For about 2500 years humankind has struggled with basic questions about who we are, what we are heading for, and of what kind of reality we are part. Two thousand, five hundred years is a short period in the lifetime of a species, and still less in the lifetime of the Earth, to whose surface we belong as mobile parts. I am not capable of saying very new things, but I can look at things from a somewhat different angle, using somewhat different conceptual tools and images.

What I am going to say more or less in my own way and that of my friends, may roughly be condensed into the following six points:

1. We under-estimate ourself. I emphasize 'self'. We tend to confuse it with the narrow ego.

2. Human nature is such that with sufficient all-sided maturity we cannot avoid 'identifying' ourself with all living beings, beautiful or ugly, big or small, sentient or not. I need of course to elucidate my concept of identifying. I'll come back to that.

The adjective "all-sided' in 'all-sided maturity' deserves a note: Descartes seemed to be rather immature in his relation to animals, Schopenhauer was not much advanced in his relation to family (kicking his mother down a staircase?), Heidegger was amateurish - to say the least - in his political behaviour. Weak identification with nonhumans is compatible with maturity in some major sets of relations, such as those towards family or friends. I use the qualification 'all-sided', that is, 'in all major relations'.

3. Traditionally the maturity of the self has been considered to develop through three stages, from ego to social self, comprising the ego, and from there to metaphysical self,
comprising the social self. But nature is then largely left out in the conception of this process. Our home, our immediate environment, where we belong as children, and the identification with human living beings, are largely ignored. I therefore tentatively introduce, perhaps for the first time ever, a concept of ecological self. We may be said to be in, of and for nature from our very beginning. Society and human relations are important, but our self is richer in its constitutive relations. These relations are not only relations we have to other humans and the human community. (I have introduced a term 'mixed community' for communities where we consciously and deliberately live closely together with certain animals.)

4. Joy of life and meaning of life is increased through increased self-realization. That is, through the fulfilment of potentials each has, but which never are exactly the same for any pair of living beings. Whatever the differences increased self-realization implies broadening and deepening of self.

5. Because of an inescapable process of identification with others, with growing maturity, the self is widened and deepened. We 'see ourself in others'. Self-realization is hindered if the self-realization of others, with whom we identify, is hindered. Love of ourself will fight this obstacle by assisting in the self-realization of others according to the formula 'live and let live!' Thus, all that can be achieved by altruism - the dutiful, moral consideration of others - can be achieved - and much more - through widening and deepening ourself. Following Kant we then act beautifully, but neither morally nor immorally.

6. A great challenge of today is to save the planet from further devastation that violates both the enlightened self-interest of humans and non-humans, and decreases the potential of joyful existence for all.

- Now, proceeding to elaborate these points, I shall start with the peculiar and fascinating terms 'ego', 'self.

The simplest answer to who or what I am is to point to my body, using my finger. But clearly I cannot identify my self or even my ego with my body. Example: Compare

I know Mr Smith with My body knows Mr Smith;
I like poetry My body likes poetry;
The only difference between The only difference between
us is that you are a our bodies is that your
Presbyterian and I am body is Presbyterian
a Baptist whereas mine is Baptist
In the above sentences we cannot substitute 'my body' for 'I'. Nor can we substitute 'my mind' or 'my mind and body' for 'I'. More adequately we may substitute 'I as a person' for 'I', but this does of course not tell us what the ego or self is.

A couple of thousand years of philosophical, psychological and social-psychological thinking has not brought us any stable conception of the I, ego, or the self. In modern psychotherapy these notions play an indispensable role, but, of course, the practical goal of therapy does not necessitate philosophical clarification of the terms. It is for the purpose of this lecture important to remind ourselves about the strange and marvellous phenomena we are dealing with. They are extremely close. Perhaps the very nearness of these objects of thought and reflection adds to our difficulties. I shall only offer one single sentence resembling a definition of the ecological self. The ecological self of a person is that with which this person identifies.

This key sentence (rather than definition) about the self, shifts the burden of clarification from the term 'self to that of identification, or rather 'process of identification'.

I shall continue for a while to concentrate on the ecology of the self, but shall first insert a word on identification.

