

The Apron Diagram

Overview

I see the deep ecology movement and its supporters as part of a total view that comprises many levels and many ultimate philosophies and diverse practices in close contact with one another. To illustrate this I use an “apron diagram” (figure 2), which illustrates logical, as distinct from genetic, relations between views. By *logical relations*, I mean verbally articulated relations between the premises and conclusions. They move down the diagram in stages: some conclusions become premises for new conclusions. By *genetic relations*, I refer to influences, motivations, inspirations, and cause-and-effect relations. They are not indicated anywhere in the apron diagram. They may move up and down or anywhere, and they involve time.

The platform principles of the deep ecology movement can be grounded for individual supporters in a religion or an ultimate philosophy. The religions and philosophies from which people can support these principles are many and diverse. In a loose sense the movement can be said to be derived from these kinds of fundamentals. The situation reminds us that a set of very similar or even identical conclusions may be drawn from divergent premises. The platform can be the same, even though the fundamental premises differ. One must avoid looking for one definite philosophy or religion among all the supporters of the deep ecology movement. Fortunately, a rich manifold of fundamental views are compatible with the platform of

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THE LONG-RANGE DEEP ECOLOGY MOVEMENT

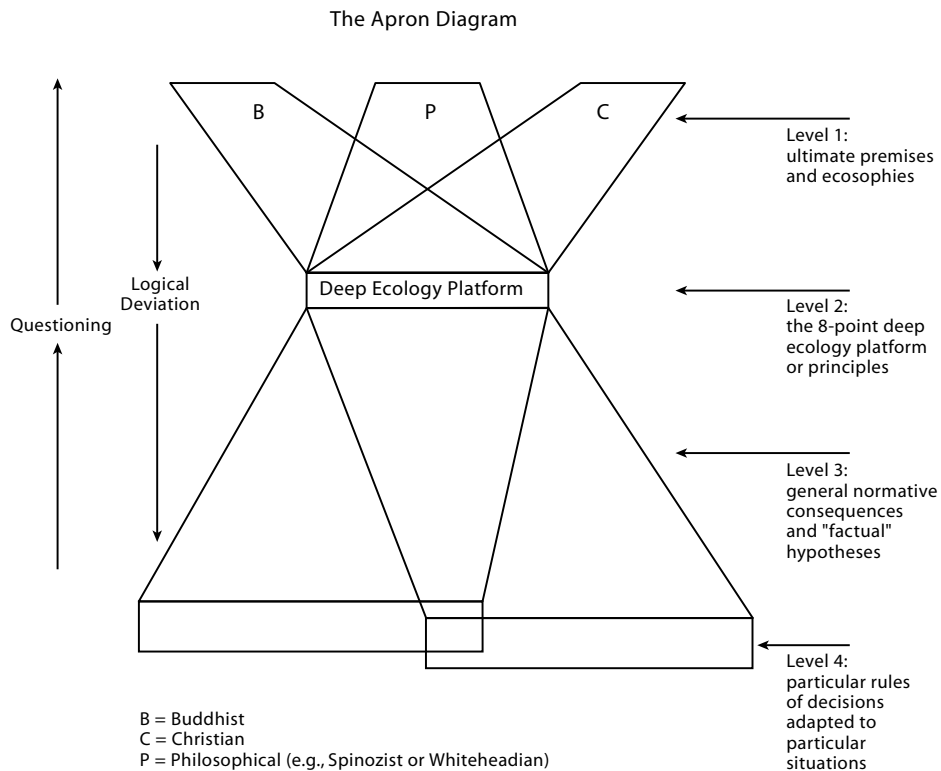


Figure 2. The Apron Diagram

the deep ecology movement. Supporters live in different cultures and have different religions. Furthermore, manifold kinds of consequences are derived from the platform because of these differences, because of differences in local conditions, and so on.

We must take four levels into account: (1) verbalized fundamental philosophical and religious ideas and intuitions; (2) the platform of the deep ecology movement; (3) more or less general consequences derived from the platform—lifestyles and general policies of every kind; and (4) concrete situations and practical decisions made in those situations.

