

# Interview with Norwegian eco-philosopher Arne Naess

Tvergastein, Hardangervidda, Norway, June 1995  
Interviewer: Jan van Boeckel

This interview was made for the film *The Call of the Mountain*  
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## ***Arne, is it always this kind of beautiful weather around here?***

This weather is exceptional, I think, one day out of twenty or to thirty would be like this. In winter of course, we have similar skies etcetera, but to have also this temperature is very rare - even in summer. But we need not this kind of temperature. We need not, here in the mountains, we need not have a temperature which makes you just lay down, because the mountain makes you active, and being active you need not have this temperature. So I have nothing against cold weather. But what is demanding is to have a good feeling when the wind is so hard that you cannot stand a quite natural way, but all the way have to adjust yourself towards the wind. And that is too much wind here.

## ***Can you maybe tell from the early start of your life, how you came up to this place, together with your mother, to the area down there?***

I have lived here nearly twelve years, if you count the days. To most people it is very unreasonable, very strange. But already when I was ten years, and eleven years, walking sometimes by myself in this direction, towards the mountain. Because, already then, I looked upon this mountain as a kind of benevolent, great father and this was possible because, between five and ten years old, my mother had a cottage, far down there. So we could see that mountain every day. And every day it was a little different, but it was the same.

Whatever the changes, it was the same. So I somehow interpreted that as equanimity, that far inside here it is completely - not harmonious, that is a too strong word, but there is a balance inside here, and you look with benevolence on everything that is not directly trying to kill you, so to say. And this big mountain - this great mountain, I mean - seems to be such an entity! So it was alive for me, and therefore I decided the best thing for me would be to live either on top of the mountain or

further down on the mountain itself. So I arranged that when I was a student still, I got the plan to have a place here, because I also have a lake, that is important. And you have these climbing possibilities and you have the *fantastic* view, so that when you sit at the window and write a book it is impossible to write something that is small. It would have to have dimension. Anyhow, in 1937, half of it was made by professional people who really made it very good, very well done, in 1937. And in 1938, I had my first long stay there for four months in the winter. And after that every year, until it is getting a little too hard, life in wintertime. It is not for me now. This is how it got to be. It is a kind of, in a broad sense, religious attitude towards that mountain.

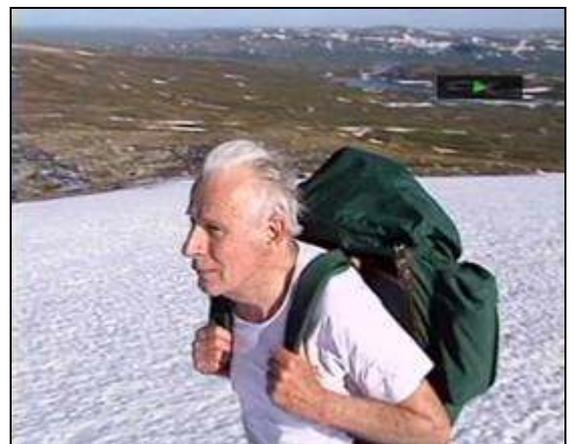


photo: ReRun Productions

## ***Can you tell how your family was when you were a small boy? You said you were without father...***

Well, do I explain why I was already at seventeen, eighteen years old sure that I would be a philosopher? Explain the major role that I was rather unhappy when I was three years old, until I was fourteen. Because the

person I felt being my mother was really a nurse and between zero and three years, I meant quite a lot for her and she meant very much for me. And suddenly she was away, because my mother found out I was spoilt, completely spoilt, by her. And then I didn't understand what was going on. And I got very depressed, certainly. And I think that in order to decide to be a philosopher, you have to have very bad experiences. Because, as I see it, a philosopher asks *why, why*, where others take things as completely evident. Why, and what is really going on in life? What life is worthwhile, and it didn't seem to me worthwhile what they said was life: to grow up, be good at schools and then marry and get children and get grandchildren and then die. I didn't find ordinary life... had no dignity for a human being. So it had to be something extraordinary, something not successful in... the way my adult environment thought was something very, very different, so you get into philosophy, of course, and I said to the very nice head of the school, when I was eighteen, that I should be a philosopher, and he said: 'But Arne Naess, I have a lot of study behind me, but then I had to earn some money too and I wished to have a family and have you really thought through what...' And then I thought: My God! That I should think of a family and how to earn a living. That I found ridiculous to ask a young philosopher, *ha, ha*. So it was kind of arrogance. It was my way, my way; *Svamarga* in Sanskrit - such a beautiful word. I *had* to be a philosopher and then I could do a lot of science reading, and I liked science also. But as a philosopher you can get into some science and say something. The scientist will say: 'Yes, maybe, yes.' And they are mostly very grateful to have a philosopher, sometimes in seminars. So I can have good relations to science and artists also. That's OK!

***Arne, you didn't explain that your father died when you were one year old, and maybe the relation of that to the father-like aspect of Hallingskarvet.***

Well, of course I must add that, not only did my beloved mother disappear, but my father disappeared before I was one year old. So I didn't have a father either. And that makes it more understandable that this big mountain was not a good mother but a good father. Later I was very glad that my father died, in this sense for me, because he was fairly strict, whereas my mother gave up easily. Gave up seeing that I... [sigh] 'Couldn't you go out and play with other children!' and so on, and then she gave up.

***But how can a mountain be your father?***

Well, of course people think it is very strange how a mountain could be a father. But not to me - at all. Because, very soon, I saw that humans live in symbols. So much of their life really in terms of symbols. And that a mountain is just minerals. No culture exists; no old culture has looked at the mountain as minerals! On

the contrary, they have always looked at very strong symbols. For instance, the contact between the earthy life and heaven. Gods are very rarely thought of to live anywhere. They live in heaven or they live on top of mountains or *are* mountains. Some mountains are holy in so many cultures, and you speak to them, you ask them for good advice, and so on. And it is a different symbol - it's kind of enormous amount of symbols - then the symbols of the ocean. The ocean is somehow less understandable. You cannot *rely* on the ocean as you can on the mountain. You see from the mountain; you see: aha, a storm is coming and you have half an hour or something. Here you have, at most, half an hour to get somewhere where you can get down.

***But you can say: a mountain as protection... Your father gives protection. A mountain is also fear or not? Does the mountain give protection like a father?***

I must say that, in understanding the *kindness* of mountain, you can always find protection, as I found when I was a teenager here, climbing around, getting under the top: you would always find protection, and especially in the more vertical places. Of course, there is no wind, mostly, very rarely wind in vertical places. I could see then people, skiers for instance, in terrible wind like this, *fighting* against the weather, I could sit on a shelf up a near vertical place in full security, and protected by the mountain.

***Why do you call the mountain 'benevolent'?***

Because the shape is for me the shape of some being that is benevolent and the expression for me is benevolent, and it is benevolent for me when I go to this mountain and find and get this view which is so philosophically important. Only a mountain you can get me that view with this fantastic horizon, and where you feel also powerful, at the same as you are very, very small, that is important philosophically. That the less you are in relation to the surroundings, the stars and the mountain, the more you intensely feel that you somehow symbolically get part of it. You get greater. You get *on par* with it. You get to feel good with it. So, the tinier you are, the more in some sense you are together with something great and therefore, get something of that greatness. I cannot explain it better. But it is sure that it has double effect. It is like the stars which I saw in my youth. We had really no lights on the streets and nothing like that. There was very little. And we had really the stars *straight* over us. When we were children and later. And that makes a different feeling from being inside a room! To be playing outside, even in darkness! So I have a special relation to the vastness of the heaven or stars, which is different from modern physics about the cosmos, which is not... I don't feel any benevolence or any greatness, reading about black holes, white holes, galaxies, and so on.

***What makes the difference between the two, the two ways of viewing?***

Well, in physics, you learn about tremendous explosions, you learn about things which have no symbolic value of a positive kind. And the distances are such that you can never get in touch with them, never. If Einstein is correct, there is absolutely no hope of contacting galaxies far away, for instance. This cannot mean, for me at least, cannot mean anything very positive. So I can't have... Now there is a lot of theology about the cosmos, that you should have a kind of religious attitude towards the cosmos as described by modern physics, but that's not for me, I say. There are gods, especially in Hinduism that make universes like this and - *psssjjj, psssjjj* - throw out universes! And if such a god were kind enough for me to see what he is doing, to be together with him for some time, and I could then see in one of his universes a mouse that was swimming, trying to get to land in a river and I would say: Ah, stop! That mouse should be able to get ashore! And this god would say: 'what? a mouse?' Haha. 'What is a mouse!' haha. So I don't feel at all the greatness of universes, some thrown out and galaxies and collision between galaxies and so on, no, not for me!

***For you participation is important, the contact...***

Yeah. It must be symbolic of something more positive, and I don't find positive symbols there, which I could if I had just the stars which we were seeing.

***Could you maybe relate the story from your childhood, that you made holes in your tents to be able to see the mountain for the tent. It is a nice story!***

I suppose early life has very much to say for the rest of the life. All these things I was talking about belong to early life. I remember that when we started going into the highest mountains in Norway, I made a tent myself and made a window in the tent, without the ability to shut it, a small window. So that when I was nearly asleep, I could still, through this small window, see the summits, through this small window. I remember this, because it was very cold, those summers, and I was fifteen years, fourteen years, fifteen years, sixteen years old and bitterly cold, and this window made it impossible to get heat in the tent, so it was so stupid! And also other things. We of course made a lot of pictures with very primitive instruments, and I decided that no friend should be in between the mountain and my camera. It's like in Muslim religion. You shouldn't have god and humans at par, to have pictures, o no. So the symbolic value of mountains was very deep seated at that age, fifteen, sixteen, seventeen, and it made me suffer quite a lot. Suffer quite a lot because the coldness of course in this highest mountains in Norway, Easter when we had to go to the summit. And we went back

from Easter, all other boys were brown and nice and pretty and we were violet and red noses and looked what...

***Can you explain a bit more why you felt it was sacrilegious to make pictures? It is an interesting point.***

Perhaps I had not quite as positive opinion about humanity that I should have had, because the adults I found stupid. Nothing wrong with their intelligence. But the *life!* The *life* they made! Nine to four work [sigh] I couldn't find a human being, whereas I read about elephants and bears and other big animals and they seemed to be living a more adventurous life. But there were certain humans, like explorers, Norwegian explorers - Amundsen, Nansen - having a good life. But they had a lot of administration. Napoleon had a lot of financial troubles. I decided that money was tremendous important, because they ruined people's life. So already at that, eighteen, nineteen, I decided to find out how little money one would need to satisfy *every* essential need and I found that *very* little was enough to live as a fairly poor student. One could live the rest of the life just now and then getting some income and not between nine and four, of course! So I was then living in a way that didn't develop any habits, so that you were dependent quite a lot of the market. The term *market* had already then some kind of negative association. Positive also, because I could have for instance some years when I absolutely must buy some classical music discs of certain kinds and so on and then I said that: 'If you now go to a restaurant, it will cost you as much as one of this, what you call, discs. It will cost two.' Then: 'O no, no, no!' So I certainly used the market, but for essential things. And looking towards my later life, it was obvious that to live with simple means was very easy for me. *Rich life, simple means*, is one of the things I repeat, the last twenty years. So I did admire tremendously some people, like Nansen, Amundsen. I looked up to many of the philosophers and specially Spinoza. So I certainly had ideals among human people, but the rest I found, adults to me were always nice. I had no bad experiences with adults, but they were so stupid in life philosophy! Nobody was very bad with me, so far I can remember. So I had a good, very optimistic view of them, their heart. But their brain: there was something wrong with their brain!

***But you didn't want to have people in between yourself and the mountain on the pictures?***

No, because it was the greatness of the mountain. And some stupid man - myself or others, standing there and smiling... *ha...* no.

***Was it a religious feeling?***

Sure, whatever is called a religious feeling, and I am

sure that this kind of feelings has a great future. Certain symbols, you live in symbols, very much. And then you have rather rigid rules: No, no, no, no, no, *no*, no not that, no, no! And then: Yes, yes! And mountains: Yes! But because sometimes we had pictures there. But you shouldn't stand on top of mountains and looking arrogant, having conquered the mountain. That is very stupid. You never conquer your ideal!

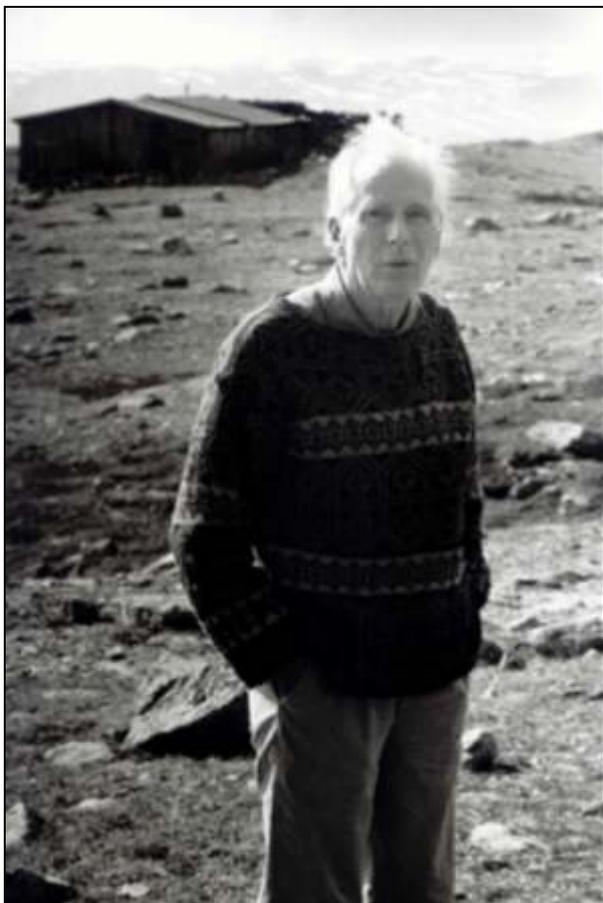


photo: Doug Tompkins

***You at one time said that it was sort of a cult, a cult of the mountain.***

In short, I started my private cult of mountains. And so many people in so many cultures started cult of mountain. But even if it was a small culture, I could have had some influence in the ideology of that culture with mountains or something. Like in Sherpa culture in the Himalayas, they have *Tseringma*, a tremendous mountain, bringing storms, but also water. A terrific mountain. And the name *Tseringma* is the Mother Of The Long Good Life. The Mother Of The Long Good Life: this tremendous mountain. So you see, you can combine this, in a sense, dangerous aspect of the mountain, and storm coming on, with a cult and you have a mother symbol. Nevertheless, a mother symbol. [clicks his tongue] Also a princess. And they would say, in the original culture there you say: 'Yes of course, minerals, yes, yes, yes, and stones, but this is also a princess, and

this is also a mother. And for us, who have a lot of symbols, this way of thinking, the mythological way of thinking, is so natural and can combine with being a mathematician or a physician, so that's OK. But it's both minerals and a princess and a mother. Yes! Not more minerals than a mother, not more minerals. So that's important for my, what I call 'total view'. This importance of symbols. You cannot live without that a human dignified life, I think.

***When you were young, weren't you yourself in a way trying to conquer mountains? To always go to the summit?***

One may ask, of course, why one has to go to the *summit* of a mountain. And there of course you have a combination with Western typical sportive way of looking at things, that you also should be able to reach the summit, able to reach the summit. And then I made a lot of statistics about how many summits, and, for instance, if you had a real tough day and night, I was then calculating the kilogram-meters lifting myself up, let's say, to go to three summits up there, down, and up again. So: kilogram-meter, how big this event was, see. So I could combine it with ambition. But the mountains didn't mind at all that I calculated that. I didn't have the feeling that it was bad behaviour. I was fond of the mountain, even in terrible weather. And sometimes, you had to feel with your hands so to say, the very summit. You didn't see anything, practically.

So, but there you have the combination with completely different kinds of attitudes. This love of bigness, not greatness. Big numbers, big mountains, big achievements, that term: *achievement*. I felt, when I was twenty-one, twenty-two, that the term achievement was too important, that I should go into psychoanalysis to analyze my doctor thesis, where the term achievement is very important. So I went into fourteen months of psychoanalysis. There was only two months left and I would go to that written document, saying I had done my analysis of the kind you have to do to be a professional psychoanalyst. But I could not go into the mountain for fourteen months, except Sundays. Saturdays, it was eight, nine in the morning: psychoanalysis. And Monday eight to nine. And the analyst, a collaborator with Freud, said: 'O, these Mondays are completely meaningless. You only talk about the mountain!' And I had some terrible things to say about what I had done, of course. And this analyst was very fat and he was sixty years old, I thought he was ninety. But I was twenty-two years old and a man of sixty was what I would call hundred years old and he was sailing in inland seas. [strong sigh] He couldn't understand anything of mountains. But, anyhow, what I am talking about is this, that I had a critical attitude towards achievement, the term used by me so much, also in my doctor thesis. So I had there something unrelated to cult of mountains, certainly. Cult of mountains can be without going to the summit for more

than hundred of the highest mountains of Norway, for instance. Why? *pfff*. That is something very different.

### ***You were not out on conquering.***

The term 'conquering' was completely unknown to me, I mean... *pfff*... conquering? no, no. I was conquering *myself*, sometimes, going the last hundred meters, instead of saying 'Ah this! Why should we absolutely go to the very summit?' So I was conquering myself. And that was important. Conquering any stupid kind of attitude. And immoral attitude also. But immorals was not quite the same as conventional morals.

### ***Yet you did like to go up the mountain, like this mountain you talked about, earlier, the Tseringma?***

*Tseringma*. Well, there is question, of course: in Tibetan culture and Sherpa Tibetan culture, *they* thought it wrong to go to the summit of sacred mountains, like *Tseringma* is a sacred mountain. In other cultures, like Inca culture, South America, it was a plus for you, religiously, to go to the summit of a mountain, to go very high. I was then, of course, admiring the sherpas very much and no question of going to the top of *Tseringma*. No, on the contrary, I decided to make an expedition to Sherpa country and then try to see whether the people in a certain village straight down from *Tseringma*, whether they would go with me, to get it out of range for any mountaineer, to make it a fully protected mountain against humans. So, there were forty-six families in that village. We were three of us: Sigmund Kvaløy is another member there. We were three of us. Forty-six families voted. Forty-six against zero! That they would rather not have all that money they could have through expeditions and have their mountain un- so-called - conquered, and together with the head of the village, we went a way that is considered to be eight days and nights away to Katmandu, the capital of Nepal, to deliver a document asking the king to make it outside range of any mountaineer in the future. It is on the border to China. So it was, at that time, 'out'. You couldn't do it. But if the relation to China gets better, then, immediately, there would be many, many expeditions with people who have no real sense of the holiness of the mountain. So, with the head of the village, we went with this document, and we couldn't even reach the tiny, tiny of officials. They just looked at my friend, who was a Buddhist, and coming from the mountains, as some inferior kind of being. So, I don't think the document was delivered to the king, and we heard nothing about it. And it was open then later. Then we tried to make mountain clubs all over the world, make a kind of petition to make it sacred and nobody getting up. But at that time, at early nineteen-seventy, the climbers didn't look upon these cultures as something interesting. They were interested in so-called conquering the mountain and get to the summit and they didn't understand what we were asking for.

'What you mean, why shouldn't we go to the summit, *ha!*' So we had very little response, and in time, there were then a lot of expeditions. And they let the last meters being unconquered, until somebody said: 'Why these last meters here, *pfff*.' So I am all for the cultures, whether they look at it as a plus or a minus, to get to the summit, and we of course wouldn't touch...

### ***But is it not special for Western people that they want to go conquer the mountains, really conquer it? Is it not European?***

I think there have been, for many hundred years, people who would like to conquer a mountain. Even where religion plays a great role, there are so many different attitudes within the number of minorities. And I think that, from older times there have been people who would like to reach a summit, as an achievement, and felt is as a conquering - not of themselves, but also of the mountain. But within Western culture you have, as of course in many other ways, you have specialization, certain attitudes, go to the extreme. You are permitted to go to the extreme more than in traditional cultures. So you have then thousands of climbers who would feel they conquer a mountain. Thousands, especially young ones. And later they would find: 'We were really very fond of the mountain, we looked up to the mountain, we found the mountain great, but that was not 'in', we were not talking about it.' So, many of the younger climbers were looked upon as primitives, in a cultural sense, complete primitives. They have layers which are not primitive, which would see the symbols. Talking about Sherpa culture, *ha*. It has been a culture of a completely outstanding character. It was non-violent as Buddhist culture, it is a Buddhist culture. Sometimes there is an eagle... And I saw the eagle there, some place... that would rob them of tiny sheep or goat baby or a hen, if they have hens and they let that. Nobody would like to shoot it or anything like that, not at all. And they never would kill a goat to eat or a cow, when it fell down a precipice and was dead: they would eat it. So they were not against meat, but they had marvellous, non-violent relations to their animals. But there were other things which were just as admirable, for instance, this way they were punishing people. They thought that if you make a child cry, a small child, before they are three years old, if you make it cry, whatever the cause, you get a minus in the register of what you have done in your life. I mean, it's bad for your next life. And so many things which have a minus. It was things which had to do with hatred, lack of benevolence, and so on. And for instance, talking about marriage, the men were traditionally on their way between India and China, carrying things over the Himalayas. It took a long time, and that's bad for the women. What should they do there without men and so you could have the brothers, always the brother was available in the bed. Yes, during marriage. But if you were unfaithful, that is to say when the man was

available, then, of course, you should not be available then. What it costs. What was then, what should the community do? Yes! They should themselves provide so much beer, that a whole community could have a great feast. That was how, instead of going to prison or something. And what we liked also was that if a man was unfaithful, he had to provide even more beer than if you were a woman, haha. That's very nice, haha. And then there were, of course there were feasting, speaking of that, they were, their use of energy was eight units in a certain kind of way of measuring, where we have three-thousand in Norway and six-thousand United States. I mean, they use only wood from trees that were dead, never living trees. But during the feasts, of course, they used to have a lot of good fire to warm themselves, it was so cold.

