

## CHAPTER 7

### RISK MANAGEMENT, RATIONALITY AND DEEP ECOLOGY

*Peder Anker'*

#### Introduction

A barrage of criticism has been levelled at Deep Ecology from a variety of positions: philosophical, political, postcolonial, feminist. My objective here is not to rehearse the attacks but to inspect briefly the internal fissures within the theory itself which undermine its professed benevolent intentions: To participate actively in finding realistic solutions to environmental problems such as risk management. I shall compare Douglas MacLean's base for rational risk management with a different rational standpoint on the issue of individuality, consent and justification of political power represented by Deep Ecology. I wish to suggest that Deep Ecologists are not able to endorse indirect citizen consent in centralized risk management for two reasons:

First, there is an epistemological connection between individual rationality and indirect citizen consent in risk management that Deep Ecology, represented by Naess's "ecosophy T", does not support. According to MacLean "[...] social consensus about safety may be difficult or impossible to obtainin." instead one ought to build consent on indirect individual rationality and personal perceptions about risk among citizens. This indirect citizen consent in risk management is obtained through different individual opinions and personal perceptions about risk evaluation.<sup>2</sup>

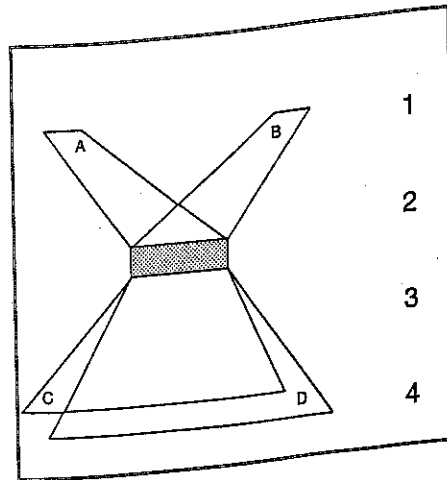
Second, according to MacLean, consent

among people on risk management is obtained by centralized decisions, justified by models of implicit, hypothetical or non social consent.<sup>3</sup> Deep Ecologists do not support such indirect consent.

#### Deep Ecological objections

To the claim that Deep Ecology does not support indirect citizen consent in risk management, Deep Ecologists can respond that Naess defends indirect consent, as illustrated by The Apron (below). Levels 1 to 4 indicate the direction of logical derivation of norms, while letters (A, B, C) and (D) refer to different schemes of values, or "ecosophies" (Naess's own "ecosophy T" denotes thus one of many possible ecosophies). The letter P stands for Naess's Deep Ecological Platform. According to The Apron, level 1 - the ultimate level of normative justification - allows clearly for pluralism of ecosophies (i.e. total views), whether philosophically or theologically inspired. In Naess's own *Weltanschauung*, the highest norm, as expressed in ecosophy T, is "self-realization", i.e. the realization of one's self as part of a universal, ecological Self.<sup>4</sup> The idea of self-realization, inspired by Spinoza and by Ghandi, breaks with the notion of an individual as an "atom" and places the self in the context of the communities to which it belongs, both human and biotic. Level 2 indicates that it is possible, at least among the advocates of non-anthropocentric conceptions of nature, to establish an

"overlapping consensus", to use Rawls' famous phrase. The basis for such consensus is provided by the Deep Ecological Platform P<sup>5</sup>. Level 3 is that of political analysis, while level 4 contains specific behavioral norms, marked C and D to allow for some cultural modifications of values due to different local conditions. It thus follows, according to this objection, that Deep Ecologists support agreement among different perceptions of risk evaluation.



