

The Ecology of an Aquarium

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ABSTRACT Aquarium offers a microcosm and metaphor for our human situation. Individualism ignores context, environment, and others, while ecological perspectives enable us to assess and deal with our human situation more effectively and realistically.

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Most of us are individualists. We think in terms of personalities and psychological approaches. Typically, we focus on specific selves.

However, alternatives abound. One way to discover these alternative ideas is to learn to think ecologically. A good way to start is to imagine or picture an aquarium.

"Picture the aquarium in your mind. Add, in your imagination, one hundred beautifully coloured tropical fish. Watch them swim around in the tank."

"Look, one of them is turning on its side - it is sick! What shall we do?"

"Take it out and treat it, or if the treatment does not work, then we should flush it, you say?"

"Okay, that leaves 99 beautiful tropical fish, swimming in the aquarium."

"Look, one of them is turning on its side - it is sick ! Quick, what shall we do?"

"Take it out and treat it, or if the treatment does not work, then we should flush it, you say?"

"Okay, that leaves 98 beautiful tropical fish, swimming in the aquarium."

"Look, one of them is turning on its side - it is sick ! What shall we do?"

This scenario can continue for a long time.

It is only when someone calls for an investigation of the temperature, the pH level, the degree of pollution, or other ecological approaches that we come to realize that environments, groups, societies, and powers greater than a self, do indeed count!

The ecological analogy holds promise for dealing with the issues of our contemporary world. If one stops and thinks about relationships, connections, linkages, as well as environments, problems, needs, planning, solutions, and much more, ecology and the ecological perspective offers creative ideas and guidelines for action.