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Belkecir Mestefa

Saida University, Dr. Moulay Taher (Algeria)

<https://orcid.org/0009-0004-3670-8569>

moos743@gmail.com

Azizi Khaldia Amina

University of Oran 2 Mohamed Ben Ahmed (Algeria)

<https://orcid.org/0009-0008-0643-8456>

azizi.khaldiaamina@univ-oran2.dz

Ecosemiotics: Semiotic Roots of Deep Ecology in the Thought of Arne Næss

Abstract

This article seeks to uncover the organic unity and methodological continuity in the intellectual trajectory of the Norwegian philosopher Arne Næss (1912–2009), whose work is often portrayed as a sequence of leaps across discrete domains: from logical positivism to empirical semiotics and, subsequently, to deep ecology. The article challenges this fragmented reading and demonstrates how empirical semiotics, with central concepts such as “determination” and its contextual method of meaning analysis, provide the theoretical and methodological foundation for the later establishment of deep ecology.

Keywords: *empirical semiotics, deep ecology, ecosemiotics, determination, context*

Belkecir Mestefa

Səidə Universiteti, Dr. Moulay Taher (Əlcəzair)

<https://orcid.org/0009-0004-3670-8569>

moos743@gmail.com

Əzizi Xalidiya Amina

Oran Universiteti 2 Məhəmməd Ben Əhməd (Əlcəzair)

<https://orcid.org/0009-0008-0643-8456>

azizi.khaldiaamina@univ-oran2.dz

Ekosemiotika: Arne Næssin düşüncəsində dərin ekologiyanın semiotik kökləri

Xülasə

Bu məqalə, əsərləri tez-tez ayrı-ayrı sahələrdə sıçrayışlar ardıcılığı kimi təsvir edilən norveçli filosof Arne Næssin (1912–2009) intellektual trayektoriyasındakı üzvi birliyi və metodoloji davamlılığı aşkar etməyə çalışır: məntiqi pozitivizmdən empirik semiotikaya və sonradan dərin ekologiya. Məqalə bu parçalanmış oxunuşa meydan oxuyur və “determinasiya” və kontekstual mənə təhlili metodu kimi mərkəzi anlayışlarla empirik semiotikanın dərin ekologiyanın sonrakı qurulması üçün nəzəri və metodoloji təməl yaratdığını nümayiş etdirir.

Açar sözlər: *empirik semiotika, dərin ekologiya, ekosemiotika, determinasiya, kontekst*

Introduction

Philosophical thought is often reduced to closed compartments: philosophy of language, philosophy of science, environmental philosophy, and so forth. The history of philosophy is frequently presented as a trajectory of increasing specialisation and fragmentation, in which each philosopher is concerned with a field that is isolated from the others.

The intellectual career of the Norwegian philosopher Arne Næss (1912–2009), however, constitutes a striking challenge to this reductionist model. Here, a philosopher who began his journey within the milieu of logical positivism in Vienna went on to find a pioneering school of empirical semiotics and ultimately established the most influential deep ecology movement of the twentieth century. At first glance, this trajectory appears to consist of leaps between distant domains lacking any unifying thread.

The central hypothesis of this article, however, proceeds from the assumption that a profound continuity and organic unity run through this apparently plural path. Næss did not abandon semiotics when he turned to ecology; instead, he transformed it into a methodological and metaphysical instrument for grounding his radical environmental project. Empirical semiotics functioned as a laboratory in which he refined his philosophical tools and developed a "relational" and "contextual" understanding of meaning, being, and the self, an understanding that itself constitutes the core of deep ecology.

From this perspective, one may speak of a theory of "ecological semiotics" in Næss's thought, not merely in the sense of applying semiotics to environmental phenomena but also in the sense that ecology itself, at its deepest level, is a semiotic issue concerned with how meaning is produced, how the world is understood, and how the self is situated within the web of life.

