On Warwick Fox’s Assessment of Deep Ecology

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I examine Fox’s tripartite characterization of deep ecology. His assessment abandons Naess’s emphasis upon the pluralism of ultimate norms by distilling what I refer to as the deep ecology approach to “Self-realization!” Contrary to Fox, I argue that his popular sense is distinctive and his formal sense is tenable. Fox’s philosophical sense, while distinctive, is neither necessary nor sufficient to adequately characterize the deep ecology approach. I contend that the deep ecology approach, as a formal approach to environmental philosophy, is not dependent upon and embodies much more than any single ultimate norm. I discuss how Naess’s deep ecology approach supports a wide diversity of ultimate norms. The only stipulation placed upon ultimate norms, to make them deep ecological ultimate norms, is that the so called deep ecology platform be derivable from them. The deep ecology approach is distinguished, in part, through its focus on diminishing environmentally degrading practices and policies by addressing root causes and by highlighting pseudo-conflicts. I present an interpretation of the deep ecology approach that highlights Naess’s emphasis upon assisting individuals to arrive at thoroughly reasoned, consistent, and ecologically sound concrete decisions by supporting them in the articulation of their own personal ecological total views (ecosophies).

1 I have not so much chosen to distinguish between deep ecology and the deep ecology approach as much as to isolate a particular interpretation of deep ecology from the many often vague and nebulous explications of the term. My hope has been to employ a descriptor that, while not losing Naess’s original intent, is capable of better reflecting his particular use of the term. I find that making such a distinction helps to clarify why different individuals can employ the deep ecology approach with different or incompatible ultimate premises, but still arrive at ecologically

I. INTRODUCTION

In this paper, I distinguish between Naess’s deep ecology approach to eco-philosophy, the deep ecology movement, and Naess’s personal ecosophy (Ecosophy T).1 My purpose is to offer an interpretation of the deep ecology approach, Naess’s general, philosophical approach for promoting the development of

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consistent total views. These ecosophies will quite probably be vastly different from Naess’s own, Ecosophy T, and they may, in many cases, lead to widely different life styles and particular concrete actions. Anyone actually employing the deep ecology approach would by necessity be seen as a supporter of the deep ecology movement. Because Fox is concerned with the general question of isolating what distinguishes deep ecology from other approaches to ecosophy, I also take his focus to be the deep ecology approach.2

Warwick Fox’s Toward a Transpersonal Ecology: Developing New Foundations for Environmentalism is often taken to be an authoritative and definitive account of deep ecology. Fox explains how deep ecology can be seen to represent a coherent body of ideas, whose core and sensibility trace back to Naess. He also presents the most comprehensive intellectual history of deep ecology to date. His detailed discussion of deep ecology buttresses subsequent theoretical inquiries and advances discussion and debate. These important contributions notwithstanding, I diverge with Fox on his account of the deep ecology approach. At issue here is much more than a semantic debate over honorific titles. Subjecting Fox’s analysis to careful scrutiny, I argue that his interpretation and assessment of the deep ecology approach neither reflects Naess’s stated intent nor captures the scope, pluralism, and significance of Naess’s contribution.

II. FOX’S ASSESSMENT OF DEEP ECOLOGY: A SYNOPSIS

Early on, Fox informs us that his goal is to uncover the essential kernel of the deep ecology approach, to elucidate those features that distinguish it from other ecosophies. His analysis has two central themes: (1) to determine what distinguishes the deep ecology approach from other approaches to ecosophy and (2) to evaluate whether these distinguishing features stand up to critical analysis.

Fox’s strategy is to distill Naess’s deep ecology approach into “senses” or meanings that are both “distinctive” and “tenable.” According to Fox, a sense is distinctive if it constitutes a unique approach to ecosophy.3 To be

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2 Warwick Fox, Toward a Transpersonal Ecology: Developing New Foundations for Environmentalism (Boston: Shambhala Publications, 1990). Although the original edition has gone out of print, it has been reprinted by Green Books of Devon, England and will be reprinted in the U.S. by SUNY Press. As far as I am aware, Fox himself was actually the first to coin the phrase, the “deep ecology approach to ecosophy” (p. xiii).

3 Ibid., p. 145.
tenable, Fox maintains, a sense must be “at a minimum, neither demonstrably false . . . nor logically inconsistent.”

Elaborating, Fox introduces a tripartite distinction for differentiating between what he designates as the three senses of the deep ecology approach that are consistent with Naess’s thinking. He refers to these three senses as the “formal,” the “philosophical,” and the “popular.” Fox “intend[s] to show that a close analysis of Naess’s work reveals that Naess has employed the term *deep ecology* to subsume precisely three related but analytically distinct meanings or fundamental ideas.”

