Deep Ecology and Education: A Conversation with Arne Næss[1]

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Abstract

This paper employs a dialogical style to explore the interface between Arne Næss's views about deep ecology and education. Themes examined include the educational implications of the "deep" questioning process and relationships between deep ecology and other formulations of environmental thought. Also explored are the roles of feelings and emotions in understanding one's experiences as part of ever more comprehensive wholes, or gestalts. Finally, relations between education, action, and activism are probed.

Résumé

Cet article emploie un style dialogique pour explorer l'interface entre les vues d'Arne Næss sur l'écologisme radical et l'éducation. Les thèmes examinés comprennent les implications éducationnelles du processus de questionnement « radical » et les relations entre l'écologisme radical et d'autres formulations de la pensée environnementale. L'article approfondit également le rôle des sentiments et des émotions dans la compréhension de ses propres expériences comme une partie d'ensembles ou de formes toujours plus complets. Enfin, il sonde aussi les relations entre l'éducation, l'action et l'activisme.

Is Deep Ecology primarily about asking philosophically "deeper" questions, questions about one's most fundamental beliefs, or is it about achieving ecocentrism, or some other ecological goals?

Arne Næss: To ask deep questions is evidently not enough. As a supporter of the deep ecology movement you have to go deep in your questioning, to what for you are the deepest beliefs. That is a necessary, but not a sufficient, condition of being a supporter of the deep ecology movement. What we see

is that from the deepest premises some people derive the eight points, or key principles, of the movement. Others derive unecological consequences.

We have seen through the history of philosophy very deep questioning that, in my opinion, goes in the wrong direction. Thomas Hobbes, the great British philosopher, for instance, did very deep questioning which led, from a deep ecology point of view, to very bad conclusions—consistent materialism and authoritarian political views. So there is no problem in the deep ecology movement about this. You have to ask a supporter to have some kind of "life lust," some kind of philosophical or religious premises. So that's clear—go deep, but that's not enough.

If our task as philosophers and/or educators is to help people develop an environmental philosophy of their own, then must we accept the risk that they might come to conclusions we may regard as unsound?

Arne Næss: Sure. We may say: "All right these are your basic premises, these are your highest priorities, and from these you draw such and such consequences, but I'm afraid some of these consequences are not good, I strongly object."

In spite of the disagreement, there are two different ways of going on with the dialogue. One is to question whether we have really derived consequences we ought to derive from our premises. The other is to see what can be modified: "Could you modify the formulation of your basic views?" And then you make a suggestion about the basic premise: "could you accept to formulate the premise a little differently?" Then you try to be helpful in seeing different possibilities of interpretation of what he or she is saying. Before you simply say "we disagree fundamentally" or "we disagree about the consequences," go on with the dialogue.

So your emphasis as a teacher would then be in helping the students examine their premises and subsequent consequences—helping the students to clarify their thinking at each level?

Arne Næss: Exactly. That's right, to help these students articulate how they feel. There is a kind of endless process going on within our societies and between different societies. We may conclude after many discussions that there are some real differences of opinion amongst us. Then you have to find some basis for peaceful existence together. We are not going to use any violence, in communication or otherwise, but we simply disagree. And then we can add: "If we didn't disagree on anything of importance it means that we are getting into a kind of completely homogenous culture

which is a terrible thing, so better to really dislike each other's position than have no differences."

Where policies are violently unecological, invite relaxed debate on a large scale.

Perhaps the continuing evolution of environmental philosophy provides a reason to give preeminence to the deep questioning process? And to be very careful about not imposing particular formulations?

Arne Næss: Yes. I look at myself as a kind of stream—not as an ego. And the stream goes on. That doesn't mean that I am a relativist. I am a relationist. And you should have a self-respect and self-confidence that you can change and admit changes. There are many people who don't have enough self-respect and self-confidence. They are a little afraid of contradicting themselves. Or, they identify too much with particular positions. Or, they feel threatened.

As a teacher I'm aware of this: I think some of my students may not have a high degree of self-respect—be careful, take plenty of time to discover their background.