To the claim that Deep Ecologists do not support consent based on individual rationality, they can respond that individualism rests on an inadequate understanding of the human condition. To proponents of ecosophy, there is an inevitable connection between individualism and the environmental havoc unleashed by competitive industrial society. The realization of the private sphere and its right to personal property is, according to this objection, linked directly to material consumption and a striving for goods which prevent the realization of the biosphere, or extended universal Self. The term self-realization should not be construed as an ego-realization (analogous to Spinoza's first level of understanding) but as an equivalent to Spinoza's second and third levels of under-

standing. Naess eschews a non-interventionary individual rationality in favor of communitarian activism based on a collective system of norms:

"[...] the positive appraisal [of individuality] becomes meaningful only within a value system in which norms for the expression of individuality and for collectivism (in several senses of the word) are allowed to confront each other and a ranking of values is suggested [...]"<sup>7</sup>

The implication is that the individual character is developed within a value system expressed by activism and enriched by diversity within groups that hold a collectivist ideology. Provided that personal peculiarities are not in conflict with the aims of the group, one may show individual entity within a collective. Individuality is essential but on the condition that one is part of an ecological community, a la kibbutz.<sup>8</sup> Naess' notion of diversity should therefore be understood as biotic diversity and not an ideological or political one. The notion of individual realization in the private sphere alienates human's relationship from the entirety of the bio-sphere and promotes an inadequate understanding of what self-realization is. Hence when risk managers attempt to establish indirect citizen consent within the framework of individual realization, this management remains an inevitably "shallow" approach to environmental problems.<sup>9</sup>

To the claim that Deep Ecologists reject indirect consent through centralized decisions, Deep Ecologists may respond that the real social consent of the public is more concerned with biotic welfare than risk management through centralization. Naess insists that the "grassroots" do not approve of centralized decisions regarding environmental problems. The reason is that the authorities are not representative of the majority of the

population, who prefer to live in an ecologically acceptable fashion within an environmentally friendly community. As often, he takes the Norwegians as representative of humanity *in toto*:

"[...] the Norwegian people are friendlier towards the environment than their party politics would suggest. [...] Today we can safely say that if Norwegian friendliness toward the environment does not differ essentially from USA, England and West-Germany, is it reasonable to think that our policies are more environmentally destructive than they would be if guided by public opinion. Our vaunted democracy thus fails to serve its purpose."<sup>10</sup>

So, according to Naess, centralized democratic decisions do not express the opinions of the public.

To the claim that Deep Ecologists reject centralized decisions, a Deep Ecologist response would be that individual justification of power through indirect consent is a result of strivings arising from Spinoza's first level of understanding. This understanding is an inadequate base for our society. What we need, according to Deep Ecologists, is more (ecological) understanding and not centralization of power. The notion of rationality that centralized justification presupposes is, according to ecosophy T, for those who have an inadequate sense of self-preservation: when the passions of competition, honour and suspicion drive them into a risky "race" for more material goods, technical solutions and short-term profits, they realize a need for centralized decisions on risk management. But the ecological balance, the primary condition for human life, is still undermined. Individual people, unable to transcend a pattern of behavior based on ego-realization, continue the kind of environmental plunder described so dramatically by Hardin in his

neo-Malthusian "Tragedy of the Commons".<sup>11</sup> The main victims are future generations. In many ways this ecosophic construction of modern industrial society resembles a Hobbesian natural state.<sup>12</sup> Deep Ecologists do not mean that our society today is utterly bereft of laws and regulations but that those whose self-realization is inadequate have a subjective understanding, or private realization, void of ecological insight.

"[...] there is for Spinoza, in his Ethics, a main distinction between the slaves and the free. *The self-preservation of the slaves is similar to Hobbesian self-preservation in the natural state*, but the self-preservation of the free does not correspond to that of citizens, neither in Hobbesian dictatorships nor in Spinozist democracies. *The former are not communities of free men, but structures based on force*".<sup>13</sup>

Characteristically, the political problem addressed by ecosophy is not so much traceable to recalcitrant citizens but to "structures based on force", imprisoning individual people in the inner (il)logic of power relations and management.

In the prevalent individualistic and utilitarian political thinking in Western industrial states, the terms "self-realization", "self-expression", "self-interest" are used for what is above called "ego-realization". One stresses the ultimate and extensive incompatibility of the interests of different individuals. "One man's slice of bread is another man's death."<sup>14</sup>

According to Deep Ecologists, these power structures bear responsibility for the near-Hobbesian "war of all against all" for economic survival, power structures based on an inadequate understanding of the human conditions, that risk management seems to maintain.