The possibility of the platform principles being derived from a plurality of mutually inconsistent premises—the *B*-set and the *C*-set—is illustrated in the upper part of the apron diagram. *B* can be Buddhism, and *C* can be Christianity. *P* may be Spinoza's philosophy, or it could be Ecosophy

T. Similarly, the lower part of the diagram illustrates how, with one or more of the eight principles as part of a set of premises, mutually inconsistent conclusions may logically be derived, leading to the *C*-set or *B*-set of concrete decisions. *C* might be inspired by a sort of Christianity, and *B* by a sort of Buddhism. Or, again, P_1 may be Spinoza-inspired while P_2 follows a certain ecological philosophy. (Unfortunately, the relation of deepness in the apron diagram leads upward. If we are to avoid mixing metaphors, the apron should be turned upside down.)

The distinction between the four levels is important. Supporters of the deep ecology movement have ultimate views from which they derive their acceptance of the platform, but those views may be very different from person to person and from group to group. Likewise, supporters may disagree about what follows from the eight points, partly because they interpret them differently, partly because what follows does not follow from those eight points alone but from a wider set of premises, and these might be in conflict.

The deep ecology movement thus can be seen to manifest both plurality and unity: unity at level 2 (as is true for many global grassroots movements) and plurality at other levels. The apron diagram can be used to illustrate the same general aspects of other international movements, such as the social justice and peace movements.

Further Elaboration and Examples

1. Let us start by asking, What beliefs of supporters of the deep ecology movement might separate them from the rest of the supporters of the environmental movement? What might separate them on a fairly general and abstract level? No one answer is supposed to be the correct one, and the question itself may be interpreted in somewhat different ways.

Suppose one proposal contains eight points, each expressed through one, two, or three sentences. We are now going to study such a proposal from one and only one point of view, the premise-conclusion point of view.

2. We ask, How do supporters of the deep ecology movement justify their stated beliefs? Are some stated beliefs *based* on other beliefs they have? They cannot be based on other beliefs, because then you would have to have infinitely many. You must stop somewhere. Some are ultimate, at least temporarily ultimate. (Note that in speaking of beliefs we do not intend to

say that they are “*only* beliefs,” that is, that they are not certain or true or right or expressing facts.)

According to my experience, supporters of the deep ecology movement usually state beliefs on which they base some or all of their “eight-point beliefs.” These normally, but not always, have the character of ultimate beliefs, making them premises for their eight-point beliefs. That is, they suggest that from the former beliefs the eight-point beliefs follow as conclusions; thus, they accept the former beliefs as premises.

An example: Peter, a supporter of the deep ecology movement, says that all living beings have value in themselves. We ask him to justify that, if he does not think it is self-evident. Peter answers with two sentences: “Creatures that God has created all have a value in themselves. God created and creates every living kind of being.” We will say that Peter infers “All living beings have a value in themselves” as a conclusion from the two premises. He may then use the conclusion as a premise for new conclusions, for example: “Bacteria have value in themselves.” He only needs one more premise, namely, “Bacteria are living beings.” The new conclusion may again be used as one of the premises for reaching new conclusions. We get a *chain* of premise-conclusion relations.

We now introduce a distinction between “beliefs on level 1” and “beliefs on level 2.” Premises of the beliefs stated in the list of eight points we call beliefs on level 1, and the eight points themselves we call beliefs on level 2. Or speaking more generally: A set of beliefs that presents a proposal of what supporters of the deep ecology movement have *in common* on a fairly general and abstract level we call a set of beliefs on level 2. The premises of such a set, suggested by supporters of the deep ecology movement, we call beliefs on level 1.

In the example, the supporter of the deep ecology movement clearly has the existence of God as a creator as a premise. If he happens to have premises for his belief in God as a creator, we say that they also belong to level 1. That is, *any* premise Peter *uses* for his level-2 beliefs we class as belonging to his level-1 beliefs. We are not here interested in *what* they are, but that they are premises of the level-2 beliefs.

3. It turns out that different supporters of the deep ecology movement announce different level-1 beliefs—often incompatible sets. Or one sup-

porter does not understand at least some of the first-level beliefs of another supporter. To me a couple of Gary Snyder's Buddhist first-level beliefs, or rather some of his sentences expressing these beliefs, are ununderstandable. I might understand them if I studied Buddhism carefully enough, but such a study has no high priority: we agree on level 2.