I'm interested in how you see relationships between deep ecology and other formulations such as social ecology, ecofeminism, …

Arne Næss: We tend to specialize. With this specialization there is a tendency to feel opposites instead of feeling the complexity of the relations and complementarity. I think that the deep ecology approach includes what we think is important in the social ecology movements, and also important things in ecofeminism. We are so grateful to work with these ideas. Deep ecology supporters must acknowledge that we sometimes have a one-sided view. We sometimes underrate participation in political debate or we are unable to have meaningful discussions with economists.

I think some students force us, through their questions, to go deeper in our own questioning.

Arne Næss: Oh yes. And there you get questions where there is no difference between the competence of a professor and a youngster. If you go deep enough into life philosophy you will get at a level where people get together whether they are professors or schoolboys, schoolgirls, at the same level.

I have a lot of conviction for what I believe and I go for it; I am sure that I will not change my opinion. But, at the same time, I see the possibility of

getting the opposite opinion. I have complete confidence in myself, yet I see the possibility that the next day, after some terrible experience, I may have a different position.

Your emphasis on the deep questioning process seems to be informed by an optimistic view of human nature. How would you suggest we deal with the barriers that fear and prejudice represent? Is deep questioning sufficient?

Arne Næss: No, discuss the consequences. With deep prejudices you must use some examples of how you would behave in a particular situation. For instance, I was climbing a little with a strong supporter of Hitler in 1935. I had some pieces of bread and I said: "This was made by a Jewish girl. See if you can eat it anyhow." Then he admitted: "Well I do not mean that absolutely every Jewish person is a terrible so and so. There are exceptions." With reluctance he would then eat just a little of the bread.

But you see you have to, if you can, get into some practical situation—you start a walk somewhere, do something together and then—bang—you have an example: "How do you look at this?" Then you may make this person change the formulation of what they have seen as absolute truths. The Hitler enthusiast could be made less dangerous, less badly informed.

That's what they were so good at, the logical empiricists in Vienna. They were very different personalities, but sometimes one would say, "Could I formulate your view a little differently?" And they would say, "No, no!" "But, could we formulate it this way?" "No." "But, how about this way?" "Yes." You see, they invited each other to propose different formulations. It means that basically they were trying to help each other; there was a kind of "research attitude." Instead of calling their philosophy "logical empiricism," they should have had the slogan "research attitude." They had four theses in philosophy that I thought were not valuable, but they had the searching minds required of insightful philosophy. They had an eminent research attitude. People did not understand this and often believed that which agreed with their own philosophy.

The cynical person might say. "Well that example didn't do very much to stop the holocaust." But the optimist might say, "Well there weren't enough people 'sharing their bread' as you described in your example."

Arne Næss: It was necessary not to hide what was going on, and our duty was to talk to people who were on the wrong side. I was in Austria in 1934/35. What I found was that many were just following a trend—"joining the bandwagon." And, expecting nothing like what ultimately

happened, holocausts. When people saw that things were going very wrong they didn't stand up as much as they should have. I said: "If some are bad then you need not talk to them. But if they are very very bad, then you may invite them to dinner." That is Gandhian. You must not leave them.

You've written about seeking ways to live both joyously in the world and according to obligations (see for example Næss, 1989).

Arne Næss: Some people think that I don't have an ethic because I don't have ethics of duty. But, I say that ethics of duty may ultimately be based on the ethics of fondness, empathy, and what I call some kind of positive identification with something else. If you have that, you then formulate duties, saying: "Whatever the situation, this must be done in this way rather than that way." So you understand that there are some things that are duties, such as you obviously have towards children. If you take the dramatic chance of being a father or mother, then there are a lot of things that you should formulate as duties, not only what you ought to do, but what you must do.

In environmental ethics I say: "Never moralize," "Sweep before your own door." In a rich country like ours we do every day things that we should not do, things that are not in a consistently ecologically sustainable way. We are all sinners. Some people are very good at certain things, others are very good at other things, and scarcely anybody is very bad in every way environmentally. You have options, I might say: "I can't be like that, you are superior there, I'm going to have this bad habit." And Gaia says: "The earth is fantastically rich; you can have some of your bad habits—but there are limits."