What would be a paradigm situation of identification? It is a situation in which identification elicits intense empathy. My standard example has to do with a non-human being I met 40 years ago. I looked through an old-fashioned microscope at the dramatic meeting of two drops of different chemicals. A flea jumped from a lemming strolling along the table and landed in the middle of the acid chemicals. To save it was impossible. It took many minutes for the flea to die. Its movements were dreadfully expressive. What I felt was, naturally, a painful compassion and empathy. But the empathy was not basic, it was the process of identification, that 'I see myself in the flea'. If I was alienated from the flea, not seeing intuitively anything even resembling myself, the death struggle would have left me indifferent. So there must be identification in order for there to be compassion and, among humans, solidarity.

One of the authors contributing admirably to clarification of the study of self is Erich Fromm.

"The doctrine that love for oneself is identical with 'selfishness' and an alternative to love for others has pervaded theology, philosophy, and popular thought; the same doctrine has been rationalized in scientific language in Freud's theory of narcissism. Freud's concept
presupposes a fixed amount of libido. In the infant, all of the libido has the child's own person as its objective, the stage of 'primary narcissism', as Freud calls it. During the individual's development, the libido is shifted from one's own person toward other objects. If a person is blocked in his 'object-relationships', the libido is withdrawn from the objects and returned to his or her own person; this is called 'secondary narcissism'. According to Freud, the more love I turn toward the outside world the less love is left for myself, and vice versa. He thus describes the phenomenon of love as an impoverishment of one's self-love because all libido is turned to an object outside oneself.\(^1\)

What Erich Fromm attributes here to Freud, we may today attribute to the shrinkage of self-perception implied in the ego-trip fascination. Fromm opposes such shrinkage. The following quotation concerns love of persons, but as 'ecosophers' we find the notions of 'care, respect, responsibility, knowledge' applicable to living beings in the wide sense.

"Love of others and love of ourselves are not alternatives. On the contrary, an attitude of love toward themselves will be found in all those who are capable of loving others. Love, in principle, is indivisible as far as the connection between 'objects' and one's own self is concerned. Genuine love is an expression of productiveness and implies care, respect, responsibility, and knowledge. It is not an 'effect' in the sense of being effected by somebody, but an active striving for the growth and happiness of the loved person, rooted in one's own capacity to love."\(^2\)

Fromm is very instructive about unselfishness - diametrically opposite to selfishness, but still based upon alienation and narrow perception of self. We might add that what he says applies also to persons experiencing sacrifice of themselves.

"The nature of unselfishness becomes particularly apparent in its effect on others and most frequently, in our culture, in the effect the 'unselfish' mother has on her children. She believes that by her unselfishness her children will experience what it means to be loved and to learn, in turn, what it means to love. The effect of her unselfishness, however, does not at all correspond to her expectations. The children do not show the happiness of persons who are convinced that they are loved; they are anxious, tense, afraid of the mother's disapproval, and anxious to live up to her expectations. Usually,

\(^1\) Clark E. Mustakas, ed., *The Self*' Explorations in Personal Growth, p. 58. This and the following quotations are from Fromm's contribution "Selfishness, Self-love, and Self-interest".

\(^2\) Ibid, p. 59.
they are affected by their mother's hidden hostility against life, which they sense rather than recognize, and eventually become imbued with it themselves ...

"If one has a chance to study the effect of a mother with genuine self-love, one can see that there is nothing more conducive to giving a child the experience of what love, joy, and happiness are than being loved by a mother who loves herself." 3

We need environmental ethics, but when people feel they unselfishly give up, even sacrifice, their interest in order to show love for nature, this is probably in the long run a treacherous basis for conservation. Through identification they may come to see their own interest served by conservation, through genuine self-love, love of a widened and deepened self.

At this point the notion of a being's interest furnishes a bridge from self-love to self-realization. It should not surprise us that Erich Fromm, influenced as he is by Spinoza and William James, makes use of that bridge. What is considered to constitute self-interest, he asks, and he answers:

"There are two fundamentally different approaches to this problem. One is the objectivistic approach most clearly formulated by Spinoza. To him self-interest or the interest 'to seek one's profit' is identical with virtue.

