

This paper aims to compare and contrast the work of two prominent figures within deep ecology. Lyn White Jr.'s piece, "The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis",¹ was written almost thirty years prior to Bill Devall's "The Ecological Self",² and while each was directed to a different type of audience based on the time and place of their publication, we see the nuanced ways that each contributed to the efforts of unpacking how man has affected the ecological crisis by looking underneath the superficial surface, as is so characteristic within deep ecology.

In a 1966 lecture to the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) in Washington (later published in "Science"), Lyn White Jr., professor of history, suggests the ecological crisis is correlated to anthropocentric ideals within religion.³ White Jr.'s piece gained traction in ecological communities and was cited for years to come.⁴ His interdisciplinary approach weaved together knowledge of science and technology's history, Christianity and ecological philosophy. White Jr. was a historian and as such, uses his expertise in the field to carefully track the early beginnings of the ecological crisis. As a Christian and self-proclaimed "churchman",⁵ he expresses his understanding of scripture and interpretation.

Bill Devall was an American professor of sociology, a conservation activist and has written extensively on long-range deep ecology⁶. Devall's chapter titled "The Ecological Self" was written as part of a compilation which sought to introduce the reader to the subject of the deep ecology movement.⁷ The wider context of Devall's piece brings together the threads of technology, psychology, philosophy and examines the constructs of society and institution to illustrate how they influence human perception of the natural world⁸. Devall's work is greatly informed by Norwegian professor of philosophy, Arne

¹ Lyn White Jr. The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis (Science, New Series, Vol. 155, No.3767, 1967), 1203-1207.

² Bill Devall The Ecological Self, in The Deep Ecology Movement: An Introductory Anthology edited by Drengson, A. and Inoue, Y. (Berkeley: North Atlantic Books, 1995), 101-123.

³ White Jr. The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis, 1203-1207.

⁴ Bron Taylor et. al. Lynn White Jr. and the greening-of-religion hypothesis (Conservation biology : the journal of the Society for Conservation Biology vol. 30,5, 2016), 1001.

⁵ White Jr. The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis, 1206.

⁶ Alan Drengson and Bill Devall The Deep Ecology Movement: Origins, Development & Future Prospects, The Trumpeter Volume 26, Number 2 (2010), 69.

⁷ Devall The Ecological Self, 101-123.

⁸ Ibid.

Naess. In fact, Devall was an important figure in recognizing the importance of Naess' work and by referencing and expanding upon his terms within deep ecology, Devall helped introduce Naess' concepts to North America and increase awareness of the movement.⁹

It would be amiss to discuss Devall's "Ecological Self"¹⁰ without giving the background of deep ecology, the deep ecology movement and ecosophy as they lay the tracks for subsequent developments within the ecological self. Devall does not need to explore this in his paper¹¹ as the topic is covered extensively in the preceding chapters.¹² Deep ecology from a wide angle lens, was constructed to distinguish itself from and to highlight the fundamental differences within "shallow" ecology. Supporters of the shallow and deep movements share common ground about ecological concerns though they differ vastly in their visions and calls to action for possible remediation.¹³ The shallow movement supports a reform, often presenting the use of technology,¹⁴ to address concerns of pollution and depletion of resources in industrial nations while deep ecology aims to probe through the surface for longer range change.¹⁵ The terms "deep ecology movement" and "ecosophy" were coined by Arne Naess and published in 1973 (within "The Shallow and the Deep, Long-Range Ecology Movement: A Summary").¹⁶

Ecosophy, adapted from oikos (household) and sophia (wisdom), is intended to broadly suggest a "philosophical world-view or system inspired by the conditions of life in the ecosphere".¹⁷ Philosophical systems are multi-faceted and amongst their most well known components are: logic, general

⁹ Alan Drengson and Youichi Inoue *The Deep Ecology Movement: An Introductory Anthology*, xviii.

¹⁰ Devall *The Ecological Self*, 101-123.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² Alan Drengson and Youichi Inoue (eds) *"The Deep Ecology Movement: An Introductory Anthology"* (Berkeley: North Atlantic Books, 1995).

¹³ Alan Drengson and Bill Devall, "The Deep Ecology Movement: Origins, Development & Future Prospects," *The Trumpeter* Volume 26, Number 2 (2010), xix.

¹⁴ Arne Naess, *"Ecology, Community and Lifestyle: Outline of an Ecosophy"*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 39.

¹⁵ Alan Drengson and Bill Devall, "The Deep Ecology Movement: Origins, Development & Future Prospects," *The Trumpeter* Volume 26, Number 2 (2010), 52.

¹⁶ Alan Drengson and Bill Devall, "The Deep Ecology Movement: Origins, Development & Future Prospects," *The Trumpeter* Volume 26, Number 2 (2010), 52.

