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## RETURN TO INTEGRATION: ONENESS WITH ECOPSYCHOLOGY AS KEY TO SAVING THE PLANET EARTH

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*Only in the last moment of human history has the delusion arisen that people can flourish apart from the rest of the living world.*

Wilson (2002, p. 349).

### Abstract

Man has turned on himself in his attempts to conquer the environment. This literature review examines the emergence, relevance and validity of Ecopsychology – the study of this self-destructive process and the search for its cure. Has man betrayed himself in his patriarchal pursuit of dominion? Can Ecopsychology embrace other fields of psychology, science, physics and religion to sort out how collective efforts could halt the destruction of our planet and ultimately ourselves? It seems that a revolution in ideas, positive action and especially thought is rising to help understand our behavior and to present possible solutions to our global environmental issues. The earth is our home, our mother and our lifeblood and as Ecopsychology shows, as much a part of us as we are of it.

Recently, environmental movements have created a greater awareness of the imperative of preserving our planet. In attempts to understand how our situation became so grave, some psychologists (Roszak, 1995) acknowledge the need for examination of the motivation for destroying our own home and the indifference towards this immanent destruction. It is in hopes of determining the reasons for such behavior that the field of Ecopsychology was established. It asks, "Can we understand the psychology hidden behind self-destructive patterns and create ecologically sound principles that can save our environment and thus mankind?"

**Ecopsychology is finding answers**

Those who study psychology with the passionate desire to understand and enhance human existence find its complexities perplexing yet fascinating at the same time. Recent literature suggests that we urgently need to evaluate whether we are moving towards mastering nature or destroying it; are evolving into a higher state of being through our exciting scientific research and presumed greater awareness, or merely developing the external, the appearance of a better world – falsely created by producing ‘things’ we value rather than developing comprehensive, responsible philosophies that will truly enhance our existence. In our fragmented approaches and ‘specialized’ perspectives we appear to be ignoring important problems and methodologies that are more inclusive of the whole.

This literature review is conducted to determine if the integration of several different methodologies may enhance and promote a better understanding of the need for global oneness in our approach to saving our planet. New laws of physics are suggesting paradigms to create a greater awareness in the minds of humans regarding the urgent need for action to address our ecological quagmire. This review is an inquiry into the concept of using quantum physics (Zukav, 1979) and energetic fields (McTaggart, 2002) as a means of altering the collective consciousness of man.

### **The philosophy of Ecopsychology**

Theodore Roszak, (in Hibbard, 2003) is credited with naming Ecopsychology and defining its purpose. Roszak expected Ecopsychology to be a field of inquiry by psychologists and social theorists as to why man would behave in such an insane manner as to destroy his own environment. He believed that it would require both psychology and ecology to save the planet. He stated, “psychology needs ecology and ecology needs psychology” (p.2) because without the psychological explanation of man’s insanity there would be no change in man’s attitude toward the environment. Roszak (1995) states that only madness could explain the destructive habits of mankind, and suggests (in Hibbard, 2003) that psychology must of necessity first define sanity with respect to the preservation of the world. This has indeed been a serious discussion topic but has not gained the momentum Roszak and his peers hoped for.

Whit Hibbard (2003), an environmentalist, grants Ecopsychology credit for creating an awareness of our environmental crisis and also astutely points out that it will require greater organizational skills and a political movement to affect the world as a whole. Man’s interconnectedness with the planet is being integrated into theory to alter the senseless acts of self-destruction. For example, one all-encompassing theory of planetary ecology is the Gaia Hypothesis (Lovelock, 1989). Gaia, is the entire ecobiological system including everything on earth as a living organism. This perspective provides a scientific theory, which when integrated with politics, philosophy, religion and science may be the most effective approach that Ecopsychology can take.