The principal problem of this article revolves around a composite question: how can a theory of language analysis and semiotics emerging from a logical positivist environment concerned with the precision of scientific statements form the theoretical and methodological foundation of a radical environmental theory that calls for a complete transformation of humanity's vision of nature and its relationship to it? In other words, what philosophical mechanisms enabled Næss to construct a solid bridge between two fields that appear distant, if not opposed?

From this problem, several subsidiary questions emerge:

How did "empirical semiotics" constitute an epistemological rupture with logical positivism, and how did this rupture prepare the ground for nonreductionist ecological thought?

What are the fundamental theoretical components of Næssian semiotics, such as determination, relationality, and the empirical method, that contain within them the seeds of the concept of the "ecological self" and the relational web of nature?

In what sense can it be claimed that "ecosophy T," which is the personal philosophical framework proposed by Næss, represents a practical embodiment and a "semiotic" application of an understanding of the self and the world?

This article advances the hypothesis that the shift in Næss's thought from empirical semiotics to deep ecology was not a "qualitative leap" or an "abandonment" of an earlier phase but rather an "organic development" and the realisation of the latent possibilities within his early semiotic perspective. Deep ecology refers to the natural fruit of a tree whose seeds have been planted in the soil via empirical semiotics.

Næss's critique of logical positivism through his rejection of reductionism, simplification, and simple correspondence theory of meaning was not merely a methodological critique within the philosophy of language; it was a critique of a metaphysics that separated the self from the object, the human being from the world, and thought from nature. When he replaced this model with a "contextual" and "relational" perspective on meaning (in which the meaning of an utterance is determined by the "occasion," the purpose, and the context), he laid the cornerstone for a new metaphysics: a metaphysics that does not view the world as a collection of discrete things but as a complex and intertwined network of relations and that does not conceive of the self as an isolated essence but as a node within the fabric of life. In this sense, deep ecology was the other face of the comprehensive and all-encompassing face of empirical semiotics.

Research

One of the most important contemporary scientific currents is logical positivism, which is concerned with linguistic justification within the framework of empirical argumentation in analytic philosophy: a statement either affirms or denies a particular proposition, and anything beyond that is

mere prattle and metaphysics. Among Arne Næss's most salient points of reference are research in the philosophy of language at its analytic level and its deployment in the field of ecology, since "logical positivism constituted the first linguistic turn in the history of contemporary philosophy, a turn that became well known and widely disseminated for an extended period of time (Bougoura, 2005). Perhaps the philosopher Rudolf Carnap best represented this tendency because he worked on Ludwig Wittgenstein's (1889–1951) *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*.

Positivist philosophy aims to attain a profound level of analysis, and this is the same profound project that Arne Næss seeks in the field of ecology because positivist philosophy is an atomic philosophy concerned with precise questions. With the same attention we devote to the details of the sciences, it is necessary to point to ecological precision through semantics that draw on analytic philosophy, a defining feature of the philosophy of science in the twentieth century. This is what Yumna Tārīf al-Khūlī (1955) clarifies in her work entitled "*Philosophy of Science in the Twentieth Century*," where she says, "Logical positivism is responsible for all the extremes and aberrations of the analytic current, as crystallised in the language of science, and gradually it produces from this a conception of philosophy as a whole, as a logical analysis of all forms of utterance, even in ordinary language." Moreover, since Næss's philosophy has empirical roots extending to logical positivism, despite his critique of it, he relied to a considerable extent on linguistic analysis and semantics. How did Næss move beyond logical positivism (al-Khūlī, 2014)?

Næss's entry into the field of empirical semiotics was not merely an academic development; at its core, it was an epistemological rupture with the logical-positivist framework that he had absorbed in Vienna. Næss directs a fundamental critique of what he called "semantic reductionism" in positivism, which believes "that most philosophical problems are pseudoproblems that can be analysed and resolved through examining linguistic contradictions (Naess, 1966)." Thereby confining meaning to a simple correspondence relation between statements and empirically verifiable facts. This model, as Næss sees it, ignores the complexity of language use in its living context. This early rejection of reductionism formed the nucleus of Næss's later rejection of ecological reductionism, which treated nature as a mere resource. Næss says, "I rejected that categorically because I was interested in nature."

