac*. (Cited from: Mostafa Al-Nashar, *Introduction to Environmental Philosophy and Contemporary Ecological Doctrines*, 78.) □ J. Baird Callicott, “Introduction to Environmental Ethics,” in *Environmental Philosophy: From Animal Rights to Deep Ecology*, ed. Michael Zimmerman, trans. Moein Shafiq Roumiya, vol. 1 (Kuwait: National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters, *World of Knowledge* series), 34.

<sup>2</sup> Gérald Hess, *Ethics of Nature*, 305.

<sup>3</sup> Baird Callicott, “Introduction to Environmental Ethics,” in *Environmental Philosophy: From Animal Rights to Deep Ecology*, ed. Michael Zimmerman, trans. Moein Shafiq Roumiya, vol. 1 (Kuwait: National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters, *World of Knowledge* series), 35.

<sup>4</sup> Mostafa Al-Nashar, *Introduction to Environmental Philosophy and Contemporary Ecological Doctrines* (Cairo: Egyptian Lebanese House, 1st ed., 2015), 79.

- The land, then, is not merely soil.
- Plants and animals keep the energy cycle open, whereas other elements may or may not.
- Human changes follow a system different from natural evolutionary processes, and their consequences are far more extensive than intended or hoped for.

These observations give rise to two fundamental questions:

1. **Can the land adapt to the new system?** That is the violent human intervention that releases stored energy and results in an illusory abundance of plant and animal life.

2. **Can the desired changes be achieved with less violence?**

In response to these questions, Leopold affirms the following truth: *The less violent the human-induced changes are, the greater the likelihood of successfully modifying the pyramid.* Violence, in this context, varies with human population density. According to Leopold, a high population density leads to more violent transformations. This outcome reflects our current philosophy, which assumes that since a modest increase in density has enriched human life, an unlimited increase will lead to unlimited enrichment.<sup>1</sup>

Leopold's approach can be summarised in his golden rule, wherein he states: *"A thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community. It is wrong when it tends otherwise."* By adding a Darwinian nuance to his views, Leopold presents the **Land Ethic** as the next phase in the evolution of human morality. He assigns a vital role to **ecological awareness** in fostering empathy and a sense of fellowship with the other members of the biotic community, as well as cultivating feelings of loyalty and devotion to the Earth itself.<sup>2</sup>

### Deep Ecology – Arne Næss (1912–2009)

In 1969, at 57, Professor Næss resigned from his position in philosophy at the University of Oslo after being profoundly influenced by Rachel Carson's publication of *Silent Spring*. The philosopher then searched for an environmental philosophy, no longer viewing himself as separate from nature.

His principal work, *Ecology, Community and Lifestyle*, was first published in Norwegian in 1976 and later in English in 1989. In this book, he presented the structural framework of his doctrine called **Deep Ecology**, offering interpretations of a new worldview, humanity's place within nature, and the system of values and norms expected to guide our behaviour in specific situations.<sup>3</sup>

Arne Næss begins with the observation of the gravity of the current situation we are living in. We share a total techno-industrial culture that contributes to the deterioration of our lives and future generations' conditions. We are connected only to the material aspects that bring us comfort and well-being, placing us before a dualism: humanity on one side and the Earth and its creatures on the other, where a man stands at the centre. This leads us to question the origins of this dualism that has characterised the modern Western civilisational role throughout human history. The essential question that must be raised is whether we live by the essence of life. This degraded state must, therefore, prompt a renewed inquiry into that matter. Næss writes: *"The crisis in the conditions of life on Earth can help us to choose another life, based on new standards of effective progress and rational action."*<sup>4</sup>

Arne Næss believes it is essential to understand the mechanisms of this system in order to collectively develop new goals that may serve as a framework for the activity of any political or social movement capable of uniting all well-intentioned individuals, regardless of their ideological, religious, or other personal convictions. His work *Ecology, Community and Lifestyle* aims to call for all possible forms of ecological activism.

Arne Næss introduces a new term for ecology, which he develops by describing what he calls "shallow ecology." He argues that this form of ecology is a movement that combats pollution and resource depletion, whose central concern is the health, prosperity, and abundance of the populations in developed countries.<sup>5</sup>

According to Næss, this approach is destined to fail, and the alternative lies in his new doctrine, **Deep Ecology**. This philosophy fundamentally challenges our current patterns of consumption and production. It aims to transform the prevailing behavioural paradigms that dominate industrial institutions. To achieve this, it is first necessary to establish a corresponding set of values and standards. However, how does this need to be done?

<sup>1</sup> Aldo Leopold, "The Land Ethic," in *Environmental Philosophy: From Animal Rights to Deep Ecology*, ed. Michael Zimmerman, trans. Moein Shafiq Roumiya (Kuwait: National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters, *World of Knowledge* series), 158.