## Responses to the Deep Ecological objections

Can Naess' system absorb agreement among different risk evaluations that the «apron»-consent is meant to profess? Or is his consent a "false consent", in the sense that he implicitly rejects ethical systems that do not agree with the Deep Ecological view? From MacLean's point of view, different risk evaluations indicate a broad spectrum of multiple self-realizations, and he wants to allow them to breathe within the constraints of an overriding model of centralized consent. Naess's "Apron" allows for different grounds for adhering to Deep Ecology. In anticipation of difficulties in reaching consent on the platform P, Naess presupposes a set of actors with divergent views. There are "others" who need to be "changed" and convinced of the "right" (i.e. Deep Ecological) views. This is emphasized by the concept of **Deep Ecology**, which presupposes that some have **shallow** ecological views, or are guilty of deficient thinking.<sup>15</sup> The environmental front is directed against those who lack ecological self-realization. The platform P itself is then a consent for the already converted and serves as an intellectual bulwark against "those who need changing". Ergo the consent propounded by Naess seems to apply basically to those who have already been convinced. Seen from the outside, from the viewpoint of the those in the shallows, this is a pseudo-consent which, through a cunning rhetorical ploy, implicitly divides the world into those who are right and those who are wrong. It then sets out a program of converting the infidels.

How radical is the Deep Ecology Movement in its attitude to the "shallows" with the "narrow" individual ego-realization of the private sphere? The answer to this question depends on whether, and how far, Deep Ecologists admit and respect the rights

of their opponents to promote their shallow views. It is highly unclear how far Naess would go in "changing" individuals or societies that have models of consent based on an individualistic, and in the case of MacLean even anthropocentric, ecological understanding. "Change" in this case can be interpreted in two ways: either as reformist or as radical. **The reformist interpretation** suggests that the "change" would be brought about by the Deep Ecologists living out their respective ecosophies within the framework of a centralized constitution. In such a constitution, a system of government with one or more criteria of justice is logically independent and sets reasonable limits to the permissible notions of how one should live in a well-ordered society. This interpretation of "reformist" implies that the Deep Ecologists would work within a constitution, justified by models of indirect consent, in spite of its individualistic understanding of justice. The task would thus be to participate in risk management in order to reform society by legal means. This reformist interpretation should not be understood as a **modus vivendi** compliant with a model of consent, but as a well-integrated philosophical standpoint, meaning that the Deep Ecologists would have to be willing to defend superordinate independent criteria of justice from attack from within the movement.<sup>16</sup> Within such a reformist framework, ecosophy becomes reduced to a "therapeutic" philosophy, attempting to raise consciousness in order to transform people's private realizations into ecosophic self-realization.

**The radical interpretation**, on the other hand, implies that the "change" will be brought about by rejecting the centralized consent of risk management, as the latter is based on a notion of individualism and ultimately on an anthropocentric rationality and understanding of justice.<sup>17</sup> This means that the Deep Ecologists would do their best to

live out their respective ecosophies, but with the explicitly stated desire to change the entire concept of human management through non-violent political action and to construct a new society based on a different system of rationality and consent. The radical interpretation is thus a rejection of the existing anthropocentric system based on a conspicuously inadequate understanding of ecology. While seeking complete self-realization within this radical interpretation one complies with risk management on a temporary *modus vivendi* basis, i.e. for strategic reasons or because of the present distribution of power. There is here an element of Spinoza's political philosophy:

"[...] as the wise man has the sovereign right to do all that reason dictates, or to live according to the laws of reason, so also the ignorant and foolish man has the right to do all that desire dictates, or to live according to the law of desire.»<sup>18</sup> The ecosophist ("the wise") must accept an *ad hoc* compromise to coexist with those having shallow views (i.e. the "ignorant and foolish") in a purely strategic compliance with the existing management laws which are not compatible with ecosophy. This is a consequence of the economic, technological and ideological structures of an unjustified anthropocentric model of consent.

In attempting to articulate their position, Naess and his followers drive from pillar to post. If, in a discussion, one stresses the reformist interpretation, they reply that Deep Ecology is not a "reform movement" because we need a change in "[..]

basic economic, technological, and ideological structures."<sup>19</sup> If, on the other hand, one emphasizes the radical interpretation, the ecosophists retort that Deep Ecology is by no means "fundamentalist" or totalitarian but non-violent. These *ad hoc* responses are

reflected within the environmental movement more generally, with its split into reformist and radical wings. The Sierra Club is an example of the former, while the membership and the self-image of Greenpeace and Earth First! answer rather to the radical description. Whether one construes them in reformist or radical terms, the ecosophists' arguments concerning justice are unsatisfactory, as we argue below.