Drengson (2011) affirms that Næss regarded the positivist method as a forcing of living language into artificial molds, thereby stripping it of its semantic richness and neglecting the study of "communicative interaction" as a whole. This critique was not isolated; instead, it formed part of a broader critical wave directed at positivism, which Katzav (2021) noted in his analysis of the history of the philosophy of language, as many philosophers began to question the positivist model's capacity to account for basic linguistic phenomena. Reality is a supple image of the everyday; it cannot be treated as a rigid proposition subject to positivist analysis in its empirical form because nature is a realm of change, diversity, and multiplicity. Hence, one may move beyond logical-positivist observation because truth has diverse angles. In this context, Næss holds "that the link is inspired by Ludwig Wittgenstein's striking claim that the world is the totality of facts, not of things". Moreover, there is thus a clear distinction between truth and the thing. Truth is governed by a principle of understanding that breaks away from the rules of logical positivism. In contrast, things are explained because they constitute a system that admits of generalisation and quantification, thereby clarifying our positions.

Arne Næss states that it is necessary "to believe in new things, because the positivists believed in things we did not believe in, and this resulted in spurious philosophical problems that can be analysed and solved by examining contradictions in language." Næss returns to a fundamental point grounded in the distinction between explanation and interpretation, or between explication and understanding, by turning to the philosophy of language, where he maintains that "despite all the Vienna Circle's claims about strict empiricism, their doctrines rested on certain nonempirical assumptions about language (Chapman, 2011)."

Accordingly, Næss turns towards the principle of field-based analysis of language as an alternative to statistical symbolism, which is more persuasive within the domain of science. This entails returning to the system of language and clarifying its real pattern: the meaning of an utterance

is determined by its use because language is exceedingly complex. Næss adds, criticising Carnap and Wittgenstein: “Despite their remarkable intelligence, they truly seemed convinced that they had discovered certain facts; yet, on the contrary, I regarded their positions as mere research programmes certainly fruitful, but whose rules were of limited value, for the hypotheses of their work can be confirmed only through multidisciplinary empirical research.” Næss elucidates this in his work entitled *Interpretation and Precision*, in which he shows that the rigour of logic does not govern language, even though bringing language and logic together is a valuable contribution to resolving philosophical questions away from metaphysics, “because the essence of the linguistic turn in philosophy in the twentieth century is the study of language as a substitute for the study of the universe, and the privileging of logic at the expense of experience in the broad sense of the term; this turning point is also a turn into a dead end.”

Through linguistic renewal, Næss clarifies a conception of meaning closer to reality than the mathematical meaning of logic. In what, then, does the importance of empirical semiotics, which Næss proposed as an alternative to positivist justification, constitute?

Among the schools descending from contemporary analytic philosophy is the "Oslo School of Semantics," to which Næss belonged, together with Ingemund Gullvåg (1925–1998), Harald Ofstad (1920–1994), Hermann Tønnessen (1918–2001), Peter Wessel Zapffe (1899–1990), and several others, whose works were published in the 1950s in the journals *Theoria*, *Synthèse*, and *Inquiry*. It is this new project that, for Næss, constitutes a language for deep ecology, seeking terms widely current in everyday life. Næss therefore states in the introduction to his book entitled *Communication and Argument*: “Language is used in several different ways and for many different purposes; indeed, it may be used with no purpose whatsoever, as when we scream unintentionally or fall into delirium. In general, people use language for communication, not always for enjoyment and lyrical expression,” because the aim of language is a tangible meaning with a counterpart in lived reality through formulation and cognitive use for the process of communication in all human engagements.

