

“There was a muddy centre before we breathed.
There was a myth before the myth began,
Venerable and articulate and complete.
From this the poem springs: that we live in a place
That is not our own and, much more, not ourselves
And hard it is in spite of blazoned days.”
Wallace Stevens

This essay seeks to examine the topic of ecopsychology by examining its key precepts, terminology, historical roots and practical theory. The possibility of ecopsychology’s unique position as a combined philosophy able to surpass the limitations of both ecology and psychology in their specific rights, is explored. About thirty years ago in 1995, leading pioneer of the advancement of ecopsychology, Theodore Roszak wrote of the “emerging synthesis of the psychological (here intended to embrace the psychotherapeutic and the psychiatric) and the ecological.”¹ The time stamp of Roszak’s early work predates the unprecedented rise of technological hyper-connectedness, and the prevailing crisis of mental illness in developing nations as we see today and which have re-written notions of “well-being”. The dramatic changes in the ecological and psychological landscape add further emphasis and urgency to Roszak’s sentiment that “the time is clearly at hand to draw up a psychological impact statement for the environmental movement”.² Ecopsychology’s mission statement of saving life on Earth, supports the notion of an ecological component to the human personality that is both natural and universal.³ The underlying assumption is that a deep, abiding connection exists between the human psyche and planet Earth.⁴ Mark A. Schroll was guided to ecopsychology through a quest to understand the pollution of the inner landscape understood to be a precursor to the destruction of the external world.⁵ While acknowledging the significance of conservationism, political campaigning and promoting of educational resources as modes of attempt to shift environmental issues, Schroll realized that healing the global crisis would need to begin with examination and confrontation of the self.⁶ Ecopsychology offers the environmental movement a layered approach which examines what motivates human behavior; it is inquisitive of emotions, needs and asks: “What do humans love?”⁷ Pioneering psychologist and consciousness researcher, Ralph Metzner, explains the very foundation of human existence is that we live in an ecosystem or biotic

¹ Theodore Roszak Where Psyche Meets Gaia, in *Ecopsychology: Restoring the Earth, Healing the Mind* edited by Roszak, T., Gomes M. and Kanner A. (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1995), 5.

² Roszak Where Psyche Meets Gaia, 15.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Mark A. Schroll, “From Ecopsychology to Transpersonal Ecosophy: Shamanism, Psychedelics and Transpersonal Psychology. An Autobiographical Reflection.” *European Journal of Ecopsychology* 4, no. 1 (2013): 122.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Theodore Roszak Where Psyche Meets Gaia, 15.

community with a variety of flora and fauna and yet our geographical/climatological settings “...appear to be irrelevant to our psychology.”⁸ Metzner views ecology as “subversive” describing its potential to transcend knowledge based disciplines (psychology, philosophy, economics, religion/theology and sociology/history) beyond their respective boundaries and “...consider the wider contexts of ecosystem and Gaia.”⁹ Ecopsychology recognizes that human nature calls forth a development of habits designed to adaptation and that somehow our species “...has learned some extremely maladaptive and destructive habits in relation to the natural environment” while its vision incorporating bioregionalism guides us to modestly recognize the condition and reinhabit dwelling in a more balanced way.¹⁰ While other terms have been proposed such as psychoecology, ecotherapy, global therapy, green therapy, Earth-centered therapy, reearthing, nature-based psychotherapy, shamanic counseling or sylvan therapy, Roszak points out that “... whatever the name, the underlying assumption is the same: ecology needs psychology, psychology needs ecology.”¹¹

Similar to deep ecology which seeks to distinguish itself from shallow ecology, ecopsychology takes a critical look at the motives of activism and seeks to differentiate from the narrow strategies often employed by environmentalists that promote fear, shame.¹² Arne Naess, in his work of self-realization through an ecological approach, warned of the dangers when people are driven by unselfish sacrifice of their own interest and that conservation efforts under such motive are not sustainable.¹³ In contrast and by identifying with nature, one “... may come to see their own interest served by conservation, through genuine self-love, love of a widened and deepened self.”¹⁴ The distinction between conservation efforts rooted in altruism versus those rooted in love has been made by many deep ecologists. The argument encourages us to look at the means and not simply the initial end result. Perhaps the intended result may superficially look the same in both the altruistic conservation model and the model of identification, however deep ecology is curious about the opportunity of connection, the experience of love and joy arising from identification with the natural world. Inspiring such emotion acts as an antidote to the anger, hopeless despair and emotional exhaustion within the movement.¹⁵ An example of a grim vision of human nature presented to us in modern psychotherapy is Sigmund Freud’s “law of entropy.”¹⁶ The drive toward death became evidence of life’s futility.¹⁷ How humans perceive themselves, others and their surroundings concerns psychology. How to protect the non-human which

⁸ Ralph Metzner, “The Place and the Story: Ecopsychology and Bioregionalism,” *The Humanistic Psychologist* 26, no. 1-3 (2008): 35-36.

