

Intimations of Deep Ecology in the Cordilleran Environmental Worldview

Oscar D. Sison Jr.
Saint Louis University - Baguio
oscarsison77@gmail.com

Abstract

The depth and breadth of the environmental predicament necessitate that its problems and solutions be approached with a multifaceted orientation. Technological solutions alone can neither provide a complete nor enduring solution. Paradigmatic shifts in relating to the natural world may be crucial to effecting long-lasting changes. Deep ecology recognizes the significance and possible contribution of indigenous knowledge. It will be argued that the Cordilleran indigenous environmental worldview carries an ecological character that coincides with the deep ecology platform. A philosophical reading of their way of life, in hunting rituals, knowledge of biodiversity, and forest management shows a comportment with nature that is holistic and non-anthropocentric. Although their relation with nature is driven by a reliance for subsistence, it is also circumscribed by a reverence for it. Ultimately, a strong identification with the land can be said to underlie this relation. In deep ecology terms, such understanding of the self and nature is tantamount to the ecological self - a widened and deepened self that embraces relations that extends to the more-than-human world. Such indigenous worldview, which reflects a fundamental familiarity and connection to nature, is a powerful wellspring of ecological consciousness and care for the environment.

Keywords: Deep Ecology, Arne Naess, Cordillera, indigenous environmental worldview

Introduction

The role of indigenous knowledge as a part of the solution to the environmental predicament is starting to find support within the academic community. Experience is showing that science alone or technological solutions by themselves can neither provide a complete nor enduring solution to the problem. The previously almost exclusive preference for calculative rationality within the field of environmental issues is now letting in more philosophical and sociological viewpoints. There is the realization that alongside technological solutions should stand changes in worldviews that could sustain necessary behavioral and cultural changes. In this regard, not a few theorists, conservationists, environmentalists, concerned individuals, and even scientists have been turning to the age-old wisdom of indigenous people. Although still wanting in force, traditional knowledge is now seen as a possible complement to scientific knowledge in addressing conservation concerns while traditional land management, economics, and culture are seen as sources of environmental values that center on “life, sustainable practices, and low environmental impact.”¹

A stronger conviction is found within deep ecology, with the belief that if people are to “reestablish a viable relationship” with nature, they would “need to rediscover the wisdom of these other cultures (indigenous cultures) who knew that their relationship to the natural world required the whole of their being.”² These indigenous practices and beliefs, although viewed by others as ‘primitive’ can actually contain a more environmentally-appropriate sensibility that can be incorporated into our ‘modern’ conceptual repertoire. In the Philippine setting, one such culture is that of the Cordillera.³

¹ Brendan Mackey and David Claudie, “Points of contact: Integrating traditional and scientific knowledge for biocultural conservation,” in *Environmental Ethics* 37, no. 3, Fall 2015, 341-345.

² Dolores LaChapelle, “Ritual - The pattern that connects,” in *Deep ecology for the twenty-first century*, ed. George Sessions (Boston: Shambala, 1995), 58. (Parenthetical comment, mine).

³ “The Cordillera: Its land and people,” Cordillera Peoples Alliance, last modified December 12, 2006, <https://www.cpaphils.org/cordillera.htm>; Maria Nela B. Florendo, “Ethnic History (Cordillera),” National Commission for Culture and the Arts, accessed April 6, 2020, <https://ncca.gov.ph/about-ncca-3/subcommissions/subcommission-on-cultural-heritagesch/historical-research/ethnic-history-cordillera/>. The term Cordillera physically refers to the Gran Cordillera Central mountain range that covers more than half of Northern Luzon and

With this in mind, this article aims to answer the following questions. To what extent is the Cordilleran environmental worldview deeply ecological? In what ways is this characteristic made apparent? How can this indigenous point of view be relevant to the current environmental concerns?

This article frames its analysis within the perspective of deep ecology. As one of the dominant positions in environmental philosophy, deep ecology presents not just a criterion for the ethical appraisal of particular actions in relation to the environment but provides a fundamental conception of the natural world as well as the human person's place in it. Thus the principles of deep ecology serve as a useful standard for assessing the degree by which a worldview is deemed environmentally friendly.

In this article, it will be shown that the Cordilleran environmental worldview carries beliefs and principles that are deep ecological in quality. Such relation with the natural world is subsumed in their concept of land as well as in its management. Special attention shall be given to their agroforestry practices and its corollary beliefs and rituals. This area is rich in the sense that it shows the complexity and depth of the Cordillera peoples' connection to the environment.

