

**A DISCUSSION OF VALUE AND SELF-REALIZATION:
ORIENTING RELIGION IN THE METHODS INTRODUCED BY
ARNE NAESS AND BERNARD LONERGAN AS THEY APPLY TO
ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICAL DELIBERATION**

by

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ABSTRACT

This work is a philosophical exploration of ethical decision-making. Bernard Lonergan's transcendental method can be applied to how environmental decision-makers might develop normative foundations for ethical decision-making, including the role of religion in ethical deliberation. In this thesis, I explore the notions of 'value' and 'self-realization' as developed in the method of Arne Naess' deep, long-range ecology; these notions have an implicit religious meaning. While Naess was at pains to avoid a repeat of the errors of the Western Judeo-Christian bifurcation of matter and spirit, his deep ecology is underlined by an implicitly religious foundation. The normative method for deep ecology offers a solution to how we might move from the present question of "How did we get here" to "Where do we go from here?" by intending self-realization. Achieving self-realization allows human beings to proceed into the future through beautiful action and knowledge of what is truly good and concrete.

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PREFACE

Scholars have dedicated their lives to interpreting the works of both Naess and Lonergan; the aim of this thesis, however, is to provide a very brief overview of their methods, which will allow me to highlight precisely why I believe Naess' deep ecology movement to be fundamentally religious.

The ultimate goal of Lonergan's transcendental method is to achieve self-transcendence; similarly, Naess' method aims toward what he calls self-realization. To achieve either is to experience a total conversion of the self. To understand this conversion as a religious one is not only important in that we may be able to deepen our interpretation of what religion is, but utilizing their methods offers us an opportunity to reach toward the good life toward an understanding of what is concretely true and good. I should note that this project is not meant to be prescriptive, but rather offer a glimpse into the methods that drive their philosophies.

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Environmental ethicists face the challenge of organizing data and methods from a complex set of interdisciplinary fields. Ethical deliberation aims towards the generation of informed decisions that collectively improve our communities, our environment, and our *selves*. As a personal and collective guideline for decision-making, including small-scale and large-scale policy, the process of ethical deliberation is concerned with understanding our situation – the question, “How did we get here?” – and based on our analysis, determining an answer to the question, “Where do we go from here?”

Ethics as a formal study, however, adds to specific ethical deliberations an understanding of the good as a general feature of human living. Its job is to develop a heuristic framework for all human deliberation, including consideration of environmental issues in all their complexity. Naturally, ethics in principle includes the area of religion, which addresses questions of ultimate meaning; answers to such questions are unsurprisingly relevant in human deliberations.¹

Given the scope of this project, the focus draws primarily from ‘western’ concepts of ethics and environment. Western religious, political, and economic worldviews have had the primary influence on globalization; many rights movements began in the West and of those that did not, many were largely influenced by the West. The notion of ‘value’ itself is paramount within Occidental ethical discourse, though, of course, the West has no monopoly on ‘values.’ We cannot ignore the importance of Western

¹ See Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press), 1971, 101-103.

traditions when considering contemporary environmental ethics. However, limiting this study of the religious foundations of an environmental movement to a study of Western thinkers does not in principle invalidate its relevance to developing a global foundation for ethics. While the diversity of human meaning is well documented, it remains that we live on one globe and that *Homo sapiens* is self-evidently a species with defining characteristics. Insofar as Norwegian philosopher Arne Naess points toward a global perspective in his foundations for deep ecology, it is important to consider what elements of his thought, and especially his method for ecological decision-making, might be relevant to both a philosophical understanding of our place in this world and in developing policies and strategies about how to proceed into the future. Likewise, Lonergan's work is self-consciously universal in scope. Broadly speaking, then, I intend to explore how environmental decision-makers might go about developing a foundation for ethical decision-making and to consider the role of religion in such decisions. Specifically, I am interested in exploring the notions of 'value' and 'self-realization' as developed in Arne Naess' deep, long-range ecology.

To move toward an answer to the questions of how we got here and where we are to go next, Naess argues that we must experience a shift in value, and more importantly, a degree of self-realization. As we shall explore later, a 'shift in values' and 'self-realization' have implicitly religious meanings. To tackle such questions in a way that will lead us to an understanding of value and what is good and true, we must employ a method that is specific to questions such as these. Bernard Lonergan's *transcendental method* is one such method; it is practical, concise, and accessible to all humans, and, as I will argue, is in fundamental ways complementary to Naess' own normative method for

decision-making. The tenets of deep ecology contend that it is the change in perception of self (i.e. self-realization), reached through engagement with and understanding of the natural world that removes otherness and provides a solid platform for all subsequent ethics related to the environment. Lonergan, for his part, speaks of intellectual, moral, and religious conversions.²

A Problem: What is *Other*?

Timothy Morton, a professor of Literature and the Environment, suggests that the “environment was born at exactly the moment when it became a problem;” within “a society that fully acknowledged that we were always already involved in our world, there would be no need to point it out.”³ For Morton, the acknowledgement of terms like ‘environment’ and ‘ecology’ suggests that we are in conflict with something that is apart from us. Even with an acknowledgement of the ecological problems we are facing, nature continues to be understood as something *other*.⁴ On the one hand, we manipulate nature to *exploit* its potential to improve our standard of living. On the other hand, and equally deserving of attention, we recognize the importance of *preserving* nature.

However, for environmental activist William Ashworth, the natural world cannot be completely civilized, nor can it be simply preserved by the hand of man. He writes:

² See Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 130-131. “By conversion is understood a transformation of the subject and his [sic] world...”

³ Timothy Morton, *Ecology without Nature: Rethinking Environmental Aesthetics* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2007), 141.

⁴ In the context of the history of human rights discourse in the West, we are now more accepting of diversity, whether we are speaking of ethnicity and gender, or class and sexual identification. Yet at the same time we seem to be perplexed about our place in the universe. We are by no means in a state of harmony with each other or with the environment. As Levinas so poignantly expressed it, there has always been an *other*.

“Nature,” as we conceive of it, in fact does not exist; all that exists is the universe... and we are a part of it, affecting everything we touch and either flourishing or withering by the result – as does all life.”⁵ His point is that we, just like any other creature, are bound by natural law, an oft-forgotten fact in the West.⁶ To ignore it is to invite disaster.

Ethicists have made many efforts to address this situation. For example, animal rights activist Peter Singer holds that we typically treat animals, and by extension the environment, as an undeserving other. In this context, we cannot identify the environment as part of who we are. This is not so far from what human rights advocates would argue, as no human being deserves to be treated with any degree of disrespect or cruelty. Singer takes this idea one step further to argue that all animals, including the human animal, are equal. He does not deny that human beings are unique in their abilities. Nevertheless, for him, this fact is irrelevant to his position. It is what all animals have in common, especially the capacity to suffer, which is of primary importance. It is the racist, the misogynist, the *speciesist* who ignores the similarities between himself and the other, and according to Singer, most human beings are *speciesist*.

How then, do we come to decide what is most important or most worthwhile when dealing with issues that affect more than our own immediate self-interests? Any effective ethical deliberation must consider all relevant data in all the relevant fields, for as Jesuit priest, philosopher, and theologian Bernard Lonergan famously wrote: “What is good

⁵ William Ashworth, *The Left Hand of Eden* (Corvallis: Oregon State University Press, 1999), xi.

⁶ Ashworth, *The Left Hand of Eden*, xii.

always is concrete.”⁷ Environmental issues, especially when life is involved, and life is *always* involved, are, therefore, complicated. They can engage all the sciences, both social and human, the humanities, and applied fields of study. But to what do we attend first? Is it human rights, animal rights, or the rights of the environment, the biosphere, the *ecosphere*? How are the various claims handled? Both human rights and animal rights are intimately connected to the decisions we make about the environment. The field of environmental ethics, defined as “the systematic and critical study of the moral judgments and attitudes which (consciously or unconsciously) guide human beings in the way they behave towards nature,”⁸ calls us to gather the data we need to make important decisions concerning the well-being of ourselves and our surroundings.

The dilemma points towards a set of underlying foundational questions that are philosophical and, ultimately, religious. What is it to be human? What is our place in the cosmos? In light of such questions about our ultimate meaning, where we begin and how we proceed forward in our quest for answers is important.

The Christian tradition, ranging from religious belief about the nature of human beings and their relation to the environment to the Protestant work ethic beginning with the Reformation, to a great extent molded modernity and the shift to globalization. With the ever-increasing reach of the Western tradition, there is a growing emphasis on democracy, individualism, a scientific ethos of technological innovation, and global economic integration. The dominant tenet of Western humanism values individual

⁷ Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 27.

⁸ Mikael Stenmark, *Environmental Ethics and Policy Making* (Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2002), 15.

freedom, which deeply influences governmental decision-making on both the economy and environment. Rapid economic development, especially in the West, plays a significant role in worsening our contemporary environmental situation. We are beginning to realize the importance of facing responsibly the environmental crisis, for our very survival may be at stake. Ironically, many environmental ethics movements that have emerged in response to the crisis have largely operated within the same utilitarian mindset that led us into crisis. They continue to implicitly support those values of Western modernity that have been problematic from the start.

There is no question that religion has had a major influence in defining ecological cosmology and Western philosophies. Even when religious questions and realities are rejected, the culture addressed grew out of a religious context. It follows that we might justifiably identify religion as a primary cause for stress on this planet.⁹ For this reason, Lynn White's 1967 article "The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis"¹⁰ has been rather significant in many discussions regarding the relation between religion and ecology. White echoed criticisms of the institution of religion made by 18th century philosopher, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, who believed that Western religion "[distorts] human societies into forms that detract from the freedom and well-being of all natural beings."¹¹ White identifies Christianity as the primary tradition that has led the world

⁹ Wars, for example, have begun in the name of religion, inevitably leading to environmental degradation. (However, although it is true that wars may begin in the name of religion, we can question whether the primary causes of 'religious wars' are inherent in the core values of religion itself. While the question is complex and beyond the scope of this thesis, I would simply note that it is difficult to reconcile core precepts such as those found in the Christian Beatitudes or the Buddhist Eightfold Path with a call to religious war.)

¹⁰ Lynn White, "The Historical Roots of our Ecologic Crisis," *Science* 155, no. 3767 (1967).

