

Ecosophy Encyclopedia Article

Ecosophy

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Ecosophy

A philosophical approach to the **environment** which emphasizes the importance of action and individual beliefs. Often referred to as "ecological wisdom," it is associated with other **environmental ethics**, including **deep ecology** and **bioregionalism**.

Ecosophy originated with the Norwegian philosopher Arne Naess. Naess described a structured form of inquiry he called *ecophilosophy*, which examines **nature** and our relationship to it. He defined it as a discipline, like philosophy itself, which is based on analytical thinking, reasoned argument, and carefully examined assumptions. Naess distinguished ecosophy from ecophilosophy; it is not a discipline in the same sense but what he called a "personal philosophy," which guides our conduct toward the environment. He defined ecosophy as a set of beliefs about nature and other people which varies from one individual to another. Everyone, in other words, has their own ecosophy, and though our personal philosophies may share important elements, they are based on norms and assumptions that are particular to each of us.

Naess proposed his own ecophilosophy as a model for individual ecosophies, emphasizing the **intrinsic value** of nature and the importance of cultural and natural diversity. Other discussions of ecosophy concentrate on similar issues. Many environmental philosophers argue that all life has a value that is independent of human perspectives and human uses, and that it is not to be tampered with except for the sake of survival. Human **population growth** threatens the integrity of other life systems; they argue that our numbers must be reduced substantially and that radical changes in human values and activities are required to integrate humans more harmoniously into the total system.

See Also

Zero Population Growth

Resources

Books

Naess, A. *Ecology, Community and Lifestyle: Outline of an Ecosophy*. Translated and revised by D. Rothenberg. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989.

Periodicals

Hedgpeth, J. W. "Man and Nature: Controversy and Philosophy." *The Quarterly Review of Biology* 61 (March 1986): 45-67.