It is not to say though that their way of life can be considered as deep ecology since deep ecology as a movement is to be taken within the context of the environmental crisis. Deep ecology developed as an attempt at a holistic take on the environmental issue. The indigenous ways of the Cordillera was primarily aimed at sustenance and not to the threat of human-caused environmental and climatic catastrophes. But it is something that must be explored in view of the search for sustainable ways of relating with the natural world. It is a worldview that is significantly different from the dualistic and rationalist perspective attacked by Val Plumwood⁴ as the basis of the Western treatment of nature, or the impersonal, mechanistic, and instrumental

is divided into six provinces and a city, namely, Abra, Apayao, Benguet, Ifugao, Kalinga, Mountain Province, and Baguio City. These places are now collectively known as the Cordillera Administrative Region (CAR). The closely-related ethnolinguistic groups living in this area include the Apayao or Isneg, Bago, Bontoc, Ga'dang, Ibaloy, Ifugao, Itneg, iwak, Kalanguya, Kalinga, Kankanaey, and Tinggian.

⁴ Val Plumwood, "Nature, self, and gender: Feminism, environmental philosophy, and the critique of rationalism," in *Hypatia* 6, no. 1, 1991, 7.

outlook which Lynn White considers as the root of the environmental crisis.⁵

Deep Ecology principles

In *The Shallow and the Deep, Long-range Ecological Movement*, Arne Naess differentiates the two predominant movements that have developed in response to the environmental problem. The “shallow ecological movement” centers on preventing pollution and resource depletion while also catering towards the needs of affluent countries, whereas the deep ecological movement raises deeper question and engages the more fundamental questions of “diversity, complexity, autonomy, decentralization, symbiosis, egalitarianism, and classlessness.”⁶ In this work, Naess outlines the basic tenets of deep ecology which consist of general principles that are mostly shared by the varied participants of this movement.

It is worthwhile to note that the deep ecological movement, unlike most philosophical movements in history, did not start with a clear set of basic notions or principle; it has multiple origins and this work by Naess was perhaps one of the first attempts to distill the movement’s common philosophical grounding.⁷ These shared principles were later on developed by Naess with the help of George Sessions, which became deep ecology’s “eight-point platform.” Being normative principles, these may come from various ultimate worldviews such as religious beliefs, cultural traditions, philosophies, and personal belief systems while capable of being translated into various specific policies, rules, decisions or courses of actions.⁸ It is conceivable, therefore, that deep ecology principles can be extracted from indigenous cultures that have lived off the land for a long time and because of such conditions have developed an intimacy with nature. Below is a summary of these fundamental norms and tendencies.

⁵ Lynn White, “The historical roots of our ecological crisis,” in *Science* 155, 1967, 1203-1207.

⁶ Arne Naess, “The shallow and the deep, long-range ecology movement: A summary,” in *Inquiry* 16, no. 1, 1973, 95-98.

⁷ Eric Katz, Andrew Light, and David Rothenberg, *Beneath the surface: Critical essays in the philosophy of deep ecology* (Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2000), ix-x.

⁸ Arne Naess, *Ecology, community and lifestyle: An outline of an ecosophy*, trans. David Rothenberg (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 106-107.

1. "The relational, total field image." As a radical shift in perspective, deep ecology rejects the 'man-in-environment concept' where the human person is conceived as a distinct actor within the environment. Instead, adopting a total field model, it posits that each entity in nature cannot be truly abstracted from the multitude of interrelations that persists between it, the physical environment and other creatures.⁹ The identity of any entity in nature becomes a function of its intrinsic relations with other entities. This has been referred to as the "all things hang together" concept. Also understood as the claim that "all life is one," it shows how human flourishing is inextricably linked to that of the environment itself and as such human beings need to see the vital needs of ecosystems as their own and that to foster these is to further their own realization.¹⁰ One applies this principle by looking into the wider effects of one's actions. Consequences to oneself, other people, and to the broader biotic community must be considered. This is captured in the succeeding illustration:

A storm causes a blowdown of tress over a favoured hiking trail in the forests surrounding Oslo. An anthropocentric solution would be to clear away all the trees to make the forest look 'cleaner' and 'neater'. A deeper solution: clear away only what is needed from the trail itself, recognizing that the removal of too many trees might endanger habitats for other species which were *improved* by the blowdown.¹¹

In doing so, one's action of clearing the fallen trees is seen not only from the perspective of the people using the place (e.g., hikers) but as a part of a wider whole that covers other species (e.g., wood peckers nesting on holes in dead trees or mosses and fungi thriving on decaying plant matter).

2. "Biospherical egalitarianism." This is the belief that all organisms have "equal right to live and blossom" in this world. Naess, though, concedes that in actual practice, there are occasions when

⁹ Naess, "The shallow and the deep," 95.

¹⁰ David Rothenberg, "Ecosophy T: From intuition to system," in *Ecology, community and lifestyle: An outline of an Ecosophy*, trans. David Rothenberg (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 9-11.