¹⁷ Arne Naess, *"Ecology, Community and Lifestyle: Outline of an Ecosophy"*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 37-38.

methodology, epistemology, ontology, ethics, and philosophy of science.¹⁸ Naess' own ecosophy, "Ecosophy T", was his specific ecological philosophy leading him to self-realization through the context of the ecological landscape he personally traversed.¹⁹ "T" for Tvergastein, was the name of his hut in the high arctic mountains of Norway.²⁰ This was his personal philosophy and not meant to be applied to everyone.²¹ In contrast, the "deep ecology movement" was defined as Naess' grass-roots initiative of outlined principles to address the need for extensive changes in mainstream values, beliefs and practices²². "Naess' platform is a means to guide our process of deep questioning about what needs to be done to create a better world"²³. The dynamic between individual efforts in self-realization and collective movement presents a micro and macro picture that is evident throughout Devall's study.

Though White Jr. does not use the terms deep and shallow explicitly, he criticizes conservation efforts aimed at regression to a brighter past, solutions focused on aesthetics or those that impose negatively on other cultures.²⁴ The palliative methods he defines as insufficient (anti-war campaigns, altering advertising, attempts to control the birth rate of developing nations)²⁵ all suggest agendas we may expect from shallow ecology. Consistent with values of deep ecology, White Jr. sought to examine how ecological attitudes at the time of his writing had taken root from religious ideals which in turn informed the perception of self as separate from nature. "What people do about their ecology depends on what they think of themselves in relation to things around them. Human ecology is deeply conditioned by beliefs about our nature and destiny - that is by religion."²⁶ White Jr. provides detailed examples of main events in human history which helped to crystalize the union of technology

¹⁸ Arne Naess, "Ecology, Community and Lifestyle: Outline of an Ecosophy", (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 38.

¹⁹ Alan Drengson and Bill Devall, "The Deep Ecology Movement: Origins, Development & Future Prospects," *The Trumpeter* Volume 26, Number 2 (2010), xxi.

²⁰ Alan Drengson and Bill Devall, "The Deep Ecology Movement: Origins, Development & Future Prospects," *The Trumpeter* Volume 26, Number 2 (2010), 56.

²¹ Alan Drengson and Bill Devall, "The Deep Ecology Movement: Origins, Development & Future Prospects," *The Trumpeter* Volume 26, Number 2 (2010), 59.

²² Alan Drengson and Bill Devall, "The Deep Ecology Movement: Origins, Development & Future Prospects," *The Trumpeter* Volume 26, Number 2 (2010), 52.

²³ Mark A. Schroll Reflections on Naess' Humor and Ecosophy from Two Meetings, *The Trumpeter* Volume 26, Number 2 (2010), 46

²⁴ White Jr. *The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis*, 1204.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 1205.

and science in the spirit of dominance.²⁷ This is traced as far back as A.D. 1000 with water power²⁸. The Middle Ages provided the landscape and White Jr. contends that upon examination of the time, we discover that man's relationship to the soil was markedly changed with the invention of the oxen-drawn plow use to till the land²⁹. During the Middle Ages, we see "man and nature are two things, and man is master" as evidenced in the exploitive way they resourced the soil, chopped trees and harvested animals³⁰.

White Jr. makes a parallel between the circa 1850's adoption of Francis Bacon's philosophies directing that "scientific knowledge means technological power over nature" with the word "ecology" appearing in the English language in 1973³¹ as if arising from an inherent need to address the confounding biases in relational activity.

He goes on to explain how the movement from pagan animism to Christianity, allowed humans to exploit nature for man's own gain and this was done without the need to consult with nature spirits dwelling within trees, rivers etc.³² White Jr. attributes this to the Judeo-Christian interpretation of Genesis where as by naming natural things, a relationship of dominance is created and nature becomes no more than a resource. Man remains free of inhibition as supported by divine word.

White Jr. surmised that since the driving force behind science and technology was religious in essence, it would be a religious renewal or revival that would be needed to reconfigure the flawed relationship between man and nature. "More science and more technology are not going to get us out of the present ecologic crisis until we find a new religion, or rethink our old one."³³

"Know thyself" is inscribed at the sacred temple at Delphi where pilgrims traveled to receive answers to their troubling dilemmas, alluding to the idea that our work lies in discovering more and more aspects of ourselves. White

²⁷ Ibid., 1204-1205.

²⁸ Ibid., 1204.

²⁹ Ibid., 1204-1205.

³⁰ Ibid., 1205.

³¹ Ibid., 1203.

³² Ibid., 1205.