⁹ Metzner The Place and the Story: Ecopsychology and Bioregionalism, 36.

¹⁰ Ibid, 45-46.

¹¹ Roszak Where Psyche Meets Gaia, 4-5.

¹² Ibid, 2.

¹³ Arne Naess, “Self-Realization: An Ecological Approach to Being in the World,” *The Trumpeter: Journal of Ecosophy* 4, no. 3 (1987), 36.

¹⁴ Naess Self-Realization: An Ecological Approach to Being in the World, 36.

¹⁵ Roszak Where Psyche Meets Gaia, 3.

¹⁶ Ibid, 9.

¹⁷ Ibid.

sustains our basic life force concerns ecology. It is here that we clearly see the interdisciplinary nature of ecopsychology weaving together the threads of psychology, ecology, sociology, anthropology and spirituality while also incorporating a view from a transpersonal lens.

Jack Hunter suggests the ecological self can be understood as an example of the dividual self which is made up of multiple parts and has permeable boundaries.¹⁸ Hunter explains how “non-pathological modes of being that incorporate plural identities, or that extend beyond the usually assumed limits of the individual, are worthy of much greater attention” in that they may help us understand “how a sense of connection to the natural world is formed, and may bear some relevance to our understanding of the ‘ecological self.’”¹⁹ A criticism of the modern psychotherapeutic process as presented by Roszak is its failure to reach beyond family and society and which stops at “city limits.”²⁰ He calls out Freud for his “civilization and its discontents,” creating an image of an isolated tiny island oblivious to the massive surrounding habitat.²¹ In Schroll’s studies of profound encounters with nature and the psychedelic experience, he investigated “openness” and hypothesized that higher levels of openness were more flexible to new ideas, experiences and more driven to grow their experiences.²²

The subject of dreams and dreaming has been intrinsic to the field of psychology since the very beginning. Dreams possessing a dual meaning as both waking goals and aspirations which “we take with us out into the world each day and maniacally set about making ‘real’”²³ as well as the images infiltrating sleep states. Roszak comments that “ecopsychology suggests that we can read our transactions with the natural environment - the way we use or abuse the planet as projections of unconscious needs and desires, in much the same way we can read dreams and hallucinations to learn about our deep motivations, fears, hatreds.”²⁴ Depth psychologist James Hillman postulated how consciousness, ego and subjectivity seem to “rest” upon an invisible layer or soul that is deeper, self-sustaining and can be experienced through imaginative possibility such as reflective speculation, dream, and image.²⁵

Psychotherapist Edward Tick studied the effects of post traumatic stress disorder of war veterans as well as survivors of all kinds of severe trauma recognized that “...deep wounds required equally deep remedies” which he surmised the roots of healing could be found in spiritual traditions.²⁶ In the 1980’s, Tick began conducting pilgrimages to sacred sites in Greece following

¹⁸ Jack Hunter *Ecology and Spirituality: A Brief Introduction* (Wales: Sophia Centre Press, 2023), 106-107.

¹⁹ Hunter *Ecology and Spirituality A Brief Introduction*, 107.

²⁰ Roszak *Where Psyche Meets Gaia*, 2.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² Schroll *From Ecopsychology to Transpersonal Ecosophy*, 125.

²³ Roszak *Where Psyche Meets Gaia*, 5.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ James Hillman *Blue Fire* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1991), 21.