***Could you tell about that big achievement in your life when you climbed the Tirich-Mir mountain?***

It is impossible not to look forward to see the Himalayas, as a climber. It is very difficult at least, for many of us. Because of the greatness, it is the greatest area of mountains and the most fabulous, with big mountains. So clearly, I *had* to visit the Himalayas. Therefore, we asked very good friends in Great Britain, what they would conceive as possible for Norwegians to do. And I was all for getting high up on one of the really high mountains, where nobody else had been. And we decided upon a mountain called *Tirich Mir*, which is the highest mountain in Hindu Kush, and Himalayas are in the wide senses Himalayan. A little more than 25,000 feet high, 7,705 metres and some expeditions had tried and were not able to reach the summit, so that suits me well as an achievement. And of course, I didn't mention that, but for some years, also the achievement in being able to reach the summit had a meaning for me, certainly, as a Westerner being interested in sports. So in 1949 - I was already quite old - I was able to get *one* Norwegian climber with me, to reconnaissance, to see what could be done. We didn't dream of reaching the summit that year, but then, the next year, and we found, and I studied everything known about the mountain. And we found that beautiful mountain, *beautiful* mountain! And the climate is very good in May, June. In late July, it starts getting worse. So we had an expedition next year, in 1950. And that time, yes... and really I got too much of it, because when you were *on* the mountain, it was not beautiful any longer, it was at a distance. When you were on the mountain it was not very different from other mountains. And it was also difficult, as a leader of the expedition, not to be harassed by practical problems, always practical problems in expeditions. But I tried to make my friends - we were, then, many of us - understand and expect that we should have some part of the day for ourselves and not thinking about the expedition, just being together with the mountain. So it was difficult for me to stand the life that was required

of a leader, on such an expedition. But we reached the summit. And from near the summit, I could see far into many countries: China, Afghanistan, India. And I knew that in certain directions there were thousands of kilometres of mountains, mountains, mountains, mountains. It is a fantastic... this *world* of mountains! And at the summit I could look down upon mountains being as high as the highest in Europe, *Mont Blanc* and others and they looked so tiny down there! And I could look down, far far down, where a small river that was going like this, indicating it was flat and green, flatness and greenness - it was very interesting. So symbols there, suddenly, different. So, I decided never to go again to the Himalayas in order to climb. And also, this symbolic thing was so important. The first time I could see the Himalayas, the hills were not higher than, not as high as Hallingskarvet, not at all. But I knew that this is the start of something that is going on for thousand kilometres, into Russia. The vastness, this feeling, was so tremendously strong! But to *be* there, it was not so great at all. So it was the symbol of the highest and most grand of everything, that was important. Not to be there, inside there, no.

***Tirich Mir is not considered a sacred mountain?***

Incidentally, some of the porters we have, looked upon, of course looked upon *Tirich Mir* as a mountain that did not like humans to go there. Not sacred, it was not considered sacred, but some of them would think it would not like it and send down avalanches. So they left us. We didn't have anything in 1949, but they didn't like to come with us, certainly, but that didn't matter. We could go without the [hirers?], high up, they didn't go far. But we didn't violate any sacredness, certainly, but as they say, the mountain perhaps didn't like us, they thought, some of them.

***Was it a primitive thought, or was there something in it that was true? That you have to respect the mountain instead of...***

Obviously, people, there are old people there in the neighbourhood of *Tirich Mir*, they warned children and others to go, and they maybe have used to say: 'Don't go higher up there because they don't like it, the mountain doesn't like it. And certainly, you could get terrible weather, and if you are inexperienced, you don't see its coming. And you get one metre of snow, during one night for instance and you are stuck, but that's not according as I feel it, the mountain wouldn't like to do you any harm. But they had to obey the laws of nature and nothing else be done.

***You once said: the mountain never fights; it will hold back avalanches as long as it can.***

Avalanches, yes. Yes, I had the feeling in the Himalayas that the mountain would hold back avalanches as long

as it could, but then... And we had to find out *where* the mountain would send the avalanches and not go there. And if there is a chance, if you see the chance this avalanche would come within a week, because of some snow, then give up the expedition; the expedition had to be given up. No great changes should be taken. That is not worthwhile. It's not worth it, to reach the summit of a mountain and you are killed or... It is a great suffering for the whole family and your husband or your wife. So, I can't see the point of adventure in the mountains. I like to *read* about adventures, people talking changes, and half-dead, and death in the mountain is a theme for some books, and to read about expeditions where they do one error, then one more, then one more error, and then still one more and *pfff*.

To read about it I like very much, but I don't admire it at all, especially if you try to stay alive. It is not very admirable to try to stay alive. It is well done, but philosophically, I don't see the point.

***But you think a mountain has its own will, like a human? If you say it can hold back avalanches?***

Saying that the mountain holds back avalanches, what I am saying is expressing the kind of attitude I have, and I would have no hypothesis about whether it could be treated... whether it has certain ways of avoiding sending it, and something... So it is on the level of symbol, and like the sherpas, when they say that *Tseringma* protects us, they have absolutely no hypothesis how *Tseringma* does this. How the *Tseringma* acts as the Mother Of The Long Good Life. The mythology has meaningfulness and is adequate for the mind that has these ideas, without being able to explain how it could be done, and so on.

***Seeing the mountain as a living being, so to speak.***

Certainly, as I did with Hallingskarvet, I see it as a living being! Certainly it has this life, and when they place a lot of stupid green things on top there, in order to make it more difficult for people who are without really knowledge of the mountain, to avoid that they were killed going a wrong way. This, to place such things on top of Hallingskarvet, was against the *dignity* of the mountain. Dignity of mountain. And the dignity we, of course, I feel it, dignity of the mountain and psychologists would say: these are certain feelings I have, and there is nothing up there.

***But how can minerals be alive?***

Well, you only ask because you have only read biology, classes of biology, and you have in biology a good definition of an organism being alive, and something else being not alive. But the term 'being alive' has a *vastly* more comprehensive sense among ordinary people. For instance, the greatest slogan they used in northern Norway in a big direct action, the greatest

slogan was the following: *Let the river live!* Let the river live, *ha!* Not: Letting us have the pleasure to go fishing there and to look at it and so on. They said: Let the river live. So there, to be alive, the river was alive. That is how many so-called ordinary people feel it with natural... mineral, the mineral kingdom, what is there. So, biology has good reasons to define alive so-and-so, but it has no effect on the mind of people. It is just a speciality. As just a science, it has very little to do with human life.

I don't say: let the mountain be alive, because whatever is done, I feel the mountain would only be hurt, diminished, in a certain sense, but still alive.

***Do you have an example of that?***

Well, in China, Mao Tse-tung was looking at mountains as a military man and they had all sorts of military vocabulary when they were, for instance, mining. And they even tried to get rid of a mountain. They had some mythology where people were able to simply move a mountain away. So this is a very different way of looking at it. Then you really destroy the mountain, and you could say: it died.

***But are there mountains hurt in Norway?***

I don't like to have too much things going on at the very summit of certain mountains. But I don't know of any mountain that is severely hurt by humans.

***Maybe you can tell a bit about the Gaustatoppen over there.***

Hallingskarvet has a kind of brother-mountain. About hundred kilometres from here you can see it very easily in this weather. Gausta, it is called, and it has not a very impressive shape, but at least it is as high as Hallingskarvet and that make a kind of feeling of nearness between Hallingskarvet and Gaustatoppen.

***Peter Zapffe said: because it was so beautiful it had to die. Do you remember that? Because they put all the stuff on top of it, rubbish and apparatus.***

There is a difference between Hallingskarvet and Gausta, that poor Gausta has a lot of instruments and all kinds of fancy... even buildings I'm sorry to say are on its top, which reduces it of course. The instrumentality there and the domination of man are really making a mark on it, and it cannot be seen as alive as clearly as Hallingskarvet can be seen. It is now more an instrument. More mineral and less symbol.

***Arne, can you tell about the tree line, why the tree line is important to you?***

It is not only the mountain, I think, of such metaphysical value, but also the very tree line, where you come from

more or less dense forest and you suddenly have this freedom of vision. So, there is a special pleasure in Norway, where you have a broad tree line, where the trees are fairly small, and you see the storms are keeping them small and keeping them in shapes that are not the ordinary ones. So this, to get from the forest above the tree line, is for me, both increase in freedom and also increase of challenge. It is challenging to get above the tree line. That is why I have written an article on the metaphysics of tree line.

***Some people say: below it is friendly and warm, and up, high in the mountains, it is cold and hostile.***

For many people it is the opposite and that is OK for me. I don't know, I don't wish that other people should be like me there. Some would find the opposite being the case, that getting from the treeless, austere, challenging mountains down into the forest is a good thing, and they feel better and feel it's more friendly, nature there. Excellent, because we need people, absolutely, to take care of the forest and feel happiness in the forest. That is fine with me. But as I say: I'm happy to be different from that.

***To you, the upward movement is important.***

Well, that's a symbol for me, yes, that's very important symbols, and also for others, and I associate this advance, getting upwards, get up, I associate that with a movement from below the tree line to above the tree line.

***You are not particularly fond of the fir trees, blowing in the wind.***

It is said that I have distaste for big fir trees blowing in the wind. That is because sometimes I told about such trees outside my window as a child. And the slow movement, back and forth like this, was a kind of saying *no* to my future. I was somehow doomed; I was a doomed being which should vanish. I had a lot of fantasies like that during the night, very special! The only important thing is that humans live and must live and should live in not only dreams, but with ideas that have a form of symbols, a symbolic life. Human life is life in symbols, and only to a small extent in verbal symbols. Now, philosophy is full of respect for language, but I've respect for non-language. All this symbols which have nothing to do with verbalisation [clicks].

***Symbols like a tree or a mountain.***

Yes, the tree is full of symbols, of course. The branches, you see the happiness, unhappiness. And different kind of branches: some being like this and some being like this, and you associate that of course with human movements. And what you see when you see a tree is so

immensely more complex than what you think you see. When you say 'Oh, that's just a tree, or that's just such-and-such tree.' But what you see, if you take hours to analyze what you see, then you grasp the tremendous complexity of what humans see spontaneously, immediately.

***You once said: 'We might have to relearn the way children appreciate trees.'***

Well, children are more spontaneous in the sense that reflection and conventional views of things do not yet play such enormous role. If we could be able to see a little bit more like children, we would gain very much. That's a very difficult re-development, to get into this state of children's inner life.

***The conventional idea is that if you see a tree as being sorrowful or joyful, it is in your mind, it is not in the tree.***

Yes, what I say is that in some kind of conventional thinking, the real tree is what science talk about, the tree. Whereas I say the sorrowfulness or joyfulness of a tree is just as real as its size, its dimension, and its geometrical... let's say *Gestalt*, form.

***What do you mean by Gestalt?***

Well, that is difficult to say, only that you... if you place three dots on a black board, it is very difficult not to see it as a triangle. You see, immediately, some kind of form: those three points. And if you hear: *Da-da-da-daah*, if you are acquainted with Beethoven's Fifth Symphony, *da-da-da-daah* immediately gets colours from the Gestalt that is the Fifth Symphony which is a tremendous Gestalt. And *da-da-da-daah* is the smallest Gestalt within the first movement, with a tremendous complex Gestalt which is again part of a more comprehensive Gestalt which is a symphony, which is again, part of a Gestalt when you are really sitting there in a concert, listening to it, looking at the orchestra. And it depends on who is sitting, if you are together with your girlfriend, *da-da-da-daah* would sound differently. That means that your life is in very comprehensive forms or Gestalts. And it is only by analyzing that you get down to particular beings and things. A thing is just an abstraction. But this is already philosophy! That's good, after all this nature.

***The Reductionist view works the other way up, from the parts to the wholes.***

Well, you have to work from parts to wholes, and from wholes to parts. So the whole is more than the part, and the part is more than the whole. I mean, a tiny part of the Fifth Symphony is certainly conveying something that the whole cannot convey! So the part also, is bigger

than the whole. And that is often forgotten, in so-called holistic thinking.

***It is the notes together, which make the Gestalt, not the notes separately.***

Well, 'the notes', that's an abstraction of course. That's a very abstract thing, the notes. But socially, you point to the notes: 'This is Fifth Symphony.' So it extremely important, the social existence of notes. But from a musical point view, of course, it's *nothing*.

***Can you maybe explain how this idea of Gestalt is important for you to nature, in combination with being in nature?***

Well, Gestalt... I should maybe say the relationship between Gestalt thinking, as I consider Gestalt thinking, and life in nature, what we call life in a place like this. If I look at *Tvergastein*, the hut, as I do at this moment, it is the surroundings that take part in what I see. I see it in a mineral environment, where it stands out as a living kind of being. The contrast between the minerals, all the stones, all the vastness, the dimension outside: this influences what you spontaneously see when you look at the hut. So you see, when being in nature as vast as this, the very vastness gets into your... as part of your spontaneous, completely spontaneous experience. And then if you look at details here: you see the form of the stone, you see the organisms there, and you see what we would call, being a stone, a part of nature so independent of us, as humans. So your vision is not 'I see a stone', no, 'I see a hut', no no. That is useful socially, and geographically, but what you see in nature that is always.. If you sit reading or writing or whatever you do, what you spontaneously experience is dependent upon your special kind of existence in a great natural environment. So it all comes together, there.

***Why have you called this cabin Tvergastein?***

Talking about the hut I am looking at; it is called *Tvergastein*. Why? Well it's an old name, here. And there is a kind of polemics, again, between East and West Norway. East Norway: they think it is coming from a lot of quartz crystals, very big, very beautiful crystals here. When people, hundred years ago, went up here to fetch crystals. 'Tverga' would then mean: 'crossing', like this. But people from the West Norway have another explanation of the etymology of the name. But I like that word very much, *Tvergastein*. It is the kind of toughness and roughness and I sometimes thought I would call myself 'Arne Tvergastein'. Because I feel I belong to that area here, I belong to it. It doesn't belong to me, but I belong to it. But that would be silly I think, to have such a name.

***It would be good, I think, if people understand that this place is rather remote, that the village is a long***

***distance and that you have to carry everything up. Maybe you can tell a bit about that.***

Then of course, people say that: Why choose [sigh] the place where you have to carry everything up?' It seems that I very early got this idea that, without effort, it is very difficult to estimate something very highly. Sometimes, yes, of course, you have spontaneous pleasure, deep pleasures, but, on the whole, when I have carried something up here, I look at it a little differently, especially. And water, for instance, in the winter, it's quite a work to get water from the lake. To melt water is very unecological because it takes so many calories from minus one to plus one, as it is from plus one nearly to hundred degrees. The state of being frozen to the state of being liquid. So to have, then, four or five containers with water in the hut during wintertime, gives me not only a feeling of richness, not only a *feeling* of richness, but *I am richer!* People say: 'Oh, but this has to do with feeling, that is not real richness.' But when I then explain what *real* richness is, then they go either into money, or I don't know what, and defining richness as something very few people can have, because it costs so much on the market. And there, so I say: 'No, no, no, I am not talking about my *feeling* of richness, I talk about richness, and I am rich when I live in this hut because I am able to satisfy all my most important needs.

I must admit, that when you are more the fifty years old, you gradually find that - especially in wintertime - it is unnecessarily far away to make things more valuable. They would be more valuable even if the hut was somewhat near the train station. And in wintertime, we may use five hours to get up here, because the northwest wind is against us, and the snow may be so hard. It's very difficult to keep balance when the wind is blowing. So I am sorry for this, I am not adapted to the hut anymore, in wintertime. I have done it, this winter. But is unnecessary to have this distance and this hard work to get up there.

***How was the hut built?***

Of course, to have it built was not easy. It was considered completely, completely... one would say 'insane' to have a hut up here. And that was in 1937. But, I was already a doctor of philosophy. And the people who are the best carpenter of the area, they had this thinking that: 'Well, he is not completely insane, so we cannot... and we have seen from when he was five years old, here, down at the railway station, so we will do what he says.' And they build it in fourteen days of very splendid weather. That's to say: half of it, and the other half I made myself.

***How did you get the wood up this high?***

It really did something very bad, namely they made three horses take the materials on the sledge, in

October. And in October, some places, there is only ten centimetres of snow and then you have rock, very difficult kind of rock. Or you have one meter, it depends on the wind. So the poor horses, they had a very bad time, getting up here in October with this materials, I am sorry. We have a picture of them, marvellous horses. And they also made the error to think that it would only be necessary fifteen times, carrying fifteen times the sledge. And after thirty, the very nice man who were in charge of this transport, said to me over the telephone: 'Arne, I am sorry, it is already thirty, and we said sixteen or something. Are we going to continue?' Ha-ha. And I said: 'Yes!' And they used sixty-two times. The horses had to drag material sixty-two times through the snow: bad effect on the horses!

***You have also the rules of Tvergastein, like the matches. That you don't spill anything because you brought it up. Can you tell a bit about the rules?***

Well, there are an enormous amount of rules, too many rules in a sense, but everything has a value here. And matches, for instance, when I am using some kerosene in my lamps, etcetera, and if you are going to ignite it, I use matches so fast, that it is not burned, all the chemical in the tip of the match. So I can use it, say, two or three times. My wife is a specialist in that. She has a record of using the same match five or six times! And you see, this is play, but with some serious background. I know it doesn't count much, two or three matches. But this is how you see things. Everything has a value that is greater than in the city, mostly. And the old things, I like the old things. That is good for me. These here [points at climbing shoes], probably sixty, fifty years old, so... You see, we are so rich here in the sense that: We get everything we really desire. And that is impossible in the city where you have all this trade going on. All this buying, all the time.

***Another rule is that you don't do the dishes, eh?***

A rule that makes people laugh, and some not really like it. Because there are so few bacteria here. Very few bacteria come, compared to further down. It is not necessary to make the dishes. You have snow, even in the middle of summer you have snow in the neighbourhood. So if you are afraid of bacteria on the dishes, you just put it in the snow and clean it in the snow. It is permitted, so to say, to go cleaning the dishes every day. Your own dishes! But even if you are four people, we have each our own set of spoons and glass and so on. You have the same set for weeks. Makes no difference. So we need not much hot water. And the young people they will also wash themselves in snow, rolling themselves in snow. Very good way of washing. You get warm, feeling very well, by that. So, it is called Puritanical but it is really luxurious and it is Epicurean. You have so many good feelings! And you have time for dwelling in situations of inherent value. That's a

formula. *Dwelling in situations of inherent value.* Where you have everything. You have company, if you wish company. You have no company, if you don't wish company. You have food, you have not too severe storm, and so on. So you may have everything in an easier way than in the city.

But, sometimes, you need the city! I have nothing against cities. New York, I have lived in twenty fourth floor of an apartment in Manhattan and it was fantastic beautiful sunset, because of the pollution makes it even more beautiful to look at.

***Your idea of dwelling in a place, is that in a way, Heideggerian?***

Yes. Heidegger has a lot of that, dwelling. Dwelling and being home. Feeling at home. The symbol of 'home' is very important and also here, important. You are at home with such-and-such. And also, I feel at home with a certain philosophy, and not at home with certain other philosophy. Feeling at home with something. Dwelling at home.

***In a way, you have been here in total about ten years. Has the experience...***

No, four-thousand one-hundred and eleven days, today. Four-thousand one-hundred and eleven. And it is between eleven and twelve years. And I may reach twelve years before I am too old to get up here.

***But, you said, things have changed. Like there are a lot less insects, for instance.***

[Sigh] During this more than four-thousand days and nights, I have seen things happening here, in the environment, which I don't like. I have seen, for instance, since 1944 or something, we have much less insects. And here at this elevation, insects are always interesting. In the 1940's, I counted 220 insect species. As amateur. And now I don't find more than forty. Then some would say: 'That's because you get old and you don't see!' But that's too great difference! No grasshoppers anymore! I saw one grasshopper last year, a tiny grasshopper. But we need grasshoppers around. And I need of course beetles, and I like also mosquitoes here. Because, first of all, they don't like to be that high so they are carried by the wind. And they make no effort to get blood from you, not at all. They are just unhappy. But it is a symbol of summer to have a mosquito at this elevation. It is rare. And so: 'Ah! A mosquito!' Therefore I also get interested in more than ten species of them. And the males all have very nice kind of sense here. It looks like what you have in your face, when you don't use your razor. But more beautiful.

***Do you know the reason why the diversity has become less?***

No, it has to do - not with this place but also general atmospheric pollution, I think, so. I can't why not the kind of air... I don't know. Maybe it has nothing to do with people. Maybe, within ten years you get it back for some reasons we don't know. We don't know much about nature! We cannot manage nature, as it is said.

***Another change is that you get the electricity poles, carrying the electricity to Oslo, in your view.***

There are also changes that you see some electricity poles far away. I dislike that very much, when they were made. But now I don't pay attention to them, I just neglect them. The poles themselves are very well made. They have a shape that is fairly beautiful. But they do not, somehow, belong there. I must say, because I have been too much in cities and too much crowded, I like that I don't see much of human influence. If I were here much more, I would like it, probably. If I had to stay here all the year round. It has to do with what you have too much of. And now you have much-to-much, too many people around, compared to animals around. I ask many people about that. And they say: 'Ah, yes, I would like to have more animals around when I go to work, then people.' I ask: 'What would you say against having less people and more animals on your way to work?' - 'Ah! ah!' Haha. So richness and diversity of living beings around yourself. Richness means abundance.

***Just to get back to the electricity poles. The idea that they are used for consumption, and maybe over-consumption, of energy, doesn't disturb you, when you look at them?***

Talking about richness here, of course electric, these poles reminds me of that Norway uses more electricity per person than any other nation in the world. But that doesn't disturb me when I look at the poles, no, not at all. I am not disturbed very easily, I am glad to say. When I am up here, it is very difficult to get me disturbed by anything.