Environmental education has been criticized. Some claim the problem lies in programs and curriculum materials that are not objective and not grounded in facts.

You have said: "Is not the value-laden, spontaneous, and emotional realm of experience as genuine a source of knowledge of reality as mathematical physics?" (Næss, 1989, p. 32)

Arne Næss: I think this sentence may easily be misunderstood. What I intend to say is that in spontaneous experiences, experiences that you are confronted with every moment, you have as near a relation to reality as you can have in mathematical physics.

For instance when my Chinese wife was confronted with a Norwegian waterfall—she spontaneously saw it as a tremendous water channel that leaked—an accident—and found it rather threatening. And I say what she

spontaneously experienced is exactly at the same level of reality as my experience of beauty and greatness. Mathematical physics, or any kind of science, cannot falsify the contact of the spontaneous with the real.

This is easy to comprehend in music. You listen to the opening of the fifth symphony of Beethoven: "Da da da dah." That makes one gestalt, one whole. Then after "da da da dah" you get "da da da dah" an octave lower, and that's another whole—one of the smallest units that you have in a symphony. And those two together—"da da da dah, da da da dah"—make a more comprehensive gestalt. But there is always a more comprehensive gestalt, more comprehensive wholes. For instance, your experience depends upon with whom you sit. If you are in love with somebody sitting together with you, that will change the whole symphony—really change it.

If you suddenly hear "da da da dah" on the radio your experience has to do with the whole symphony and not with just this part. You simply cannot think of existence, as a human being, without acknowledging that kind of experience. There is nothing in science that can undermine these experiences—saying it's wrong, it's mistaken, its subjective.

Your daily life has the character of gestalts rather than separate facts. Whatever we do, we are in a unitary situation that is extremely complex. But you are never in a merely factually describable situation. You are always in a value situation, somehow. For instance a parking lot is seen as tremendously well made, technically. But there is a question of whether we should have it. We may experience a parking lot within a whole, an emotional gestalt, as a negative on a deeper level, which lead you to say: "I feel the policy is wrong." Such a feeling is a valuable starting point. Try to articulate what you feel!

Sometimes critics dismiss elements of environmental thought, and environmental education, as subjective evaluations, sentiments.

Arne Næss: There is an underestimation of the cognitive value of feelings. What people say in favour of economic growth is sometimes highly emotional. I can't see why I should be opposed to their personal engagement in this case. We do not like to rob our antagonist of feelings. It would be terrible if I met some opponent without any feelings. We may have, for instance, a great feeling about economic growth. We all have feelings for this or for that. To say that how we relate to nature is a question of feeling—that's not interesting because it's so obvious, that we are subjects. How we relate to our children and how we relate to criminality are also questions of feeling. Really, there is no valid argument against the strong

feelings for, or against, nature. But we may properly ask: "Why do we have those feelings?"

How then does a teacher tell a principal, or school council responsible for her school, that she wants to take kids out and have them get spontaneous experience, to nurture their gestalts?

Arne Næss: Some people have hundreds of good joyful experiences that cost nothing. In the schoolyard itself, you find a corner where there is just one little flower. You bend down—you use your body language—and you say: "Look here." And some answer: "There is nothing there." And then you talk a little about what you see: "This flower here, it's not the season for it. How can it be there this late in the year? And look at it. It certainly has need of a little more water; it's bending, look at the way it bends. What do you see when it's bending like this?" I call teachers who behave like this "nature gurus." It is a little more like an Eastern kind of education. More in terms of personal relations. Try to make them see things they haven't seen before. Use your body language. And even inside the schoolyards you find nature's greatness.

I remember in Tokyo, our car stopped unexpectedly. I found right there no building, but a small area of "weeds," excitingly different from those in Norway. Consequently I had a splendid time for a whole hour inspecting the strange "weeds." Conclusion: Teach children to value spontaneous "crazy" experiences, "crazy" because usually one would say, "There is nothing there."

