general norms—only vague general guidelines. The more narrow and specific the questions posed, the less vagueness there will be. For example, I have proposed norms relating to communities of bears, wolves, sheep, and sheepowners in Norway.1

Another relevant factor is the felt nearness of different living beings. This factor largely determines our capacity to strongly identify with a certain kind of living being, and to suffer when they suffer. One cannot put forth ethical rules of conduct without taking our limited capacities, and such personal feelings, seriously. If it is difficult to avoid killing A, for example, because of its smallness, whereas killing B is easily avoided, then we tend to protect B rather than A. And there is an obvious diversity of obligations. We obviously have special obligations towards our own children: any animal may be killed in order to feed one’s starving child. Obligations toward individuals that have been members of our communities for long periods of time are greater than toward accidental visitors. Furthermore, there is, of course, the relevance of suffering: is the suffering of A less than that of B? Does A have the capacity to suffer?

The rather simple thing I am trying to convey here is that an ethic that attempts to deal with the differences between nonhuman living beings is of a comparable level of complexity with an ethic which concerns itself with our behavior toward different people and groups with which we interact.

Related to the above, I prefer the term living being to the term organism. The intuitive concept of “life” (or “living being”) sometimes includes a river, a landscape, a wilderness, a mountain, and an arctic “waste.” The intuition has a little, but not much, to do with biology or neurophysiology. Intrinsic value, as posited by the intuition, is influenced, but not decisively, by “biological news”: for instance, news about the whale’s “nervous system complexity comparable to humans.”

The kind of intuition I have been speaking about I take to be rather common among supporters of the Deep Ecology movement. It is not easy to verify this in detail, however, because of terminological and conceptual differences.2

The broad stream of nature poetry, over thousands of years, is perhaps the best source of confirmation of the widespread intuitive appreciation of the same right of all beings to live and blossom.

NOTE


2. This essay was originally given as a lecture, March 12, 1986, at Murdoch University, Western Australia, sponsored by the Keith Roby Memorial Trust. Reprinted with permission.
is compatible with maturity in some major sets of relationships, such as those
towards one’s family or friends. And so I use the qualification comprehensive to mean “being mature in all major relationships.”

3. Traditionally, the maturity of the self has been considered to develop
through three stages: from ego to social self (comprising the ego), and from
social self to a metaphysical self (comprising the social self). But in this conception of the maturity of the self, Nature is largely left out. Our immediate
environment, our home (where we belong as children), and the identification
with nonhuman living beings, are largely ignored. Therefore, I tentatively
introduce, perhaps for the very first time, the concept of ecological self. We
may be said to be in, and of, Nature from the very beginning of our selves.
Society and human relationships are important, but our self is much richer in
its constitutive relationships. These relationships are not only those we have
with other humans and the human community (I have elsewhere introduced
the term mixed community to mean those communities where we consciously
and deliberately live closely together with certain animals).

4. The meaning of life, and the joy we experience in living, is increased
through increased self-realization; that is, through the fulfillment of potentials
each of us has, but which are never exactly the same for any two living beings.
Whatever the differences between beings, nevertheless, increased self-realization implies a broadening and deepening of the self.

5. Because of an inescapable process of identification with others, with
increasing maturity, the self is widened and deepened. We “see ourselves in others.” Our self-realization is hindered if the self-realization of others, with
whom we identify, is hindered. Our love of ourself will fight this hindering
process by assisting in the self-realization of others according to the formula
“Live and let live!” Thus, everything that can be achieved by altruism—the
dutiful, moral consideration for others—can be achieved, and much more, by
the process of widening and deepening ourselves. Following Kant, we then
act beautifully, but neither morally nor immorally.

6. One of the great challenges today is to save the planet from further
eco logical devastation which violates both the enlightened self-interest of hu-
man s and nonhumans, and decreases the potential of joyful existence for all.

II

Now, proceeding to elaborate these points, I shall start with the peculiar and
fascinating terms ego and self.

The simplest answer to who or what I am is to point to my body. But
clearly I cannot identify my self, or even my ego, with my body. For example,
compare:

Self-realization

I know Mr. Smith.
I like poetry.
The only difference between
us is that you are a
Presbyterian and I am a
Baptist.