²⁶ Edward Tick *The Practice of Dream Healing: Bringing Ancient Greek Mysteries into Modern Medicine* (Illinois: Quest Books, 2001), xii.

its mythological traditions and “inviting the genius loci, the spirit of the place, to speak to him.”²⁷ Tick built upon the work of Carl Alfred Meier, leading psychoanalyst in Carl Jung’s closest circle, to elucidate the tradition of Asklepios and the notion of dream incubation in modern psychology.²⁸ Not surprisingly, some of Maier’s most important insight on Asklepiian healing in modern clinical practice came via dreams.²⁹ Similarly Marna Hauk, director of the “Institute for Earth Regenerative Studies,” performed research to explore the possibility of earth regeneration through a dreaming matrix. In the ancient tradition of Heigeian dream temples, seekers retreated in natural spaces and made sacred contact with the earth to facilitate healing dreams.³⁰

Tick refers to “radical ritual” to explain how a significant structured experience in one’s life may dramatically alter an old definition of self and lead to multi-faceted change in one’s being.³¹ Sweat lodges, vision quests, spirit dancing, sacred chanting, prolonged meditation, pilgrimages to sacred sites, formidable excursions into the wilderness or extreme athletic challenges can all be forms of radical ritual when may lead to authentic transformation if they are attempts at conscious mythmaking or conscious attempts to “evoke transpersonal energies.”³² A vision or dream commonly follows such an experience leading to an epiphany or sense of personal encounter with the divine and it is through such epiphanic events that either instantaneous changes in the “body/mind system” occur or signals appear pointing to the manifestation of aforementioned change.³³ Tick asks: “But how is it that dreams can function as conduits for holistic body / mind wisdom or for epiphanies?”³⁴ and cites Meier for the answer: “Only when dreams are very highly valued can they exert great influence.”³⁵ This may seem life a far stretch in today’s world where dream images and personal visions are dismissed, rationalized as meaningless figments of imagination or even pathologized. The dreams of Meier and Tick are “living experiences of the soul.” They are embodied rather than solely analyzed. By being curious about where we *were* and what we *did* during our dream states, we allow our images to live and heal and not only exist as symbols for decoding.³⁶

The staff of Asklepios depicts a snake wrapped around a rod close to the ground and is an example of the mythic and archetypal symbol of healing making its way into mainstream society as it is used in medical / pharmaceutical brand marketing.³⁷ Dreaming about or encountering a

²⁷ Tick *The Practice of Dream Healing*, xv.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 169.

³⁰ Marna Hauk “Dreams of Earth: Earth Dreaming as Eco-Resilience Practice for the Long Emergency” *Ecopsychology* 7 (2015): 258.

³¹ Tick *The Practice of Dream Healing*, 166.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ C.A Meier *Ancient Incubation and Modern Psychotherapy*, reprint 1949 (Evanston, IL : Northwestern University Press, 1967) as in *The Practice of Dream Healing*, 166.

³⁶ Tick *The Practice of Dream Healing*, 167.

³⁷ Hauk *Dreams of Earth*, 259.

snake may bring forth powerful emotions. Tick suggests that snake imagery in dreams, visions or unusual encounters in nature “...may signal our access to the healing wisdom of Asklepios” announcing that something latent will be revealing itself.³⁸ Feeding honey cakes to tree snakes was a ritual task at the Hygeian temple performed before descending into earthen beds.³⁹ Symbolically, snakes may indicate a reconnection to the physical earth, awaken earth powers or bring one closer to their own nature.⁴⁰ In my own psycho-spiritual journey, I recorded two dreams during a particularly significant time of change and insight:

The setting is an old wooden cabin in a forest. A large snake pokes its head through an old wooden barrel to the side of a long dining table. The snake is large in size similar to an anaconda, though not agile. I have the sense that it has been forgotten/neglected and in need of nourishment. I hand feed the snake while also serving dinner to my family members at the adjacent table.

Several weeks later, I experience another snake dream:

The setting is my family home; a second floor apartment in a busy city. A snake is actively roaming the floor. We move into the kitchen and I intuit the snake is hungry. I offer it egg, followed by pomegranate seeds and finally, honey. The snake perks up after consuming the honey. The dreamscape dissolves.

Both dreams are laden with archetypal and mythical symbolism and can be read in any number of ways; however for the purposes of this paper, I will only include select key notes reflecting the perceived healing and transformational capacity experienced. At the time, I was consulting with a homeopath who recommended a constitutional earth-mineral based remedy and suggested I pay attention to my dream life. Following the advice, I began taking note of my nightly imagery. The combination of the earth essence and newfound attention to subconscious imagery allowed me to traverse these as scenes as places sojourned. This translated to an increased awareness in waking states of my conscious life. The snake imagery evolved from a restricted, oversized yet malnourished state to one of greater freedom of movement. The dreams were quite aptly corresponding to my waking life movement where I was in the process of disconnecting from a job held for almost ten years which had become banal and meaningless but to which I had been firmly tethered. My career shift was the outward manifestation of the inner work catalyzed and the beginning of increased capacity for greater responsibility in various areas of my life including the emotional and spiritual realms. As someone who has lived in a busy, urban and boxed-in city since birth, there is little rational reasoning as to why a snake would appear in my

³⁸ Tick *The Practice of Dream Healing*, 228.