¹¹ Bron Taylor, *Dark Green Religion: Nature Spirituality and the Planetary Future* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010), 10.

into scientific, technological, political, and environmental decline, and in effect identifies the Christian tradition as a significant source for the justification of environmental degradation. He writes: “Christianity inherited from Judaism not only a concept of time as non-repetitive and linear but also a striking story of creation,”¹² Thus, for White, the first blessing, Genesis 1:27-28, is the starting point for understanding the historical and contemporary treatment of the environment. “So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. God blessed them and said to them, ‘Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground’ (NIV translation).” White concludes from this that the world has never seen a more anthropocentric religion. In his view, Christianity appears to see little or “no relationship between the spiritual and the physical orders of [being, and throughout history] it has devalued the flesh and the world as inferior to the concerns of the soul.”¹³ Such assumptions of a quasi-god-like nature creates a split between man and environment that allows human beings to exploit the planet without regard to the integrity of nature. Non-human life holds no value in and of itself. Conversely, nature is but a tool that man might use for survival and enjoyment.

White’s biblical scholarship has been heavily criticized, as has his brief, simple, incomplete, and almost farcical description of Western history. However, White does highlight concerns that remain relevant today, namely that the “history of ecological

¹² White, “The Historical Roots of our Ecologic Crisis,” 1205.

¹³ Mark I. Wallace, “Sacred-Land Theology: Green Spirit, Deconstruction, and the Question of Idolatry in Contemporary Earthen Christianity” in *Ecospirit: Religions and Philosophies for the Earth*, ed. Laurel Kearns and Catherine Keller (New York: Fordham University Press, 2007), 292.

change is still so rudimentary that we know little about what really happened, or what the results were.”¹⁴ Yet while his biblical scholarship may be suspect, he is not wrong in pointing out the intersection between the current environmental crisis and the development of Western civilization, a civilization rooted in the religions of the Book. In any case, as Mary Evelyn Tucker and John Grim argue:

While the particulars of [White’s] argument have been vehemently debated, it is increasingly clear that the environmental crisis... present[s] a serious challenge to the world’s religions. This is especially true because many of these religions have been concerned with the path of personal salvation, which frequently emphasized otherworldly goals and rejected this world as corrupting. Thus, how to adapt religious teaching to this task of revaluing nature so as to prevent its destruction marks a significant new phase in religious thought.¹⁵

As Western scientific and technological advances developed from Christian attitudes regarding the man-nature dualism, it is doubtful for White “that disastrous ecologic backlash can be avoided simply by applying to our problems more science and more technology.”¹⁶ As White suggests, humankind does see itself as somehow unique and apart from the natural process, and evidence suggests that religious beliefs do often support the notion of our mastery over nature.

Is there another way of understanding our relationship with nature that *grasps value and merit in preserving nature apart from our own benefit*? According to the commonly held *veni, vidi, vici* mindset, the answer is *no*. Human beings are reasonable creatures, or rather endowed with the faculty of reason, and are thus conceived as unique.

¹⁴ White, “The Historical Roots of our Ecologic Crisis,” 1203.

¹⁵Mary E. Tucker and John Grim, “Series Forward,” in *Christianity and Ecology*. Ed. Dieter Hessel and Rosemary Ruether (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2000), xxv.

¹⁶ White, “The Historical Roots of our Ecologic Crisis,” 1206.

Within this horizon, the human species is an alienated species, one that values an ecological cosmology defined through a tyrannical mentality. Similarly, when addressing matters of natural law and process, we tend to do so in a way that suggests nature is somehow purposefully either serving or negatively affecting humankind. Ashworth argues that when speaking of natural processes, we commonly use language of destruction and violence.¹⁷ Such anthropomorphism and hyperbole further separate human beings from such natural force, providing more reason to try to subdue it.

As is often the case, our concern for the environment originates from a concern for our own well-being. We are driven by the desire to thrive, which many would argue is an instinctual motivation. Conversely, many would argue that we have broken the shackles of instinctual restraint and that our reason and ability to learn makes us genuinely unique. This distinctive characteristic separates us from the non-human animal, and for many, offers justification to override the interests of those who do not possess the same mental ‘worth.’ Such self-understandings inevitably shape our moral understanding of our world. Materialists do not consider anything beyond what is visible. For them the spiritual does not exist. Alternatively, the Platonic tradition, which seems to separate the spiritual and the material and has been so influential in Christian theology, serves as a constant affirmation of the death of animism and nature-based religious traditions. In this view, Christianity looks beyond what is visible toward a spiritual other – our ‘true’ nature. For White, while the source of our problems is so rooted in what he regards as Christian religious arrogance, nonetheless, our response must essentially be

¹⁷ Ashworth, *The Left Hand of Eden*, 35.

religious as well. We must find a way to rethink what seems to us an age-old cosmological identity.

Loneragan and Naess: Value Shift, Self-Realization, and Deep Ecology

Lynn White proposes that an ideological shift is necessary, but he does not suggest how this is to be done. In response to White's article, Willis Jenkins argues that by "focusing discussion of religious environmentalism on ecological cosmology, collaborative exchanges can not only accommodate great religious, political, and methodological diversity, but also refer to shared criteria of interest."¹⁸ For thinkers like Arne Naess, this is an excellent approach to the problem. However, to experience a shift away from beliefs so deeply rooted in our culture, we must reconsider our understanding of *value* and the *good*. Value, for both Naess and Lonergan, is a transcendental notion. According to Lonergan, our self-realization (identified in his works as *self-transcendence*) results from an exploration of conscious intentionality that consists of many parts and requires a lengthy personal (and ultimately communal) development:

There is a first step in attending to the data of sense and of consciousness [i.e., experience]. Next, inquiry and understanding yield an apprehension of a hypothetical world mediated by meaning. Thirdly, reflection and judgment reach an absolute: through them we acknowledge what really is so, what is independent of us and our thinking. Fourthly, by deliberation, evaluation, decision, action, we can know and do, not just what pleases us, but what truly is good, worthwhile. Then we can be principles of benevolence and beneficence, capable of genuine collaboration and of true love. But it is one thing to do this occasionally, by fits and starts. It is another to do it regularly, easily, spontaneously. It is, finally, only by reaching the sustained self-transcendence [self-realization] of the virtuous

¹⁸ Willis Jenkins, *Ecologies of Grace* (New York: Oxford University Press, Inc., 2008), 10.

man that one becomes a good judge, not on this or that human act, but on the whole range of human goodness.¹⁹

Value for Lonergan is not only a transcendental notion and achievement, but a concrete reality.²⁰ His *transcendental method* is accessible to each of us insofar as we are being attentive, intelligent, reasonable, and responsible; it is “a normative pattern of recurrent and related operations [of questions, answers, and actions,] yielding cumulative results.”²¹

Naess, for his part, believes that how man came into this world often determines how he identifies with his surroundings. Man, as a mobile being, has struggled with such questions for millennia, and Naess approaches these questions following a series of points:

1. We underestimate *ourselves*, confusing the “self” with ego.
2. With the comprehensive maturation in *all* relationships, our human nature leads us to identify with *all* living beings.
3. *Maturity of the self* has traditionally been understood to develop through three specific stages: from ego to social self (encompassing the ego) to metaphysical self (encompassing the social self). However, nature is fundamentally left out here. “Our immediate environment...and the identification with nonhuman living beings are largely ignored.” Therefore, Naess introduces the concept of the *ecological self*. “We may be said to be in, and of, nature from the very

¹⁹ Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 35.

²⁰ Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 36.

²¹ Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 4.

beginning of ourselves. Society and human relationships are important, but our own self is much richer in its constitutive relationships,” which comprise those we have with other humans, as well as non-humans.

4. The experience of living is bettered through self-realization, (i.e., the fulfillment of our potentials), as an increase in self-realization “implies a broadening and deepening of the self.”
5. The *self* is deepened through the inevitable identification we have with other beings and our increased maturity. “Our self-realization is hindered if the self-realization of others, with whom we identify, is hindered. Our self-love will fight this hindrance by assisting in the self-realization of others according to the formula ‘Live and let live!’ Thus, everything that can be achieved by altruism— the *dutiful, moral* consideration for others— can be achieved, and much more, by the process of widening and deepening ourselves.”
6. The ecological devastation that we face today violates humanity’s enlightened self-interest, as well as that of nonhuman beings, and limits the joy of existence in general.²²

For Naess, coming to know who we are individually is an existential experience. It is a consent to unrestricted love. “We need environmental ethics,” argues Naess, “but when people feel that they unselfishly give up, or even sacrifice, their self-interests to show love for nature, this is probably, in the long run, a treacherous basis for

²² Arne Naess, *The Ecology of Wisdom*, ed. Alan Drengson and Bill Devall (Berkeley: Counterpoint Press, 2008), 81-82.

conservation.”²³ It is through *identification* that one will successfully see his interests being served by conservation, through the love of a transcended, deepened self, and the realization of the inherent potentialities of the *other*. Questions such as, “What are the inherent potentialities of the beings of species *x*?” lead us to answers, which in turn lead us to more questions regarding, for instance, our own inherent potentialities as a species. This line of reasoning will eventually lead us to move beyond that which we previously were, becoming what Naess refers to as our *ecological selves*:

Through the wider Self, every living being is connected intimately, and from this intimacy follows the capacity of *identification* and, as its natural consequences, practice of nonviolence. No moralizing is needed, just as we do not need morals to breathe. We need to cultivate our insight: The rock-bottom foundation of the technique for achieving the power of non-violence is belief in the essential oneness of all life.²⁴

Naess’ deep ecology movement embodies this notion. The platform for deep ecology can be both rooted in and derived from the fundamentals of religion, philosophy, as well as ethics. However, it is necessary to avoid identifying deep ecology with any one specific philosophy or religious belief. It is intended to be broad and transcultural, encouraging religious diversity. Naess states that “there is a rich manifold of fundamental views compatible with the deep ecology platform. And without this, the movement would lose its transcultural character.”²⁵ Naess’ platform for deep ecology reveals this transcultural character. For supporters of the movement, the principles of the platform can be rooted in any religion or philosophy. The platform is founded on eight points, outlined as follows:

²³ Naess, *The Ecology of Wisdom*, 85.

²⁴ Naess, *The Ecology of Wisdom*, 90.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

1. The flourishing of all life has intrinsic value, and the value of non-human life is independent of its apparent “usefulness” to man.
2. The richness and diversity of all life forms are also values in themselves and contribute to the flourishing of all other life.
3. Man does not have the right to reduce this richness and diversity apart from satisfying his vital needs.
4. A decrease in the human population can lead to a flourishing of both human and non-human life.
5. The interference of human beings on the non-human world is excessive, and is rapidly getting worse.
6. It follows that policies regarding the environment *must* be changed. These changes would affect our basic economic, technological, and ideological structures, and the result would lead to the possibility of a more fulfilling experience of the connectedness and interdependence of all life.
7. “The ideological change is mainly that of appreciating *life quality* (dwelling in situations of [intrinsic] value) rather than adhering to an increasingly higher standard of living. There will be profound awareness of the difference between ‘big’ and ‘great.’”
8. Those people who adhere to the above seven points have an obligation to contribute in the challenge to execute the necessary changes.²⁶

²⁶ Naess, *The Ecology of Wisdom*, 111.