"'The more', he says, 'each person strives and is able to seek his profit, that is to say, to preserve his being, the more virtue does he possess; on the other hand, in so far as each person neglects his own profit he is impotent.' According to this view, the interest of humans is to preserve their existence, which is the same as realizing their inherent potentialities. This concept of self-interest is objectivistic inasmuch as 'interest' is not conceived in terms of the subjective feeling of what one's interest is but in terms of what the nature of a human is, 'objectively'." 4

'Realizing inherent potentialities' is one of the good less-than-word clarifications of 'self-realization'. The questions 'Which are the inherent potentialities of the beings of species x?' and 'Which are the inherent potentialities of this specimen x of the species y?' obviously lead to reflections about and studies of x and y.

3 Ibid, p. 62.
As humans we cannot just follow the impulses of the moment when asking for our inherent potentialities. It is something like this which Fromm means when calling an approach 'objectivistic', opposing it to an approach 'in terms of subjective feeling'. Because of the high estimation of feeling and low estimate of so-called 'objectivization' (verdinglichung, reification) within deep ecology, the terminology of Fromm is not adequate today, but what he means to say is appropriate. And it is obviously relevant when we deal with other species than humans: animals and plants have interests in the sense of ways of realizing inherent potentialities which we can only study interacting with them. We cannot rely on our momentary impulses, however important they are in general.

The expression 'preserve his being' in the quotation from Spinoza is better than 'preserve his existence' because the latter is often associated with physical survival and 'struggle for survival'. A still better translation is perhaps 'persevere in his being' (perseverare in suo esse). It has to do with acting out one's own nature. To survive is only a necessary condition, not a sufficient condition.

The conception of self-realization as dependent upon our insight into our own potentialities makes it easy to see the possibility of ignorance and misunderstanding as to which are these potentialities. The ego-trip interpretation of the potentialities of humans presupposes a marked underestimation of the richness and broadness of our potentialities. In Fromm's terms, "man can deceive himself about his real self-interest if he is ignorant of his self and its real needs ..."5

The 'everything hangs together' maxim of ecology applies to the self and its relation to other living beings, ecosystems, the ecosphere, and the Earth with its long history.

The existence and the importance of the ecological self is easy to illustrate with some examples of what has happened in my own country, Norway.

The scattered human habitation along the arctic coast of Norway is uneconomic, unprofitable, from the point of view of the current economic policy of our welfare state. The welfare norms require that every family should have a connection by telephone (in case of illness). This costs a considerable amount of money. The same holds for mail and other services. Local fisheries are largely uneconomic perhaps because a foreign armada of big trawlers of immense capacity is fishing just outside the fjords. The availability of jobs is crumbling.

5 Ibid, p. 63.
The government, therefore, heavily subsidized the resettlement of people from the arctic wildernesses, concentrating them in so-called centres of development, that is, small areas with a town at the centre. But the people, as persons, are clearly not the same when their bodies have been thus transported. The social, economic and natural setting is now vastly different. The objects with which they work and live are completely different. There is a consequent loss of personal identity. 'Who am I?' they ask. Their self-respect, self-esteem is impaired. What is adequate in the so-called periphery of the country is different from what counts at the so-called centres.

If people are relocated or, rather, transplanted from a steep mountainous place to a plain, they also realize, but too late, that their home-place has been part of themselves, they have identified with features of the place. And the way of life in the tiny locality, the density of social relations has formed their persons. Again, 'they are not the same as they were'.

Tragic cases can be seen in other parts of the Arctic. We all regret the fate of the Eskimos, their difficulties in finding a new identity, a new social and a new, more comprehensive ecological self. The Lapps of Arctic Norway have been hurt by interference with a river for the purpose of hydroelectricity. In court, accused of illegal demonstration at the river, one Lapp said that the part of the river in question was 'part of himself. This kind of spontaneous answer is not uncommon among people. They have not heard about the philosophy of the wider and deeper self, but they talk spontaneously as if they had.

The sentence 'This place is part of myself we may try to make intellectually more understandable by reformulations, for example 'My relation to this place is part of myself', 'If this place is destroyed something in me is destroyed', 'My relation to this place is such that if the place is changed I am changed' ...

One drawback with these reformulations is that they make it easy to continue thinking of two completely separable, real entities, a self and the place, joined by an external relation. The original sentence, rather, conveys the impression that there is an internal relation of sorts. 'Of sorts' because we must take into account that it may not be reciprocal. If I am changed, even destroyed, the place would be destroyed according to one usual interpretation of 'internal relation'. From the point of phenomenology and the 'concrete content'-view the reciprocity holds, but that is a special interpretation. We may use an interpretation such that if we are changed, the river need not be changed.