³⁹ Hawk *Dreams of Earth*, 259.

⁴⁰ Tick *The Practice of Dream Healing*, 128.

dream imagery; however when perceived through an archetypal lens, it makes perfect sense. Becoming aware of the mythological significance of the snake and understanding the correspondences in my personal sphere, led to a feeling of spiritual connection. Hauk described her awe-inspiring feeling thinking about the liveliness of the Earth and how dream and reverie had the capacity to “...take me out of my smallbuzzing brain into the larger aliveness.”⁴¹ Even without a textbook, nature intuitively teaches the teachings of the snake; one need only watch a snake shed its skin and give up its old forms for something new. As “...life unfolds in an endless process of transformation” while “death and rebirth constitute the eternal cycle of which we are each a part.”⁴²

In a study by Trigwell et al., the Ecological-self theory is explored in which nature-connectedness acts as a harbinger of spirituality.⁴³ A distinction is made therewith between the psychological functions of hedonism and eudaimonism as approaches to well-being.⁴⁴ Trigwell et al. draws from the work of professors of psychology, Edward L. Deci and Richard M. Ryan, to explain the critical distinction between the two traditions in which the focus of hedonism exists in a happiness which simply favors positive effect / rejects negative effect while eudaimonism possesses a wider spectrum of complexity that fosters depth and meaning.⁴⁵ “Hedonism focuses on increased pleasure, decreased pain, and overall satisfaction with life as components of well-being, whereas the eudaimonic approach focuses on optimal psychological functioning and realizing one’s true potential.”⁴⁶ The study uses Carol Ryff’s theory, articulated in 1989, presenting psychological well-being as a scale of six facets to illustrate conceptualized eudaimonic health⁴⁷:

- Self-acceptance (a positive sense of self)
- Purpose in life (sense of meaning in direction and aspiration)
- Personal growth (experiencing growth / unfolding development)
- Positive relations with others (satisfying interpersonal relatability with others)
- Environmental mastery (competency in facing the challenges of one’s environment)
- Autonomy (to independently assess and regulate the self)

Using this criteria as a scale, Trigwell et al. concluded that humans who resonate emotionally with the surrounding natural world generally experience enhanced psychological functioning as

⁴¹ Hauk Dreams of Earth, 261.

⁴² Tick The Practice of Dream Healing, 228.

⁴³ Jasmine Trigwell, Andrew J.P. Francis, Kathleen Bagot “Nature Connectedness and Eudaimonic Well-Being: Spirituality as a Potential Mediator.” *Ecopsychology* 6, no.4 (2014): 241-251.

⁴⁴ Trigwell et al. Nature Connectedness and Eudaimonic Well-Being: Spirituality as a Potential Mediator, 241-251.

⁴⁵ Richard M. Ryan and Edward L. Deci “On happiness and human potentials: A review of research on hedonic and eudaimonic well-being.” *Annual Review of Psychology*, 52 (2001), 141–166 as in Trigwell et al. Nature Connectedness and Eudaimonic Well-Being: Spirituality as a Potential Mediator, 241-243.

⁴⁶ Ibid, 241.

⁴⁷ Ibid, 242.

nature-connectedness was positively correlated with three of the above dimensions: purpose in life, personal growth and autonomy.⁴⁸ While there are findings to support the hypothesis, Trigwell et al. insisted that advanced research is necessary to understand the causal relationship and discover what mediates the two.⁴⁹ One of these possible mediators is the evoked sense of spiritual fulfillment although complex and abstract, a connection to nature may reverberate feelings of oneness and belonging which act as an avenue for improved well-being.⁵⁰

The ecology of consciousness was a main topic of Metzner's research for some time. It is thought the dissociation from nature beginning in the Middle Ages came with the rise of Euro-American science and gave way to the "humanist superiority complex."⁵¹ Lyn White Jr.'s startling 1967 hypothesis explained the ecological crisis took root within Judio-Christian religious ideals promoting a creation myth where man was named steward of all things and where nature was at his ultimate disposal.⁵² In Metzner's study discussing the negative correlation between alienation from nature and dissociation of consciousness, we find Jung's alchemy is revisited in relation to unfurling individuation.⁵³