In the above sentences, we cannot substitute “my body” for “I.” Nor can
we substitute “my mind” or “my mind and my body” for “I.” More ade-
quately, we may substitute “I as a person” for “I,” but this does not, of course,
tell us what the ego or the self is.

Several thousand years of philosophical, psychological, and social-psy-
chological thinking has not brought us any adequate conception of the “I,” the
“ego,” or the “self.” In modern psychotherapy these notions play an indispensa-
ble role, but, of course, the practical goal of therapy does not necessitate phi-
losophical clarification of these terms. It is important to remind ourselves about
the strange and marvelous phenomena with which we are dealing. Perhaps
the extreme closeness and nearness of these objects of thought and reflection
adds to our difficulties. I shall offer only one single sentence which resembles
a definition of the “ecological self.” The ecological self of a person is that with
which this person identifies.

This key sentence (rather than a definition) about the self shifts the burden
of clarification from the term “self” to that of “identification,” or rather “process of identification.”

III

I shall continue to concentrate on the “ecology of the self,” but will first say
some things about identification.

What would be a paradigm situation involving identification? It would be
a situation which elicits intense empathy. My standard example involves a
nonhuman being I met forty years ago. I was looking through an old-fash-
ioned microscope at the dramatic meeting of two drops of different chemicals.
At that moment, a flea jumped from a lemming which was strolling along the
table and landed in the middle of the acid chemicals. To save it was impossible.
It took many minutes for the flea to die. Its movements were dreadfully
expressive. Naturally, what I felt was a painful sense of compassion and empathy.
But the empathy was not basic, rather it was a process of identification: that “I
saw myself in the flea.” If I had been alienated from the flea, not seeing intuit-
avely anything even resembling myself, the death struggle would have left
me feeling indifferent. So there must be identification in order for there to be
compassion and, among humans, solidarity.

ARNE NAESS ON DEEP ECOLOGY

One of the authors contributing admirably to a clarification of the study of the self is Erich Fromm. He writes:

The doctrine that love for oneself is identical with "selfishness" and an alternative to love for others has pervaded theology, philosophy, and popular thought; the same doctrine has been rationalized in scientific language in Freud's theory of narcissism. Freud's concept presupposes a fixed amount of libido. In the infant, all of the libido has the child's own person as its objective, the stage of "primary narcissism," as Freud calls it. During the individual's development, the libido is shifted from one's own person toward other objects. If a person is blocked in his "object-relationships," the libido is withdrawn from the objects and returned to his or her own person; this is called "secondary narcissism." According to Freud, the more love I turn toward the outside world the less love is left for myself, and vice versa. He thus describes the phenomenon of love as an impoverishment of one's self-love because all libido is turned to an object outside oneself.1

What Fromm attributes here to Freud we can now attribute to the shrinkage of self-perception implied in the fascination for ego-trips. Fromm opposes such a shrinkage of self. The following quotation from Fromm concerns love of persons but, as "ecosophers," we find the notions of "care, respect, responsibility, knowledge" applicable to living beings in the wide sense.

Love of others and love of ourselves are not alternatives. On the contrary, an attitude of love toward themselves will be found in all those who are capable of loving others. Love, in principle, is indivisible as far as the connection between "objects" and one's own self is concerned. Genuine love is an expression of productiveness and implies care, respect, responsibility, and knowledge. It is not an "effect" in the sense of being effected by somebody, but an active striving for the growth and happiness of the loved person, rooted in one's own capacity to love.2

Fromm is very instructive about unselfishness—it is diametrically the opposite of selfishness, but still based upon alienation and a narrow perception of self. We might add that what he says also applies to persons experiencing a sacrifice of themselves:

The nature of unselfishness becomes particularly apparent in its effect on others and most frequently, in our culture, in the effect the "unselfish" mother has on her children. She believes that by her unselfishness her children will experience what it means to be loved and to learn, in turn, what it means to love. The effect of her unselfishness, however, does not at all correspond to her expectations. The children do not show the happiness of persons who are convinced that they are loved; they are anxious, tense, afraid of the mother's disapproval, and anxious to live up to her expectations. Usually, they are

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affected by their mother's hidden hostility against life, which they sense rather than recognize, and eventually become imbued with it themselves. . .