¹¹ Rothenberg, 12-13.

species are “killed, exploited, or suppressed” for another to flourish. In cases of hunting communities, this is done minimally and accompanied by “a deep-seated respect, or even veneration, for ways and forms of life.”¹²

3. “Principles of diversity and symbiosis.” The principle of diversity implies that the drive of life is towards greater diversification. Symbiosis, on the other hand, promotes the principle to “live and let live” by the formation of complex relations, which in the end translates to better survival. “Ecologically inspired attitudes therefore favour diversity of human ways of life, of cultures, of occupations, of economies.”¹³

4. “Anti-class posture.” It follows from the foregoing principles that deep ecology must adopt an anti-class posture. Both in human affairs (e.g., relations with cultural minorities, relationship between developed and developing nations) and in the human person’s relation with the earth, deep ecology maintains a “classless diversity” that is non-hierarchical.¹⁴ Deep ecology is against the exploitation and suppression of any people or culture.

5. “Fight against pollution and resource depletion.” The striving against pollution and the depletion of natural resources is given a deeper rationale and not simply pursued for its own sake. Deep ecology-associated concepts like “diversity, complexity, autonomy, decentralization, symbiosis, egalitarianism, and classlessness” inform its significance.¹⁵ The innumerable connections highlighted by ecology here become foundational.

6. “Complexity, not complication.” The world is not perceived as complicated but as complex. Although the world is composed of multiplicities, they generally follow lawful processes that allow them to integrate and configure unified systems. “Organisms, ways of life, interactions in the biosphere in general, exhibit a complexity of such an astoundingly high level.”¹⁶

¹² Naess, “The shallow and the deep,” 95-96.

¹³ Naess, 96.

¹⁴ Naess, 96-97.

¹⁵ Naess, 95.

¹⁶ Naess, 97-98.

7. “Local autonomy and decentralization.” Deep ecology values local autonomy and decentralization.¹⁷ This is within the context of energy expenditure and environmental footprint. Sourcing raw materials of industries from neighboring areas is more energy efficient and results in fewer disturbances in the environment. The advantage of local produce to imported ingredients is an apt example: less fuel and labor, less possibility of invasive species.

Cordillera Environmental Worldview vis-à-vis Deep Ecology

Now that the measure has been laid down, it is time to reinterpret the pertinent Cordilleran practices to deduce and assess its environmental worldview. The corresponding practices and beliefs will be classified and analyzed according to the seven tenets provided by Naess. A general description of the nature of the Cordilleran environmental worldview will then be provided after the detailed treatment.

1. “The relational, total field image” is about the interrelatedness that persists between members of the biotic community and the environment. Sometimes captured by the “all things hang together” theme, this point implies that “fundamental interdependence, richness and diversity contribute to the flourishing of human and non-human life on Earth.”¹⁸ For a people, therefore, to flourish, they would have to recognize this interdependence and work with it. The Ifugao, for example, exhibits this in their farming systems. Although widely known for their rice terraces, intensive rice cultivation in these terraces is just one of three major agricultural practices, the other two being swidden farming (commonly known as slash and burn agriculture) and agroforestry. These three components work together to form a sustainable system.¹⁹ The intensive cultivation of rice provides for the prestige of a bountiful harvest and the mark of wealth and status while the root crops grown in the swidden farms like sweet potato and taro provide ample risk management should the rice

¹⁷ Naess, 98.

¹⁸ Arne Naess, “The deep ecology ‘eight points’ revisited,” in *Deep Ecology for the Twenty-first Century*, ed. George Sessions (Boston: Shambala, 1995), 214.

¹⁹ Stephen Acabado, *The Ifugao rice terraces: Antiquity, archaeological processes, and highland adaptation* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2015), 68.

harvest fail.²⁰ Despite common perception, the swiddening practiced here contributes to maintaining adequate forest cover and complements agroforestry in providing environmental services such as watershed, protection of low-lying fields from water runoff and erosion, maintenance of irrigation water supply, stabilizing relative humidity, and improving soil nutrients.²¹

For successfully living off the land, it is not just a matter of planting crops, applying agricultural inputs, and expecting a bountiful harvest. The health of each ecosystem - the fields, mountain farm, woodlot, and forest - has to be maintained for the sustenance of the community to be assured. Also from the province of Ifugao, the Kalanguya's²² management of forest lands shows overlapping consideration for both human and non-human beings. The *bel-ew* or watershed covers the higher portions of the settlement that contains the springs and streams that provide potable water, areas for hunting wild game and birds, places for trapping migratory birds, as well as sacred sites.²³ The sacred sites where human entry is restricted are believed to be "dwelling areas of spirits" and likewise serve the ecological function as sanctuaries for wild animals, ensuring a healthy and adequate gene pool for the community.²⁴ There is an awareness that the maintenance of forest ecosystem is positively tied up with access to water, fertility of the fields, and the availability of food for the community. This is something reflected in recent studies on forest management reporting a higher biodiversity in forest lands occupied by indigenous people.²⁵

2. "Biospherical egalitarianism." There are numerous practices within the Cordilleras that imply a high level of value given to non-

²⁰ Acabado, 91-92, 99.