<sup>2</sup> Moein Shafiq Roumiya, *From Environment to Philosophy* (Damascus: Ma'abir Publishing and Distribution, 1st ed., 2011), 34.

<sup>3</sup> Gérald Hess, *Ethics of Nature*, 340.

<sup>4</sup> Arne Næss, *Ecology, Community and Lifestyle* (France: Éditions Dehors, 1st ed., 2013), 56.

<sup>5</sup> Arne Næss, "Deep Ecology," in *Introduction to Ecological Thought*, ed. and trans. Moein Roumiya (Damascus: Ministry of Culture Publications, 2007), 44.



At the first level, Næss insists on the necessity for each individual to define their worldview, which he terms **ecological wisdom**. This perspective is rooted primarily in personal intuition, which may refer us to numerous forms of ecological wisdom. This wisdom leads us to identify a set of principles that Næss calls the **Platform**, upon which the adherents of the Deep Ecology movement rely. It may be viewed as a kind of constitution for the movement. These principles consist of **eight points** articulated by Næss himself, the founder of this philosophy and proponent of the movement.<sup>1</sup> The principles guide the ecological activities of individuals engaged in this cause.

Thus, Ecological wisdom results from personal reflection, commitment, and lived experience about the world. It represents the first step, which, according to Næss, requires the renewal of philosophical and religious intuitions that become active when we are in direct contact with the world. This interaction grants us a holistic vision of reality. Such a perspective is grounded in personal intuition and world experience, much like the many holistic worldviews individuals may develop as they question both the world and their existence within it.

Accordingly, the path toward ecological wisdom proceeds directly from the self (*ego*) outward to nature in all dimensions. The core idea is that each individual begins from a fundamental intuition of the greatness and value of nature and develops this intuition through their vision. In this way, *"The ecological worldview becomes the starting point for a new path of contemplation, a path that arises in the age of ecology, wherein a profound awareness emerges that we are ecological selves in this world, and that the fulfilment of the self is an existential project aimed at establishing values that reflect the ecological dimension into which we have entered."*<sup>2</sup>

According to Næss, collective action requires a shared understanding of specific fundamental points. He maintains that *"the realisation of ecological awareness in practice demands a set of principles that form a working programme, one that serves as an intermediary between ecological ideas and values, and the scientific and practical methods aimed at realising those ideas and values."*<sup>3</sup>

This does not imply the elimination of individual differences or personal approaches. Instead, the guiding principles of Deep Ecology are intended to support a diversity of worldviews by grounding them in fundamental intuitions. When a particular worldview leads to the principles of the programme and does so through philosophical concepts, Næss refers to it as *ecological wisdom*. He labels his specific perspective as *"Ecological Wisdom T."* Thus, it is possible to arrive at many forms of individual ecological wisdom, each shaped by one's rational faculties and guided through different means toward the same conclusion.

Arne Næss proceeds to develop a shared programme of principles for members of the environmental movement. This programme guides all thinkers and stakeholders concerned with the environmental crisis, recognising that the situation calls for far more than simple technical solutions to material scarcity.

1. The flourishing of human and non-human life on Earth has intrinsic value (synonyms: inherent value, intrinsic worth). These values exist independently of the utility of the non-human world for human purposes.

2. The richness and diversity of life forms contribute to the realisation of these values and possess intrinsic value in themselves.

3. Humans have no right to reduce this richness and diversity except to meet vital needs.

4. The flourishing of human life and cultures is compatible with a substantially smaller human population, while non-human life requires a decrease.

5. Present human interference with the non-human world is excessive, worsening the situation.

6. Therefore, policies must change. These policy changes require fundamental economic, technological, and ideological transformations. The resulting state of affairs will differ profoundly from the present.

7. The main ideological shift will value the quality of life (dwelling in situations of inherent value) more than pursuing an ever-increasing standard of living. The two must be deeply aware of the substantial and nuanced differences.

8. Those who endorse the preceding points have a direct obligation to work toward implementing the necessary changes.<sup>4</sup>

Næss's ecological wisdom is based on three core theses:

<sup>1</sup> Arne Naess, *Ecology, Community and Lifestyle* (France: Éditions Dehors, 1st ed., 2013), 67.

<sup>2</sup> Moein Shafiq Roumiya, *From Environment to Philosophy* (Damascus: Ma'abir Publishing and Distribution, 1st ed., 2011), 132.

<sup>3</sup> Arne Naess, *Ecology, Community and Lifestyle*, 60.

<sup>4</sup> Arne Naess, *Ecology, Community and Lifestyle* (France: Éditions Dehors, 1st ed., 2013), 243.

