

Bioregionalism: Practical Environmental Ethics with an Underlying Pragmatic Ideal

Bioregionalizm: praktyczna etyka środowiskowa z uwzględnieniem pragmatycznego ideału

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Abstract

The theories of environmental ethics battle about appropriate value of nature and consequently the appropriate human attitude towards nature. However, they are unable to influence actual human behavior towards nature. So what we need here is not another theory about what possesses intrinsic value or, what ought to influence behavior, but some strategies that can actually influence individual behavior, their attitude about unlimited consumption, and their present environmentally destructive lifestyles. Bioregionalism may be one such strategy. Bioregionalism, with its ethics of reinhabitation and precondition of identification with the local place ensures an emotional connection with nature, which may just be the answer to human induced environmental degradation. Further, such practical ethics has an underlying pragmatic ideal. Pragmatism is the school of thought that roughly holds that our ideas, theories, and world views should be examined in the light of their practical implications in our lives.

Key words: bioregionalism, pragmatism, sustainable development, practical ethics, environment

Streszczenie

Koncepcje etyki środowiskowej wskazują na odpowiednią wartość przyrody, a w konsekwencji odpowiedni stosunek człowieka do natury. Nie są one jednak w stanie wpływać na faktyczne ludzkie zachowania wobec natury. Potrzebujemy więc nie kolejnej teorii na temat tego, co ma wartość wewnętrzną lub, co powinno wpływać na nasze zachowanie, ale nowych strategii, które mogą faktycznie wpływać na indywidualne zachowanie ludzi, ich stosunek do nieograniczonej konsumpcji i obecny szkodliwy dla środowiska styl życia. Jedną z takich strategii może być bioregionalizm, który z jego etyką odnowy i założeniem identyfikacji z tym, co lokalne, zapewnia emocjonalny związek z naturą i odpowiedź na wywołaną przez człowieka degradację środowiska. Co więcej, taka praktyczna etyka ma ukryty pragmatyczny ideał. Pragmatyzm wszak jest szkołą myślenia, która z grubsza utrzymuje, że nasze idee, teorie i poglądy na świat powinny być badane w świetle ich praktycznych implikacji w naszym życiu.

Słowa kluczowe: bioregionalizm, pragmatyzm, rozwój zrównoważony, etyka praktyczna, środowisko

Introduction

Human beings, from the time they realized their superiority to rest of nature in form of their crowning intelligence, have modified the natural environment at their own whim. Instead of abiding by the natural law of the animal world to adapt to nature, humans decided to make their own laws and if required modify nature to suit their needs. At the beginning of human civilization, with minimal human population

and their simplistic needs, the earth was considered as an unlimited reservoir of resources; the only purpose of the resources being human benefit. The belief came crashing down when nature started revolting against the dominion of man. Today, pollution (Bharucha, 2004), global warming (Rajagopalan, 2005), biodiversity losses (Hens and Boon, 2003), ozone depletion (Rajagopalan, 2005) and many more, are recognized as human-induced wide-scale environmental problems.

One of the probable causes of environmental degradation has been the increasing distance between human beings and nature. Initially, humans lived in close conjunction with nature where the former directly derived their means of survival from the latter and as such human dependence on nature was apparent. Gradually, with human development, this direct relationship became mediated and humans became detached from nature both physically and psychologically. Division of labour, changes in farming techniques, industrial revolution, technological advancements; in other words, every step taken towards development has also dissociated humans physically from nature. When humans started deriving their necessities from supermarkets, the physical dependence on nature was no longer apparent. This led to a psychological dissociation, with human beings regarding themselves as separate from and superior to nature. In due course, when the deteriorating environmental condition posed a threat to the existence of human beings, the necessity of environmental ethics was realized.

Another reason for such indifference towards nature might be that the services of nature come free of cost in terms of money. We have come to a juncture of civilization where we value things depending on how much we pay for it. Electricity is preserved when we have to pay for its usage. Whatever is derived free of cost is treated without respect as if useless. Greater care for more expensive or precious objects than cheaper, easily available ones is not unnatural because the former may be much more difficult to replace than the latter due to rarity or cost of the object. However, there seems to be a spillover of such an attitude even in case of things that are not economically evaluable, like air or water, to the extent that we forget the distinction between *free* and *priceless*. Nature is not free but *priceless*, considering how much depends on it. Nature is the origin and source of sustenance of life in the planet.

