

Intellectual Origins of the "Depth" Theme in the Philosophy of Arne Naess.

The Trumpeter: Journal of Ecosophy 9 (1992): 68-73
ISSN: 0832-6193

Warwick Fox

1. Introduction

The vast majority of English-speaking people who have now heard of the work of Arne Naess know of him primarily in association with his work on deep ecology. Being largely unaware of the intellectual range, thirty-five year history, and considerable influence - especially in Scandinavia - of his earlier work, they are therefore largely unaware that the theme of "depth" has pervaded more or less all of Naess's work. In particular, this theme was central to the work for which Naess was best known among professional philosophers prior to his work on ecophilosophy, namely, his philosophy of language and communication, which he referred to as empirical semantics (for reasons we shall come to).¹

In this paper, written in the year (1992) of Naess's eightieth birthday, I would like to explore what I believe may be the main intellectual origins of the depth theme in Naess's work. Specifically, I want to suggest that Naess's involvement in psychoanalysis and involvement with the Vienna Circle jointly informed the development of his work on empirical semantics and that this work, in turn, fed into his later development of what he chose to refer to as a deep approach (meaning a deep questioning approach) to ecological concerns. In telling the story of Naess's involvement in psychoanalysis and with the Vienna Circle we will also gain some insight into a number of the main emotional and intellectual influences that affected him during his childhood, teenage years, and early adulthood.

The focal point of the story is Vienna, 1934, when Naess was twenty-two. Early in that year Naess "found [himself] in Austria eager to climb mountains and to study."² Even though this was still the Austria of an intellectually great and culturally vibrant Vienna, the Vienna of Freud and of the Wiener Kreis (Vienna Circle), Naess's reason for going there had more to do with his love of mountains than his attraction to academic life: "Valuing mountaineering and life among mountains higher than university studies, I chose to live in Switzerland after receiving the degree of Master of Arts (University of Oslo, 1933), but after comparing prices I went to Austria instead."³

While Naess's presence in Austria was thus more or less accidental from the viewpoint of his academic motivations, it nevertheless afforded him direct contact with both psychoanalysis and the Vienna Circle. I consider these two influences in turn.

2. Psychoanalysis and Naess's Formative Years

When Naess found himself in Vienna in early 1934, psychoanalysis was "very close to the centre of cultural attention." It was therefore "inevitable," says Naess, that he should ask himself: "If I am to be an honest philosopher or scientist, would it not be prudent to go through a psychoanalysis?" The decision to do so provided a distinctly modern twist to the Socratic view, already "emphatically endorsed" by Naess, that "The unexamined life is not worth living"! "Soon," says Naess,

I was in a deadly serious 14-month analysis, 8 to 9 a.m. every morning, except Sundays, with the old collaborator of Freud, Edward Hitschmann. We were both somewhat astonished to find that I had suffered a pronounced childhood neurosis. It had obvious consequences for my later life, and the analysis turned into a combined character analysis and analysis of my philosophical inclinations. [This is also the path I will take in the remainder of this section on "Psychoanalysis and Naess's Formative Years."]

Naess describes the origins of this psychoanalytically revealed neurosis as follows:

The feeling apart seemed to stem from a basic catastrophe in my earliest life. Because of the death of my father when I was only one year old, and the preoccupation of my mother with my two brothers who were in their early teens, I was left to the care of a maid. She was excessively kind and submitted to all my wishes. Thus, in summer time I would not tolerate to be put into the bath-tub except together with a fly. She had to fetch a specimen through climbing up the windows. She was dismissed because of her excesses when I was three years old, and I was never able to love my mother properly as a substitute. It seemed that I experienced the change as a loss of a whole world, and that I managed to procure a new one.

What was this new world that Naess managed to procure?

From when I was about four years old until puberty I could stand or sit for hours, days, weeks, in shallow water on the coast, inspecting and marvelling at the overwhelming diversity and richness of life in the sea. The tiny beautiful forms which 'nobody' cared for, or were even unable to see, was part of a seemingly infinite world, but nevertheless my world. Feeling apart in many human relationships, I identified with 'nature.'