The work of Arne Naess and Bill Devall spoke extensively to self-realization and the ecological self where the interrelatedness of nature, spirituality and well-being is at the core foundation. In discussing self-realization, Arne Naess reminds the reader of the challenge within even the most basic psychological constructs: "A couple thousand years of philosophical, psychological and social-psychological thinking has not brought us to any stable conception of the I, ego, or the self."⁵⁴ There is the inherent difficulty of philosophical clarification while the practical objective of therapy is not hinged on its definitions.⁵⁵

Within the work of pastoral counselor and professor Howard Clinebell who spent time studying eco-therapy in his later years, we again see the union of ecological spirituality and psychology. In 1979, Clinebell laid out six dimensions to growth counseling.⁵⁶

⁴⁸ Richard M. Ryan and Edward L. Deci "On happiness and human potentials: A review of research on hedonic and eudaimonic well-being." *Annual Review of Psychology*, 52 (2001), 141–166 as in Trigwell et al. Nature Connectedness and Eudaimonic Well-Being: Spirituality as a Potential Mediator, 241-243.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Trigwell et al. Nature Connectedness and Eudaimonic Well-Being: Spirituality as a Potential Mediator, 242.

⁵¹ Metzner *Green Psychology: Transforming Our Relationship to the Earth*. Rochester, VT: Park Street Press (1999) in Mark A. Schroll, Review of Ralph Metzner *The Expansion of Consciousness*, Vol. 1. *Anthropology of Consciousness* 20, 1 (2009): 81–83.

⁵² Lyn White Jr. "The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis" *Science New Series* 155, no. 3767 (1967), 1205.

⁵³ Schroll Review of Ralph Metzner, 81.

⁵⁴ Naess *Self-Realization: An Ecological Approach to Being in the World*, 35.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Howard Clinebell *Growth Counseling*. Nashville: Abingdon Press (1979) in Jill Snodgrass "From Rogers to Clinebell: Exploring the History of Pastoral Psychology." *Pastoral Psychology* 55, No. 4 (2007), 520.

- Enlivening One's Mind
- Inner Growth: Revitalizing One's Body
- Renewing Our Relationships
- Growth in Relating to the Biosphere
- Growth in Relation to Organizations and Institutions
- Spiritual Growth

Clinebell's criteria emphasize more than intrapsychic health highlighting the requirement of healthy relationships.⁵⁷ He believed that each individual possessed the drive toward actualization and regardless of their state of well-being, this could be experienced as a push or pull toward growth.⁵⁸ Additionally, Clinebell acknowledged the possibility of growth being destructive while holding the possibility of paradox between the potentiality of creativity as well as destructiveness.⁵⁹ Similarly, the very story of Earth's creation via the Big Bang theory possesses both death and rebirth. Mother Gaia is symbolically and literally at once a birther of life and murderess. If we are to accept nature and Earth in all its facets, it seems quite important that our philosophies entertain both sides of the coin.

The ecological self as a "... search for an opening to nature (Tao) in authentic ways"⁶⁰ claims a relationship with nature rooted in harmony and balance. As the Tao focuses on an alignment with the natural order of all things, similarly the "ecological self is not a forced or static ideology."⁶¹ Bill Devall explained when an authentic connection to the Earth is established, one naturally and sincerely strives for its preservation and there is a sense that "if this place is destroyed then something within [...] is destroyed."⁶² The ecological self assumes connection by identification with the external or greater world and shares this tenet with ecopsychology. While the footsteps of "the way" are not defined in the Tao nor do we have a manuscript for cultivating the ecological self however we know from the relevant research that "...it does not mean learning how to use the joystick in 'spaceship earth' but how to joyfully blend with the watershed in which we live"⁶³ encouraging "modesty instead of hubris."⁶⁴ Roszak draws from the work of environmental activist Dave Foreman to poetically express the greater goal of opening up to

⁵⁷ Jill Snodgrass "From Rogers to Clinebell: Exploring the History of Pastoral Psychology." *Pastoral Psychology* 55, No. 4 (2007), 520.

⁵⁸ Snodgrass "From Rogers to Clinebell: Exploring the History of Pastoral Psychology," 521.