³³ Ibid., 1206.

makes a distinction between Christianity in the Greek East interpreting sin as “intellectual blindness” rather than the Latin West where it is considered “moral evil”³⁴. The difference is that one finds salvation in intellectual illumination or mental clarity while the other in piety and focuses on conduct³⁵. Devall agrees in the “humans have limited ability to love from mere duty or moral exhortation”³⁶. In contrast, as the ecological self is discovered, one may wholeheartedly protect nature and their environment as it is a part of them³⁷ and they are engaging in a type of self-defense³⁸. In a similar fashion, Hermetic axioms suggest “As above, so below. As within, so without”. The ecological self becomes a symbol of self realization and interconnectedness; personal and transpersonal at once.³⁹ In this concept, we develop a deep sense of empathetic compassion for what is outside of ourselves as it bears close correspondence with what lies within.

“How many, how many, how many
make up a world!
And then I think of that old idea: the singular
and the eternal.
One cup, in which everything is swirled
back to the color of the sea and the sky.”

From “One” by Mary Oliver⁴⁰

Devall notes that outside of the limited social self defined by our social identity of occupation, religion, gender etc., lies the concept of the “oceanic self” which describes a merging to oneness.⁴¹ He uses a variety of terms from diverse spiritual traditions to describe this concept including the Christian God, Hindu Atman, the Chinese Tao. One may wonder if these heightened states of pure consciousness are available to all. White reflects that many contemporary Americans are unable and/or unwilling to “counsel with wolves or exhort birds” as is the way through Saint Francis of Assisi.⁴² However, whether one reaches

³⁴ White Jr., *The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis*, 1206.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 1206.

³⁶ Devall *The Ecological Self*, 105.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 104.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 105.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 104.

⁴⁰ Mary Oliver, *Why I Wake Early* (Beacon Press, 2004), 66.

⁴¹ Devall *The Ecological Self*, 101.

⁴² White Jr., *The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis*, 1207.

the ultimate goal of maximum self-realization is not the point that neither White nor Devall seek to make. Healing in transpersonal psychology is a process which commences with self-awareness.⁴³ This is not narcissism or an absorption in the problems of the narrow ego but a transformation of coming to terms with our psyche and our vulnerabilities. Devall references the work of transpersonal psychologist Frances Vaughan to explain how a sense of knowing and acceptance of ourselves must come before any attempts to change the undesirable.⁴⁴ This distinction is made so as to elucidate the true purpose of self awareness is to develop key attributes that serve to heal oneself which translates to healing in the world. Acceptance, forgiveness, humility and so forth would afford the seeker an increased capacity to care outside of themselves as part of themselves. Rainforest activist John Seed explains this is “enlightened self-interest”: “I am part of the rainforest protecting myself. I am that part of the rainforest recently emerged into thinking.”⁴⁵

The ego, according to Devall, is the voice of the self and when it acts negatively in a disconnected way, we may see this as a “barbed wire fence”.⁴⁶ In relation to nature, this may look like denial of the interconnectedness of our environment and on a micro-level, we may deny feelings or vulnerabilities.⁴⁷ “From the perspective of transpersonal psychology, we are more richly alive when exploring patterns of relationships and interactions which we can call the self”.⁴⁸ Translated to a conservation perspective, a mature ecological self will “joyfully defend and interact with that with which we identify.”⁴⁹ Similar to White’s argument that motivations to protect “other” which are grounded in pious expectation, both Devall and Naess agree that such efforts are not sustainable and long-range effects would need to be generated from within.⁵⁰

Devall references the Native American Sioux and Hopi as well as the Koyukon of Alaska to illustrate models of kinship between human and non-human

⁴³ Devall *The Ecological Self*, 104.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ John Seed in Devall *Rainforest and Psyche* (Linsmore, New South Wales: Rainforest Information Center, 1985).

⁴⁶ Devall *The Ecological Self*, 103.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 103.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 104.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 105.

which arise from expanded notions of identification.⁵¹ In contrast, Devall uses the example of university students studying natural resources through only the lens of science and technology. Without an emotional response to accompany the intellectual experience, nature becomes objectified data and the examiner is akin to guards in Nazi death camps.⁵² This powerful image calls to mind Hannah Arendt's concept of the banality of evil and subsequent sociological experiments by Milgram and Zimbardo to illustrate "conformity bias". In contrast to cultures that foster an innate sense of place in the cosmos, we see an emphasis on narrow ego in western modernity.⁵³ In these disconnected states, we find ego-gratification, obsession with status at the forefront while the ego strives to survive rather than grow and flourish.⁵⁴ An environment as such breeds the ground for attempts to control nature with technology and utilize science in ways motivated by productivity.⁵⁵

