

Reflections on Humans, Nature and Education:

Prologue by Jorge Conesa-Sevilla

In the mid 1980s, while attending Humboldt State University, I took courses from deep ecologist Bill Devall and had the privilege of stopping by his office and asking him questions that formed the basis of my own “ecosophy.” I also lived in Trinidad, California. There, from time to time, I would bump into Bill walking on a trail we both shared. Bill’s recent passing was personal. With his passing, I mourned uncountable opportunities, never realized, to have sat down with him to compare notes on nascent and established ideas—a patient and correcting soundboard.

After the deaths of Arne Naess and Bill Duvall, thus, a sense of urgency overcame me and prompted me to gather a series of writings--these interviews--from other founders or well-known writers in ecosophy, deep ecology, ecosemiotics, and other areas. Similar to the impending realization that the last few remaining shamans are the depositories of knowledge they themselves have gathered over a lifetime of experiences, I thought about a list of questions (sadly, never inclusive) that would serve as an inspiring and guiding oracle for younger writers, researchers, and activists. In the autumn of my own professional life, I feel a strong need to alert a new generation to the wisdom that already exists so that they do not reinvent the proverbial wheel.

A relevant sideline: because I write about ecosemiotics and ecopsychology, I had the privilege of, while working in Switzerland, to sit down over lunch with well-known psychologist and semiotician Dr. Alfred Lang. It is this memorable (for me) experience that I have used to model these interviews after. Namely, Professor Lang went on to describe the shortcomings of psychology in being slow in realizing (implementing) semiotics (or, for example, continuing the semiotics of J. Lacan). These important conversational tangents helped me realize the work I still needed to undertake within my profession.

Some of the individuals contacted for this project know each other or know of each other. Some have corresponded with one another, shared meals, and have exchanged enviable moments where they partook of each other’s company, charity, and wisdom. However, they are also individuals who have their own views about the issues and questions I posed for them.

Because I am a teacher and a writer I crafted the questions hoping to elicit specific responses that dealt with the experiences that shaped the thinking of the chosen wise men and women. I thank Michael Caley for helping me to hone these questions in their final form. These questions, in addition to being field specific, seek basic formative knowledge that could reveal something about the ontogeny of these individuals who have done so much for so many. The people selected received these questions in writing and had the opportunity to sit down and reflect before answering them. Reflective writers that they are, they took their time to answer and return them to me. They are published without added commentaries (mine) because they speak for themselves. Some of the questions overlap somewhat, and they act as follow up devices seeking further clarification.

Their responses, lengthy or pithy (a reflection of their own voices), were beyond my expectations. As I first read them, and now once again, I experienced a sense of intimacy as if I had sat down and partaken of their immediate company. Then, I was amazed by how much I did not know about them: as professionals or individuals developing during the course of a lifetime to be the distinguished and caring persons they are today.

I am very grateful for their time, for having shared these experiences and thoughts with us. I hope the readers will find in their words an invaluable source of biographical information to be sure, but also more: the “spirit” of great hearts on their way to self-actualization—a “self” actualized by “nature.”

Alan Drengson

1. What people, works, and specific ideas (introduced to you for the first time) increased your awareness about environmental/ecological problems (with possible solutions)?

Answer: There are some key experiences, writings and talks that helped me to draw my feelings and ideas into a more coherent personal philosophy of life from which my actions flow. There was the soil destruction of the dirty thirties, which I knew personally from living on the plains. Later there were destructive logging practices I saw on the west coast in the rain forests of Washington State. There were articles and books by authors such as William O. Douglas, David Brower, Arne Naess, Rachel Carson, Gary Snyder and others. Before I had this comprehensive understanding, I was working with others to save and

protect specific spectacular natural areas as national parks and monuments. Some of my jobs took me into the mountains, such as mapping with the USGS in the summer when I was in school. There were also the family relatives who were farmers. They impressed upon me the importance of sound farming and forestry practices, that we should care for the land and also let nature be in wild places.

My mother's family produced small circulation local newspapers. This encouraged me later to become a publisher, and I founded 2 journals and published 3 books of poetry and one nonfiction book. I have also published books and articles with other publishers such as 5 anthologies I co-edited, two nonfiction books and one fiction book. I also became an editor and was the associate editor of the Selected Works of Arne Naess (SWAN 2005) and other publications. I worked for the University Press at the University of Washington when a student, which taught me lots about publishing, since we published journals, academic and trade books.

My work in environmental philosophy and related areas was inspired by all the above and more as I will explain below. Reading Naess' seminal paper published in 1973 in *Inquiry* inspired me to start *The Trumpeter: Journal of Ecosophy* in 1983. I later started a journal now called *Ecoforestry*. My first paper on environmental issues was "The Relevance of Humanities to Environmental Studies" in 1978. I started working on my first book called *Shifting Paradigms: From Technocrat to Planetary Person*. This book is based on Thomas Kuhn's work on the history of science in which he identifies two main trends in the history of Western Science, revolutionary periods when major paradigms are shifting, and periods of more stable slow change that build on existing paradigms. I tried to show that our modern development models were all in need of a basic shift away from the narrow mechanistic "value free" dogmas of positivism, to ecological paradigms embedded in organic relational metaphors. The first paper I published in *Environmental Ethics* in 1980 "Shifting Paradigms" had a slightly different subtitle. It presented the argument of the book in less detail. This paper drew more responses than any other paper or book I've published.

2. When and why (e.g., triggered perhaps by a specific event, personal relationship, watershed publication, or political situation) did you become involved in pro-environmental causes?