***One more question about the mountain. A lot of people resemble it to a loaf of bread but that is not your view of the mountain, is it?***

There is at least one person, who says that Hallingskarvet looks like a tremendous bread, loaf of bread. And that is a good spontaneous experience. And that's all right when some people could look at it in that way. But that's very rare I think, in Norway. Anywhere, it would be rare. But the shape is a little like that. Yes!

***How do you look upon it yourself? What is the appropriate metaphor?***

No, I have no metaphor for the shape of Hallingskarvet. But it certainly has a sort of weight. It is not a pinnacle;

it is not a shape like this. It's a certain weight, a certain solidity, a certain... there is something of eternity there. You cannot easily see it fall down or anything like that. Solid. And it's not rough and tough in a way that would convey aggression or an enemy would like, that is threatening you. It is not threatening you. The shape is... There is a certain distance. It is as if the mountain itself likes the distance. A certain aloofness, to some extent. Aloofness, with benevolence, nevertheless, as some priest or some religious people would have a kind of aloofness. But have also, not a complete smile but something in the neighbourhood of a smile, like a Buddha. And Buddha also has this massive body. So, I have then a enormous number of spontaneous experiences, for each part of Hallingskarvet. So, the names I have of the climbs there, would also have to do with the shapes of Hallingskarvet.

***You see faces in it?***

Very much spontaneous experiences have to do with shapes of human beings. Probably from when you're one or two years old, you see very much things in shapes of human beings. So in that sense we are anthropocentric. Humans are in the centre, whether you like it or not. You have a special relation to humans, seeing so much in their faces. And so you see faces pointing, but you also see animals, I think. Spontaneous experience is a very important word for me. I think, you can develop your spontaneous experience to such an extent that your life gets richer, and it costs little money.

***Let's talk about the mountain Andersnatten. You once said that the troll... people experience it as being a troll. You said that was an appropriate Gestalt for that mountain.***

There is a mountain in southern Norway which has been used as an object for artists to paint, and it is quite clear that many artists or non-artists find that the shape is that of a troll. A big, big fellow, trees are the hair. And Gestalt thinking is such that this spontaneous perception of a troll is completely on par, is a completely adequate description of reality, as somebody saying: 'It is a heap of stones.' So as long as it is a spontaneous perception of a Gestalt. And a Gestalt of course is then not only the shape of a troll but also the *being as* a troll. That is to say, you get then all the mythology about trolls into what you see. You don't see then a troll in the mountain. But what you see is a tremendously complex, culturally complex, thing. And when I talk so much about Gestalt, it is because I have this opinion that science, and I think especially about natural science, only asserts something about the abstract relations in reality. Things and phenomena, the relations between them. Not about the content of reality. The content of reality, you get directly through spontaneous experience. But the abstract relations

which are so important in acting, when you act. If you see a mountain that seems to threaten you, to fall over you. And you start running. Then you have some error in abstract relations of a geographical kind. But the perception of the mountain threatening you, is a perception of reality. Whereas a perception of the physical relations of a mountain - geographical and physical -: they are only expressing relations between things. If you have a relation between two things, we call the *relata*, that which is such that you have a relation. But science does not talk about that at all. So it is a kind of critique of the place of science in your philosophy, in your life-philosophy. It has nothing to do with the content, except through abstract relations, and that is part of my philosophy, then. Which is: tremendous admiration for contemporary physical science and cosmology, *tremendous* beauty in this building, but it has to do with abstract relations, and nothing with the content of reality.

***Why do you stress so much the spontaneous experience, the immediate experience? What's important about it?***

Because, that's what is there. Whereas the reflection then starts to analyze these things. And through analysis, you get to know about the structure. But if there were no spontaneous experiences, you have nothing. What you experience that's... then you have contact, direct, with reality.

***Before the analytic mind starts to interfere.***

Yes. And not destroy so much as you understand the relations which are absolutely necessary to do anything. But as long as we believed in atoms, we could think of reality being atomic. But then the atoms was like whole, let me say, planet earth systems. You had then something interior there, the electrons, and then you start analyzing the electrons and so you get into something that you don't whether it is mathematics or physics. The quarks, the strange particle. And you have nothing left of physical reality as independent reality.

***In your philosophy on ecology, these spontaneous experiences are also quite important, isn't it? The immediate appreciations.***

Well, in my work in the relation between ecology and philosophy, has to do also with this concept of spontaneous experience, because people would for instance say: 'We make a road now through this forest, and it's through the centre of the forest. But, the square meters of this road is tremendously small. The square meters of it.' But then I would say: 'It goes through the *heart*, the heart of this forest. And this is the heart of the forest!' 'That's nonsense. We have a road here and it is so small part of the forest that it makes no difference.' So the spontaneous experience, when you get into the

forest, deeper and deeper, you have this feeling of being *deep* in the forest. And if you then hit the road, this completely disappears. And then people say: 'Well, that's your imagination. There is no heart here.' But if you start this way, saying there is no heart, just certain distances, you get into a worldview which resembles that of Immanuel Kant, the great philosopher. You end up saying: 'Nature is without colours, even without shapes, and even without cause and effect. Because relations of cause and effect is something created by humans. So there is nothing there. In short: there is *nothing* in nature in itself! You have no access to nature in itself.' You see, you end up in complete nonsense. That's what many people do who are in philosophy. Even in contemporary so-called postmodernism, nature is something, only a limiting thing, which you never can really see or appreciate. You appreciate only your own ways of thinking and feeling and you are completely determined by your culture, and so on. So, this protection of nature is a sham in a sense. There is something there, but you don't have any access to it. So it is undermining for some people, the believe in protection of nature as a fast undertaking for the next century, for the next two centuries.

So, that's important to see, what you experience spontaneously in a rich natural setting, I call it, not wilderness but free nature, that is to say, where it is not dominated by human presence. What you see there is infinitely complex. Whereas when you look at something you have made, you see the instrumentality; what it is made for, and it's so much poorer in content. So this is how I connect then my philosophy of nature and my general philosophy, through this term Gestalt.

***A Gestalt like 'the heart of the forest', is it wise to articulate that further, what you mean by that, or should you leave it as it is?***

Not much can be said, I think. You just say: 'All right, we go into the forest. We go. We now spend a week out in forest country.' And I would say on Wednesday or Thursday, in the week: 'Now, we are in the heart of the forest. Where is the limit, where do you think is the nearest where you get out?' Maybe there, maybe there. It's far away to the borders and there is just forest. Nothing reminds you of anything else. So I say: 'This feeling you have now of distance, of the power of the forest, that you are immersed in the forest and it is something so much greater than yourself. So much greater. You are in the heart of the forest. And here shouldn't be any roads - ha-ha!

***The heart of the forest would change, if there was a road nearby?***

Yes. There would not be a heart. If it is cut into, and it is very big, the two parts would have a heart. But cutting and cutting, there will no heart left. [grins]

***A similar Gestalt of the Sámi people, 'La Elven Leve,'  
Let the river live.***

Yeah, the Sámi people, they astonished me; one young man there, a Sámi young man, who was caught by the police, standing where they should make a road. It was part of a direct action in favour of the river that should not be used for hydro-electric dams. And the police: 'Why do you stay here? You are not supposed to stay here. Why do you stay here?' 'Well, this here, is part of myself.' It was the area of the river where his reindeer were crossing and he had been since boyhood. And to stay there, and to be there, so close connection with his *self*, that he could say: 'It is part of my self.' And that is typical of deep ecology movement, that you feel yourself is hurt when they hurt the place with which you identify. You identify with a place in such a sense, that cutting up and destroying, it's like cutting yourself. And it *is* cutting yourself. Because your self is much more than your ego. The self has to do with that with which you identify. First of all people of course, your nearest. You identify with your nearest. And it is part of yourself, this relation you have to your nearest. If I ask you: 'Who are you?' Who are you, basically? Who *are* you?' You will answer with these close relations. Also with your job, your social status. But you will say something about that with which you identify. And this Sámi young man was identifying so much with this place, that, thinking that there was a big road here, would destroy something for him, in here, something *in here*.

So Self-realization, as I use in ecological philosophy, the self here is not the tiny ego nor the social self, but what I call the ecological self, that is to say, the total reality in which you are immersed, is your self, which you then realize through your identifications and the way you live.

***If I ask you: Who is Arne Naess? Where does he identify himself with?***

Well, in a sense when it gets to nature, I identify with the area here, so that anything that is ruined here affects my self.

When I have, in order to not make stupid tourists fall down the cliffs here, they made a lot of identifications, green big, kind of wooden things, along here. That destroyed a little for me. So I am glad, so I made a lot of noise in order to get them taken away. And insisting that you don't go on top of Hallingskarvet in wintertime, without knowing exactly what you do. So if you are new to Hallingskarvet, you go skiing with somebody else, who knows Hallingskarvet.

***But there are not that many big flowers for instance around here, were you can identify with.***

Yes, I identify with tiny, tiny flowers, and that has to do probably with my feeling of helplessness, between age

four and fourteen. So I liked very much to be together with tiny shrimps. You have, especially before now, there are mostly... pollution has taken away. But tiny shrimps, who would then come to me when I was standing quiet in the water, with the water to my knees, not, well, and get under my foot. I could just do like this and they were killed. Or they would come and pick on my... to find out something about me. They are very curious looking and feeling around you. So I felt I was together with them. And later, I could have something to eat for them. Sometimes I would take them up in my hand and let them then go. So I was together and I identified very much with a shrimp.

***Did you feel tiny yourself, at that time?***

Oh, yes.

***Why was that?***

Well, I felt lost in a sense. I had no mother and no father and I had only one friend and he disappeared very soon, because his father were having a job somewhere else. So, I was rather lonely, and found such... I had such a good time, weeks after weeks in the summertime, in shallow water. And I liked the tiny crabs. I said to my real mother, then: 'I have found the world's smallest crab!' But I didn't really have found that, but they were suddenly very small. And the smaller they were, the more I identified. So, then I went to be successful in a social sense, but I was successful with these tiny creatures. And later with the more grand nature.

***When you, later-on, went to the sessions of psychoanalysis, did you learn more about this feeling of tinyness?***

Yes, we were... we started with discovering my infantile neurosis, sleeplessness and not being willing to eat, and so on. We started with that, of course. But we... And we found some things of value for who I am. Fourteen months every day, except Sundays. And then I gave up two months earlier. The analyst would like that I should be an analyst myself. He was then at outlook for people who would be good analysts, and he thought I would be a good analyst.

And I had to... and he asked me to study psychiatry and I went to a psychiatric clinic in Vienna. There was such misery that I never got over it. I had two special patients. I had white coat and was introduced as a doctor. But I was no doctor of course, but I was introduced. And I had long, long talks in the evening with an extremely unhappy patient. *Extremely* unhappy, who tried to commit suicide and had unhappily been caught in Donau, big river, discovered and brought to land. And then, some time after again, they get this terrible kind of anxiety, with shifts, and into the clinic again. And I had to do with the absolute, most miserable human beings that could be found, I think.

### ***What did you learn from that?***

That one never should say that life is wonderful. But you could say that your own life is very good. But never say: 'Life is wonderful.' Because there is thousands of people who would like to die as soon as possible. And who are in suffering, not only physical pain, but complete suffering, with a panic. In panic of anxiety such that you have froth around your mouth and just like this for hours. Now they inject... if there is a doctor they would inject something and they just fall asleep. But I have seen too much of... too much probably, of extreme suffering. To say: Life is wonderful. *Pfff!*

### ***Did it also teach you something about compassion?***

Yes, because when I was sitting near a patient in such terror, just sitting there, within... not even touching, you know, not holding a hand even, after when they get a little better, or get an injection, they were tremendously grateful. So you can do something, it doesn't cost more than just *sit* with somebody in extreme... and it has... So, compassion, not... need not have strong compassion, even. But just be there. Something relating to something. Now you get injections and so most places, but of course in Third World you have the same going on, people in torture and people in extreme suffering otherwise.

### ***Arne, can you go back to the year 1973, when you first coined the term 'deep ecology'? What did you mean by that?***

Well, I started this terminology in 1970 and the first, the third edition of a little book was in '73, with a deep ecology terminology. It's... the term 'deep ecology', or better, 'to be a supporter of the deep ecology movement', that is a long term, but is more basic. That is: to join in activism, to get rid of the ecological crisis. To join on the basis of your life-philosophy or religion, that is to say: Your motivation comes from your total view or your philosophical, religious opinions, so that you feel, when you are working in favour of free nature, you are working for something within your self, that demands that, demands changes. So you are motivated from what I call 'deeper premises'. You go all the way back. If we ask you: 'Why do you do this, why?', the supporters of the deep ecology movement do not stop with for instance: 'It is bad for the health if you have such pollution, it is bad for this, bad for that.' You do not talk so much about pragmatic what you call pragmatic goals, as that. It cannot be done, we cannot live as we do. It is against my deepest concern for myself, as well as for nature itself, and these supporters then have a job to do, together with the others, which we call then, mostly, the reformist people, who say: 'This is what's going on. In order to overcome the crisis has to do with practical things, technology and other things and you need not go back to your own

philosophy or your own religion. That is unnecessary.' So it is... those who go all the way back to what I call the ultimate premises, they are generally in favour of very harsh policies that seem to make a lot of trouble for you. But they say: 'Hah, if it is necessary: no car. If it is necessary, I will not go by airplane in my vacations, I will not so-and-so. And I need not such-and-such products, which require a lot of energy to be made.' So it's... it flows from their inclination to live in a way that is universalisable.

### ***Doesn't it restrict your possibilities?***

Sure it will restrict your possibilities, but not what I would call your Self-realization. You cannot do anything you would like. But you may have of course some bad habits ecologically, but clearly, the rich countries have to go down in material consumption. That's one point we have said since 1970. We have to go down, and of course in the Third World, they would have to go up. And we cannot continue this lifestyle, average lifestyle, and say that we shall have that lifestyle, but of course in China they don't, must not have that, because if China starts on this way, then there it has catastrophic consequences.

### ***I think that one of the major differences between the two groups is that one group sees nature as a resource, and the supporters of the deep ecology movement see nature as having value in itself.***

Yes, that's a good way of saying it, that people, some people look at nature *only* as resource, where we say: it makes *sense* to do something for nature in itself and the first point in what I call the eight points of deep ecology, says that every living being has inherent or intrinsic value. It makes sense to do something for this living being and a very important point is that humans don't have the right to reduce the richness and diversity of life on this planet, except to satisfy vital needs. And every word in such a formulation, of course, is open to different interpretations. But in the deep ecology movement we feel that we do not have the right to reduce the life on earth. And the more people we are, if we are going to be ten-thousand million people, what we can do, each of us, in disturb... disturbing ecosystems is of course very much smaller, what we can do, without ruining something.

### ***Who says that we don't have the right? Where does this come from?***

It comes from the inner life of the supporters. And it's not a juridical term; it is a term mothers use to... for instance saying to Tom: 'Don't! You have not the right to eat the dessert of your little sister. You do not have the right.' It is a little different from saying: 'No, you haven't... you should not', or something. Calling it: 'You don't have right to eat all this which is supposed to be

for your sister.' So this... in ordinary language, completely ordinary language, you use the term 'right', and this is the way I use it in the third point of the eight points.

***Can you tell a bit more about value in itself? Like a plant having value in itself, what is that?***

Well, I made a questionnaire about whether people knew or used the term 'intrinsic value' or 'inherent value', the Norwegian term, in the beginning. And they did, they... I think they understood that. So it is also... it is not far from ordinary language to talk about: 'It has value in itself. It makes meaning to do something for it and so on.' So, this is a... these are terms from ordinary language and not technical ones. In philosophy, you may then try to make it more precise this term, and in different directions. But... and that is done, with little consequence for the deep ecology movement.

***Does every living being have an equal value?***

No, it's... No, that's a completely different thing, according to this terminology. The best formulation is to say that there is something which every living has in common with every other living being. It is a value we call intrinsic value. And then, question: Is there more or less intrinsic value? I say: 'That's up to you to find, that's up to you whether you consider that intrinsic value.' I find that it is not for me... according to my intuition, you shouldn't grade intrinsic value in more and less intrinsic value. But you must grade very much your obligations towards different kinds of living beings. So that your moral obligations towards your fellow beings, fellow humans of course, have a very high priority. And your obligations towards your children and your own children even more. So it is a term.... I use the term 'differences in obligation', towards the different living beings.

***But if, for instance, penguins in Antarctica, how can you identify with them or feel obligations, you never saw them.***

That is a thing we asked a lot of people about, penguins. And it was so interesting to see that. The general opinion was: 'Oh, they have to be there, they belong there and we like them to be there.' And if you would like to go to that: 'No, no, no, thank you, no, no, no, no.' It had nothing to do with having them around you. But it has a status there of a very special kind. They have value in themselves so obviously! Obviously, they have value in themselves.

***But when you walk around the hut, it is unavoidable to step on plants. You must make a decision on which plants you step and on which ones you don't step.***

Yeah, and there it is up to you, on the whole. For instance flowers, I make more effort not to put my feet

on flowers. Or even after the blooming, I know this is a plant which will give such-and-such flower, and there are flowers such as *Gentiana Nevalis*, that has a special treatment. Feelings like that, I think, there is no use for trying to make universal rules about how to behave in particular cases like that. It's... we have to make rules to be different in different societies, of course. And, there should be no kind of priesthood, deep ecology priesthood, saying: 'No, no, not that, but that', and so on. That's... it's not a sect, the deep ecology movement, it is not a sect.

***Can you explain that the deep ecology movement is already existing, and that it is in many countries, not only Norway, and it doesn't have a building like Greenpeace for example?***

But you should not think of it as a party, or anything like that, or an organization. It is a movement; you have similar things in the movement, for instance in what you are eating. Some years you should eat that, and not that, and there is a movement for this... It is a movement in that kind of... and there is thousands and thousands in many, many countries and in many cultures, and there are very few theoreticians. By theoreticians, I mean those who try to verbalize more or less general value statements and hypotheses. Those are between fifteen and twenty at the moment, who I would consider theoreticians of the deep ecology movement. And they have very many things in common, of course. For instance, democracy. Very strong kind of democracy, but not necessarily anarchism or not necessarily so-and-so. But they have nobody who thinks that dictatorship of any kind would be useful, or would be justifiable.

***But you also say, there are people in the deep ecology movement who have never heard the term...***

Yes, most people. Only few of them have heard the term. But it's very... if you talk to people in, for instance in an ecological direct action, environmental direct action; if you talk to them and about things, and you mention something like eight points and so on, so many will say: 'Well, that's how... that is how I felt a long time! I mean, that's how I feel, that's... yes!' And some will say: 'Yes! I need... it is not bad to have a word for this, but I felt like that, always.'

***There are also people in India, who act from inclination already...***

Oh, yes! Yes. And you have the Chipko movement. That is in part reformist and in part deep ecology oriented. But there, and in other cases in the Third World, if they stand up to protect something in nature, they stand out in a very strong way, risking their lives, very much risking their lives. Hugging trees and risking their lives and livelihood.

***Can you maybe give an example of a deep ecology action, like the one at the Alta dam?***

Alta. Hydro-electric power stations are all over Norway. And then they built big dams. But in arctic Norway, far north, there was a plan to make a big dam that would also... that also would injure the Sámi people. And Norway has *two* cultures, two people, kind of people. You have the Norwegians and the Sámi people, these arctic people you have in Norway, Sweden, Finland and Soviet Union. And some of us then thought that here, this must not be done. We couldn't make a thing that is harming the Sámi people, that is impossible! So, there was a direct action. We stopped the building a road, which was necessary to start, And it was summertime and we didn't reach our goal. And then it was wintertime, it was very cold, and that made an impression, because we were more than thousand people and it was a very harsh time, and to stay there made an impression. But they sent... the government sent a big steamer with six-hundred police, to stop us. And according to the deep ecology attitude, you have to be very polite and very nice to people who oppose you. There were people then, up there, who were in favour of the dam, especially those who said: 'We need electricity. There would be a lot of... the unemployment will go down when we make this dam', and so on. They were very angry.

So, according to the Gandhian principles, and the Gandhian principles are adopted by the deep ecology direct actions. When they come like this to our camp, you see [grins], very angry: 'Hwrrrhgg...' 'Please sit down, have some coffee' [grins], and they couldn't resist that temptation. And they set down, had coffee and they didn't turn round to opposition, but they were not opposing us in a violent way or anything like that, you see. So, so on the whole, it was unfortunately, the people with higher education who were against. And in schools for instance, you saw when I made a speech, invited to make a speech in the school, nobody stood up for the dam. Because it was 'in' to be against it. So you see it is very difficult class questions, also. Questions of...

***But were you sitting on the ground, when the police came?***

Yes.

***Can you describe what happened, then?***

Well, some of us had a very great privilege to be fastened with very, very strong iron things, here, to the ground. And one of the most active there, Sigmund Kvaløy, he was sure they have no technology to unfasten us from the rock. Ha-ha. And I said: 'Oh yes, modern technology... this is a symbol, it is a symbol. It has nothing to do with...' And of course they had things made so that they were able to not harm us at all.

***And did you get punished?***

Oh yes, we got punished. And, of course, it is a rule in deep ecology, you ask for prison, to get prison instead of money, to get in prison. That is important to message. All this has to do with communication to the Norwegian people. And if you gladly go into prison, and foresee going to be taken prison, that is much better than that you foresee that have to get some thousands of crowns.

***Did you go to prison yourself?***

Pardon? Yes, of course, I asked for it, but you see they wouldn't let me have... To let Professor Arne Naess in prison that's not good, ha-ha. So they didn't... practically nobody went into prison. Most, some, because some would, after being carried away, they went back again. A second time and third time. And then they get very harsh...

I mean, in a Green society we would have police also, and police have no choice. You can... Police who are against this dam, they couldn't say: 'No, thank you, I will not go there and carry them away.'