²¹ Acabado, 68, 71.

²² Florence Daguitan, *The Kalanguya's territorial management: Caring for our source of sustenance* (Baguio City: Tebtebba Foundation, 2010), 31. Although one of the major ethnolinguistic groups in the Cordilleras, the Kalanguya who occupy Tinoc, Ifugao, have been "largely an anonymous group to ethnologists, census surveyors and anthropologists who made the first inventories and studies of Filipino ethnic groups." This may be in part because they mainly referred to themselves as *Igorot*, the general term for the upland people living in the Cordillera region.

²³ Daguitan, 44.

²⁴ Daguitan, 44.

²⁵ Adrian Albano and Shinya Takeda, "Conserving forests in privatized commons: Trends and management options in an Ifugao village, Philippines," *Small-Scale Forestry* 13, no. 1 (March 2013): 2, doi:10.1007/s11842-013-9238-2.

human beings, both animals and plants, or to living things in a general sense. One is in not wasting resources that they take from nature. When Ifugaos harvest trees from their *muyong* or private forests, they follow what is called whole tree harvesting wherein no part of the tree is wasted: the roots and buttress along with a short portion of the trunk is used as *gamut* or vertical pillars for the traditional houses, the remainder of the trunk and branches are used for general purposes, smaller branches and twigs are for firewood that is shared with other villagers, while the leaves are left in the forest to decompose.²⁶ Another example would be the agricultural activity of planting rice which is steeped with rituals and practices. At harvest time, the Kankanaeys of Sagada, Mt. Province has a ritual for lost grains called *apuy*, which involves a sacrifice to appease the spirit of the field for whatever grains were lost while transporting their harvest.²⁷ The spirit or the unseen is believed to watch over the fields, warding off pests, rodents, and birds that may ruin the crop and in this ritual done by the elder of the family, a chicken is sacrificed on its behalf.²⁸ This effort to avoid wastage can be understood as ascribing considerable value to one's resources while the opposite is to disrespect nature's spirits.

There is also a corollary sense of gratitude that accompanies every successful harvest or hunt in the Cordilleran culture. Kalanguya hunters, in giving animals the equal value to flourish, practices seasonal and selective hunting, sparing pregnant or thin nursing animals. They also perform the *ta-ang* ritual "in return for the animals they captured."²⁹ Similar practices can be seen in other indigenous cultures where myths and rituals are used to prevent excessive exploitation of their material environment, be that over-hunting or over-fishing, which allows them to live in the same place for thousands of years without degrading the land.³⁰

Naess speaks of valuing resources in view of scarcity and reduced environmental impact as an ecological attitude. Following the

²⁶ "Muyong forest of Ifugao: Assisted natural regeneration in traditional forest management," Food and Agriculture Organization, accessed August 10, 2018, <http://www.fao.org/docrep/004/AD466E/ad466e06.htm>.

²⁷ Jill Gale de Villa, Maria Teresa Farr, and Gladys Jones, *E Masferré: People of the Philippine Cordillera photographs 1934-1956* (Manila: Devcon IP. Inc, 1988), 116.

²⁸ Gwen Gaongen, online message to the author, April 8, 2020. This is a supplemental information from a resident of the locality.

²⁹ Daguitan, *The Kalanguya's territorial management*, 50.

³⁰ LaChapelle, "Ritual - The pattern that connects," 57-58.

cabin tradition in Norway, he periodically spends time in his hut in Tvergastein, a place atop Mt. Hallingskarvet, one of the majestic mountains in Norway.³¹ In this high altitude, arctic environment, there is a scarcity of resources like firewood, food, and water while transporting these up there was likewise a challenge due to the remoteness of the place. In consequence, one becomes creative in thinking of the many alternative purposes for any item brought up there, which in effect assumes more value than the same item in a city context.³²

3. “Principles of diversity and symbiosis.” Studies from the field of biology, agriculture, and forestry confirm the presence of a high degree of environmental and ecological understanding in Cordilleran traditional knowledge. The aspect of diversity is manifested in the practice of *muyong*. This system is considered as a “vital tradition that sustains healthy biodiversity” and the *muyongs* themselves are seen as “storehouses of biodiversity” with studies showing particular examples where “about 264 species, mainly indigenous, belonging to 71 plant families that thrive in these conserved zones.”³³

Symbiosis is evident in how much these indigenous cultures are aware of the complex interdependencies of the natural environment. Knowledge of connections between natural entities inform and aid daily activities as people work with and not against these associations. A simple example would be the *luyoq* or topmost layer of clay soil found in the *payew* (pond fields of rice terraces). The variety of its uses captures the Ifugao’s nuanced familiarity with their surroundings: coating or lining for the terraced walls; a smooth surface for dragging heavy loads; a nutrient rich planting medium when mixed with aquatic plants; preservative and decorative substance for wooden implements; softening agent for bast-fiber plants used as strings; as

³¹ Rothenberg, “Ecosophy T,” 22.