According to Fox, Naess’s use of the term *deep* originates with his emphasis upon “deep questioning.” Fox characterizes the “formal sense” of the deep ecology approach as a combination of “deep questioning” and Naess’s methodology of normative systems analysis. He argues that this “formal sense” is untenable because he demonstrates that unecological practices can be “derived” from ultimate norms.

Equating the “popular sense” of the deep ecology approach with ecocentrism, Fox contends that this sense is not distinctive to the deep ecology approach. Finally, he associates the “philosophical sense” of the deep ecology approach with “Self-realization!,” the fundamental norm of Naess’s personal ecosophy (Ecosophy T). After considerable discussion, he asserts that this remaining core idea (“Self-realization!”) represents the deep ecology approach’s distinctive and tenable contribution to ecophilosophy.

By arguing that the “formal sense” is untenable, Fox arrives at a rationale for discontinuing the use of the modifier *deep*. He argues that the essence of the deep ecology approach, which satisfies both his tenability and distinctiveness criteria, is embodied only in the “philosophical sense.” Fox also argues that this remaining core idea is best understood in the context of transpersonal psychology. These three contentions constitute Fox’s justification for arguing that the surviving core element of the deep ecology approach be given the appellation, “transpersonal ecology.”

### III. FOX’S REJECTION OF THE TERM *DEEP ECOLOGY*

In what follows I examine Fox’s arguments for eliminating the use of the

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4 Ibid.

5 Ibid., p. 75. This point is also reiterated in an *Intramural Note* by Fox, “Deep Ecology: Too Thin as Theory,” December 1992, p. 3.

6 Fox, *Toward a Transpersonal Ecology*, p. 75. To the best of my knowledge, however, Fox’s tripartite distinction has never been acknowledged as providing an accurate characterization of the deep ecology approach by any deep ecology theorists.

term *deep ecology* and replacing it with the term *transpersonal ecology*.\(^8\) I focus on three questions. First, is Fox’s dismissal of the popular sense of the deep ecology approach defensible? Second, can what Fox refers to as the philosophical sense of the deep ecology approach, “Self-realization!,” be seen as the only defensible deep ecological ultimate norm? Third, are Fox’s arguments for rejecting the formal sense of the deep ecology approach tenable and consistent with Naess’s writings on deep ecology and normative systems theory? In the next section, I question the validity of Fox’s tripartite typology of the deep ecology approach by asking if his attempt to separate the deep ecology approach into three senses captures all that is distinctive and tenable about deep ecology. Because Fox’s characterization can capture only a very small subset of the deep ecology approach, I argue that his rejection of the term *deep ecology* amounts to much more than a mere search for more representative terms; it results in a complete alteration of the meaning, character, and focus of the deep ecology approach. My concern is not with who is entitled to use or modify particular honorific titles, but rather to put forth a contrasting interpretation of the deep ecology approach’s richness and distinctiveness.

**Fox’s Popular Sense**

Fox associates the popular sense of the deep ecology approach with general principles that are embraced by supporters of the deep ecology movement, to level two of Naess’s “apron diagram.”\(^9\) He characterizes these as “the most general kinds of ecologically relevant views that are popularly shared by those who derive their views from philosophical or religious fundamentals.”\(^10\) Fox then equates this popular sense with the deep ecology platform and, furthermore, associates it with *biospherical egalitarianism*, which he takes as a general orientation towards noninterference.\(^11\) This general orientation toward noninterference is then equated with both ecocentrism and nonanthropocentrism. Finally, he argues that ecocentrism, which he takes as equivalent to nonanthropocentrism, is not distinctive to the deep ecology approach because it repre-

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\(^8\) An alternative, albeit substantially less detailed account of Fox’s arguments for eliminating the use of the term *deep ecology* and replacing it with the term *transpersonal ecology*, appears in Michael E. Zimmerman, *Contesting Earth’s Future: Radical Ecology and Postmodernity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994.) pp. 49–51. In this section Zimmerman references my earlier paper (see author’s note). While I concur with much of Zimmerman’s discussion of Fox, I regret that he conflates the deep ecology approach with Ecosophy T. Despite my appreciation for Zimmerman’s caveat, which asks for forbearance for conflating some issues and blurring others (p. 22), I maintain that the distinction between Ecosophy T and the deep ecology approach is consequential.


sents one of the central tenets of “virtually all” approaches to ecophilosophy. In this manner, Fox argues that the popular sense of the deep ecology approach is not distinctive.

In my judgment there are two particularly problematic contentions here: (1) ecocentrism, nonanthropocentrism, and the deep ecology platform are all taken to be equivalent and (2) ecocentrism is taken to be common to virtually all approaches to ecophilosophy. I argue that ecocentrism is not equivalent to nonanthropocentrism and, further, that neither ecocentrism nor nonanthropocentrism are equivalent to the deep ecology platform.