Carrying is also interesting. As a fairly old man, I would talk to the police, asking for what training they had in order to carry so many people and so on. I mean, having a good chat with the police.

***What was the slogan of the activists?***

The slogan seemed to be very well chosen, it was: 'Let the river live!' *La Elven leve*. In Norwegian: *La Elven leve*. Let the river live. Marvellous! I don't know who made that slogan but *whooo*, like fire, that was the thing! Let the river live. Not: We need not electricity, we can have electricity from other places here in Alta. It's... we had specialists showing that that was an alternative. Getting from further south and not disturbing anything Sámi. But: Let the river live. And that is typical deep ecology, you see.



***But people would say: the river is still living, when there is a dam. It is still going on, after the dam...***

No, it is dammed up and it's... the life of it is harmed, according to the feelings of the population. And it is also

clear that the river, the term 'the river' also includes people living around there, the river. And using the river for fishing. Using the river for everything, so letting the river live includes of course what you call the ecosystem. In ordinary people's mind, they have an idea of ecosystem, so...

***Isn't it a form of nature mysticism?***

I think that is a too strong term. But certainly some of the theoreticians have a kind of nature mysticism. If you use the term 'mysticism' and 'unity', that you feel a unity with nature, many people will say 'Yes, I feel a unity with nature. I feel I am part of nature', they say, in a way and, 'Well, but don't you see there are relations that distinguish... distinction between culture and nature.' And they say: 'Oh, yes, yes, yes, yes, yes. There is something there.' If you are a Sámi, you might say: 'This place is part of myself.' Saying that it... You may use the term 'mysticism', but it's unfortunate I think, to use it, because so many people think of religion in a sense that is not appropriate.

***Can you maybe tell again – you told it already yesterday outside – but that the Sámi people saw the river as some part of themselves?***

The Sámi, where he was staying, that was part of himself. And river, river is part of his self. And he is part of the river. And he is part of the river and the river is part of his self.

He was staying at the riverside, where they were going to have the road. And he was not supposed to stay there, and the police asked: 'Why do you stay here? It is not... Why do you stay here?' And he said: 'This is part of myself. I cannot leave a part of myself. And this is said completely spontaneously by Sámi people without any kind of formal education. So it is a spontaneous reaction. 'You hurt me, you hurt me if you do something to this place.'

***Some people will say: 'To talk about the sacredness of the soil, for instance, reminds us of Himmler. What is your response to that?'***

Haah! Himmler had a sense of archaeology and certain other things. But to make a kind of argument, saying that... to somebody who is eating: 'Well there are people who eat other people, how can you eat, thinking of those people who are eating other people?' It is just like if you don't have a good relation to your old mother: 'Goebbels had a good relation to his old mother, so how can you have a good relation to your old mother. Goebbels had that. Hitler talked in favour of nature, how can you talk in favour of nature?' And so on, you see. It is so stupid. But it is interesting that Hitler of course liked nature, because of these what he called 'eternal laws of nature', which is struggle and violence, and physical strongest and mentally strongest would

kill the weakly. Now, that is very... looking down upon weakness is one of the important, very important ingredients of both National Socialism and fascism. And then to have a kind of... every human being has intrinsic value, that is absolutely poisonous for fascists and National Socialists, that every human being as such has intrinsic value, *ha!* Tigers, maybe, but not humans.

***You yourself have had quite some experience with the Fascist occupation of Norway.***

Five years, so we learned a lot. And of course, I was in Oslo and in 1934, '35, when the students started being Nazified [sigh]. And the daughter of my psycho-analyst had to jump out of the window. First floor, but... because somebody... There was kind of excitement among the students and they would be violent, go getting violent. And so the violent... the strategy of violent solution of conflict is also the second ingredient. There is no plus to have a non-violent solution of a deep conflict. The real thing is to get a violent solution.

***You were active in the resistance movement too.***

Yes, and I was active in an organization that was violent. Spying, I mean, secret... what you call it, secret service. So I sometimes carried a lot of weapons in my rucksack [grins]. But I wouldn't use weapons of any kind, and, but I didn't look down upon those who were fighting with weapons during... against Hitler, against the Nazis, no.

***Did you also spend time here, in the hut when Norway was occupied?***

Yes, some when... especially when the university was shut. I was here for a long time and the head of the Gestapo in Geilo heard about this hut, and thought: 'Aahh! It better be burned.' But they didn't find it! Ha-ha.

But then when I was here with two of my most darling students, somebody came and said: '[making sound of gasping for breath] Gestapo insists that you come down to the headquarters of Gestapo at Geilo.' And I decided: of course we do that, we do not try to evade it and with my two darling students we went down to headquarter and those two students were pacifists and absolutely passive during the war. And they were very good in German. I had already written a book in German, so we were all very good in German. And the sense of humour of those students are just unbelievable. So, from the very start, there was some kind of strangeness about us, you see. And this chief of Gestapo there gradually gets a more mellow, especially when I was... They were... had... got hold of a big, big tank of milk, eight litres, and they all drank it and they left it on the road. And the Gestapo then thought maybe this is for the sabotage... saboteurs on the Hardangervidda, the 'heavy water people' and so on. I didn't... they didn't tell me that they really drank all

the eight litres, those two, two students drinking all... so I then started telling them: 'What? Did you drink all that? And it is *war* now, I mean; so many people don't have any kind of... any kind like that! How could you drink *eight* litres?' You see, and I scolded my students, and the Gestapo chief, you see. There a professor was scolding. He simply couldn't resist... he didn't smile, but he was mollified, totally. And that day... 'Well, you are not supposed to go back to the cottage. You two students. But from the police you will get two tickets to get this train back to Oslo.' And leaving the place, they said: 'Thank you for this being able to get the ticket', you see. And then: 'No, no, don't thank them!' that was going too far with the Gestapo! [grins]. I said: 'No, no.' But it was such... it was a fantastic event for all three, and for the head of this Gestapo thing, this situation.

***Did you spend time during the war looking out of the window to see if they were coming for you?***

No, I didn't really, because I didn't know at the time that they *were* looking. I only knew that later, after Geilo and people saying: 'Oh, they try to...' and so on. So I was not looking. I was completely relaxed here, not knowing that it may be burnt down, ha-ha.

***Above the turmoil in the rest of Norway, so to speak. What do you think of people who say that the deep ecology viewpoint is: 'Nature is more important than humans'?***

To say something like that, 'Nature is more important than humans', is so nonsensical from a deep ecology point of view, because human are fantastic beings, with each of them having intrinsic value, and to think that we should kill some of them, or anything like that But the more people we are, the more difficult it is to keep up the richness and diversity of nature. So, one of points, the eight points is: 'It would be better for humans if there were fewer, and much better for non-humans.' We have also formulations saying that an increase... eh, decrease of human population is necessary to have the non-humans realize their potentialities. But the term decrease - then people think in terms of one generation. And even if it is said again and again and again, this is questions of hundreds of years, it would be strange if we were able to do it within 400 years, and against... and down-scaling the population, it is enough, if there is half... among 400 babies, there is one less, every year. Or 200 babies were placed where there really produce 200 babies... if they're produced 199: that's enough, in the rich countries. So, you wouldn't really feel the change that is necessary in the production of babies. And if ten percent of un... of babies who are not really produced because of the parents really want them - there are so many unwanted babies - if you could reduce that to ten percent, that would be fabulous in the rich population. And in the non-rich, of course, they are not disturbing

nature *yet*, but the next century, there is a problem there, also in the Third World.

***It is not imperialist of us to say this to the Third World?***

No, we just see that you cannot be imperialist because there are no new continents. You are very unfortunate. We have exploited new continents in order to get rich. You cannot get rich because there are no more continents. But we have to go down in material standard of living; we have to go down, so far enough, that when we stop going down, what... how we live is universalisable. That's to say: the others could also live on that level, without catastrophic consequences. And we have to go down, as... so far, far enough that eight or ten thousand million people could live on that level without seriously, and very seriously destroy much of what I call the 'free nature', non-dominated by humans. 'Free nature' is the term for pieces of nature not dominated by humans, like the area here.

***Why is it so important to respect the richness and diversity, to not reduce it?***

Well, I think people who have had the opportunity to live as children in free nature: to them it is very important for their quality of life. And it's important also, because if you have had free nature, access to free nature, you are *inclined* to keep up the richness and diversity, and you will see that it is meaningful to do something for other beings than just humans. If you get depressed, the only thing to have a little nature is good for you, yourself, and you get this notion that they are, in a very deep sense, similar to us, in having interests. They are interested in not being trampled on, they are interested in water. You see, the plants, going down for lack of water and you have joy from helping them. So, that's the... when people get sufficient opportunity to live as they wish to live, most people will be in favour of the richness and diversity of life on this *fantastic* planet. I mean, there may be only one in our galaxy among more than hundred-thousand million stars, there would be a planet, and we... And this is for *my* philosophy very important, that I am in a galaxy here, and there are hundreds of millions of years behind me, before I was made. And I couldn't sit here and talk without this happenings hundreds of millions years ago. So I feel I have one second of life now in this fantastic development that is infinitely greater than me. And that's a good feeling.

***Is it not, in a way, necessary for real human fulfilment to have this access to free nature?***

Well, I think that the people never had access to free nature. They could just as high level of Self-fulfilment and Self-realization. But, if you talk about... what we have in German, the saying, or in Norwegian: *alside*, that

is to say: all-sidedness of maturity. Then *one* aspect of your maturity would be a mature way of looking at other life forms than humans. So, I think that Self-realization, as I call it... if that is supposed to be all-sided or many-sided, then the relation, the more or less deep ecology relations, to nature is one of the things you would have to have in this all-sided maturity of human beings. But some people are so tremendously mature in their family life, in their community life, and so on. So I wouldn't say there is something lacking there in Self-realization. I wouldn't say that at all. But if you take *all* sides together, then: I say what I say. So then, there is no arrogance necessary in deep ecology movement, no. *Whhpp*.

***Can you maybe tell a bit more about this idea of richness? What richness is, for instance here, you might say it is only snow and rock, still...***

Well, there are some animals, for instance foxes, who live around here, and one of them, I looked through this window, seeing the fox staying and looking at me. And that's a tremendous experience, a wild animal living here all year. All year! I do not do that. Staying there and looking into my eyes and I looked into his eyes - I don't know whether it is a female or not -; And I tried to give some food, I don't know, we always wish to give some food of something and... but he didn't quite like when I was throwing something. It... but then it went about three metres further away, and was listening. Because they are able to listen through the snow, for lemmings or mice, you see. They can hear, they can hear some... Trusting me! Not being interested in me any longer, but trusting me. And the more you have of animals around here, the... the greater you feel your life here. So I am very sorry that it is not much to be seen [coughing], it's... you have some marvellous birds, of course, the eagle, and so on.

***There is a difference between abundance and richness.***

No. I use richness, and abundance would be a better, a more precise term. But somehow, 'abundance': you think *just* about the number. Whereas, the term 'richness', I like that because it is a little more than just counting. And it's *very* different from biodiversity, of *biodiversity*, we say. It is very different from biodiversity, because, there may be biodiversity, but only as tourists you can see if... you see practically no wild animals. But they're all, they're all, yes, we have enough, but there is a surplus of whales, we eat those, the surplus, we need not be afraid of extinction. So bio... biodiversity has to do with the limit of extinction. And: If people of other planets come here, they may tell... say to us: 'We have... Don't, worry, don't worry, don't worry. We are not interested in the limit of extinction. But we will cut down some of the population of you and our method of

killing, our method of reducing the number is *so* much superior to your.

Because, you only hear a very well known piece of music from Mozart, and then, it's nothing more. That's the very end to this [clicks]. You are dead. So we are superior. And what... we need the territory, we vitally need the territory. I think we would be... not like those people coming, and saying that to us. And this is how I see this interest about the extinction level. This is [obviously?] we should have abundance of life around and most people like abundance of animals, I think. Especially city people who are not afraid of what's happening to different kinds of vegetables or what they are making.

***You say: next to biodiversity, also cultural diversity is important.***

Yes, I take cultural diversity of humans *on par* with species diversity among non-humans. And that's then... every year, the number of cultures which are not industrialized - every year, they're going extinct or getting near to extinction. So there is, from a deep ecology point of view, great concern about the unification, the possibility of economic unification of the world, by a strong world market. If you have the same, in detail, the same kind of products you buy, the same kind of economic system all over, I am afraid that it is practically impossible to have deep cultural differences. You have then only *subcultures*, as you have within New York, for instance. You have marvellous subcultures, for instance of musicians, where they live in music, all of them. But it is not the same as a culture. Because their children are, *pfff*.

***Why is it a loss?***

I think, when we talk about the realization of the fulfilment of the potentialities of human beings, the potentialities of humanity, that the potentialities of humanity on this planet is much narrowed down if you have the same culture, all over. Whereas, you see from... you can read about old fantastic cultural achievement, which is impossible for us. But they were small cultures; they are influenced from other cultures, but not dominated by any definite kind of culture, like the old Indian Sanskrit culture. What they had in their mind was so fantastic, I mean, it is impossible for us.

***Does the feeling of this process happening make you sad?***

Yes, sometimes yes. It reduces my quality of life a little, to... when I think about that, when I think of my patient, psychiatric patient, when I was 22 years old, I mean this... sometimes I wake up thinking about this misery, this fantastic misery. So, there are three great movements, today. There's a peace movement and then the social justice movement

and then we have the deep ecology movement, but the misery is so terrible, and we have to do something to it.

***But you are not pessimistic?***

No, not considering the twenty-second century. Then I think... [laughs] We might have turned the tide. We may have chance. But I think the chances next century is small, it depends on what we do today and tomorrow. [clicks]

***But the loss of cultures seems to be a one-way process.***

Yeah, I don't know what would have to happen in order to have a great variety of deeply different cultures which are not of a fascist or a National Socialist kind; that is, cultures which tolerate other cultures. And that is, for me of course, a necessary condition. A culture, I wouldn't like cultures which do not tolerate other cultures.

***Let me ask: can you explain the difference between basic needs and vital needs?***

With basic needs, generally, they're... you have food, you have shelter, and you have certain other things. Vital needs is relative to the kind of society you are in, and in Norway, for instance, at this time, through this generation, or next generation of Norwegians, the education of a formal kind will be a vital need. And in the arctic Norway at the moment, it tends to be a vital need that the family or the neighbours have a car. [grins] So, and the vital need of sheep owners is to not to have any wolves around. That's a vital need for them. They cannot stand having wolves around. Bears, yes, if they behave, but not wolves. So it is a vital need for them, so they would kill any wolves they happen to see. It's a vital need for them. But that is a very special situation. And within 30 years probably, it will probably not be economical interesting to have sheep in Norway, they would be get... there is more of them at other places, they could have farms or sheep.

***But the wolf, also, has value in itself.***

Oh yes, and there is no question that people in these valleys where there are, like to shoot wolves, that they would say: 'Oh yes, they have value in themselves, but: no thank you.' But it has not the status, culturally, as the bears. Bears have a very high cultural status among people who are sheep owners. And sometimes they eat some sheep, that's OK. But if they are badly educated, they would just harm them and, and then they have to be killed, they say. All right. Killing is absolutely compatible with having, with recognizing intrinsic value. There is no *logical* relation there, so that if you think this animal has intrinsic value, you cannot under any circumstances kill it.

***Can you explain that a bit more?***

Well, you see, reindeer here, with practically no big carnivores, we have to kill *a lot* of reindeer every year. Many thousand reindeer are killed for ecological reasons. We have made the wolves extinct around here, all over. And eh... also there are a couple of other big carnivores that could do the job, we are going to do the job. Because they get hungry and starving and they get thin and tiny and having a bad time.

***Is that not that mankind is then sitting at the seat of the Creator, doing that?***

Yes, in this cases, but we cannot manage nature, that's a bad expression. Because the thing we can do is manage our own interference in nature and a little more, we can have a little more. But to take over God; a God, a God with brains would never tell humans: now you take over the management of nature. Ha ha. That requires... we couldn't... a single leaf you couldn't... you have *so* little knowledge of what is going on in nature and that would be permanently like that, probably. It's too complex. It's beyond any kind of machinery you could have, information machinery.

***Can you explain the difference between 'quality of life' and 'standard of living'?***

Well, that's an extremely important question, because the term 'quality of life' is getting more and more popular. And so it's misused, in my opinion, it's misused. Because quality of life has *just* to do how you feel life. How you *feel* life, about life. What are your concerns, your worries. Which are your... how, how strong are such-and-such worries, economic worries, what kind of economic worries, what other kind of worries; no friends, you are ill, your illnesses, or what it is. And you cannot just ask: 'How-do-you-feel?' You have to go *round* the question, of course. And you have to stay with each, each human you are interviewing. It would be together with the humans. And then you can say: 'There is a higher life-quality among women with full-day jobs, and half-day jobs in rural... or in district Norway, or something like... You can generalize about quality of life.

But it is important that in 1941, the quality of life of Jews in Norway was very high. [sigh] And some of us felt that any day Gestapo would come and drag them away. So, they shouldn't have had... they wouldn't have had the quality of life if they knew more about the possibilities of being harassed by the police and dragged away. But the quality of life, what's high, has nothing to do with whether you're stupid or not, or whether you don't understand how terrible your situation is. You have cancer, and of course your, your quality of life may be very high, because you don't know about it. But it may be also high, when you know about it. It depends on how you can manage. There is more to

saying: 'Life-quality has not to with *how* you live but how you *take* how you live, how you react to the way of life, your cancer... The quality of life depends on how you manage the situation, having cancer.' So, quality of life, quality of life is a very important term.

### ***Also to find meaning in life?***

Of course, if you don't find meaning of life, but you [...?] high standard of living, that's very bad, and that was a joke in 19..., late 1940's, when I was in California, that they were leading Californians in... university people, you know, they were leading in standard of life and leading in number of visits to psychiatrists. So, you would have a fantastic standard of life, but you looked to your psychiatrist as others would look to the dentist. So, you see. It is not so easy to have a very high standard of living.

As to richness of life here, and the abundance, if you would like that word, it was so nice to have... to sitting here and suddenly I saw a fox, exactly down here, [smiles] near... That fox was looking at me and I was looking at the fox. And of course, as usual with humans, I fumbled getting some food for it, or something like that, quite stupid, but when I was just giving... trying to give some food, it didn't like that, he didn't like that. He went a little further down, and then standing and listening... because foxes are able to hear the lemmings and other small... and mice, what they're doing underneath the snow and underneath the soil. So, what I say is that it would be marvellous to have more, more animals around here, at Tvergastein. There are too few, I think. Which is difficult for humans to get, to behave in such a way that they are all over here. That's difficult.

### ***Did you recognize something of yourself in the fox?***

Natural, we were completely on par, I mean, completely: one looking at the other, and *pfff*. The difference was, that I was a visitor here, where the fox was living here all year. And... so the tremendous difference between the fox and the human, that doesn't disturb the feeling of unity, the feeling of what we call identification, and that it has meaning, this fox has meaning. Of course in itself, that's... *pfff*... trivial, quite trivial. Even if we... some people kill - I am sorry, some people like to kill foxes - but gradually they tolerate that they eat some things, some hen or something. Do some disturbance for humans, that they take that.

### ***Arne, you interpret Kierkegaard as saying that you are always responsible to develop a total view, can you explain that?***

I don't think that is typical for Kierkegaard, because he was so much against Hegel and a system, what he called a system. But I think that, at every moment, according to Kierkegaard, you are totally responsible in relation to what you believe. The value priorities that, whatever

you do, whatever you eat, where-ever you are, the terrible condition of humans are such that you are responsible for your choice. And I interpret him to say that... but if you have a system, so that you say: 'According to my general view, I have to go to the left now, not to the right', you have to, three times do this and find out whether you really... are you really... accept what your system says? And then you get into a situation where you say: 'No, I go to the right. I will not go to the left.' And then, of course, you are going against your verbalized kind of value hierarchy. And you then try to find out where it went wrong, where in your total network of your opinions, you were wrong. Because, after all, your, your spontaneous reaction for or against is very important. So, even if you have a tremendously well worked out, verbalized total view, it's after all something secondary in relation to the personality. You as a person are always above the system.

### ***What is a total view?***

Well, it's a view that has certain value priorities for your life, and, more generally, also has hypotheses about who you are, what country you are in and what social and political situation. So it is both descriptive, it's describing the main features of the world. And value priorities, so that you are more, you have more obligations to your own children, than to the children of others and so on. So you have more or less fundamental views, views, and today that's more important than ever, because there is such a cynicism and that's used by what is called the post... post-modernism. That search for truth and validity on a large scale is *out*. That's old-fashioned, and now you have cultural conversation and small narratives, and this great movement, like peace-movement and this movement... is too big for us. We just have small conversations and narratives to each other.

### ***Is there a difference between scepticism and nihilism?***

Yes, sure, I mean scepticism, you may have ten ways of using the term but, one use that goes back to Pyrrho, a Greek philosopher, such that you say that you have no guarantee that you have the truth in your hands, so to say. Fallibility is such that you never have a guarantee to have the truth in your hands. That scepticism is very different from nihilism, saying: We cannot reach any truth and we *cannot* reach any truth. And there are no values in any universal sense, just for instance your desires at the moment. So it's extremely different from nihilism. You are, you are... according to this kind of scepticism, which I find very much... I think is very much good in it. Hmm.

I have published a book on a very special sort of scepticism. And some people think that this leads to a kind of nihilism. But that's not the case. It's just a kind of belief in general fallibility, that you have never a

guarantee to be completely in truth of what you say. You're no guarantee. So anything can happen. You have no guarantee in this about the future, and also about the future of your own self; what will be your opinion tomorrow. And you are liable to be mistaken about your past, as I am when I write self-biography, there may be a lot of errors. And if I say, 'Oh yes, I'm mistaken, this is... was, this... it was like that!' Next day you may say: 'Oh no, I was not mistaken!' And that is typical then for human beings, that you have this fallibility. And it asks for open mind, completely open mind, at the same time as you must be strong in your action. So your act... you are responsibility, to act and go into the centre of conflict which you think are important, at the same time as you are aware that you are been mistaken all the way!