Hibbard (2003) points out that promoting the perspective of our environment as being ‘primitive’ and consequently advocating for a need to conquer the planet is very much a male type of energy; in Chinese cosmology, an imbalance of too much Yang (masculine) and too little Yin (feminine). He supports the view regarding the relevance of a feminist movement and a shift away from the patriarchy that has created the need to conquer earth – in the same manner that man has sought to conquer women. The female energy is a nurturing energy and

is not motivated by the need to dominate or conquer. Likewise, it is the female that is usually the preserver of peace and the healer.

Similarly, relationships of men and women are mirrored in the manner in which man disregards the Earth Mother – the ecobiological system which supports all life on our planet. Female theorists or ecofeminists such as Karen Warren (1998) have advocated for restructuring the political system and the western philosophy with regard to what is often called the divine feminine. She states that the patriarchal rule needs to end; it is the female energy that will initiate the salvation of the planet.

Psychologically, we are inside what is mirrored on the outside, in the external. Noble prize winning Wolfgang Pauli expressed it in these terms: “From the inner center, the psyche seems to move outward, in the sense of an extraversion, into the physical world” (Jung & Pauli, 1955, p. 175). This type of theorizing contributed to scientific research and understanding of healing energy and its interactive and organic properties. As awareness of biological energies has become more accepted, mechanistic theories are perceived in a new, less dominant perspective (O’Connor & Robertson, 1997). If Pauli is right, and what exists outside is a reflection of what is within us, then we are in pretty bad shape inside and out. What we are manifesting is grievous suffering with regard to our environment, internally as well as externally – and revolution is long overdue.

### **How important is Ecopsychology?**

As a health psychologist, herbalist and shaman, this writer has studied with fascination the condition humans find themselves in. Strangely, it appears that few are noting or accepting that once our planet is gone, so is humankind. As proposed by Roszak (1995), we seem to exhibit a mass insanity in our quest to conquer the environment. The practice is not selective and not isolated in the western world, but the west does seem to manifest the ravages of our need for dominion more so than other parts of the world. We are quick to wage wars, live in a totally polluted environment – including contaminated water and air, nuclear wastes, too much light, too much noise, and crime-fouled urban environments (Shaman, 2003).

The west has the highest crime rates in the world. We have the unhealthiest of dietary practices, which are not poverty induced (World Health Organization, 2003). Paradoxically, in a nation of exorbitant wealth, while a large share of our population is obese we have millions of hungry, homeless men, women and children living in boxes and cars (Baran, 2004). We are now at a critical choice point because if we cannot come to terms with our environmental madness, we face imminent destruction at our own hands.

Roszak (1995) calls the environmental movement, “the largest political cause ever undertaken by the human race” (in Hibbard, 2003, p. 1). The world turns to psychologists to find answers regarding why humans behave the way they do. Can psychology come to the rescue of the human race? Probably not – if we rely on psychology alone to give us the answers we are seeking.. Psychology must come to terms with our clearly demonstrated ineptitude to make a significant impact on the processes which have landed us where we are today. Innovative research and neurobiological approaches are advancing the understanding of our pathologies and what motivates us to act as we do. However, we still have not even clearly defined what normal behavior is; there is actually a great hesitation to establish what might be criticized as a

premature judgment as to what the normal state of man is or should be. Roszak (1995) feels that the establishment of such norms should be one of our highest priorities.

We can logically reason that to destroy our planet and ourselves is utterly ludicrous; possibly indicative of psychopathological; or at the very least extremely neurotic behavior (Metzner, 1995). Many would call this insanity. The term 'insanity' has no agreed neurobiological cause and as a concept in everyday language is extremely broad and vaguely defined. Not surprisingly, therefore, it is a concept which is neither used nor useful to professionals in the neurosciences. Compounding the vagueness of this concept, scientists often regard so-called insane behaviors as the results of abnormalities or changes within the brain (Andreasen, 1997).