Answer: There was no single event or personal relationship that led me to be involved in pro-environmental causes. There were many events and many persons. I was born in North Dakota in 1934. Many in our extended families, on both my mother and dad's sides, were farmers. I was born in the "dirty thirties" in the depths of the "Great Depression." My parents had managed a large experimental farm for a wealthy Minneapolis family. When mother became pregnant with me, they moved into a small town on the Red River. My brother was born a year and a half later, and by then we had moved to Jamestown, North Dakota, where we lived a short distance from the James River.

From my earliest memories I loved nature and wild beings. My brother and our companions spent most of our time playing in nature in our special places. In school and when visiting relatives, we learned about good farming with methods that preserve the land and care for the soil. Our school classes had scads of films and other presentations about the same things. When World War II started, we began to move a lot. We lived in many places and went to many schools, from the North Dakota plains to the west coast rain forests and mountains. During the War there was rationing and shortages. As a nation we all pulled together for the war effort. There were endless drives to raise bond money and collect scarce material; there were community peace gardens and USOs. We played in wild nature in the forests and shores of Washington State, which gave us a profoundly different ecosystem to grow up in compared to the prairies.

We got involved in hiking and climbing in the Olympic Mountains of Washington. We were mentored by a man who was an artist, architect, and polymath of practical arts and skills. Although he was single, he looked after boys for parents who could not care for them. His home was the base for a neighborhood tribal community that cultivated the kinds of skills taught in Boy Scouts. Sometimes our group was a Boy Scout Troop. We competed with the other Troops in Scout events. Our unifying narratives were based on wilderness travel, climbing and other adventures in nature. We went on wilderness trips throughout the year. He taught us how to design and build our own equipment and how to use tools. We formed a tight knit group with a high esprit de corps. He showed us how to be teachers and how to learn from wild nature. He taught us to see the world through an artist's eyes. As a result, many of us, my brother and I included, became life long seekers and hikers. This was the beginning of my desire to try to save wild places for others and for future generations. This

naturally evolved into a deep love of and appreciation for the wild beings all around us, even in the city.

In college I was always involved with friends and groups who were into climbing, hiking, skiing and other outdoor activities. I worked with groups, such as the Sierra Club, Wilderness Society and Friends of the Earth to get parks created and protected, to encourage sustainable forest practices and organic agriculture. This passion and participation led me to meet many people long active in these conservation efforts, like David Brower and William O. Douglas, both of whom I knew. Rachel Carson published a series of articles in the 1962 *New Yorker* that became her book *Silent Spring*. I read the articles and knew that we had to address a much larger interrelated context of processes and issues. We could not save wild forests and parks by themselves, since they are interconnected with larger ecosystems and the global systems. What we do to the Earth we do to ourselves. She showed us how the natural world must be seen as an interdependent ecosystem of relationships in processes and fields. What we put into the local stream becomes regional and global. The reaction of the chemical companies and of the local agriculturalists in the area where I lived also led me to reflect more on the affects of petrochemical agriculture on the land and human health. Some local farmers agreed with Carson because they saw the effects of the chemicals on birds and other organisms. I would say that the deeper environmental awareness began from this time.

From the mid-sixties on, I worked to support what Arne Naess calls the Deep Ecology Movement in his 1972 presentation at a Conference in Bucharest. In his talk and published paper he warns about the technical fix proponents derailing the movement for deeper values and more compassionate relationships with all beings. This emerging awareness led many of us to put forth proposals for more comprehensive approaches in education. I moved during this time to the University of Victoria in Canada in 1968. At UVic we formed an experimental interdisciplinary environmental studies program. The Club of Rome studies such as *Limits to Growth* were important, because we saw them as reinforcing Carson's insights into the interdependent nature of ourselves with the natural world. We realized that we are fully part of this world. We cannot opt out of our responsibilities to be caring stewards and good farmers with respect to our practices.

During the early 70s the first comprehensive National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) was passed in the U.S. and similar laws were passed in Canada. The first Earth Day was held. I was involved in Environmental organizations in both Canada and the U.S. During this time there were proposals to build large oil shipment transport systems in our area which led to opposition on both sides of the border. There was also the plan by the U. S. Navy to build and base the world's largest atomic submarine called Trident at Bangor in Puget Sound. I worked with groups on both sides of the border that formed Concerned About Trident (CAT). CAT and other organizations took the Navy to court for inadequate compliance with the requirements of NEPA. The Navy did not think they were fully bound by these requirements because national defense comes first. The laws had not been tested and the case went from a local federal court to the U.S. Supreme Court. It ruled that the Navy and all government organizations had to comply with NEPA.

By 1974 we launched an ES program that has evolved into a School for Environmental Studies at the University of Victoria, where I am now an Emeritus Prof of Philosophy and an Adjunct Prof in ES. During its long history, I was a member of the ES Steering Committee that oversaw the program and its evolution. I was the Director of ES when it was reviewed and made a regular program. My efforts were helped by what I learned in my Scout days which our mentor taught indirectly. When we first formed our troop, we wanted to do well in the competitions, but we were all beginning Scouts. We had not studied the Manual. He got us each to take sections in the Manual, learn the skills and then teach them to the other boys. One boy, whose mother was a nurse, tackled first aid; another, whose dad was a surveyor, did map and compass; I did knots, and so on, until everything was covered. We were already skilled in wilderness camping and hiking, since we did a lot of it before becoming Scouts.

3. What training and degrees did you obtain to expand and clarify these interests? Would you recommend that students undertake similar career paths?

