

Deep Ecology

The Norwegian philosopher **Arne Naess** coined the phrase 'deep ecology' in his 1973 article "The Shallow and the Deep, Long-Range Ecology Movements: A Summary," to express a vision of the world in which we protect the environment as a part of ourselves, not in opposition to humanity.

Thomas Berry provided an explanation in his essay, 'The Viable Human': Deep ecologists put a reign on human exploitation of natural 'resources' except to satisfy vital needs. The use of a field by an African tribe to grow grain for survival is an example of a vital need whereas the conversion of a swamp to an exclusive golf course is not. Much of the mining, harvesting, and development of our technological age does not meet the vital needs requirement of this principle. Rather than being concerned about how to raise car production, this ethic would be interested in solving the problem of human mobility in a way that would not require the disruption of highways, roads, and parking lots. It rebels against **Peter Drucker's** industrialist world view: "*Before it is possessed and used, every plant is a weed and every mineral is just another rock*"

Another explanation by **Rev. Samuel A. Trumbore**, 1996:

Deep ecology departs from the anthropocentric world view and looks at things from a planetary or ecocentric view point. Rather than taking the shallow approach looking at pollution as a control, placement and dispersion problem to limit human toxicity, the deep ecologist questions the production of any toxic waste at all and evaluates its effect on the total biosphere. A shallow approach to acid rain would be to replant acid resistant trees verses eliminating acid rain to preserve the original plants and animals and steering the economy away from the need for burning sulfurous fossil fuels. Rather than developing heavy polluting industry in under developed countries and encouraging export to developed markets at low prices, indigenous industries and traditional crops and technology are encouraged to limit the cultural disruption of a region.

David Suzuki's book, *The Sacred Balance* (1997) provides some relevant perspectives.

Economic growth is necessary to satisfy the needs of all members of society. But this growth is at the expense of the rest of life on Earth, and it behoves us to reflect on what best satisfies our needs and brings us happiness.

I was able to do that in 1989, when my six and nine year old daughters, my wife and I were guests of the Kayapo leader Paiakan in the village of Aucre, deep in the Amazon rain forest. For ten days, we lived a simple life, sleeping in hammocks stretched inside a mud hut. The nearest settlement was a 14-day canoe trip, and the two hundred residents of Aucre had no plumbing, tap water or electricity. The pace of life was leisurely. Often we awoke to find a roomful of children inches away, observing us. We were obviously the entertainment for that non-television-watching audience. Breakfast might be bananas or guavas and leftovers from the night before. We would drink fresh water from a spring and meet socially with others for a long morning swim while the children and women fished for a delicious fish they called piaau.

Each day we went on expeditions through the forest to gather fruits and edible plants or travelled by dugout canoe in search of fish, turtle eggs or capybara. In the village we witnessed a spectacular three-day festival to celebrate women and their fertility, observed an emotional funeral for an old man who had died of tuberculosis and watched the men weave straps to carry babies, or feather headdresses. There was time to reflect, play, observe and learn. My daughters wept when our ten-day visit was over and we had to leave.

What a contrast with our daily life in the rich, industrialised country of Canada. My days are spent working on television programs in Toronto or at the David Suzuki Foundation or the University of British Columbia in Vancouver, which is my home. My time is set by obligations and commitments - the clock, my secretary and the daily schedule dictate my every activity. I wake to an alarm in the morning and race through a shower, make breakfast and lunches for the girls and then zip to the office for a round of answering calls, reading mail and fulfilling requests. The day is fragmented

into short intervals that preclude any time for observation or reflection.

As a boy, I loved to read articles about the world of the future when robots and machines would serve our every need and free us to read, play and interact with others. Well, that future has arrived. In my home I have a microwave oven, instant foods, computer, fax, modem, telephone and answering machine, hair dryer, dishwasher, TV and VCR, stereo and CD player, and a clothes washer and dryer. But life has accelerated as we race through it, and there is little time to watch and think. Thinking back to our time in Aucre, I often ask myself what this way of life and all of the material things are for. Am I happier or freer now than when we were swimming in the river, fishing or singing in Aucre? My children are not yet caught up in the turbulence of the adult world and economics, so it's small wonder they knew the answer to my question. That's why they wept when we left Aucre."

Link to more on deep ecology:

<http://www.rainforestinfo.org.au/deep-eco/johnston.htm>