The Need for Practical Environment Ethics

The theories of environmental ethics differ with one another in various dimensions; they are all in agreement to the extent that environmental sustainability has to be attained but prescribe different ways of attaining it. For instance, let us consider the three most important theories of environmental ethics, namely,

anthropocentrism, biocentrism and ecocentrism. Anthropocentrism means *human-centric*. Any theory that gives sole importance or at least primary importance to human beings compared to other animals or rest of nature is called an anthropocentric theory. Thus anthropocentrism can support and justify an environmental concern not for the sake of intrinsic value¹ of nature but for the sake of human beings. Bio-centrism, on the other hand, gives intrinsic value to all living beings and supports their right to life, not that of human beings alone. Eco-centric ethics refers to the view that environment deserves direct moral consideration over and above living beings. What might be a possible way of accepting one theory over another? The basic principle that drives all the theories of environmental ethics is that a change has to be brought about in the way humans interact with nature. The theories try to bring this about by attempting to change people's beliefs and worldviews. However, this purpose gets diluted in the theoretical disputes about intrinsic value of nature. The theories tend to concentrate more on disputes about whether nature has intrinsic value, and how far beyond human beings it is legitimate to extend intrinsic value; rather than on their efficiency in bringing about changes in human behavior towards nature. Even if it is established that nature has intrinsic value, how such a worldview would lead to behavior changes is not addressed. The underlying belief is that, there is an essential link between our outlook of the world and our behavior. The justification of bringing about this change in outlook therefore is that it can sufficiently change our behavior, and consequently also reduce its harmful effects on nature. Thus if the fundamental purpose of the theories is a change in behavior, the theories should be evaluated on the basis of their application.

The theories like biocentrism and eco-centrism are extremely difficult to apply in everyday life. They require such a change of lifestyle and such amount of sacrifice that people are most of the times not ready to make. Eco-centrism, for instance, requires one to think of the biosphere before oneself in every little activity pertaining to daily life. This is easier said than done. Arne Naess², in spite of propounding *biocentric egalitarianism*³, could not but agree that biocentric equality is true only in principle; in reality nature provides resources for basic subsistence without which no species would survive (Satyanarayana,

¹ Any discussion of the literature on environmental ethics would require an understanding of the distinction between instrumental and intrinsic value. The former refers to the value of a thing as a means to an end while the latter refers to the value of things in themselves. For instance, a doctor has value as a means to the end of relieving patients from illnesses; in addition it is usually accepted that human beings have value in themselves irrespective of whether they serve the purpose of furthering some other end or not. A medicinal plant has value because it serves some purpose,

whether it has value in itself or not is however a matter of debate.

² Norwegian philosopher Arne Naess was the founder of a school within environmental ethics, namely, Deep Ecology. According to it, all lives, including humans, are equal in worth and related to one another in a web of lives that constitute ecology.

³ Biocentric egalitarianism is the view that all living beings have the equal right to live and flourish.

2010). Aldo Leopold⁴ supported total disengagement from nature but he too had to admit the practical impossibility of the principle and suggested that a less radical form of disengagement be endorsed (Leopold, 2001). The theories really battle about how one ought to act and what should be the principle behind such action but are not really concerned about whether they are able to motivate actual behavior. Biology and psychology tells us *what is* while ethics tells us *what ought to be* but the means of evolution from the former to the latter remains a question that belongs to neither domain.

The theories basically differ in opinion about what would be the ideal state of nature-human relationship. They fail to recognize the real state, and the constraints individuals face in attempting to mould the real state into the ideal one. The ideal, as a result, remains a delusion, a perfection one dare not attempt to actualize. This creates a gap in knowledge and application. In spite of knowledge about condition of the environment people are often at a loss about how to act. What is being questioned here is the basic principle of the theories of environmental ethics that changing worldview changes behavior. The theories of environmental ethics demand too much. Anthropocentric concern for the environment sounds achievable but not even this is always achieved. Do we actually think about the environment in regular activities like using air conditioner, driving automobiles, using plastic bags etc.? The theories might all be supported by very logical and convincing arguments, have some devoted proponents and a few points in criticism but the main issue is that they are not able to influence individual behavior or alter lifestyles. So what we need here is not another theory about what possesses intrinsic value or, what ought to influence behavior, but some strategies that can actually influence individual behavior, their attitude about unlimited consumption, and their present environmentally destructive lifestyles. Bioregionalism may be one such strategy.

What is Bioregionalism?

