

Deeper Ecology Movement:
Deep Ecology Movement Remodelled by Deconstruction Apprehended by An Oriental Mind-
set

Mansik Lee
(Kyungwon University)

The unprecedented seriousness of environmental crisis demands a high degree of consensus. The relationship between humans and non-humans has been described with the terms of wealth, asset and resource based upon the concept of personal ownership during the industrialization. Arne Naess discloses the inconsistent and even contradictory logic of environmentalism of industrial societies. I believe we have the utterly ethical, if not theological, obligation to take care of the planet earth. However, I don't think we humans are qualified to represent adequately non-humans especially when the biosphere does not depend upon human societies for its existence. The following platform principles No. 1 and No. 2 of DEM(Depth Ecology Movement) are "the nonethical opening of ethics" and "a violent opening" for the ecological revolution because "there is no ethics without the presence of the other"(Derrida:1976, 139-40).

1. The welfare and flourishing of human and non-human living beings has value in itself. The value of the non-humans is independent of their usefulness to humans.
2. Richness and diversity of living beings has value in itself.

All the oppositions including that of human and non-human are rooted in the metaphysics of Western ethnocentrism. Thus the declaration of the intrinsic value of all living beings is nonethical in terms of metaphysics but a violent opening of the new ethics for ecological revolution. If ethics were to be mentioned, the presence of the other should be seriously considered. Mahayana Buddhism may be referred in this respect not for the annihilation of self but for the realization of self from egoism to compassion, whose spirit is well represented by the dharma talk of Zen master Seong[西翁], "Wherever you are, be a master[隨處作主]." The ecological crisis is not only about the serious environmental problems but about the demise of industrial society itself upon which all the fundamental systems of modern society, such as family, class and nation, have been dependent. Therefore, the ecological crisis would not be solved within the existing systems of modern society originated from the industrial revolution. I'd like to explicitly express agreement with the ultimate goals of DEM. But as to the means I found out a lot of suggestions for concrete ideas drastically foreign to the supporters of DEM. Even if all of us agree wholeheartedly with the principles of DEM, it is clear the feasibility is one of its major problems because its messages are too naive.

The plans for ecological sustainability can be implied locally in the developed countries but should be expounded and implemented globally including in the developing and underdeveloped countries whose life style has been transforming toward higher standard of living with higher levels of population and consumption of natural resources, which is hailed as industrial development. One of the main solutions for the local problems caused by the drastic climate changes, such as tropical storm, flood and drought, can be suggested only by the global

cooperation including Al Gore's efforts in his movie *An Inconvenient Truth* dealing with the greenhouse gas effect which originated locally, for example, with the rain forest destruction resulted from the terribly low standard of living in South. The positions of intellectuals in developing or underdeveloped countries may be very different from those in developed countries even though all of them are keenly aware of the urgency to work out the global problems of ecological crisis.

Naess says "the planet may be divided into three types of areas: wilderness, patches of free nature, and human dominated area"(Naess:2005b, 30). He defines 'free nature' in cities, and not just park, with its goal that "every little child should have access to free nature, because it will help them understand very easily that other living beings, like themselves, like to live, they are wonderful to look at, and to be together with"(Naess:2005c, 50). The concept of free nature in cities, which is safe enough for little children to play, is too utopian for the citizens in almost all the countries to appreciate except those in top 20 developed countries of the world at the very most. It is based upon the original idea that we can go to faraway pristine places to experience the pure nature. But virtually almost all the environments has clear signs of human intervention: fires, the hunting of animals and the harvesting of plants or fruits. There is not much area left in the world that has not undergone serious human impact. Naess's free nature in cities is not a pure nature but a man-made nature.

Free nature in cities is one of the Western concepts of ecology revealed as the guise or disguise of a primary mode in terms of Arcadian vision of industrial revolution based upon the materialistic ethos. Perhaps this human aspiration will never end as it is essentially theological. "Its historical *closure* is, however, outlined"(Derrida:1976, 14). "A careful and thorough discourse" is needed to outline the historical closure of the metaphysics of industrial revolution with both (a) the critical concepts to "designate rigorously their intimate relationship to the machine whose deconstruction they permit" and (b) the critical concepts to "designate the crevice through which the yet unnameable glimmer beyond the closure can be glimpsed" in the same process(Derrida:1976, 14). This is one of the reasons why the principles of DEM are so naive without sufficient feasibility and why Naess says shamelessly "there is no specialists in ecophilosophy" and that "team work is therefore essential in every ecosophical research, however modest"(Naess:2006, 26-7).

