

Deep Ecology: A Debate on the Role of Humans in the Environment

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ABSTRACT

Deep ecology is a relatively new and highly controversial environmental philosophy, laid out in eight basic principles as a guide for how human thought needs to change concerning the environment and the world around us. My project consists of a research paper which looks into what deep ecology is, how it has been received with society, including praises and criticisms, the role humans play in the environment as suggested by deep ecology, and finally, the comparison of this role of humans as suggested by deep ecology to the role of humans in the environment as interpreted from the Taoist perspective.

Considering that we are moving in to an age where the environment is becoming a greater pressing issue, deep ecology is a very relevant topic. Humans are playing more of a role in the environment everyday, and the purpose of my project was to explore this idea further by comparing an environmentally philosophical perspective to an Eastern religious perspective, as I successfully have done.

PREFACE

“There is a revolution coming. It will not be like revolutions of the past. It will originate with the individual and with culture, and it will change the political structure only as its final act. It will not require violence to succeed, and it cannot be successfully resisted by violence. It is now spreading with amazing rapidity, and already our laws, institutions and social structure are changing in consequence. It promises a higher reason, a more human community, and a new and liberated individual. Its ultimate creation will be a new and enduring wholeness and beauty--a renewed relationship of man to himself, to other men, to society, to nature, and to the land.”

- Charles A. Reich

The Greening of America, (2)

As Reich spoke of the coming of a new revolution, he did so with hope of creating a better place and time. Revolutions have been around since the beginning of civilizations, always in attempt to change the status quo to something better, something higher. Essentially, those who revolt are fighting for a better way of life, because they have noticed some injustice in the world that needs to be put to a stop. While it has not entirely gotten as far as perhaps some of the more famous revolutions of the past have, the environmental movement has been growing as we move onward in time and closer to more severe environmental crises.

The world we live in has been around for an estimated hundreds of billions of years, and has supported even more different species. As long as humans have been around, so has the relationship between human beings and nature. For the majority of that time, this relationship has been a very good one. Not until the mid-20th century, however, has the civilization really started to become a larger and larger problem for the future environment. Worries of a lack of resources, of a decreasing number of species, of a booming human population, and of an overall place to live have been great concerns in the highly destructive civilization which we live.

As the problems increase and the former reliance on technology as a solution has shown to fail us yet again, we are faced with a difficult decision on what we are left with to do to solve these problems.

Deep ecology has been a newly emerging environmental philosophy that has attempted to start solving the environmental crisis with a new form of thought. While deep ecology is rather new, it has combined the thought of many environmental movements and religious ideals as well. With the hopes of attaining some gain through appeal of moral obligation of care for the nature around us as our ancestors once felt, deep ecology is something that may very well lead us into something like Reich's new revolution.

INTRODUCTION

Deep ecology is a radical environmental philosophy that was articulated and presented in April of 1984 by Arne Naess and George Sessions, to essentially gather up environmental thought with eight basic principles. However, it has really been a compilation of decades of thought and ideas about the environment, which was drawn from many different religions and philosophies. The “deep ecology movement is a direct outgrowth of the ecological concerns of the 1960’s (Zimmerman, 161),” and has really attributed its influence to many people over time. According to Naess and Sessions, deep ecology’s religious roots span from many differing religions, but its philosophical roots can be “found in the ecocentrism and social criticism of Henry David Thoreau, John Muir, D.H. Lawrence, Robinson Jeffers, and Aldous Huxley (Sessions, ix).”

The deep ecology platform consists of eight basic principles, or guidelines for a reformed way of thinking about our environment (not being entirely exclusive to the living plants and animals, or the paradigmatic thought of the word ‘environment’, but basically the world around us, the place we live). Why is the platform so important? “The heart of deep ecology is its platform (Sessions, 85).”