In observing White's work, Bron Taylor explains its findings in anecdotal evidence which supports the idea that the Genesis creation story led to anthropocentric views and a desacralization of nature.⁵⁶ A profound result of White's linking of spirituality and ecology in such a way was promoting a pro-environment movement within faith based communities."⁵⁷ Consequently, Taylor notes that a consideration which was not taken into account by White Jr. was "the tendency of religious people to attribute environmental changes to divine favor or disfavor, a dynamic that is especially strong with religions, such as Christianity, which stress the sovereignty of God."⁵⁸

Depth psychologist Edward Edinger quotes and elaborates upon Carl Jung's interpretation of Saint Augustine to illustrate how the rational ego gains control and obscures spirituality:

"Morning knowledge is knowledge of the creator, evening knowledge is the knowledge of created things. Morning

⁵¹ Devall *The Ecological Self*, 110-111.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 111.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 112-113.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 112.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ Bron Taylor et. al. *Lynn White Jr. and the greening-of-religion hypothesis*, 1001.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 1002.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 1002.

knowledge knows about God, evening knowledge knows about humanity. Morning knowledge is a religion, evening knowledge is science. The transition from morning knowledge to evening knowledge corresponds to the fact that⁵⁹ 'every spiritual truth gradually turns into something material, becoming no more than a tool in the hand of man'.⁶⁰

The interplay between morning and evening knowledge is intended to show a correlation of increasing darkening as the rational egoic functions expand. Without a strong function of the expanded ecological self, it seems like we would expect this movement to occur organically. Both White and Devall speak to the importance of human identification with the greater non-human realm. White Jr. proposed Saint Francis of Assisi as a symbol for ecological mindedness that could be adopted by the West.⁶¹ The key for White's conclusion was that within Saint Francis we see humility for the greater species, an egalitarian relationship between all of creation and a rebellious spirit to question the status quo.⁶²

Humans "have often been a dynamic element in their own environment" and perhaps this is not considered anything novel in nature as White explains "all forms of life modify their contexts"⁶³. While we may not be able to understand the full breadth of human induced impact upon the environment in with detailed precision, White points out that at the time of his piece, ecological concerns were growing rapidly⁶⁴.

Devall blends theory and practice to offer a grass-roots style of relating to the reader. Devall maintains that exploring one's own bioregion is the most accessible way to stir the ecological self and lays out four criteria as proposed by Jim Dodge.⁶⁵ The reader is encouraged to directly engage via physical encounters with their nature environment through:

⁵⁹ Edward Edinger *Anatomy of the Psyche: Alchemical Symbolism in Psychotherapy* (Chicago: Open Court, 1994), 180.

⁶⁰ Carl G. Jung *Collected Works*, vol 13 par. 302 quoted in Edward Edinger *Anatomy of the Psyche: Alchemical Symbolism in Psychotherapy* (Chicago: Open Court, 1994), 180.

⁶¹ White Jr., *The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis*, 1206-1207.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 1206.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 1203.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ Devall *The Ecological Self*, 116-117.

- Biotic shift: observing the changes in plant/animal species as an active observer.
- Watershed: following the origins of our drinking water.
- Spirit-of-place: rediscovering sacred sites.
- Cultural distinctiveness: gaining awareness of rituals, art forms or language specific to the culture of the region.⁶⁶

Broadening our narrow sense of self includes identifying with the landscape and this can be done by connecting with one's bioregion as well as becoming mindful and growing appreciation for the way in which we are regularly nourished by nature through wind and water.⁶⁷ We can think of and grow appreciation for the winds and waters.

White Jr. is authoritative in tone and presents a well structured argument aimed at deconstructing modern views of scientific and technological influences upon nature by promoting a deep look at the underpinnings. We hear his voice clearly in his proposal of offering a positive suggestion to the ecological predicament through existing Western systems of faith. By the time Devall's piece is published, we have a sense of expanded parameters as suggestions are made that are not limited to occidental systems of faith. Bill Devall's "Ecological Self" is constructed as a patchwork quilt drawing from a diverse group of thinkers including environmentalists, geographers, philosophers, poets and psychologists to make the subject matter accessible to a wide and general audience. Devall's voice as both sociologist and activist is clearly articulated as he calls out the various disciplines which affect the ecological self. His spirit of activism runs throughout this piece as he qualifies his studies in steps that can be taken by the average westerner. Arne Naess summarizes, "a great challenge of today is to save the planet from further devastation that violates both the enlightened self-interest of humans and non-humans, and decreases the potential of joyful existence for all."⁶⁸ Both Devall and White identify the nuanced paradox of the present ecological state and offer no simple solutions to complex issues.

⁶⁶ Devall The Ecological Self, 117-118.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 104.

⁶⁸ Naess Self-realization: An Ecological Approach to Being in the World (Murdoch University: 1986), 35.

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