As a reaction to the epistemic framework of logical positivism, Næss turned towards establishing what he called “empirical semiotics,” thereby transforming the philosophical question from “How should an ideal language be?” to “How do people actually use language in the situations of their lives?” This methodological shift from “deduction” to “induction,” and from idealism to realism in the study of linguistic phenomena, was revolutionary in its context.

Gullvåg explains that Næss borrowed methods from the social sciences, especially psychology and ethnology, to conduct field studies and administer questionnaires that traced variation in the use of basic philosophical terms among individuals and groups (Gullvåg, 1983). This approach to the study of semantic phenomena prepared the ground for Næss to adopt a comparable “ontological” vision in his theory of deep ecology, in which the human being is understood as part of nature rather than as an entity separate from it.

Empirical semiotics defines its aim as the analysis of the cognitive understanding established among the various stakeholders in communication, treating “cognitive understanding” as something that can be linguistically formulated (Afeissa, n.d.). “We are particularly interested in those uses of language in which the cognitive content of an expression takes the form of an assertion, that is, when something or other is stated to be the case (Næss, 2017).” The goal is to identify the means that enable the stakeholders in the communication process to resolve the problems they encounter and to arrive at a mutually confirmed agreement about the meaning of what has been said, “not about the truth or falsity of what has been said in every act of communication (Afeissa, 2010).” “Our interest is focused on the more urgent problem of determining what people including ourselves mean when they say things that are in principle disputable; the problem is a practical problem of interpretation, and it deals with difficulties arising from the fact that a sequence of a single word can have more than one meaning and that a number of different sequences of words can have the same meaning.”

The concept of “determination,” or context, is regarded as the cornerstone of Næss's empirical semiotics. This principle holds that the meaning of any utterance cannot be determined in an absolute, independent manner; instead, it is intrinsically bound to the specific “occasion” or communicative

context, its purpose, and the prior conceptions of speakers and listeners. The same utterance may carry different significations on different occasions.

Different levels of understanding can be identified with respect to what interacting persons have said: "in terms of knowing belief and distinguishing between what we want to say, what we intend or mean, and what we elaborate in saying it; all of this is connected to understanding the self and what it means through levels of understanding directed towards things, interests, or towards persons."

The stage of belief is followed by reading or understanding, which we call the second level, manifested in judging that belief, what analytic philosophers term verifiability. In the stage of understanding, we examine beliefs in light of communication and understanding to overcome variation and differences in the process of understanding, which must lead us to the purpose "that is, to the purpose associated with the expressions or formulations that are used to clarify the relation between the intended meaning of speech through the empirical investigation of linguistic behaviour, such as the process of questioning a particular person."

Through empirical investigation, whose greater part is oriented towards purpose rather than purely inferential empirical analysis, the idea parallels the phenomenological concept of intentionality in knowledge because variables that affect belief and are connected to the person, such as will and desire, and emotion, are involved. These shift meaning from the fixed to the variable, notwithstanding the rigour of analytic philosophy. This leads Næss to maintain that "ecosophy is a personal system, a personal philosophy; and for another philosophy to reach us, there must be something that resonates with us immediately, and this something need not necessarily be wholly original." Interpreting nature is a reflection of the facts of perception, and, given their diversity, different theories and opinions arise according to the nature of meaning and according to what we signify in moving from belief to referent. Even a single word has diverse significations, yet this does not cause it to deviate from its purpose, which is communication. Næss clarifies this in empirical semiotics through individual differences, which make the same speech subject to different elucidations: an utterance may have a determinate meaning, just as it may admit of multiple interpretations.

Meaning was no longer a fixed entity contained within itself; instead, it became a dynamic process arising from the interaction between the utterance and context. This view intersects with Wittgenstein's later analyses of "meaning as use" and language games, even though the methodology differs radically, as Næss relied on empirical data rather than reflective examples.