Answer: When I started college, I wanted to be a geologist. I loved the mountains and wanted to spend most of my time exploring wilderness. I wanted to understand the forces that shape the earth. From studying the sciences and other subjects, I saw that geology is too limited. Geology depends on other sciences for its progress. At the time plate tectonics was not even a prominent feature. I also did not know much about human cultures. I

broadened my interests and education. I then faced a critical decision: I had to decide between the arts (I am passionate about music, poetry and art) and the sciences (I am passionate about the sciences as well). Because of this conflict, I decided to study philosophy, since it unites these interests. I realized that world views and cultural diversity are of major importance in understanding human life and history. Thus, I pursued BA and MA degrees in philosophy. After I received my Masters degree, I taught in a Community College for 5 years. My earliest encounters with philosophy actually began in my Scout years when our Scout Master told us about the philosophy of Spinoza. One of my close friends and I read some of Spinoza's Ethics and we discussed his pantheism, which seemed to fit well with our love of nature and sense of its interconnectedness.

In my first teaching position, I taught introduction to Anthropology (both physical and cultural), Ancient History, Greek and Roman History, and three core Philosophy courses, logic, ethics and introduction. My approach in philosophy was deeply influenced by: 1. the study of cross-cultural worldviews and Husserl's phenomenology, and 2. the study of language in the analytic tradition coming out of the Vienna Circle and the development of modern logic. My math professor from Germany had studied with Husserl. He encouraged my study of philosophies in other cultures including India. On the analytic and language side, there were people in the Oxford and Cambridge like Russell, Whitehead, and Wittgenstein from whom I learned. When I read Arne Naess' work on language, I realized that his approach to the ecology of communication incorporated both of these streams. My doctoral work focused on self knowledge and awareness related to personal narratives.

In my teaching and research I continued to expand my understanding of other philosophies and fields. I am not wedded to a specific philosophy, but have explored a wide range of approaches, especially ones that include spiritual awareness disciplines. The same is true for my appreciation and performance in music and other arts. I have wide-ranging tastes. I play the guitar and sing and have written many poems. For many years I was a stain-glass designer and artisan. From early in my academic life, I realized I wanted to have as complete a view of the world as possible. I kept exploring other areas and moving into deeper waters and to broader perspectives. I taught many courses in philosophy and other areas, which I designed and introduced.

In exploring the human self and personal development, I studied the philosophical and practical disciplines in East and West. Naess' work ran parallel to this. He was a natural mentor for me, since he was Norwegian which connected with my heritage and desire to visit Norway. My family were Protestant-Christians, but my brother, friends and I were drawn toward indigenous forms of spirituality by immersion in wild nature wherever we lived. The old Norse nature spirituality was still strong in our families, among those who lived on the land as farmers, fishermen, hunters, ranchers, and explorers.

4. Why did you choose to be an educator—a writer?

Answer: I guess I always wanted to be a teacher, even though I did not like school until I went to college, and then I loved higher learning. There are many teachers on both sides of my family. They taught in public, private grade and high schools and some taught in college. In Norway both sides of my family include teachers going back a long way. My surname "Drengson" is actually the middle name of my great grandfather. His father's first name was Dreng. Dreng's full name was Dreng Oleson Rike. They called him "The Old Dreng," when he was in his 40s. He was the first teacher in the upper Setesdal village of Valle who was formally trained. He was also a farmer and a polymath of practical skills. He had many sons who all had the middle name "Drengson" meaning "son of Dreng." One of his sons was named Torgrim Drengson Rike. He was my great grandfather. When he brought his family to the United States in 1860, he spelled his last name Riige using a Bokmal spelling. As with many immigrants, the immigration officers suggested they use the more American sounding name ending in son. Thus, my great grandfather's American names became Thomas Drengson. "Thomas" sounds similar but does not mean the same as "Torgrim."

Torgrim's father, my great great grandfather, was called "The Old Dreng" in Norway as an honor, but also to distinguish him from younger members of his sons' families, who named their eldest sons Dreng. The name "Dreng" is mostly only used in Setesdal. Setesdal is an old district centered inland on the Otra River Valley. It includes the plateaus on both sides of the valley. The name Dreng is still used by the family on the Rike Farm. The oldest son is named either Dreng or Olav, depending on his father's first name. The surname Rike comes from the farm. The word Rike means abundant, rich and kingdom. In the

Setesdal dialect the name “drengr” means a bold and capable man which Old Drengr was. In Danish it means a boy or farm hand.

Old Drengr was educated as a teacher outside the Otra valley. He taught reading and writing when he returned to Valle and the Rike farm. He taught what is called “Bokmal,” a form of Danish writing adapted to Norwegian. It tickled Drengr to be called “The Old Drengr,” since in Danish this means “the Old Boy.” He had a way with words. He was the village teacher, and he was the village person who could answer people’s questions about practical matters. The Rike farm was at the edge of the village. He oversaw the construction of a new log church, which replaced the old Viking Stave Church that burned down. The log church is used regularly, and is in perfect shape. It was built in the early 1800s. When Torgrim and others from Valle settled south of Grand Forks, North Dakota, they built a church that looked like the Valle Church. It was called the Walle Church and was the center for the community.

This story about origins and names is related to places, traditions and sense of home place. Places are a source of identity in these old traditions. One’s surname and lineage is identified by these Places. Setesdal Norwegian is one of the oldest dialects and is close to Old Norse and Icelandic. Norse heritage is rich in stories that we listened to over and over. The stories are connected and infused with natural places and nature lore that communicate love and respect for the natural world. There are both old and new country stories in our extended family. Many in our extended family wrote poetry; they were skilled musicians and folk dancers. These stories are related to and connected with farm, forest, sea and mountain places and myths. All my life I wanted to live in a place like the Rike Farm, even before I knew where our family’s roots are. I was born on the prairies and had only vague ideas about mountains, until we traveled west through the Rockies.

During World War 2 we traveled to the West Coast through the Rockies and other mountains. This awakened my sleeping desire to live in the mountains. As a young adult I wanted a farm with the characteristics of the Rike Farm, even though no one told me what it was like. I dreamed of going homesteading in Canada and spent hours talking over plans to do this with friends, some of whom did go homesteading. Many of my Dad’s relatives left the States and homesteaded in Canada.