The reformulation 'If this place is destroyed something in me is killed' perhaps articulates some of the feelings usually felt when people see the destruction of places they deeply
love or to which they have the intense feeling of belonging. Today more space is violently transformed per human being than ever, at the same time as their number increases. The kind of 'killing' referred to occurs all over the globe, but very rarely does it lead to strong counteraction. Resignation prevails. 'You cannot stop progress.'

The newborn lacks, of course, any conceptions, however rudimentary, corresponding to the tri-partition - subject, object, medium. Probably the conception (not the concept) of one's own ego comes rather late, say after the first year. A vague net of relations comes first. This network of perceived and conceived relations is neutral, fitting what in British philosophy was called 'neutral monism'. The whole, their universe and altogether, lacks the tripartition at this early stage. In a sense, it is this basic sort of crude monism we are working out anew, not by trying to be babies again, but by better understanding our ecological self. It has not had favourable conditions of development since before the time renaissance glorified our ego by putting it in some kind of opposition to what else there is.

What is now the practical importance of this conception of a wide and deep ecological self?

Defending nature in our rich, industrial society, the argument of the opponent often is that we are doing it in order to secure beauty, recreation, sport, and other non-vital interests for us. It makes for strength if we, after honest reflection, find that we feel threatened in our innermost self. If so, we more convincingly defend a vital interest, not only something out there. We are engaged in self-defence. And to defend fundamental human rights is vital self-defence.

The best introduction to the psychology of the self is still to be found in the excellent and superbly readable book *Principles of Psychology*, published in 1890 by the American psychologist and philosopher William James. His 100-page chapter on the consciousness of self stresses the plurality of components of the wide and deep self as a complex entity. (Unfortunately he prefers to talk about the plurality of selves. I think it may be better to talk about the plurality of the components of the wide self.)

The plurality of components can be easily illustrated by reference to the dramatic phenomenon of alternating personality.

"Any man becomes, as we say, inconsistent with himself if he forgets his engagements, pledges, knowledge, and habits ... In the hypnotic trance we can easily produce an
alternation of personality, ... by telling him he is an altogether imaginary personage . . .

If we say about somebody that he or she is not himself today, we may refer to a great many different relations to other people, to material things and certainly, I maintain, to what we call his or her environment, the home, the garden, the neighbourhood ...

When James says that these relata belong to the self, it is of course not in the sense that the self has eaten the home, the environment, etcetera. Such an interpretation testifies that the self is still identified with the body. Nor does it mean that an image of the house inside the consciousness of the person belongs to the self. When somebody says about a part of a river-landscape that it is part of himself, we intuitively grasp roughly what he means. But it is of course difficult to elucidate the meaning in philosophical or psychological terminology.

A last example from William James: We understand what is meant when somebody says "As a man I pity you, but as an official I must show you no mercy." Obviously the self of an official cannot empirically be defined except as relations in a complex social setting. Thus, the self cannot possibly be inside the body, or inside a consciousness. Enough! The main point is that we do not hesitate today, being inspired by ecology and a revived intimate relation to nature, to recognize and accept wholeheartedly our ecological self.

The next section is rather metaphysical. I do not defend all the views presented in this part of my talk. I wish primarily to inform you about them. As a student and admirer since 1930 of Gandhi's non-violent direct actions in bloody conflicts, I am inevitably influenced by his metaphysics which to him personally furnished tremendously powerful motivation and which contributed to keeping him going until his death. His supreme aim was not India's political liberation. He led a crusade against extreme poverty, caste suppression, and against terror in the name of religion. This crusade was necessary, but the liberation of the individual human being was his supreme aim. It is strange for many to listen to what he himself said about his ultimate goal:

What I want to achieve - what I have been striving and pining to achieve these thirty years -is self-realization, to see God face to face, to attain Moksha (Liberation). I live and move and

---


7 This and other quotations from Gandhi are taken from my Gandhi and Group Conflict, Oslo, 1974, p. 35, where the metaphysics of self-realization is treated more thoroughly.
have my being in pursuit of that goal. All that I do by way of speaking and writing, and all my ventures in the political field, are directed to this same end.