- 1) *The well being and flourishing of human and nonhuman life on Earth have value in themselves [this is commonly referred to as inherent worth, or intrinsic value]. These values are independent of the usefulness of the nonhuman world for human purposes; and*
- 2) *Richness and diversity of life forms contribute to the realization of these values and are also values in themselves; and*
- 3) *Humans have no right to reduce this richness and diversity except to satisfy vital needs; and*
- 4) *The flourishing of human life and cultures is compatible with a substantial decrease of the human population. The flourishing of nonhuman life requires such a decrease; and*
- 5) *Present human interference with the nonhuman world is excessive, and the situation is rapidly worsening; and*
- 6) *Policies must therefore be changed. The changes in policies affect basic economic, technological structures. The resulting state of affairs will be deeply different from the present; and*
- 7) *The ideological change is mainly that of appreciating life quality (dwelling in situations of inherent worth) rather than adhering to an increasingly higher standard of living. There will be a profound awareness of the difference between big and great; and*
- 8) *Those who subscribe to the foregoing points have an obligation directly or indirectly to participate in the attempt to implement the necessary changes.*
(Sessions, 68)

The first principle of deep ecology has a couple of basic points which it aims to get across. The most important part, however, is that every living being, human and nonhuman, has its own inherent value, and thus has its own right to live and flourish. Essentially, everything has an “own” to it, and therefore has its own irreducible right to live, to blossom, to reach its own fullness in existing and reproducing. In its own right, each living thing is independent and separate of its “usefulness” to any other thing, specifically of humans. Lastly, these all mean that deep ecology is really about ecocentrism, and not anthropocentrism, in that it is against seeing everything in terms of its beneficial usefulness (or lack thereof) to humans. It is important to note that not just the actual living and breathing beings are the ones that should be considered. The “non-living”, as Naess put it, which include watersheds, landscapes, and ecosystems as their own wholes, should never be overlooked, in that they too have an unbelievable amount of importance in their own right.

The second principle addresses the issue of why everything should be seen as having its own value, through the explanation of interconnectedness. This point reinforces the importance of biodiversity in the world--that everything is connected to everything else. There is no hierarchy that exists of living things, simply because without everything, everything else would not exist. There is a reliance of everything upon everything, and therefore nothing can be less or more than anything else in the web of life. Deep ecology really calls for humans to view everything as in the relationship Naess describes between object A and object B: “An intrinsic relation between two things A and B is such that the relation belongs to the definitions or basic constitutions of A and B, so that without the relation, A and B are no longer the same thing (Sessions, 151).” In their infinite relationships, all things help to contribute to the richness and diversity in life, and the web is moreover not about the complication with the inclusion of all things, but the beautiful complexity that is brought about by all things. We need to value the richness and diversity of life forms in and of themselves, because we as humans also rely on them. It furthermore explains that ecosystems are self-regulating and self-maintaining because of this biodiversity and interdependence.

Ecosystems require every member to function, but as long as they have that, there is no other need for human interference.

It is next explained in the third principle to what extent a living being's inherent value can be ignored. Essentially, this inherent value, or intrinsic worth, is only reducible by vital needs of the individual. This is somewhat of a vague area, and it was meant to be left this way for the individual's interpretation of what they define as vital needs. Vital needs are opposite of "other" needs, meaning that while it is the individuals job to determine the difference between the two, all of these should be categorized as such. While some would say that vital needs are just food, clothing, and shelter, many others may say that all of the daily activities and ways of life are vital needs. It is also important to look into the intention of reducing a living things inherent worth. While some individuals go hunting for food to eat, others go for the sport. While some accidentally step on a bug, others do it on purpose. Basically, it is being stressed that no human has the right to reduce any other living things right to live and flourish, except in the case of its own vital needs, and every living thing needs to be taken into consideration. If an individual does so happen to violate another beings' right when it is not a vital need, it should never be done with intention or awareness of doing so.