While Fox’s assertion regarding the equivalence of ecocentrism and nonanthropocentrism is often made, it is nonetheless incorrect. Ecocentrism represents a one element subset of nonanthropocentrism. Any approach to valuation that is not exclusively anthropocentric, is nonanthropocentric, but ecocentrism is a very particular form of nonanthropocentrism. Ecocentrism values ecosystems as wholes and defines value in terms of the well-being and flourishing of these ecosystems. Ceteris paribus, it tends not to differentiate between the relative value of an ecosystem’s diverse constituents. Ecocentrism is an assertion of the intrinsic value of whole ecosystems and of each constituent. It seems to require a recognition, at least in principle, of both the equal value of all members and their equivalent “right” to live and flourish. Nonanthropocentrism, as such, provides little or no guidance for assessing the relative value of individual members or ecosystems. It merely requires that instrumental approaches to value are not used exclusively and that humans not be the sole center of value. Furthermore, while it is true many, or even most, approaches to ecophilosophy express concern over human centeredness, and that many of

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12 Ibid., p. 118.
13 An anthropocentric approach defines value in exclusively human terms. Ecocentrism and anthropocentrism are better understood as theoretical or “ideal” bounding concepts. Ecocentrism also conveys an important moral message that falls into the realm of a guiding principle. While ecocentrism may, in theory, be a desirable goal, consideration of our own vital needs, and acknowledgment of the rhythms of life and deep ecology approach, place realistic praxis in the realm of nonanthropocentrism. Ecocentrism values ecosystems as wholes and defines value in terms of the well-being and flourishing of these ecosystems. Ceteris paribus, it tends not to differentiate between the relative value of an ecosystem’s diverse constituents. Ecocentrism is an assertion of the intrinsic value of whole ecosystems and of each constituent. It seems to require a recognition, at least in principle, of both the equal value of all members and their equivalent “right” to live and flourish. Nonanthropocentrism, as such, provides little or no guidance for assessing the relative value of individual members or ecosystems. It merely requires that instrumental approaches to value are not used exclusively and that humans not be the sole center of value. Furthermore, while it is true many, or even most, approaches to ecophilosophy express concern over human centeredness, and that many of
these approaches even embrace the concept of nonanthropocentrism, it does not follow that they also embrace ecocentrism.

One cannot even support Fox’s much less radical proposition that the deep ecology platform is equivalent to a statement of nonanthropocentrism. The deep ecology platform’s call for particular life style and policy changes, such as significant population reduction over the long term, a focus on vital needs, reduced human interference in free nature, and policy reformulation that emphasizes quality of life over standard of living, go well beyond, and amount to something very different from, a statement of nonanthropocentrism. Acceptance of the bulk of the deep ecology platform is, in fact, not even dependent upon embracing nonanthropocentrism. One might imagine embracing all of the platform statements, except possibly the notion of intrinsic value, from anthropocentric, ecologically inspired enlightened self-interest or Christian stewardship standpoints. Thus, nonanthropocentrism, while a general belief common to most supporters of the deep ecology movement, must not be seen as in any way equivalent to the deep ecology platform.

Both Fox’s weaker claim, that the popular sense of the deep ecology approach is equivalent to nonanthropocentrism, and his stronger claim, that the deep ecology platform is equivalent to ecocentrism, are unsound. These difficulties lead to the conclusion that Fox’s interpretation of the popular sense of the deep ecology approach is too narrow. No other formal approach to eco-philosophy, to my knowledge, embraces such a radical, activist-oriented series of principles for ecological sustainability. In fact, embracing Fox’s own criteria, one seems forced to affirm the distinctiveness of the deep ecology platform because of its unique scope and content.15

**FOX’S PHILOSOPHICAL SENSE**

Fox identifies the philosophical sense of the deep ecology approach with a single ultimate or “non-derived” norm, “Self-realization!”16 Fox contends that this norm represents the “philosophical basis of Naess’s approach to eco-philosophy.”17 An important distinction, however, must be made between Naess’s

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15 This point about the distinctiveness of the deep ecology platform has been articulated by Andrew McLaughlin, Regarding Nature: Industrialism and Deep Ecology (Albany, New York: SUNY Press, 1993). McLaughlin contends that the deep ecology platform is the “heart of deep ecology,” p. 175. While I concur with McLaughlin that the deep ecology platform is a distinguishing and requisite element of the deep ecology approach and that it has many (sometimes conflicting) justifications, I do not accept his characterization of the three “distinct dimensions” of the deep ecology approach as: (1) a “variety of justifications,” (2) a “unified platform,” and (3) a “context bound analysis of what follows from the program” (p. 178). My differences with McLaughlin are: (1) that his characterization of the deep ecology approach is too narrow (it misses the importance of deep questioning, the development of total views, etc.) and (2) that a “heart” cannot be isolated from what is essentially a gestalt.