If one has a chance to study the effect of a mother with genuine self-love, one can see that there is nothing more conducive to giving a child the experience what love, joy, and happiness are than being loved by a mother who loves herself.3

We need environmental ethics, but when people feel that they unselfishly give up, or even sacrifice, their self-interests to show love for nature, this is probably, in the long run, a treacherous basis for conservation. Through identification, they may come to see that their own interests are served by conservation, through genuine self-love, the love of a widened and deepened self.

At this point, the notion of a being's interests furnishes a bridge from self-love to self-realization. It should not surprise us that Fromm, influenced as he is by Spinoza and William James, makes use of that bridge. "What is considered to constitute self-interest?" Fromm asks. His answer:

There are two fundamentally different approaches to this problem. One is the objectivistic approach most clearly formulated by Spinoza. To him self-interest or the interest "to seek one's profit" is identical with virtue.

"The more," he says, "each person strives and is able to seek his profit, that is to say, to preserve his being, the more virtue does he possess; on the other hand, in so far as each person neglects his own profit he is impotent." According to this view, the interest of humans is to preserve their existence, which is the same as realizing their inherent potentialities. This concept of self-interest is objectivistic inasmuch as "interest" is not conceived in terms of the subjective feeling of what one's interest is but in terms of what the nature of a human is, "objectively."4

"Realizing inherent potentialities" is one of the good, less-than-ten-word, clarifications of "self-realization." The questions "What are the inherent potentialities of the beings of species X?" and "What are the inherent potentialities of this specimen X of the species Y?" obviously lead to reflections about, and studies of, X and Y.

As humans we cannot just follow the impulses of the moment when asking what our inherent potentialities are. It is something like this that Fromm means when he calls an approach "objectivistic" as opposed to an approach "in terms of subjective feeling." Because of the high estimation of feeling and a correspondingly low estimate of so-called objectivization (Verdinglichung, rationalization) within Deep Ecology, Fromm's terminology is not adequate today, but what he means to say is appropriate. And it is obviously relevant when we deal with species other than humans: animals and plants have interests in the sense of ways of realizing inherent potentialities which we can study only by

interacting with them. We cannot rely on our momentary impulses, however important they are in general.

The expression "preserve his being," in the quotation from Spinoza, is better than "preserve his existence" since the latter is often associated with physical survival and a "struggle for survival." An even better translation, perhaps, is to "persevere in his being" (perseverare in suo esse). This has to do with acting from one's own nature. Survival is only a necessary condition, not a sufficient condition of self-realization.

The concept of self-realization, as dependent upon insight into our own potentialities, makes it easy to see the possibilities of ignorance and misunderstanding in terms of what these potentialities are. The "ego-trip" interpretation of the potentialities of humans presupposes a major underestimation of the richness and broadness of our potentialities. As Fromm puts it, "man can deceive himself about his real self-interest if he is ignorant of his self and its real needs."

The "everything hangs together" (or "everything is interrelated") maxim of ecology applies to the self and its relation to other living beings, ecosystems, the ecosphere, and to the Earth, itself, with its long history.

IV

The existence and importance of the "ecological self" is easy to illustrate with some examples of what has happened in my own country, Norway.

Scattered human habitation along the arctic coast of Norway is uneconomical and unprofitable, from the point of view of the current economic policy of our welfare state. Welfare norms require that every family should be connected by telephone (in case of illness); this costs a considerable amount of money. The same holds for the mail and other services. Further, local fisheries are largely uneconomical perhaps because a foreign armada of big trawlers of immense capacity is fishing just outside the fjords. And so, the availability of jobs is crumbling.

Therefore, the government heavily subsidized the resettlement of people from the arctic wilderness, concentrating them in so-called centers of development (small areas with a town at the center). But the people, as persons, are clearly not the same when their bodies have been thus transported. The social, economic, and natural setting is now vastly different. The objects with which they work and live are completely different. There is a consequent loss of personal identity. They now ask "Who am I?" Their self-respect and self-esteem has been impaired. What is adequate in the so-called periphery of the country is different from what is important in the so-called centers.