If the reformist interpretation is correct, then ecosophy lacks an explanation of how the adherents of the Deep Ecological movement should behave towards those who have an inadequate ecological self-realization. Nor does Deep Ecology give us any legal prompting on how actions meant to defend the environment may contravene statute laws without negating the idea of an alternative movement within the constitution. The reformist interpretation implies that the understanding and realization of the points in the Deep Ecological platform must be subject to certain precepts of justice. That is to say, some political platform on justice, logically located at level 3. of the Apron, must be recognized as an independent "safety net" or yardstick against which ecosophic norms may be measured with respect to justice. This does not mean that such a platform is explicitly entailed by Deep Ecology, but that the platform should be there as an essential precaution to avoid authoritarian interpretations of ecosophy and to leave room for consent to different views on risk evaluation.

If we follow the radical interpretation then we get stuck on the question of how the Deep Ecology movement is to implement a future State or society based on an ecocentric system of justice, and how such a system might work. The very fact that ecosophy, when it does make mention of justice, identifies what is right with what is right within its own normative system, points logically to the relevance of the radical interpretation. From the

ultimate ecosophic norm about the good life "N1: Self-realisation!" Naess, with help of hypothesis H1-H13 and further norms N2-N10, logically deduce a theory of rights: "N11:<sup>20</sup> All have equal rights to Self-realisation!". Justice, as a base for rational consent, is thus subsumed under one particular set of beliefs - a radical breach with the contractual ethic whereby political rights are practically independent of any notion of what constitutes the good life. Within ecosophy, it does not make sense to distinguish between ecosophic views on the good life and a theory of justice; justice is subsumed within Deep Ecologists' theory of the good life. It thus follows that only those with the right (deep) ecological understanding should be trusted with risk management. If this is practised in politics, Ecosophy can in fact prevent the self fulfillment of others,<sup>21</sup> which is incompatible with Naess' own norm "N2: Self-realization for all living beings!" since, as I have shown, Naess' "self-realization for all" refers ultimately to those within the movement, and not to those with shallow views who prefer an "ego-realization".

A problem with Naess' optimistic view of public opinion and his criticism of centralized decisions is that he has not attempted to collate his statistical evidence on the opinions of the "Norwegian people". Instead, he refers to a U.S. survey which supports his postulates.<sup>22</sup> Surveys by NIBR (the Norwegian Institute for Urban and Regional Research) actually indicate the opposite, i.e. that politicians and bureaucrats accord higher priority to the environment than their electors.<sup>23</sup> Though it is an endearing characteristic of Naess to take the "grassroots" seriously in his philosophy, the generalizations about the Norwegian people and the failure of democracy rest on very shaky empirical foundations. Extensive studies of statistical material would be required to vindicate or refute his claims. The very concept of the

"grassroots", however, is problematic. If "grassroots" is meant to describe the environmental activists as "far from the centers of power and decision making in routine politics", then there has been a study arguing, to the contrary, that "People who are far removed from routine politics and poor in social resources seldom take part in actions [of political protest]".<sup>24</sup> The public (i.e. "grassroots") perception of risk is also problematic. Often the public can both underestimate and exaggerate different risks, according to experts. One way of facing this problem is not to hide the "exaggerated"<sup>25</sup> risk evaluations in our risk communication, and let the expert's view be a qualified advice in democratic discourses on those cases where the public underestimate a risk.