When I traveled to Norway, I discovered that the Rike farm fit my ideal place to live. It is in a beautiful protected high valley with a southern exposure and rich river bottom land. It has gardens, grain fields, orchards, forested slopes and open fields, with natural meadows and extensive alp land on the mountain plateaus above it. The Rike farm has three separate summer farms (Setters) each with buildings in the mountains. These Setters are surrounded by lakes and streams, snow fields and mountain peaks. The farm has amazing land of thousands of acres. It is almost a self-sufficient kingdom unto itself. It has all the climate possible in its Norwegian location and is farmed using traditional methods. It is a complex farm of many microclimates, crops and animals. Setesdal is characterized by these kinds of farms. They are the basis of Norwegian culture. Even the King has a farm near Oslo. Other areas in Norway have similar farm systems, with valley land, hillside forests and open meadow plateaus and mountains. The farmsteads my relatives built in the new world were made of the same kinds of materials and used the same design and techniques as the buildings on the Rike farm.

The Rike farm is in many ways an archetype of the best Norwegian farm, which is one of the reasons it is named Rike (which also means kingdom). Legend has it that it was the farm of the King of Upper Setesdal. He was one of the kings who left Norway at the beginning of the reign of Harold Tanglehair (also known as Harold Fairhair) to settle in Iceland. These Icelandic settlers left Norway after being defeated by Harold in battles. They were the first of the permanent Icelandic settlement, which partially explains why Icelandic is closer to the Setesdal dialect. These farms have their own identity, heritage and history. Each farm is associated with family lineages. They have their own personality that transcends any person or generation. If you moved to the Rike farm and began to farm it, you would change your last name to Rike. Men who marry a woman who oversees their family's farm, will take the name of the wife whose last name is that of the farm, such as Viki. In Norway this old farm tradition is still intact with laws and traditions to protect them. If you oversee a farm you must farm it.

These farms are very ancient. It is thought that the upper Setesdal, which is in the upper Otra River Valley, was first settled as a semi permanent camp by hunter-gathers who followed reindeer and other animals into the valley from the mountain plateaus. My people are used to a semi-nomadic life, since in the summer they take the farm animals to the mountains to graze until fall. We are

wanderers who have moved all over the world from Setesdal. This wandering and seeking and at the same time being at home in different places in nature with different conditions, has encouraged many of us to take the same exploratory approach to learning and professional life. This is part of our old Viking heritage as traders, explorers and innovators. Much of their skill and boldness came out of this complex farm based mountains–valley culture. Many of the same things can be said about other similar cultural complexes such as those of the Swiss.

Naess is steeped in this cabin mountain plateau tradition and he has also climbed in mountains all over Switzerland and Europe as well as in North America and the Himalaya. It explains why he has explored so many mountains and also subjects since he is a semi–nomad and a wandering seeker of new views and knowledge. Naess is in the Odin crazy wisdom tradition. This is partly shown by Arne’s invention of Gandhian tennis and boxing. Odin is a seeker whose companions are a wolf, raven and spirit horse.

Arne Naess was born and raised on a large suburban property on the outskirts of Oslo, which is surrounded by a City forest (Oslo Marke) of thousands of acres. This city forest is larger now than when he was a boy. He played in nature from an early age learning how to communicate with the wild beings in his surroundings. From when he was quite young, his mother took the family to a mountain hut of her family near Ustaoset village in the mountains between Oslo and Bergan. Her family was originally from Bergan. On this Mt Hallingskarvet Arne identified with the mountain as his old father. His father had died before he was a year old. Mt. Hallingskarvet became part of his own personal mythology, which included the mountains to the north called the Jotunheimen (home of the giants), the highest mountains in Norway. As an adult he built a hut high above Ustaoset village on a bench overlooking the vast plateau to the south called Hardangervida, the largest alp plateau in Europe. (On the far south of this plateau country are the summer farms of my ancestors and relatives. Many of the cabins on the plateau belong to the old farms.) He climbed the cliffs of Mt. Hallingskarvet for all of his life. The south side of the mountain has over 40 Km of cliffs for good rock climbing. (Arne seriously considered changing his surname to Tvergastein.

It was at his hut named Tvergastein (crossed stones), that he developed his personal philosophy Ecosophy T (tailored to Tvergastein). The hut is the highest

such hut in Norway. It is above where the domestic animals go, but it is visited by wild Reindeer. Arne learned from the mountain farmers and herders through his own trips in the mountains, which grew more complex when he became a mountain climber in high school. Norway has many dialects that he knew and this inspired his development of empirical semantics. These dialects are honored in Norway.

In Oslo his family's home was a center of leading edge Norwegian and European culture. His mother was deeply involved in high culture and the arts. People from all over Norway and Europe visited the Naess home. He learned many languages and studied in Europe. It is a tradition for university students to go abroad even today. That is how he became a member of the Vienna Circle, while working on his doctoral project in Vienna. His research investigated the nature of science and whether we can have a science of science (meta-science). After he finished his doctorate, he was invited to UC Berkeley by Prof E. C. Tolman, the learning theorist doing empirical research using lab rats (which are derived from Norway rats). Naess became a post doc research associate in Psychology at the University of California in Berkeley. He studied not only rats, but also the psychologists studying the rats as part of his empirical studies of language and science. His experiences in Vienna and in Berkeley made a life long impression on him. He returned to California and North America many times over the years. While in Vienna he spent 14 months, six days a week in one hour sessions in deep psychoanalysis with Dr. Hitchman, an associate of Freud. He wanted Naess to be a healer and arranged for him to make rounds in the psychiatric hospitals, which influenced Naess' later work in ecology of self. Naess says from then on he had deep compassion for people with emotional and mental problems.

