

Arne Naess, His Life and Work Part Two: Reflections on Naess's Inquiries

Introduction

Bill Devall and Alan Drengson, Editors of the Naess Series

The third of four issues in this special *Trumpeter* Series, devoted to the work of Arne Naess and its relevance to the deep, long range ecology movement, contains essays written by various people who have been influenced or impressed by Naess and the principles of the deep, long-range ecology movement. A Festschrift, a special supplementary volume of works by Arne Naess, is being published simultaneously as a companion to this issue.

The first part of this issue focuses on Relations, Places, and Practices. Bill Devall's essay on living in mixed communities uses an empirical research approach to evaluate how Naess's general 'norms' for living with specific species of wildlife can be applied to conditions in California. Alan Drengson's essay "Emotions, Judgments, and Life Quality" explores the language and psychology of emotions in older traditions and in contemporary society. Drengson explores the ways in which we might follow Spinoza's advice to emphasize positive emotions and how these are life actualizing. This tack is in line with Naess's interpretation of Spinoza.

In the next part, the focus is on Overviews and Transitions. It includes essays by Tim Quick, Anthony Weston, and Ralph Metzner, who reflect on pluralism, multicentrism, and some of the main factors in transitions to an Ecological Age. These three writers, each in their own way, give us reason to be pluralists in Naess's sense. We are led from Quick's insightful appreciation of Naess's approach compared to more monolithic ways of looking at the world. Weston's brilliant paper on multicentrism vividly articulates what respecting many centres does to open our understanding. Metzner's paper puts all of this in our Western context and touches on global changes and common grounds of main

orientations and practices suitable to ecologically aware and responsible societies.

The last part offers Personal Sketches of Naess from people who have studied Naess's work and who have spent time with him. It includes two essays, one by Margarita García Nortario on meeting Naess on his ninetieth birthday and the other by Andrei Whitaker, called "Five Things You Should Know about Arne Naess," which reflects on Naess's playful approach to living joyfully in a world of fact. Both authors give us insights into Arne's personal life and character and into how his daily life reflects his philosophy.

All together, this Naess Series provides a broad sweep of articles representing Naess's main areas of research and writing. They underscore major themes in his work, such as the role of empirical research, critical focus on language, its logic and semantics, cross cultural perspectives, examination of the ways to discuss and compare different worldviews, lifestyles, and cultures, as well as quality of life issues—the roles of feeling and reason in an interconnected world with many cultures, languages, religions, and great individual diversity. Naess's approach to language is in terms of systems of communication within an ecologically centred, place-based context. This is partly shown in his own identification with specific places, especially the mountains, such as Hallingskarvet.

Throughout Naess's life and work there has been the constant theme of the mountains and free nature. In his own personal life this has been one of the touchstones of his personal meaning and myth. He has from an early age realized the many ways in which all beings communicate with each of their own kind and with others not of their kind. He has from an early age been committed to nonviolence in personal relations. He recalls how he was always trying to prevent other boys from fighting by getting between them and asking why they were doing this. He shows the utmost respect for those with whom he disagrees. These directions led him to Gandhi, and so he became one of the leading authorities on Gandhi in the Scandinavian countries.

People who have known Arne for a long time have said that he is a linguist of exceptional talent and skill, and that his research in major philosophies in East and West has focused on original texts rather than secondary commentaries. Nowhere is this more evident than in his work on Spinoza, whom he started reading in the original Latin while still in high school. As he never tires of pointing out, Spinoza is a philosopher who developed a well-articulated total view that represents the

wholeness and maturity of his own person. In his work as a whole, Spinoza shows us how to live a high quality of life by emphasizing positive emotions and feelings. The self-actualizing person is always changing with the world and yet maintains an inner balance or equanimity no matter what the circumstances. Naess has shown us all this balance whether climbing a mountain or responding to attacks in discussion, or when being arrested by authorities for demonstrating against projects that violate nature and human rights.

A recent book published in Norwegian, *Timotei*, also shows in pictures and text, the Naesses' playful approach to relationships. Arne and his wife, Kit-Fai, have for years had a pig doll that always smiles and that they named Timotei, who is, Naess tells me, a little unphilosopher. Timotei is a person of the moment, and he is part of the couple's daily life and goes everywhere with them. He acts as a playful go between for two people from quite different cultural backgrounds. At the reception for the *Selected Works of Arne Naess (SWAN)* Arne wore a Timotei pin on his sweater and also said he himself is "a lucky and happy pig." Another recent book in Norwegian offers a series of discussions about life and culture between Arne and Wenke Voss, a well known diva and elder in Norway. Also just released in Norway this fall is a book called *Sva Marga*. These Sanskrit words, which Naess considers among his favourites, mean *to follow your own path*, or to go your own way. The cover shows Naess in a patterned sweater dancing in his own unique way. It is a collection of quotes from things he has written and said over the years, a distillation of his wisdom and insight. Throughout all of these books, events, and themes, the role of nature and the interrelatedness of all beings is a continuing concern to him. This is why he has focused on grass-roots movements and the importance of cultural diversity in living sustainably in harmony with the natural world.

Naess has long said that the three great movements of our era—the ecology movement, the peace movement, and the social justice movement—have many areas of common interest. There is no more central issue of justice than the safety of our own persons and the places we dwell in. To have our places and our personal self polluted without our agreement is a major social justice issue throughout the world. We cannot separate peace, social justice, and environmental responsibility, they all come together in daily life in concrete places. Naess emphasizes the importance of tolerance for the great diversity of ways of life and religions. He is a celebrant of diversity on every level and yet recognizes the interconnections between the three grass-roots, but global, movements of our era.

The Nobel Prize committee agreed with this view in 2004, when they awarded the Peace medal to Wangari Maathai, a woman who has worked for decades on reforestation in Kenya. She contends that planting trees in Kenya advances women's rights and democracy. In her essay in the *New York Times*, "Trees for Democracy," she says

Unless we properly manage resources like forests, water, land, minerals and oil, we will not win the fight against poverty. And there will not be peace. Old conflicts will rage on and new resource wars will erupt unless we change the path we are on.

The deep, long-range ecology movement provides a framework for many paths toward the same goals of conservation, peace, and social justice.

The fourth issue of this special *Trumpeter* series devoted to Arne Naess and the deep, long-range ecology movement will include essays by people who have been involved in deep green work. Just as Naess is always revising his essays to reflect changes in conditions and in his ideas, the deep, long-range ecology movement is developing in the changing circumstances of the twenty-first century.