Whatever the public's opinions on risk, the Hobbesian dilemma remains. To Hobbes, the problem was not the people at large, but the few naturally aggressive and foolhardy individuals who are bent on security, power and prestige and who are willing to take high risks. How to control the few who break away and who prefer short-term goals such as money, power and prestige to a sustainable society? How to restrain those who would risk to "go to hell first class"? In contrast to Hobbes, ecosophy T offers neither a contractual theory to explain the abolition of, e.g., Hardin's "limited natural state", nor any alternative political theory. To Naess, self-realization is the realization of humans as members of a biospheric community. Apart from the fact that the system of justice in this community should be based on principles of non-violence and direct political action, no precise guidance is given as to how to manage the changeover. Unless one endorses utopian anarchism, it can be reasonably inferred that the biospheric community must be governed by some political power capable of preventing individuals from relapsing into competitive materialism. Those in favor of

"limiting the state of nature" might accept the idea that all parties involved ought to relinquish their power to an ecologically enlightened Sovereign. This need not be an absolute ruler, as proposed by Hobbes, but some Sovereign People who would see to it that potential "shallow" breakaways live in an ecologically acceptable fashion. In Western societies fair models of justice and consent as a base of risk management do legitimize the use of force. The power of the Sovereign is legitimized by a contract between the actors. The difficulty in Hobbes' case is, of course, that the Sovereign is not bound by this contract. MacLean, by contrast, seems to propose a theory of consent whereby all actors, including the Sovereign, must agree on principles of justice and rights of the individual, almost irrespective of their personal risk evaluation: "The argument [of indirect consent], then, would have to show that ideally reasonable or rational people would consent to this decision [about risk] because the method that generated it takes account of all the factors that matter."<sup>27</sup> The objective of MacLean's models of indirect citizen consent with centralized decisions is to safeguard the right of all to live according to their values, and to account for all the factors that matter, deep or shallow, as long as this does not infringe upon the corresponding rights of others. Thus, the basic point is that models of consent must be justified in the eyes of our opponents, justified in the eyes of those who, according to the Deep Ecological view, need "changing". It follows that legitimation, justification and decision on risk management based on an "internal" system of norms, as in ecosophy, done without consent by people with different norms and values is wrong. Rights founded on an internal, and not an indirect model of citizen consent would be regarded as unjust by the "shallows".

Furthermore, what if another, equally deep

if not deeper, ecosophy U or F or O,<sup>28</sup> equipped with a concept of consent which is in conflict with Naess' ecosophy T should arise? This could lead to a schism within the Deep Ecology movement, since the conflict would not be regulated by any common model of consent. This brings us to the problem of the actual political consequences of Naess' model. Since Deep Ecology has a concept of consent (the platform in the Apron), it is a plausible assumption that other, competing deep philosophies will have their platforms, derived from their respective deep values. If there are at least two deep persuasions concerning the good life, of which at least one is not friendly to the ecosystem as a whole but only friendly to human beings,<sup>29</sup> then we need a centralized model of rationality by which they can be fairly separated so that an unregulated conflict does not break out. Naess has not been very much interested in suggesting an adequate model of consent which can mediate between differing deep convictions as to what (in a deep sense) is good. To MacLean, *per contra*, models of consent can prevent one view of what, in the deepest sense, constitutes the good life from infringing on the corresponding views of others that are of the utmost importance.<sup>30</sup> As one of several possible Deep Ecological persuasions, ecosophy T risks running into unregulated conflicts with the deep ecosophic self-realization of others, as well as with other, radically different, deep positions. The distinction between deep and shallow, self- and ego-realization, also invites a reading which restricts the notion of consent and threatens an unjust treatment of those who are outside Deep Ecology. To put such restrictions into political practice would, in fact, risk unleashing an authoritarian potential of the Deep Ecological movement. On the other hand, respect for a centralized model of indirect consent can be a base's for successful risk management.

**Footnotes:**

<sup>1</sup>Centre for Development and the Environment, Box 1116 Blindern, University of Oslo, N-0317 Oslo.

E-mail: peder.anker@sum.uio.no.

I am grateful to Nina Witoszek for here support.

<sup>2</sup>Douglas MacLean 1986, p. 18f.

<sup>3</sup>MacLean, 1986. "The idea [of implicit consent] is that individual preferences for risk and safety trade-offs are revealed in certain areas, where markets function properly, so we can use data from these areas to justify decisions in other areas." (p. 22.) on this idea, MacLean refers to Chauncey Starr. Hypothetical consent is obtained by asking "[...] what an individual would consent to under certain favorable conditions." (p. 24.) On this idea, MacLean refers to John Rawls. Nonconsent "[...] require direct appeals to the values we seek to secure, even though this might entail endorsing and ranking social values through philosophical arguments." (p. 27.) On this view, MacLean refers to Thomas Scanlon.