A bioregion is defined by both ecological and cultural factors. The ecosystems and social institutions on which one directly depends for survival and well-being may be understood as one's bioregion. A bioregion etymologically means a life-place. Usually a region is defined politically, ethnically, economically or through some other man made dimension. A bioregion is in contrast, marked out in terms of its natural features like biotic communities, watersheds, terrain etc. The boundary of a bioregion is culturally determined by the people living inside rather than any scientist, expert or political leader from the outside. Although the boundary is culturally defined, it

is done so on the basis of the natural features of the region especially the ones which are most important for the local way of life (Booth, 2012).

In *Society & Natural Resources*, Mark Diffenderfer and Dean Birch defined *Bioregionalism*, as ecosystem management and more. *The requirement of a fundamental change in beliefs, attitudes, and values concerning the interaction of humans with their natural environment distinguishes bioregionalism from other forms of ecosystem management* (Diffenderfer and Birch, 1997). Ecosystem management takes into account:

- I. Maintenance of viable population of native species in situ.
- II. Maintenance of the natural variation of the different ecosystems.
- III. Preservation of the evolutionary potential of species and ecosystems.
- IV. Striking a balance between human use and preservation of integrity of ecosystems.

It does not necessarily involve institutional changes. Bioregionalism does not underestimate these issues while at the same time highlighting the importance of a change in beliefs, attitudes and values as influencing human interaction with nature, as Diffenderfer and Birch stated, *A fundamental change in systems of production must coincide with a concomitant change in those beliefs, attitudes, and values that affect humans' interaction with the natural environment* (Diffenderfer and Birch, 1997). The concept of bioregionalism has been expressed by poet Gary Snyder in *Turtle Talk: voices for a sustainable future*, as that *the bioregional undertaking is to learn our region; to stay here and be at home in it; and to take responsibility for it, and treat it right* (Snyder, 1990).

There are two key terms central to the concept of bioregionalism, which form its core.

- I. **Reinhabitation:** it refers to the process of becoming native to a life place. The first step of reinhabitation requires choosing a place and deciding to live there. The second step requires *applying for membership in a biotic community and ceasing to be its exploiter* (Berg and Dassman, 1977) This involves turning our attention towards local ecosystem and forming concrete relationships with its members. The boundaries of a community are defined by the interrelations between humans, soil, water, plants and animals. The goal of bioregionalism is to reabsorb the activities of human communities like religion, art, institution building etc. within their bioregions that provide their foundation and material support.

The prefix *re* in *reinhabitation* is to recognize the fact that there have been native cul-

⁴ Aldo Leopold was a 19th century philosopher and among the first environmental thinkers. He is best known for his

book *A Sand County Almanac*, which portrays his environmentalist views.

tures that were environmentally sustainable and based on a deep relationship between human beings and other members of the biotic community. These cultures have been mostly decimated and annihilated by the advent of the modern society. The *re* in *reinhabitation* attempts to bring the realization that people have to achieve what local cultures had previously achieved but under very different conditions (Booth, 2012). Modern society with its heavy reliance on globalization, detaches people, their identities, economies, recreations etc. from the local life places. Bioregionalism counters this trend by urging people to base their lives, identities, ideologies, economies etc. as far as possible within the local bioregion. This enhances one's sense of place. Bioregionalism's sense of place is not one's street location, local cuisine, music or architecture but human relation with the local natural ecology, waterways, weather patterns, flora and fauna. Mainstream environmentalism stresses more on protection than adaptation, and protection of particular regions like wildlife areas etc., usually away from one's home. Bioregionalism is more about adapting, about sustainable living in one's own home ecosystem (Booth, 2012).

- II. Identification: Identification with the local place is important for developing sensitivity towards the latter just like identification with another person is a prerequisite to be sensitive to his needs. According to G. H. Mead, a pragmatist philosopher and social psychologist, the ability to identify with others and develop one's own self-identity through the eyes of others is central and fundamental to being human. This might be extended beyond our relationship with human beings to include other life forms and life places. We can consider our actions not only from the point of view of other people but also from the point of view of other members of the biotic community (Booth, 2012).

Practical instances the concept

The concept of bioregionalism may be traced back to aboriginal practices. Long before academic use of the concept, many of its tenets may be found in the practices of the native inhabitants. Bioregionalism might be a new approach in environmental circles of the metropolises, but when it comes to tribal cultures, as in Ohlone, Ojibwe, Kickapoo and other tribes; it is an age old course of action (de Prez, 1996). Bioregions may be revealed in indigenous and aboriginal religious practices like the celebration

of the return of totem salmon in forms of dances and stories, in the languages spoken or through traditional songs of different places, in mimetic rituals of animism or nature writing (McGinnis, 2005).