Naess's early identification with the nonhuman world was so profound that he sees the attitudes it engendered as having informed his entire mature philosophy. After describing the world of the "infant shorelines naturalist" in sympathetic detail - a world of friendly sole, conflict-avoiding crabs, and inquisitive translucent shrimps - Naess notes that "Two things of clear relevance to philosophy in general and to my philosophy in particular are

elucidated by the above: an enthusiasm for diversity, [and] a lack of incentive to judge something (some life forms) as unquestionably higher, nobler, more right, than any other."

From about the age of eight, Naess's strong identification with the nonhuman world had reached the point where a particular mountain had become for him

a symbol of a benevolent, equiminded, strong 'father,' or of an ideal human nature. These characteristics were there in spite of the obvious fact that the mountain, with its slippery stones, icy fog and dangerous precipices, did not protect me or care for me in any trivial sense. It required me to show respect and take care. The mountain loved me but in a way similar to that of my ten and eleven years older brothers who were eager to toughen me up.

As with his early shoreline experiences, Naess also sees his mountain-as-father experiences as significant for the development of his mature philosophy. In particular, his cult of a particular mountain "reduced the need for anything supernatural, anything protecting us directly, or guaranteeing the meaningfulness of life." There were other philosophical lessons too, from this mountain and from others. For example, living in mountains necessarily inspired such qualities as "austerity" and "toughness," qualities that Naess relates to his youthful "detestation and fear of being influenced by manifestations of spirituality and high-sounding notions." And the views from mountains drove home the importance of such qualities as "distance," "perspective," "aloofness," "breadth of survey," "contemplation of the totality," "being 'above' things," "unruffledness," and "equimindedness."

These qualities all represent key-terms in understanding both Naess and his professional philosophical work. However, in summing up the philosophical significance of both his early shoreline and mountain experiences, the points that Naess emphasizes are again those of "egalitarianism [which, for Naess, amounts to a restatement in positive terms of his "lack of incentive to judge something (some life forms) as unquestionably higher, nobler, more right, than any other"] and the value of diversity." To these he also adds a third, developed through the combined influence of these two: a certain form of scepticism. Some points of view (like some animals), are clearly vulnerable from some other points of view (or some other animals), but why imagine that one definite point of view (one kind of living being) would not be vulnerable from any other? What value would there be in having something defeat all others?

These attitudes were reinforced during Naess's teenage years when his naturalist interests began to take in theoretical concerns as well. Naess makes special note in this regard of H. G. Wells's 1920 book *The Outline of History*, which, he says, was the first widely read general history of life: "Not only were civilizations far away from Europe in time and space treated earnestly and sympathetically, but also the prehistory of life since Cambrian, hundreds of million years ago."⁴

Naess's reaction to this book was again characteristic of his enthusiasm for diversity and his lack of incentive to judge one thing as higher, nobler, or more right than any other:

What an immense and sudden expansion of my own life's frame of reference! I found that I ought to pay attention just as much to all this life history as to that of my own country. All geological periods had the right to be taken seriously and also all creatures, past or present.

By the age of fifteen Naess had largely traded the "interminable" and "horrible" nightmares that had afflicted him throughout childhood for nights with little or no sleep. Turning this situation to advantage, Naess says that, in his imagination, he traversed life history on a Wellsian scale "again and again" during the sleepless nights of his later teenage years. And this gave rise to what he describes as "a crucial experience:"

I divided life history from Cambrian into one week of nights - with my own life at the very end of the week. It would comprise only a fraction of a second. What would be worthwhile in this fraction of a second? I was never in any doubt as to the correct answer: to have a look at the marvellous world, to find out a little about it. Humans were the first species that had the capacity to get a little acquainted with the universe. Devoted scientists, or rather 'researchers,' seemed to be those who could satisfy the yearning to find out about the universe, so I started to get the feeling that research would be the right occupation in life. What a joy to get acquainted with the overwhelming richness of our planet!

3. The Vienna Circle

In that minuscule fraction of a second of the post-Cambrian week in which Naess found himself in Vienna in 1934, he says that he "dropped by chance into the famous seminar led by Moritz Schlick and Friedrich Waismann" (i.e., the Vienna Circle). Despite the apparently casual beginning to this association, Naess's meeting with the members of this group was to prove a fateful one for the development of his future philosophical work. To understand why this was to be so, however, it is first necessary to have some acquaintance with the views and influence of this group.