³² Arne Naess, *Ecology of wisdom: Writings by Arne Naess*, ed. Alan Drengson and Bill Devall (Berkeley: Counterpoint, 2008), 56.

³³ Leni Camacho, Dixon Gevaña, Antonio Carandang, and Sofronio Camacho, “Indigenous knowledge and practices for the sustainable management of Ifugao forests in Cordillera, Philippines,” in *International Journal of Biodiversity Science, Ecosystem Services & Management* 12, no.1-2 (November 2015): 5, doi:10.1080/21513732.2015.1124453.

source of fish, edible snails, mole crickets and other semi-aquatic fauna, among others.³⁴ The same dynamic interaction can also be found in the details of caring for the rice terraces, which manifest the “ways in which the Ifugao respond to and are attentive towards the plants and animals and other nonhuman beings that inhabit and take part in transforming the landscape.”³⁵

From the vantage point of deep ecology, the preceding illustrations are not only about knowledge of the environment or successfully adapting to it. They imply a people’s immersion in the natural world, a sense of belongingness to a place, a crucial element in deep ecology. A sense of place that is nourished by rich internal relations with the environment is a strong basis for ecologically relevant action.³⁶

4. “Anti-class posture.” There is a prevailing idea in anthropology that with the increasing interaction between autonomous clans or villages in accomplishing more complex tasks, a transition to a central governing power to control important resources naturally follows.³⁷ “In Ifugao, however, we do not see this political change. Rather, cooperation among autonomous villages that share an irrigation system appears to be the norm.”³⁸ This anti-class posture can also be seen in the absence of landlord-tenant relationship in most ethnolinguistic groups in the Cordilleras as most irrigated fields are actually privately managed.³⁹ In addition, apart from the time families spend for their own crops, they also engage in the maintenance of the community itself by clearing pathways and communal irrigation that “allows for labor exchange network building and for people to be in common areas at the same time where knowledge in resource management is shared.”⁴⁰

³⁴ Harold Conklin, “Some aspects of ethnographic research in Ifugao,” *Transactions of the New York Academy of Sciences Series I* 30, no. 1 (November 1967): 104.

³⁵ Jon Henrik Zeigler Remme, “Harold C. Conklin: Atlas of Multispecies Relations in Ifugao,” *Ethnos*, (June 2019): 6, doi:10.1080/00141844.2019.1580305.

³⁶ Naess, *Ecology of wisdom*, 45.

³⁷ Acabado, *Ifugao rice terraces*, 2, 7, 15.

³⁸ *Ibid.* 2.

³⁹ *Ibid.* 72.

⁴⁰ Daguitan, *Kalanguya's territorial management*, 60.

The communal orientation of the above activities though does not preclude the presence of some form of social stratification in Cordilleran ethnic groups. In Ifugao, there are three main status levels: 1) *kadangyan* or aristocrats who own "large number of pond fields," 2) *natumok* or middle class who have rice that may not last them for the whole year, and 3) *nawatwat*, which means very poor, or people who have very small rice fields or none at all.⁴¹ However, the status of the *kadangyan* has to be continually validated by holding *uyauwe* feasts that are re-distributive in principle, where the participating community partake of the meat of butchered animals, rice, and rice wine that the *kadangyan* provides.⁴² Some anthropologist, thus, claim that "one of the greatest sources of power of the principle *kadangyan* lies in their ability to command the aid of their remote kin on account of their prestige and wealth and the ability to dispense aid and favor."⁴³ Similar mechanisms can be found in the other ethnolinguistic groups.

Such re-distributive element of sharing resources and taking responsibility for the less fortunate goes well with the principle of environmental justice found in the ecological movement. The anti-class posture can also be understood on a deeper level as opposing the prevalent anthropological worldview that sets the human person as separate from, in opposition to, and (in terms of value) above the rest of nature. When value is restricted to the human species alone, it makes the abuse of nature more easily conceivable. This duality, however, is hardly present in the Cordilleran indigenous worldview. The concept of land of the Ibaloi who live in Benguet illustrates this point:

The traditional Benguet igorot's concept of land [is] a 'total lifestyle'. Land is seen by the Ibaloi as a resource which he shares reciprocally with his gods, ancestors, kindred, and future descendants. He does not 'own' the land as we might own a pair of shoes. Rather, he is a steward of the land from which he obtains his livelihood.⁴⁴

⁴¹ J. Peter Brosius, "Significance and Social Being in Ifugao Agricultural Production," *Ethnology* 27, no. 1 (January 1988): 99, doi:10.2307/3773563.