⁵⁹ Howard Clinebell *Growth Counseling*. Nashville: Abingdon Press (1979) in Jill Snodgrass "From Rogers to Clinebell: Exploring the History of Pastoral Psychology." *Pastoral Psychology* 55, No. 4 (2007), 523.

⁶⁰ Bill Devall *The Ecological Self*, in *The Deep Ecology Movement: An Introductory Anthology* edited by Drengson, A. and Inoue, Y. (Berkeley: North Atlantic Books, 1995), 108.

⁶¹ Devall *The Ecological Self*, 108.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Ibid, 108-109.

⁶⁴ Ibid, 109.

loving “... this glorious, luxuriant animated planet.”⁶⁵ To forget this uplifting element and focus on negative encouragement is “damaging to our personal mental health.”⁶⁶

Schroll wrote about his own journey from ecopsychology to transpersonal ecosophy.⁶⁷ Within his observation of ecopsychology and its related interdisciplinary fields, he notes that ecopsychology is not without critical objection as the union of psychology and ecology is not universally accepted. Schroll cites Susan Clayton and Gene Myers to articulate one of its challenges: “Not all ecopsychologists are trained as psychologists, and writings on ecopsychology have been criticized for a lack of scientific objectivity, referencing concepts like spirituality and indigenous wisdom that are difficult to clearly define.”⁶⁸ While Schroll did not believe these terms were difficult to define and referred to the respective resources, he expressed preference using “transpersonal” which refers to consciousness rather than “spirituality” which casts a wider net and may lose focus in its broad usage.⁶⁹ To the detriment of ecopsychology, being linked with psychology assumes certain standards inherent within psychology that were never the intention according to Roszak and Metzner.⁷⁰

“The earth never tires,
The earth is rude, silent, incomprehensible at first, Nature is
rude and incomprehensible at first,
Be not discouraged, keep on, there are divine things well
envelop’d,
I swear to you there are divine things more beautiful than
words can tell”

Walt Whitman, "Song of the Open Road"

The idea that nature evokes feelings of terror as well as love taps deeply into primal human roots and is in a sense, archetypal. Roszak incorporates zoologist E.O Wilson’s notion that it is possible humans have a capacity for biophilia or “the innately emotional affiliation of human beings to other living organisms.”⁷¹ The capacity for biophilia may inspire and be counteracted by biophobia, or a fear of nature. Psychologists note that both love and fear elicit emotion, both justify careful examination and both may be “...translated into devotion, respect, concern, or awe, can be used to rebuild our strained bonds with the natural environment.”⁷² The shadow is an

⁶⁵ Dave Foreman, “The New Conservation Movement,” *Wild Earth* (Summer 1991), 10-11 in Roszak *Where Psyche Meets Gaia*, 3.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ Schroll *From Ecopsychology to Transpersonal Ecosophy*, 116-144.

⁶⁸ Schroll *From Ecopsychology to Transpersonal Ecosophy*, 119.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ E.O. Wilson and Stephen R. Kellert, eds., *The Biophilia Hypothesis* (Washington D.C.: Island Press/Shearwater Books (1993) in Roszak *Where Psyche Meets Gaia*, 4.

⁷² Roszak *Where Psyche Meets Gaia*, 4.

integral component in depth psychology and loosely refers to personality traits suppressed by personal or social ideals. Jung famously discussed the proposition that everyone carried a shadow and that its darkness and density were proportionate to the degree of embodiment or lack thereof. Similar to the psychic fragmentation resulting from alienation of the discarded personality parts, we expect to see similar patterns of detriment to well-being with disconnection from nature. The greater non-human world cannot ever be fully separate from the human even at the simplest level of biological reliance on breath and water. This inseparability is inherent in indigenous wisdom and cosmological mythology though easily forgotten in “...increasingly ecocidal urban, industrial society...”⁷³ which needs “... all the help we can find in overcoming our alienation from the more-than-human world on which we depend for every breath we breathe.”⁷⁴