This sounds individualistic to the Western mind. A common misunderstanding. If the self Gandhi is speaking about were the ego or the 'narrow' self ('jiva') of egocentric interest, the 'ego-trips', why then work for the poor? It is for him the supreme or universal Self - the atman - that is to be realized. Paradoxically, it seems, he tries to reach self-realization through 'selfless action', that is, through reduction of the dominance of the narrow self or the ego. Through the wider Self every living being is connected intimately, and from this intimacy follows the capacity of identification and as its natural consequences, practice of non-violence. No moralizing is needed, just as we need not morals to make us breathe. We need to cultivate our insight:

The rockbottom foundation of the technique for achieving the power of non-violence is belief in the essential oneness of all life. Historically we have seen how nature conservation is non-violent as its very core. Gandhi says:

I believe in advaita (non-duality), I believe in the essential unity of man and, for that matter, of all that lives. Therefore I believe that if one man gains spirituality, the whole world gains with him and, if one man fails, the whole world fails to that extent.

Surprisingly enough, Gandhi was extreme in his personal consideration for the self-realization of other living beings than humans. When travelling he brought a goat with him to satisfy his need for milk. This was part of a non-violent demonstration against certain cruel features in Hindu ways of milking cows. Furthermore, some European companions who lived with Gandhi in his ashrams were taken aback that he let snakes, scorpions and spiders move unhindered into their bedrooms - animals fulfilling their lives. He even prohibited people from having a stock of medicines against poisonous bites. He believed in the possibility of satisfactory coexistence and he proved right. There were no accidents. Ashram people would naturally look into their shoes for scorpions before using them. Even when moving over the floor in darkness one could easily avoid trampling on one's fellow beings. Thus, Gandhi recognized a basic, common right to live and blossom, to self-realization in a wide sense applicable to any being that can be said to have interests or needs.

Gandhi made manifest the internal relation between self-realization, non-violence and what sometimes has been called biospherical egalitarianism.
In the environment in which I grew up, I heard that what is serious in life is to get to be somebody - to outdo others in something, being victorious in comparison of abilities. What today makes this conception of the meaning and goal of life especially dangerous is the vast international economic competition. Free market, perhaps, yes, but the law of demand and supply of separate, isolatable `goods and services', independent of needs, must not be made to reign over increasing areas of our life.

Ability to cooperate, to work with people, making them feel good pays, of course, in a fiercely individualist society, and high positions may require that; but only as long as, ultimately, it is subordinated to the career, to the basic norms of the ego-trip, not to a self-realization worth the name.

To identify self-realization with the ego-trip manifests a vast underestimation of the human self.

According to a usual translation of pall or sanskrit, Buddha taught his disciples that the human mind should embrace all living things as a mother cares for her son, her only son. Some of you who never would feel it meaningful or possible that a human self could embrace all living things, might stick to the usual translation. We shall then only ask that your mind embraces all living beings, and your good intention to care and feel and act with compassion.

If the sanskrit word translated into English is atman, it is instructive to note that this term has the basic meaning of `self, rather than `mind' or `spirit', as you see in translations. The superiority of the translation using the world `self stems from the consideration that if your `self in the wide sense embraces another being, you need no moral exhortation to show care. Surely you care for yourself without feeling any moral pressure to do it - provided you have not succumbed to a neurosis of some kind, developing self-destructive tendencies, or hating yourself.

Incidentally, the Australian ecological feminist Patsy Hallen uses a formula close to that of Buddha: We are here to embrace rather than conquer the world. It is of interest to notice that the term `world' is here used rather than `living beings'. I suspect that our thinking need not proceed from the notion of living being to that of the world, but we will conceive reality or the world we live in as alive in a wide, not easily defined sense. There will then be no non-living beings to care for.

If self-realization or self-fulfilment is today habitually associated with life-long ego-trips, isn't it stupid to use this term for self-realization in the widely different sense of
Gandhi, or, less religiously loaded, as a term for widening and deepening your `self so it embraces all life forms? Perhaps it is. But I think the very popularity of the term makes people listen for a moment, feeling safe. In that moment the notion of a greater `self should be introduced, contending that if they equate self-realization with ego-trips, they seriously underestimate themselves. "You are much greater, deeper, generous and capable of more dignity and joy than you think! A wealth of non-competitive joys is open to you!"