It is all the possibilities to solve the environmental problems in terms of industrial revolution that must be first thought, until the moment of *impasse*, before attempting to understand all the possibilities of ecologically alternative plans. Because the ecological revolution belongs to the industrial revolution ecologists claim to fight against even though ecology can never be thought under the category of industrial development. The ecological revolution has been already discoursed *within* and *before* the industrial revolution. Nobody did not declare the beginning of ecological revolution but it has been seen that the ecological revolution has been already described all over the places. The ecological revolution has been described without being publicly declared.

I do not dare to question, in the level on which modern development has been evaluated, the truth of the purposes of industrial revolution. Bringing both industrial development and environmental protection to underdeveloped countries is a reckless work which usually leads not to the conservation of natural environment but to the excessive destruction of nature with a

lot of political excuses. Environmentalist's political approach is both precipitous and simplistic, encouraging environmental protection in nations that may not have the social and economic conditions necessary to sustain it. Environmentalists are not prepared to understand, assess and respond to the complexities of other societies in their own countries as well as in other countries.

I'd like to stress that I am not against the platform principles of DEM per se; I merely object the way these principles have typically pursued. Many of us will not be completely satisfied with one of the temporary solutions to reduce the social tension asking market-dominant minorities to share some of their wealth by making significant, visible contributions to the local societies. Mother Teresa, who won a Nobel Peace Prize for her charitable work with the poor and the sick, embodies the old compassionate way of treating social problems. Governments are sometimes no more efficient than the private sectors and now showing the limit of their capability to take care of all the social services like schools, hospitals, public transportation and garbage removal.

Jean-Francois Lyotard published *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* as a kind of manifesto for the on-going complete change of world view from modernism to postmodernism. However, the modernity will not bow out gracefully to give way to the postmodernity. The modern condition will be as important as the postmodern condition for a very long time. When Derrida writes "History can be neither a decidable object nor a totality capable of being mastered, precisely because it is tied to *responsibility*, to *faith*, and to the *gift*(Derrida:1995, 5-6)," he indicates that we humans cannot make absolute decisions outside of the consensus or beyond the acknowledged limit of knowledge and certainty, and that we have to endure the very ordeal of the undecidable condition.

Derrida tries to explain the history of religion as the process of transition from the orgiastic mystery to Platonism, responsibility on the other, and to Christianity in *The Gift of Death*;

Although it is incorporated, disciplined, subjugated, and enslaved, the orgiastic is not annihilated. It continues to motivate subterraneously a mystery of responsible freedom that is at the same time a politics, indeed the still partly intact foundation of politics in the West; it continues to motivate such a freedom after the second turnaround or conversion that is Christianity: (Derrida:1995, 19)

I think this is one of the finest description for human history mainly because Derrida does not describe the process of historical transition from one world view to another by the dichotomous mechanism. I coined a term 'transclusion[包越]' which is the combination of two concepts, transcendence[超越] and inclusion[包含], for the Derridian description of historical transition.

Jonathan Culler describes the feminist movement in terms of Derridean deconstruction in his book *On Deconstruction*(43-64), in which the three level process of 'transclusion' is applied as follows. (1) The philosophy of difference. The biological condition of women is stressed based upon the difference of male and female, which is explained usually by the term sex. (2) The philosophy of differing. The political condition of women is emphasized based upon the differing activities of the masculine and the feminine, which is explained usually by the term gender. Feminist criticism is a political act to change the world by changing the consciousness of readers. (3) The philosophy of differance. The cultural condition of women is highlighted

based upon the difference of the masculinity and the femininity, which is explained usually by the term sexuality. The task of third level of feminist criticism is "to investigate whether the procedures, assumptions, and goals of current criticism are in complicity with the preservation of male authority, and to explore alternatives"(Culler, 61).