Carl Jung studied the principle of correspondence (“theory of correspondentia” for the natural philosophers of the Middle Ages) as present in the Tao as well as in Hippocrates’ “sympathy of all things” to explain: “The universal principle is found within the smallest particle and therefore the smallest particle corresponds to the whole.”⁷⁵ The old axiom: “as above, so below” was the most important mental instrument afforded to man and it was through the comprehension of this “Universal Law” that Nature’s otherwise hidden, paradoxical could become known.⁷⁶ When observing this principle through a transpersonal psychological lens, we find in Jung’s work, that the archetypes are the determining components in the conscious psyche which comprise the structure of the collective unconscious in all.⁷⁷ In Jung’s own journey of departure from Freud, the “hard science” was left behind in his quest for the collective unconscious

Jung studied medieval alchemy and natural magic as seen in *The Red Book* where Jung’s images unfold to symbolize his individuation process.⁷⁸ In the literal sense, alchemists were concerned with the transmutation of base metals into gold and the search for the philosopher’s stone while often using images to illustrate their processes.⁷⁹ “If we hypothesize that the alchemists unconsciously projected their internal experiences of transformation into their work with matter, their images are most relevant to the work of psychological growth and healing”⁸⁰ while they “...themselves were quite often aware that they were using a symbolic language to talk about the

⁷³ Roszak Where Psyche Meets Gaia, 4.

⁷⁴ Roszak Where Psyche Meets Gaia, 4.

⁷⁵ Carl G. Jung, *Synchronicity: An Acausal Connecting Principle* (New York, NY: Bollingen Foundation, 1973), 84.

⁷⁶ William Walter Atkinson “The Kybalion: The Definitive Edition” edited by Deslippe, Philip (New York: Penguin Books, 2011), pp 65-66.

⁷⁷ Jung *Synchronicity: An Acausal Connecting Principle*, 29.

⁷⁸ Kathryn L. Evans “Shamanic Vision Quest: Native American Ritual, Depth Psychology, and Renaissance Natural Magic” *NeuroQuantology* 14, no.2 (2016), 325-326.

⁷⁹ Joseph L. Henderson and Dyane N. Sherwood *Transformation of the Psyche: The Symbolic Alchemy of the Splendor Solis* (East Sussex: Routledge, 2003), 3.

⁸⁰ Henderson and Sherwood *Transformation of the Psyche*, 3.

phenomenology of inner experience.”⁸¹ An essential feature in alchemy is the necessity of heat as well as the “death” of form before it is birthed anew. Taken in this context, Freud’s Thanatos drive is not an ultimate thermodynamic annihilation but a sublimatio transformation. The language of our evolving story as the periodic table which moves from heavy to light and from simple to complex.⁸²

Kathryn LaFevers Evans recognizes a paradoxical element of the human psyche that “...only when we become conscious of the unconscious abyss can we live rooted to our singular nature, and from that individuation begin to experience divine love for our shared cosmos.”⁸³ It seems without coincidence that the latin root of both “individual” and “indivisible” are one in the same where “in” (not) and “dividuus” (divisible) gives us the sense of inseparable connectedness. This is in stark contrast to the common usage in today’s world to represent a single human being. In 1921 philosopher Joseph Alexander Leighton studied the interrelatedness of individuality, indivisibility, one’s true nature and the Absolute.⁸⁴ Over a century has lapsed and the questions he posed continue to bear weight. “Can the problem as to the nature of individuality be attacked by method distinct from ordinary psychological analysis?”, “What are the limits of application of such a method” and “What are the ethical and metaphysical bearings of this study?”⁸⁵ Leighton’s study surmised that human individuals, though so incredibly varied and complex, are living and indivisible units having origins beyond the present experience as “...manifestations of the Absolute.”⁸⁶ The Absolute, Leighton argues, is precisely “...the source and ground of human individuality” and “...far from being abstract, becomes precisely the most complex and individual kind of being thinkable by us men.”⁸⁷ Leighton’s Absolute, calls to mind the notions of the Ecological Self where by celebrating unique individuality, we come to know the divine. “To know the Absolute, then, is to appreciate the innermost nature of the individual life and the various types of human individuality from the side of their meanings and implications as elements in the organized system of reality.”⁸⁸

⁸¹ Henderson and Sherwood Transformation of the Psyche, 3.

⁸² Roszak Where Psyche Meets Gaia, 8.

⁸³ Evans Shamanic Vision Quest, 309.

⁸⁴ Joseph A. Leighton “The Study of Individuality.” *The Philosophical Review* 11, No. 6 (1902), 565-575.

⁸⁵ Leighton The Study of Individuality, 565.

⁸⁶ Leighton The Study of Individuality, 565.

⁸⁷ Ibid, 575.

