

“Response to ‘Notes From the Field: Report on Visit to Arne Naess’” by Bill Devall

I am compelled to respond to Crowley for several reasons. I hope to correct some of Crowley’s disinformation. I don’t know if Crowley includes me as one of the unnamed Americans who he counts among the “increasingly dogmatic American and Australian elaborations of (Naess’s) philosophy.”

I also want to encourage readers of ISEE to develop their own ecosophies based on the union of theory and practice. I suggest they read my essay “Conservation of Biodiversity: Opportunities and Challenges” in which I include several versions of the “Platform” of the deep, long-range ecology movement” that Naess and George Sessions originally articulated in 1985.

I have known Professor Naess for almost three decades. I have traveled with him in Norway and Australia. Crowley claims that Naess is a recluse who is aloof from social interactions. Naess is not a recluse. He is extremely sociable. Crowley says “But while Tvergastein represents the peace and quiet beauty Naess sees in nature, it also highlights his detachment from the world of human interaction and concerns of social justice.”

Crowley does not discuss Naess’ own reflections of the meaning of Tvergastein in terms of his concern for loss of sense of place in a world of increasing globalization and sameness brought about by many social forces (SWAN vol. 10,339-359).

Naess is kind and generous in social interactions, with his wife, Kit Fai, with children, with anyone who approaches him. For personal meetings with Arne readers of *ISEE newsletter* can read Alan Drengson, “SWAN flies at Oslo Reception,” Andrie Whitaker’s “Five Things You Should Know About Arne Naess,” and Margarita Garcia Notario’s “Meeting With a Giant,” all published in *The Trumpeter: Journal of Ecology*, <http://trumpeter.athabascau.ca/index.php/trumpet> in vol 22.1.

Crowley states that Naess does not have empathy with poverty and the starving people on this planet.

Naess wrote extensively on the problems of poverty and called for “ecological sustainability.” See for example his response to Guha. Naess was inspired by the Bruntland report and frequently said that without ecological sustainability, the goals of the Bruntland report to provide for human future generations cannot be realized.

I am not one of the “hero worshipers” that Crowley disdains in his “Report”, however I worked extensively on *The Selected Works of Arne Naess* (SWAN). I find it distressing that Crowley does not mention the SWAN in his “Report.” In SWAN we provided the most accurate

rendering of Naess' evolving thoughts. Without mentioning SWAN, my intuition tells me that the underlying theme of Crowley's "Report" is an attempt to discredit the scholarship of SWAN and to personally attack Naess' integrity.

The union of theory and practice is one of the central themes of Naess' life. He was not only an academic philosopher; he was living philosophy (see Naess' *LIFE'S PHILOSOPHY*).

I cannot find any indication in Crowley's "Report" that he visited with Arne's wife, Kit-fai nor that he visited the office at the University of Oslo that contains Naess' archives. Since you published Crowley's very personal statements about Naess and his relationships with other people, surely you, as editor, would require that Crowley at least mention Kit-fai who has the most close relationship with Naess and continues to contribute to his personal well-being.

I have had many, long conversations with Naess about his experiences in Nazi occupied Norway. Crowley does not include the full story of Naess's relationship with the underground. According to Naess, the Norwegian underground decided he should not be an official member of the underground for tactical reasons. During one difficult situation, Naess says he had guns intended for the underground stored in his office at University of Oslo. After the war, Naess says, members of the underground did not want to discuss their operations in public because they still feared the Soviet Union and wanted to remain anonymous in case of Soviet occupation of Norway. According to Naess, the underground primarily provided intelligence on the Nazi in Norway to Allied Forces.

After the end of World War II, Naess was asked to become the leader of a reconciliation committee bringing those who were tortured during the Nazi occupation of Norway to tell their stories and those who were torturers to tell their stories. This is the process that was followed many years later after the end of Apartheid in South Africa. This is one example of how Naess is different from many academic environmental philosophers in his active involvement in society and how Crowley provides disinformation to readers of the ISEE newsletter about Naess' role in the social justice movement.

In my way, I tried to follow Naess' approach to the union of theory and practice in activism on the issue of old growth forests. I know the abuse that I received from many of my academic colleagues how difficult it is to even appear at protest demonstrations while an academic professor. Crowley should be holding Naess up as a guiding light to the academic

philosophers and readers of ISEE Newsletter rather than criticizing him for playing a minor role in protests against building a dam on a river in Norway.

Naess' essays on the tragedy of Norwegian whaling and his recommendations on living in mixed communities of humans, bears, sheep, and wolves, show his continued attempts at reconciliation and peaceful dwelling in rural areas. Readers of *ISEE newsletter* might be interested in attempt at using Naess' method of living in mixed communities in the development and implementation of social policy concerning condors, bears, mountain lions and wildfires in California.

Crowley says that he did a tutorial with Holmes Rolston during the Spring semester, 2006. *The Selected Works of Arne Naess*, ten volumes, were published by Springer, The Netherlands, in 2005. The SWAN is the definitive edition of Naess's works. Naess's essays that are not included in The SWAN, but are online on *The Trumpeter* website.

We live during an era of global warming. We need both scientific studies and wisdom philosophy. Naess frequently used the term "ecosophy" rather than "deep ecology." He considered Rachel Carson the founder of the modern deep, long-range ecology movement. In face of intellectual oppression and disinformation spread by some members of academia, the development of the deep, long-range ecology movement has been remarkable (see my essay "The Deep, Long-Range Ecology Movement 1960-2000" in *Ethics and the Environment*, 2002).

Naess has faith that people in everyday life, not only academic philosophers, understand is happening to the earth under the impact of global warming, globalization of economy, and the hegemony of capitalist accumulation.

The most hopeful ecological future may be in the small farms and local communities, one of which Crowley visited during his brief trip to Norway. (see my essay "The End of American Environmentalism?" *Nature and Culture*, Autumn, 2006).

#### Citations:

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