The Vienna Circle constituted what was probably the single most influential recognizable grouping of philosophers - at least upon Anglo-American philosophy - in this century. It formed around Moritz Schlick during the 1920s following his appointment in 1922 to the chair in History and Philosophy of the Inductive Sciences at Vienna University. This chair had been established by Ernst Mach in 1895. True to Mach's own orientation, the Circle was both strongly pro-science and anti-metaphysical (this extremely positive evaluation of science to the exclusion of other modes of inquiry usually being referred to as positivism). This meant that the Circle's supporters represented a small minority group among German-speaking philosophers, since these, in the main, still subscribed to one

form or another of German idealism. But the Circle's very isolation also made for strong European and international affiliations. Thus, while direct membership of the Circle included such luminaries as Rudolf Carnap, Otto Neurath, Herbert Feigl, Friedrich Waismann, and Kurt Godel, the Circle also counted among its close associates members of the Berlin group of logical empiricists, led by Hans Reichenbach and including Carl Hempel, and the Warsaw Circle of mathematical logicians, which included Alfred Tarski. The Vienna Circle held regular, informal Thursday meetings until Schlick was shot and fatally wounded by a deranged student in 1936. The rise of Nazism ensured the subsequent dispersal of the Circle's remaining members (some, like Carnap and Feigl, had left Vienna before Schlick's death) as well that of their associates in Berlin and Warsaw. Many members of the Circle (as well as some of their Berlin and Warsaw associates, including Reichenbach, Hempel, and Tarski) eventually took up academic appointments in locations across the United States.

Often described as *logical positivists*, a number of the Circle's members and associates preferred (or came to prefer) the description *logical empiricists*. The classic statement of the Vienna Circle's position was advanced in their manifesto of 1929 entitled *The Scientific Conception of the World: The Vienna Circle*. This recalled Hume and was heavily influenced by the philosophy of logical atomism (i.e., the views of Russell and, especially, the early Wittgenstein) in advancing the view that the only meaningful statements were those expressing claims that were empirically verifiable (i.e., the propositions of science) or, if they did not assert anything about the way the world was (and so could not be empirically verified), those that simply explicated the meanings of terms as agreed by convention (i.e., statements whose truth was analytic or tautological, as in the truths of mathematics and logic). The upshot of this view was, first, that much of philosophy was dismissed as meaningless, since many or all of the propositions that were advanced in discussions of metaphysics, ethics, and aesthetics, for example, could not be empirically verified. Second, and consequent upon this, the proper task of philosophy was to assist the development of science by tending to the clarification of logic, language, and scientific method.

In considering metaphysical, ethical, and aesthetic statements to be nonsensical, the Vienna Circle meant that they lacked "cognitive meaning," which is to say that they were not statements of a kind that could be verified by any potentially accessible facts and, hence, that they conveyed no information of any consequence about the world. However, such statements might still be meaningful in a noncognitive sense since they could still have emotional associations. In this sense, then, metaphysical, ethical, and aesthetic statements could at least be said to differ from totally nonsensical jumbles of words.

The Vienna Circle's "no-nonsense" approach to philosophy, which, as I have noted, ran counter to the then dominant metaphysical tendency of German-speaking philosophy, presumably accorded well with the young Naess's own "detestation and fear of being influenced by manifestations of spirituality and high-sounding notions." At any rate, Naess certainly found himself made welcome by the members of the Circle: "The logical empiricists received me with touching cordiality, and for some years treated me as a new

comet on the philosophical firmament." Naess also quickly came to respect the members of this group not only for the power of their ideas but also for the quality of their discussions, which exhibited the virtues of clarity, congeniality, and democratic participation. With respect to congeniality, Naess has told me that, rather than disagreeing in an outright manner, one member might, for example, say to another: "I think perhaps that is an unhappy formulation."⁵ And with respect to democratic participation, Naess felt that this applied to the point where he was accepted on a par with everyone else. But in spite of Naess's youthful attraction to the "hard-headed" ethos of the Vienna Circle, the Circle's high estimation of him, his respect for their intellects, and his admiration for the modus operandi of their meetings, he nevertheless found that he had significant disagreements with fundamental aspects of their philosophical orientation. Specifically, Naess objected to "their belief that the study of language and formal logic could somehow contribute in an essential way to the 'solution,' or at least 'dissolution' [à la the early Wittgenstein], of philosophical problems." Much of Naess's early work must, therefore, be understood as that of someone who was both strongly influenced by, and strongly reacting against, the philosophical orientation of the Vienna Circle.