What advice would you have for those living in urban areas? Can we connect properly with deep ecological thought in only relatively undisturbed settings?

Arne Næss: We can do it in cities. You can do it along railways, highways. Everywhere there is something that is essentially nature. You don't see any human purpose in it. It's there on its own—and it's ugly or it's beautiful—but it's there and its complexity is unlimited. To see something where you do not need to take any stand towards a purpose, or utility, or even beauty is a good thing. Even if you go to look at an art exhibit you are constrained, you are expected to like something and dislike something. Whereas if you look at the sky—there are a fantastically lot of different clouds in Norway—you are free, and therefore free to strengthen the imagination. More and more I look at clouds. I did it as a boy and now at the age of 88 I get back to clouds—changing, changing, changing. There must be much more of that in school—keeping imaginations intact.

What I say here has to do with high level environmental education. There is a school where they have wonderful semesters on environment, but they say: "I think we must start with chemistry." We have to have the facts first!" People go to those places to have one whole year of environmental immersion—they are motivated not by chemistry at all. Go straight into what they are motivated about, then later you say: "Well here we have to do a little chemistry"—use the term CO_2 and so on—but as part of a whole where we always have the basic motivation of the students in mind. Where there is care for the environment all the time, then put in some physics and chemistry. If they are not very fond of physics, chemistry, and statistics, let it drip in—into something marvelous.

You say that gestalts are complex and sensitive to introspection. Application of scientific observation habits will lower gestalt abilities—reduce peoples' ability to see wholes—if counterforces are not introduced at an early school-age level (Næss, 1989).

Arne Næss: You learn as a child that there is something called knowledge, and soon children learn about scientific knowledge as something opposed to myths and the undue influence of feelings, and values. And, you easily get to overestimate the importance of scientific knowledge in a vital question, which is always also a value question. As to ecology, we have had for a long time more than enough ecological knowledge about how to mend our ways. So, in some senses it is a blind alley to ask for more knowledge; wisdom is what we need. Climate research, for instance, will always be hypothetical in character. But we have to say: "If there is an effect, then what are the consequences?" Then people sometimes think: "But it is not scientifically proved." But we can't verify or falsify, in a strict sense, any scientific thesis. We must be quite honest that it is always hypothetical. A theory is born, has a life, shorter or longer, and a death. So you see, we have to undermine the prestige of scientific knowledge in favour of research, and of value priority.

Can you speak about the relationship between research and the valuations that underlie scientific knowledge?

Arne Næss: You can prefer, for instance, a certain kind of methodology. You value it. But you cannot derive the value of that methodology scientifically. You can only point to examples of how it has worked in particular cases—descriptive examples. Not all questions in research are on the same level, on this descriptive level. You make choices that are normative. And these choices cannot logically be derived from descriptions.

I'm interested in the relationship between natural history and praxis as you see it?

Arne Næss: Instead of immediately introducing the term ecology, you may introduce relations of humans to nature with the historical background—not from the history of humans, but history in general. You can start holistically—integrate—in a mild sense of holistically. We can ask the philosophical questions: "Who am I?" "Where am I?" "What do I want?" You can talk about human relation to what is not human.

And then I wish that we would let teachers say: "How do you feel the world?" "How do you feel yourself?" The term "feel." "What does this feel like?" Instead of: "What is this?" We immediately get feelings into the teaching. We don't have a life of pure cognition and a life of feelings as something separate. We start with both at once. And natural history is a good place to do that. So the extensive use of the terms: "How do you feel? What do you feel?" Then you inevitably get: "What should you feel?" then: "What do you think you are right to feel?" and " What do you want yourself to feel?" The praxis, human practice today in the rich countries, is detestable, and many want to feel it more strongly so that they are motivated more strongly.

The developmental years, those early years of school (and before), seem crucial. This brings with it a great burden of responsibility for those who care for and teach young children.