### 1. Self-Identification (Identification):

To construct one's identity, one must go beyond mere self-negation and move toward identification with all forms of life. Identification is how we transcend the sensory ego and form a meaningful unity with what is non-self: an animal, a river, a mountain, or a landscape. This unity was previously described through the concept of Gestalt psychology, which Næss redirects into the ecological context. It helps foster a sense of belonging to the biotic domain for all individuals. It nurtures an understanding of the profound interdependence of nature and the mutually beneficial relationships within it.

### 2. Self-Realisation:

The expansion of awareness where each individual perceives themselves as part of the more excellent web of life corresponds to self-realisation and the development of one's full potential. *"This expansion of consciousness experienced by each person leads to identification with all life forms."*<sup>1</sup>

### 3. The Holistic Metaphysical Perspective:

There are no ontological separations within the realms of existence. All approaches categorising entities as distinct and unrelated in the world must be abandoned. In Næss's writings, three metaphysical themes emerge: **holism**, **Gestalt ontology**, and **self-realisation**. Holism refers primarily to ideas that reject reductionism in science, emphasising that **nature is more than the sum of its parts**.

Through the processes of **identification** and **self-realisation**, environmental protection becomes, for each individual, an act of self-preservation. Suppose a person genuinely perceives and develops the self to the point of involving every being and everything in nature. In that case, altruism becomes unnecessary because the whole becomes part of our interests. This, in turn, allows for a more profound development of our self-awareness.<sup>2</sup>

**Self-realisation** is a way of life, a process achieved through identification and the discovery that the elements of nature are parts of ourselves, without which we cannot fully realise who we are. In this view, the vital needs of all living beings are our own needs. For Næss, there is a single step: *"Self-realisation stands at the top of the worldview pyramid."*

Addressing the environmental crisis must be done in the **Kantian sense**. The environment should be protected not out of benevolence or charity but with joy and respect, not because of the wealth it provides us. This quest for self-realisation benefits all, and its achievement comes through a long maturation process.

### Globalisation and the Environment:

Globalisation has had a significant impact on human lifestyles. Access to technology has become more manageable, and communication and creativity have seen marked progress. It has also significantly contributed to different cultures' convergence and opened countless channels for development. However, globalisation has also raised concerns in many areas, perhaps most notably in its environmental impact. This issue draws considerable attention in discussions about environmental preservation and the efforts of green activists who frequently highlight the environmental consequences of globalisation.

Environmental advocates have pointed out that globalisation has led to an increase in the consumption of goods, which in turn disrupts ecological cycles. Increased consumption drives higher production levels, which places mounting pressure on the environment.

Globalisation has also resulted in the large-scale transport of raw materials and foodstuffs from one location to another. Whereas people typically consumed locally produced food in the past, globalisation has led to widespread consumption of imported goods. The volume of fuel consumed in transporting these products has contributed to rising levels of environmental pollution and has given rise to additional concerns, such as noise pollution and environmental encroachment.

### 4-Conclusion:

Environmental ethics is not merely a reflective step or an alternative path to solve current environmental issues; it poses more profound and fundamental questions. The question *"What is man?"* as Kant once stated, is the one toward which all philosophical inquiries converge. Environmental ethics serves as a means to raise this question anew, along with the essential questions of human thought, both metaphysical and anthropological: *What is reality? What is the nature of man and his place within the vastness of the universe? What is his destiny?* These are unavoidable questions through which we attempt to redefine the relationship

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<sup>1</sup> Mustapha Belkacir, *Introduction to Environmental Philosophy and Its Ethics* (Constantine, Algeria: Alpha for Documentation, 1st ed., 2023), 102.

<sup>2</sup> Gérald Hess, *Ethics of Nature*, 340.

between humans and nature. Environmental ethics thus returns us to these profound and authentic meanings. Through philosophical practice, it helps to define the conditions that make it possible for human beings to attain a fulfilled and meaningful life. Addressing environmental issues such as air pollution, the excessive consumption of natural resources, the threat of species extinction, deforestation, animal experimentation, climate change, and others cannot be approached through the exclusive adoption of one ethical current over others. The correct moral stance must sometimes draw from anthropocentric perspectives and, at other times, from non-anthropocentric ones. It may invoke theories related to utilitarianism, then shift to virtue ethics, Kant's principle of duty, or, in specific contexts, to contractual theories, depending on the specific situation.

Reading the various doctrines presented, it becomes evident that radical ecological centrism reduces human beings from rational agents endowed with will and initiative to a mere component of the biotic community no different from other living creatures. This position, driven by excessive emotional attachment to nature, alienates reason. Moreover, positions grounded in the notion that nature has intrinsic (essential) value often lack rational and scientific justification. By contrast, the values and criteria that should be attributed to nature are aesthetic value, which appeals to our sense of beauty and the criterion of suffering, which guides our moral judgement regarding animals. These two considerations contribute meaningfully to forming an ethical position in the face of environmental problems.

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