

# Deep Ecology

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I've already completed an Independent Study of Deep Ecology, so I am familiar with the concept. Last Summer, I fully immersed myself by reading seventeen books on and around the subject. This complemented nicely the previous Winter's investigation of Taoism, when I read nineteen books. I've come to think of Deep Ecology as a philosophy of Nature for the West and Taoism as a philosophy of Nature from the East. I've fully accepted and integrated both philosophies into my comprehensive worldview.

I trust Arne Naess, the originator of the term 'Deep Ecology,' and his careful use of words to describe ideas which are intuitive. As chair of the Philosophy Department at the University of Oslo for some thirty years, he was able to glean the best writings of the Nature philosophers and synthesize these into his own 'ecosophy:' Deep Ecology. I like the fact that this discipline is intellectual yet based on intuitive perceptions. I like that the thoughts of Spinoza, Heidegger, Whitehead, and Bateson are found to be completely complementary with the essence of Buddhism or Native American traditions. And I like that all these concepts – the 'minority tradition'—can be integrated into a philosophy of Nature for the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

I also trust Arne Naess because he lives what he philosophizes: He spends much of his time in a small mountain cabin, without amenities, accessible only by cross-country ski. Deep Ecology is best learnt experientially and is best taught by example. In contrast is my perception of David Orr, author of *Ecological Literacy*. I am unable to trust anybody who moralizes with imperatives: "we should," "we must," "we need," etc. It is obvious by the way he uses "we" so much – as in "the way we live now" – that he is not living what he is philosophizing. He is not authentic; and so I am unable to respect his ideas.

But I do respect Deep Ecology and I think it is serving as an important reference point and common basis for a wide variety of individuals and groups that are making a difference by doing the 'real work.'

I came to a major conclusion during my immersion in Deep Ecology. I was fortunate to have read as the first book in the series *The Mayan Factor* by Jose Arguelles. In it he describes the Mayan view of the larger role being played by *Homo sapiens* in the universal scheme: this role is the need to subdue and technologize Nature in order to effect further planetary evolution. This purpose is genetic, and fortunately it is timed, so

that *Homo sapiens*, in this story, fades out by the year 2012. Now every time I read about human beings as being this way or that way, as in “human beings are innately destructive,” or “human beings are trashing the planet,” “it’s just human nature,” or as David Orr says, “We are still caught up in denial. The civilization we have built causes us to spend 95% of our lives indoors, isolated from Nature,” or, “The decisions necessary to move us toward a culture capable of biophilia [love of Life] are, in the end, political decisions,” I have to stop and think...Wait a minute, maybe they’re talking about *Homo sapiens* but using the generic term “human being.” *I’m* not trashing the planet; *I* don’t spend 95% of my time indoors; *I* don’t feel isolated from Nature; *I* don’t need a political decision to move toward biophilia. Why do they always want to include “me” in their “we?”

It reminds me of the quote I still remember from my Deep Ecology immersion, something to the effect, “Human beings have the terrible, ironic tragedy of coming to realize that the living world would be much better off without them.” In order to be more accurate, maybe this writer needs to substitute “*Homo sapiens*” for “human beings;” after all, I am familiar with a small group of beautiful human beings for which the world is much enriched by their presence. Now, I have to wonder, are they really *Homo sapiens*?