<sup>4</sup>Arne Naess, 1989, p. 84-85, cf. chap. 7. Naess draws on Spinoza's ethics and the idea of different levels of epistemological understanding. Spinoza's three levels of understanding include: (1) intuitive and adequate (in so far as one has grasped intuitively a deeper sense of the living, creative *natura naturans*; (2) rational and adequate (in so far as one has understood the already created *natura naturata*) and (3) inadequate (synonymous with ego-realization). See Benedict de Spinoza, 1955.

<sup>5</sup>The platform P: (1) The flourishing of human and non-human life on Earth has intrinsic value. The value of non-human life forms is independent of the usefulness these

may have for narrow human purposes. (2) Richness and diversity of life forms are values in themselves and contribute to the flourishing of human and non-human life on Earth. (3) Humans have no right to reduce this richness and diversity except to satisfy vital needs. (4) Present human interference with the non-human world is excessive, and the situation is rapidly worsening. (5) The flourishing of human life and cultures is compatible with a substantial decrease of the human population. The flourishing of non-human life requires such a decrease. (6) Significant change of life conditions for the better requires change in policies. These affect basic economic, technological, and ideological structures. (7) The ideological change is mainly that of appreciating life quality (dwelling in situations of intrinsic value) rather than adhering to a high standard of living. There will be a profound awareness of the difference between big and great. (8) Those who subscribe to the foregoing points have an obligation directly or indirectly to participate in the attempt to implement the necessary changes." Arne Naess, 1989, p. 29.

<sup>6</sup>MacLean, 1986 p. 20.

<sup>7</sup>Arne Naess, 1992, p. 321 (my trans.).

<sup>8</sup>ibid. See also Arne Naess, 1985, p. 261.

<sup>9</sup>Arne Naess, 1989, p. 16, 28.

<sup>10</sup>Arne Naess, 1987, p. 7. (my trans.).

<sup>11</sup>Garrett Hardin, 1968.

<sup>12</sup>Thomas Hobbes, 1985, chap. 6, p. 119, 122, chap. 8, p. 134-135, 138, chap. 10, p. 150-153, chap. 11, p. 160-161, chap. 13, p. 183-188.



<sup>13</sup>Arne Naess, 1980, p. 321, (my emphasis).

<sup>14</sup>\* Norwegian proverb. Arne Naess, 1989, p. 85.

<sup>15</sup>Note that "shallow" in this context refers to an inadequate ecological understanding, and not to "shallow people". It is shallow, subjectively narcissistic anthropocentrism that is Naess's target; he does not deny that the paddlers in the shallows may be "deep" in other matters. Ironically, the expression "shallow" may evoke, and has evoked, associations implying that those outside the green movement are "simplistic" and "limited" in all fields. Naess cannot be charged with this view.

<sup>16</sup>e.g. John Rawls, 1987, p. 23f.

<sup>17</sup>For a radical interpretation of Naess' work see Peter C. List, 1993.

<sup>18</sup>Benedict de Spinoza 1955b, chap. 16, p. 201.

<sup>19</sup>Arne Naess 1989, s. 29 (my emphasis). Point 6. in the platform P (see note 4.)

<sup>20</sup>Arne Naess, 1989, p. 197-210.

<sup>21</sup>On the authoritarian potential in the Deep Ecology movement, see Nina Witoszek and Peder Anker: *Is Theory Innocent? The Case of Deep Ecology*, Manchester University Press, (under publication).

<sup>22</sup>Naess refer to L.W. Milbrath, *Environmentalists: Vanguard of a New Society* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1984).

<sup>23</sup>NIBR-rapport 1992:1, p. 69f.

<sup>24</sup>For Naess' views on the "grassroots" see Naess (1987) p. 7 ff.

<sup>25</sup>See J.P. Olsen & H Sæter, 1980, p. 16 and p. 71 (my emphasis and trans.)

<sup>26</sup>K.S. Shrader-Frechette, 1993, p. 33. K.S.; 1991, p. 191.

