

EXTRA TERRESTRIAL ECOLOGY

The real world is always bigger than we think. We all tend to live inside our own tiny personal cosmos. Why not take a look around outside? This is ecological awareness.

Ecology is derived from the Greek word "oikos" meaning household or dwelling place. Ecology then is the study of Man's habitation. Man's dwelling place has no limits. The limitation is in Man's awareness. There are worlds without end. Thus our tiny planet is seen in its true perspective.

Man has access to innumerable worlds, endless possibilities. Why then do we limit ourselves? As well as the urge to be and be more there is the need to maintain integrity. Desiring security we cling to what we already know, maintaining existing forms, the existing order.

Ecology includes cosmology, the knowledge of the order inherent in ourselves and all we perceive. "Cosmos" means order. The principle of cosmos is present throughout the worlds from the structure of the atom to the largest galaxies.

But all this is seen in terms of our own structure. We project our own internal organisation onto the external world. Our own limitations determine the apparent extent and nature of our dwelling place. Ecology and cosmology are therefore inseparable from a knowledge of our own psychology both individual and collective. To know the world we must know ourselves.

The principle of order or cosmos is embodied in individual cosmoses. As living beings cosmoses seek to maintain their own integrity thereby structuring the world they inhabit. Within each cosmos is the urge to grow and spread its particular type of organisation throughout the world. This is true of a microbe or a civilization.

But no cosmos exists in isolation. Relationships between cosmoses may be ones of co-operation or of conflict. This conflict may be creative, destructive or futile. Each cosmos exists within a larger one and each contains smaller cosmoses. An effective sociology must extend far beyond the human level. We are all claimants in the welfare state of the earth's ecosystem. But at the same time there is no such thing as a free lunch. What is Man's role in Nature?

But the earth's ecosystem itself is sustained by the solar energy assimilated by plants. Life on earth must continually adapt to our sun and other extra terrestrial influences. Thus it is obvious that our ecology can never be the study of life on earth. The earth by itself is incapable of supporting life. To have any grasp of ecology at all awareness must be extended beyond the confines of this planet. At the very least our ecology must be the study of life in the solar system.

This wider awareness is vital to the health of mankind. There is no such thing as terrestrial ecology. To think otherwise is to turn our awareness away from the larger world. Our cosmos then becomes a closed system. When a system is shut up within itself, cut off from its food supply it tends to disorder.

Cosmology is the study of how worlds are ordered. Ecology also includes cosmogony, knowledge of how worlds and cosmoses come into being. To do this we must understand the activity of mind, that greater mind of which the human mind is a part. Consciousness exists throughout every level of our universe. Consciousness attached to energy creates form. Thus the worlds develop into greater complexity.

The proliferation of forms is endless. But this complexity can be understood by learning to see at the level of principle. Any ecological principle should be directly observable in your

everyday life. Real learning is accompanied by a heightened awareness of your participation in the world. But remember that world is always bigger than you think.

Worlds consist of energy. Energy tends to disperse. Within this dispersion cosmoses arise. Cosmoses concentrate part of the energy on which they feed and bind it into intricate forms. Thus beings take on the form of complex force fields manipulating extreme concentrations of energy.

Energy is constantly transferred between cosmoses. This is the economy of Nature. Money was invented to facilitate energy transfers within the cosmos of Man. Economics is derived from the same root as ecology. Ecology is the knowledge of Man's dwelling place, economics is its effective management. As such, economics should incorporate a thorough understanding of the principles of energy transformation and of Man's role in those transformations.

These principles may appear abstract. This is intentional. Only abstract principles are applicable to more than one limited situation. Ability to see general patterns in specific events brings adaptability. If ecology teaches us anything it teaches us that life forms must be adapted to their environment, but in the final analysis that environment is always a changing environment. The dinosaurs learnt this to their cost.

Adaptation is, however, just one side of the coin. Living beings are not just passively moulded by their environment. They actively impose their own inner world of possibilities on the external world. The atmosphere of this planet is largely the work of living beings themselves. Much of the rock forming the planet's surface is derived from living creatures.

Most of us live in a landscape profoundly modified by man. In our larger cities many live in a totally self-made environment. Contrary to a popular misconception there is nothing "unnatural" in this. The social insects do exactly the same thing. A coral reef is just a self-made environment inhabited by its tiny animal creators. In a more far reaching and therefore less obvious way plants create their own environment too. The soil they live in and the atmosphere they use is largely their own creation.

Ecology is not something you do in nature reserves. Ecology is an awareness of where you live. If you live in a town you must master the principles of urban ecology. We live amidst our own creations. We are all of us responsible for what we create.

Creation was not completed in six days. Neither was creation a one off event occurring in a big bang billions of years ago. New forms are constantly being created and Man himself can be an instrument of creation. We are creative beings. Therefore, all our organisations contain inherent instability. No society can afford to forget this.

Ecology brings us to an awareness that all exists within a Unity. Who dares to set limits upon that Unity and the manifestation of its endless possibilities? But ecology also teaches us that the integrity of Unity cannot be violated. No being can escape the consequences of its own actions. As a being's power to affect its environment grows so does its responsibility. The same is true of Mankind as a whole.

We need not let our joy in creation blind us to our connection with what already is. We exist within a network of extreme complexity. Each part of this web is connected to and governs every other. We are part of a whole whose integrity is maintained by the interdependence of all life forms. The men and woman who design and inhabit the first successful space colony will have learnt this lesson well.