⁸⁸ Ibid.



Fig. 1⁸⁹

In Figure 1 of Michael Maier's *Atalanta Fugiens*, a 1618 alchemical treatise, we meet emblem forty-two where the caption reads: "Nature, Reason, Experience and Reading must be the Guide, Staff, Spectacles and Lamp to him that is employed in Chemical Affairs."⁹⁰ Nature is anthropomorphized as a woman dressed in lightly draped garments holding flowers and fruit of the harvest despite the seemingly cold and dark setting. Nature is within arms reach and her footsteps guide the way. The image illustrates the dual meaning of nature as discussed throughout this paper: nature as the world of matter on planet Earth and one's true nature that becomes manifest through Self-realization.

Ecopsychology teaches us to not shy away from complexity. In Nature's unbounded sway exists order and chaos, the simple and compounded, all contributing to varied richness and intricate webs of interrelatedness. Likewise, psychology has reached its highest vista thus far, masterly diagnosing, classifying and lending itself to understanding the human condition. Both psyche and nature are suffering and "for a wound almost as big as the world itself, something grand [is] needed."⁹¹ "The planetary system is in a time of peril and potential healing and regeneration"⁹²

⁸⁹ Figure 1. Emblem 42. Michael Maier "Atalanta fugiens: hoc est, emblemata nova de secretis naturæ, chymica, accommodata partim oculis & intellectui, figuris cupro incisi, adiectisque sententiis, epigrammatis & notis, partim auribus & recreationi animi plus minus 50 rugis musicalibus trium vocum" (1618), 124.

⁹⁰ Maier *Atalanta Fugiens*, 125.

⁹¹ Tick *The Practice of Dream Healing*, xii.

⁹² Marna Hauk "Dreams of Earth: Earth Dreaming as Eco-Resilience Practice for the Long Emergency" *Ecopsychology* 7 (2015): 258.

while “the context for defining sanity in our time has reached planetary magnitude.”⁹³ Roszak suggested that an ecological unconscious resides at the heart of the psyche which is available to all of us as a “...resource for restoring us to environmental harmony.”⁹⁴ Even if we do not subscribe to the notion of an “ecological unconscious”, ecopsychology remains a field of inquiry committed to “understanding people as actors on a planetary stage who shape and are shaped by the biospheric system.”⁹⁵ Neither ecological nor psychological approaches can be reviewed in a vacuum. The biosphere is changing; human consciousness is changing. Ecopsychology is positioned to track the developments while always being connected to the current conditions and state of current affairs. It adds a dimension to each that claims the well-being of the human and non-human and suggests that neither can be healthy without health in the other. Schroll warns us of the danger of the twenty-first century schizoid man who is psychologically disconnected from others and the natural world.⁹⁶ A field of psychology that is operated by “technophiles” encourages technological consumption and nature’s exploitation.⁹⁷ Ecological practices which rely solely on technological advancements remain shallow and miss the mark of the joyous potential of sustaining and long-range conservation. The principle of correspondence would ask how we could possibly understand the crises without if we remain oblivious to the crises within. While we can only speculate a causal relationship between the advent of modern religion, Western science and anthropocentrism to the diminishing natural habitat, there is no way to return to the blissfully unified, unadulterated state. Deep ecology recognizes this attempt at wish-fulfillment and depth psychology understands the complexity in the psyche’s travails from self to Self; from single to One.

“It seems that nature is out to prod man's consciousness towards greater expansion and greater clarity, and for this reason continually exploits his greed for metals, especially the precious ones, and makes him seek them out and investigate their properties. While so engaged it may perhaps dawn on him that not only veins of ore are to be found in the mines, but also kobolds [gnomes that haunt underground places] and little metal men, and that there may be hidden in lead either a deadly demon or the dove of the Holy Ghost.”⁹⁸

⁹³ Roszak *Where Psyche Meets Gaia*, 5.

⁹⁴ Theodore Roszak *The Voice of the Earth an Exploration of Ecopsychology*, New York: Touchstone (1993) in Roszak *Where Psyche Meets Gaia*, 14.

⁹⁵ Roszak *Where Psyche Meets Gaia*, 14-15.

⁹⁶ Schroll *From Ecopsychology to Transpersonal Ecosophy*, 128.

⁹⁷ *ibid.*

⁹⁸ Carl G. Jung *Collected Works* 13 | 119 as in Henderson pp 66.

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