Næss explains this process in an analytic form in which he employs mathematical symbols with greater precision to incorporate new information and control the most important variables that affect meaning because understanding ecology requires a way of life connected to clarify the true meaning of deep ecology, away from empirical justification in the specification of standards, and the regulation, determination, and clarification that Næss regards as "work instructions and environmental policy measures for the lower levels."

The principle of "determination" leads to a kind of "systematic semantic relativism" that does not imply arbitrariness but recognises a plurality of legitimate interpretations on the basis of differing frames of reference. This idea served as a philosophical antidote to any determinism or dogmatism, and it is the same spirit that later led Næss to reject dogmatism in dominant developmental and economic models that fail to acknowledge the plurality of environmental and cultural values.

Næss's interest in the ordinary use of language, his unease with the method of logical positivism, which he regarded as unempirical, and his use of questionnaires to collect data and statistics and analyse them all by the mid-1930s, these three features reinforced what would later be known as the theory of empirical semiotics. Næss's distinctive contribution in this setting lies in his research in empirical semiotics, grounded in diversity and a return to the concept, because truth is diverse, its source being real people. Because their observation is simple, it touches the true meaning of understanding. It is among the most prominent statistical variables that must be treated quantitatively, using questionnaires and measurement, to answer the question of what is correct and rigorous.

Accordingly, it may be said that Næss's critique of positivism and his founding of empirical semiotics were not merely a project in the philosophy of language; instead, he was, in embryonic

form, laying the foundations of a relational ontology that would dominate his ecological phase. By rejecting the atomic model (which separates statements from facts) and moving towards an interactive contextual model, Næss was replacing a metaphysics of isolated essences with a metaphysics of networks and relations. This vision, as will become clear later, is the very one that would be applied to the concept of nature: instead of being a collection of separate beings, it becomes a complex network of reciprocal relations; instead of the self being a separate essence, it begins to appear as a "relational self" produced through its interaction with its environment. Thus, empirical semiotics are the soil in which tall trees in deep ecology grow.

Næss's shift from semiotics to ecology was not merely a change in the object of study; it was a fundamental shift in philosophical aim from analysing the neutral language of science to deconstructing the language of value and existential significance. Næss came to recognise that the environmental crisis is, in essence, a crisis of understanding and evaluation; it is therefore a semiotic-axiological crisis. The central questions thus became the following: How do we confer meaning upon nature? What values are latent in our discourse about it?

In this context, there is a link between Næss's method of analysing basic philosophical terms (such as "truth" and "knowledge") and his later analysis of environmental concepts such as "intrinsic value" and "biodiversity." As the meaning of an utterance is determined by its context, the "value" of an entity is determined by the network of its relationships and its role within the ecological whole, not solely by its utility to human beings. This shift from descriptive meaning to evaluative meaning constitutes the first bridge between his two projects (Zimmerman, 1984).

The concept of the "ecological self" constitutes the most profound embodiment of the bridge between semiotics and ecology in Næss's thought. If the meaning of an utterance is determined ("determined") through its contextual relations (the principle of determination), then the identity of the human self is likewise determined through its relations within the surrounding web of life (Rothenberg, 1993). The self is no longer an isolated entity; it becomes a dynamically evolving node in the fabric of being.

The ecological self expands beyond narrow bodily boundaries and becomes the self-in-relation-to-the-other, where the "other" includes human beings, living organisms, and entire ecosystems. This vision strikingly intersects with Spinoza's philosophy, which influenced Næss: the individual is a temporary "expression" of nature/God (*Deus sive Natura*), not a separate entity.

Here, the semiotic method becomes a powerful instrument for undermining anthropocentrism. By analysing the language we use to describe nature (such as "resources" and "ecosystem services"), Næss reveals how these terms carry within them an anthropocentric assumption that renders the world merely a means to a human end. This discourse analysis is not a secondary activity; it is a prerequisite for genuine environmental transformation because it dismantles the conceptual foundations upon which the crisis rests.