### ***What is nihilism to you?***

Nihilism will say that there are no opinions any better than any other opinion, and so you can just do what you like, so to say. There are no values which are such that you ought to follow this and realize those values. And that's... nobody probably has completely consistence there, but also in the old Greek culture you had a couple of philosophers who were like that.

### ***There might also be another form of nihilism, in the post-modern age, of people saying that 'God is silent', the spiritual vacuum of this time.***

I think I should add, that today, there is a wave in philosophy, and I think there are more and more waves. In this century you have had so many waves of philosophy, where it is *in* to have such-and-such opinion, as today, it is *in* to have a kind of, so-called postmodernism. That the search for truth is over. Any kind of vary serious great movement like peace movement, ecology movement, is out. What, what we are going to have is locally, to have small narratives to talk to each other. Cultural conversation, narratives of a smaller kind, and don't have this arrogance to try to erect consistent views of reality and so on. That is out. Fortunately, this will not last long, I think, and you come back to serious questions which are more or less global, but always you act locally, that's natural you do, and you know your power is tremendously small towards others, but we are back again, the next century, to have total views which are more or less fragmentary, but we are serious people.

### ***But some say, we are now realizing the consequences of what Nietzsche said, that 'God is dead.'***

Well, God is not dead in the sense that we still have priorities of value, and you have certain values which are just absolute for us, such that against torture, for instance. If you are against torture, in principle and in practice, what Gandhi would say, we are not Godless.

We may be atheists, but not Godless. And that is a big distinction for a Gandhian and others who have... Gandhi thinks of himself as an orthodox Hindu, but he has great respect for militant atheists. 'Oh yes, that's alright. If you have a value that religion is bad and you have thought about it and you act against it, this is correct of you to do.' So you see, you may have definite values of such a kind, that you are not Godless. But you may say: 'No, no. A Christian God, no thank you.'  
***Still there is, I think, still quite a lot of spiritual suffering at this time. People not finding a place to belong.***

[sigh] Great spiritual suffering, I think, yes. And that's good in a sense; that you... that those are mistaken, I think, who say: We are... now, in the future, never come back to anything like definite views of life, and definite views of greater and lesser values. That's all there, at the moment, as it was one hundred years ago, and one thousand years ago. It's all there.

### ***Where? Where is it?***

In the minds of people, they still find something valueless and other things valuable. They find something meaningful and other things not meaningful and they are willing to die for certain things, they think are valuable, just as we think going to die as a thousand years ago.

### ***Do You yourself don't have the feeling that there is a spiritual void or vacuum?***

Some people of course have a background and a upbringing through that they get into terrible depression with the feeling of void, and nothing is worth anything and so on, and they're suicidal. Thousands of people are suicidal, thousands of people who rather die than live... go on living. And in some cases, we should be helping them, I think, to get rid of their life.

But that has been like that in old times, also in the Middle Ages, where people were supposed always to be Catholics, and so on. That's of course nonsense. So that's... We have to pay for having this mind and this kind of possible... potentiality of reflecting all the time. It costs, being a human being. It costs very much; for some people it's an awful thing.

### ***Can you explain that a bit more?***

Well, the brain and the entire human mind is such that you see alternatives which seem not to be open to animals - other than human beings. We can see completely different possibilities for yourself and for everything. And your instinctual life is... has much less to say than with a fly, or a pig, or something. So, this means that this freedom of choice is tremendous, area of freedom makes that you get completely, maybe

completely blocked in your... you get, you don't know what to do, what to do with yourself. So many young people say: 'I don't know what to do with myself, I don't know.' So, it costs, and it has always cost, I think, and will always cost. So it pays, and therefore I would never say that life, being alive, is wonderful. But I will just say that life as a phenomenon, the development of life in six hundred million years is wonderful and fantastic and unbelievable.

***Some people, like the Swedish film maker Bergman, they speak about the silence of God.***

Of course, if you have been brought up with a definite kind of God, as believe in God, a definite kind, then you get into trouble very much easier, than if... like myself, I had a mother who said: 'Oh people, I would like to be like my friend who is believer in God and next life, I wish I could.' But then she would laugh and say: 'I can't do that.' So, with a mother who was like that and with a suspicious about every teacher at the school, you don't get into having a very strong belief that there is definite kind of God, with definite kind of goals for you. And it then breaks down, for instance, a Jewish philosopher said to me: 'How can you be that sceptical? And we have such joy as a Jew.' The Jewish scepticism is one anxiety and frustration, 'Oh, I am doubting, oh, I am doubting. What shall I do? My God, I am doubting.' Whereas a Hellenic scepticism of Pyrrho, that was a *joyful* scepticism, saying: 'We don't know much, we don't know. We will follow our spontaneous impulses as long as they are not too bad for other people.' And they were sceptical, not as anti... not as a mortal kind of doubt, 'Oh my God, I doubt!'...

***But even people with a Christian or another religious background may say that this world is falling to pieces. With this threat of atomic war or the ecological crisis, they feel that God is silent, God is not taking care anymore.***

Well, if you read a lot of history, you see how terrible things have happened then, how, how the world has gone to pieces, when there were very... this great distance between the cultures, geographically et cetera. Like the American Indians, the last Indian for instance, who was a free Indian, were caught in 19 so-and-so, a long time ago. His world, he said, is gone to pieces. He was very depressed. He was taken very good care of, the *last* free Indian. Ishi, was his name. And he said: 'My world is gone, completely.' So, in olden time, this was olden time, and this diversity of cultures... sometimes your world simply go to pieces. And today, I don't see any sign that the world is going to pieces, and I don't think the atomic wars could, could destroy more than 95 percent of humanity. And then you have five percent and that's enormous number of humans.

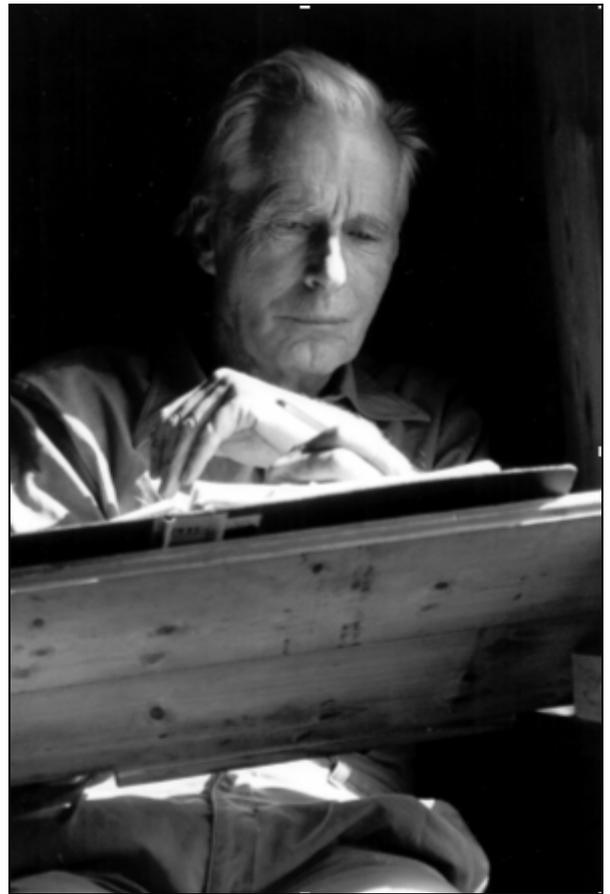


photo: Doug Tompkins

***But before the Middle Ages, we used to live in an enchanted world, now we live in an age of the disenchantment of nature.***

They talk about disenchantment of nature, but that's talking... that's talk. There are great problems ahead and there is no certainty about things going towards catastrophe. There is no good signs, that we will, in the next century, overcome the ecological crisis. We don't know much, so we just go ahead. You do this now, you try to do this, and this, and this, and there is no reason to stop and say: 'We are helpless', or, the... These doomsday preachers are just doing harm. We are just going to go on and trying to protect our own life and the life of others.

***But you might argue that there is still a huge difference, for instance, between a Sámi person, who lives in an enchanted world who feels the connection to... whatever, and us, who have to relearn it. We have to be educated. We have moved beyond the split.***

It turns out that people lived all their life in cities, and if they had then, by chance, getting into free nature, it doesn't take long time before they're just as protective

minded, just as eager to protect free nature and others. So human beings are such that they seem to be completely stuck in one kind of way of living, and one that seem to have vital needs of such-and-such-and-such things, and they get, by chance, pushed into some other reality. Ha. And they are there, adapting to a new kind of reality. So, it's frightening, but it also is a very good thing. It is frightening for many people that humans are so able to be... to get into be a torturer or to be a saint.

And if we were young, let's say two hundred years, not only five or ten years, we would probably show very, very different kinds of characters, developments. With this, a long youth. So I'm a great believer in equanimity, that you will have, inside yourself somewhere, a trust; trust, not *believe* of a very dogmatic kind of anything, but a trust. And that is typical of some of the sceptics. The, the... where the... now, we are suddenly drowning in a flood coming through the house here, or not coming, that's... I don't know... There may be a tremendous big stone on the way down. And hitting us within two seconds, we are all just out of here; you are, some of you. Just saying: 'Goodbye life and eh...' That's... that shouldn't disturb you much. And not that the possibility, that we have wars of such-and-such terrible kind, and two hundred... million species are going extinct or four million species are going extinct. You go on. You just try to help what you think is worth to help, and keep quiet inside here.

***But that is on the individual level, but a Sámi person belongs to a culture where there is no split between what we call nature, wilderness, and spirituality. It is all a whole.***

It is amusing to see that among supporters of deep ecology, of the deep ecology movement, it's amusing to see that they have *such* a high estimation of any culture that is not industrial. The Indians... and they think that every old culture was better than what we have now. But if you read carefully about the social reality in certain cultures, it is so much worse than we have.

***Yeah, but that is not what I mean. I mean is that if we use the word or the concept of nature, it means that we have grown apart of nature.***

I don't think we have grown apart of nature, and you don't think that every non-industrial civilization had consistently better relationships to the nature. But what's so terrible today is our power to destroy. They didn't have much power to destroy, and that's the main reason they didn't destroy much, I think. That they didn't have this terrific power. So, now the terrific power is in hands of adolescents, we may say. But that's also an exaggeration. I think that there is hope for the twenty-second century. That we are on the way of decreasing the unsustainability of life. There is a fair chance [smiles]. And we just go on and do what we

think is the right thing to do.

***I like to return to the subject of 'total views'. Maybe you can tell about your own total view.***

I have, I think, a total view, but only fragments are verbalized, and that holds good for other people, those who are not professor in philosophy, they don't have all this time to reflect.

But things happened to me, for instance, when I was sixteen years, out in the highest mountains in Norway, when I got into a hut, a tourist hut, I was always sitting with a... some thick, very technical book of some kind. And a professor of palaeontology of the worlds before our own time, six hundred million years of development of life. He saw me sitting there and started, starting discussing with me and told me about... of there was a world of development before humans. And from that time, certainly, I got the feeling, a feeling of time in terms of millions of years. So I didn't understand why people were so upset by things and I didn't... I hadn't... couldn't see how any human being could feel small and helpless because, compared to this form of beings, even a dinosaur will have a fantastic power in their minds, or capacities, unbelievable power. So, I was then having a total view, where you do not live in this century but you live in a time that is covering hundreds of millions of years. And I feel the Ice Age just as yesterday, where the ice was covering this, here. Just as yesterday, and therefore, my total view is, is of a kind where you, yourself are tiny, tiny being in a *fantastic* world, but you are also a fantastic being, you yourself are a fantastic being. And whether you get to be socially successful or not is absolutely un... of very little interest whatsoever, as long as you can have a little food. Just a little money, you do not need... then you can have a fabulous life. So...

***It makes you feel humble, and at the same time great.***

We are tiny and, compared to this cosmos... but we are proud beings, *tremendously* proud beings, being humans, *ahaa!* 'You should be tremendously proud of yourself.'

But not compared to others, that you are better in playing the piano or better in so-and-so, you may be very bad in everything.

I had a friend who never succeeded in *any* kind of thing. He tried to be artist, he tried to go to the theatre, he tried botany, he never succeeded in anything, but he was such a marvellous person!

His achievements were: *ha*, so small, but it was so nice to be together with him because he had so many interests - none of them make... they didn't make headway, any of them. I am sorry he died long ago. So, that's what... success, he was, for me, such a fantastic successful human being! And we need many more of them! And he was also invited very much by people, because he had always nice things to say. 'I could sing

some song for you!' And then he sang moderately good, but with *tremendous* enthusiasm! That's the kind of person I like.

***You just talked about going to the mountain and reading this book. It was another experience you had in the mountains when you went as a boy of eleven, to Jotunheimen. When you came to meet mountain people.***

Ahh! Yes, speaking about what I really admire... Against the wishes of my mother, who was asking 'No, no, no, no', I went alone to the area of high mountains, when I was fourteen years. And when I got up there, no hut was open yet. But there was an old man who was shovelling snow all day and he told me, alright, you can stay with me in a shack, a tiny, tiny, very cold room. And when he, when it got dark, he was taking his violin, and play. [sound of stamping foot] And was doing this, with his feet, and then he said: 'You have to do that also.' And I tried, you see. But, the rhythm! I was quite good at that time, with a difficult rhythm of Chopin, a certain classical... But his rhythm, I couldn't follow. And he didn't like that. What we eat was porridge. Old, old porridge, cold. So, but he had this, playing the violin, and his outlook - *completely* sovereign, I mean. And then, early morning, he went out shovelling all day again. For me, he was ninety years old. Probably he was sixty.

But I saw this and that made me politically... in my political philosophy and social philosophy, turning towards the left in politics without being a socialist. I was voting left and left... leftist views, never being a socialist. Because, they had so many meetings, ha. I didn't... This kind of life, as socialist, was impossible for me.

***But what was the old man doing in the mountains?***

He was hired to shovel snow, this old man. he was hired to shovel snow. And he was a peasant, poor peasant from neighbourhood, but city people, owning a hotel, a big... made him go up there, two weeks before the tourists would come, and make headway, getting away this snow.

***Did he make a sad impression on you or...***

No, I mean, this old man, of course I say, you understand, that he was very joyful. he had nothing to complain about. He didn't complain at all. This was alright. He had some money for doing this job and that money would help him for months, in his life.

***How did then your political development, how did this experience develop your personal development.***

When I often have told about this old man, it's because I saw myself as a son of an upper middle-class family,

with a lot of money and a lot of education, all this. And I compared myself with this fellow and I thought that such people must be taken care of, if they really get old and cannot do any shovelling anymore. So we must have a welfare society. We must have a society that resemble that of the socialist, without being socialist. Because I make a tremendous difference between private initiative and personal initiative. And I am so much for personal initiative. But whether it's private or not private, is for me uninteresting, completely uninteresting. A university may be fabulous, being a state university, because of the personal initiative. So the political philosophy, which is a very important part of philosophy. There, I have then a paradoxical situation, that I am politically active, without being a politician. [smiles] I speak good... I speak well about politicians, because it is so easy to be making fun of them and... as they do now, in United States and in Norway. And I am voting left, without being socialist, et cetera.

***You made the word ecosophy, or ecosopher. You regard yourself as an ecosopher. What is that?***

Well, ecology, for me that word is the name of a science. We have thousands of volumes of very good scientific reports about the state of the planet. But we need *wisdom*. Not as much science, as wisdom. That is to say: that you do practical decision-making, make practical decisions from really good premises. And you act according to the premises. So we need *sofia*, that is wisdom, and *ecosofia* means, you must have ecosofia, that means you must behave according to your ultimate value priorities. Here, on this planet. And it is much more important now to teach eco... not so much ecology, as eco-sophy. So if you can get some million dollars less for ecology but for ecosophy, then you can change many more peoples' behaviour and many institutions would be also saturated with ecosophy, 'wisdom of household', 'wisdom of the world', 'wisdom of...'. But ecosophy, then, in my term, is not only being wise in your relation to the planet, but as a total view which includes the relation towards the nature. It's a total view that's inspired *in part* by our situation of an ecological crisis. But it is only inspired in part with the ecological crisis. It is inspired also by a philosophy like Spinoza has, or another kind of philosophy, or religion. So ecosophies would then be personal point of view, that's general covering your life, covering political views you have, social views you have, et cetera. [clicks]

***And you, yourself, have developed 'ecosophy T'.***

I call it ecosophy T, and people think it's T is for Tvergastein. I don't think so. But for ecosophy T, I make a point that you should do, that you should work to some extent, you should use some of your time to find out about yourself. What are your... what are, what makes your life meaningful, what is the most important

thing for you in your life? And, so I have ecosophy T, that means, at any moment, you could say: 'Arne, what's the meaning of what you do now? What's the meaning of being here now, what's...' So that I say: 'Alright, I will try to find out.' And then I get probably some stupid answer, and they say: 'No, no. That answer Arne is not good enough for you say you have ecosophy T, that's not a good answer. And I say: 'It may be not! Maybe not. I am glad you tell me about this.' And so, you learn a little more about yourself, through others, through friends, which should always criticize you, I think. Good friends is one that really criticize you. So it's no dogmatism, there. It's just that I again and again say: 'As a human being, you are much greater than you think, and you have a kind of life philosophy, approach to life, and that you must try to verbalize to some extent in our present civilization.' It's so important to stand up, stand up and tell things. And many people who should stand up, don't, and those who should be saying less and writing less, they write more than ever.

***Spinoza wrote that reason demands, that everyone loves himself, that he strives to obtain all which really leads men to greater perfection. Is that what you would take to be Self-realization?***

Many have taken notice that I am inspired so much by the old philosopher Spinoza, living in the seventeenth century and writing in Latin, and belonging to a very different period and civilization than we are. And they ask: 'What's so good about him?' And I say: 'Spinoza may say nothing to you, and the study of him is very difficult, so I don't find it strange that you do not even like him, or find him obnoxious in certain ways. But Spinoza means very much different things for me, because I discovered him when I was having a lot of Latin in school, and I then started a new reading Spinoza in Latin. And that made me not flunk, because I thought that was worthwhile, whereas Caesar's wars in France, in Gallia was completely uninteresting and, *pffff!* Cicero was very uninteresting, but Spinoza was something.

And if we ask about his relation to ecology, he has certain very abstract notions but important to me, namely, that every living being is not only in something else, but also in himself, or herself. That is to say: There is a core where you are full cause of your own action. There are situations where you are full cause of your decisions and your action.

And God is then a limiting kind of notion of a being that would be in any situation, in any time, anywhere, fully causing our action. But this God of him is contrary; it is called completely immanent, that is to say: If there were no finite beings like us, there would be no God. So it is not only that we are in God, but God is in us. And the God is defined through being completely in himself, in itself. So there you have all the grades of being in itself, and man is completely superior to other living beings, in having the possibility of being cause of own action.

And this causality is for him freedom.

So he is called, so-called, determinist, and that makes people don't like him at all, but if you are not insane, you are cause, as a personality, of your actions and decisions. So you wouldn't like to feel that you are not causing your actions. So this kind of freedom is a good kind of combination of scientific point of view, and your total view, which is for freedom.

***He speaks about God or Nature, Deus sive Natura.***

Well, Spinoza talks as if he is a pantheism, that is to say that everything is God, but that's far out. He has a wonderful distinction between *natura* and *naturata*, and *natura naturans*. And this presence particeps of a verb, *naturare*... He has a verb for nature naturing, naturing. And he says: 'There is a force of some kind of dynamics, creating nature. And that is *natura naturans*. And then he uses Nature with a capital 'N'.

And then you have the *natura naturata*, the 'natured nature'; nature as something that is made already, or are created, or status, static, and that is nature with an ordinary 'n'. And God and *natura naturans*, God as creative nature, is then for him synonyms. But we are part of nature *naturans*. We humans are special favoured beings, so to say, in creating nature. So you have both in one.

And that's very good, and then he has this relation of positivity towards beings, he has. Because, for him, the highest kind of knowledge is what he calls an intuitive knowledge, which is knowledge of particular things, not generality, as in science. He has a verb *intelligere*, the Latin is *intelligere*, and people then think this has to do with intellect. But *intelligere* has to do with understanding. And the highest kind of understanding is the understanding love of particular beings. So you also get rid of this scientific point of view, general like that, because the highest kind of understanding is always between, always towards particular things; from particular thing to a particular thing. That, he calls *amor intellectualis Dei*, and it's not intellectual love but it is an understanding love. So, for him, understanding and loving cannot be separated at all. That loving is a kind of understanding and understanding is a kind of loving. That kind of psychology is also very good. And he has also anticipated Freud to some extent, saying that 'You get better on the way to greater freedom, through knowing *yourself*, and through knowing your weaknesses. If you know your weaknesses, you are already on the step upwards towards greater freedom. So, with complete understanding of your weaknesses, you are on a higher level of freedom already.

***Does that tie into the idea that you have ask deeper questions about yourself?***

The particular thing about the deep ecology movement is that you go deeper in questions, towards ultimate

questions. That's Spinoza hundred percent, I mean, he is typical of a philosopher who tries to have a tight connectedness between your opinions. That's the term. System doesn't mean another thing. *Systema* in Greek, is synthesis, you have things, putting together. And then he asks, typically asking about which would be the ultimate things you believe in? So, he is, he is there also. I like that, for that reason. And that is also why he is considered impossible by people who say: 'You must stop talking about foundations', as they do, many philosophers today. Stop talking about foundations. He is *typical* of foundations, but that does not imply dogmatism, and does not imply that you have closed mind! You may have a completely open mind, nevertheless, trying to get to the bottom of things. And there is bottom. Believing, that there is a bottom.