16 In this paper, the terms *ultimate* norm and *nonderived* norm are used synonymously.

17 Fox, Toward a Transpersonal Ecology, p. 113.
personal ecosophy, Ecosophy T, and his general approach to ecophilosophy, what I have been referring to as the deep ecology approach. It is indisputable that “Self-realization!” is the nonderived or ultimate norm of Ecosophy T. However, “Self-realization!” is only one of a multiplicity of viable nonderived norms that are consistent with Naess’s deep ecology approach. In fact, the term Self-realization is not even mentioned in Naess’s ground-breaking, introductory article on deep ecology. While Fox presents a thorough discussion of “Self-realization!” as the distinctive ultimate norm of Ecosophy T, he pays little heed to Naess’s emphatic statements that no particular nonderived norm can adequately reflect the depth or complexity of his general approach to ecophilosophy.

An idea of Self-realization . . . has not been proposed by me as an adequate expression of the central message of the whole movement. ‘Self-realization!’ is central in the sense of the only nonderived norm in my ecosophy T.

Naess repeatedly stresses that a call for unity at the level of ultimate premises is not part of the deep ecology approach; no ecological ultimate norm is to be privileged.

What supporters of the Deep Ecology movement have (more or less) in common at a fairly general and abstract level [the deep ecology platform], must not be sought at the level of ultimate premises of a given philosophy. . . .

Naess is quite specific in stating that, from the standpoint of the deep ecology movement, it would be counterproductive to try to limit the variety of religious and philosophical ultimate premises from which the deep ecology platform might be derived. The place for unity is in a commitment to fight against unecological practices and policies, not in a commitment to share ultimate premises. Naess, to my knowledge, has provided only one elaborating caveat to his doctrine of radical pluralism of ultimate premises. “The only reason to attack a religious or philosophical ultimate premis[e] seems to be that a parti[cul]ar environmentally unacceptable position follows with necessity from it.” This statement suggests that almost any ultimate norm could be viewed, at least tentatively, as a viable deep ecological ultimate norm. In reviewing this manuscript, however, Naess characterized the above caveat as too weak. He

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emphasized that ultimate norms consistent with both ecological sustainability and authoritarian or fascistic principles could not be justified as even tentatively valid. In Naess’s view no norms, not even ultimate norms, are to be characterized as unrevisable; they are all subject to critical evaluation, checks for consistency, and emendation due to new information and observation. Naess’s brand of radical ecosophical pluralism insures that no particular ecosophy, his own Ecosophy T or any other, is to be identified with the deep ecology approach.

The required commonality at the level of the deep ecology platform, however, makes one wonder if the set of viable deep ecological ultimate norms does not contain some common characteristic. Looking carefully at both Naess’s own use of the term Self-realization and the collection of other viable deep ecological nonderived norms, it becomes evident that one aspect of these highly abstract, packed, and vague ultimate norms continues to be emphasized, namely “wide-identification” or expansion of one’s sphere of concern to include nonhumans. Wide-identification is often characterized by the intuition that life is interdependent; common goals bind all living beings to the life process, but it can take on various levels of expansiveness and it can propagate itself through several modes.

For some, widening of identification may follow from a species-centered expansion, outward from the self, like the ever-expanding concentric waves that result when a pebble is dropped into a glassy pool. For others, it may follow a community-centered path of “felt nearness” based upon close associations. In this case, it might be possible to “skip over” particular individuals and entire species. One might relate more closely to an intimately known mountain or landscape than to particular human beings or unfamiliar species. Wide-identification can even be inspired by an association with that which appears as “wholly other.” Contrary to Cheney’s speculation, such a pluralistic conception of wide-identification need not be viewed as totalizing or as colonizing difference.

In Naess’s “Self-realization!” wide-identification appears in its most expansive form as the perception that the interests of all entities in nature (both living and nonliving, ecosystems and individuals) are our own. Naess, in effect, expands the economic notion of Pareto optimality, the criterion that the only valid decisions are those that benefit at least one individual, but do not come at the cost of reducing the welfare of any individuals, to all decisions and all entities in nature. Fox’s interpretation of “Self-realization!” seems consistent.