The fourth principle is perhaps one of the most controversial parts of deep ecology, and thus is where much of the criticism of deep ecology is rooted as well. Because of excessive human interference in the environment, deep ecology calls for a decrease in human population, and this will then lead to a higher quality of life. Increasing population is simply not the best for quality of life, nor is it good for the environment, and therefore needs to be significantly cut back. By doing so, this will bring about stabilization of the ecosystems. If this is not done, Naess says that "substantial decreases in richness and diversity are liable to occur (Sessions, 69)." While this is ideally supposed to be recognized and started upon as quickly as possible, it is also important to realize that this will take many years to become a reality.

The fifth principle identifies where environmental problems are stemming from, and that is human interference. This goes back to the second principle, in humans being able to identify that ecosystems are self-regulating, and there is no need for human involvement. Essentially, humans are a part of nature, and are expected to interfere in their environment to a certain extent. Naess explains that every animal interferes on their surroundings, such as a beaver building his dam, or a bird building her nest. However, human interference has been going on excessively, and must be put to a stop. Without exception, it seems, human interference has continually done more harm than good, because ecosystems are developed to maintain themselves.

In the sixth principle, there is a call for new policies and radical social changes to be made. To make changes, new ideals and mindsets need to come about, and thus, new policies will emerge on how humans treat the environment. This is nothing that can be done overnight, but needs to be done over decades. It is not something that can suddenly be made into a law, and it is essentially thought to have a purpose of completely transforming every single part of human life.

The seventh principle supports a simplified lifestyle. It addresses the fact that quality of life should take precedent over quantity of things, to reach a higher level of happiness instead of a higher standard of living. It calls for voluntary simplicity, meaning that not only is it that the human reduction of needs must happen, but that it must be wanted to happen, and through this, a greater happiness will emerge.

Lastly, the aforementioned seven principles, after being read and understood, call for an "obligation" of direct or indirect action. It is not necessarily about obligation, however, but what the understanding of these principles should bring about in its awareness and intention of a better living, and in theory, a better environment. Deep ecology does not call for just the Earth to be fought for in itself, but for these values to be fought for, and for a new change in the world to develop and take over. By addressing just the environment, there are many things that are overlooked, and essentially, what this philosophy is trying to get across is a coming about of a better world as a whole, spawned by the better individual. It is something that can and should be adopted by all humans, and through living these principles, it is theorized that not just the environmental problems will disappear, but social, political, economical, and human relational problems will dissolve as well. Basing thought on the environment is a start, but it is not solely about that and in its hopes, a better place will be attained.

It is first important to distinguish between shallow ecology and deep ecology. Shallow ecology is probably what people are most familiar with in the western world. Shallow ecology is a much more anthropocentric point of view, in that it holds values of nature entirely on the premise that nature's sole purpose is for human needs. Shallow ecology neglects many of the important aspects that deep ecology touches on, the most important being that it neglects every living beings', human and nonhuman, intrinsic right and value to live and flourish. Shallow ecology sees nature at the disposal of humans, whereas deep ecology recognizes no right other than vital needs for humans to dispose of nature.

The dynamic between deep ecology and shallow ecology can possibly be better explained in terms of conservation and preservation. Conservation is comparable to shallow ecology in that it is more of a controlled usage and systematic protection of natural resources. Typically, the method of conservation is used in terms of humans conserving nature for their own future needs. Humans conserve such resources as water, forests, and oil so that they will be there for following generations. Preservation, on the other hand, is much more similar to deep ecology, in that it is more along the lines of keeping safe, as from injury or peril, or attempting to keep resources unchanged and intact. This is more in terms of humans preserving nature from human use. Its intent is more for keeping nature at its original state, free from human interference and damage, with the idea that nature holds its own right.

DISCUSSIONS

There are many criticisms of deep ecology that have been made since its articulation in 1984 from fellow ecologists and anti-ecologists alike. Fellow ecologists are mainly criticizing deep ecology for having misdirection in its message. For instance, a main critique is from the ecofeminist movement, which dislikes that association that deep ecology makes of both men and women being where the cause of the environmental crisis lies. Social ecologists feel that deep ecology is missing out on the bigger picture, the problem being that the crises live in the dominating nature of society. In general, however, deep ecology has been accused of everything from being too mystical, too religious, unrealistic, hypocritical, making of too large of claims, narrow-minded, and even anti-human.