In this general respect, at least, Naess can be compared to Karl Popper. However, Naess's reaction against the philosophical orientation of the Circle can be seen as more radical than that of Popper. Whereas Popper's work on the logic of scientific discovery represented a reaction against certain (verificationist) views of the Vienna Circle, Popper still shared the Circle's general concern with the logical demarcation of language: where members of the Circle employed the criterion of verification in an attempt to demarcate meaningful statements from nonsensical ones, Popper employed the criterion of falsification to the considerably more modest end of attempting to demarcate scientific statements from nonscientific (as distinct from nonsensical) ones. In contrast to both the Vienna Circle and Popper, however, Naess wanted to call into question this whole turn "towards logic rather than experience in the broadest sense." In Naess's view,

The naturalist approach is neglected in Western academic philosophy in favour of epistemic logic, logic of discovery and other approaches which avoid broad empirical confrontations. It is as if logical considerations are considered more philosophical in themselves than empirical.... The turn of (Western) philosophy in this century towards language rather than cosmos, towards logic rather than experience in the broadest sense (like that of William James), is a turn into a vast blind-alley...the turn from cosmos to language is not a shortcut to truth.

Thus, when Naess came to develop his own ideas on the philosophy of language and communication over the next two decades he was more concerned with exploring the ways in which language is actually used in particular contexts than with the logical demarcation of meaningful statements from nonsensical ones (like the Vienna Circle) or scientific statements from nonscientific ones (like Karl Popper). In order to distinguish his approach to semantics (i.e., the study of meaning) from the dominant logical approach to semantics, Naess therefore called his naturalistic approach, with its empirical and

contextual emphases, *empirical semantics*.

4. Empirical Semantics⁶

The Vienna Circle's philosophy of logical positivism or logical empiricism echoed that of the logical atomists (Russell and the early Wittgenstein) in treating language as if it were ultimately unambiguous in character: a proposition could be shown either to be saying something that was clear and distinct or to be nonsensical. For Naess, however, it was empirically demonstrable that the same proposition could be interpreted in different ways depending upon the people interpreting and the situation that applied. Thus, whereas the logical atomists and logical empiricists would have been quite happy to state that sentence p either is or is not logically equivalent in meaning to sentence q, Naess, and the group that he influenced (the "Oslo group"), denied the adequacy of such a judgment by pointing to the empirical fact (or its possibility) that p is only synonymous (or not synonymous) with q for some people in some situations.

But Naess was not only interested in the various ways (or directions) in which the same proposition could be interpreted, he was also interested in differences in what he referred to as the *depth of intention* that these interpretations could display. To understand the distinction between Naess's concepts of *direction of interpretation* and *depth of intention* it is necessary to understand his concept of *precization*. An expression p is defined as a precization of another expression q if the reasonable interpretations that can be made of p are a subset of the reasonable interpretations that can be made of q. (An interpretation of q is an expression that is synonymous with q for some person in some situation whereas a reasonable interpretation of q is an expression that is synonymous with q for many people in many situations.) In less formal language, then, one expression is a precization of another if it is both a more precise interpretation of that expression and one that might often be made. It follows that every reasonable interpretation of the precization will necessarily be a reasonable interpretation of the original expression.

Using this concept of precization, Naess showed that we can construct chains of precizations in various directions of interpretation. For example, consider an ostensibly straightforward expression such as "all men are equal." Does the reader take this to mean that "all humans are equal" or that "all male humans are equal"? The former option is a reasonable interpretation of the point of departure formulation without being a precization of it in that the reasonable interpretations of both are equivalent. However, the latter option is a precization of the point of departure formulation in that its reasonable interpretations are more restricted than (or a subset of) those that can be made of the original expression. In either case, we can go on to ask, for example: Is the expression taken to mean that "all humans (or male humans) are the equal in the eyes of God" or that "all humans (or male humans) have equal moral worth" or that "all humans (or male humans) are equal before the law" (and so on)? All of these formulations are precizations (or further precizations) of the point of departure formulation. If we select just one of these branches or directions of interpretation - for example, "all humans have equal moral worth" - we can go on to ask, for example: is this expression in turn taken to mean that "all humans should be treated with the same degree of respect regardless of how they behave" or that "all humans should be treated with the same degree of respect providing

that they observe certain social norms" (and so on)? And so the ramification process can be continued. Naess wrote:

Sooner or later a situation arises where the subject must admit, if honest, that (1) if he made a definite interpretation of the sentence at all, he either must have intended a or non-a (a certain distinction). Further, (2) that he neither intended a nor non-a, being unaware of the possibility of making the distinction at issue (e.g., between ton as a measure of volume and ton as a measure of weight [Naess's own discussion in this context being in regard to the point of departure expression 'The ship was of 5,000 tons']).⁷

The extent to which a person discriminates along a chain of precizations (and, therefore, in a particular direction of interpretation) is a measure of their depth of intention, that is, the depth to which that person can claim to have understood the intended meaning of the expression. Thus, as Ingemund Gullvag notes in his study of Naess's concept of depth of intention:

People may differ in their responses not only by choosing different branches of interpretation but by stopping at different levels of discrimination within the same branch. If two persons choose the same branch but stop at different levels of discrimination within that branch, we say they have understood [the point of departure formulation] with different depths of intention.⁸

5. Empirical Semantics and Psychoanalysis

I think it is arguable that Naess's experience of psychoanalysis, which took place in Vienna at the same time as his contact with the Vienna Circle, may well have provided him with a powerful stimulus to the development of the central concepts in his philosophy of language and communication. To begin with, both psychoanalysis and Naess's concept of depth of intention are concerned with depth of understanding - the former with one's depth of understanding of one's self and the latter with one's depth of understanding of others. Thus, where Freudian psychoanalysis is concerned with revealing the extent to which a person is unaware or unconscious of the deeper meanings of their own utterances (whether these be the free association of seemingly unconnected items, verbal accounts of dreams, slips of the tongue, instances of forgetfulness, or jokes), Naess's empirical semantics is concerned with revealing the extent to which a person is unaware or unconscious of the deeper meanings of someone else's utterances (i.e., unaware or unconscious of distinctions that were intended by the speaker).

It should be emphasized that this parallel does not point to the existence of a commonality between empirical semantics and some incidental feature of psychoanalysis; rather, the possibility of differences in depth of interpretation is a fundamental feature of psychoanalysis. The whole point of psychoanalysis is to *uncover* or *reveal* material that

has been *repressed* by the conscious mind, so that this material can then be integrated into the personality structure rather than continue to operate like a "back-seat driver"—albeit one that the patient has been (or has preferred to be) largely unaware of. Thus, for example, psychoanalysts are not particularly interested in what they see as the superficial *manifest content* of a dream, but are vitally interested in what they take to be its deeper, more significant, *latent content*. Precisely because of this emphasis on depth of understanding, psychoanalysis is often simply referred to as *depth psychology*.

Second, in both psychoanalysis and empirical semantics, one reveals or makes conscious a person's depth of understanding by a process of verbal probing. While the generality of this parallel could make it seem insignificant to us today, it needs to be remembered that the verbal probing approach to psychiatry and semantics was, in both cases, revolutionary at the time. Psychoanalysis was originally distinguished from other approaches to mental disorder that were then current (such as hydrotherapy, electrotherapy, massage, the Weir Mitchell rest-cure, and hypnosis) by the fact that it was based purely on verbal probing. Naess's empirical approach to semantics was likewise distinguished from its then current alternatives (i.e., the logical approaches inspired by the Vienna Circle) by also being based on verbal probing. For Naess, the synonymy or otherwise of sentence p and sentence q, for example, was not a question to be decided on logical grounds but rather a question to be decided by asking person x in situation y whether p was synonymous with q for them. It is also interesting to note in regard to this second point that just as the person who initiates the verbal probing in psychoanalysis is referred to as the analyst, so the person who asks the questions in Naess's empirical semantics (in order to reveal such things as the subject's depth of intention) is also referred to as the analyst.⁹

Third, the central role given in psychoanalysis to the interpretation of highly complex and exceedingly ambiguous material (such as the free association of seemingly unconnected items, dreams, slips of the tongue, instances of forgetfulness, and jokes) inevitably highlights the fact that interpreters of the same material can differ not only with respect to their *depth* of interpretation—which was my first point—but also with respect to their *direction* of interpretation. The possibility of differences in direction of interpretation must impress itself upon anyone who undertakes psychoanalysis: the patient and the analyst—or two different analysts, for that matter—may both address themselves to what they take to be the latent content of a dream, for example, but nevertheless interpret this content in significantly different directions. Thus, the ideas of both *depth* and *direction* of interpretation or understanding are as central to psychoanalysis as they are to Naess's empirical semantics.