If people are relocated, or rather, transplanted from a steep mountainous place to the plains below, they also realize (but too late) that their home-place was a part of themselves and that they identified with features of that place. The way of life in the tiny locality, with the intensity of social relations there, has formed their personhood. Again, "they are now not the same as they were."

Tragic cases of this can be seen in other parts of the Arctic. We all regret the fate of the Eskimos; their difficulty in finding a new identity, a new social self, and a new more comprehensive ecological self. In addition, the Lapps of arctic Norway have been hurt by interference with a river for the purpose of developing hydroelectricity. Accused of an illegal demonstration at the river, one Lapp said in court that the part of the river in question was "part of himself." This kind of spontaneous answer is not uncommon among people. They have not heard about the philosophy of the wider and deeper self, but they talk spontaneously as if they had.

V

We may try to make the sentence "This place is part of myself" intellectually more understandable by reformulations—for example, "My relation to this place is part of myself"; "If this place is destroyed something in me is destroyed"; "My relation to this place is such that if the place is changed, I am changed".

One drawback with these formulations is that they make it easy to continue thinking of two completely separable, real entities: a self and the place, joined by an external relation. The original sentence rather conveys the impression that there is an internal relation of sorts. I say "of sorts" because we must take into account that the relation may not be reciprocal. If I am changed, or even destroyed, the place would be destroyed, according to one usual interpretation of "internal relation." From the standpoint of phenomenology and the "concrete contents" view, the reciprocity holds, but that is a special interpretation. We may use an interpretation such that if we are changed, the river need not be changed.

The newborn, of course, lacks any conceptions, however rudimentary, corresponding to the tri-partition—subject, object, and medium. Probably the conception (not the concept) of one's own ego comes rather late, say after the first year. First there is a vague net of relations. This network of perceived and conceived relations is neutral, similar to what in British philosophy was called "neutral monism." In a sense, we are trying to work out this basic sort of crude monism anew, not by trying to become babies again, but by better understanding our ecological selves. This understanding has not had favorable conditions for development, since prior to the time the Renaissance glorified our ego by placing it in opposition to the rest of reality.
What is the practical importance of this conception of a wide and deep ecological self? When we attempt to defend Nature in our rich industrial societies, the argument of our opponents is often that we are doing it to secure beauty, recreation, and other non-vital interests for ourselves. Our position is strengthened if, after honest reflection, we find that the destruction of Nature (and our place) threatens us in our innermost self. If so, we are more convincingly defending our vital interests, not merely something “out there.” We are engaged in self-defense. And to defend fundamental human rights is vital self-defense.

The best introduction to the psychology of the self is still to be found in William James’ excellent and superbly readable book, The Principles of Psychology (1890). His 100-page chapter on the consciousness of self stresses the plurality of components of the wide and deep self as a complex entity. (Unfortunately, he prefers to talk about a plurality of selves. I think it may be better to talk about the plurality of the components of the wide self.)

If we say about somebody that he or she is not himself today, we may refer to a great many different relations to other people, to material things, and certainly, I maintain, to what we call his or her environment: the home, the garden, the neighborhood . . .

When James says that these relata belong to the self, of course, it is not in the sense that the self has eaten the home, the environment, etc. Such an interpretation would mean that the self is still identified with the body. Nor does it mean that an image of the house inside the consciousness of the person belongs to the self. When somebody says about a part of a river-landscape that it is part of himself, we intuitively grasp roughly what he means. But it is difficult, of course, to elucidate this meaning in philosophical or psychological terminology.

A last example from William James: We understand what is meant when someone says “As a man I pity you, but as an official I must show you no mercy.” Obviously the self of an official cannot empirically be defined except as relationships in a complex social setting. Thus, the self cannot possibly be inside the body, or inside a consciousness.

Enough! The main point is that we do not hesitate today, being inspired by ecology and a revived intimate relationship to Nature, to recognize and accept wholeheartedly our ecological self.