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26 In a later chapter on transpersonal ecology Fox implicitly makes a connection between Self-realization and wide-identification by arguing that wide-identification is the key term in transpersonal ecology (*Toward a Transpersonal Ecology*, pp. 217–21). He further clarifies his position in, “On The Interpretation of Naess’s Central Term ‘Self-Realization,’” *Trumpeter*
but he neglects to point out that “Self-realization!” represents only one way to motivate wider identification. While Naess may, in his own personal ecosophy, prefer this most expansive notion of identification, such a perspective is by no means necessary for acceptance of the deep ecology platform. Many other forms of and modes for propagating wide-identification exist.

For example, Naess discusses a biblical basis for wide-identification in *Ecology, Community, and Lifestyle.* Additionally, one can embrace an abbreviated form of wide-identification from an instrumental value perspective only by accepting the belief that all life is interconnected, while at the same time not committing oneself to the view that all life has intrinsic value. One can even embrace wide-identification by perceiving nature as entirely foreign, as “wholly other.” Peter Reed has argued that this very separateness can inspire us to “recognize the values in nature that are totally independent of what we humans think is beautiful, right, and good.” An underlying hypothesis here is that we have no right to destroy that which we cannot understand, no less recreate.

Westra’s “principle of integrity,” Daly and Cobb’s “biospheric vision,” Wilson’s “biophilia hypothesis,” and Taylor’s “respect for nature,” are just among a few of the other nonderived norms that are consistent with wide-identification and the deep ecology platform. The point is that deep ecological ultimate norms are widely diverse; they may even be mutually incompatible or “at least difficult to compare in terms of cognitive contents.”

The critical issue is that even though Naess always links “Self-realization!” with wide-identification, it is wide-identification that appears to be the shared element of deep ecological ultimate premises. In this way, wide-identification is seen as a more basic norm subsumed within, but not necessarily isolatable

(1990): 98–103. In this article, Fox replies to a letter from George Sessions who claims that Fox’s focus upon the transpersonal tends to suggest that his emphasis may be on humans, not on the whole planetary ecological system, nor on life in general. While Fox never responds to Sessions’ point directly, he does discuss humans’ basis for concern for nature. He argues that Naess’s concern for the processes of life on Earth (Self-realization!) is motivated by inclination (through wide-identification), not by moral injunction (axiology). However, Fox’s continued emphasis upon the “psychological-cosmological” motivation for wide-identification, as opposed to Naess’s explicitly stated ontological basis, tends to leave this question still open to debate.

28 Reed, “Man Apart,” p. 58.
30 Herman E. Daly and John B. Cobb, Jr., *For the Common Good: Redirecting the Economy toward Community, the Environment, and a Sustainable Future* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1989), pp. 377–78.
from, Naess’s “Self-realization!” In an earlier paper, I suggested a corollary to Naess’s caveat by arguing that the only limitation placed upon ultimate norms, to make them deep ecological ultimate premises, is that they allow for the derivation of the deep ecology platform.34 By ignoring this emphasis upon a radical pluralism of ultimate premises, Fox opens himself to criticism by Cheney and others that his transpersonal ecology uses privileged discourse to create a colonizing, totalizing vision of the deep ecology approach that leaves little room for diversity.35

Another argument against Fox’s contention that “Self-realization!” represents the “philosophical basis of Naess’s approach to ecophilosophy” is that nonderived norms are themselves only one element in Naess’s general approach for guiding the formation of deep ecological total views. Naess argues that humans act as if we have systematic conceptual structures for relating to the world, total views, which integrate “our basic assumptions, our life philosophy, and our decisions in everyday life,”36 whether or not we attempt to make such structures explicit. Contending that each individual’s decisions regarding society and nature are guided by implicit or explicit total views, Naess asserts that individuals are responsible for striving to articulate their own total view so that they might be better able to communicate their position in situations of conflict.37 According to Naess, the point of articulation is to improve our ability to clearly reason from ultimate premises to concrete consequences. The expression of meaningful fragments of total views, however, requires more than ultimate premises; it demands, at least in principle, an entire systematic philosophical framework.

Naess’s methodology of normative systems analysis, as embodied in the deep ecology approach, provides such a theoretical framework.38 In the deep ecology approach, precise consequences do not logically follow from non-derived norms. The derivation of concrete consequences requires the addition of hypotheses and derived norms.39 “Self-realization!” (or any fundamental norm, for that matter) can provide only a vague form of guidance. A single ultimate norm cannot replace the ongoing and dynamic process of forming a

37 Naess, Ecology, Community and Lifestyle, p. 38.
39 It may also depend upon several nonderived norms. While Naess has emphasized the pedagogical and pragmatic value of working from a single non-derived norm, individuals will likely employ several non-derived norms. In these cases fundamental norm conflicts may arise.
Thus, even if we were to accept Fox’s belief in the uniqueness and essential importance of “Self-realization!” we would still be left with a single ultimate norm, the minutest fragment of a total view. Since the aspirations of the deep ecology approach are inimical to specifying any single norm, it is clear that Fox’s assertion that “Self-realization!” alone represents the distinctive element of deep ecology is insupportable.