All of the above is related to my sense of who I am, and to my love of nature and pro-environmental work. I met Arne in North America, but corresponded with him for quite some time, ever since reading his earliest articles on nature and the environment. I first went to Norway at his invitation. When I was at his home in Oslo, I asked what I should see there. He urged me to go to the folk art museum on Bigdøy Island. He said that I would better understand what he meant, when he said that we can have a very rich and diverse culture with a small population, low energy and material use. He was right in his suggestion. I visited the museum and saw outside and inside exhibits. There were buildings and other items from Setesdal and also from Rike Farm. I saw a rich Norwegian culture with new and deeper eyes. Each district of Norway has distinctive styles

of building and regional costumes. They have forms of dancing and music and other arts unique to these places. I looked for Rikes in the Oslo directory and called them from Arne's home. Thus, I reconnected with some of my Norwegian relatives. I visited the Rike farm, home of my great grandfather. I was the first of his descendants to go to the farm and meet people there. I might never have done this without Arne's invitation and encouragement. This gave me a deeper sense of who I am and of my extended family's relationships with Norway and nature.

Naess and I distinguish between the small s self of ego and large S Self of ecological identification, which includes family heritage, lineages and places. We distinguish between place and Place. Arne wrote about Tvergastein as a Place (with deep culture and personal history) and not just a place (like a location on a map). The Rike farm is a Place, not just a place. (His article on Tvergastein is in my (and Bill's) anthology *Ecology of Wisdom: Writings by Arne Naess 2008*.) After meeting relatives and visiting the Rike farm, I later took my whole immediate family to Norway. We visited Arne and Kit-fai Naess in Oslo and at their mountain hut. When we were at Tvergastein Arne led us to the top of the mountain about 1500 feet in elevation above the hut. These experiences helped me to serve as the Associate Editor of the *Selected Works of Arne Naess (SWAN)* which was published in 2005. (You can read an account of the official launch of the series at the University of Oslo in the *Trumpeter*.) They helped me better understand my family and have a deeper sense of who we are. They provided invaluable knowledge for my writing and teaching about the natural world. I learned from my relatives and Naess that Norway considers the open land "free nature", as most of it is owned by the farms. This is connected with the tradition of *friluftsliv* (life in the free air) since in free nature we can camp and hike. They don't have the concept of large wilderness that we do here, since over 90% of the land in Norway belongs to the old farms, but not fenced on the plateaus.

5. What obstacles, barriers did you encounter while becoming a professional "environmentalist"?

Answer: I do not call myself a professional "environmentalist." The latter is a media term that tends to mislead people about what I am committed to. I call myself a philosophical field ecologist or an ecological philosopher. Sometimes I shorten this to "ecophilosophy," but that is not entirely satisfactory. Our aim as

scholars and teachers in supporting a deep approach is to better understand and improve human–nature relationships. We take Carson’s insights in *Silent Spring* seriously. We have to explore, not only the ecological relationships in the natural world and human interconnections with them, but also our inner ecology, the ecology of our self and who we are. This leads us to see that traditional disciplines in the academic world are too narrow and specialized. Hence, the need for programs such as environmental studies, which are interdisciplinary and also go beyond traditional fields. We try to avoid the myopia of the narrowly focused expert.

An important practice that helps us to avoid being too ivory towered is to walk and be in nature every day. When I visited Naess, we had lunch and then went into the forest to cut wood with a hand saw. We carried the wood to his home in backpacks. Being in nature everyday is what I’ve done all my life. This is what Arne did all his life. He would leave the university in the city and travel by train and then on foot to his mountain hut on the weekend and at other times.

Throughout my life I have taught academic subjects, and also practical and spiritual disciplines such as hiking, climbing, Tai Chi and Aikido. I have taught skiing and wilderness survival. I have been a fly fisherman, a hunter, a hiker, a climber, a sail boat enthusiast, a canoeist, and a gardener. In all of these I have been overjoyed to see the many large views which helped me know what is happening to the land, and also to see the smallest things around me, such as tiny bugs. I have also built huts, cabins and houses.

I learned from an early age to communicate with other beings. Humans are not the only conscious beings with spiritual energies. These experiences led me to formulate a personal ecosophy which is a Wild Way practice I call “Blue Mountain Ecosophy.” Blue Mountain refers to Blue Mountain Farm which is our place on the North Olympic Peninsula on the Deer Park Road, which leads to Deer Park and Blue Mountain. (I like the lines from Dogen’s *Mountain and Rivers Sutra* “The blue mountains are always walking...”) My book *Doc Forest and Blue Mountain Ecostery* was written there. The buildings were burned down by vandals several years ago. (For more about the book see www.ecostery.org.)

I have always felt more at home in the wild than in the heart of the city. Thus, I have led a way of life that helps me to be at home no matter where I am. My latest unpublished book is called *Wild Way Home*. I daily practice the Wild Way at home and in nature. The Wild Way is a whole art and spiritual discipline like

Aikido or Zen. It is interconnected with the nature traditions of Norway, Europe and North America. It is connected with nature spirituality and shamanic journeying. It is influenced by Eastern spiritual disciplines such as Zen, Aikido and Tai Chi. I am steeped in nature literature of these traditions, and that of the Romantic poets and American writers like Thoreau and Muir. I also learned from German philosophers and writers, like Goethe, Nietzsche, Kant, Rilke, Hesse and Thomas Mann. I am steeped in classical, folk and jazz music.