Within deep ecology there is an attempt to avoid ascribing to nature an instrumental value; instead, Naess understands value as both internal and entirely objective in character. Currently, the dominant Western worldview is contrary to sound environmental ethics. Liberalist democracy has given rise to unrestrained capitalism and resulted in astonishing stress on the environment. The belief that the world is the human dominion in which we will do what we please is troublesome. Nevertheless, human beings are ontologically connected to the natural world, no matter how estranged we seem to have become. Technological progress is not an indication that we have somehow surpassed, defeated, or disconnected from nature. On the contrary, it is a way in which we might reaffirm our natural condition. Our ‘progress’ in the fields of technology especially, and the increasing demand for raw materials, have driven us into a crisis. To confirm that there is a problem, an affirmation of certain instability, has always been the first step in a new understanding of what it means to be of moral worth.

Arne Naess introduced with his version of deep ecology a normative method akin to that which is used in the sciences. Like Naess’ approach, Lonergan’s heuristic transcendental method is normative, producing cumulative results. Both methods intend the same objective – self-realization. Unlike Lonergan, who was a religious man, Naess rejects the notion that deep ecology is grounded in religious philosophy. While he would acknowledge that religious philosophy and tradition are not contrary to the principles of deep ecology, they do not define the movement. However, it is important for us to expand notions such as *self-transcendence* and *self-realization* to incorporate the religious zone of experience and inquiry. Lonergan defines self-transcendence as “the achievement of conscious intentionality” and that self-transcendence explicitly includes a religious

intentionality.²⁷ For Naess, self-realization in one's conscious intentionality is to reach one's *ecological self*, which I suggest and hope to show shares important elements with a deeper understanding of religion and religious or ultimate values. Lonergan states that "as [conscious intentionality] has many parts and a long development, so too has [self-transcendence]." This thesis sets out to identify the role of religion and spirituality in two specific methods, tools used to achieve self-realization in both Naess' deep ecology and Lonergan's method in theology. Deep ecology, which aims to discover our place in the cosmos, to identify the interconnectedness of all things, and to make good, *concrete* decisions about how we are to proceed into the future, is, I believe, at its very core, a religious movement.

²⁷ Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 35.

CHAPTER TWO

The Debate About Value in Environmental Ethics

As we said at the beginning, “ethical deliberation aims towards the generation of informed decisions for the betterment of our communities, our environment, and our *selves*.”

Values motivate what we are going to do or not do; they inform the process of whether we choose one course of action rather than another. Moreover, as thoughtful creatures, each one of us has some understanding, however minimal, of our ‘place’ in the world; that is, we have some notion of how we each share a common world. In this context, we observe, we learn, we make decisions, and at significant moments we may revisit and reevaluate the horizon of our world and our relationship to it. How we understand our place in the universe, our horizon of concern or care, provides the boundary zone for what we consider importance to us – that is to say, what is of real value. As suggested in Chapter One, that identity is at least implicitly religious. In other words, we all hold some type of cosmological identity, whether we know it or not.

To engage in thorough, effective, and *concrete* ethical deliberation, within the context of the work of both Naess and Lonergan, it is important to understand how for both there is a normative dynamic imbedded in the notion of value.²⁸ In the next chapters we will explore in more detail the normative features of the notion of value as presented

²⁸ Many might dismiss a conversation about the meaning of “value” as irrelevant, but I would argue that philosophy plays the greatest role in understanding notions such as these, since ethics, though interdisciplinary, finds its fundamental roots in philosophy.

by Naess and Lonergan.²⁹ For now we need only point out that for Arne Naess, a normative notion of value plays a central role in the construction of his apron diagram.³⁰ Lonergan, for his part, presents a generalized method in which value “is what is intended in [all] questions for deliberation.”³¹ Both Lonergan’s transcendental method and Naess eight-point platform aim at a fundamental and profoundly personal *shift* in perspective, a change in the boundaries of our ‘world.’ Naess’ shift embodied by a normative transvaluation of the notion of value – a deep ecology – is embedded in a very practical and concrete strategy of realigning our personal relationship with earth. Lonergan’s shift is more general: it is a shift in method that illuminates a personal development involving intellectual, moral, and religious conversions. To begin to appreciate the significance of the contribution of both, we first turn in this chapter to a brief historical sketch of conflicting approaches to environmental ethics that have informed the debate. This should help to contextualize and sharpen our appreciation of the shifts envisaged by Naess and Lonergan to be taken up in chapters three and four.

Intrinsic and Extrinsic Value

Environmental ethicists typically employ the distinction between extrinsic value and intrinsic value. On the one hand, something possesses *intrinsic* value, because it is valuable in and of itself. It is non-relational (i.e., value-independent of its relationship with other things), non-derivative (i.e., not valuable *because* of other things), and it is

²⁹ Our effort is not an exhaustive comparison of their foundational positions. For now, we will simply establish a descriptive point of contact between Naess and Lonergan on the notion of value.

³⁰ See Naess, *The Ecology of Wisdom*, 107ff.

³¹ Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 34.

objective and concrete (i.e., value-independent of the *valuer*). When we speak of human rights, for example, we suggest that persons, by the very fact that they are persons, have worth or intrinsic value. On the other hand, *extrinsic* value assigns utility to something.

Katie McShane, environmental ethicist and scholar, accurately pointed out that we do not simply happen to value some things extrinsically, while valuing others intrinsically. “While these judgments will usually be context dependent,” McShane says, “they are nonetheless very important in our thinking about what to do and how to feel.”³² Thus, what we believe has intrinsic and extrinsic value has been important in shaping the debate historically in environmental ethics. For instance, it is difficult to deny all living things on this planet can be interrelated in some way, however indirectly, as each life is a participant within a biotic community, an ecology. Quite simply, if it lives, then it participates. For many, it naturally follows that all forms of life are of intrinsic value. If this is so, then it becomes problematic to treat the environment, and indeed all living creatures, as simply extrinsic to human concerns. Yet as Lynn White noted, we in the West encourage the exploitation of the environment for our own ends. If all living things have intrinsic value, how can we justify their systematic exploitation? How can we treat the environment as merely a means to an end? Yet we want to survive; it can be argued that survival, for us, has intrinsic value. And survival means we must at some level exploit or use the environment. If we are to be consistent, then how can we accommodate both the intrinsic value of both the environment and our own species? In what sense are ‘use’ and ‘exploitation’ understood? Are they the same or is there a difference? If there

³² McShane, *Why Environmental Ethics Shouldn't Give Up on Intrinsic Value*, 53.

is a difference how are we to understand the difference? In essence, how do we compare the value of one thing against another? Clearly differing intrinsic values can be at odds with each other. How do we fit various forms of life into our understanding of the kinds of value and the relations among them?

For instance, in the context of Arne Naess' eight-point platform (see pp. 13-14) the flourishing of all life has intrinsic value, regardless of its utility. If we agree on Naess' third point in the eight-point platform, that man has no right to reduce the richness and diversity of this planet apart from satisfying his vital needs, do we not assume that all beings, as it were, are equal? We turn then to a brief sketch of how this question has been historically handled. Our aim is not to be exhaustive but to simply highlight a selection of common approaches to the question.

Moral Equality

The issue of making comparative judgments, raised in the previous section, challenges us to consider whether the concept of intrinsic value has any moral significance at all. For instance, what might it actually mean for human deliberation about the environment to say, "all life is equal"? Oftentimes the intrinsic value attributed to a thing is given in virtue of some other extrinsic property or value attributed to it. In direct contrast to the notion of intrinsic value, which states an object has value in and of itself, independent from any supposed utility, extrinsic value is subjective.

Relevant here is Michael J. Zimmerman's discussion of this transitiveness of intrinsic value. He writes: "The possibility that something *A* is intrinsically better than

something else *B*, which is itself intrinsically better than some third thing *C*, and yet *A* is not intrinsically better than *C*,” is extremely problematic.³³ To suggest that there are degrees of intrinsic value is counter to the whole notion of intrinsic value in and of itself.

So, then, what type of thing can be intrinsically valuable? Zimmerman points out that some take a conservative, monistic approach, “to which there is just one kind of bearer of intrinsic value,” while others take on a pluralistic approach.³⁴ In his view, if we are to avoid a conflict between the two approaches, it is better that we do not understand intrinsic value to be a property of objects themselves. For example, some claim that the *property* of a thing can hold intrinsic value (i.e., being alive); others claim that *facts* are the bearers of intrinsic value (i.e. the fact that someone is alive); others still claim that *states of affairs* of something or someone hold intrinsic value (i.e. the state of being alive).³⁵ “Ontologists often divide entries into two fundamental classes; those that are abstract and those that are concrete. Unfortunately, there is no consensus on just how this distinction is to be drawn.”³⁶ Most would classify those listed above (properties, facts, and states of affairs) as abstract. What, then, is a concrete intrinsic value? Unfortunately, as Zimmerman points out, there is no consensus on how we draw this distinction. No simple formula exists to determine the intrinsic value of a complex whole because of something G.E. Moore, author of the *Principia Ethica*, identified as the “principle of

³³ Michael J. Zimmerman, "Intrinsic vs. Extrinsic Value," The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Spring 2015 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2015/entries/value-intrinsic-extrinsic/>.

³⁴ Zimmerman, "Intrinsic vs. Extrinsic Value."

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid.

organic unities,” which suggests that the intrinsic value of a whole cannot be seen as a sum of the intrinsic values of its parts.³⁷

Naess can be seen to take on such an approach. He reveals this in the first point of his eight-point platform (see pp. 13-14), wherein he states that the well-being and flourishing of all human and non-human life has intrinsic value independent of the usefulness to human life. This *flourishing* is a state of affairs that is intrinsically valuable for human and non-human life, independent of the value of each individual being within the ecosphere. Naess acknowledges that some exploitation is necessary for the flourishing of *human* life (i.e. for purposes of survival). So, what does this say about moral equality? A central affirmation within deep ecology is the principle of “biospherical egalitarianism,” which on the surface would suggest that there are no moral differences between human and non-human species.

Beginning in the 17th century, the prevailing understanding of moral equality was grounded in the tradition of natural law and social contract theory. For instance, Thomas Hobbes believed that man is by nature equal to all other men, especially in his capacity to inflict harm. The will to fulfill individual desires is what drives human beings, and because of such independence, individual perceptions of good and evil are entirely subjective. To strive to fulfill one’s own desires inevitably leads to the belligerence and hostility toward others in their attempts to do the same.