⁴² Brosius, 99.

⁴³ Brosius, 106.

⁴⁴ Angelo De los Reyes and Aloma De los Reyes, ed. *Igorot: A people who daily touch the earth and the sky* (Baguio City: Cordillera Schools Group Easter School, 1986), 145.

5. "Fight against pollution and resource depletion." Cordillerans are not foreign to fighting against the destruction of the environment. After successfully resisting Spanish rule, the entry of Americans, with their more powerful military and effective diplomatic means, and the eventual reestablishment of the Philippine Republic ushered in a series of environmental struggles for the Cordillerans. Mining, logging, land grabbing and conversion were all threats to the land. And like most indigenous cultures, this is also a threat to the very fabric of their way of life which is intricately interwoven with the environment.⁴⁵ Such incursions disrupted their way of life and erupted protests among the people. In 1963, Igorots from Kibungan, Benguet protested against the Philex Mining Co. copper exploration that was "drying up the source of irrigation for the extensive Palina rice terraces;" in 1972, people from Bokod, Benguet raised up against mining whose heavy erosion wreaked havoc to hundreds of hectares of rice fields.⁴⁶ In relation to big logging concessionaires in the Cordilleras, highlanders felt that

"they intruded into the Igorots' communal forest though they were not of the tribes, and cut down venerable trees in numbers which the Igorots never did in living memory, without regard for the terrible consequences which was sure to visit men when the mountains are stripped naked and the earth shivers unprotected from the onslaught of storms and winds."⁴⁷

Their struggle against the destruction of the land of course involves the protection of livelihood. But the indigenous context goes beyond this physiological requirement. To them, land is sacred because it is both the ground of their identity and because it also transcends them. Macli-ing Dulag, a Kalinga *pangat* (community leader) speaks of man's place within nature in the following lines:

To claim a place is the birthright of every man. The lowly animals claim their place. How much more man? Man is born to

⁴⁵ Julius Mendoza, "Alterity and cultural existence," in *Cordillera in June: Essays celebrating June Prill-Brett, anthropologist*, ed. B. P. Tapang (Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press, 2007), 1-29.

⁴⁶ De los Reyes and De los Reyes, *Igorot*, 118.

⁴⁷ De los Reyes and De los Reyes, 118.

live. Apo Kafunian⁴⁸, lord of us all, gave us life and placed us in the world to live human lives. And where shall we obtain life? From the land. To work the land is an obligation, not merely a right. In tilling the land, you must possess it. And so, land is a grace that must be nurtured. To enrich it is the eternal exhortation of Apo Kafunian to all his children. Land is sacred. Land is beloved. From its womb springs our Kalinga life.⁴⁹

Like the other indigenous cultures, the motivation for protecting the environment transcends mere satisfaction of needs to the level of an identification with the land. Naess speaks of an internal relation between the immediate environment and its human inhabitants. Examples of these are cases of indigenous groups that are uprooted from their home territory or are threatened to be evicted from it. He narrates the story of “the Lapps of Arctic Norway [who] have been hurt by the diversion of a river for hydroelectricity. In court, accused of an illegal demonstration at the river, one Lapp said that the part of the river in question was a ‘part of himself.’”⁵⁰ Thus the fight to preserve the land assumes not just a moral but a transcendental or spiritual quality. When the Kalinga people’s land and way of life were threatened during the Martial Law era as four dams were to be constructed along the Chico River, a view of the land as more than property and as something greater than the human settlers themselves is reflected in Macli-ing Dulag’s statement. When asked to justify their claim to the land, he answered:

You ask us if we own the land. And mock us, 'Where is your title?' Such arrogance of owning the land when you shall be owned by it. How can you own that which will outlive you?⁵¹

6. “Complexity, not complication.” The Cordillerans are aware of the multifarious links in natural processes and have evolved their agricultural activities alongside them. In rice culture, for example,

⁴⁸ Apo Kafunian or *Kabunian* is one of the highest gods found in the Cordilleran religious belief system.

⁴⁹ De los Reyes and De los Reyes, *Igorot*, 148.

⁵⁰ Naess, *Ecology of wisdom*, 87.