Throughout my academic life it was difficult at times to pursue these interests and subjects, because the mainstream academy encourages high specialization. There was great resistance to interdisciplinary studies. It was difficult to gain support for such programs in most universities and colleges. At the University of Victoria we had many battles over the development of Environmental Studies as the kind of program we thought necessary. (By “we” I mean the small group of faculty from different departments who saw the importance of this broad approach. I am attaching an overview of this program and its development that I wrote in 2007.) There were few institutional rewards or even recognition in promotion and tenure for these efforts to create such programs. We volunteered our time over and above our regular duties. Only single author articles in “respected” specialized journals were considered evidence of competence and contributions to “knowledge” in many fields. What we were doing was viewed as intellectually below standard. Some thought there is too much vague terminology and too many feelings involved; it is not objective and rigorous enough.

6. What specific projects did you undertake that changed the way you presented scientific ideas to students and colleagues?

Answer: I am not in a science field, but I have taught logic and philosophy of science. I have taught courses in philosophy of technology and environmental philosophy. I have written in transpersonal psychology and ecopsychology. The journal I started (The Trumpeter) is now online at (<http://trumpeter.athabascau.ca>); it includes on its site the back issues of the Ecopsychology journal started by Theodore Roszak. I think all my projects, including personal research papers, were related to the comprehensive way I presented subjects to my students and colleagues.

I gave a presidential address to the Northwest Conference in Philosophy that focused on Socrates as a central ideal of humanities studies. I appreciated the

radical nature of his way of philosophizing, which is illuminated by comparing his aims to some Eastern philosophers. Too often he is construed as offering a specific philosophy as an abstract doctrine, rather than showing a way of being and acting in the world. His approach is more radical than the abstract theory approach. He invites us to realize our native intelligence and to actualize our capacity for full awareness by living fully in the present. This is shown in the way that he dies, how he keeps fully focused on the process of dying. This is at the heart of Zen and Shinto (the latter as revealed in the Shinto art of Aikido). This is part of what Naess, in his Ecosophy T, means by “Self-realization.”

7. Related to the previous question, were there any watershed moments during your professional career when you came to understand key (environmental/ ecological/eco-psychological/eco-social) issues in a new light? Could you share some of these insights?

Answer: As is clear from what I have written above, there were many such moments. All of these go back to the continuous revelation of the natural energies of all beings by time spent in nature, often alone, in special places. These insights are spontaneous spiritual awakenings. I believe we all have them and that they are the basis of many religions. The earlier shamanic cultures, including Old Norse culture, had ceremonial ways to journey in the different spiritual realms. The world is deep and complex and is filled with beings that we can communicate with and from whom we can learn. The bird that sings in the forest, the elk that bugles, the wolves that howl, the bees that buzz, they all have stories from which we learn.

I think the most important insight in these experiences, related to my work and inspirations as an ecophilosopher, is in seeing communication as central to natural processes. It is important for us to understand the ecology of communication and to be able to communicate. Nonviolence is crucial to good communication. Human languages are one of many forms of communication. We should not be so wedded to specific articulations that we become closed to other appreciations of the world and other ways to express our experiences, whether in words, music, images, and so on. The world as a whole is a Whole and we are wholes within it; there are stories within stories and worlds within worlds. These insights are found through wandering and in all traditions. As soon as we bind ourselves to one form of speech and articulation, we die to the flow of life. The arts that I practice keep us in the present, fully alive and

spontaneous. This is where freedom lies. We want to share these treasures with others and so we become teachers and students. If we are always learning, we are fully alive. Arne was alive and learning in his nineties.

8. Human psychology (the way we relate, perceive, feel, and think about the world and other people) seems to be a central concern or scientific interest as we unravel the complexities of human-made environmental and ecological challenges. What areas of psychology do you deem more important (relevant) in addressing these challenges?

Answer: I would add to this the anthropology of consciousness and transpersonal psychology as important to deepen and enlarge our understanding of the human persons and communities embedded in the natural world. (There are journals in both of these areas to which I've contributed.) I've already commented on some of these issues in my other answers. Clearly, the way we are as persons has deep bearing on the way we treat others and the natural world. How we relate to others is interdependent with the sort of ego selves we are, and on our ability to remove our shadows that develop as a result of our growth being thwarted by harsh treatment and trauma.

9. What is your opinion about "eco-psychology" (loosely defined) as a means for addressing and gaining some understanding of these issues?

Answer: I have already gone into this in many ways in my answers above and will say more below. Just as ecophilosophy aims to put nature back into the study of personal philosophies and worldviews, so ecopsychology aims to put the human self or psyche back into an ecological context in order to understand the self as a whole in its internal and larger relationships. All these terms, including ecoforestry and ecoagriculture, attempt to mark the difference between what we are now doing to consider our larger and deeper context. We want to understand ourselves, not only in our immediate human created family and setting, but in the deeper ways we are related to everything in the world. Our lives have deeper meaning when we are aware of these connections.

Many of our current pathologies result from ignoring these relationships and pretending they don't matter; that wild nature is no longer important, since we are taming every thing, every thing is becoming a human artifact in new cyber space. This ignores that there are wild beings inside us; in our dreams of wild

animals, such as the cougar in my dream the other night. The “eco” prefixes mark transitions strategies for moving to new disciplines and studies that do not suffer the wild nature deficit of our mainstream institutions and practices. Hence, ecopsychology emerges as an urgent study and exploration leading us to a more in depth place of the wild human within, and the human in wild nature. It is not the environment on one side and humans on the other. We cannot avoid participating in the natural world; the main issue is how we participate. We can choose to act in beautiful ways that add to harmony in the world. The natural world is not a special interest, but a vital concern to all living beings and cultures. We can be part of the solution by being harmonious within ourselves and by making all of our immediate relationships harmonious. We can go beyond doing no harm, we can contribute positive benefits back to our community and home places.

10. In your opinion, does “eco-psychology” need to be rooted in evolutionary (natural) science for it to be a credible branch of Human Ecology? (For 8, 9, or 10, if you think it is appropriate, what did Bill Devall think about “eco-psychology”?)

