



**Arne Dekke Eide Næss** (27 January 1912 – 12 January 2009) was the founder of deep ecology. <sup>[2]</sup> He was the youngest person to be appointed full professor at the University of Oslo.

Næss cited **Rachel Carson's** 1962 book ***Silent Spring*** as being a key influence in his vision of deep ecology. Næss combined his ecological vision with Gandhian nonviolence and on several occasions participated in direct action. In 1970, together with a large number of demonstrators, he chained himself to rocks in front of Mardalsfossen, a waterfall in a Norwegian fjord, and refused to descend until plans to build a dam were dropped. Though the demonstrators were carried away by police and the dam was eventually built, the demonstration launched a more activist phase of Norwegian environmentalism <sup>[3]</sup>

. In 1958, Arne Næss founded the interdisciplinary journal of philosophy *Inquiry*

Næss had been a minor political candidate for the Norwegian Green Party. <sup>[4]</sup>

Næss was a noted mountaineer, who in 1950 led the expedition that made the first ascent of

Tirich Mir (7,708 m). The Tvergastein hut in the Hallingskarvet massif played an important role in Næss' life.

## Philosophy

Arne Næss' main philosophical work from the 1950s was entitled "**Interpretation and Preciseness**". This was an application of set theory to the problems of language interpretation, extending the work of such logicians as Leonhard Euler, and semanticists such as Charles Kay Ogden in

*The*

### ***Meaning of Meaning***

. A simple way of explaining it is that any given utterance (word, phrase, or sentence) can be considered as having different potential interpretations, depending on prevailing language norms, the characteristics of particular persons or groups of users, and the language situation in which the utterance occurred. These differing interpretations are to be formulated in more precise language represented as subsets of the original utterance. Each subset can, in its turn, have further subsets (theoretically ad infinitum). The advantages of this conceptualisation of interpretation are various. It enables systematic demonstration of possible interpretation, making possible evaluation of which are the more and less "reasonable interpretations". It is a logical instrument for demonstrating language vagueness, undue generalisation, conflation, pseudo-agreement and effective communication.

Næss developed a simplified, practical textbook embodying these advantages, entitled ***Communication and Argument***

, which became a valued introduction to this pragmatics or "language logic", and was used over many decades as a

*sine qua non*

for the preparatory examination at the University of Oslo, later known as "Examen Philosophicum" ("Exphil").

Philosophy of science

In the doctoral thesis "Erkenntnis und wissenschaftliches Verhalten" Næss gives a theoretical reasoning for the basic positivist idea that there exists only one understanding form of reality, the scientific, and that there is one form of science, the natural sciences. All form for

understanding - traditional philosophy, religion - submits as "meta physics". In later writings, for example "Notes on the Foundation of Psychology as a Science" (1948), Næss goes into this position.

Beginning in the 1960s, Naess examined the problematic sides of the positivist program about unified science and in "Pluralist and Possibilitist Aspect of the Scientific Enterprise" (1972) positivism is replaced with pluralism. The banner is no longer unified science, but "plurality of theory". At any time, and should, there be a numbers of competing and individually ununitable scientific theories, where any can be said to be compatible with "reality". While Næss previously perceived the "objective", positivist science as an important tool against the spread of totalitarian politic, which thought with the blood, this science has now become the ruling ideology.

## Recommendations for public debate

*Communication and Argument* included his recommendations for objective public debate. Næss argued for adhering to the following rules to make discussions as fruitful and pleasant as possible:

1. **Avoid tendentious irrelevance**

Examples: Personal attacks, claims of opponents' motivation, explaining reasons for an argument.

2. **Avoid tendentious quoting**

Quotes should not be edited regarding the subject of the debate.

3. **Avoid tendentious ambiguity**

Ambiguity can be exploited to support criticism.

4. **Avoid tendentious use of straw men**

Assigning views to the opponent that he or she does not hold.

5. **Avoid tendentious statements of fact**

Information put forward should never be untrue or incomplete, and one should not withhold relevant information.

6. **Avoid tendentious tone of presentation**

Examples: irony, sarcasm, pejoratives, exaggeration, subtle (or open) threats.

For many years these points were part of two compulsory courses in philosophy taught in Norwegian universities ("Examen philosophicum" and "Examen facultatum").