### ***What is your bottom?***

Well, I have the word Self-realization, which is not the realization of your ego, but the larger self, with a maximum... the ideal, the ideal maximum is a maximum of identification with every other being. So I have used, then, one norm, that is to say, to develop Self-realization. But that is for convenience. I'm a systematician. So I like to have as few as possible sentences which are the basic ones. Because if you have hundred sentences, their compatibility with each other takes a lot of time to develop. Whereas you can start with one norm, and then a lot of hypotheses, of course, about who you are. But one that makes this systematically much more easy to handle.

### ***If you talk about Self-realization, is that not egoistic, that you are preoccupied with the ego, and not with the ecological crisis?***

No. But it is a term most people have used or know about. And you find philosophers all through the centuries talking about something like Self-realization. So it is in the middle of great traditions, Western and Eastern, Gandhi talks about Self-realization, and so on. Marx talks about Self-realization, and so on. So, but then you can always say that 'By self, I mean so-and-so, and not so-and-so.' So the ego-trip, which is by some people thinking they are... that's the highest they can do in life is the ego-trip. The cult of your ego, your special kinds of wishes and desires. Then they say: 'Oh, you talk about ego, I talk about the self with the ordinary 's', and the self with the capital 'S'.' Corresponding to Nature with a capital 'N', you see, in Spinoza. And in this way, I manipulate words, and you are permitted to manipulate words as a philosopher. Only that you say: 'No, this term can be used in ten different ways. I propose to use this so-and-so.' So I am much in favour of definitions, I try to define my words.

### ***But how can you do something about the ecological crisis by Self-realization?***

Specific of human beings is the capacity of identifying yourself with nature, to some extent. To see, a mountain even, as part of yourself, or a river, as part of yourself. 'This is part of myself': the Sami. So that this Self-realization means, this Self-realization, in my terminology, means realizing the possibilities; not to coerce, not to diminish the realization potentials of other beings. So the basic term is really: Self-realization *potential*.

And feminism gets in, because males cannot decide which are the Self-realization potentials of women! The women must themselves find out which are their Self-realization potentials. We cannot do that, that's stupid. And the same we see in nature beings, insects, other, they have potentials of Self-realization. And it is depending on temperature. So if there is a butterfly here, outside the window, it's probably dying because of the coldness brought up by the wind. The self-potential of the butterflies depends on the high temperature. So, if it is possible, I would take it and somehow do something to get it into warmer weather.

### ***But if you see the ecological crisis, the loss of diversity, biodiversity for instance, how does Self-realization fit in there?***

That different beings have different Self-realization, and the cosmos, as we know it, get's realized through the Self-realizations of the living beings. So it all adds up to the Self-realizations of life on this planet, and I don't know how many other planets there are. But there, it is Self-realization of this totality which is augmented, the more you have of particular beings. Self-realization of their selves. And the whole may be said to be more than the individuals, but also individuals are more than the whole, because: without individuals, no whole.

### ***And you talked about spontaneous experiences, is that one source for intuitive knowledge?***

Exactly. Intuitive knowledge would be intuitive understanding of some particular other being, and in this intuitive understanding, it must be a component of spontaneity. Of course you can also analyze relations of a very more or less difficult kind, and abstract kinds, but it must, fundamentally, be a spontaneous understanding. Without any spontaneous understanding, it would be an abstraction. So, you realize, understanding is realized in a *bang*, spontaneously, bang like this.

So in many ways, you see, I can suit, I can use, *use* Spinoza in my kind of total views. But it doesn't mean that I must have the same opinion as a human being as Spinoza. Human being Spinoza didn't have much regard for animals. He said it was womanish, not to be willing to kill animals. And he said many things like that, as a man of his age. This is of no importance to me. I am inspired by the *kind* of thinking, the *kind of thinking*, which is so splendid. And also because, as a human

being, nobody can say much against him, as a human being.

### ***Why is that?***

[sigh] His life, you see! He had terrible enemies, but no enemy was able to point out that he was immoral in his life. Such a humble fellow, with such behaviour of modesty and wisdom... So, those who saw in him a devil, as somebody devilish, ruining Christian faith, they also say: 'Well, as a human being, yes, yes, alright', they say, 'alright. *But* he is undermining Christianity, he is undermining everything.'

### ***He was expelled from the church?***

He was expelled, and that was, and is, was a terrible thing for a Jew to be expelled from the community. No Jew should ever... If you knocked on the door: *no!* They should isolate him completely. And so on and so on. But he had a good time in *Nederland!* [smiles] And I think, having had, having helped Spinoza in his life and his many years, not all his life, he had so good time in *Nederland*. And to have an outstanding philosopher like Spinoza in your culture, then you need no more philosophers, next to a thousand years. You can say: 'Well we have, we have Spinoza!' 'Ah, yes, that's right, yes, yes, yes...'

### ***We don't have mountains!***

No, you have Spinoza. No mountains, but you have Spinoza. Ha-ha. With a mountain view, with this enormous view of Spinoza, so you have enough, for a long, long time.

### ***Why did Spinoza argue that intuitive knowledge is the superior knowledge?***

That has, probably, to do with his, how his feeling of intuition, with other people and his friendships he had. He had terrible enemies and he had very good friends. And his relations with friends, somehow there he realized this intuitive kind of understanding. And he felt that, however brilliant the sciences were, according to him he was *very* much impressed with mathematics and chemistry. He was very impressed with chemistry of his time. But it couldn't *compare* with the understanding of the intuitive kind. [clicks]

### ***He is regarded as a rationalist, yet intuition is more like...***

Yes, they say: 'How can Naess be a Spinozist?' Whereas Spinoza was working, just like Descartes, more or less, and believed in rationality, rationality, rationality, rationality. But you see what he is saying: that in order to gain in freedom, you must use your rationality. That rationality is an instrument to gain in freedom and to

gain... rational thinking is also necessary to gain such kind of freedom that makes place for understanding of the intuitive kind. So this rationality was completely pragmatic, in the sense that it's not a top thing in humans, it's an absolutely necessary instrument for gaining freedom and reaching understanding of the intuitive kind.

And that's good for me, you see. Fascism and National-Socialism, the... As Hitler says: 'We must give up this rationality of the Germans, this... if you don't give up that rationality, there is no hope that you can understand that you are the chosen race, and Germany is so-and-so-and-so.' Rationality, the more difficult a situation is politically and socially, the more important, in the conflicts, the more important you have people like Gandhi, who was very rational in his ways, dealing with other people, but always in the service, in the service of higher goals. Never, never equalizing, of making rationality a kind of top faculty of human beings, no, no!

Talking about rationality, I think it is important that we today call something rationalization of, especially in economic life, and that way we complete irrationalization, or pseudo-rationalization from the point of view of Spinoza. Because it is rational within a *very* limited context of economic life, and not in the context of total human life. And it's not going to the bottom, to the foundation of well-being, of social and political well-being. So, today, the term rationalization et cetera have *nothing* to do with Spinoza. It's just a blind alley!

### ***If we get back to intuition, usually it is being associated with poets, and artists. Not with rationalists.***

It's interesting that Spinoza, classified as a great rationalist, uses a term: intuition. But intuition there does only mean that you don't have still deeper level of argumentation. You have to start somewhere! It was Aristotle already saying: 'You cannot prove everything.' And we cannot prove everything. So you start somewhere, and, but to start with is what we call intuitive kind of understanding. [sigh] It is starting point, logically. Because it has to do with maturity of thinking, and maturity of behaving. But it is intuitive in the sense that it is not part of the argumentation, what you hold. You have an understanding that it is not founded on argumentation *itself*, on understanding *itself*. When you, in a situation, feel intuitive understanding of another living being, that moment it's a spontaneous experience. And it is an understanding, it's spontaneous experience *and* also an understanding, and what should we call it then? Intuition is a quite good word, but it doesn't mean that it is absolutely true or absolutely unfounded, but the foundation is not within an argumentation. You have to go beyond argumentation, beyond rationality. *Beyond* rationality,

but not *against* rationality. Because you need rationality all the time. [clicks]

***Can you give an example of coming to such a basic intuition?***

Well, let's say you are outside your own country and you are trying to approach Indians, as they did hundred years ago, in Brazil or somewhere, a tremendously different culture. And they said that they kill you. They kill white people. And so, the first people trying to connect with them, white people, they don't know whether you should stretch out your arm, because that may mean hostility. You don't know anything what it means, you see. [laughs] And they then said: 'We'll have a child with us.' And so they approach the Indian with a child, the Indian community. And that helped. The connection of the child couldn't be... they couldn't be enemies, who took their child with them. And then, you see, they derived a kind of intuitive understanding of this person coming, approaching them. And they were able, somehow, to connect. Intuition was so important. Because you got no argumentation. You have nothing. You have no speech or actions that could be convey anything. And smiling, couldn't know what that could mean: coming smiling, huh! So, you see, it's, it is easy to get examples of what, what we would call intuitive, and there it was between particular beings, not on the level of science at all. You have no science of that culture. And that culture didn't know anything.

***Maybe you can tell a bit how people from intuitive understanding come to ultimate premises, which can be quite different like Christian or Buddhist, and still act in similar ways to face the ecological crisis.***

Yes! According to deep ecology movement, there are so many different religions, so many different philosophers, on the basis of which, on the basis of which you can come to what I call the eight points, that is to say: certain principles that's in fairly general and in common in the deep ecology movement. And I am glad to say that so many different basic ultimate valuations are compatible with the deep ecology movement. So there is a movement *in spite*, one movement in spite of... some are from Islam, other are Jewish, and some are atheists, and so on. They get together and they could meet somewhere in free nature. And they would have the same attitude. They would bend down, not like a monk, but probably will bend down. They see the same. They see, they see it in the same way. So it is inter-cultural. But it's not a knowledge, because it's not a knowledge they have in common. There are attitudes, and these attitudes have intuitive, basic features, *plus* knowledge of ecology, of course. So in ecosophy you need knowledge. Today we need, of course, knowledge. And in Spinoza's term, knowledge of the second kind. The first kind is just superficial. But we need both.

Training oneself is taking care of intuitions. It has to be with training also. To take care of your intuitions and to trust your intuitions.

***You talked about maturity of behaving, what is that?***

Well, in family life, you have, bringing up boys, you have teenagers, and we all know what we call immature behaviours and with the liberal kind of democracy, as we have, there is wide possibilities for acting out any kind of impulse. And as long as you are very immature, that will also be a lot of violence. Because, so much, when you are 13, 14, 15, 16 years old, violent impulses. So, in this way, you can define maturity, I think, seeing how they develop, taking care, but also seeing that you are not hurt yourself. I mean, there is an ethics of self, that you take care of yourself, but take care of others too. So, the term maturity, I think, can be given a quite good psychological and sociological meaning.

***What is the opposite of Self-realization?***

If we ask, what's the opposite of Self-realization, they will say: what would be the *zero* Self-realization? The zero Self-realization would be where you have, not been able to, at all, develop a self, as some people are unable. Autistic, for instance. The autistic children, they do not even have a self. So if they get burned, on a stove for instance, they may not take away their arm. And then, of course, we are practically helpless in helping them. But some have, and there are very touching histories of autistic children being lead into kind of connection with others. So the zero Self-realization would be exemplified by certain children development, of certain children.

***Can you also say that alienation is the opposite?***

Alienation is very good, because then you have kind of ego, what you are alienated from others, you are alienated from your culture. Alienation is very good as an opposite of what Spinoza called: being in itself, and in your self. If you are alien towards yourself, towards others. So: *in alio*, in Latin *in alio*, has to do with the term alienation. So you have a direct connection between the term alienation and Spinoza. And in a great conference with people from all great cultures, they ask: 'Do all cultures have a lot of alienation, as we have in our industrial rich cultures?' And somebody said: 'No, no, we never had.' I don't remember which culture. 'No we never have that in our culture.' And, certainly, the possibilities of alienation in our civilization today, the possibilities are greater than in a more closed society. More closed society. So, we have a difficulty there, also.

***Arne, before I forget it, when we talk about Gandhi, it would be important, I think, if you would say something about the urgency of the ecological crisis***

***today, and the urgency of getting involved in the deep ecology movement.***

There is a difference between the urgency of getting global justice, social justice, and the urgency of doing something really serious about the ecological crisis. And that has to do with increasing work, and increasing money you would have to spend, in order to overcome the crisis. And it is increasing, not linearly, but like a curve that is steeper and steeper.

So in 1988, when the Washington-based institution *Worldwatch* tried to estimate the cost in dollars - this is a strange way of measuring what's necessary, but at least it is one way - they said that for 149 billion dollars, that is 149 thousand million dollars, they could change the direction from increasing unsustainability to decreasing unsustainability. But it would be ten years before one could use that amount of money in a rational way. So that would be 1998, and from that year on, one could spend in a rational way 149 thousand million dollars for stopping erosion, stopping deforestation, et cetera. The estimation was done in 1988 and now we have 1995, and nothing seriously is being done. So we must estimate and say 200 thousand million, or 250 thousand million dollars a year, from year 2005! It's amusing that businessmen, confronted with this numbers, which are staggering for us, normal people, top-businessmen say: 'Oh, that's not a fantastic big amount of money.' And of course, the financial life today is such that billions of dollars are just fleeting around. So it doesn't make a great impact. And it certainly is a very small percent of the total military budget, globally. So, it's feasible, and there is no reason to say: 'It's too late.' or something. But for every year it costs much more, to get stabilized in a sustainable ecological world order.

Some, of course, are unclear about the crisis, what it consist of. One can say in general that it is a decrease in life quality of the planet. The life conditions are decreasing in quality. And of course, it affects the humanity in a very serious way.

And, as always, it affects the poor more than the rich. The rich can always disappear from very polluted area, can always get clean water and water enough. But the poor cannot do that. So since the seventeenth century, pollution for instance in London, has always been a question, problem for the poor, never for the rich. But one cannot first make people rich - if ever. So one has to take the ecological crisis very seriously, and that means that we all who have this formal education, and access to all the data, we should be activists, whether supporting the deep ecology movement or being more practical, saying that this concern about philosophy and religion or the ultimate question is, for me, they would say: 'For me, that's either nonsense, or this is not important. What is important is to go on with the practical problems, that's important.'

***Can you also explain why there is a crisis in the life conditions of non-human beings?***

This crisis, so obviously, will affect human lives, of course, affects non-human lives. And the non-human life quality decreasing, affects again, the human life. So, we are dependent on bacteria, we are dependent on every, practically every kind of... every species. We don't know which species are of no consequence for us. So, the more seriously you take the non-living... the non-human beings, the better. And it will never be taken too seriously, because it's so natural for us to have fellow-humans in our mind, always. Fellow-humans [so as that goes on?]. It's good that we have more people now than before, who are concerned about the life of the non-human beings.

***Can you give examples of non-human beings that are affected by the ecological crisis?***

Well, for instance, it's quite interesting that the non-human beings here, on the stones, the tiny, tiny creatures living darkly under the stone; they are affected very heavily, so that you can make them an indicator of the level of pollution. They cannot stand the level of pollution we can stand. So, are... are many very important types of what... of plants, specially, that are... that will go extinct, or will be reduced, so for instance, that reindeer will get less to eat, and so on, and so on. And without reindeer, the Sámi population - some of it - gets into trouble, and so on, and so on. So you see the interconnectedness we have, that's much greater than usually understood. So ecology, my definition, has to do with the interaction of organisms on this planet. The close interaction, which we do not dream of.

***Can you maybe say a bit more about that, this interconnectedness of species?***

Well, if you take the fisheries which they have played a great role in northern Norway. The fisheries are dependent on certain fish, that are not commercial. And those fish depend on the plankton, the organism fleeting around, not moving much for themselves. And if you touch the life condition of the plankton, you touch the life conditions of this non-commercial fish, which again [coughs], affect the life conditions of the commercially extremely important fish. So, the last ten or twenty years, we have changed the policy of fisheries, being very careful, not only with certain fish, which all... everybody are thinking about, but with the total ecosystem of the Barents Sea, north of Norway and Soviet Union. So there are conferences all the time now about what's happening in the sea. And there, of course, we need to educate people, including those who fish, and to look in a time reference - not of five years, ten years, but hundred years. To see that we have... this is not question of today, it is a question of the next century as a whole [clicks].

***I would like to come to Gandhi. Could you tell how and when you first came across Gandhi and his work?***

I think that in 1931, when I was writing in my master art, my master manuscript. I was studying just down here, at Ustaoset, in a hut of my mother, and in the neighbourhood there was a hotel. A small hotel at that time, and there Indian students came. And I immediately contacted the Indian students, and we had enormous discussions about the future of India. My conclusion was that there would be more happiness in India if the British continued, but it is intolerable, because of the dignity of an old, big civilization and continent like India. It was an undignified situation and suddenly the students felt the, the untenable... and they couldn't be slaves under, or even half-way free people, under British rule. And of course, then, we had a lot of discussions about Gandhi.

So, at that time I started, or maybe even earlier, I started reading about Gandhi and his campaigns in South-Africa, not India. He started there and what made the most impression was his way of *communication*, his way of feeling identity with the opposition. When he was nearly killed by some people who viewed him as a traitor, when he woke up in the hospital, one of the first things he was saying, was: 'Don't persecute these two people who are trying to kill me, because, according to their religion, you have to kill somebody, if he in a way tramples on the values of that culture.' And they had their serious conclusion that what Gandhi was doing was against the cultural values of their religion. And Gandhi said: 'Those two were braver than other, with the same religion, who ought also to have killed me! They were the only ones who really tried to kill me.' And this bravery, plus his way of explaining the viewpoint of the opponent who tried to kill him, I found marvellous, simply delicious. That is how to go, to explain, when you are conscious in a hospital, *explain* why it was correct for them to kill him. And then to say: 'They are better than those who didn't kill me.' *hmmm!* 'Who should have done it, because of so-and-so.' So from that time on, and I later elaborated into six points of ethical rules for discussion. But I... it is not only ethically, it is rules for effective discussion. Because in intense conflicts, what is effective is to keep completely cool about... to have your emotions under control, and see the points of your opponent and then go against what you must go against and nothing else. And never, at all, attack the persons. You do not attack persons, you attack their opinions, their attitudes. To make this clear, absolutely consistent distinction between a person and the views of that person. So, in 1945, I played that to the torturers. I had to do with finding the bodies of people who were tortured to death. So I was then communicating with the torturers. And there, of course, they got tea to drink and anything, and we tried to find out where they had, what they have done and where the dead bodies were. Because, during

the war, if you torture somebody to death, they got rid of the body so that there would be no indication what had happened. And they saw the possibility that Hitler would *not* win. And then, of course, they would question: 'Where are such-and-such people?'

So the Gandhian way of communication is then, the superior way of communication and the non-violent strategy is, in the long run, the best strategy, both ethically and effectively. And I have then written books about that.

So Gandhi played a role, *primarily* because of his way of communication. Eh... and this notion of bravery, eh... and it is special, it made a special impression that certain Pathans, neighbourhood Afghanistan, who are educated in a very violent way, so solving conflicts, they are so happy with going around with a gun! Even you go to the toilet outside your farm, or your house, they go sometimes with a weapon. They did, because there were always nice, delicious family conflicts, and you may be shot when you went to toilet, you see! And the British liked that, I think, it was a marvellous thing. Where they had little war, the British and this Pathans, very good friends in either eating together or killing each other. I mean but the same style: you're killing a nice way, and you were eating together.

So, Gandhi then met one of the superior people in, among the Pathan, his name is Abdul Gafr Kahn. He has seven foot high, and had tremendous physique, and used to violence, and didn't care about being hit, or being *pffff!* That's nothing. Pain, physical pain, is nothing. And when he was convinced by Gandhi, his bravery and his violent background made him much braver in conflicts between Hindus and Muslims, and Hindus and Sikhs, and Sikhs and Muslims - and all this terrible internal conflict in India. And Gandhi was so fond of this man; the police could hit him over the head and he would stand up. He had to be hit many times before he sank down. So, there was certainly in Gandhi a great enthusiasm for people who, who are brave and honest. Gandhi thought that if you are on the side of justice in a really convincing, consistent way, you will get into prison, you will be hit on the head, you will be killed, some day. And from that also very probable that if you stand up in a conflict, and according to Gandhi, one must seek the centre of the conflict, not the surroundings. If you do that and use you resistance it is only by *luck* that you don't loose your life or your health.

