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Integral Ecology: Ecology's Working Days Begin in Earnest

Aldo Leopold said ecology is “an infant just learning to talk, and, like other infants, is engrossed with its own coinage of big words. Its working days lie in the future.”

Current approaches to environmental problem solving, even where labelled as “integrated”, are generally very piecemeal and non-inclusive. This is not to discount the importance or efficacy of multidisciplinary approaches to addressing environmental issues. In fact, multi- and transdisciplinary studies have probably contributed more to solving environmental problems than any single discipline acting alone. The latter may seem an obvious outcome, and is often how we intuitively arrive at solutions. Therefore, having a more balanced and inclusive approach is the central insight of Integral Ecology. Integral Ecology seeks to further enhance these current balanced approaches by taking into account all of the possible perspectives on environmental problems. Integral Ecology draws heavily on a new iteration of Integral Theory, known as “Integral Post-Metaphysics” or “Integral Methodological Pluralism”. The latter enables a thorough analysis of any problem through multiple perspectives. Practitioners of Integral Ecology recognise that there are eight native perspectives. Each is represented by a shared community of knowledge, each with its own injunctions and “Community of the Adequate” who test all claims in that realm. What are these perspectives, these ways of knowing? And by holding as many of them in awareness as possible can we actually be in a better position to solve environmental problems? Are we finally living during the “working days” of ecology?