The system of three level transclusion may be used to describe the current process of historical transition from the modern industrial society as follows.

| | | |
|-------------------|------------------|-------------------|
| <i>Difference</i> | <i>Differing</i> | <i>Differance</i> |
| subject | subjectivity | subjectification |
| policy | politics | the political |
| realism | symbolism | deconstruction |
| book | text | textuality |
| liberation | arrogance | humility |

The platform principles No. 5 and No. 7 written in the below may be appreciated as some practical solutions suggested by Naess.

5. Present human interference with the non-human world is excessive and the situation is rapidly worsening.

7. The appreciation of a high quality of life will supersede that of a high standard of living.

A gradual reduction of population(No. 5) as well as public and private consumption(No. 7) is too idealistic to be achieved here. The principle of humility and abstention itself does not lead anybody to the activeness. When there is a conflict between economic interests and health, people will generally support what gives them employment and income. We humans now live in the world where threats to our well-being are everywhere: loss of job security and unemployment, family breakdown, crime and punishment, not to mention the possibility of ecological collapse.

David W. Low introduces Frank Fisher's 'three stages of environmental concern,' which is quite similar to my system of three level transclusion, in his article "Environmental Concern as a Triadic System." Three progressively deeper levels are (1) the whistle-blowing level to establish an awareness of environmental breakdown, (2) the formulation of social insights and political actions in environmental problems and (3) the examination of the possible future consequences of the very ways of ecological thinking. While the principles of DEM seem to aim at the third level, Naess is in the whistle-blowing level especially when he tries to suggest an alternative action plan. He is well aware of his level of environmental concern when he admits that his action plan is "a very unlikely development, but important as a guiding star"(Naess:2005a, 88).

The processes of human negotiation with nature as well as with other humans have been already carried out since the period of hunters-gatherers in the last Ice Age. Negotiation is not a system to produce mutual agreement to guarantee some success but a sphere to strengthen the preventive procedures of possible and unavoidable dangers lurked in industrial societies. The

major task of ecological studies should be to read and write what has been already happening in *between*. We can and do systematically negotiate boundaries and other practices with adjacent human and non-human societies if we know how to negotiate the borders of their respective living spaces. The negotiation will produce an alternative action plan for ecological sustainability required not by manufacturing it according to a specific set of rules, but by making available an incredible diversity of material from which the appropriate plan is selected. Remarkable resilience and evolutionary possibilities will be provided by the enormous redundancy in alternative plan making.

The deep questioning approach of DEM is very praiseworthy. Unfortunately it is not enough to meet the present crisis. Ever deepening questioning process is desperately needed to cope with the ever-changing world. This is why I'd like to call DEM Deeper Ecology Movement in stead of Deep Ecology Movement. My type of green society will be not only ecologically successful but also fully industrialized. I think the whistle for the platform principles of DEM will be blown loudly and long enough to be heard by everybody on earth because it may take time before lots of environmental conflicts need not to be faced. (duleehyun@yahoo.co.kr, mslee@kyungwon.ac.kr)

Works Cited

- Culler, Jonathan. 1982. *On Deconstruction: The Theory and Criticism after Structuralism*. London: Routledge.
- Derrida, Jacques. 1976. *Of Grammatology*. Tr. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins UP.
- . 1995. *The Gift of Death*. Tr. David Wills. Chicago and London: The U of Chicago P.
- Low, David W. 2003. "Environmental Concern as a Triadic System." *The Trumpeter* 19-1: 57-68.
- Liotard, Jean-Francois. 1984. *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*. Tr. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi. London: Manchester.
- Naess, Arne. 2005a. "Ecosophy, Population, and Sustainable Development." *The Trumpeter* 21-1: 72-89.
- . 2005b. "Architecture and Deep Ecology." *The Trumpeter* 21-2: 29-34.
- . 2005c. "Does Humanity Have a Cosmic Role? Protecting and Restoring the Planet." *The Trumpeter* 21-1: 49-52.
- . 2006. "Notes on the Methodology of Normative Systems." *The Trumpeter* 22-1: 14-28.