Hobbes argues that the most compelling force in man’s natural condition is the fear of (violent) death; in order to avoid being placed in a situation where his safety is

³⁷ See G.E. Moore, *Principia Ethica* (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 2004).

jeopardized, it is necessary that he enters into social contract, which in turn protects the “natural rights” – the desire of peace – on the part of each individual. For one to threaten the life of another is to forfeit his place in this social contract, and thus forfeit his own human nature (the right to peace and life).

Contrary to the Aristotelian view of what constitutes the good life, Hobbes argues that in man’s state of nature, no group of people is capable of reaching an agreement in what the good life is. Rather, each man independently determines for himself what is good. Happiness is based on self-interest; it is fulfilling one’s own will and desire, and contrary to the ancient thinkers “who thought that experiencing continual desire was slavery to our passions... Hobbes argues that life itself is the feeling of desires. [And if] that feeling should cease, life itself would cease.”³⁸

Although man’s natural condition consists of equality, so too does it embody unbounded liberty, fear (namely of violent death), and as mentioned above, the desire to preserve one’s own life. Naess would scarcely disagree on this point, for the flourishing of all life holds value. Man is entirely free in his state of nature; yet for Hobbes, such unbounded liberty is largely problematic vis-à-vis *other* men. Perpetual peace of mind is virtually impossible. Laurie M. Johnson Bagby describes Hobbes’ case, stating that being content is “a form of death, which could actually lead to one’s physical destruction because others may take advantage and move in to take away what a man has acquired;”

³⁸ Laurie M. Johnson Bagby, *Hobbes’s Leviathan* (New York: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2007), 27.

it follows that not only is the continual pursuit of fulfilling one's desires the core of happiness, "but it is also the logical means of security and survival."³⁹

For Hobbes, morality in man's egalitarian natural condition fails to extend beyond one's individual rational self-interests. Good and evil are reduced to individual desires (i.e. self-preservation) and fears (i.e. violent death). Man will do everything in his power to fulfill his desires and deter anything that threatens him in attaining them.

There is little difficulty in applying this theory to, say, a discussion of animal rights. In Hobbes' theory, "[animals], in general, pose very little threat to us. And, more importantly, not being rational agents, they cannot coherently be regarded as contractors... [and thus we] have nothing to gain from attempting to do so."⁴⁰ It follows that they appear to be lacking in moral significance and are thus not included in man's considerations.

Contrary to Hobbes' conception of the non-human animal, the theory of *Kantian contractarianism* provides "a *framework* for the attribution of moral rights to non-human animals... [and] an expression of the idea that individuals have equal moral status, whatever their physical or intellectual capacities," socio-economic condition, or their concept of the good.⁴¹ Contemporary philosopher Mark Rowlands argues that proper equal consideration involves reaching beyond the human sphere to acknowledge the moral rights (or moral entitlements) of at least some non-human animals. He explains this theory as follows:

³⁹ Bagby, *Hobbes's Leviathan*, 27-28.

⁴⁰ Mark Rowlands, *Animal Rights: A Philosophical Defense* (New York: Palgrave, 1998), 4.

⁴¹ Rowlands, *Animal Rights*, 4-5.

An individual, *I*, possesses a moral right *R*, relative to theory *T*, if among the entailments of *T* is the proposition that *I* is entitled to the treatment, or to the freedom, prescribed by *R*. Thus, if theory *T* contains the principle “Thou shalt not kill!” and if you fall under the scope of this principle, then you are, according to *T*, entitled, at least *prima facie*, not to be killed (by anyone else who falls under the scope of this principle). And, on the present understanding of the concept of a moral right, this means that, relative to *T*, you have a right not to be killed by any other individual who falls under the scope of the principle... One possesses moral rights only relative to moral theories and principles, and to the extent that one falls under the scope of these.⁴²

Theory *T* as described above contains the principle, “Thou shalt not kill!” yet is not limited to it due to the fact that this theory may contain the primary principle of concern for a species’ own well-being. This is to say that, contrary to adopting an extreme principle of bio-centrism, we might find ourselves concerned with maintaining our own comfort and existence which can be achieved through the inclusion and care of the biotic whole. Like Hobbes, Kant argues that individual men are self-interested and often act in direct conflict with another, and “that they are advancing unconsciously under the guidance of a Purpose of Nature [or instinct] which is unknown to them.”⁴³ It is when men are regarded as a whole that they “are not guided in their efforts merely by instinct, like the lower animals; nor do they proceed in their actions, like the citizens of a purely rational world, according to a preconcerted plan.”⁴⁴ For Kant, it is this which separates man from beast – man is not subject to a regular systematic history like animals seem to be. Similarly, Kant affirmed man to be the sole rational creature on the planet, an oft held

⁴² Rowlands, *Animal Rights*, 120-121.

⁴³ Immanuel Kant, *Principles of Politics*, ed. and trans. W. Hastie, B.D. (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1891), 4.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

reference for ethical deliberation in today's world. It is a difficult thing to deny certain attachment to our humanity, and to take on a specifically bio-centric worldview seems to be quite counterintuitive to many in the West. However, in Kant's moral philosophy, there is an emphasis on seeking "self-knowledge: not a knowledge of right and wrong – that we already possess – but a knowledge of what we desire as persons with powers of free theoretical and practical reason."⁴⁵

According to Tim Hayward, Kant's ethics are "widely viewed as inimical to environmental values, as arbitrary and morally impoverished, because, while exalting the value of human, rational beings, it denies moral consideration to non-human, or non-rational beings."⁴⁶ Yet it has been argued that Kant attempts to make us conscious of the idea that moral law is rooted in our free reason and does not seek to teach us precisely what is right or wrong.⁴⁷ Lonergan's and Naess' methods teach us something similar. While their methods for ethical deliberation might be viewed as somewhat prescriptive, they approach morality as rooted in our *humanity*, of which free reason is a quality, rather than something rooted in our free reason. Naess and Lonergan both point out man's ability to stretch his awareness beyond his own self-interest. Morality, or knowledge *and* action of what is good and true and concrete, is our potential.

⁴⁵ See John Rawls, *Lectures on the History of Moral Philosophy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000), 148.

⁴⁶ Tim Hayward, "Kant and the Moral Considerability of Non-Rational Beings," in *Philosophy and the Natural Environment*, ed. Robin Attfield and Andrew Belsey (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 129.

⁴⁷ Rawls, *Lectures on the History of Moral Philosophy*, 148.

Troubles with Intrinsic Value

Endless troubles of course arise when discussing moral equality, especially with regard to contract theories, as such theories might suggest moral equality cannot exist if intrinsic value is ascribed to a thing. However, I would suggest that simply because intrinsic value may be ascribed to a thing, it does not make it false value. In fact, I would argue that this is the nature of self-realization.

In her article titled *Why Environmental Ethics Shouldn't Give Up on Intrinsic Value*, Katie McShane argues that there is a common call among environmental theorists to discard the view that nature possesses intrinsic value on the grounds that the concept is not helpful in understanding why the environment should matter.

She outlines the three main criticisms of the idea as follows: First, “the notion that things can possess value independently of the relations they have to other things suggests a peculiarly atomistic picture of the world.”⁴⁸ But the more our knowledge of the world grows, the more we understand that it consists of things that are interrelated, interdependent, and identified by their relations with other things. Within the environmentalist discourse, there is a push to view natural relationships as interdependent, and it would be unusual to see value as something that stands alone. So, an appropriate way of avoiding this problem is through inheriting a type of *ecology of values* – an idea that relates each value to the next, creating an interdependent relationship between each.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ Katie McShane, “Why Environmental Ethics Shouldn't Give Up on Intrinsic Value,” in *Earthcare*, ed. David Clowney and Patricia Mosto (Plymouth: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Ltd., 2009), 174.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

The second critique lies in the creation of a “metaphysically elaborate (and therefore dubious) picture of the world;” it has been suggested that to believe intrinsic value exists implies that values could exist before human conception of them.⁵⁰ Value, if understood this way, would not be a property of an object, but would be as an object in and of itself.

The final critique of the intrinsic value argument is that it is simply unnecessary. Critics maintain that we do not need the argument in order to articulate the importance of those things we value – extrinsic arguments are just as, if not more, appropriate.⁵¹ McShane provides the example of old-growth forests: we do not need to demonstrate that the forest possesses intrinsic value to make a case against its destruction; we can do just as well by revealing the likely effects that destroying it would have on us. To understand that a thing’s destruction, like the old-growth forest, would lead to a negative effect on something we care about (i.e., the well-being of our species, and the interrelatedness of ours with others in the biosphere), is to credit it with a certain degree of value. It is a blatant recognition of the unified nature of man and environment. McShane states:

It is this connection between the kind of value people think something has and attitudes they think it makes sense to take toward it that largely explains the interest in the concept of intrinsic value from environmental ethicists. The idea, I think, is this: we can, do, and should take some of the same intrinsically valuing attitudes toward things in the nonhuman natural world that we do toward things in the human world. We can, do, and should at least sometimes think of some part of the natural world as appropriate objects of awe, reverence, respect, and love. We should not reserve this role in our emotional lives for humans [and animals] alone.⁵²

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ McShane, “Why Environmental Ethics Shouldn’t Give Up on Intrinsic Value,” 175.

⁵² McShane, “Why Environmental Ethics Shouldn’t Give Up on Intrinsic Value,” 179.

In line with the Kantian contract outlined earlier, nothing exists alone in this world, and for McShane there is no reason for us to consider things as isolated individuals for the purpose of ethics.⁵³ Within any ethical discourse, there is a need to look beyond the individual toward the whole. To do so is to remove the characteristic of *otherness*, and begin to find unity under one moral compass. In order to develop an environmental ethic that might sustain our natural environment, as well as those who partake in it, such a principle is necessary. It is important to avoid ascribing to nature an *instrumental* value, and rather introduce to it something we might understand as *internal*, entirely objective in character. However intrinsically good is understood, it must be understood concretely, which is to say that it is good in the particular case under consideration. In this context, acts of intrinsic valuing must be both meaningful and attainable. It makes little sense to espouse, for example, a ‘love of humanity’ but promote racism.

In this brief sketch of various past efforts to understand the meaning and use of the notion of intrinsic value as applicable to the environmental questions, we have found considerable conceptual confusion or, at least, no consensus. Yet, as we shall discover in the next chapters, both Naess and Lonergan propose methods to unify or organize what presently appears separate and alienated. For both, ‘self-knowledge’ understood as ‘self-realization (Naess) or ‘self-transcendence’ (Lonergan) provides us with leads for sorting out the confusion. Naess and Lonergan both point to our human capacity to stretch our horizon or boundary of concern beyond our own self-interest. For Lonergan, by being personally attentive, intelligent, reasonable, and responsible, we can go beyond or

⁵³ McShane, “Why Environmental Ethics Shouldn’t Give Up on Intrinsic Value,” 182.

transcend the constricted horizon of mere self-interest to embrace the whole universe as our horizon of concern. For Naess' deep ecology the horizon of concern extends to the *non-sentient* as well including the whole *ecosphere*, both sentient and non-sentient.