The diversity of level-1 beliefs is a strength, not a weakness. There are no deep cultural differences without diversity at level 1.

Unity in diversity: unity at level 2, diversity at level 1!

4. Now we jump to a level we call level 4: practical decisions in concrete (dated) situations. "Ah, a moose in our garden. What do we do? Call the police!" Fifty years ago some people in Oslo ran for their guns. Now, (decent) people call the police, who are in charge of the practical decisions: shoot in earnest, shoot to tranquilize and transport the moose far out of Oslo, and so on. The decision to call the police may be taken by a supporter of the deep ecology movement, because he or she knows the rules and finds it is the best solution for the *moose*.

The level-4 decision cannot be based solely on level-2 beliefs. Critical, complex thinking involving a variety of beliefs intervenes. Those we say belong to level 3. Only under rare and special conditions do we try to articulate as fully as we can the additional premises leading from level 2 to level 4—"leading" in terms of a premise-conclusion chain. Difficult? In theory, yes, but we all sometimes use the aspects of premise and conclusion.

More or less inevitably, level 1 contains philosophical or religious beliefs (or both). I propose to characterize, or even define, a supporter of the deep ecology movement as a person whose environmentally relevant beliefs are based on philosophical or religious beliefs in the sense of having beliefs on level 1 that are, at least in a broad, *nonprofessional* sense, philosophical or religious.

The argumentation pattern of a supporter of the deep ecology movement, taken as a whole, reveals references to *ultimate premises*. This relates to the preferred sense of the term *deep*: the argumentation, if the supporter of the deep ecology movement tries to state what he or she ultimately stands for (in questions related to the environment and the ecological crisis), touches rock-bottom questions. Sheer deepness is not enough, however; the argumentation goes through level 2! James Watt, the U.S. administrator of

environmental policy under President Reagan, based his decisions on rock-bottom beliefs within his form of Christianity (“Why so much preservation when the end is near?”). He certainly did not accept any of the Naess-Sessions Eight Points or similar proposals.

A small technicality: some supporters of the deep ecology movement find that the intrinsic value of living beings is obvious, self-evident. Do we then say that they have no level-1 beliefs at this point? We may, but we may also say that the point belongs to *both* level 1 and level 2 for these particular supporters. Logically it is okay; they tell us that from premise *P*, the conclusion *P* follows. Anyhow, to hold that every living being has a value in itself is to enter the sphere of philosophical considerations. There are naturally a host of questions related to the four-level conception that lead us into difficulties, but here is not the place to go into them.

What, then, is the four-level conception good for? To sort out agreements and disagreements. For example, if by ecofeminism you mean that the ecological crisis owes essentially to the domination of masculine-type value priorities, this can be articulated on level 3. The strategy for overcoming the crisis, the level-4 decision, will be colored by a point of view belonging in deep ecology movement argumentation patterns. It shows up in the argumentation pattern of well-known deep ecology ecofeminists like Patsy Hallen (1987). Some supporters of the deep ecology movement will not entirely agree, and disagreement occurs between supporters of the deep ecology movement on levels 3 and 4.

The so-called apron diagram illustrates the kinds of room for agreement and disagreement. It is, however, not meant to suggest that only one definite set of level-2 beliefs should be available. Changing one or more of the eight points of the Naess-Sessions proposal means that changes will follow on the other levels. A movement is dynamic and manifests changes of emphasis.

Two things are often forgotten: the apron serves to clarify the specific character of a subspecies of the environmental movement. In a subspecies characterization, one does not include characteristics of the species as a whole. Supporters of the shallow or reform movement tend to argue only on levels 3 and 4, that is, their argumentation pattern when described in terms of the apron is wholly contained at those levels.

Against the term *shallow* the reformists argue that going into philoso-

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phy, questions about intrinsic value, meaning of life, and so on, is side-tracking the issue, getting lost in a blind alley, plus it undermines realistic cost-benefit analysis. It is therefore a plus, not a minus, to limit oneself to levels 3 and 4.

The second thing easily forgotten is the fact that the apron consistently limits itself to premise-conclusion relations; this arrangement is only one among many others, the “genetic” arrangements.