I think it is very different from a pacifist attitude, in the sense that you, with the war you say: 'Nothing can be done before the war is over', but a Gandhian has to go into the canter of conflict, that's to say: you partake in the war, without any weapons. [clicks]

***You said once, that you felt that the period after the war was worse than it was during the war....***

The the years before the Second World War, it was clear that one should not only try to resist. One shouldn't

only think of weapons, if Hitler started the war, but one has to also think about the way one could resist Hitler, if he were to occupy Norway. But, at that time, non-violent action was not considered important, militarily. So, practically nothing were done. And when, then, in April 1940, Norway was invaded, and was occupied by the Nazis for five years, then not many people knew what could be done. I felt that of course, the Gandhian way would be to participate, but without weapons. So, after a while, it took some time before I really went into the Resistance movement, but doing it, there was absolutely no friction between people who would fight non-violent without weapons, and those fighting with weapons. Because, for both categories, those who fought with weapons and those who didn't, for both it was this problem that within half an hour, if they were caught, they would be tortured. If, if the Gestapo knew that we knew something, and if they found a weapon or found documents and so on, they knew that we knew something and then they thought that torture is justifiable. So, this way, the Gandhians and non-Gandhians had excellent partnership within the war. When the war stopped, with Hitler being crushed, then the question was: 'What we do, from a Gandhian point of view, with the Quislings, the people who were, more or less directly, supporting the occupation?' First of all, according to Gandhi, we had to see what their standpoint was and so many thousands of Norwegians were convinced that Hitler would win, and then they didn't leave their political organization which was not democratic, but not really National Socialist either. So they were continuing being in that organization. So Gandhi would then say: 'Of course, they should be, not be punished, because they thought that Norwegian independence after the war, if Hitler won, was dependent on that Hitler could rely that Norwegians would not fight the Germans. So, it was the best for Norway to, not to fight against the occupying forces, not to help them necessarily, not that. But at least not, refrain from sabotage and all these things. So, I was then on the so-called *silk front*. 'Silken hands' in the treatment of those who were on the wrong side in Norway. I could be without anybody attacking me, because I had been in the Resistance movement, and they knew that I was not in any way helping the occupation, the Nazis, and-so-on, and-so-on. So I couldn't, I could stand up for a treatment that was according to Gandhian principles. But, of course, in other countries, like France and Hungary and all over, they didn't think that way in general, so they killed many of the people who had been 'on the wrong side', as you say. And also, in Norway, very few were killed, but many were prisoners. And the children, the children of those who had been on the wrong side, the Quislings, the children were treated very badly, at school etc. There were so many black points in the history of Norway, 1945-1950. That, especially in 1945, I was, as I have said many times, rather depressed, more depressed than during the war. That they couldn't say:

'Now the war is over, now we shall just see how we shall treat those who were on the wrong side.' So in this way, Gandhi was important figure, and some of my friends were *exactly* the same way, looking at it. They were active on the Resistance, in the Resistance during the war, and then *bang*, that was over, they were acting in according to what I would call justice, and not according to anything: 'They should have pain, we should have more pain. We should contribution... contribute to the pain of this people who were on the wrong side, putting them into prison and-so-on. [clicks]

***You also tried to get the torturers and the families of the people who were tortured together...***

Those who had been on the wrong side, had not the permission to enter the university, not even around the university. They were out, kept outside. So I found it necessary to get some of the prisoners, some of the Quislings in a seminar at the university, against the rules of the university. At the seminar we had Resistance people and those who were traitors, so-called traitors, against their homeland, together. And some of them were very good at it, too. The title of the seminar was: 'Moral indignation during the war.' And you see, the moral indignation was tremendous against Quisling. But when for instance Resistance men would say: 'You should have known about the concentration camps and the killing of the Jews!' And then, I remember very well, one of the Quislings, a very small, nice little man, he said: 'But I did not get those pamphlets and those periodicals the Resistance movement were distributing. Because they didn't give those information to us, who were on the wrong side! That was considered dangerous. So I didn't know, before 1945. I didn't know about it.' And one couldn't doubt that he didn't know. He knew about concentration camps, but he didn't know about the 'final solution' of the Jewish problem or anything like that, of course. So, getting them together, they started smiling then, 'Well, well, well, I remember, we remember we didn't give it to you. Of course we couldn't give any information to you. We had not to talk. We said to the Norwegian people: Don't talk with the Quislings.' Because then they were saying things which were dangerous probably and we should keep off. That's against the Gandhian rule. That we should keep off. The situation was such that it was better not to talk to them.

***Yesterday you said something: that you are angry very little in your life, but there was one episode in the war that you really got angry.***

This that you should always treat others as persons in a correct way, and never judge anybody because of affiliation to an organization, I was glad, I am glad to say that I was saved once, from prison probably, by a Gestapo man. A man in the Gestapo. Suddenly, where I was sitting in the house, alone in the house of family

members, the house was invaded by Gestapo, three Gestapo. Two ordinary Gestapo people, and then an officer in Gestapo. The pointing weapons of course, because they thought there were some Resistance people there. And they searched all over the house. And then, in the drawer, the officer opened the drawer and I was not kept away. He admitted me to be with him, around searching, you see. And he grabbed into the drawer and say, and said to me: *'What's this?'* And it was how to do sabotage in industrial buildings; sabotage against the Germans, you see. And it couldn't be worse. That would, *fttt!*: torture immediately! When somebody found that. And I had to decide very quickly whether he understood what it was or not. And I decided: he understood what it was, understood Norwegian. And he said: *'Haah, it's something that shouldn't be in a drawer!'* And then, he put this document *back*, into the drawer, and closed it. Looking angry, I thought: *'My god, what is happening now?'* And then I was arrested and I got into interrogation. I asked: *'May I take a book with me, as a professor, I must have a book with me.'* And he said: *'Alright, take a book with you.'* And then, during the interrogation, after the interrogation, a couple of hours, he said: *'You may go.'* *'May I ask,'* I said. *'From where you come?'* And he said: *'Sleswijk Holstein, border of Denmark.'* And then he added, and that is very brave of him: *'Everybody in the police had to go into the Gestapo, or they would go into prison. So I went into Gestapo. Point.'* And then I thought: *'Ah! I should like to talk more about this. Ah!'* But I didn't, because that was brave of him. So I left, and he completely, clearly, was not doing what Gestapo asked him to do. Finding this document, ah! And-so-on, and-so-on. So he was against the Nazis, but a Gestapo man. So you see: If somebody is a Gestapo, and Gestapo is killing people, doesn't mean that you should treat this, or conceive this, who... this man who is part of Gestapo, as, as, an enemy. According to Gandhi, you never treat anybody as an enemy. You always see in other people a possible friend. I didn't see him as a possible friend, but actually, he was in the sense a friend. You see, how it made a big impression on me. Of course, if he hadn't been against the occupation, I would have been put into prison!

I was innocent of that, because I had nothing to do with that document. But the Gestapo couldn't be sure that I didn't know something, so they had done something to me. [clicks]

***I like to go back to Gandhi and his notion of Self-realization. The Hindu concept of Atman.***

*Atman.* Yeah, maybe I should talk about the relation of this Gandhi and the philosophy, and his treatment, and Gestapo. Gandhi thought that, basically, people are capable of seeing what is just and not just. And he says: They're capable of seeing that to their own self, the best is to be non-violent. That it serves their self to be non-violent. So, and serves your personal human self to

treat others as similar beings as yourself. So you see yourself in the other human being. And when people said to Gandhi: *'How marvellous, how altruistic you are, how altruistic how you give up things in order to help others!'* He would say: *'No, no, no, no! I realize myself. I am not selfish, but I am realizing myself. And I never have been altruistic. That's to say: When I do things, I do it for myself.'* And this Self then, I would then spell with a capital 'S'. So, Self-realization was of course a very positive word for Gandhi. Only that most people underrate themselves; they underrate their being as human beings. They don't see how great they are. And then they act according to, according to the notion that they have an ego that sits, and not a Self with a capital 'S'.

***Arne, can you talk about Gandhi's concept of 'Advaita', non-duality? The sense of unity of man and matter and all that lives.***

Gandhi was interested in philosophy and he made a translation of *Bhagavad-Gita*, or short, *Gita*, the most honoured, one of the most honoured texts they have in Hinduism. And there, you have of course the concept of Oneness of everything, everything that, in my terminology, is alive, unity. This is a kind of mysticism then, but mysticism that is very special, because the individual for Gandhi has such a supreme status. The individual consciousness: what is right or wrong is up to the individual. When he was caught, taken into prison, the judge would say: *'But wouldn't that lead to anarchism, if everybody should live according to his or her individual consciousness?'* And Gandhi just said: *'No.'*

*Atman*, the Self, is conventionally translated by 'soul'. Which is not a good translation. There it's a little different between Hinduism and Buddhism. Buddhism has something they call *An atma wada*, the doctrines against Atman. But they are then against the transcendent Self, that is to say, a Self that is apart from us, as a kind of Self existence. And that is also against what Gandhi thinks. So he sometimes has said: *'I am also a Buddhist, because Buddhism is just a reformed Hinduism.'*

So, by mysticism one need not mean a kind of complete unity, like a drop in the ocean. He has not at all this feeling of being a drop in a ocean, because the status of the drop; humans as drop, are so high, the individual, the status of the individual is so high. So that's out. And by chance, Spinoza can also be interpreted that way. There is a unity, but at the same time, the individual beings have high status, and not, not question of disappearing in a unity, not at all.

***Are there similarities to you between Spinoza's concept of Self-realization and that of Gandhi?***

Speaking about Gandhi, and Hinduism, and Buddhism, and Spinoza, it's important for me, in my philosophy,

that you have to have a free attitude towards the texts, in the sense that you shouldn't be so arrogant to think that you can really understand deeply what this other people have meant. You only have guesses. But guesses are extremely important for you, and should be important for our culture, our present culture. You should just be arrogant, saying: exactly *this* Gandhi was thinking, and not that.

One reason why you shouldn't think like that is: they were all living beings with a development. Spinoza changed his views all his life! And the same with Gandhi. As you know, he thought he would be Christian, finding so many terrible things within Hinduism. But then, he was not permitted into the Christian church in South Africa. They just closed the door. And then, he decided: 'Alright, better try to keep Hinduism, and to reform Hinduism.'

But when I'm talking about these things, for me the kind of interpretation I have, is such, that there is a close relation between Spinoza and Gandhi, very close connection. And if somebody says: 'No, no, there is a difference also.' 'OK! That is your interpretation.' And here I am in accordance with the way we have in philosophy, called hermeneutics. Hermeneutics, the philosophy of interpretation.

### ***Can you maybe say more about the widening of the Self?***

What I find, then, in common, is the existence of a possible process of widening and deepening yourself. Widening and deepening. Widening in the sense that you see, you identify with more than your own family, your own tribe, your own nation, et cetera. And even, you get even outside the area of human beings. That's a width of the broadness of your thinking. And then, you have the deepening of the Self, in the sense that you have in your mind this constant kind of attitude that what you do is part of your Self-realization. So that a meal, and whatever, you are playing something, or whatever you do, you do it as in what we call an integrated person. That integration is integrated in your life, that is not cut out: Now it is work, now it is vacation. Now it is this, now it is that. But it's a whole you have. You have kind of feeling of the whole of your life, and the whole of the rest of life. So this is a deepening. The two have... Not every, once a week you go to church or something. But that the church is there all the time. And the depth: in the church you go deep, according to what you try to do. But you should have a depth always, as an ideal. But, of course, it doesn't mean to get to be a fanatic, in any way.

### ***You once said; 'Self-realization is dependent on the Self-realization of others too, including nonhuman beings.***

In my ecosophy T, the first hypothesis g is: 'The further you are able to go in your Self-realization, the more

important it will be for gaining still more Self-realization, to help the Self-realizations of others. It's like the Buddhists who went into the Himalaya, Himalaya forests to train themselves to live in certain ways and not hurting any animals. After many years, they went back into the village. They couldn't do anything more with themselves. They have now to help the village people, and help others. So the further you are, the more impossible it would be to come anywhere further, being alone. You have to be in the community, in society and so on.

### ***Gandhi looked down upon the so-called Karma-Yogi's, in the sense that they stayed up in the Himalayas and never went down.***

So he was very much against, not very much but at least he was *against*, the purists who would then stay in the woods, and thinking, by being there, they could influence the war, for instance. Meditating in the forest, they could influence somehow.

And he also was very much against fasting too much. He says: 'I'm for a delicious meal, hmmm, I like that' and then he was eating vegetarian of course. So he has nothing against material goods you have in life. Only that so-and-so is enough for me. Enough is enough. And that is also an ecological main slogan. 'Enough is enough.' And there he is also quite modern in the sense that this is ecologically important thing to feel when enough is enough. And desires, as he says, desires are infinite. He himself said: 'There is enough on this planet for everybody's needs, but not enough for everybody's desires.'

### ***Can you tell about Gandhi's pursuit of 'Moksha', the aim to see God face-to-face, as he says.***

*Moksha* is supreme liberation. He was not very much interested in Nirvana and such notions. He was not. He was very practical man in the sense, that when it gets to be a little far out, the metaphysical views rather far out, he would stop. And he remained, to his death, a very practical fellow, who would laugh and smile a lot. When you get into too abstruse, too dark and difficult theoretical problems, he would cut that out, cut out, like Buddhists, a little. Like Buddha himself, cutting out speculations about metaphysics and Atman and all this. Just cut it out.

### ***For him, God was immanent, not transcendent.***

Well, Gandhi, of course, used his words for God constantly. But rather soon, he started saying: 'God is Truth', meaning honesty and certain other things. So that seemed to be very unorthodox. But he insisted: 'No, no, I'm orthodox Hindu.' Then he went even further, saying: 'Truth is God.' And that means, then, completely immanent God, of course. You, you are seeking truth and truthfulness. Then you are seeking God, and there

is no God, except in this seeking. So he was then far out from the point of view of the masters of Hinduism, in general. And he quotes, in his speeches he would quote the Koran, he would quote the Bible freely, and the same time he was quoting the Hindu scripts. So that I also find a very good thing with Gandhi that he's not interested intimately in niceties of texts, just like the present head of the Buddhists.

***Can you maybe tell a bit about Gandhi's concern for the Self-realization of the nonhuman beings in his Ashram? Like for instance the snakes.***

Yes, there's a doctor thesis on his relation to environmentalism, a doctor thesis. And the author has gone through the eighty, more than eighty volumes of the complete works and sayings of Gandhi. And it is astonishing how, how, how he started as a young man. So much interested in free nature! He went out, and got to get out of the village.

And he also said that perhaps the reason that the rivers are being more violent is maybe because of the deforestation, is exactly what we are saying today. And he was looking at scorpions and snakes as friends. And he said: 'They will not do anything, do you harm, if you are careful. So let the doors be open, let the Ashram' - the centre of, religious centre, religious centre they had - 'let the doors be open. But in the morning, look into your slippers and see: there may be a scorpion there. And when you walk over the floor, walk like this [makes gesture]. Because there will be a scorpion or a snake or something and they don't understand. When trampled on, then, of course, they bite.' So he had a rule: no medicine against snakes bites and so on. No medicine. And the Hindus there of course obeyed the rules. But some of the Christians, followers of Gandhi, they had a secret medicine. So, they didn't believe quite that those scorpions would find it alright. You had nothing on your feet, of course, you were barefoot.

***He would also take his own goat everywhere he went.***

Yes, he was terribly annoyed with the brutality of milking. And they milk, getting the last drop of milk of the cows. And he demonstrated by having always a goat with him, as a demonstration against the Hindu brutality, brutality. And this is a public relations problem. He was good in the public relations, in what we call today public relations. Because, very many unsophisticated people would ask: 'Why do you have the goat?' And he would say it, and they would understand. So he was very good at it. But many sophisticated people, they would say: this is meaningless and *pfiff*, that's stupid.

***For Gandhi self-respect is also very important.***

Well, the goat is a being on par with humans, in many ways. The obligations of us for humans are more than

the goat, but at least you should behave, behave well towards the goat.

***The self-respect, that you act not as a functionary but as an autonomous, fully responsible person.***

And what's special of course about humans is that when you, they have relations with other humans, where, some of which, some of whom are very much more powerful, but the power relation has nothing to do with your dignity and your self-respect. You must, if you are without class, if you are among the [Pariyans?], you are just on par with the top Brahmans, the top people in the classes you had in India. So we had eh, he tried to make conditions better for the down-trodden, weak people in India. They should stand up, as they... as being completely on par with any kind of king or some...

***And one shouldn't be a coward. He looked down upon cowardice.***

But what you then try to do, to use your self-respect in a way that made you brave, standing up, braveness. This is of course, as I have said already, that he thought that brave, brave person is, that you need bravery. You need to be brave and without brave... being brave, you cannot really fight for justice. You cannot fight for your own self.

***To close of, what's the importance of Gandhi, in fighting the ecological crisis?***

For me, of course, it's so good to see how Gandhi can be used in the ecological crisis and eh, there he, some people say: 'Oh no, this is eh, the deep ecology movement, I try to get, they try to make these people like Spinoza and Gandhi and other people from other cultures relevant to the crisis. But that's because they don't understand this, these other cultures.' But in this doctor thesis on Gandhi's relation to environment, it is the opposite. The doctor thesis ends with saying the deep ecology movement is the most close to Gandhi thinking. It's the deep ecology movement, the principles that Gandhi had. That's the doctor thesis.

***In what sense are they close?***

Well, Gandhi was saying something that was completely, eh, the same as the eight point of deep ecology, that every living being has a self, [coughs] has inherent value, and-so-on, and-so-on. I don't think so. And as to the population problem, Gandhi was certainly in favour that you could only have children because you had a need for children or had the possibility of supporting the children. You shouldn't produce children as something inevitable from sexual life. So, there was an intimate relation, according to this doctor thesis, between deep ecology principles and the Gandhian.

***But is it not, basically, a very deep trust in human nature?***

Gandhi trusted the people and Gandhi trusted nonhuman beings, and the same with, in deep ecology, at least as I find it, I have a lot of trust, more than believe in abstract statements, trusting to ridiculous, according to my, certain other people, I've much too much trust in humans. And I think that if you see other people as very close to yourself, identify with. Then you have at least as much trust according to them as you accord to yourself. But if you have little trust with yourself, if you trust yourself very little, you also tend to trust others very, very little.

It's is typical of Gandhian trust, and also, this joy. The South African government made him a prisoner and it was general Schmutz who ordered him to get into prison. He made a pair of slippers for general Schmutz, joyfully, and, he was very witty, Gandhi was very witty. And general Schmutz was also witty, and so they had a marvellous relation, one as a prisoner and the man who got him into prison. And there, Gandhi was quite outstanding in the terrible conflict with the British, and when they had a session, they always started with some witticism. Some smiling and laughing and then they got on, this things, there. So joy, has a very great part in the life of Gandhi, *except* the last couple of years. Because when everything went down and there was a massacre in India after the liberation, he didn't smile anymore. Anyhow, the joy: he looked upon joy as something [sigh] necessary and beautiful and so on, like, like Spinoza. According to Spinoza, joy from all your, from your personality corresponds to a step in greater freedom and greater virtue. To say that the joy from your whole person... If you have a state of joy, it is a state where you gain in freedom and gain in virtue. And if there is melancholy, you lose some freedom, and you lose in virtue. I think they would say that, well, some people psychiatric cases, and you cannot reckon them, but depressing, if you are depressed as a, your total personality, it's not only very painful, you are also decreasing your level of freedom and virtue. And that's Gandhian, that's Spinoza for me. I don't want to say very much more about it, but certainly if you end by smiling and even laughing, that would be in the atmosphere of both Gandhi and Spinoza and others, I'm glad to say!

***But one might argue, that the ecological crisis gives every reason to feel said, for melancholy.***

That's, well, again, a last argument then, against this would be: there is a reason to be depressed and melancholic about the increasing, increasing ecological crisis. Both Gandhi and Spinoza would say: "There is no reason for it. There is no reason for it, but it takes very much self-discipline and self-reliance to, to eh, to keep the insight alive that things are getting worse. But you

never stop with this spontaneous experience. When you say, it is getting worse, you continue, immediately, with: so what are we to do?" And immediately when you say: so what am I going to do the next moment? *Ha*. And you start doing this the next moment. Because you do then something which you think is important and which is in accordance with your whole, whole personality. You, inevitably, get joyful.

Just as in a traffic accident, with blood and all terrible things around. If you are the one who knows how to reach a telephone and you run, running itself make you joyful [clicks]. The context is just terrible. But the activeness, the activeness of: 'Now I'm going to... *I'm* going to get the ambulance soon!' *Ha!* And if you are able to continue then, the doctor will come also and do things and, as a professional, he will not being depressed. He will be eager to do things. And only when he stops doing things, he thinks: 'Oh, this is a terrible case. This is a terrible case.' But that's because he stops and get passive. Passivity. Then you get: *wraaah!* But then you start again doing things and you are: joyful.

***So it's despite knowing the terrible truth, the state of the world, you continue.***

Yaah. It goes on. In 1938 I started living here, I hoped I would live here quite a lot and I numbered the days I was here. And now we are four thousand, one hundred and fourteen days. It's number one, four thousand one hundred and fourteen today. That's between eleven and twelve years. So I hope that I will experience the twelfth year here. Twelve multiplied by 365. Well, I'm now 83 and I see that I may be not able to have lived here twelve years, but at least I have lived here more than eleven years, counting the days. And I'm counting the days, there are 4114, today. That's not yet twelve.

***But are you already sad, that you probably in the future won't come up here? That you cannot make it?***

I could be carried up here, easily. Carried up here, when I can't walk up here. So that's no problem, but it's a problem whether I can be here really enjoying the view and enjoying the place as I can now. And when I am past that stage, it makes no meaning to carry me up here. [laughs].

***Do you feel sad about that the hut is living longer than you are?***

No, I couldn't be sad about that. I think it is extremely nice for me to know that there are people who say: 'We should, must see to it, in all next century, there would be Tvergastein, and there would people here, living according to the rules of Tvergastein. There are certain non-sensical rules, certainly, and we disobey those nonsense. But most of the rules would be kept alive here, at this place, all next century. That's the opinion of good people here, in Norway.'

***Do you think the mountain will miss you?***

Slightly, yes.

Tvergastein is about 1500 feet above tree line, 500 meters. A little more than about 500 meters above the tree line. So eh, in, in, in the Alps it would be very much above 2500 metres high. But it's actually only 1505! Because of the 60 degrees north, north of the Equator, so the climate at Tvergastein is purely Arctic climate. At 1500 metres, 60 degrees north, this is Arctic. It is the same latitude as Greenland, south of Greenland. So, it's not easy to understand for people in the Italian Alps, for instance, if they hear here it's 1500 metres: but that's a nice place with a lot of people living there in small villages. But there is no village here, that would be completely [laughs] impossible to think of. Well, even you, who are now interviewing me, would think it is, this place is just as another nice place just above the tree line in the Alps, because we had some tremendous weather, sun and sun and sun, only sun, and moderate winds. But eh... it's very few times, maybe less than five or six times, that you had had so many days with such weather like this! And it is only the middle of the summer possible.

Perhaps people coming from other countries, visiting Tvergastein, think that there are many huts, privately owned, on this level. But there is nobody else, it's the highest privately owned hut. What you have higher is meteorological stations, et cetera. But the highest hut in the Nordic countries of Europe, nothing like it. And there is good reason for it, because, because of the climate, I mean, why should you have an Arctic climate, I mean, you get...