Arne Næss: I usually say that at 4 years old it seems to be quite natural to have a total view, a rudimentary philosophy of life. A total view would be the kind of view that encompasses him or herself and the world. If you could talk with a 4 year old for a long time you could probably describe an outline of the total view of this boy or girl, a view that is still uninfluenced by school-teaching. We should try to investigate more what happens between 4 years old and 10 years old. We talk about socialization—after four-years it starts—Bang! "This is how it really is, not how you fancy it is." "This is how things are done." "This is how we should feel." "This is how you should think." Five, six, seven, and eight year olds are coerced to listen. Unfortunately, it is more and more believed that the earlier you start schooling the better. So we have a very important function to find who is writing good things about this time between four and eight.

But the reality is that we have a system where we do put children in schools right away. And we have people responsible for nurturing their development—people who teach kindergarten and grades 1 and 2.

Arne Næss: I would then introduce the difference between science and research. If you let the 4 year olds continue the development in cognition they will be researchers rather than scientists, they will be researchers and seekers, and they will be marveling at what we don't know just as much as what we know. Lots can be done in upgrading the term "research" in relation to science. A good researcher may never pretend to have contributed to scientific knowledge. Teachers as researchers, or seekers, talk as much about what we don't know as about what we do know.

So, in the kindergarten you should have very few finished products of any kind, but many tools and very many natural things which the children can use. You should have projects that only faintly suggest what can be done.

And there should be easy access to what I call "patches of free nature." And those may be very small. Not wilderness. Patches are where things grow without any design whatsoever. Just being there. And if the body language of the teacher expresses concentrated attention, they all tread very lightly, very carefully.

One square meter of a meadow is so fantastically rich that there should be enough to discover for the rest of our lives. So you could have the children follow the small patch of free nature through several months, the same little flower, but now withering. Take just as much care of the withering plant as the blooming plant.

Kit-Fai Næss: How could you expect 5 year olds to withstand social pressure, group pressure from not having this particular toy, from not having a Spice Girl CD?

Arne Næss: Yes, its not a question of not having new things, but rather, a question of keeping and valuing things. Show children, don't just place gifts in their hands. My small daughter already knew about radio when she came into the mountains. "Where is the radio?" she would say. Then, the next time we had a radio with us: "And here is your radio." Of course, for a couple of days she used the radio. But, after a week she never used the radio. The mountains did not encourage radio.

You have often said that you're an optimist for the 22nd century. But what about a 14 year old who is despairing, who's is facing her whole life? If she thinks the world is burning up because of greenhouse gasses, why should she care?

Arne Næss: There are some doomsday prophets, but there are no doomsday prophets amongst the serious ecologists. Not a single one. Every 14 year old who cares should be told this. Ecologists tend to say that if we continue

developing exactly as we do now, looking at statistics, we may then reach within a hundred years a catastrophe of a major kind such as major worry about access to clean water. There are often qualifying "ifs."

Serious ecologists also tend to say: "If you would like to be with us, you are welcome." There are so many different kinds of things that are going on where you can help. So you can find your place. The 22nd century may see the end of the ecological crisis.

I use the slogan: "The frontier is long." There is a tendency to say: "What I am doing for the environment is of the most important kind. Then the other one says: "I am doing so and so; I think what I'm doing is of the most important kind." We never should say such things because there are so many different tasks to be done and there is a calling for so many different kinds of persons and capacities. If somebody is not yet an activist, we should find a suitable area for this particular person. Then say: "Oh, excellent, we need people there. Just go on!!" And not say: "There are more important problems, you should do something else."

What about cynical students? Deep ecology perspectives are appealing to many environmentalists and educators, and yet we live within the cultural and economic systems that give rise to so many problems. We cannot isolate ourselves from these systems. For example, I am now in Oslo and you were recently in Victoria and Vancouver, yet the consumption of the vast quantities of fossil fuels required for such travel seems at odds with our values. Given these potential inconsistencies, it is easy to "tear ourselves apart from within" or retreat into cynicism or lack of interest.