This semiotic analysis extends to targeting the binary of human versus nature, an opposition that, according to Næss, constitutes one of the deep philosophical roots of the environmental crisis. The concept of the "ecological self" rests upon deconstructing this binary from within and replacing it with a vision of continuity. The human being is neither a master of nature nor separate from it; instead, he is an "earth citizen" within a broader biotic community.

This deconstruction of binaries is a direct extension of Næss's early rejection of rigid dichotomies in the philosophy of language (such as the analytic/synthetic and fact/value dichotomies). He applies the same methodological scepticism to the fundamental metaphysical categories that organise our relation to the world (Naess & Rothenberg, 2009).

It may be concluded that the theoretical bridge that Næss constructed transformed semiotic tools from a mere method for analysing speech into a foundation for a relational metaphysics. He moved from a semiotics of the relations between words and their contexts to an ontology of the relations among beings within the web of life. This new metaphysics is a metaphysics of "depth," where "depth" does not denote a spatial dimension but rather the degree of complexity, interconnection, and

relational richness. Thus, empirical semiotics, with its emphasis on context and relation, was not merely a prelude to deep ecology; it already contained its metaphysical nucleus.

The essence of deep ecology in Arne Næss's thought is connected to the semiotic dimension and to the political, social, and economic dimensions; these dimensions are regarded as axioms for organising the environment and designing its meanings through the economic structure and for emphasising the importance of the surrounding environment so that action may be dynamic. "To develop his ethics, Næss begins from the principle of the inevitable and irreducible interdependence between the human being and nature (Naess, 1966)."

Næss summarises all of this by saying, "The more our understanding of our interconnectedness with other beings increases, the more identification and care we shall take; thus, the path is also opened to joy in the well-being of others and to sorrow when harm befalls them. We seek what is best for ourselves." This proposition reinforces the ethical stance upon which the self, in its vision of the natural environmental order, is grounded to achieve the good and thereby arrive at deep ecology, coherently enough to be described as a movement in its own right. In the political sphere, it begins from ethics and ends in ethics by regulating various types of biological legislation while taking into account diversity and difference so that ethical communication becomes possible.

Semiotics, although it has been the province of philosophers of language through clarifying the relationship between the signifier and signified and explaining different semiotic models, nevertheless finds in environmental ethics a core of meaning that mirrors the concept of the ecosystem, in the multiplicity of its systems, through the meaning of correspondence between the environmental signifier and the ontological and ethical dimension of its significance.

Ecosophy T, developed by Næss, represents the clearest practical embodiment of the fusion of his semiotic method with his ecological vision. Instead of presenting a closed environmental doctrine, Næss offers an open "platform" composed of general principles and a network of derived beliefs. This design is a direct embodiment of the principle of "determination," insofar as these principles are left open to "determination" and development in accordance with the differing cultural, philosophical, and personal contexts of each individual or group.

The platform consists of foundational principles such as "Human and nonhuman life on Earth has intrinsic value" and "The richness and diversity of life-forms have value in themselves." However, Næss does not impose a single interpretation of the words "value" or "intrinsic," thereby permitting a plurality of interpretations and applications. This intended semantic flexibility is a practical application of his understanding that genuine meaning emerges from context rather than from a definition imposed from without.

For Næss, ecosophy is fundamentally a process of philosophical inquiry, not a set of ready-made answers. It is the journey through which the individual "determines" his relationship with the world, gradually discovering his own "ecological self." This makes it an eminently semiotic practice: an ongoing process of understanding and interpreting the natural and cultural signs that constitute our world.

This perspective entails a radical shift in the very concept of the "environment." It is no longer the "surrounding environment" as an external entity that can be managed objectively; it becomes the "lifeworld," or the "lived place, a concept Næss borrows from the phenomenological tradition and frames within his semiotic vision. This "lifeworld" is the domain of relations and meanings, of which we are inseparable.