Nevertheless, within ecopsychology, our self-destructive behaviors are construed to be evidence of a societal insanity. Ecopsychology was begun as a means of determining if psychologists and other interested professionals could – through discourse, study, research and theory – begin to understand why man is as he is in his collective insanity. For instance, Hillman and Ventura (1993) wrote *We've Had a Hundred Years of Psychotherapy and the World is Getting Worse*. These authors express genuine concern about the inward or 'self center' focus of individual therapy. They raise many questions about how psychological therapy may be working in contradiction to methods of collective social change by keeping people engaged in their individual process without a sense of how their individual process might be connected to the rest of the world. That separation and distance is a serious problem. They question, "How can we help people to become more integrated with and active in their world by removing them from it?" They suggest that isolationism and individualism have produced a self-centered way of thinking. While such was not the initial intent of analytical introspection, individual psychotherapy has become distorted over time – reflecting the collective desires of those who ardently seek the individual self as their exclusive personal goal (Lifton, 1993).

The universal problems we now confront are so complex and have been present for so long that wider perspectives of therapy need to be addressed before we can correct them. Some ecopsychologists are promoting the integration of specialties that can deal more effectively with these problems through collaborative efforts. Change will require the collective efforts of leading researchers in each of these areas, to secure the future of our planet and our continued existence. Many have stopped the doom and gloom approach and are replacing the 'sky is falling' message with one focused on taking corrective action (Winter & Kroger, 2004). They advocate instead for shifting the paradigm from one of want, scarcity and lack to one of universal abundance, with changes in consciousness from the pursuit of personal interests and greed to more sharing and caring for others. There are enough resources to meet everyone's needs. The challenge has been to find ways to help people shift their consciousness.

Therapeutic approaches vary, with some focused on practical issues with programs for change, and others more focused on the need for a greater awareness of the whole (Canty, 2004).

Transpersonal Psychology is one example of a therapeutic approach that is reaching out – addressing the self but admonishing that the self as it develops must ultimately reconnect with the whole. The transpersonal refers to an expansion beyond our ordinary sense of self and a feeling of connection to a larger, more meaningful reality. Religious or spiritual experience is often seen as central to the transpersonal agenda, although the transpersonal can also be

about extending our concern for or our sense of identification with other people, humankind, life, the planet, or nature (Fox, 1995). Likewise, the essence of Ecopsychology is to attain a global heightened awareness of one's interconnectedness with all things, understanding that everyone and everything is an integral part of all that exists. Disconnectedness creates a weak link in the universe, causes weakness, illness and death to the individual and disrupts the whole (Davis, 2000).

### **Wider perspectives**

If one considers that the whole is essentially all-encompassing, one needs to address the issues of the holistic nature of man and who man is. How does one's spirituality or connectedness affect one's life and heighten one's awareness? What is the role of heightened awareness and can it help us address the worldwide issues that threaten our existence? How does man live with man (and woman)? What perceptions cloud our ability to make necessary change in order to preserve or rescue our species? Some areas that are being examined follow.

### ***Politics in Ecopsychology***

Historical research leads us to understand our present state, including the awareness of how to choose a path that does not repeat decisions and actions that harm the whole. People still demonstrate vast intolerance of differences in culture, religion and diversity in political systems – each of which claims to be the better than the rest. Man still declares military or financial war upon anyone who differs politically. The inherently aggressive nature of man leads him to attack any obstacle he may find in his path. Not only does man feel the need to conquer other men and nations but also to conquer the earth. Man seems to need to maintain an enemy, real or fictitious, in the propagandized forefront of the media to keep a nation's populace unified in a common goal; never minding that at the same time this approach may alienate the rest of the world. Why?? Because in the most simplistic terms, we have always done it that way, and politically, though misguidedly, it works – to the advantage of a nation's leaders.

In contrast, unity would stop the isolationism and animosity experienced between nations if political leaders were to pursue global unity rather than local power. It is time to address the disparities of wealth and power in the world today. Such disparities reflect our greed. War is a tool of coercion to force other countries to follow one political system's construct, asserting the view that one is more politically correct than another. Regrettably, the ravages of hunger in third world countries are not adequately addressed and gross disparities in adequate healthcare services are staggering. Our use of the word 'foreign' implies we are different and epitomizes our disunity. People from other countries are not foreigners. We are all one global family living in the same place, i.e., on the planet earth.