VI

The next section is rather metaphysical. I do not defend all the views presented here; rather I primarily wish to inform you about them. As a student and admirer of Gandhi’s non-violent direct actions in bloody conflicts since 1930,
when moving over the floor in darkness one could easily avoid trampling on one's fellow beings. Thus, Gandhi recognized a basic common right to live and blossom, to self-realization in a wide sense applicable to any being that can be said to have interests or needs. Gandhi made manifest the interrelation between self-realization, non-violence, and what has sometimes been called biospherical egalitarianism.

In the environment in which I grew up, I heard that what is important in life is to get to be someone—to outdo others in something, to be victorious in comparing one's abilities with others. The ability to cooperate, to work with people, to make them feel good, of course, "pays" in a fiercely individualistic society, and high positions may require that—but only to the extent to which they are ultimately subordinated to one's career, to the basic norms of the ego-trip, not to a self-realization worthy of the name. To identify self-realization with ego-trips manifests a vast underestimation of the human self.

According to the usual translation of Pali or Sanskrit, Buddha taught his disciples that the human mind should embrace all living things as a mother cares for her son, her only son. Some who would never feel it to be meaningful or possible that a human self could embrace all living things, might stick to the usual translation. We shall then ask only that your mind embrace all living beings, together with your good intentions to care, feel, and act with compassion.

If the Sanskrit word translated into English is atman, it is instructive to note that this term has the basic meaning of "self," rather than "mind" or "spirit" as one usually sees in the translations. The superiority of the translation using the word self stems from the consideration that if your self (in the wide sense) embraces another being, you need no moral exhortation to show care. Surely you care for yourself without feeling any moral pressure to do it—provided you have not succumbed to a neurosis of some kind, developed self-destructive tendencies, or hate yourself.

Incidentally, the Australian Deep Ecology supporter and ecofeminist Patsy Hallen uses a formula close to that of Buddha's: We are here to embrace rather than conquer the world. It is of interest to notice that the term world is being used here rather than living beings. I suspect that our thinking need not proceed from the notion of living being to that of the world, but we will conceive reality, or the world we live in, as alive in a wide, not easily defined, sense. There will then be non-living beings to care for.

VII

If "self-realization" (or "self-fulfillment") is habitually associated today with lifelong ego-trips, then isn't it stupid to use this term for self-realization in Gandhi's widely different sense or (in a less religiously loaded context) as a term for widening and deepening the "self" so that it embraces all life forms? Perhaps it is. But I think the very popularity of the term makes people feel safe, and they listen for a moment. In that moment the notion of a greater "self" should be introduced, pointing out that if they equate self-realization with ego-trips, then they seriously underestimate themselves. "You are much greater, deeper, generous and capable of more dignity and joy than you think! A wealth of non-competitive joys is open to you!"

But I have another important reason for inviting people to think in terms of deepening and widening their selves, starting with the ego-trip as the crudest, but inescapable, zero point. It has to do with a notion usually placed as the opposite of the egoism of the ego-trip; namely the notion of altruism. The Latin term ego has, as its opposite, the term alter. Altruism implies that the ego sacrifices its interests in favor of the other, the alter. In the latter case, one is motivated primarily by duty: it is said that we ought to love others as strongly as we love ourselves.

Unfortunately, what humanity is capable of loving from mere duty or, more generally, from moral exhortation, is very limited. From the Renaissance to the Second World War about four hundred cruel wars were fought by Christian nations for the flimsiest of reasons. It seems to me that, in the future, more emphasis has to be given to the conditions under which we most naturally widen and deepen the "self." With a sufficiently wide and deep "self," ego and alter as opposites are, stage by stage, eliminated. The distinction between ego and alter is, in a way, transcended.

Early in life, the social "self" is sufficiently developed such that we do not prefer to eat a big cake all by ourselves. We share the cake with our friends and our nearest. We identify with these people sufficiently to see our joy in their joy, and our disappointments in theirs. Now is the time to share with all life on our maltreated Earth through a deepening identification with all life forms and the greater units: the ecosystems and Gaia, the fabulous old planet of ours.