Answer: I believe the more we (Westerners) can gain a sense of ourselves in an interdisciplinary cosmology that combines spiritual practices and traditions with leading edge ecology, biology, and evolutionary theory, the better we will understand ourselves in the world. Thus, the happier we will be. Thomas Berry recognized that in all our undertakings, we finally have to come into our narrative home contexts. These are interwoven with stories about everything, including creation and development. The Creation Spirituality articulated by Mathew Fox and others is compatible with these new cosmologies and with other myths and stories. We can reinterpret the earliest teachings of Jesus as in this tradition of creation spirituality. Naess’ approach to the ecology of language as within larger systems of communication also brings us back into the narrative context of our everyday lives and emphasizes the importance of respecting the unique languages and dialects that are rooted in these home places. They have their own forms of ecological wisdom. When he studied these languages in different places in the world, he found that ordinary people have quite extraordinary ways of feeling and thinking that are creatively expressed in their own dialect stories. We should avoid a globalization that destroys this cultural and personal diversity.

Bill and I mostly agreed about these things I've been writing. We talked and corresponded often and worked on many projects together. He thought that the efforts by Roszak and The Trumpeter journal were all important. He embarked in his life into the discipline of zen. He helped to establish a Zen community sangha in Aracata California, where he was a professor of sociology at Humboldt University. We both did our Ph.D.s at University of Oregon during the same time. He thought it very important for each of us to do our own spiritual work to be more effective in pursuing and furthering the values to which we are committed by supporting the platform principles of the deep ecology movement. Arne Naess wrote a seminal essay on the ecology of self that inspired Bill and I. It is called "Self-Realization: An Ecological Approach to Being in the World." We reprinted it in our anthology called Ecology of Wisdom: Writings by Arne Naess (2008). In this essay, Naess pursues understanding the ecology of self. He distinguishes between the ego self and the ecological Self. Bill wrote a book about this. He later said that he was writing about his personal ecosophy.

Bill and I were involved in a number of projects with Doug Tompkins and Gerry Mander. They created the Foundation for Deep Ecology inspired by Arne's work. Bill was the project director for the Clearcut book project which involved not only editing the anthology filled with photos and articles, but running ads about ecologically responsible forest practices we call ecoforestry, comparing them with bad industrial forest practices. We ran ads in the New York Times and other papers. We helped to launch the Ecoforestry Institutes in the US and Canada. This in turn led to the publication of an anthology called Ecoforestry: The Art and Science of Sustainable Forest Use (1997) that I co-edited with Duncan Taylor. Bill contributed articles and talks to these projects. We met in Oregon and BC with ecoforesters mostly from the west coast from Alaska to California. Thus, we met people like Merv Wilkinson (who has won many awards for his work at Wildwood Forest), Orville Camp and many other writers and practitioners. This led eventually to the new book Duncan and I co-edited called Wild Forestry (2009). Bill contributed a Buddhist perspective to this anthology. Bill was very active in the environmental movement throughout his adult life but concentrated his efforts in later years to Northern California and the forests therein.

Bill continued to walk in nature every day until he was too ill, but even then he did zazen. I too have done mindfulness meditation for years and have applied

this to mountain journeying and in other kinds of journeying. I call my practice the Wild Way, with which Bill was in tune. When Bill and I were grad students at U of O, it was an exciting time in the early 60s. Oregon was a leading edge state in higher education and encouraged grad students to come from all over. In the philosophy department, where I studied, we had leading edge work on narratives and stories by Profs like Frank Ebersole and John Wisdom. Bill was in Sociology doing research into the history of the environmental movement in the US. Lots of amazing creative people came to U of Oregon to give seminars and talks, like John Cage, Gary Snyder and Ken Kesey.

11. New terminology, such as Nature Deficit Disorder (NDD), has been proposed to describe the consequences (neurotic or psychotic) of individually or collectively disengaging from natural processes, rhythms, and activities. Is this a useful concept and apt description of the behaviors that you have observed?

Answer: Duncan Taylor and I included material on the nature deficit disorder in our latest book *Wild Forestry: Practicing Nature's Wisdom* (2009). Richard Louv and others writing on this topic were recently here in Victoria for a conference. We have some his articles in our book. We think that an important aspect of Louv's work is focused on how loss of actual experience in nature affects our children's development and their ability to care for the natural world. David Sobel's writings on place based education are also relevant to this. (See the Orion website for articles and books.) We know from case studies of grad students and other researchers, that there is a pervasive feeling of loss over the death of specific natural places. There are therapeutic undertakings used to cope with these problems, including more conscious forms of education that involve participation in naturalizing school grounds and taking trips to clean up beaches, naturalize a stream, as well as in the traditional outdoor education programs. Adventure and outdoor therapy are getting increased attention in our area and at my university. There are lots of reasons to welcome these developments. We know from long personal experience how important being in nature on a daily basis is to personal wellbeing and quality of life. This is true at all ages and even for older people. Now they are often housed in places where there is no nature, no animals and no children, a very sorry state of affairs. No wonder they are over medicated and depressed!

12. Could you share the names (if appropriate) of your students who have gone on to become significant figures in their own right, as nature writers, social activists, environmentalists, etc.--anything you would like to share about them (things that they would not mind you sharing about them: what they were like in school, their interests, etc.)

Answer: I can't mention names unless I clear this with each person. My broad answer is Yes. Many of my students have made all sorts of contributions to the world, to our understanding of human-nature relations, to improving our feelings of worth, to life quality, to education, to knowledge, and to local communities. When I reflect on 50 years of work as an educator, I am amazed by all of the people I've known, students I've taught and learned from, and all that they have accomplished as persons, professionals, writers, scholars, teachers, and therapists. I had no idea that this is where I would be when first a grad student studying philosophies of history, moral psychology and self knowledge. When I got involved in the environmental studies program, I realized that this was a revolutionary undertaking from the standpoint of my self, the academic and social worlds. As we work ecological paradigms all through the many levels of our life and society, there are major changes. The world today is totally different from the way it was in 1960, when I became a college teacher and outdoor wild journeying mentor. From a narrow understanding of teachings such as the "Sermon on the Mount," to global perspectives on spiritual traditions around the world, all of these expanded and deepened for us over this period. We contributed to it and were caught up in these changes, many of which we did not appreciate until they were well under way.