A main critique comes from Richard A. Watson, who has read thoroughly into deep ecology and has made several arguments against the movement in his article, "A Critique of Anti-Anthropocentric Biocentrism". For one, Watson finds deep ecology to be hypocritical in its desire for man to be treated equally with nature, when all other nature is allowed to live out its "evolutionary potential in interaction with one another (Brennan, 115)," while man is supposed to not do so. Furthermore, Watson dislikes the return to religious or mystical grounds, because he feels that it will not be effective. However, Watson's biggest problem with deep ecology is he thinks that it will be ineffective in its anti-anthropocentric approach. Watson believes that humans will only care about the environment if they see its usefulness for humans: "There is a very good reason for thinking ecologically, and for encouraging human beings to act in such a way as to preserve a rich and balanced planetary ecology: human survival depends on it (Brennan, 118)." Moving beyond anthropocentrism has the risk of losing the majority of the population in the environmental movement, and this is where Watson feels Naess and Sessions have failed most of all.

Naess, however, gives a defense of Watson's argument against the anti-anthropocentric movement that he started. Naess only sees shallow ecology has helping out certain problems, but not addressing deeper problems, or the well-being of every living thing in their own right. Naess gives an example by telling the story of a pack of wolves which came into a small village. The small village went out to their untended herd of sheep one day and realized that a pack of wolves had eaten every single sheep. The people of the village became very upset and worried, because they feared that if the wolves had eaten their sheep, what would stop them from eating their own children on the way to school. The people of the village decide that the best thing to do is to kill the pack of wolves. Now, as an environmental protector of these wolves, an anthropocentric argument would not save them. No one would understand why it would be beneficial to save the wolves, because they would not understand the premise of the wolves being a necessity to human survival. However, people would be much more likely to defend the wolves from being killed if they saw that the wolves had their own intrinsic value, just as humans do, and just as the sheep did, to live and flourish. In this case, the killing of the wolves would be decided against, and the community members would work something out where the wolves and their children would all be protected.

As previously stated, deep ecology has been criticized for being anti-human in trying to separate man from his environment. It is often misinterpreted that deep ecology sees that the only way for ecological balance is in the absence of humans, when in reality, this is not the case. The platform of deep ecology begins by saying that human interference is too excessive, but never once says that it needs to be eliminated all together. It is also extremely important to remember that although this is somewhat of a radical movement, it was devised by people who love nature. Some people still have continued to argue that humans should realize their connection with nature, but remain completely out of nature, alienated from the natural world. Naess argues that nature should never be something that is "hands-off", nor should humans ever be alienated from their environment. As quoted in his article "A Defense of the Deep Ecology Movement", Naess says that "there is no general norm in ecosophy against our full life in nature, and this implies acceptance of hurting and killing. Ecosophy, as I conceive it, says yes to the fullest self-realization of man (Brennan, 125)." As Naess spoke of this full self-realization, Bill Devall also brought up how deep ecology principles can help to reach a higher self.

Bill Devall wrote many articles on deep ecology, one being his book Simple in Means, Rich in Ends, and it is essentially about living practically by the deep ecology principles. Devall particularly gets into the ecological self, which is one of the best explanations of the deep ecologists' view on the role of humans in their environment. The ecological self is that which is beyond, mature, aware, sensitive, and caring towards the environment and nature. We all have the potential to reach our ecological self, but we are dis-encouraged by the surrounding institutions of society to pursue such a self. The self is furthermore not about being independent from the "other", in reference to nature. By calling nature the other, we allow ourselves, free from guilt, to manipulate, use, and control nature for our own benefits, because basically, no one is able to identify with the other. Deep ecology suggests that humans need to start seeing the relation of themselves to the environment. Devall quotes Frances Vaughn in saying that the healthy self is "an open living system in an intricate web of mutually conditioned relationships (Devall, 41)." By realizing our relationships with nature, we realize our dependence on nature, and thus our responsibility as humans to care for nature and to treat it for its true worth is created. Devall agrees, when he says that "as we reach our ecological self we will joyfully defend and interact with that with which we identify; and instead of imposing environmental ethics on people, we will naturally respect, love, honor, and protect that which is of our self (Devall, 43)." In our realization of nature as a part of humans, humans will not only begin to care for nature as it is its own, but humans will reach a higher level of self as well.