Arne Næss: Well, I'd say to those who would like to be consistent: "It's a high ideal to be consistent. And, you will achieve it when you die—not before." As long as you are an honest human being, you will see that you are inconsistent in ecological matters. And Gaia, she says to you: "You may have a lot of bad habits but there are limits." If you have a bad habit—if you always must have the newest kind of camera—you can't also have the latest kind of tent. When I got an invitation to go to the Antarctic, I could not resist the temptation. But I immediately announced that I would be glad to make lectures in Uruguay on deep ecology and the relationship between deep ecology and social ecology. So I said to Gaia: "I am now going to Uruguay on your business, and then I might do this very bad thing: to fly all the way from there to Antarctica." We are sinning in a sense but we have a budget. You may think each year Gaia will give you a gift, a Gaia gift, of some ecologically bad habits. And the goal will be to have a little left even for Christmas. I never have.

If you live in Norway, it is very difficult to live all year within the scope of the gift, especially if you live in the city, so you must take into consideration where you live. You should think of this as a gift, and that She is very tolerant. And She doesn't like if you moralize to others—saying: "I use the train, I'm not flying." Because we all are sinners in a sense. Very young people should be discouraged from trying to be perfect. Rather, they should try to classify bad habits and say: "There is a bad habit here which really has some influence, maybe I could change that. And then I keep some of the others."

Some people might say that this is an easy way to rationalize bad habit.

Arne Næss: It is an expression of realism, but of course it might be an invitation for some people to rationalize. On the other hand, there are people who feel and remember their imperfections too often, too much. Some are carrying a heavy burden all of the time. So it goes both ways. Some need to be encouraged.

I once had a student who seemed to think it was an all or nothing game—who did not seem to see any incremental way to make a difference because we needed such fundamental changes in every dimension of our society. He seemed to throw up his hands.

Arne Næss: Well, here I learned from Gandhi. He had a vast revolutionary program. Not so much to get the British out of India, but to liberate the Indians of their own kind of authoritarianism and their corruption. But he said: "One step is always enough for me. One step and then another one." We have this one step as a major thing to accomplish. And having accomplished that little step then take the next step. "I am a compromiser, except on the fundamentals," he said.

You may be a revolutionary in two senses, either try to make things happen fast and with violence, or make things happen more slowly and with nonviolence. Nonviolent revolutions are long-term revolutions. A revolution is thought to be something really important. It is about big things—like getting rid of slavery. But a minority, consisting of activists, is enough. The majority will hesitate, then say: "Well I agree . . . okay." A minority must stand up, as your students must do, stand up and say things, that's an obligation.

Alfred North Whitehead once said, "the merely well informed man is the most useless bore on God's earth"(Whitehead, 1949, p. 13). At least partly to blame, he

argues, is that they are overladen with inert ideas. And you have said, philosophical insight "should be directly relevant for action" (Næss, 1989, p. 37). But is action properly an aim of education or a logical and practical consequence of having acquired an education?

Arne Næss: The education should itself consist of actions. You cannot have a dichotomy there. You can have something that is more like a piece of theoretical education and something that is more like a piece of creative action. When you walk—a little trip into nature with students—you cannot draw the line sharply at all between education and action. And you should not draw a sharp line between how you treat nature, how you behave, and how you act. We call this "*friluftsliv*" (see Gelter in this *Volume*). Life in nature is a major thing in Norway.

I stress the difference between activity and activeness. With activity you do things, play things, that can be seen by others. But in what I call activeness your whole person is active, but you may be completely quiet. No overt action. And, something in your personality is somehow changing—maybe not always permanently, but for the moment. Activeness is an important term. You may point to somebody and think: "He is in no activity at all. He has stayed at the same spot for one hour." But, he may realize a high level of activeness.

In Japan a friend of mine helped me to gather about 100 people. We went into the forest at daybreak, and we said: "Now let us say nothing to each other. We will just listen to what the trees are saying." We had one hour of complete silence. We were active. We had a high level of activeness, but showed no observable activity.