The parallels I have pointed to between psychoanalysis and empirical semantics take on added significance when one bears in mind the fact that Naess undertook and would have been reflecting upon his "deadly serious," six-days-a-week, fourteen-month experience of psychoanalysis at the same time as he was reflecting upon the views he was being exposed to by the members of the Vienna Circle. Taking all these considerations into account, then, I think one can make a persuasive case for the claim that Naess's experience of psychoanalysis provided him - whether consciously or unconsciously! - with a

powerful stimulus to the development of the central concepts in his philosophy of language and communication.

6. Depth of Intention, Deepness of Questions, and Deep Ecology

While Naess formally developed the concept of depth of intention in his empirically oriented work on semantics, that hardly exhausts the depth theme in his work. Rather, this theme spills over into many of Naess's other writings for an obvious reason that derives directly from his work on empirical semantics, namely, this work showed that all our understandings can be thought of as having a depth dimension. For simplicity, I have only considered the concept of depth of intention in regard to a person's immediate understanding of a simple proposition but, as we all know, if the object of study is complex, then, as Naess says, "our depth of intention improves only slowly over years of study. There is an abyss of depth in everything fundamental."¹⁰

The concept of depth of intention clearly implies a complementary concept: depth of questioning. If one's focus in a question/answer string is upon the answers given then, in Naess's terminology, one will speak in terms of depth of intention (which, in this context, could also be termed deepness of answers). If, however, one's focus is upon the questions asked then, again in Naess's terminology, one will speak in terms of deepness of questions. Analogous to the situation in Naess's work on empirical semantics, where it was shown that people can understand an utterance with differing depths of intention (some being aware of intended distinctions the possibility of which does not occur to others), consideration of the concept of deepness of questions reveals that people can also ask questions of an utterance that differ with respect to depth (some asking questions the possibility of which does not occur to others). Moreover, consideration of this concept also reveals that questions can be used in either a passive way, simply to gauge a person's depth of intention (as in Naess's work on empirical semantics), or in an active way, to deliberately stimulate an increase in a person's depth of understanding.

It was this concern with the active sense of the concept of depth of questioning that led Naess to refer to his own approach to ecophilosophy as deep ecology. For Naess, "The essence of deep ecology is to ask deeper questions. The adjective 'deep' stresses that we ask why and how, where others do not." As I show in *Toward a Transpersonal Ecology*, Naess repeats this point again and again in his work on deep ecology. He says that by the term *deep ecology* he means to refer "primarily to the level of questioning, not the content of the answer"; that "The difference between the shallow and deep movement is one of...deepness of questions"; that "The term 'deep' refers to the depth of questioning"; that "the deep ecology movement is therefore 'the ecology movement which questions deeper'"; and so on.¹¹

To sum up, then, I hope to have shown, albeit very briefly, that Naess's early involvement in psychoanalysis and involvement with the Vienna Circle jointly informed the development of his work on empirical semantics and that one of the central ideas in this work - depth of intention - implied a complementary idea - depth of questions - that, in

turn, directly inspired Naess's subsequent development of what he chose to refer to as a deep approach to ecological concerns.

7. In Conclusion

On a personal note, I find Naess's concepts of direction of interpretation, depth of intention, and depth of questions tremendously useful for my own thinking in regard to a wide range of philosophical problems - including the problem of what philosophy is! (in brief, it's about asking deeper questions) - and would like to do what I can to get these ideas across to a wider audience. My problem with the concept of depth of questions as it applies to deep ecology, however, is that I do not think that asking deeper questions, by itself, provides any guarantee that the answers thus elicited will necessarily be of an ecocentric (as opposed to anthropocentric) kind. For this reason, I find myself, in this particular context, drawn far more to the (ecocentric) content of Naess's own answer to his deepest questions about living in the world than to his method of asking deeper questions per se. The content of Naess's own answer with respect to these questions has to do with the realization of our capacity to identify more widely and deeply with the world around us. And it is this emphasis on our capacity to identify beyond (or trans-) our own small, egoic, personal concerns that has led me to characterize what is most distinctive and defensible about his approach to ecosophy and support of the deep ecology movement as representing a transpersonal approach to ecological concerns. Thus, while I may think that the term deep ecology is, as it were, an "unhappy" formulation, I am at one with Naess on the content of his views. But all this, as they say, is another story, or, more precisely, another argument, and one that I have presented at length elsewhere (see *Toward a Transpersonal Ecology*).