⁵¹ Jerrie Abello, “Indigenous people remember Macliing Dulag’s martyrdom,” *GMA News Online*, April 24, 2010, <http://www.gmanetwork.com/news/news/nation/189239/indigenous-people-remember-macliing-dulag-s-martyrdom/story/>

“following nature’s signs and doing the work collectively results in synchronized activities in the fields, which helps prevent pest build-up. The simultaneous harvesting of rice cuts the food source of pests, killing or weakening them.”⁵² It is also interesting to note how the traditional activities in rice production are signaled by events in the natural world just as how the start of work in rice fields in the months of August is prompted by the “the flowering of the *pullet* and *bunyakaw* plants, which coincides with the arrival of the *ahib* and *aladog* birds” or how “the coming of the *killing* bird around the month of November” signals the end of the typhoon months and the task of germinating the seeds for the new rice crop.⁵³

It is interesting that current anthropologists, in re-reading the ethnographic works of pioneering anthropologist that documented these relations, are theorizing that there is more to the human story than simply dominating the physical environment and animal and plant species. Thus, terms like “multispecies anthropology” and “more-than-human scholarship” are now found in the discipline. The “constant attention and structural care” that the Ifugao devote to the terraced fields can be understood as a “form of care, one in which humans are attentive to and responsible to the lively multispecies relationality in ways that render capable and response-able all kinds of animate forces.”⁵⁴

In deep ecology, the self-realization of human persons and their capacity for joy and action is intrinsically dependent on one’s relations. The mature and integrated person nourishes relations with other people, nonhuman beings, and the ecosphere. The complexity of nature enjoins thinking along the lines of wholes. “Organisms, ways of life, and interactions in the biosphere in general, exhibit complexity of such an astoundingly high level” and this “complexity makes thinking in terms of vast systems inevitable.”⁵⁵

7. “Local autonomy and decentralization.” Traditionally, there was a high level of autonomy in Cordilleran villages. This was not least due to the fact that people have a vast knowledge of biodiversity. In the 1970’s in Tukucan, Ifugao, residents were able to identify seven species of vines, eight herbs, fifteen grasses, and thirteen shrubs

⁵² Daguitan, *The Kalanguya’s territorial management*, 59.

⁵³ Daguitan, 57.

⁵⁴ Remme, “Harold C. Conklin: Atlas,” 8.

⁵⁵ Naess, “The shallow and the deep,” 97.

whose uses include medicine, handicraft materials, food, pesticide, vinegar, ornament (necklace), beverage (tea and coffee), and wrappers; alongside these were 4 types of bamboo, 20 species of mushrooms (18 of which are edible), fifty-one species of birds (eight are migratory), eight kinds of wild animals, seven honeybees, and forty-seven trees suitable for varied uses.⁵⁶ In effect, even without the benefit of modern Western technology, people were able to manage. This capacity for local autonomy in the form of self-government, material and mental self-sufficiency is a counterweight to external and global trends that may threaten the ecological equilibrium of a local region.⁵⁷

Having analyzed the Cordilleran practices pertaining to their relationship to the land, it could be said that this culture have actually developed a deeply ecological environmental worldview in their indigenous tradition. In relation to the tenets of deep ecology purported by Naess, numerous instances from this culture's conception of and interaction with the environment satisfy these basic principles. Most important is the presence of a sense of place, a rootedness in the immediate environment coupled with an intimate interrelation with its processes. This connection is ultimately an identification with one's place which dissolves the modern notion that self and place are completely separable entities joined by an external relation. An indigenous culture's statement like "This place is part of myself," demonstrates an internal relation which implies that if the place is changed or destroyed, something in the people is likewise changed or destroyed. In Naess' terminology, this is an instance of the ecological self, the widened and deepened self whose relations encompass both human and nonhuman beings, a trait tremendously important to an invigorated environmental movement.⁵⁸

Where Naess emphasizes the need for action in view of environmental degradation, the Cordillera's history can boast of sustained activism for the protection and conservation of the environment. The usual approach in promoting environmentally sound actions is either through enlightened self-interest or moral exhortation. The former is limited by the anthropocentric bias of valuing only those beings who resemble or are useful to the human

⁵⁶ Daguitan, *The Kalanguya's territorial management*, 80-81.

⁵⁷ Naess, "The shallow and the deep," 98.

⁵⁸ Naess, *Ecology of wisdom*, 87-88.

person.⁵⁹ The latter, with the condition that “humankind is very limited in what it can love from mere duty.”⁶⁰ In contrast, “the requisite care flows naturally if the self is widened and deepened so that protection of free nature is felt and conceived as protection of ourselves.”⁶¹ This is a spirit of the people that can be once again tapped, rekindled in the light of contemporary environmental issues. The discussion of which can be a first step for the current generation to get in touch with this tradition and through such connection enliven their own love and valuing of the natural world.