## Ecosophy T

**Ecosophy T**, as distinct from deep ecology, was originally the name of his personal philosophy. Others such as Warwick Fox have interpreted deep ecology as a commitment to ecosophy T, Næss's personal beliefs. The T referred to Tvergastein, a mountain hut where he wrote many of his books, and reflected Næss's view that everyone should develop his own philosophy  
[5]

Although a very rich and complex philosophy, Næss's ecosophy can be summed up as having Self-realization as its core. According to Næss, every being, whether human, animal or vegetable has an equal right to live and to blossom.<sup>[6]</sup> Through this capitalized Self, Næss emphasizes, in distinction to realization of man's narrow selves, the realization of our selves as part of an ecospheric whole.<sup>[7]</sup> It is in this whole that our true ecological Self can be realized. Practically Self-realization for Naess means that, if one does not know how the outcomes of one's actions will affect other beings, one should not act  
[8]

, similar to the liberal harm principle.

## Family

Næss, himself an avid mountaineer, was the younger brother of shipowner Erling Dekke Næss. Arne Næss was the uncle of mountaineer and businessman Arne Næss Jr. (1937–2004), who was once married to Diana Ross.

## References

1. <sup>^</sup> Naess, Arne. Translated and edited by Rothenberg, David. Ecology, Community and Lifestyle. (page 10).
2. <sup>^</sup> "Kagge Forlag" . <http://www.kagge.no/index.cfm?id=66398> . Retrieved 2006-04-29.
3. <sup>^</sup> J. Seed, J. Macy, P. Flemming, A. Naess, *Thinking like a mountain: towards a council of all beings* , Heritic Books (1988), ISBN 0946097-26-7, ISBN 0-86571-133-X
4. <sup>^</sup> [Statistics Norway](#) (2005). "[Storting Election 2005. Official electoral lists, by county](#)" . *Storting Election 2005*

<http://www.ssb.no/emner/00/01/10/stortingsvalg/tab-2005-10-27-18.html>

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5. [^](#) Murray Bookchin, Graham Purchase, Brian Morris, Rodney Aitchey, Robert Hart, Chris Wilbert, *Deep Ecology and Anarchism*, Freedom Press (1993) ISBN 0-900384-67-0.

6. [^](#) Næss, Arne (1989). *Ecology, community and lifestyle*. Cambridge University Press. pp. 164-65

7. [^](#) *ibid*, p. 168

8. [^](#) *ibid*, pp. 174-75

## Sources

- Harold Glasser (ed), ed (2005). *The Selected Works of Arne Naess, Volumes 1-10*. Springer. ISBN 1-4020-3727-9.

## External links

- [Downloadable interview with Dr. Alan Drengson about Deep Ecology and Arne Næss. June 6, 2008.](#)
- [The Trumpeter collected works on Arne Næss](#) (2005) [2006 archive of the dead link](#)
- ["Ecosophy from T to X"](#) - article about Arne's philosophy, by [Jim Cocola](#) , in [n+1](#) magazine, April 2006.
- [The Trumpeter Volume 9.2](#) (1992)
- [Arne Næss: A Biographical Sketch](#) , by Warwick Fox.
- [Arne Naess - Ecophilosophy and Ecology](#) Page from the University of Oslo. Contains basic information about Arne Næss and his publications from 1936-2005.
- [Jens Bjørneboe: How Arne Næss and I conquered NATO](#)
- [Photos of Næss' arrest at Mardalsfossen](#) (in Norwegian)
- [Inquiry](#) An Interdisciplinary Journal of Philosophy founded by Arne Næss
- [Crossing the Stones: A Portrait of Arne Naess](#)
- [The Call of the Mountain \(transcript\)](#) Transcript of the film The Call of the Mountain on Arne Naess and the Deep Ecology Movement (1997)
- [The Call of the Mountain \(excerpts\)](#) Excerpts of the film on YouTube.
- [The Call of the Mountain \(complete\)](#) See "The Call of the Mountain" as one whole online
- ["Arne Naess, Norwegian Philosopher, Dies at 96", \*New York Times\* obituary](#)

- ["Philosopher Developed 'Deep Ecology' Phrase", \*Washington Post\* obituary](#)
- [Arne Næss obituary in \*The Guardian\*](#)