VIII

Moral acts are acts motivated by the intention to follow the moral laws at whatever cost; that is, to do our moral duty solely out of respect for that duty. Therefore, the supreme test of our success in performing a pure moral act is that we do it completely against our inclination: that we, so to speak, hate to do it but are compelled to do it by our respect for the moral law. Kant was deeply awed by two phenomena: "the heaven with its stars above me and the moral law within me."
If we do something, we should do it according to the moral law, but if we do something out of inclination and with pleasure—what then? Should we abstain from performing the act, or try to work up some displeasure? Not at all, according to Kant. If we do what the moral law says is right on the basis of positive inclination, then we perform a beautiful act. Now, my point is that, in environmental affairs, perhaps we should try primarily to influence people towards performing beautiful acts. We should work on their inclinations rather than their morality. Unhappily, the extensive moralizing within environmentalism has given the public the false impression that we primarily ask them to sacrifice, to show more responsibility, more concern, better morality. As I see it, we need to emphasize the immense variety of sources of joy which are available to people through an increased sensitivity towards the richness and diversity of life, and the landscapes of free nature. We can all contribute to this individually, but it is also a question of local and global politics. Part of the joy stems from the consciousness of our intimate relation to something bigger than our ego; something which has endured for millions of years, and is worth continued life for many more millions of years. The requisite care flows naturally if the “self” is widened and deepened so that protection of free nature is felt and conceived as protection of ourselves.

Academically speaking, what I am suggesting is the supremacy of environmental ontology and realism over environmental ethics as a means of invigorating the environmental movement in the years to come. If reality is as it is experienced by the ecological self, our behavior naturally and beautifully follows strict norms of environmental ethics. We certainly need to hear about our ethical shortcomings from time to time, but we change more easily through encouragement and through a deepened perception of reality and our own self. That is, a deepened realism. How can that be brought about? The question needs to be treated in another paper! It is more a question of community therapy than community science: a question of healing our relations to the widest community—that of all living beings.

IX

The subtitle of this paper is “An Ecological Approach to Being in the World.” I now want to speak a little about “Nature,” with all the qualities we spontaneously experience as being identical with the reality we live in. This means a movement from being in the world to being in Nature. Then, at last, I shall inquire into the goal or purpose of being in the world.

Is joy in the subject? I would say No. It is just as much, or as little, in the object. The joy of a joyful tree is primarily “in” the tree we should say—if pressed to choose between the two possibilities. But we should not be pressed:

there is a third position. The joy is a feature of the indivisible, concrete unit of subject, object and medium. In a sense, self-realization involves experiences of the infinitely rich joyful aspect of reality. It is misleading, according to my intuitions, to locate joys inside my consciousness. What is joyful is something that is not “subjective”; it is an attribute of a reality wider than a conscious ego. This is philosophically how I contribute to the explanation of the internal relations between joy, happiness, and human self-realization. But this conceptual exercise is of interest mainly to an academic philosopher. What I am driving at is probably something that may be suggested with less conceptual gymnastics: namely that it is not unwarranted to believe that how we feel nature to be is not how nature really is. Rather, it is that reality is so rich that we cannot see everything at once; we see separate parts (or aspects) in separate moods. The joyful tree I see in the morning light is not the sorrowful one I see that night, even if they are the “same” tree in terms of their abstract (physical) structure.

X

It is very human to ask for the ultimate goal or purpose for being in the world. This may be a misleading way of putting the question. It may seem to suggest that the goal or purpose must somehow be outside of, or beyond, the world. Perhaps this can be avoided by living “in the world.” It is characteristic of our time that we subjectivize and individualize the question asked of each one of us: What do you consider to be the ultimate goal or purpose for your life? Or, we leave out the question of priorities, and simply ask for goals and purposes.

The main title of this paper is motivated partly by the conviction that self-realization is an adequate key-term expression one would use to answer the question of the ultimate goal in life. Of course, it is only a key-term. An answer by a philosopher could scarcely be shorter than the little book, Ethic, by Spinoza.

In order to understand the function of the term self-realization in this capacity, it is useful to compare it with two other terms—pleasure and happiness. The first suggests hedonism; the second, eudaemonism, in professional philosophical (but just as vague and ambiguous) jargon. Both terms connote states of feeling (in a broad sense of the term). Experiencing pleasure or being happy is to feel well. One may, of course, find that the term happiness connotes something different from this, but the way I use happiness, one standard set of replies to the question “How do you feel?” would be “I feel happy” or “I feel unhappy.” The following set of answers to the question would be rather awkward: “I feel self-realized” or “I do not feel self-realized.”