A more recent endeavor has been the Mannhatta Project which produced a detailed map of Manhattan Island in terms of its terrain, plants and animals, as it was prior to development (Booth, 2012). Such a project can produce a different sense of the place in which one lives and knows so well. Although it is like a journey back in time, the aim is not to return the place to its primal state. Rather it is to produce the consciousness of what has been lost, what can be gained back, what may be lost in future, and what may still be preserved. By recreating a vision of the past, the project gives a bioregional sense of place to the New Yorkers and hopes to create a positive vision of the future. There are no constraints on what this vision might be. This openness to the future, while acknowledging the natural history of the past, is typical of bioregionalism.

Another endeavor has been community based restoration. This allows individuals to participate hands-on in the restoration of damaged sites. Each participant or a group of participants are given an environmental problem along with an active on the ground solution and often with tangible results (California Coastal Commission, 2008). The process re-establishes the long-lost connection between humans and nature and also gives people a new sense of place. Participants also realize the effects of pollution, population, consumption etc. when these begin to affect the landscape they have worked to restore. This method has gained popularity in developed states. In developing countries like India it is very new and yet to spread. It can be very helpful, especially in states like Jharkhand, Chattisgarh, parts of Orissa etc. These mineral rich states of India have been wreaked havoc and a devastated, destroyed landscape left behind, awaiting restoration. Community-based restoration could be the answer in its hands-on and educative approach.

Arguments in Favor of Bioregionalism

Bioregionalism is being suggested as a strategy of practical environmental ethics to achieve tangible results. The following arguments may be forwarded to show that bioregionalism can bring about a change in human attitude towards environment.

- I. Human beings depend on the environment for their survival. Earlier the connection was direct when people used to live on the food and other necessities they themselves produced from nature. There was direct realization of the dependence on nature, especially the immediate environment. Today, modern technology has made life much simpler. All products are available in the supermarket and the consumers have

- no relation with how they are being produced. However, modern technologies, in spite of creating a distance, have not been able to alleviate the dependency. This is a dangerous situation where people remain almost as much dependent on the natural environment as they previously were but become unaware of this dependence. The close connection with nature, once developed through regular interactions and direct dependence for food, shelter, clothing etc., is eventually lost. This gives rise to an attitude of indifference and the consequent neglect and destruction of nature. Bioregionalism attempts to combat this tendency by bringing about a realization of the dependence on the area of inhabitation. The preconditions of bioregionalism, namely intimate knowledge and emotional connection with the place of inhabitation are useful in bringing about a change in the attitude of indifference.
- II. *Reinhabitation* is a central concept of bioregionalism. According to Dodge, it is *a notion an inclination, an urge* (Dodge, 1990); it is the urge to live in close proximity with the biotic community of a place. It begins with the inclination to live in a place, not as a consequence of some preconceived set of principles, but as the starting point. It must be realized that the application of this strategy requires as a precondition the urge to apply it. No amount of external force, levying of fines and taxes etc. can lead to a successful application of it. *Environment friendly inhabitation* may be an externally imposed rule but reinhabitation along with its preconditions of intimate knowledge and emotional connection with the place cannot be externally imposed. This stress on an internal urge rather than external force is the strength of the concept. External forces bring about desired consequences only till the force exists. Thus it is dependent on certain conditions. However, an internal urge to bring about a change would guarantee a much more stable and long term change that is unconditional.
- III. Further, huge environmental problems have often been brought about unwittingly from a series of insignificant activities by individuals or small groups of people. Bioregionalism seems to apply the same policy reversely, where the pro environmental activities of small groups of people may be expected to bring about a big difference. In other words, bioregionalism provides a starting point from the level of the relationship between individuals and their bioregion ultimately aiming to bring about a transformation of the relationship between humankind and the natural world.
- IV. The hands-on approach of bioregionalism is also useful in educating the community which cannot occur from passive activities without direct involvement, like reading about environmental problems or even wild-life viewing, hiking etc. Education does not only comprise of formal school training. Education, in a broad sense, refers to a process of lifelong experiences, knowledge and wisdom that has transformative or additive influence on an individual's personality (NCERT, 2014). Intimate knowledge of the place of inhabitation also adds to the education of an individual to the extent that it can bring about transformations in the outlook of the individual towards the place, from a region to a life place.
- V. Ancient bioregional knowledge is vanishing day by day. It has been estimated that nearly 90% of ancient language and knowledge would be lost by 2020 (McGinnis, 2005). With it would be lost the myths and stories of the places, the indigenous culture and knowledge of plants and animals, the traditional songs and dances that have been practiced for ages. Contemporary bioregionalism aims to preserve not only ecological diversity and the interconnectedness of life systems but also these traditions that are reservoirs of local bioregional knowledge.
- VI. Emotional connection, which is a pre requisite of bioregionalism, can have important implications for nature-human relationship. One pathway that seems to override economic considerations is emotional attachment. As has already been stated, at the present juncture of civilization, objects are often evaluated economically and valued according to the price that we pay for it. Exception to this rule may be observed in case of objects that are emotionally significant. This includes our relation with parents, children, friends and whatever we are emotionally connected with. Some letters, old photographs etc. are often treated as priceless because of an emotional, not economic consideration. A pet is often treated with love without considering the economic benefits it can bring to us. In other words, what would be treated with value and what would not, may be determined emotionally without reference to economic considerations.