To identify what objects possess intrinsic value, we should consider the process of how we come to appreciate, choose, and act in terms of value. As we shall see, while questions regarding intrinsic value are pointedly metaphysical, the process must be equally scientific. For Lonergan, metaphysics is scientific. This, according to Michael Shute, is "because of the methods and aims of the procedures. Whereas common-sense intelligence aims at getting things done in the concrete world of living, science aims to understand the relationship of things to one another."⁵⁴ Only by being attentive, reasonable, and responsible can we hope to understand precisely what possesses intrinsic value. To a fuller account of this approach, we now turn.

⁵⁴ Michael Shute, *The Origins of Lonergan's Notion of the Dialectic of History: A Study of Lonergan's Early Writings on History* (Maryland: University Press of America, Inc., 1993), 40.

CHAPTER THREE

Lonergan's Method: Intending an Understanding of the Human Good

In chapters 2 and 4 of *Method in Theology* Lonergan develops notions of value, the human good, and religion that provide a very helpful context for appreciating Naess' deep ecology and his concepts of 'self-realization' and 'ecological self' as implicitly religious. Both Lonergan and Naess understand 'value' as a transcendental notion, something that moves us beyond a mere orientation toward self-satisfaction to an appreciation of a large world of real values, ecological or otherwise. For both, realizing the transcendental nature of value as an orientation in living involves the person in an ongoing shift or process of conversion. Lonergan acknowledged that as a cognitional process transcendental method provides general categories for his theological method and does not explicitly supply the religious component. In order to apply transcendental method to theological method, it is necessary to consider the special context of religious experience.⁵⁵ In any case, understanding the human good is foundational to understanding religion. In this chapter, I provide a sketch of Lonergan's transcendental method and his notions of value and conversion. My ultimate intention is to provide a foundation for locating the implicit religious core of Naess' deep ecology.

Lonergan's notion of value is built upon a life-long effort to develop foundations for a dynamic metaphysics. In *Insight*, Chapter 18, Lonergan writes: "Metaphysics was conceived as the implementation of heuristic structure of proportionate being. The fundamental question of the present chapter is whether ethics can be conceived in the

⁵⁵ On the foundational relationship of general to special categories, see *Method in Theology*, sections 5-7.

same fashion.”⁵⁶ In what follows in Chapter 18, Lonergan lays out his argument for how ethics can be understood as such an implementation. It would require a very lengthy detour to lay out and critically evaluate what Lonergan means by ‘the implementation of an integral heuristic structure.’ Our more modest aim is to provide a context for understanding what Lonergan means by value as transcendental, as Lonergan grounds his notions of value in a methodical dynamic metaphysics; it is the dynamic orientation of his metaphysics that grounds transcendental method which informs his notion of value in *Method in Theology*. Moreover, and this is a crucial point, the key to the establishment of his dynamic metaphysics, and so transcendental method, is the method of self-appropriation which he first introduces in *Insight*. While self-appropriation in its full measure includes *all* human conscious experience – knowledge, deliberation, decision, and action – insofar as he was establishing the notion of an integral heuristic structure of proportionate being, the primary focus is on cognitional process. To take a brief step back, in developing a dynamic metaphysics, Lonergan turned scholastic metaphysics inside out. In scholastic metaphysics, the ideal was a static, deductive, and universal set of categories grounded in a deduction from first principles. From the underpinnings of such a metaphysics all else followed, including ethics. Lonergan, however, came to the realization that underlying any metaphysics were prior epistemological and cognitional questions, at the core of which are cognitional structure and process. How we understand the basic operations of cognitional process grounds subsequent epistemological and metaphysical positions. In his own investigation of cognitional process, he discovered

⁵⁶ Bernard Lonergan, *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding: Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan* Vol. 3, Eds. Frederick E. Crowe and Robert M. Doran (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992), 618.

that a basic pattern of intentional operations was common to *all* instances of human knowing, and these included what we know of ethics and religion. An account of these basic operations reveals a dynamic normative (i.e. self-corrective) set of structured terms and relations out of which we can develop an ethic.

We turn in this chapter to an initial sketch of the core operations and elements of cognitional structure. As we shall discover, this account is non-logical at its core, dynamic, and self-corrective, not only with respect to understanding, but also with respect to value. It is the same fundamental dynamic process that informs his notions of religion and religious value.

Because this method is a pattern of operations that are engaged in every cognitional activity, it follows that the process is accessible to all people. If used correctly, it is a method that *transcends* mere data, allowing us to identify the human good which will ultimately enable us to become better, more informed, decision-makers. Method does inspire – or is inspired by – a spirit of inquiry. As we learn, our inquiries repeat, demanding accurate observation and lauding discovery. Lonergan writes: “[Method] insists on ... the formulation of discoveries in hypotheses, and hypotheses recur. It requires the deduction of the implications of hypotheses, and deductions recur. It keeps arguing that experiments be devised and performed to check the implications of hypotheses against observable fact, and such processes of experimentation recur.”⁵⁷

The ability to inquire leads to the ability to be critical. The results of critical thinking throughout the process of such operations are cumulative and progressive,

⁵⁷ Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 4-5.

producing new data, observations, and descriptions that either verify or refute a hypothesis. If each operation leads to a confirmatory result, it can be assumed that the hypothesis is not off track, and a theory might be formulated; yet if the result is otherwise, new data is revealed and the hypothesis must be modified, thus repeating the process of logical derivation. Each new discovery is added to our increasing “pool” of available knowledge, and each time we are either correct or incorrect, we learn.

The ability to inquire is, of course, dependent upon ‘consciousness.’ I do not refer here to wakefulness or the state of being alive, but rather a level of awareness or cognizance – the ability to learn. Lonergan divides consciousness and intentionality into four levels on which we operate:

First is the *empirical* level upon which we are able to sense, perceive, imagine, feel, speak, etc. The second level is based on the *intellect*, wherein we are able to inquire, understand, express these understandings, and “work out the presuppositions and implications of our expression.” We reflect, gather evidence and data, and make decisions regarding truth or falsehood and probability on the third, *rational*, level of consciousness. It is the fourth level, the level of *responsibility*, on which we “are concerned with ourselves, our own operations, our goals, and...deliberate about possible courses of action, evaluate them, decide, and carry out our decisions.”⁵⁸

Each operation is distinct but related and each set of relations creates a pattern which is described as the correct way of doing things. Each object within this pattern of operations (i.e. “seeing, hearing, touching, smelling, tasting,

⁵⁸ Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 9.

inquiring, imagining, understanding, conceiving, formulating, reflecting, marshalling, and weighing the evidence, judging, deliberating, evaluating, deciding, speaking, writing⁵⁹) is intentional, or rather *intended*. This pattern of operations is consciously performed, and through these operations the subject is conscious. Operations may be repeated indefinitely while the results are cumulative (not repetitious).

The operations are of course diverse, and so too are the objects intended by them.

Lonergan's four levels of consciousness and intentionality can be outlined simply:

- Level I Experience / observation
- Level II Understanding / inquiry
- Level III Judgement / interiority
- Level IV Decision / action

On the first level, the empirical level, we experience the world. It is important to remember that we do so through the lens of our ultimate principles – how we experience the world depends upon what we *believe the world to be* (that is, our religious or philosophical worldviews). But if we are to proceed level by level, with progressive results, it is important, as we already know, to be attentive, reasonable, and responsible. We do this by *experiencing our experiences, understandings, judgments, and decisions*. On this level, data is received.

On the second, the intellectual level, we find understanding: inquiring, understanding, conceiving, and so forth. Data is analyzed on this level.

⁵⁹ Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 6.

The third, the rational level, is the level of judgement: here we reflect, marshal and weigh evidence, pass judgment on the truth, or otherwise, of a statement.

On the fourth, the responsible level, we make decisions: considering possible courses of action, evaluating them, deciding whether to carry them out, etc.⁶⁰ This level of consciousness sublates the prior levels and reaches beyond them. It “sets up a new principle and type of operations, directs them to a new goal but, so far from dwarfing them, preserves them and brings them to a far fuller fruition.”⁶¹ As we move through the first to the fourth level of consciousness, we are aware of ourselves, but as we reach the fourth level we become better able to understand the good (or value, or truth), becoming increasingly better judges. Without the effort to understand, we would have no opportunity to judge. The recurrent pattern of logical derivation from our ultimate premises leads to hypotheses, which lead to action, which leads to further questions, which lead to a revision of our ultimate premises.

Lonergan’s process for transcendental method is akin to Naess’ process for normative method – which we will discuss further in the following chapter – in that the operations within it are not limited to just operations on terms and relations. It intends a higher level of consciousness – a conversion.

Outlined in *Method in Theology*, the objects intended by attentiveness, reasonableness, and responsibility are transcendental notions. Attentiveness allows us to proceed past experience by allowing us to ask the “what, why, how” questions.

⁶⁰ Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 9.

⁶¹ Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 316.

Reasonableness allows us to proceed beyond the answers from attentiveness to ask whether or not the answers are true. Responsibility moves us beyond fact and desire to allow us the ability to discern what is truly good and what is only apparently so.

While categories are needed to put determinate questions and give determinate answers, the transcendentals are contained in questions prior to the answers. They are the radical intending that moves us from ignorance to knowledge. They are *a priori* because they go beyond what we know to seek what we do not know yet. They are unrestricted because answers are never complete and so only give rise to still further questions. They are comprehensive because they intend the unknown whole or totality of which our answers reveal only part.⁶²

What makes Lonergan's method 'transcendental' is that the results we are intending through deliberation are matters of the human mind. This is to say that this particular method addresses transcendental – or universal – notions, such as value, as discussed above.

Value is a transcendental notion and to engage in the act of ethical deliberation is to engage in the act of *intending*. Such intending is not knowing – inquiry is the quest for knowledge, and inquiry into what is valuable is the quest to understand what value is. Transcendental notions elevate the subject to a higher level of consciousness – from a level of experience to one that is intellectual, from the intellectual to rational, and from the rational to existential. Such notions provide the measures which reveal whether the subject's goals are being reached.⁶³ We are driven by these notions and are only satisfied when the truth is reached. It is the process of *self-realization*. And like in the sciences, self-realization is knowledge in process. It is the method.

⁶² Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 11.

⁶³ Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 34-35.