But it is Hallingskarvet I'm for. It is not the Arctic climate, it is Hallingskarvet. I'm *obeying*, obeying the urge of Hallingskarvet to come!

As I was ten years old it was more spontaneous experience of Hallingskarvet as a God-like being. Certainly, a God-like being would ask you to come nearer, to stay.

***You could not resist.***

No, that was out of the question. I would have to go and I am only glad that I didn't place the hut on the *summit* of Hallingskarvet! I don't think Hallingskarvet would like that anyhow, but I had the idea to have been still higher on the mountain. That was a bad idea. It was part of my sport, sportive ego, probably, that it was necessary to *climb* with your hands, in order to reach the cottage.

***The good thing was that you wouldn't have any film team there! We couldn't make it up there!***

[laughs] That would be a good thing, and the first twenty years no journalists or no filming permitted to come up there. No journalists, no, no. *pfff*.

***This place can also be very silent. Is the silence important to you?***

Oh yes, if you get the silence, it makes you, if you were to sit down here, and there is not much wind. And you listen, then you may listen to the silence. But because of the water, it's not a typical question of silence. But if you place yourself where there is no water rushing, and you, you see the silence is very important in the mountain, the silence.

I prefer to get away from people, and sometimes away from here to get down to people.

Here you have endless movement in the water, endless variety of movement. And the light, endless. You can sit here and look at this... The longer time you use, the more it says. Communicating, more and more. You have all sorts of waves. Tiny, tiny ones and then little bigger, and little bigger. And movement this direction, that direction and it's flowing. Infinite complexity.

***Can you maybe relate the fact that you have been professor for so many years, and at one point you got interested in the ecological problem.***

Eh, as I have told, I had a peculiar relation to small animals. And eh, I had also relation to, I think, the ocean and the mountains. But what's going on in me was something more complicated. For instance, the meaning of life, ordinary life, which is really, certainly you can have, if you are not too unlucky. I had no kind of hope that there would be a different kind of policy towards free nature.

In 1940's I was, I said yes to be in the nature protection kind of institution. It was called the tourists' institution. And it has to do with the Norwegian tourists, and they had about 100.000 members. But there was no kind of real effort to protect what's left of non-dominated nature. Nature not dominated by people. They thought that tourists should go everywhere they wish to go and that we should have houses or huts anywhere. But that was in 1940's. And 1950, there was no reason to have any hope.

But then came something tremendous. And, by chance, it came from United States [laughs]. The biologist Rachel Carson, she wrote a book, that was not unique at all, *Silent Spring*, talking about pesticides; first of all against destroying the soil, but also that we were destroying life along the shores, for instance. She was specialist on life along the shores. And then came the big firms of chemistry, were supplying all the chemicals used in agriculture: together with the Department of Agriculture, those two tremendously powerful institutions came together, when they heard about the book, *before* it was published and started a campaign against her. Saying: this was completely unscientific and it was a hysterical woman talking about things she didn't know anything about, and so on. So those two institutions started then a campaign against her, even before the book. And it then led to be a tremendous shaking of

the people in the United States, seeing things from her point of view. So she got admirers. And people, even in the chemical industry and in the Department of Agriculture, wrote to her: 'We are all for what you are saying, but don't use our names. We can forget about our job if we support you. But we are just behind you. Ah, go on! Go on!' And she really was able to carry on this polemics.

And then you get, got in the early seventies - this was '63 -, early seventies, you got very good kind of protection through laws. Good laws about protecting species that was threatened and eh... Fabulous laws, that you cannot place a factory anywhere you like. You have to have, to, to explain what is going on then in, in the environment, what you call the environment. So, for some years, United States was top. The top level of protection.

### ***When you heard from her, you were an ordinary professor in Oslo?***

I had a friend in Norwegian, who is, who is now professor of Ethics, who told me a little about Rachel Carson in 1966, '67. Four years after, the book. And then from that time on, I saw life, the life, that it was possible, through political means, social and political means, to change policies towards nature. And then I jumped into that instead of having living as I wished to live. I wished to get away from writing so much. But this made me, then, very active from about 1970, very active. And I wrote then several hundred articles, and also a couple of books.

So, it meant that instead of getting rid of academia, and all this, *pfff*, writing and polemics, and so on, I continued.

### ***But you are one of the most famous professors in philosophy of Norway, you gave up that position.***

I gave up that position in 1969. And I planned in 1965 to leave in order what I say to function as much as I would live. I mean, if you are a professor for long time and head of the department and, *pfff*, all this things, then your mind suffers very much from it, I think [clicks].

### ***In what sense?***

You are then forced to place your problems in certain ways, you have to meet a lot of people. You have to be in all kinds of meetings. So I had to be two days, every week, in the city. I had all my lectures and meetings on Tuesday and Wednesday, so I can get away into the mountains. But I have to go back again into the city. And I placed the examinations early in the year, in the, in the spring time, in order to get away. But it didn't help very much. And I always gave more lectures than was required of me, in order to prove that I am not skipping my responsibilities at all. I do more than the others. I

work more than write text books without any kind of free time, and so on.

So, it was complicated, life, being a professor, very bad life, I think. You get accustomed to certain ways of thinking, and, no-no.

### ***What did you teach?***

I thought every branch of philosophy. I was considered to be, in the first years, to be a positivist, in a sense. But really, I was not a physician because I liked the way Spinoza was thinking: the *grand* total view that humans beings, with this capacity here, ah! So they have the obligation to find out where they are, who they are, and what is to be done [clicks]. Three things. That's my first article, when I left school. Nineteen years old. And eh, so the great philosophers are those who take up every branch: the philosophy of mind of course, the theory of knowledge, what is knowledge, what is truth, and so on. And you have social philosophy and you have political philosophy and you have aesthetics and you have ethics. So you have more than five branches of philosophy. And the total view means you have certain value priorities, and you have certain hypotheses who you are, what kind of reality, and what kind of cosmos are you put into, so to say. And what, what's to be done in your life, which is: bang, bang! You are born, bang! and you die, bang! Not more than one second, and what is worthwhile, within this time? Bang, bang. From nothing to nothing.

Of course, I felt that ordinary life couldn't satisfy me, so the only thing would be to be a kind of philosopher. But then I was academic philosopher until about '65, 1965. From that time I would say: 'I am not a professor of philosophy, I am a philosopher.' That's to say: when certain... when people like to hear my opinion on something, I have to tell my opinion, but without any kind of arrogance.

So they started: 'How do you solve the problem of death?' And I say this: 'It's not a problem, because then you must have a question mark, what is your question? What's the problem?' and so on. I had to be a little more precise. But then I had to answer questions about the life and death and eh, anything. And, as of course saying: 'If you wish to listen to me, this is what I have. If you don't want to listen to me, never mind!'

### ***You were among quite some noted philosophers in Vienna.***

Hm-mm. That's what they call the logical positivists. And because there was so little known about philosophy in Norway, they thought it was the same as something like positivism, which is very flat kind of philosophy, really. So, but eh, I was hang up in questions of how to pose your question precisely. And eh, I distinguished talking from thinking. And it was painful to think! [laughs]. And you could give lectures and everything like this - wa-wa-wa - talking without

really having an intended meaning. That you don't mean really any definite. You just talk. You say: 'Well, this boat is very big with 100.000 ton', and, and eh, if you ask what you mean by 100..., by tons, 'Well, I don't know. It's the weight; no. It's a big boat, natural, big boat - how many tons, I don't know.' I didn't have any kind of thought, in order to talk, so to say 'It is a big boat' and you say: '100.000 tons'.

So, I thought then, I knew if you agree about something, you must prove that is same thing you mean by those words you agree about. Whereas, that's quite hypothetical. Probably we never agree about the same thing. And maybe never disagree about exactly the same thing. We talk. We talk and talk and we say we meet so-and-so place and by chance we meet there, and that's OK. Sometimes we don't meet because: 'Oh, you meant so, oh yes!'

So, I would try to take hold of the students, and then shaking them like this! [laughs]. Thousands of students. And I was the only professor of philosophy. So I had a great power over the students. And because I was so young, 27 years old, full professor of 27 years old, because I was so *young*, they didn't really, couldn't really dislike my terrible ways of thinking. Because we going slalom together, we were climbing together, we have boxing together! Everything together with the students! But then I, *ppff*. At the exams, they are *rushhh*, like this, hundreds of them just flunking there, hundreds of flunking, like this.

***Can you still maybe try to tell a bit about this time in Vienna, the people who influenced you?***

Oh yes, they are, I found that, they were this philosophers called Carnap, and philosopher called Neurath. And then in the background was Wittgenstein. I get, got a lot against him, because he, he won through magnetism, more than thinking, I think. But Carnap and I, and what I liked so much was that they were trying to help each other within philosophy, whereas mostly philosophers like to disagree and don't think that you understand me, and on. They had a formula: when others would say: 'I disagree,' they said: 'Maybe what you say is, eh, it's not quite a fortunate way. Maybe it's not a lucky way of saying what you mean there. Do you, could you say it *this way*?' And then the other will say: 'Yeah, yes! yes! Aha, then perhaps we agree, yes.' So, you *invited* the other in the sense, to, to listen to another way of formulating a think, a thought. So you try to find out what the other really meant. And try to see it best. You would say: 'Perhaps you mean so-and-so, and that was, that's an intelligent way.' And instead of saying: 'Well, you mean probably this; and this is false!'

***Is there a relationship between your being, at a young age, in this Vienna circle, and the awareness in the sixties of the ecological crisis or were it completely different worlds for you?***

Completely different worlds until this Rachel Carson. I didn't think that anything could be done as an individual. Except saying, I wrote an article saying: 'Nature is vanishing', or something like that. Then I had to go into the ecology. So therefore, it took a long time before I started on that, a long time. And before that, I wrote many books and in many fields, and eh, I had a peculiar admiration of exact science, at the same time, as I thought that if you are mathematician or a physicist, you, if you, and if you go ask exactly what you mean and ask what, on what basis you make physics, or make eh mathematics, you get into metaphysics and get into philosophy. So if you dig deep enough, wherever you start, if you start: 'What time is it?' And you say: 'It's half past eight.' You can start: 'Well, what you mean by that?' And you get into problem of time. So wherever you start, you say: '*Why?* I don't catch what you thought there and what you, exact question.' You can start anywhere, and you go deep: you get into philosophy [clicks].

***With this digging deep, how you also came to the concept of deep ecology?***

Absolutely, exactly. What distinguishes supporters of the deep ecology movement from other in the, activists in the ecology movement, is that the supporters of the deep ecology movement have, as a kind of starting point or motivation, a kind of life philosophy. So it's... they go into themselves: 'What are meaningful for me and what make me feel as I feel I am', what they feel that 'what I am hangs together with nature.' So when you protect nature, you protect yourself, in this way. And it's no reason that everybody should try to be a supporter of deep ecology movement. And we have lot of people doing research on the climate, on the ozone layer, and so on. Who would neglect totally the philosophy, and we couldn't do the same job. So we have cooperation between activists in the deep ecology movement and activists who say: 'Philosophy? No, that's not for me. It's not necessary. And we have to win this and we have to overcome the ecological crisis through science and through behaving differently and to have some different priorities of value within the society but, we need not go deeper. That you lose yourself in questions that cannot be solved.' All right. That's fine with me. But, the plus with the minority who are activist in deep ecology movement is that they will do everything out of inclination, whereas those who are not deep ecology supporters, they do things for, out of duty. We must not behave as we do because it is bad for yourself and for the children and grandchildren, and so on. So, it's more... so we can be more radical in our views, because we are not afraid of being hurt, because it would be a fantastic for us, to see things being protected. We would be so glad, even if you have no cars, not to much to eat, and everything. We would be glad if you could protect nature.

### ***Is that the distinction Kant makes?***

Ah. And there, of course, I have been lucky to find a distinction in a really very great philosopher, Immanuel Kant. He distinguishes in an early work, that is not known, mostly, among professors of philosophy. He makes the distinction between *moral* actions and *beautiful* actions [laughs]. And the act is only moral, if it is completely motivated by a respect for the moral laws. The, some eternal laws of morality. You act, only motivated to see, moral law teaches you to do so and not so-and-so, I do it. Then you act morally. But then, especially among women, he says, they are often *inclined* to care for others and to other things, do other things which they should do, according to moral law. But they do it through inclination! They feel, feel like it. 'Wouldn't you like me to do this for you. Wouldn't you like...' And they are inclined to do things for other people and so on. And for animals. They are more inclined than men. So he said: 'If they do what the moral law requires of you, but through inclination. Then you act beautifully.' And then, as I talk in my lecture, saying: 'You wouldn't mind, if you only act beautifully and not morally.' And they would say: 'Oh yes! Act beautifully. For me, that I would like more, to be able to say: I acted beautifully.' Good for you. Because if you get into such situations, then you get into such development, then you protect, whatever you see of life. And you protect through inclination. Then you act beautifully! Whereas if you protect because of the moral law, then you do not act beautifully, but you act morally. And they said: 'Well, I like to think of myself as acting beautifully.'

And that's promising for the protection of the planet, that more and more people are led into situations that they do things out of inclination. Because a force, human force of inclination, is so tremendously bigger than the force, the motivation, to act morally. We of course do that sometimes, but we try to avoid saying: 'This is a moral law, we should do it.' We try to get away with it, as we live. Whereas inclination, yes!

### ***Is there a way to nourish inclination?***

The way to nourish inclination is most obvious when you have to do with children. Because you just lead children in free nature, and you bend down to look at a tiny flower, for instance. You bend all the way down. And the child will say: 'What are you seeing there? There is nothing to be seen there.' And you say: 'Look at this, and, and then you don't trample on it. You say: look at it, and so, and you show your inclination, to see the beauty and to see the marvel of life. Then children are easily, easily get to be inclined to behave properly. Also, for instance, if you have a lot of insects in the window. You may have very big windows in summertime and a lot of different kinds of insects down on the [short?]. Then the parents give them some poison and they like to *psss, psss, psss, psss* - to kill the

insects, you see. But I have the opportunity to say: 'Very amusing, but it's very amusing also to try to catch them and don't hurt them and take them all the way out! They don't find the way out, because then they get, they have to go into darkness, and that's against their instinct, they go try the window.' [knocks on window] And so, the small children were trying to help the insects out, you see. Eh, eh, I say: 'They like to go out, you see! Just as you would like to get out, they would.' And they identify with these insects. And that takes no time for children. So, if the parents behave properly, it's no, no difficulty to get children... But when you are already fifteen years old, that's different. Then, of course, it's much more difficult to get people to see my point, and eh, but eh, at the moment there are plans to have real biology and ecology teaching in high schools and universities.

### ***The learning of a new way of perception is more important than moralism.***

Absolutely. I would say that to see the world in a certain way, that's important. And that is in philosophy called *ontology*: what's real. What's there, what's real. To see the reality of life and... is much more important than getting rules how to behave. So I'm for what I call, then, *Gestalt ontology*. That's to say, the world is made of Gestalts and eh, that's, that's reality we have. And there are certain ways of experiencing Gestalts, which you have to train yourself in. And if, and then, you get [sufficient?] training, you widen yourself, more and more. And I speak about Self with a capital 'S'. And there is no limit, for me, but some people seem to relate to, more or less, everything, in a way of identification. Buddhists, for instance. I don't, I'm not able to do that. But eh, it's a question, quite a lot of training. And a few people like to train themselves. [laughs]

### ***You once identified very strongly with one of the tiniest creatures, eh?***

I found that I'm on par with, or even more powerful, than a shrimp. Because: if a shrimp is here, and I'm here. I can take the hand and it will go like this. But then I have my other hand *behind* the shrimp. And it will go straight into my hand. So, my power is evidently, as a human being, is *fantastic* power. And I, I repeat it over the radio many times, that you are much, much powerful than you think. You think you are just an ordinary, ordinary man or woman. No-no, you are extraordinary. Every human being is completely extraordinary. Nobody is like the other, and the relation between you and Michelangelo and Einstein and so on, the similarity there is so great, compared to a shrimp, for instance. So, you should compare yourself with a shrimp - and with Einstein, and you see you are just as great as Einstein, practically.

***What I meant is that you, what I referred to is when you looked through a microscope, you identified too.***

Well, identify with all life, I, there is at least *one* microscopic being with whom I identified clearly and that's a microscopic being that is in-between being an animal and being a plant. And the name is *Eutreptiella gymnastica*. *Eutreptiella*, that's the genus, genus, and *gymnastica* is the species. And it's moving [imitates movement], like this, a ballet. And eh, that's how I would like to move! So I see it as something similar to me, but eh, maybe not experiencing anything. Or if there is any experience, it's in a tiny drop and a drop is then drying out and you see this wonderful being get disturbed in her movement and gradually stiffening. So, I have a feeling of identification with this, And there is a lot, billions of them, in the water, outside southern Norway and they are not popular among the fishermen.

***But you also identified with the death struggle of a flea.***

[sigh] Oh, this is a story. On this table I was working and then I had a *lemmen* [lemming], what you call it in English. *Lemmen*?

***A small animal.***

Yaah. What is called eh, lemming?

***Lemming.***

Lemming, yes. And there, I had a lemming, at that time. And then a flea from the lemming landed on the glass under the microscope. And there it was in the drop. And things were happening in that drop, which I, as an amateur chemist, like to study. And suddenly, there was a flea there. And I couldn't save it. Impossible because the adherent, certain forces on the surface of the tiny drop. So, so there is no chance. And it lasted about ten minutes, the death struggle of the flea. [laughs] I sometimes talk about that, because one cannot avoid, seeing one's self. They have six eh, limbs, and every limb was doing things which we do when we are suffering. You see. The movements were as we would do. So it's illustrate what I call identification.

***What is identification?***

It is just that you see yourself in somebody else. You see a similar being as yourself. Similar, even if there's tremendously differences also. But if you identify yourself and you do something for your own sake, you are also prepared to do something for this - whatever you identify with - you are prepared to do for their sake. Whereas, with this spoon [picks up spoon], I would clean the spoon for my sake but I wouldn't do anything for the, the, for the spoon, for itself. I don't see it has a self, as I have. So, that's different... But if I think

that the spoon is alive, somehow, then of course, it started moving.

***When it's alive, you recognize the resemblance.***

Yaah, there are certain characteristics, such that I would say: *Oh!* This is a living being. And exactly what they are, I couldn't tell. But certainly, most eh... If you pick up something like this, it fragments [picks up tiny bread crust], it's kind of fragment, that's not a living being. But a fly, of course, is obviously trying to get out. Trying to get out. It is so obvious it has interest to get out. Living. But eh, bacteria also yes, but eh, another thing is, if there are molecules that just are able to multiply, then I wouldn't call it... I don't have the feeling. So there would be questions in-between, like, just like between green and yellow you have hundreds of shades, which you would, well, green or yellow, I don't have names for all this shades. The same.

***A rock is maybe somewhere in-between.***

A rock? A rock I don't see as alive. But a mountain! [clicks]

***If you go back to this critical period in the late sixties, you had a special experience in the Sonora desert, with Jon Wetlesen. You once wrote or said in an interview that you realized that the concept of human rights, that it could also be applied to nature. That you could extend the idea of rights.***

My colleague, professor Johan Wetlesen, he was not any professor at that time. We were together in Sonoran Desert and eh, he was much in favour of human rights and I was, then, in favour of rights of animals and living beings in general. And he agreed that one could eh, just generalize the rights philosophy, the philosophy of rights, generalize the rules, and you get rights for animals. But eh, some people, and also Johan Wetlesen hesitate, because they think that if you have no obligations, you have no rights. But I say, you can have rights without obligations. Like babies, for instance, you have a lot of rights. And people who are disturbed mentally, completely disturbed mentally, no obligations and you have rights. So, it's a kind of caring - not only caring for other beings, but also attributing rights to other beings.

That's done in modern what you call eco-philosophy of the radical kind. Like deep ecology. What's different is that your obligations are tremendous towards fellow humans. Your obligations towards your own children, is so fantastically much greater than the children of other people, but still quite big. And your obligation to hungry children in Africa or somewhere, are certainly very great, your obligations towards fellow human beings... because they are so near to yourself and you know exactly what you can do for them, or more or less exactly. Whereas, many animals, mostly we just know

that they care to be alive, but human beings, we know very much what it means to suffer. So, your obligations are tremendous there. So, I think it's good for supporters of the deep ecology movement also to show their concern for fellow humans by eh, supporting institutions like eh, 'Save the children', like Amnesty International or other great institutions for helping fellow humans who are immensely, immensely greater problems, have immensely greater problems than you have. So to do that. And that's good, because otherwise, you get this stupid argument that deep ecology supporters care more for animals than for humans, which is eh, very wrong I think, to say.

***Why is that wrong, why is that a misconception?***

Because in the daily life of supporters of the deep ecology movement, from day to day, have to do with other fellow humans. And you have, if you have a lot of obligations then you, you agree completely that you have those obligations. If you go have an expedition, animals in Africa, you have very great obligations to your fellow beings in that expedition. More than for the tigers and lions et cetera, and eh... and eh, so, humans are al, always there, in the surround, and you have to care for them. But, and, but what you spend financially, worldwide, on fellow humans is so big that if one percent of that would be, would be used to help *non-human* beings, living, then it would be a colossal help for non-human beings. If only one percent were set aside for non-human...

***You once put it this way, that if there are human rights, then there are also animal rights. Of a wolf or a sheep.***

Yes, that's right. The term right, that has to do with academic philosophy. In academic philosophy, there is a lot of polemics going on whether [mumbles] where they want to clarify the concept of rights. The existence of rights. Therefore, I sometimes say: 'If you are among those who talk about rights of humans, how can you avoid talking about rights of animals?' And if they say: 'Well, they don't have obligations.' I say: 'Well, some, some animals really have obligations to protect us, for instance dogs. But even if they have no obligations, *why* can't they have rights?' And then, they have no good answers.

☪