What is being suggested is that the treatment of objects according to their financial worth does not hold when there is an emotional connection with the object. The same would be true for the treatment of nature. Bioregionalism tries to ensure an emotional connection with nature so that human behavior is determined by emotional consideration rather than their economic significance.

- VII. Henry David Thoreau⁵ (1817- 1862) was one of the first to extend the realm of moral consideration beyond human beings to include the non-human world, more than hundred years before environmental ethics emerged as a separate field of study in the mid-1970s.

He too spoke of the ethical significance of living in close proximity to nature. He did not mention bioregionalism but addressed the idea of *living well in nature*, and his own life in a *humble cabin* near Walden Pond may be cited as an instance of it. This, in spite of being a non-anthropocentric stance, brings benefits to human beings. Thoreau spoke about virtues that we can learn from nature. Simplicity is one of them. Simple living is such a virtue that nature exhibits in abundance. Nature does not know greed or affluence, it takes only what is necessary for survival. If human beings are able to imbibe this virtue, it would not only reduce one's ecological footprint but also according to Thoreau it would enrich their lives. It would bring back humanity in money making machines (Cafaro, 2002).

Bioregionalism and Environmental Pragmatism

Pragmatism is the school of thought that roughly holds that our ideas, theories, and world views should be examined in the light of their practical implications in our lives. By the early 1990s there arose a discontentment among some regarding the concentration of environmental ethics solely in finding intrinsic value in nature. They regarded it as a meaningless theoretical task with no practical applications. These revolutionists who called themselves *environmental pragmatists*, rather than answering abstract questions about values, found a more worthwhile task of trying to have practical implications on environmental policies (Light and Katz, 1996).

Despite their very different origins, one as a grass roots movement and the other a more academic endeavor, bioregionalism and environmental pragmatism seem to have quite a lot in common. Both lay

emphasis on achievement of practical ends and practical applications of theories rather than inapplicable theoretical disputes, and both value pluralism. Bioregionalists often do not like to call themselves pragmatists but it has been argued that the two are very similar with respect to their core values. The ethics of *reinhabitation* in bioregionalism is fundamentally practical ethics which makes it a form of pragmatism (Booth, 2012).

Bioregionalism's ethics of reinhabitation is similar in form to the approach of practical ethics rather than applied ethics. There is a fine distinction between applied ethics and practical ethics (Norton, 1996). Applied ethics is that branch of philosophy which begins with ethical theories and tests their soundness through application, sometimes in real life situations and sometimes in thought experiments. Practical ethics, on the other hand, begins with real life ethical issues and tries to solve them with the help of philosophical tools and theories. Thus the role of the theories occur somewhere in between the problem and the solution.

Environmental pragmatism also endeavors to find solutions to real life environmental issues through ideas and innovations. Bioregionalism is more a practical ethics than applied ethics and so is environmental pragmatism. We call bioregionalism a type of *practical ethics* because its *ethics of reinhabitation* begins with the actual problems of living in relation with a place. Bioregionalism does not prescribe any theoretical mandate that may be blindly followed in order to be a bioregionalist. Environmental problems are real life ethical issues that bioregionalism tries to counter through its recommendations of intimate knowledge and emotional connection with one's place of inhabitation. Jim Dodge believes such an ethics to be rooted in *palpable intelligence of practice* (Dodge, 1990). Doug Aberle maintained that the *goal of the bioregional theorist has been to reflect on the needs and values of living in – place, not to craft a seamless theoretical construction or utopian diatribe* (Aberley, 1999) Theoretical disputes without practice lead to utopian ideas in an endeavor to reach theoretical consistency rather than practical workability.