The idea of a higher self implies a lot of changes in thought for one to be able to finally reach it, for those who have spent their entire lives in Western civilization. In Lynn White, Jr.'s essay "The Historic Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis", he identifies anthropocentrism as being the main cause for the environmental problems of today. While deep ecology also points this out, White goes further by explaining where he believes this anthropocentric view came from. White identifies the source as being fundamental Christianity: "Especially in its Western form, Christianity is the most anthropocentric religion the world has seen...[it] not only established a dualism of man and nature but also insisted that it is God's will that man exploit nature for his proper ends (White, 250)." However, White does not entirely give up on religion. As he continues further, he displays how there have been many Christians who have played a very significant part in the environmental thrust forward throughout the ages, namely Saint Francis of Assisi. It does not so much seem to be that religion is the problem for White, but conventional, institutional and, as previously stated, fundamental Christianity that has set apart man from his environment, and thus has fueled the inherited notion that man is superior to his environment, leading to the assumption that it is there for his disposal. White later states that "since the roots of our trouble are so largely religious, the remedy must also be essentially religious, whether we call it that or not (White, 254)." This is what appears to have opened doors for religion in the environmental movement, and also the same philosophy that Naess and Sessions may have had by stating that deep ecology did have a great religious and philosophical foundation that it was built upon. There have been many religions associated with deep ecology which include Christianity, but Taoism in particular seems to have had one of the largest influences on the deep ecology mindset and the principles it presents.

The origins of Taoism, while not exact, are attributed to a man named Laotse. There is very little known about Laotse's actual life, and it is even questioned whether he actually existed. Laotse was thought to have been born in 571 B.C.E. He lived in society for the majority of his life as a Confucian. However, as folklore goes, Laotse became tired of the errors and wrong-doings of society, and decided to leave mainstream civilization and live out the rest of his life alone and in peace among nature. However, there was a river Laotse was forced to cross on his way out of town, and to get across, one needed to ride in a ferry boat. The ferry boat driver knew of Laotse, and asked him where he was going. Laotse replied that he was going to live out the rest of his life alone and away from the problems in society. The ferry boat driver was very upset in hearing this, because he knew how important Laotse's teachings were, and he wanted to ensure that they would be there for future generations. He told Laotse that he would not take him across the river until he wrote down everything there is to know about Taoism, and so he did, and what Laotse wrote down is now what we call the Tao Te Ching.

Taoism, while commonly referred to as an Eastern religion, is actually much more of an Eastern philosophy for living life. The most important principle of Taoism is the idea of the Tao, or the Way: "For the countenance of great virtue, only the Way is to be followed (Cleary, 21)." Despite the fact that Taoism has been around much longer than deep ecology, there are still very many similarities between the two. These include everything from their mystical qualities to basic values of sensitivity, simplicity, and joy.