I have argued that “Self-realization!” is only one of a viable multiplicity of ultimate norms that are consistent with Naess’s deep ecology approach and that ultimate norms themselves are only one key element in a series of concatenated elements that form Naess’s deep ecology approach. These two arguments establish that the “philosophical basis” of Naess’s approach to ecophilosophy, if at all possible to isolate, must be far broader than Fox’s interpretation of “Self-realization!” Since “Self-realization!” is not tenable as the single non-derived norm of the deep ecology approach and since it does not illustrate what is distinctive about the deep ecology approach, we must conclude that Fox’s philosophical sense does not represent an adequate characterization of the deep ecology approach.

FOX’S FORMAL SENSE

Fox associates the formal sense of the deep ecology approach with Naess’s four-level normative-systematization of ultimate premises, general principles, life styles, and concrete actions along with his two “reasoning” aids, deep questioning and loose derivation. These three elements play an essential role in Naess’s general approach for supporting the development of total views. Fox also recognizes their integral role in Naess’s deep ecology approach. “This asking deeper questions/derivation-from-fundamentals sense of deep ecology underpins all of Naess’s writings on deep ecology.” Fox explains that the formal sense is the glue that binds the deep ecology approach; it “is the key sense in linking together his [Naess’s] other two senses of deep ecology, since it provides the four-level structure within which the content of these other two senses can be located.”

After acknowledging the integral nature of the formal sense of the deep ecology approach, Fox then argues that this formal sense is untenable. He takes a Popperian approach, attempting to falsify the hypothesis that consistent and coherent reasoning from fundamentals necessarily leads to concrete consequences that are ecologically harmonious. Fox’s argument, however, rests on two indefensible premises. First, he assumes that the formal sense is “purely formal,” that it makes no reference to content (i.e., it is entirely nonnormative),

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41 Fox, Toward a Transpersonal Ecology, p. 92.
42 Ibid., pp. 102–03.
and therefore that it allows arbitrary ultimate norms to be employed. Second, he seems to assume that derived norms and hypotheses themselves are not subject to deep questioning and consistency testing with the deep ecology platform.

Fox presents two examples, Ecosophy O (for obedience to the will/ways of God) and Ecosophy E (for evolution), to demonstrate his claim that the formal sense of the deep ecology approach is untenable. In both of these examples Fox argues that “it is a simple matter to derive nonecocentric views from fundamentals.” Fox’s first example, Ecosophy O, begins with the ultimate norm, “Obey God!” and ends with the hypothesis: “God has given humans the authority to govern the earth as they see fit (provided, of course, that they obey God in all other respects).” His second example, Ecosophy E, starts with the fundamental norm, “Evolution!,” and has as its third hypothesis: “The more advanced an organism is in the evolutionary direction referred to in H2 [evolution has inherent directionality], the more valuable it is.”

Fox’s two examples are a product of acontextual abstracting from the deep ecology approach’s formal elements. As I tried to show earlier, Naess does not argue that arbitrary ultimate norms necessarily lead to ecologically harmonious consequences. Naess is quite specific in stating that only those ultimate norms that allow for the derivation of the deep ecology platform can be classified as deep ecological ultimate norms. Furthermore, Naess maintains that “deep” in deep ecology cannot be separated from “ecology.” Deep questioning must always be employed to establish that derived norms and hypotheses are consistent with logically prior norms and hypotheses as well as spontaneous experience and observation.

Deep questioning beckons us to evaluate and assess Fox’s derived norms and hypotheses. For instance, if we accept evolution’s “inherent” directionality, why should entities higher along on this scale be more “valuable?” Even if we were to decide that they were more “valuable” from the perspective of this evolutionary scale, do any logically necessary implications for environmental decision making follow from this very technical and narrow notion of “value”? Similarly, with Ecosophy O, one must employ loose derivation carefully to

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43 Ibid., p. 94.
44 Ibid., pp. 134–36.
46 Ibid., pp. 134–36.
48 What Naess does assert, however, is that by placing only minimal restrictions on nonderived norms and by eliminating pseudo-rational thinking a wide variety of nonderived norms can be shown to be consistent with ecological sustainability.
flesh out what it means to govern Earth as we see fit while also obeying God in all other respects. One could imagine accepting Fox’s nonderived norm “Obey God!” but still arriving at a position consistent with the deep ecology platform by drawing on the wide diversity of permissible derived norms and hypotheses.