For now, it remains to say that my thanks to Arne Naess for the inspiration that his own fascinating intellectual path and enriching friendship has bequeathed to this particular thinker cannot be adequately expressed in words. Even so, here's a thoroughly inadequate "point of departure formulation" that I trust will be interpreted by all with a very great depth of intention: *Thank you, Arne!*

Notes

1. I provide a brief overview of the range and influence of Naess's work since the 1930s in my book *Toward a Transpersonal Ecology: Developing New Foundations for Environmentalism* (Boston and London: Shambhala Publications, 1990), see pp. 81-91. [Reprinted earlier in this issue of *The Trumpeter*.]

2. To avoid cluttering the text with notes I shall simply state that, unless otherwise noted, all quotations from Naess herein are from his brief, candid autobiographical article "How My Philosophy Seemed to Develop," in *Philosophers on Their Own Work*, vol. 10, ed. Andre Mercier and Maja Svilar (Bern: Peter Lang, 1983), pp. 209-226. Despite the fact

that this article represents the most sustained piece of autobiographical writing that Naess has published, it seems to be hardly known.

3. Freud was based in Vienna until 1938 when the Nazis invaded Austria and he was forced to flee to England. He died in London (of cancer) the following year. The Vienna Circle met until Moritz Schlick, its founder, was murdered in 1936 (more on the break up of the Circle later in the paper).

4. The Cambrian period refers to the period that ran from around 570 to 500 million years ago that constituted the beginning of the Palaeozoic era (570-225 million years ago). As Stephen J. Gould notes in his marvellous book *Wonderful Life: The Burgess Shale and the Nature of History* (London: Penguin Books, 1991), p. 55, "the inception of the Palaeozoic era denotes a concentrated episode of [biological] diversification—the 'Cambrian explosion', or first appearance of multicellular animals with hard parts in the fossil record."

5. Personal conversations, Oslo, June 1984 and September 1990; and Perth, Western Australia, and Hobart, Tasmania, March 1986.

6. Naess's major elaboration of his approach to semantics is *Interpretation and Preciseness: A Contribution to the Theory of Communication* (Oslo: Oslo University Press, 1953). A simpler, more popularly aimed presentation is Naess's *Communication and Argument: Elements of Applied Semantics* (Oslo: Oslo University Press, 1966, reprinted 1981). For briefer overviews of Naess's approach to semantics, see Arne Naess, "Toward a Theory of Interpretation and Preciseness," in *Semantics and the Philosophy of Language*, ed. Leonard Linsky (Urbana, Illinois: The University of Illinois Press, 1952), pp. 248-269; and Ingemund Gullvag, "Depth of Intention," *Inquiry* 26 (1983): 31-83.

7. Naess, "Toward a Theory of Interpretation and Preciseness," p. 257.

8. Gullvag, "Depth of Intention," p. 35.

9. See, for example, Naess, "Toward a Theory of Interpretation and Preciseness."

10. Arne Naess, "Through Spinoza to Mahayana Buddhism or Through Mahayana Buddhism to Spinoza?," in *Spinoza's Philosophy of Man: Proceedings of the Scandinavian Spinoza Symposium 1977*, ed. Jon Wetlesen (Oslo: University of Oslo Press, 1978), pp. 143.

11. For references for these quotations and many other similar ones by Naess - as well as an extended discussion of this point - see chs. 4 and 5 of *Toward a Transpersonal Ecology*.

Copyright retained by author

Citation details: Warwick Fox, "Intellectual Origins of the 'Depth' Theme in the Philosophy of Arne Naess." *The Trumpeter: Journal of Ecosophy* 9 (1992): 68-73.