In Deng Ming-Dao's book, Everday Tao, he talks about eight important qualities special to the Taoist way of life, each of which holds similar comparison to deep ecology. The first is simplicity, which relates to the deep ecologist principle of valuing quantity of quality, and what is phrased as voluntary simplicity. Simplicity for the Taoist means keeping life as simple as possible and being content with what one has. By doing so, in theory, this maintains equilibrium in ones life, and as deep ecology says, keeping stabilization. This not only means for the individual, but for the surrounding environment. Secondly, the Taoist has sensitivity, in being observant and aware

of others, and in this awareness, loving fellow beings and nature. This is very similar to the deep ecology principle of valuing nature, by understanding and becoming aware of its value. It is thought that the first step for humans is to recognize the intrinsic worth, and in its hopes, one will then be able to understand what the Taoist does, in terms of learning and absorbing from their surroundings. Next, flexibility is highly valued. The Taoist is flexible in his understanding of the all-connectedness, synonymous with deep ecology's interconnectedness. The Taoist sees everything as relative to everything else, and in seeing this, they do not hold absolutes, and are flexible to what is going on around them. The deep ecologist would also support this principle. Fourth is the value of independence of the individual. This is not the independence from other beings or from nature, but the independence from the fundamental institutions of society, which have shaped much of the ideals for domination over nature in Western culture. The Taoist does not follow conventional morality, but a higher, more profound level of spirit. Deep ecology would also agree with this, in that it calls for a new reform of thought, away from anthropocentrism, which Lynn White, as earlier discussed, attributes to fundamental Christianity. By letting go of these inherited values, individuals are able to reform new values by their relationships and experiences with nature and others around them. One of the most important principles in Taoism is the fifth which Ming-Dao mentions, that of focus. Focus is meant in terms of following the direction of life, as to what is better known as the Tao. Deep ecology also recommends looking beyond daily concerns of civilization, and following the natural life-flow in the environment. Sixth, there is the ideal of cultivation, as in the attempt to always follow the Tao more perfectly. While the deep ecology principles leave much up to the interpretation of the individual, there is also an obligation in the eighth principle of action and inaction after the realization of the importance of all things to be living in accordance of a more perfect life. Discipline is the seventh principle, and this means making one's actions in order for the attainment of one's goals. This is not meant to be limiting in structure by any means, but it is more of an extension of the quality of focus. In deep ecology, there is a certain discipline that goes along with the understanding and appreciation of nature. It is not law, but it is a moral obligation, to an extent, of what the individual feels after realization of the importance and value to all beings. Finally, all Taoists have joy. This is received through living in the Tao, and it is inevitable because the Tao is most perfect. Deep ecology has the same intent. Happiness is a very important aspect of human life, and above all, this is seen as something to be attained in living in both the Tao and the mind of a deep ecologist.

More specific examples of similarities can be found when looking at the actual text of the Tao Te Ching. In Thomas Cleary's book, The Essential Tao, a certain mindset is displayed for humans in how they should feel towards it, in simplicity and sensitivity:

*Heaven is eternal, earth is everlasting.
The reason they can be eternal and everlasting
is that they do not foster themselves;
that is why they can live forever.
For this reason sages put themselves last,
and they were first;
they excluded themselves,
and they survived.
Was it not by their very selflessness
that they managed to fulfill themselves?*

In Cleary's translation of the Tao Te Ching, this passage explains how selflessness leads to fulfillment of the self, in terms of the sages and heaven and earth. Not fostering over oneself is the importance in the message, and in doing so, the self will become a higher level of spirit. In terms of deep ecology, this same lesson can be interpreted from many of the same principles. For one, the idea of voluntary simplicity is comparable, in that it calls for an individual to avoid preoccupying themselves with their own desires, and through practicing this, greater happiness will be the result. The second principle is much more significant, and although Taoism speaks of it in terms of one individual, it also fits with the whole of mankind. Humans need to stop being so anthropocentric, and individuals need to stop being egocentric. By transferring this energy from one's kind to the whole, they are developing a better ecological self, as previously discussed in Devall's writing. In doing this, the kind and the whole both become better for it, and in the true sense, a higher fulfillment.