The defensibility of the deep ecology approach’s inherently normative approach can be further supported by examining Ecosophy O in more detail. One can imagine following Fox’s nonderived norm with the following series of derived norms and hypotheses: (N2) What God has directly created has intrinsic value, (H1) God has created each life form directly, (N3) Every life form has intrinsic value. . . . By exploring Fox’s parenthetical expression, that humans must “obey God in all other respects” we can see how a perspective incorporating some form of wider identification can be drawn directly from the Bible. This perspective, contrary to Fox’s interpretation, starts with the understanding that God never merely gave “humans the authority to govern the earth as they see fit.” God provided some guidelines for equality: “each thing is blessed separately and referred to as good.” God also required accountability, “For the Earth is the Lord’s, and the fullness thereof.” Thus, humans are not quite “free to do as they choose”; they must answer for their activities on Earth and these activities must respect all life. To Fox’s credit, albeit in a footnote, he acknowledges that the Bible can be interpreted in a manner that inspires wide-identification.

I contend that Fox has not convincingly falsified the relevant hypothesis. In choosing and fleshing out the ultimate norms of his examples, he disregards Naess’s normative requirements. Furthermore, he does not even establish convincingly that unecological consequences must necessarily follow from his nonderived norms. Even if Fox were able to show, using deep ecological ultimate norms and employing deep questioning and loose derivation, that he

50 This series of derived norms and hypotheses are adapted from comments by Arne Naess, personal communication, 17 May 1995.
51 Fox, Toward a Transpersonal Ecology, p. 136 (emphasis added).
52 This point has been made by many others before me. Lynn White Jr., in the follow-up article to his famous “The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis,” refers to the Benedictite, omnia opera domini, domino’s “call for a spiritual democracy of all creatures.” See “Continuing the Conversation,” in Western Man and Environmental Ethics: Attitudes toward Nature and Technology, ed. Ian Barbour (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1973), p. 61. Max Oelschlaeger has recently devoted an entire book to the argument that religious narrative, through a dialogue on “caring for creation,” has the potential to resolve the ecocrisis. See Max Oelschlaeger, Caring for Creation: An Ecumenical Approach to the Environmental Crisis (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994).
53 Fox, Toward a Transpersonal Ecology, p. 136.
56 Fox, Toward a Transpersonal Ecology, p. 342, n. 24.
57 Deep ecological nonderived norms must be: (1) consistent with at least a weak notion of wide-identification and (2) allow for the derivation of the deep ecology platform.
While I personally concur with Naess’s contention that many of our unecological practices and policies result from pseudo-rational thinking and a failure to search out norm conflicts, I also believe that this form of rational thinking cannot resolve all such conflicts. The approach may even, at times, highlight very basic norm conflicts that cannot be resolved by seeking consistency with higher level norms or hypotheses.  

A POSITION GONE AWRY

Whether intended or not, Fox’s resulting “transpersonal ecology,” as I understand it, is something very different from Naess’s deep ecology approach. Even if we were to accept Fox’s arguments, and grant him his suggested name change, we see that his distillation of the deep ecology approach to “Self-realization!” by eliminating Naess’s emphasis upon pluralism of ultimate norms, results in a privileged discourse that is both totalizing and acontextual. Transpersonal ecology seeks to bind everyone to “Self-realization!,” regardless of religious, philosophical, or cultural orientation. This effort to control difference by colonizing diversity can only achieve unity by silencing alternative voices. Besides resulting in an interpretation of nonderived norms that is diametrically opposed to Naess’s, this privileging of “Self-realization!” also radically diminishes the intent and scope of the deep ecology approach.

The end result of Fox’s analysis is more than a mere name change for the deep ecology approach. The focus upon titles belies a much more serious consequence of Fox’s project. By dismissing both the formal and popular senses of the deep ecology approach, the emphasis upon forming total views and the deep ecology platform, and by limiting its focus to a single ultimate norm, transpersonal ecology results in a fragmentary, vitiated version of the deep ecology approach that cannot incorporate much of what is distinctive about Naess’s contribution. “Transpersonal ecology” does not represent an alternative ecosophy and it cannot be viewed as a systematic philosophical framework for helping individuals to form their own deep ecological total views. In the end, transpersonal ecology is merely a new appellation for “Self-realization!” In the next section, I elaborate on the notion of Fox’s transpersonal ecology as representing a position gone awry by showing that Fox’s analysis of the deep ecology approach inadequately represents both Naess’s stated intentions and the conceptual development of the deep ecology approach.

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IV. THE VIABILITY OF FOX’S TRIPARTITE DISTINCTION: ANALYTICALLY DISTINCT OR INEXTRICABLY LINKED?