But I have another important reason for inviting people to think in terms of deepening and widening their selves, starting with the ego-trip as a crudest, but inescapable point zero. It has to do with a notion usually placed as the opposite of the egoism of the ego-trip, namely the notion of altruism. The Latin term ego has as its opposite the alter. Altruism implies that ego sacrifices its interest in favour of the other, the alter. The motivation is primarily that of duty: it is said that we ought to love others as strongly as we love ourself.

It is, unfortunately, very limited what humankind is capable to love from mere duty or, more generally, from moral exhortation. From the Renaissance to the Second World War about 400 cruel wars were fought by Christian nations for the flimsiest of reasons. It seems to me that in the future more emphasis has to be given to the conditions under which we most naturally widen and deepen our `self'. With a sufficiently wide and deep `self', ego and alter as opposites are stage by stage eliminated. The distinction is in a way transcended.

Early in life, the social `self is sufficiently developed so that we do not prefer to eat a big cake alone. We share the cake with our friends and our nearest. We identify with these people sufficiently to see our joy in their joy, and see our disappointment in theirs.

Now is the time to share with all life on our maltreated earth through the deepening identification with life forms and the greater units, the ecosystems, and Gaia, the fabulous, old planet of ours.

Immanuel Kant introduced a pair of contrasting concepts which deserve to be extensively used in our effort to live harmoniously in, for and of nature: the concept of `moral act' and that of `beautiful act'.

Moral acts are acts motivated by the intention to follow the moral laws, at whatever cost, that is, to do our moral duty solely out of respect for that duty. Therefore, the supreme test of our
success in performing a pure, moral act is that we do it completely against our inclination, that we, so to say, hate to do it, but are compelled by our respect for the moral law. Kant was deeply awed by two phenomena, "the heaven with its stars above me and the moral law within me".

But if we do something we should do according to a moral law, but do it out of inclination and with pleasure - what then? Should we then abstain or try to work up some displeasure? Not at all, according to Kant. If we do what morals say is right because of positive inclination, then we perform a beautiful act. Now, my point is that perhaps we should in environmental affairs primarily try to influence people towards beautiful acts. Work on their inclinations rather than morals. Unhappily, the extensive moralizing within environmentalism has given the public the false impression that we primarily ask them to sacrifice, to show more responsibility, more concern, better morals. As I see it we need the immense variety of sources of joy opened through increased sensitivity towards the richness and diversity of life, landscapes of free nature. We all can contribute to this individually, but it is also a question of politics, local and global. Part of the joy stems from the consciousness of our intimate relation to something bigger than our ego, something which has endured through millions of years and is worth continued life for millions of years. 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.

Academically speaking, what I suggest is the supremacy of environmental ontology and realism over environmental ethics as a means of invigorating the environmental movement in the years to come. If reality is like it is experienced by the ecological self, our behaviour naturally and beautifully follows norms of strict environmental ethics. We certainly need to hear about our ethical shortcomings from time to time, but we more easily change through encouragement and through deepened perception of reality and our own self. That is, deepened realism. How is that to be brought about? The question needs to be treated in another lecture! It is more a question of community therapy than community science: Healing our relations to the widest community, that of all living beings.

The subtitle of this lecture is "An Ecological Approach to Being in the World". I am now going to speak a little about 'Nature' with all the qualities we spontaneously experience, as identical with the reality we live in. That means a movement from being in the world to being in nature. Then, at last, I shall ask for the goal or purpose of being in the world.
Is joy in the subject? I would say "no". It is just as much or little in the object. The joy of a joyful tree is primarily "in" the tree we should say - if we are pressed to make a choice between the two possibilities. But we should not be pressed. There is a third position. The joy is a feature of the indivisible, concrete unit of subject, object and medium. In a sense self-realization involves experiences of the infinitely rich joyful aspect of reality. It is misleading, according to my intuitions, to locate joys inside my consciousness. What is joyful is something that is not 'subjective', it is an attribute of a reality wider than a conscious ego. This is philosophically how I contribute to the explanation of the internal relation between joy, happiness, and human self-realization. But this conceptual exercise is mainly of interest to an academic philosopher. What I am driving at is probably something that may be suggested with less conceptual gymnastics: It is unwarranted to believe that how we feel nature to be is not like how nature really is. It is rather that reality is so rich that we cannot see everything at once, but separate parts or aspects in separate moods. The joyful tree I see in the morning light is not the sorrowful one I see in the night, even if they in abstract structure (physically) are the same.