Lonergan also makes note that we must not be misled in believing that transcendental notions, though they are broad, are abstract. While the concept of what is valuable (and ultimately good) may seem vague, transcendental notions, like value, are the source of our questioning. As we reach an answer, so too do we formulate new questions, and continue along in this cycle, each time transcending the level of intelligence on which we previously stood:

Only the concrete is good. Again, as the transcendental notions of the intelligible, the true, the real head for a complete intelligibility, all truth, the real in its every part and aspect, so the transcendental notion of the good heads for a goodness that is beyond criticism. For that notion is our raising questions for deliberation. It is our being stopped with the disenchantment that asks whether what we are doing is worthwhile. That disenchantment brings to light the limitation in every finite achievement, the stain in every flawed perfection, the irony of soaring ambition and faltering performance...In brief, the transcendental notion of the good so invites, presses, harries us, that we could rest only in an encounter with a goodness completely beyond its powers of criticism.⁶⁴

Lonergan's method is an excellent basis for an establishing a standard course for ethical deliberation, which ultimately intends knowledge of what is good in all fields. If what is good is concrete in every aspect of every instance, what we are trying to achieve through ethical deliberation is a full moral awareness – we are reaching toward a meta-ethic, around which there are no discrepancies or misunderstandings.

Essential to our discussion are the twelve key features of Lonergan's method, which effectively complement Naess' own method and ultimately orient

⁶⁴ Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 36.

religion in our analysis. It will be expedient within this discussion to address each, though briefly.

First, it is *normative*. That is to say it has norms, which, in the case of transcendental method, are to be attentive, intelligent, reasonable, and responsible. Before each of these precepts can be formulated or expressed, they must “have a prior existence and reality in the spontaneous, structured dynamism of [the four levels of] human consciousness.”⁶⁵

Second, transcendental method is *critical*. Essentially, it is a working backward from false judgments about reality or ultimate premises to the actual performance of what Lonergan calls a “mistaken theorist.” Being critical allows us to learn.

Third is the *dialectical* function. Criticalness can be applied to every mistaken cognitional theory, so one can determine the dialectical series of basic positions and counter-positions. Dialectic has to do with conflicts that modify an individual’s mentality and ultimate premises. The dialectical function aims at an all-inclusive viewpoint from which it can proceed to an informed understanding.

Fourth is the *systematic* function. According to Naess, “systematizations of norms and hypotheses are needed in research motivated by pedagogical, ethical, political, or other large-scale movements.”⁶⁶ A systematic method helps to unify and coordinate, as it brings to focus “the basic premises and fundamental norms that guide concrete actions

⁶⁵ Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 20.

⁶⁶ Naess, *The Ecology of Wisdom*, 173.

and minor research units having meaning only within, or mainly within, a major normative framework.”⁶⁷

Fifth, systematization promises *continuity*. As a research instrument, systematization must allow for flexibility. The terms and relations within a normative system refer to the operations of cognitional process and link each operation to the next. As outlined above, the four levels of consciousness are described as experience (level one, empirical), understanding (level two, intellectual), judgement (level three, rational), and decision (level four, responsible). Being attentive, intelligent, reasonable, and responsible does not impose rigidity. Being flexible means allowing for various levels of preciseness, as well as alternative terminologies: Naess makes the same point as follows: “Modifications can be carried out through the reinterpretation of terms and sentences as well as through negating or modifying propositions. ... [Systematizations] visualize complicated logical or, more generally, cognitive relationships between important clusters of prescriptions and descriptions.”⁶⁸

Sixth, transcendental method, as a normative method, is *heuristic*. Within a method such as this one, we can divide the language into two categories: first, norms, which propose a set of tentative guidelines, and second, hypotheses, which are indicative of testability rather than uncertainty. Because norms offer tentative guidelines and hypotheses can be tested, it holds that both can be reviewed and modified. The goal of every inquiry is to make known something that is currently unknown. As a hypothesis is

⁶⁷ Naess, *The Ecology of Wisdom*, 174.

⁶⁸ Naess, *The Ecology of Wisdom*, 174

tested, new data brings to light the accuracies or inaccuracies of the original query. Refer to the apron diagram (pg. 45) and we are able to see this heuristic process of learning.

Seventh is the *foundational* function. According to Thomas Naickamparambil, “[since] the essence of this method is constituted by the very structures of human cognition, any human inquiry in any field whatsoever has to respect this method if it is to be successful... True knowledge can result only from the implementation of this method.”⁶⁹ Understanding that a normative method offers a normative pattern of recurrent and related operations that yield cumulative and progressive results, it follows that the foundational function of transcendental method is developed through the occurrence of proper norms progressing from the cumulative experiences of investigators from varying fields of expertise. It is a naturally interdisciplinary method, a method of methods, and is characterized by Lonergan as the “rock” upon which all cognitive operations are built.

Eighth is the function of theology, or in this context, the *matter of the spirit* – that which is a mystery, that which offers order, intelligibility, and comfort in our universe. Matters of the spirit are an important factor in the way we understand the environment – and the entire human experience – because they begin with our ultimate premises (based on religious or spiritual value) which ultimately influence our ethics. All decision-making derives from the ultimate ground for all knowledge. This is perhaps the most important function within this discussion. The theological implications of transcendental method reinforce the connection between matter and spirit stressed by Naess.

⁶⁹ Thomas Naickamparambil, *Through Self-Discovery to Self-Transcendence: A Study of Cognitional Self-Appropriation in B. Lonergan*, (Rome: Gregorian University Press, 1997), 238.

This leads us to the ninth function of transcendental method, which is the fact that *matters of the spirit are not outside the field of inquiry*. By having the ability to modify our ultimate premises, we must be able to ask theological questions. The fact that one has a question means there is, somewhere, an answer – though the answer may be that the question itself is wrong. All questions anticipate intelligibility, so it follows that matters of the spirit are within our realm of knowing. The transcendental field is unrestricted, though “not in the sense that the transcendental notions are abstract... [but are rather] comprehensive; they intend everything about everything. So far from being abstract, it is by them that we intend the concrete, i.e., all that is to be known about a thing.”⁷⁰ Greater knowledge means more specific questions, which means more testable hypotheses, which means more definite answers. More definite answers lead us to action, which brings us back again to a modification of ultimate premises and ever more questions. It is important to note that this is not to say human knowing is necessarily unlimited. Arguably, it is not. However the *transcendental field* is defined by what man can ask – not by what he knows – and given that we can ask more questions than perhaps we can answer, we are able to better understand the limitations of our knowledge.⁷¹ Tenth, Lonergan adds that we do not add any new resources to theology simply because we designate transcendental method a role in theology. Rather it “draws attention to a resource that has always been used. For transcendental method is the *concrete and*

⁷⁰ Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 23.

⁷¹ We find Lonergan’s detailed argument for establishing transcendent knowledge as the ground of all proportionate knowledge in chapter 19 of *Insight*. This chapter augments the sketch on the Question of God in section 4.1 *Method in Theology*, 101-103.

dynamic unfolding of human attentiveness, intelligence, reasonableness, and responsibility.”⁷²

While transcendental method may not bring anything new to theology, it does add much to the execution of spiritual tasks. Our eleventh function of transcendental method lies in that the method itself provides a key to *unification of all fields of knowledge*. This is not to say that plurality is extinguished from the world. However, when applied to the natural sciences or to fields of ethics, for example, it becomes possible to imagine a future wherein all people can find “common norms, foundations, systematics, and common critical, dialectical, and heuristic procedures.”⁷³

The final function of transcendental method, a *heightening of consciousness*, brings to light our conscious and intentional operations. It allows us to not only ask “How did we get here?” but gives us the ability to approach the question of “Where do we go from here?” with an informed self-luminous judgement. The answers to these ultimate questions are cognitional, epistemological, and metaphysical, and particularly ontological, for “[to] know the good, it must know the real; to know the real, it must know the true; to know the true, it must know the intelligible; to know the intelligible, it must attend to the data.”⁷⁴

Self-realization is the ultimate achievement – to attain it is to attain a concrete judgement of value. True judgements of value, however, reach beyond intentional self-realization toward a moral self-transcendence. It is one thing to *know* good, and it is

⁷² Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 24.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 13.

another to *do* good. As Lonergan states, an individual can know what is right and not do it. The judgement of value is a reality in the “moral order,” and “[by] it, the subject moves beyond pure and simple knowing. By it the subject is constituting himself as proximately capable of moral [self-realization], of benevolence and beneficence, of true loving.”⁷⁵

⁷⁵ Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 37

CHAPTER FOUR

Naess' Method: Reaching Toward Self-Realization

Naess' method for deep ecology is profoundly complementary to Lonergan's transcendental method. The transcendental method introduced by Lonergan is meant to be transcultural, much akin to Naess' own method for deep ecology. His method is similarly metaphysical, it is heuristic, and it describes ultimate methodological foundations for decision-making. Like Lonergan, the goal in Naess' normative method is to reach a state of self-realization, understand what is good and concrete, and become effective ethical decision-makers.

The Basics of Deep Ecology

First and foremost, it is important to point out that there is no single and true deep ecology. The term "deep ecology" was first coined by Arne Naess in his 1972 paper, "The Shallow and the Deep, Long-Range Ecology Movement."⁷⁶ It was a call for a *volte-face* in environmental thinking that would surpass anthropocentrism and an ethic centred on simple policy-reform. Deep ecology proposed a different way of looking at the world; unlike other movements within environmental ethical discourse, deep ecology offers a method that can be used to answer to the question, "Where do we go from here?" by first probing questions of how it is we got here in the first place. It is an exploration of the

⁷⁶ Arne Naess, *The Shallow and the Deep, Long-Range Ecology Movement: A Summary*, eds. Alan Drenson and Yuichi Inoue (Berkeley, California: North Atlantic Books), 1995.

root causes of environmental problems and of a fundamental environmental worldview that inspires policy.

Deep ecology is differentiated from what Naess refers to as shallow ecology, which generally directs its focus to principles of a socio-economic concern and doesn't reach a level of ultimate value. Shallow ecological concerns may indeed be of importance in terms of the environmental crisis, but as Naess writes: “[there] are deeper concerns which touch upon principles of diversity, complexity, autonomy, decentralization, symbiosis, egalitarianism, and classlessness.”⁷⁷

Supporters of the deep ecology movement come from a rich background of diverse religious traditions and philosophical and cultural backgrounds. There is no one set of rules that one must adhere to in order to be a supporter of the movement; because of this, to call oneself a “deep ecologist” is not quite correct. For Naess, emphasizing that supporters do not necessarily hold the same basic philosophical or religious premises is important. These premises naturally vary because of individuals' cultural differences. Nevertheless, as Naess says himself, “the platform of the movement can be grounded in religion or philosophy, including ethics. It can also be said to be *derived* from these fundamentals.”⁷⁸

⁷⁷ Naess, *The Shallow and the Deep, Long-Range Ecology Movement*, 3.