Many people are looking for mentors who work towards bringing their actions and their ideas together. Would you care to give an example from your own life about how you formulated a position and then engaged in direct action?

Arne Næss: For me, it was a question whether we should get a lot of electricity by harnessing a great, beautiful waterfall. In this case the local population deeply liked that waterfall, and they were less interested in all the money from development—they preferred the waterfall as it was. And, I thought that was marvelous. You cannot join all the protests. But, when there is something very special, you just leave what you are working at and you join in the protest, in my case at this waterfall.

If you wish to get into practical conflicts you must train yourself. You must do the right thing, but in a way that does not make antagonisms. For example, I always had excellent relations with the police, being arrested sev-

eral times. I said: "I'm sorry I have to do this. I'm sorry, I have to lie down." Then, as I was being dragged along, I once asked them: "Do you get told how to carry—so that you can carry many people without hurting your backs?"

You should have a lot of self-respect. You must believe you are entitled to civil disobedience, but only after genuine efforts to avoid it.

What about the teacher who lives on the west coast of Vancouver island, who's concerned about environmental issues, and is living near a logging community? The teacher wants to explore issues concerning human-nature relationships and relate these to logging or fishing. When all is said and done, what is the role of action?

Arne Næss: If you find a particular environmental goal, then it is right for you to join in this direction, and invite the students to do the same. But we must respect the opponent fully. You only use, as I say again and again, the term "if." If your priorities are in a particular direction, then it is appropriate to point towards relevant actions. But always act in a Gandhian way, always non-violently. That implies maximum contact with the opponents and less talking with the "converted." Let people in the logging community call you names, make if difficult for you. Never retaliate.

How do we nurture action, without being guilty of leading students in the direction of our own ideologies?

Arne Næss: By means of the qualifying term "if." You may say: "If we have a particular deep kind of priority and value, what then follows from this?" And if you always use these qualifying "ifs" then you are on the right side. You can go on arguing for three-quarters of an hour, but only if, from time to time, you preface your remarks with the term "if."

It is correct for you to lead people in your direction—towards what you think is right—but not in a wrong way. So it is completely right for you to do everything you can to have the community adopt your policy. But, as a teacher, this should always be done with qualifying "ifs." "If you have the following value priority, then . . . ."

I can't help but think that we need to make space for, something beyond advocating our positions, even with the "ifs." In an academic setting, you can logically make your point with the qualifying "ifs," but if you're teaching school in a logging town, people threaten to remove their children from school if a teacher even mentions the environment. There is a great amount of fear.

Arne Næss: I understand. Better never mention "the environment" in class.

Let's say we discussed an environmental issue for 40 minutes. You may end up by clarifying the position of loggers. Clearly elaborate your own opinion, but don't end up with that. End up admitting that the situation in your community is different from the situation in the community of your antagonists. We may continue to disagree, but let us look for areas of cooperation.

Arne Næss would be in pursuit of truth and validity. He would not claim an ultimate answer, but he would like to point in a direction.

Note

This conversation was developed from meetings in Oslo on May 29 and 30, 1998 and February 23, 2000.

Notes on Contributor

Arne Næss was born in 1912 and graduated from the University of Oslo in 1933. He studied in Paris and Vienna and completed his Doctorate in 1936. From 1939 to 1969 he was professor of Philosophy at the University of Oslo. Perhaps his greatest event came in 1938 with the building of his cabin "high up on a slope of a mountain of metaphysical dimensions." Arne Næss has been a mountaineer throughout his life. In 1950 he made the first ascent of Tirich Mir (7705 meters), but has become a prophet of honouring, not "conquering," mountains.

During and after World War II Arne Næss was a leader in the peace movement, winning many distinctions for these efforts. Since 1970 he has been a leader in the deep ecology movement. "My participation," he says, "in environmental conflicts has been motivated by my profound gratefulness for what nature has contributed to make it possible for me to enjoy a meaningful life."

Professor Næss founded the influential interdisciplinary journal *Inquiry*, and has published more than twenty books and many articles.

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