It is very human to ask for the ultimate goal or purpose for being in the world. This may be a misleading way of putting a question. It may seem to suggest that the goal or purpose must be somehow outside or beyond the world. Perhaps this can be avoided by living out "in the world". It is characteristic for our time that we subjectivize and individualize the question asked of each one of us: What do you consider to be the ultimate goal or purpose for your life? Or, we leave out the question of priorities and ask simply for goals and purposes.

The main title of the lecture is partly motivated by the conviction that 'self-realization' is an adequate key-term expression one uses to answer the question of ultimate goal. It is of course only a key-term. An answer by a philosopher can scarcely be shorter than the little book Ethics by Spinoza.

In order to understand the function of the term 'self-realization' in this capacity, it is useful to compare it with two others, 'pleasure' and 'happiness'. The first suggests hedonism, the second eudaemonism in a professional philosophical, but just as vague and ambiguous, jargon. Both terms connote states of feeling in a broad sense of the term. Having pleasure or being happy is to feel well. One may of course find the term happiness to connote something different from this, but in the way I use 'happiness', one standard set of replies to the question "How do you feel?" is "I feel happy" or "I
feel unhappy." This set of answers would be rather awkward: "I feel self-realized" or "I do not feel self-realized."

The most important feature of self-realization as compared to pleasure and happiness is its dependence upon a view of human capacities, better potentialities. This again implies a view of what is human nature. In practice it does not imply a general doctrine of human nature. That is the work of philosophical fields of research. An individual whose attitudes are such that I would say that he or she takes self-realization as the ultimate or fundamental goal has to have a view of his or her nature and potentialities. The more they are realized the more there is self-realization. The question "How do you feel?" may be honestly answered in the positive or negative whatever the level of self-realization. The question may, in principle, be answered in the negative, but at the point following Spinoza I take the valid way of answering to be positive. The realization of fulfilment - using a somewhat less philosophical jargon - of the potentialities of oneself is internally related to happiness, but not in such a way that looking for happiness you realize yourself.

This is a clear point, incidentally, in Stuart Mill's philosophy. You should not look hard for happiness. That is a bad way even if you take, as Stuart Mill does, happiness as the ultimate or fundamental goal in life. I think that to look for self-realization is a better way. That is, to develop your capacities- using a rather dangerous word because it is easily interpreted in the direction of interpersonal, not intrapersonal, competition. But even the striving implied in the latter term may mislead. Dwelling in situations of intrinsic value, spontaneous non-directed awareness, relaxing from striving, is conducive to self-realization as I understand it. But there are, of course, infinite variations among humans according to cultural, social, individual differences. This makes the key term self-realization abstract in its generality. But nothing more can be expected when the question is posed like it is: What might deserve the name of ultimate or fundamental goal? We may reject the meaningfulness of such a question - I don't - but for us for whom it has meaning, the answer using few words is bound to be abstract and general.

Going back to the triple key terms pleasure, happiness, self-realization, the third has the merit of being clearly and forcefully applicable to any being with a specific range of potentialities. I limit the range to living beings, using 'living' in a rather broad sense. The terms 'pleasure' and 'happiness' I do not feel are so easily generalized. With the rather general concept of 'ecological self already introduced, the concept of self-realization naturally follows. Let us consider the preying mantis, the formidable group of voracious
insects. They have a nature fascinating to many people. Mating is part of their self-
realization, but some males are eaten when performing the act of copulation. Is he happy,
is he having pleasure? We don't know. Well done if he does! Actually he feeds his partner
so that she gets strong offspring. But it does not make sense to me to attribute happiness
to these males. Self-realization yes, happiness no. I maintain the internal relation between
self-realization and happiness among people and among some animal groups. As a
professional philosopher I am tempted to add a point where I am inspired by Zen
Buddhism and Spinoza: Happiness is a feeling, yes, but the act of realizing a potential is
always an interaction involving as one single concrete unit, one gestalt as I would say,
three abstract aspects, subject, object, medium. What I said about joyfulness in nature
holds of happiness in nature. We should not conceive them as mere subjective feelings.

The rich reality is getting even richer through our specific human endowments; we are the
first kind of living beings we know of which have the potentialities of living in
community with all other living beings. It is our hope that all those potentialities will be
realized - if not in the near future, at least in the somewhat more remote future.