⁷⁸ Naess, *The Ecology of Wisdom*, 106.

Eight-Point Platform: A Discussion of “Rights”

Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, Naess worked on a series of revisions relating to the ideas he first presented. To facilitate discussions around deep ecology amongst the philosophically-minded, he sought to distinguish a common platform of deep ecology from those fundamental features of the various religions and philosophies from which those platforms are derived, provided it is formulated around factual assumptions.

The term platform is preferred to principle because the latter may be misunderstood to refer to ultimate premises. Furthermore, the formulations of a platform should be short and concise (as a synopsis), whereas the fundamental premises are Buddhist, Taoist, Christian, or of other religious kinds, or they are philosophical with affinities to the basic views of Spinoza, Whitehead, Heidegger, or others. Different sets of fundamentals are normally more or less incompatible, or at least difficult to compare in terms of cognitive contents. Supporters of deep ecology may have great difficulties in understanding each other's ultimate views, but not sets of penultimate ones as formulated as a kind of platform they have largely in common.⁷⁹

In general, most supporters of deep ecology have some general and abstract views in common, and as a result, the eight-point platform was created. These points are not rules per se, nor do they represent some deep ecological doctrine, a set of commandments, which all supporters must abide by. Rather, Naess describes this platform as a set of general and abstract statements that appear to be accepted by the majority of deep ecology supporters. They are ‘reference points’ and not every one is critical – indeed, Naess himself is unable to commit to one way only of formulating each point.⁸⁰

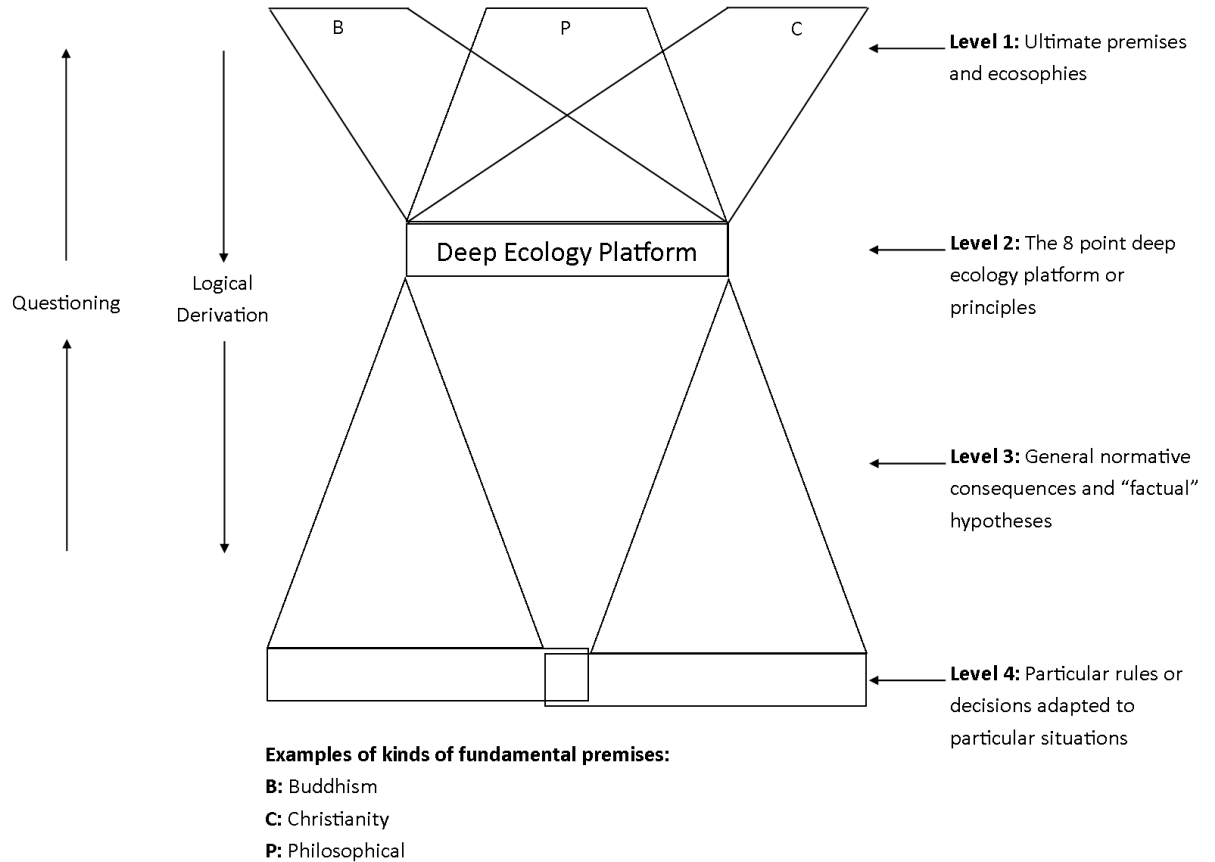
⁷⁹ Naess, *The Ecology of Wisdom*, 105-106.

⁸⁰ See Arne Naess, “The ‘Eight Points’ Revisited,” in *Deep Ecology for the 21st Century*, ed. George Sessions (Boston: Shambala, 1995), 216. “Points 3 and 8 are the ones that most clearly belong to a (normative) ethic covering actions related to the ecological crisis. An announcement of an obligation is made in point 8, and an ethical prohibition is expressed in point 3. Both belong as part of an ethic of vast

Different supporters hold different total views that are inspired partially by reactions to the environmental crisis. These views are what Naess calls *ecosophies*, and they vary. It is for this reason that Naess claims the platform does not contain any point that implies, for instance, nature mysticism. However, by following the method laid out in deep ecology, one can hone in on what is ultimately good and what holds intrinsic value. Naess describes deep ecology as a total view comprising various levels in close contact with one another, best laid out in his well-known apron diagram (below):

scope covering our relations to nonhuman beings. The search for an environmental ethic is, as I see it, a laudable undertaking from the point of view of the deep ecology movement...Like many others, I distinguish between an ethic as a normative system...and acts of moralizing – that is, when one individual or group admonishes others to follow certain moral precepts...[I continue to emphasize] the rather limited motivational force or moralizing.”

Apron Diagram



Apron Diagram. See Arne Naess, “The Apron Diagram,” in *The Deep Ecology Movement: An Introductory Anthology*, eds. Alan Drengson and Yuichi Inoue (Berkeley: North Atlantic Books, 1995), 11.

The diagram reveals a heuristic method for ethical deliberation and is based on logical relations between premises and resulting conclusions, much like scientific method. Naess admits that the platform of deep ecology (found on the second level of the diagram) is grounded in religion or philosophy.⁸¹ However, he notes that this “situation

⁸¹ Arne Naess, “The Apron Diagram,” in *The Deep Ecology Movement: An Introductory Anthology*, eds. Alan Drengson and Yuichi Inoue (Berkeley: North Atlantic Books, 1995), 11.

only reminds us that a set of very similar or even identical conclusions may be drawn from divergent premises. The platform is the same, the fundamental premises differ.”⁸²

There are four key levels to consider in this diagram. First is the level dictated by one’s ultimate premises (i.e. religious or philosophical worldviews), or that which ultimately guides a person through the process of ethical deliberation. On the second level are the principles laid out in the eight-point platform.⁸³ One proceeds to the third level, which is essentially the consequences derived from the eight-point platform, and then on to the fourth level, which is the practical decision made in a concrete situation.

Helpful to our discussion is to understand the basics of scientific method, which can be laid out simply, on four basic levels:

- | | |
|-----------|-----------------------------------------------------|
| Level I | Observation of phenomena; premise for understanding |
| Level II | Principles and hypotheses |
| Level III | Test formulations |
| Level IV | Theory and practical action |

Such a method is heuristic. On the first level, observations are made. These observations can be broad or they can be narrow and focused; it does not matter. From our observations, we are able to formulate principles and hypotheses that will explain the phenomena that were observed in the first level. Thirdly, hypotheses are tested through experiments which produce conclusions, predicted or otherwise. On the fourth and final level, theories are developed and put into practice. After we test and understand a theory,

⁸² Naess, “The Apron Diagram,” 11.

⁸³ See pp. 13-14. See also Naess, *The Ecology of Wisdom*, 11-12.

it is only natural that the way phenomena are observed will change, thus tweaking or fine-tuning our (ultimate) premises.

Providing a picture of this method applied to deep ecology, Naess' apron diagram is practical and logical, albeit somewhat abstract. It is meant to explore the *logical relations* between premises and their conclusions. As in scientific method, the method used in the deep ecology framework requires us to make observations, ask questions, test hypotheses, analyze data, use inductive and deductive reasoning, and act accordingly. The process is repeated continually as we learn from applying our findings to practical action. Another way to visualize Naess' method found in the diagram is to sum it up in the same way we did scientific method.

Level I	Ultimate premises
Level II	Movement platform principles
Level III	Normative or factual hypotheses and policies
Level IV	Practical decisions and actions

The apron diagram is a static model according to Naess, but the sentences and premises on each level can be modified at any time. New information inevitably changes existing hypotheses, which in turn will change the norms based on these hypotheses. Like scientific method, Naess' method outlined in his apron diagram encourages deep questioning.

From a point of view of normative systematizations, what goes on when changes are made at one or more levels is rather complicated. But part of it is processes of [logical] derivation. The [diagram] pretends only to illustrate important differences of the levels of derivation and the specific character of level 2. It represents a condensed formulation of the deepest level norms and hypotheses which most supporters of the deep ecology movement can agree

upon. This level is illustrated as the penultimate... level of argumentation characteristic of those supporters of deep ecology who try to articulate their very basic views. At the third and fourth levels disagreements may arise. At the first level supporters with entirely different backgrounds disagree, or find each other's views more or less incomprehensible.⁸⁴

Not only is the method for deep ecology laid out by Naess akin to normative scientific method, but we can see that it is also similar to Lonergan's own transcendental method. As in Lonergan's method, Naess' method for deep ecology is both grounded in and proceeds from the experiences found in the first level.

Fundamental to Lonergan's transcendental method is the aim of self-transcendence. As in transcendental method, the essence of deep ecology is self-realization. In order to solve the problem of the environmental crisis, Naess argues that we must undergo a radical conversion, moving beyond the individual self (small *s*) to the greater, realized, ecological Self (capital *S*). Through self-realization, human beings can live a richer, more fulfilling life brought about by knowledge of what is good and true. Such a conversion experience is hindered when the self-realization of others within our community is hindered.