<sup>27</sup>MacLean, 1986, p. 21.

<sup>28</sup>Warwick Fox, 1990, chap. 5.

<sup>29</sup>Warwick Fox, 1990, p. 134f.

<sup>30</sup>MacLean, 1986 p. 19f.

#### References

Fox, W. 1990. *Toward a Transpersonal Ecology; Developing new Foundations for Environmentalism*. Boston and London: Shambhala.

Hardin, G. 1968. «The Tragedy of the Commons», *Science* 162:1243-1248.

Hobbes, T. 1985. *Leviathan*. London: Penguin Classics

List, P.C. 1993. *Radical Environmentalism; Philosophy and Tactics*. Belmont: Wadsworth Publishing Company.

MacLean, D. 1986. «Risk and Consent: Philosophical Issues for Centralized Decisions». *Values at Risk*, edited by D. MacLean. New Jersey: Rowman & Allanheld.

Naess, A. 1980. «Environmental Ethics and Spinoza's Ethics. Comments on Genevieve Lloyd's Article». *Inquiry* 23:313-25.

Naess, A. 1985. «Identification as a Source of Deep Ecological Attitudes». *Deep Ecology*, edited by Michael Tobias. California: Avant Books.

Naess, A. 1989. *Ecology, community and*

*lifestyle*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Naess, A. 1987. *Eksperienes syn på naturens egenverdi* [The experts view on the intrinsic value in nature]. Oslo: Tapir Forlag.

Naess, A. 1992. *Økologi, samfunn og livsstil*. Oslo: Universitetsforlaget.

Olsen, J.P. and H. Sæter. 1980. *Aksjoner og demokrati* [Political actions and democracy]. Oslo: Universitetsforlaget.

Rawls, J. 1987. «The idea of an overlapping consensus». *Oxford Journal of Legal Studies* 7(1).

Shrader-Frechette, K.S. 1993. *Burying Uncertainty*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Shrader-Frechette, K.S. 1991. *Risk and Rationality*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

de Spinoza, B. 1955a. «The Ethics». *Works of Spinoza Vol II*. Trans. by R.H.M. Elwes. New York: Dover Publications.

de Spinoza, B. 1955b. «A Theologico-Political Treatise». *Works of Spinoza Vol II*. Trans. by R.H.M. Elwes. New York: Dover Publications.

## CHAPTER 8

### SHOULD WE RISK ANY CATASTROPHES?

*Ebhen A. Nilssen*

#### Introduction

Industrial pollution, nuclear industry, and deforestation all have severe catastrophes as possible outcomes. Nevertheless, such enterprises seem to be allowed at least because of three reasons: The benefit is highly valued, the probability of a catastrophe is believed to be low or uncertain, and we have consented to the risk. Are these reasons sufficient? I believe not.

I claim that if a society is not facing a situation of saving human lives, then it should not opt for actions having possibly catastrophic social or ecological consequences. A "catastrophe" is here understood as an event involving the loss of a large number of human beings within a shorter time span or as an even larger number of human losses within the lifetime of one existing or future generation. The loss of lives can occur directly or indirectly, for example, by ruining the environment on which human beings are dependent. In what follows I shall give two arguments supporting my claim and then answer four objections to them.

#### Two arguments

No relatively-valued benefit can justify actions with possible catastrophic consequences because human beings should be considered as beings with an absolute value. I defined a catastrophe as an event always directly or indirectly involving loss of human life.

According to deontological have an inherent value which with their having solely financial value. Inherent value while, for example, it a relative value. Immanuel 1804), one of the most influential philosophers ever, justification of inherent value to his reference to our autonomous Kantian deontologists maintain persons' monetary value as a criterion of moral permissibility category mistake? The reason that to carry out such calculation to consider individuals as with only a relative value; it found absolute value and Now, to risk a catastrophe some relatively-valued benefit this type of category mistake unethical from a deontological Nuclear power plants could concrete result of such a catastrophe since the risk of a major catastrophe on us to gain the benefit power and nuclear weapons. The mere possibility of a catastrophe should be enough to stop because of the irreversible destructive causes. In practical terms mean that if we could choose different actions X and Y, catastrophe as one of its potential then we should choose Y. T.