

Review: Beneath the Surface: Critical Essays in the Philosophy of Deep Ecology

By Eric Katz, Andrew Light and David Rothenberg (Eds.)

Reviewed by [Barbara L. Wagner](#)
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Katz, Eric, Andrew Light, & David Rothenberg (Eds.). *Beneath the Surface: Critical Essays in the Philosophy of Deep Ecology*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2000. 328 pp. ISBN 0-262-61149-X (paper). US\$65.00. Alk. paper

Deep ecology evokes deep thoughts in readers, whether ecologists, environmentalists, or adherents of earth religions. This anthology treats this philosophy of the "deep green theory" as one of several eco-philosophies (or ecosophies), one that may apply in different vocations and fields. It includes essays not primarily from this movement's advocates.

Norwegian philosopher Arne Naess coined the term "deep ecology" in 1972 to describe a philosophical movement based on earth-centric values. In the 1984 "Platform of Deep Ecology," Naess and George Sessions describe the basic premises as a belief in the intrinsic value of non-human nature, a belief that ecological principles should dictate human actions and moral evaluations, an emphasis on non-interference in natural processes, and a critique of materialism and technology.

All three editors are professors of philosophy: Eric Katz and David Rothenberg at the New Jersey Institute of Technology, and Andrew Light at the State University of New York, Binghamton. A broad overview, detailed analysis, and rigorous assessment of deep ecology's strengths and weaknesses were the editors' goals. A bibliography supplements readings cited in notes at the end of each essay.

The editors are primarily concerned with deep ecology's philosophical position concerning ontology, the fundamental nature of things. "For us, deep ecology is a philosophy about the nature of the world and the human place in this world, or the human relation to the world ... part of it or apart from it. It ... focuses on the fundamental ontological interrelatedness and identification of all life forms, natural objects, and ecosystems" (p. xiv).

The selected essays are grouped into two parts. Part I, *Deep Ecology and Its Critics*, includes essays by the editors supplemented by those of Professors John Clark, William Grey, Val Plumwood, Mathew Humphrey, and Ariel Salleh. Part II, *New Horizons for Deep Ecology*, includes editor Rothenberg's essay and those of Professors Michael E. Zimmerman, Arran Gare, Johathan

Maskit, Knut A. Jacobsen, Deane Curtin, and Bron Taylor. In analyzing this philosophy, these authors raise the questions that need to be asked and explored. Deep ecology's connections with other contemporary worldviews and comparisons with other schools of thought are explored, thus becoming a starting point for in-depth discussions.

While they state their intent to provide a detailed analysis, the editors also admit this collection is not a comprehensive one. Not all deep ecology issues are covered; absent are discussions of specific policy issues, the "economic imperialism of international environmental programs," criticisms of economic materialism, and criticisms of non-sustainable technological developments. Also not considered are arguments for changing human lifestyles and restructuring society to be in harmony with natural processes.

Environmentalists may look for the applications of these ideas in practical action. But the primary use for this anthology will most likely be for academic courses in philosophy. Students in environmental management programs may usefully encounter this as a supplemental text, or in an elective course discussing the theoretical underpinnings of managing natural resources.

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