Another specific example is also in Cleary's translation of the text, which identifies some very important values that are overall representative of what both philosophies would agree with in making the individual a better person. In speaking of human behavior, the text reads that "No crime is greater than approving of greed, / no calamity is greater than discontent, / no fault is greater than possessiveness (Cleary, 37)." Taoism points out these errors of

humans very simply, but Western society does not always see them so clearly. Deep ecology is not just asking for a valuing of other living things, but a realization of the destructiveness that goes on day to day. In terms of the environment, humans have been greedy in their use of resources and land. Humans have been continually discontent by never having enough and constantly desiring more. Most importantly, humans have been completely possessive over the entire earth and its living ecosystems. Domination causes a constant struggle between the inherited values of the culture and the fight against oppression, only this time the oppressed have no voice of their own. Human kind has taken possession of every part of the environment for themselves, and this possessiveness, discontent, and greed of society is exactly what deep ecology is trying to turn around.

Despite the many similarities that can be seen throughout various texts, one very important thing Taoism relates to in terms of its Western derivative is the value and love for nature. Nature is an incredibly important part of Taoism, and it has a lot to do with the way of life for a Taoist. Taoists, in any age of existence, show a deep concern for the world around them, directly coinciding with the philosophy behind deep ecology. When in reference to nature, however, Taoism's language is not as clear as the language of deep ecology. There exists no written platform or clarification, and the majority of the texts of Taoism speak in metaphors and allegories in putting forth a message of how to live life. One of the main principles of Taoism is following the Tao. The Tao itself is an explanation for the way things are, and as Ming-Dao says, "nature is not wholly synonymous with Tao, but it is completely a part of Tao (Ming-Dao, ix)." Essentially, the Tao is not defined as nature, but nature is a major aspect to understanding and living in the Tao, and it is essential that the Taoist live in accordance with it. In Cleary's translation, there is a description of the Tao as that which "lovingly nurtures all beings, but does not act as their ruler (Cleary, 30)." Taoists, in any age of existence, have been known to show a deep concern for the world around them, and this includes both respect and care, just as deep ecology suggests.

While there are many similarities between Taoism and deep ecology, the most important concern is the individual, and how this individual relates to his or her environment. This is not merely the interaction, but the relationship that both philosophies suggest one should have or attain to have with their environment and their fellow beings. Mainly, Taoism touches on the importance of being mindful of one's interference upon nature. In Lin Yutang's translation, it reads:

*"There are those who will conquer the world,
And make of it (what they conceive or desire).
I see that they will not succeed,
(For) the world is God's own vessel
It cannot be made (by human interference).
He who makes it spoils it.
He who holds it loses it."
(Yutang, 164)*

However, as commonly misconstrued as it is in deep ecology, Taoism is not recommending a pushing of human beings away from nature. In fact, Taoists historically and in practice are some of the most nature-oriented people. Ming-Dao writes a lot about the practicality of Taoism in one's everyday life, highlighting the importance of nature as a place to live: "(Taoists) love nature and spend time in the wilderness learning from the seasons, studying animals, and absorbing the lessons of nature's creativity (Ming-Dao, ix)." Taoism, like deep ecology, recognizes the great importance of being aware of other beings and having sensitivity towards them. But also like deep ecology, Taoists have no intention of alienating man from nature--man is a part of nature, as long as he wisely refrains from interference, follows simplicity, and above all, values the lives of all other beings in the recognition that they are a part of man as well.

CONCLUSION

Through the inquiry into deep ecology, its principles, its view on the role of the environment, and its relation to Taoism, I have seen a tremendous push for some kind of revolution of thought such as Reich's to come about. With the worldly realization of deep ecology and its comparable Eastern philosophy of Taoism, I think that there is a real chance of Reich's environmental movement having a chance to take place. After my personal journey through the discovery and investigation of this project, I have been able to better understand the philosophy behind both deep ecology and Taoism, and in turn have altered my own environmental ethic. Both are about the individual in their morality, touching on the deepest issues of life itself. Perhaps it is best to finish with a quote from Arne Naess, being that I think it is what articulates the true heart behind deep ecology and Taoism themselves:

“Man may be the measure of all things in the sense that only a human has a measuring rod, but what he measures he may find to be greater than himself and his survival.”

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