

Age of Humans?

Examining the Cosmic Perspective and the Individual

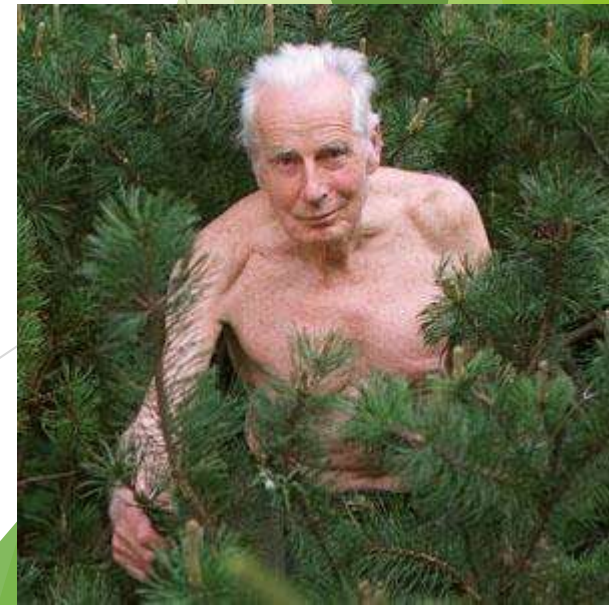
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Laying the Groundwork

- ▶ How are we to look at the environment and the damage we have done to it without relying on our own bias as humans?
- ▶ The Planetary Perspective Argument, The Cosmic Perspective Argument, Deep Ecology.
- ▶ What do these perspectives mean for the people living in the environments?

Why it Matters

- ▶ Arne Naess Criticizes what he calls the 'man in environment' viewpoint.
- ▶ Naess wrote that humans often look at themselves in the narrowest interpretation of self.
- ▶ Every part of an ecosystem is connected. Each individual effects the others.
- ▶ The world must be looked at as a complete organism and not as a binary system.
- ▶ When human action is looked at as natural it enables more shortsighted, self-serving action.

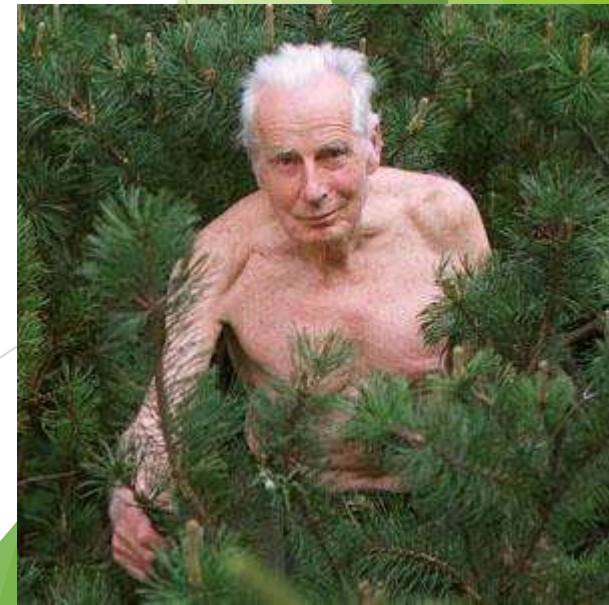


“The meaning of life, and the joy we experience in living is enhanced through increased self realization, that is, through the fulfillment of potentials that each of us has, but are never the same for any living beings.”

-Arne Naess

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The Planetary Perspective Argument (“PPA”)

- ▶ The PPA is an attempt to find a moral viewpoint that does not rely on human bias.
- ▶ PPA looks at the world from Earth’s perspective in geologic time, not real time.
- ▶ PPA states that the world has suffered great natural catastrophes.
- ▶ PPA suggests that Earth has moved in cycles from one period to another.

“

The new Age (of insects perhaps) will eventually be just as diverse, orderly, harmonious, and stable and thus no less good than our current ecosystem with its present compliments of species. ”

-J Baird Callicott

Criticisms of PPA

- ▶ The Planetary Perspective itself depends on scale.
- ▶ Current damage to the planet is insignificant if considering geologic time.
- ▶ This historical model ignores the dynamic and complex history of the Earth.
- ▶ After humans are gone there will be another dominating species.

Cosmic Perspective Argument (“CPA”)

- ▶ Builds from the Planetary Perspective.
- ▶ Cosmic Perspective builds off of recent advances in cosmology and astronomy.
- ▶ States that with more Earth-like planets being discovered, the less special Earth is.
- ▶ As a result, damage to Earth is not important.

Criticisms of CPA

- ▶ Due to the large scale of the argument complexity is ignored. It is only focused on whether life is there or not.
- ▶ Applied to an individual this would advocate giving up and never trying to move forward.
- ▶ When applied to the Universe the Earth's environmental degradation is even less significant

Who Cares?

- ▶ Apparently Oil Companies.
 - ▶ Shell, ExxonMobil, and British Petroleum all have sections of their websites dedicated to environmental preservation.
- ▶ Everyone should. As the problems for the individuals will become problems for society at large.