Pragmatism often argues against ethical monism or the theories of ethics built on a single fundamental principle like intrinsic value of nature. Monism is not able to account for the variety of different ethical dilemmas that arise in real life. Andrew Light and Eric Katz view environmental pragmatism as a call to endorse moral pluralism, with less emphasis on theory building and greater stress on practical policy making (Light and Katz, 1996). Pluralism is also an important aspect of *reinhabitation*. The ethics of living in a place cannot be developed on monistic principles. The principles would be as diverse as the place

also proved with his own choice of life that his ideas were in fact practical and not any utopian theory.

⁵ Henry David Thoreau was one of the first non-anthropocentric thinkers, who not only extended the realm of ethics beyond human beings to include non-human animals, but

themselves. As has already been stated, bioregionalism is an urge or inclination based on intimate knowledge and emotional connection rather than any monistic principle. There is nothing in bioregionalism that favors one ethnic cultural background over another. However, it is not also an open ended relativism. Bioregional values are shaped by local climate, flora and fauna which set limit on clothing, diet, and associated cultural practices.

Nortan's environmental pragmatism has much in common with bioregionalism. His stress on place based communities for environmental protection reiterates itself in the bioregionalist's emphasis on bioregional communities (Booth, 2012). A true place based community is in fact a bioregional community which is formed through identification with the place and the biotic community of the place.

Applicability of the Theory

Bioregionalism has been criticized as being too radical. Although it endorses practical ethics, it is sometimes said to be too visionary or too utopian. On the contrary, bioregionalism is most down to earth. Thoreau's extreme choice of life in the woods, confronted only with the essentials of life should not be misinterpreted to be the only path to endorse bioregionalism. Every person has to choose some place to live in; all that bioregionalism adds is the development of identification with the place of inhabitation. In taking a stand away from all the abstract and wishful thinking of mainstream philosophy, and concentrating on practical problems of living in a place, bioregionalism reveals an ideology grounded in reality. The practicality of the theory is most evident from the fact that it is being successfully applied all over the world. In Australia, California, and Western Canada, bioregion is already treated as a unit of planning and management (Miller, 1996). In the United States more than 600 bioregional initiatives have been recorded (Miller, 1996). The *1995 Planet Drum Bioregional Directory* incorporated 204 bioregional projects in Canada and US, 5 in Mexico, 6 in Australia, 26 in Europe and 4 in the Pacific Islands (Miller, 1996).

Identification with a place is difficult when a job transfer, a change of home is anticipated every few years. In contrast, an Ohlone Indian spent his entire life approximately within a 12 mile radius of his birthplace (dePrez, 1996). The nomads, of the plains, however covered thousands of miles in their life time, changing place with changing seasons, yet were a million times more in sync bioregionally than the modern society. This is a major drawback of bioregionalism that it is difficult to apply in case of people who have to change their place of inhabitation every few years. However there are millions of other people who live in the same place throughout their lives, who can successfully apply this strategy. Valerie DePrez, gives an example from his own life.

He was born in the Prairie State (Illinois). He grew up to be an interpretative naturalist in Oregon and California. However, in spite of his efforts and acquirement of knowledge he failed to make a success out of his profession. In his own words, *I was displaced spiritually and my work reflected it*. He further lamented, *It is hard to bloom where you are planted when you have been repeatedly uprooted* (dePrez, 1996). Once this realization dawned he moved back to his roots and *reinhabited* the bioregion resulting in success in profession and an overall satisfaction with life. This does not mean that, bioregionalism is not possible outside one's birthplace. John Muir, for instance, was a naturalist who successfully adapted to the bioregion of Sierra Nevada, away from his birthplace at Scotland.

Some contend that bioregionalism's stress on local areas makes it difficult to apply in global problems and undoubtedly many environmental problems are global in scale. This contention, however, is not true. Bioregionalists admit that many environmental problems are global in scale, however, they also add that even to global environmental problems human adaptation should begin from particular places. Bioregionalists may be concerned with other regions and the planet as a whole, but the starting point is invariably local. Adaptation requires an intimate connection, including knowledge of and sensitivity to the biotic elements of the particular region. As stated by Robert Thayer, *It makes little sense to discuss sustainable development at the global level if no thought is given to the local places and scales where human life actually takes place* (Thayer, 2003). Kirkpatrick Sale put the realization in the following words, *At the scale of the bioregion, people can understand the flow of natural systems, whereas at the global, or national levels, the mind boggles* (de Prez, 1996).

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