Conclusion

As a concise description of the Cordilleran environmental worldview, it is a cooperative relation with nature that is informed by an acute attunement with its complex processes. This is also imbued with a sense of humility and gratitude that springs from the awareness of the human person’s finitude and facticity as a mere member and never the lord of the world where they live and depend on. The fundamental conception of the human-nature relation that can be deduced from this worldview can serve as a strong foundation for environmental care, and when needed, activism.⁶²

References

- Abello, Jerrie. “Indigenous people remember Macliing Dulag’s martyrdom.” *GMA News Online*. April 24, 2010. <http://www.gmanetwork.com/news/news/nation/189239/indigenous-people-remember-macliing-dulag-s-martyrdom/story/>.
- Acabado, Stephen. *The Ifugao rice terraces: Antiquity, archaeological processes, and highland adaptation*. Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2015.
- Albano, Adrian, and Shinya Takeda. “Conserving Forests in Privatized Commons: Trends and Management Options in an Ifugao Village,

⁵⁹ Plumwood, “Nature, self, and gender,” 3-5.

⁶⁰ Naess, *Ecology of wisdom*, 92.

⁶¹ Naess, 93.

⁶² Acknowledgement: An earlier version of this paper was presented to Prof. Beverly Sarza’s 2018 PhD Seminar on Filipino Philosophy at De La Salle University. I would like to thank Dr. Sarza, Dr. Jeremiah Joven Joaquin, Gulliver Alawas, Ronald Taggaoa, Jonathan Florendo the editors and reviewers of the journal for their input and comments that have been consequential to the improvement of the paper.

- Philippines." *Small-Scale Forestry* 13, no. 1 (March 2013): 1-17, doi:10.1007/s11842-013-9238-2.
- Brosius, J. Peter. "Significance and Social Being in Ifugao Agricultural Production." *Ethnology* 27, no. 1 (January 1988): 97-110, doi:10.2307/3773563.
- Camacho, Leni, Dixon Gevaña, Antonio Carandang, and Sofronio Camacho. "Indigenous knowledge and practices for the sustainable management of Ifugao forests in Cordillera, Philippines." *International Journal of Biodiversity Science, Ecosystem Services & Management* 12, no.1-2 (November 2015): 1-9, doi:10.1080/21513732.2015.1124453.
- Conklin, Harold. "Some aspects of ethnographic research in Ifugao." *Transactions of the New York Academy of Sciences Series I* 30, no. 1 (November 1967): 99-121.
- Daguitan, Florence. *The Kalanguya's territorial management: Caring for our source of sustenance*. Baguio City: Tebtebba Foundation, 2010.
- De los Reyes, Angelo and Aloma De los Reyes. *Igorot: A people who daily touch the earth and the sky*. Baguio City: Cordillera Schools Group Easter School, 1986.
- de Villa, Jill Gale, Maria Teresa Farr, and Gladys Jones. *E Masferré: People of the Philippine Cordillera photographs 1934-1956*. Manila: Devcon IP. Inc, 1988.
- Food and Agriculture Organization. "Muyong forest of Ifugao: Assisted natural regeneration in traditional forest management." Accessed August 10, 2018. <http://www.fao.org/docrep/004/AD466E/ad466e06.htm>.
- Katz, Eric, Andrew Light, and David Rothenberg. *Beneath the surface: Critical essays in the philosophy of deep ecology*. Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2000.
- Mackey, Brendan and David Claudie. "Points of contact: Integrating traditional and scientific knowledge for biocultural conservation." *Environmental Ethics* 37, no. 3 (2015): 341-357.
- Mendoza, Julius. "Alterity and cultural existence." In *Cordillera in June: Essays celebrating June Prill-Brett, anthropologist*, 1-29. Edited by B. P. Tapang. Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press, 2007.
- Naess, Arne. "The shallow and the deep, long-range ecology movement: A summary." *Inquiry* 16, no. 1 (1973): 95-100.

- Naess, Arne. *Ecology, community and lifestyle: An outline of an ecosophy*. Translated by David Rothenberg. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989.
- Naess, Arne. "The deep ecology 'eight points' revisited." In *Deep ecology for the twenty-first century*, 213-221. Edited by George Sessions. Boston: Shambala, 1995.
- Naess, Arne. *The Ecology of wisdom: Writings by Arne Naess*. Edited by Alan Drengson and Bill Devall. Berkeley: Counterpoint, 2008.
- Plumwood, Val. "Nature, self, and gender: Feminism, environmental philosophy, and the critique of rationalism." *Hypatia* 6, no. 1 (Spring 1991): 3-27.
- Remme, Jon Henrik Z. "Harold C. Conklin: Atlas of Multispecies Relations in Ifugao." *Ethnos*, (June 2019): 1-20, doi:10.1080/00141844.2019.1580305.
- Rothenberg, David. "Introduction: Ecosophy T: From intuition to system." In *Ecology, community and lifestyle: An outline of an ecosophy*, 1-22. Translated by David Rothenberg. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989.
- White, Lynn. "The historical roots of our ecological crisis." *Science* 155 (1967): 1203-1207.