

Some comments upon Takako Takano's "Essence of Friluftsliv: Outdoor Education in Alaska and Japan"

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In her paper "Outdoor Education in Alaska and Japan", based on a first presentation in Oslo April 2002, Takako Takano seeks to introduce us to some forms of outdoor education in both Alaska and Japan, and then wants us to see that in spite of the different approaches and meanings we find in the Alaskan /the Japanese outdoor activities and forms (especially compared to "The Friluftsliv Philosophy") they, too carry quite some of the same significant universal values such as "implications for a lifestyle which leads to sustainable living" – by simply seeking a deeper relationship to the natural world which very often emphasises strong emotional ties. And I think to be aware of just this is as important for those of us socialized to "The Friluftsliv Philosophy" as it is for all other outdoor and wildlife people to see that their traditional worldviews and beliefs also implies sustainable living or living within the earth's capacity.

Takano points out quite clearly, and a bit defensive I would say, that "the link between the attachment to nature and environmental behaviour is never 'proven'". Though it is proven that for nearly every human being having some sort of close contact with nature is something you cannot be without for more than just some days or very few weeks. Nature is so important for us. Newer human ecology and psychology have found that we may have an evolutionary made predilection for close contact with the living nature. (See summary by Hågvar & Støen 1996, and more details by Kaplan & Kaplan 1989 and Uddenberg 1995). The starting point is that man and woman came into being in the nature. The human body, senses and brain are evolutionary developed through very close contact with the natural elements. The Nature is our true home. By birth, we have for generations, and we will for numerous more generations still be the perfect hunter and collector, with body and senses built for searching and exploring the natural landscape. We have the endurance, the joy of exploring – and the sense of locality. If we look upon our heredity mass, our genes haven't been radically altered since the Stone Age. A lot of the quite normal responses to nature human ecologists and psychologists have found, fits into a clear pattern when we take into consideration our evolutionary roots and traces. I feel it is important to point out that the hypothesis of The Joy of Close Contact with Nature being evolutionary and genetic determined should be looked upon as a fruitful hypothesis! This also has to do with nature ethics and on which side we are, the Mankind's side or on the Nature's side. Untouched nature constitutes itself with nature morality and this should be used in our argumentation for the transcendental necessity of taking care of as much untouched nature as possible (Ariansen 1994). "Act beautifully, not dutifully", Arne Næss says to us – in spite of the fact that most of us will feel this call is a bit contradictory. The Struggle for Life has during the mankind's history been The Struggle against Nature. Alas, the loving prospects of victory sometimes fill us with fear as well. It is as likely the victory will be a Pyrrhic one, that we have won by destroying the nature!

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