Naess' deep ecology movement exhibits both plurality and unity: it encourages the diverse perspectives that may embody at least some of the eight points of the platform bringing those diverse perspectives under one umbrella. The realization of the eight points "requires significant changes in both the rich and the poor countries and affects social, economic, technical, and lifestyle factors," which include goals of protecting the

⁸⁴ Naess, *The Basics of Deep Ecology*, The Trumpeter, 66.

planet's diversity of life for its own sake.⁸⁵ For Naess, the conventional utilitarian mindset is outdated. He holds that the natural world possesses an intrinsic value and integrity; human beings must experience a shift from a *biocentric* attitude (the notion that living beings alone have intrinsic value and integrity, identified as *shallow ecology*) to that of *ecocentrism* (the notion that all species and ecosystems within the biosphere have intrinsic value and integrity, most closely linked to the platform of deep ecology). Nothing truly exists alone in this world, and there is no reason in ethics for us to consider the individual in isolation. We know that within any ethical discourse, we must look beyond the individual toward the whole. The very word *discourse* tells us this. To do so is to remove the characteristic of *otherness*, and begin to find unity under one moral umbrella. To develop an environmental ethic that might sustain our natural environment, as well as those who partake in it, Naess' deep ecology adopts this principle of unity. The method employed by Naess, as well as that used by Lonergan, which both aim to uncover our place in the cosmos, to recognize the unity of all things, and to understand what truth and value really are, provide us with the tools required to make a concrete decision about how we are to proceed into the future.

⁸⁵ Naess, *The Ecology of Wisdom*, 113.

CONCLUSION

In his book *Dark Green Religion: Nature Spirituality and the Planetary Future*, Bron Taylor suggests that we might look at the etymology of the word *religion* if we are to define it. The Latin *re* (again) and *ligare* (to connect) suggests the meaning ‘to reconnect.’ From this, we may conclude that religion can be defined by that which binds or connects people to the things they most value.⁸⁶ Yet while there may be dangers in seeking an explicit definition of the term, as we risk ignoring important phenomena, this definition is broad and encompassing.

Anthropologist Benson Saler points out that by "avoiding an explicit commitment to a definition... we retain a certain flexibility. Explicit definitions are explicit heuristics."⁸⁷ If we maintain a polyfocal approach to understanding what religion means, we can better understand the myriad dimensions that comprise religious beliefs and we can reject the supposition that any single characteristic is essential to religious phenomena. I believe that this definition maintains such an approach. If we are to consider Naess’ deep ecology, the conversion experience that takes place when one approaches self-realization does indeed connect individuals – and communities – to the things they most value. To achieve self-realization is to gain the ability to act *beautifully*, and not simply morally or immorally, as identified through Kant’s perception of duty. What distinguishes a beautiful act from one that is performed out of duty in adherence to

⁸⁶ Bron Taylor, *Dark Green Religion: Nature Spirituality and the Planetary Future* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010), 2.

⁸⁷ Benson Saler, *Conceptualizing Religion: Immanent Anthropologists, Transcendent Natives, and Unbounded Categories* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2000), 74.

the moral law (you do it because you must), is that when one acts beautifully, one is doing so based on a natural inclination. It is neither moral nor immoral (i.e. contrary to moral law). Beautiful acts are done without pain or conflict. This is not to say one cannot commit beautiful acts without first achieving self-realization. Quite the opposite, in fact. Yet to reach self-realization is to gain the ability to act beautifully in all situations. In essence, by utilizing Naess' method for decision-making, we are reaching toward enlightenment, acting out of love.

Contrary to the Buddhist conception of enlightenment, the conversion experience found within Naess' method is anchored in a matured and fully developed personality (the *Self*), which takes a long time and intensive action to develop. Naess writes: "The distinction between external and internal action is fruitful, but a high level of activeness ('causedness' through oneself) is possible and is needed if one is to reach high levels of freedom (understanding, perfection)."⁸⁸ In line with Spinoza's work in *Ethics*, Naess agrees that insight is expressed through an action. This is why value is conceived of as a transcendental notion – because to truly understand what intrinsic value *is*, and thus what *has* intrinsic value, we must have reached the point to know what is good and concrete. What is good and concrete is so in *every* situation. The intelligible (earthly matters) is the spiritual when norms are internalized and one reaches toward self-realization.

Taylor highlights the importance of defining the term 'spirituality,' especially in contrast with 'religion.' While the latter term is often associated with the theocratic side of institutionalized religion, or 'organized religion' (most often the Abrahamic

⁸⁸ Naess, *The Ecology of Wisdom*, 253.

religions: Christianity, Judaism, and Islam), spirituality is often understood to be a more open-ended idea and is frequently associated with nature and a person's connection to the earth. However, as Taylor points out, unless a person considers a belief in a creator or divine being to be essential to the term 'religion,' most spirituality could in fact be considered religious.⁸⁹ Taylor echoes Saler in cautioning us against holding too narrow a view of religion and what it actually means. Saler proposes that we view religion instead as "a network of predicates, criss-crossing and overlapping in their applicability to phenomena that we variously deem better and less-good exemplifications of the category religion."⁹⁰

Naess' philosophy was heavily influenced by Spinoza, who himself "articulated a sophisticated organicism, or monistic pantheism, that influenced generations of future religionists... for if every being and object is a manifestation of God or God's activity, then everything has value, which presents a fundamental challenge to the prevailing anthropocentrism."⁹¹ Spinoza contradicted the notion that nature-based religions were primitive or dangerous; instead, he offered a solution to the spiritual dis-ease of the West. Naess interpreted his works to describe a "harmonious future characterized by fulfilling relationships among the earth's diverse forms of life."⁹²

Arne Naess was a well-known Spinozist. He points out that, indeed, many of those engaged in the ecological crisis would consider themselves Spinozists in spite of the fact that Spinoza did not write on the beauty of nature, nor did he make it evident that he

⁸⁹ Taylor, *Dark Green Religion*, 4.

⁹⁰ Saler, *Conceptualizing Religion*, 201.

⁹¹ Taylor, *Dark Green Religion*, 8.

⁹² Taylor, *Dark Green Religion*, 10.

felt any particular connection to animals. It is his *kind* of philosophy of life that so inspires deep ecology supporters, as he sets out certain ultimate premises and applies them to concrete situations.⁹³ As opposed to Aristotle's identification of the good life to be guided by *eudaimonia*, Naess' interpretation of Spinoza tells us that if we are to realize *eudaimonia*, we must live our lives under the direction of reason.⁹⁴ Spinoza's works, Naess believes, can be an important source of inspiration in the quest for ecological equilibrium.

While Naess recognizes that there are numerous interpretations of Spinoza's work, he offers his own.⁹⁵ According to Naess' interpretation, Nature, as discussed by Spinoza, is perfect in and of itself. He notes that "*perfection* can only mean *completeness* of some sort when applied in general, and not to specifically human achievement. In the latter case it means reaching what has been consciously intended."⁹⁶ The bifurcation of matter and spirit in relation to Nature or ecology is not supported in Spinoza's work; rather both are facets of reality and *perfection characterizes both*. If perfection in human achievement means reaching what is consciously intended, self-realization is the fulfillment of that ultimate goal.

Nature is not a utilitarian concept. It exists independent of human thought and action, and therefore human morality is not a law of nature. There is no good or evil

⁹³ Naess, *The Ecology of Wisdom*, 234.

⁹⁴ Espen Gamlund, "Living Under the Guidance of Reason: Arne Naess's Interpretation of Spinoza," *Inquiry* 54, no. 1 (January 2011): 5.

⁹⁵ See Arne Naess, *Freedom, Emotion and Self-subsistence*. Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1975.

⁹⁶ Arne Naess, "Spinoza and Ecology," *Philosophia* 7, no. 1 (1977): 46.

within nature, as these terms "must be defined in relation to beings for which something is good or evil, useful or detrimental."⁹⁷

Reaching for the Future (Where do we go from here?)

Following in Bron Taylor's footsteps, let us borrow the idea presented in Malcom Gladwell's *Tipping Point*. Gladwell suggests that social change is abrupt. It is rapid, spreads like wildfire, "coming as if from nowhere and with unstoppable momentum."⁹⁸

Gladwell begins his book with an excerpt about Hush Puppies, which did not become popular until the 1990s. It seemed that out of nowhere, the American shoe brand became an overnight success after years of failing business; they were being worn in clubs, designers were wearing them and featuring the shoes in their spring collections. At some point, though it is nearly impossible to pinpoint exactly when, there was a *tipping point*. This is a small example of an *epidemic in action*. "Ideas and products and messages and [behaviours] spread just like viruses do."⁹⁹

As we move into the future, we approach Naess' and Lonergan's notion of self-realization. This converted state, this informed and reasonable state of living in the world, leads to more responsible and informed decision-making. As human beings collectively act reasonably and responsibly, intending and reaching toward self-realization, there could very well be a tipping point. Appropriate action will conceivably become a global pandemic. To clarify, this converted state refers to a state of moral

⁹⁷ Naess, "Spinoza and Ecology," 48.

⁹⁸ Taylor, *Dark Green Religion*, 207.

⁹⁹ Malcom Gladwell, *The Tipping Point* (Boston: Little, Brown & Company, 2000), 7.

conversion and is not a simple adoption of a new mode of thinking. One would not "choose" to accept this method of thinking. While indeed we must choose to act reasonably, responsibly, that is be good judges, once this point of conversion, or self-realization, has been reached, there is simply no other way to act – or to *be* in this world. It is an experience associated with the definitive and decisive joining of the mind and spirit.

In a discussion with Dr. Michael Shute, Lonergan expert and aficionado, he told me “all religions posit an intelligible ground.” Transcendental normative method allows us to make sense of the world; if one can make sense of the world, one enters the realm of the spirit (not matter!). Lonergan aptly wrote:

As science develops, philosophy is impelled to migrate from the world of theory and to find its basis in the world of interiority... [Science] gives up any claim to necessity and truth. It settles for verifiable possibilities that offer an ever-better approximation to truth... In this situation philosophy is left with the problems of truth and relativism [and] of what is meant by reality.”¹⁰⁰

Understanding truth, what is good and concrete, is the ultimate goal within ethical deliberation. Lonergan describes the basic pattern of conscious and intentional operations of his method as dynamic, comparing it to a pattern of bodily movements to form a dance or a pattern of sounds to form a melody. To intend self-realization is to live by the functioning of the pattern. To live by the functioning of the pattern is to live beautifully. Only by living beautifully can one move from the question of “How did we get here?” into an answer to the question of “Where do we go from here?”

¹⁰⁰ Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 259.

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