The most important feature of self-realization, as compared with pleasure

and happiness, is its dependence upon a certain view of human capacities (or better—potentialities). Again, this implies a particular view of human nature. In practice this does not imply a general doctrine of human nature. That is the work of philosophical fields of research.

An individual whose attitudes reveal that he or she takes self-realization to be the ultimate or fundamental goal in life has to have a view of his or her nature and potentialities. And the more one's nature and potentialities are realized, the more self-realization there is. The question “How do you feel?” may honestly be answered in the positive or negative, whatever the level of self-realization. If one has attained a certain level of self-realization, the question may be answered in the negative, in principle. But at this point, following Spinoza, I take the valid way of answering the question “How do you feel?” to be positive, because the realization of the fulfillment (using somewhat less philosophical jargon) of one's potentialities is internally related to happiness. But it is not related in such a way that by deliberately seeking happiness, one thereby realizes one's self. John Stuart Mill makes this point clearly in his philosophy; you should not deliberately go seeking for happiness (“Happiness, to be got, must be forgot”). That is a bad way to proceed even if, with Mill, you take happiness to be the ultimate goal in life. I think that it is much better to deliberately seek self-realization; to develop your capacities (using a rather dangerous word because it is easily interpreted in the direction of interpersonal, rather than intrapersonal, competition). But even the striving implied in the term competition may mislead. Dwelling in situations of intrinsic value, spontaneous non-directed awareness, relaxing from striving, are all conducive to self-realization as I understand it. But, of course, there are infinite variations among humans depending upon cultural, social, and individual differences. This makes the key term self-realization abstract in its generality. But nothing more can be expected when the question is posed as it is: “What might deserve the name of ultimate or fundamental goal in life?” We may reject the meaningfulness of such a question (I don't) but for those of us for whom it has meaning, an answer using few words is bound to be abstract and general.

Going back to the three key terms—pleasure, happiness and self-realization—the third has the merit of being clearly and forcefully applicable to any being with a specific range of potentialities. I limit this range to living beings, using “living” in a rather broad sense. I do not feel that the terms pleasure and happiness are so easily generalized. Having already introduced the rather general concept of “ecological self,” the concept of self-realization naturally follows.

Let us consider the preying mantis, a formidable group of voracious insects. They have a nature which is fascinating to many people. Mating is part of their self-realization, but some males are eaten while performing the act of copulation. While being devoured, is he happy, is he experiencing pleasure? We don't know. But, well done if he does! Actually he feeds his partner so that she has strong offspring. But it does not make sense to me to attribute happiness to these males. Self-realization? yes; happiness? no. I maintain that there is an internal relation between self-realization and happiness among people, and among some animal groups. As a professional philosopher, I am tempted to add a point where I have been inspired by Zen Buddhism and Spinoza: I agree that happiness is a feeling, but the act of realizing a potential is always an interaction involving, as one single concrete unit (one gestalt, as I would say), three abstract aspects: subject, object, and medium. And what I have said about joyfulness in nature holds as well of happiness in nature; they should not be conceived as merely subjective feelings.

The richness of reality is becoming even richer through our specific human endowments; we are the first kind of living beings we know of which have the potentials of living in community with all other living beings. It is our hope that all these potentialities will be realized—if not in the immediate future, then at least in the somewhat near future.

NOTES

2. Ibid., p. 59.
3. Ibid., p. 62.
4. Ibid., p. 63.
5. Ibid.
6. This and the following quotations from Gandhi are taken from Arne Naess, Gandhi and Group Conflict (Oslo: 1974), 35, where the metaphysics of Self-realization is treated more thoroughly. For further detailed discussions of identification, see Naess, "Identification as a Source of Deep Ecological Attitudes," reprinted in Radical Environmentalism, edited by Peter List (Belmont, Calif.: Wadsworth, 1993), 24–38; Naess, "Man Apart and Deep Ecology: A Reply to Reed," Environmental Ethics 12, no. 2 (1990): 185–192.