This shift has profound methodological implications. Instead of studying the environment as a separate object (the positivist method), understanding the "lifeworld" requires interpreting the relations and meanings that constitute it (a semiotic-phenomenological method). This corresponds precisely to the transition from empirical semiotics (which studies the meaning of speech in its lived context) to deep ecology (which studies the meaning of existence in its lived ecological context).

In confronting the environmental crisis, Næss's ecosemiotics do not offer a technical solution; rather, they pose a deeper question: What kind of beings do we want to be? What story do we want

to tell about our relationship with the Earth? From this perspective, the crisis is a crisis of the dominant, anthropocentric “story.”

Accordingly, the solution is radical (deep) and consists of changing the story, that is, changing the semiotic system through which we produce meaning about ourselves and the world. This requires, as Glasser indicates, an ongoing “open dialogue” and “inquiry”, two concepts central to Næss’s semiotic method concerning our values and our basic concepts. Combating deforestation, for example, is not merely a technical matter; it is, fundamentally, a semiotic struggle over the meaning of “forest”: Is it a repository of timber, or is it a biotic community with existential and intrinsic value? (Sessions 1995). In this sense, ecosemiotics become the practical philosophy that equips us with the conceptual tools to wage this struggle on the front of meaning.

Conclusion

Through this analysis, it becomes clear that Arne Næss’s intellectual trajectory, beginning as a methodological critique of logical positivism and the establishment of the project of “empirical semiotics,” did not come to an end when he moved into the field of environmental philosophy. Rather, it continued as a guiding thread that led him to find “deep ecology.” The transition was organic and developmental, not a leap or a rupture. Empirical semiotics, through its central concept of “determination” and its critique of reductionism and rigid binaries, prepared the methodological and metaphysical ground for a vision of a world constituted by relations and intertwinement, the very vision that forms the core of deep ecology.

The positivist justification for empirical meaning, in Arne Næss’s philosophy, is distributed across three levels: the logical-empirical ground represents the first level; it is followed by Næss’s theory of positivism, derived from the philosophy of language; and the first and second positions are then applied to an understanding of deep ecology.

As this article has shown, Næss’s most significant contribution lies in his articulation of a unified philosophical theory that links a theory of meaning (semiotics) with a theory of being (ecology). He succeeded in transforming the precise analytical tools of the philosophy of language into a foundation for a relational ontology and into the core of an existential and ethical stance. The “eco-semiotics” we have drawn from his thought do not present ecology as a merely applied field for semiotics; instead, it argues that the environmental problem is, at its deepest level, a semiotic–axiological problem, concerned with systems of meaning-production and with the prevailing understanding of humanity’s place in the world.

Næss’s theory remains vital and capable of enriching contemporary philosophical conversations on several fronts. In the age of the Anthropocene, where human impact has become the dominant geological force, Næss’s semiotics offer tools for deconstructing the anthropocentric discourse that has brought us to this crisis, and it proposes an alternative grounded in redefining the self within the geobiotic network.

Næss’s vision of the intertwined “ecological self” intersects with projects in posthuman philosophy that seek to move beyond anthropocentrism. Both aim to dismantle the traditional human/nature binary and to press for the recognition of agency and value in nonhuman entities.

Ecosemiotics can offer a radical critique of prevailing environmental discourses such as “sustainability” and the “green economy” by exposing the anthropocentric assumption latent in their terminology. These assumptions often turn nature into “natural capital” and preserve the same logic of domination, albeit in green disguises.

In conclusion, Arne Næss does not merely offer solutions to the environmental crisis; he offers a comprehensive philosophical framework for redefining our relationship with the world. Recovering the unity between his semiotic project and his environmental project, as we have sought to do here, is not merely an academic exercise; it is a reanimation of a philosophy of “joy” and “immersion” in the world, one that sees in every relation, and in every sign, a window into the fullness of being.

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