Fox’s attempt to mold deep ecology into three “senses” devitalizes deep ecology. His effort to identify the essential kernel of the deep ecology approach is akin to trying to isolate the “heart” of a forest. As an adventure that is doomed from the start, it must systematically exclude many essential elements of the deep ecology approach and thus fail to capture much of what is unique about Naess’s contribution. Even Naess, with his sincere emphasis upon pluralism, has found it necessary to criticize Fox’s tripartite distinction.

...I defend the close connection between what Fox sometimes calls the first and the third “senses” or “meanings” of the term deep ecology. The important concepts here are those expressed by the terms the deep ecology movement and ecosophy. There is in my conceptual structures no concept expressed by the term deep ecology, no three senses or meanings of the term when (sparingly) used by me. 59

Elsewhere I have argued that the deep ecology approach is a systematic philosophical framework for supporting the development of total views inspired, in part, by the ecological crisis. 60 The deep ecology approach is Naess’s theoretical-philosophical, praxis-oriented approach for encouraging and assisting individuals to develop ecologically responsible policies, life styles, and concrete decisions. It assists individuals in the process of weaving descriptive and prescriptive premises to form a normative framework for guiding decisions involving society and nature.

The ontologically inspired deep ecology approach focuses upon eliminating the perception of fundamental people/environment and spiritual/physical cleavages. 61 One of its primary goals is to help eliminate environmentally degrading practices and policies by helping individuals avoid pseudo-rational thinking. 62 In my view, the deep ecology approach can be characterized as consisting of at least six coupled elements (necessary, but not necessarily sufficient conditions): 63 (1) the unifying notion of total views, (2) the deep ecology approach as a normative-derivational system, the reasoning aids, (3) “deep questioning” and (4) “loose derivation,” (5) the adoption of ultimate premises that incorpo-

62 For a discussion of Naess’s logical semantics as they relate to the deep ecology approach, see Glasser, “The Deep Ecology Approach and Environmental Policy.”
63 These six coupled elements of the deep ecology approach are elaborated upon in Glasser, “Deep Ecology Clarified: A Few Fallacies and Misconceptions.”
rate some form of “wide-identification,” and (6) the eight points of the deep ecology platform. I argue that the deep ecology approach should be viewed as a Gestalt unity in which not only is the whole more than the sum of its individual parts, but the parts, as coevolving entities themselves, are more than mere parts.

V. PSYCHOLOGIZING DEEP ECOLOGY OR DEEP ECOLOGIZING TRANSPERSONAL PSYCHOLOGY?

As Fox correctly points out, psychology may be broadened and deepened by incorporating elements from the deep ecology approach. Suggesting directions for ecologizing transpersonal psychology may, perhaps, be the most significant contribution of Fox’s book. The deep ecology approach, on the other hand, has no need for being “transpersonalized.” The deep ecology approach, and ecology in general, are already predicated upon concepts of wider-identification and interconnectedness that go well beyond a narrow human focus.

Transpersonal ecology begins and ends, abruptly, with a singular ultimate norm, “Self-realization!” Fox’s transpersonal ecology is neither an alternative ecosophy nor a systematic philosophy. Despite Fox’s assertion, embracing his expansive, “transpersonal” version of wide-identification cannot render ethics superfluous. Individuals and societies both experience basic value conflicts that require a systematic philosophy for resolution. In any case, it remains questionable how broadly psychology, as a limited area of human knowledge and concern, can interpret the “Self.”

Fox’s psychological approach removes the sense of action and praxis from the deep ecology approach. Fox strips the deep ecology approach of both its focus on assisting individuals in the development of deep ecological total views and its formal tools for questioning assumptions, discerning motivations, and deriving concrete consequences. I have argued, contrary to Fox’s analysis, that the deep ecology approach is not dependent upon, and embodies much more than, the concept of “Self-realization!” The deep ecology approach is more robust; it is capable of embracing a wide variety of structurally distinct ultimate premises and it employs a normative framework for reasoning from fundamentals. It is this emphasis upon a practical approach for developing ecologically sustainable total views that clearly distinguishes the deep ecology approach from other approaches to ecophilosophy.

Naess maintains that the long-range, deep ecology movement has a broad frontier. I concur. The present attempt at clarification and critique is in no way meant to denigrate the efforts of other deep ecology supporters. It is meant to be a constructively critical contribution to deep ecology theorizing. Fox’s Transpersonal Ecology makes a significant contribution to the intellectual history of

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64 Fox, Toward a Transpersonal Ecology, p. 217.
deep ecology, but it does little in the area of developing new foundations for environmentalism. Sturdy foundations have long since been built by Naess and others. Preservation of the Earth’s remaining richness and diversity rests upon our collective efforts to build on these foundations.