13. What have these students taught you in return?

Answer: I have worked with students at every level in my adult life and am an old father to three college-age daughters. My undergraduate and graduate students taught me so many things that I can't begin to express and describe. Grad students come up with new areas to explore that are beyond the mainstream focus. Many faculty members would not participate in directing these students because they thought the projects were too flaky and not rigorous. Many of these graduate projects pushed the boundaries of what constitutes philosophy, psychology, counseling, well being and wholeness.

14. Looking back and into the future, in your opinion, what is the likelihood that humanity (individuals, societies, governments, scientists) could solve dire environmental, ecological, and population problems before these processes (globally and locally) reach a significant threshold, a “point of no return” ? (Please, identify specific and immediate steps that must be taken to turn things around.)

Answer: I am an optimist about the future and a positive activist in the present. I think one barrier to solving these problems is the attempt to make everyone do exactly the same thing. We need to encourage all sorts of grass roots efforts and get rid of the control of our major systems, such as energy sources, by large vested interests based on fossil fuels, and this includes plantation trees and agro-crops devoted to “bio-fuels.” The deep ecology movement embraces biological and cultural diversity and local place based wise solutions (ecosophies). There are thousands of solutions to the various problems that concern humanity. If we focus on empowering these kinds of efforts, we will solve these problems. A small number of people are waiting for the second coming, or for some extraterrestrial intervention to save the elect, but if their efforts don’t derail the other diverse approaches being developed, they will be just a footnote in history. There is a rebirth of authentic nature spirituality taking place all over the world in diverse cultural, philosophical and religious traditions. Important among these are daily practices that bring us into personal ecosophies (forms of ecological wisdom and harmony) suited to our home places.

15. If relevant, how does your “spirituality” (however defined) inform your environmentalism?

Answer: I’ve already answered this question, but the short answer is Yes. I have been inspired by the more than human spiritual presence of the natural world and all the beings in it. When philosophers and psychologists were denying this consciousness by following the behaviorist approach anchored in positivism, I knew from experience that they were mistaken. I brought this out in various ways, but was dismissed as sentimental and fuzzy headed. Anyone who cares for a small animal such as a puppy, colt or kitten, knows that this once orthodox view is false. It comes from an ontology that grew out of a theology that asserted only humans have souls. Modernism unfortunately accepted this division in the world in order to get religion out of science fields and

technological development. The division between science and religion, or science and our broader feelings, led to the assumption that we can have totally value free sciences. We know that this is not possible, for science must use logic and logic is value laden as is any science.

16. Why is it so easy to swat and kill a mosquito—without remorse?

Answer: Arne Naess used to say, “If I swat a mosquito, it is not because it lacks intrinsic value. It is because it annoys me.” He also tells of watching a flea through a microscope die in an acid solution. He felt great distress for the flea. Like Arne, I accept the platform principles of the deep ecology movement that recognize the intrinsic worth of all living beings, and of complexity and diversity. Because I recognize this worth does not mean that I do not kill other beings. I have no choice but to consume other beings, if I and my family are to live. It is how we do this that is crucial. We must consume with respect, not mindlessly. We must respect other beings. We must not poison them by dumping toxins into the water, soil and air. We must be modest in our demands.

I try to minimize my impact day to day. I do not use toxic substances. I participate in politics to support changes in policy and values that will further the aims of the Deep Ecology Movement. I am inspired by Arne Naess’ discussion of beautiful actions in our relationships. We should do not only what is required, but go beyond that to give back benefits to our family, community and the world. I have spent much of my time as a teacher, author and activist working on concepts of design practices that do this. I have designed whole systems of practice and learning such as the Wild Way (see Trumpeter #20). I published *The Practice of Technology* which articulates this philosophy of ecosophic design. The work described in *Cradle to Cradle* by William McDonough and Michael Braungart is a fine example of the philosophy of design I favor.

When I am in the mountains, with lots of biting flies and mosquitoes, I do not use repellents but put on more clothes. I usually don’t slap bugs but shoo them away. Yellowjacket hornets once built a nest in the storage area of my study. By the time I discovered them, their huge nest wound around under the eaves and into the rafters. It was the largest yellowjacket nest I’ve ever seen. The yellowjackets were buzzing around the house and the eaves where they entered their nest. People urged me to have them destroyed. We decided that we would

leave them alone and respect them. We believed that no one would get stung. This is what we did. They did not sting anyone that summer, and yet there were so many of them that at night we could hear them humming in a very eerie way when we went into my study. They sounded like they were snoring and breathing in unison. Yellowjackets are predators that control other insects that can harm our crops and they also clean up rotting flesh. They are wild creatures found even in urban areas.

Humans have always swatted flies and other biting bugs, as do horses and dogs. My dogs bite and snap at bugs in the air. My cats eat spiders when they see them on the floor. I do not kill spiders, but leave them alone. I try to go through each day without killing any being, or causing suffering, as much as possible, but I must consume other beings to live. To say they all have intrinsic value is not incompatible with this, since we too have intrinsic value and also have to consider our vital interests and priorities, all of which enter into our life philosophies and normative practices. We have to play many roles in life. Being a parent is something we share with other beings. Being a parent has its own unique responsibilities for humans and other mammals, as does being a teacher and an Earth Dweller.