Sadly, history demonstrates that we have repeatedly applied approaches to our global problems without producing change. We are disconnected from our interconnectedness, making it difficult to pursue the development of ways to live equitably and in peace. We ignore the greater wholeness of our existence that could support everyone on our planet.

The late physicist, David Bohm (1987), was deeply troubled by the suffering in the world. His vision called for a complete restructuring of our fragmented collective consciousness in a 'New Renaissance.' Bishop Desmond Tutu's (2004) concept of a feminine revolution interfaces with Bohm's earlier theory. Tutu states that only the nurturing and gentle nature of the feminine can alter the course of the planet and only the shift from the patriarchal to a matriarchal system can save us. This feminist revolution would recreate balance of Yin and Yang. The need for change is being addressed through research but we are not acting on it with any particular sense of urgency. We must ask ourselves why we are so resistant to change. This inquiry could lead to illuminating our underlying core beliefs that prevent us from accepting our differences or possibly even more relevant, our similarities (Wilson, 2002).

### ***Social issues in Ecopsychology***

We have lost the sense of community that could grant security if each one looked out for the other. We live isolated in the midst of overpopulation and the disconnection causes depression and fragmentation (Lifton, 1993). Many psychologists seek a method of creating unity of the fragmented mind and soul of man. Many, in seeing a much larger picture, acknowledge the need to unify the whole in order to heal the one which is the whole. It is indeed a dilemma of enormous proportions because we face some of the worst problems globally, ecologically and environmentally that we have ever faced on this planet.

In our attempts to mechanize the world we have also mechanized man into a state of production at all costs. Subsistence needs, under pressures of ever-growing populations and ever-shrinking resources, appear to dictate that we pursue ever more efficient mechanization of agricultural and industrial production. With no global, long-range vision or plans, we are populating the entire wilderness and attempt to conquer our environment in order to survive. The paradox is that we are destroying the sense of community, the environment and loving co-existent relationships that could exist. Paradoxically, we live in abundance with the fear of scarcity. There are assessments of global resources and population growth that strongly suggest there can be sufficient food and other material provisions so that no one need be poor. The problems are more from poor distribution of resources than from lack of resources. Sadly, greed propels us to produce more, consume more and waste more than at any time in history. We are fully informed of the possible plight we face in the future but pursue with fervor the getting of more, sharing of less and taking what is not given (Bonnett, 2002).

And yet it is in our nature to be otherwise. It is in within our nature to love, be loved and express community in all our daily interactions. However, accountability for our actions is [dismissed overridden] by self-serving endeavors and the pursuit of personal gain at the expense of others, adhering to Darwin's theory of survival of the fittest. The costs are high and frighteningly threatening as we destroy the sacredness of the earth. Winter and Kroger (2004) shed light on some of the underlying fears that create our self-destructive attitudes. They suggest that the fear of scarcity reveals that we have little trust in our future or in the fact that our needs will be met. As fear and competition replace the belief that cooperation and trust will bring us benefits, we become neurotic in one of four ways, and these neuroses will impact our environmental behavior. The four reactions are narcissism, depression, paranoia and compulsions. Narcissism denies the value of anything beyond the self. Depression creates helplessness and apathy toward global issues. Paranoia creates fear of others and negative propaganda about foreign political systems and others, thereby fueling this neurosis.

Compulsions are fed by the greed that is advocated as need based – having set our standards for needs in some parts of the world at levels that drain the resources of other parts of the world. Boldt, (1999) writes of the art of abundant living and the Tao of abundance as an alternative to fear. We can learn of our incredibly creative qualities and exercise them versus living in fear of our imminent demise.

### ***Science in Ecopsychology***

Lynne McTaggart (2002) consulted and interviewed leading scientists from all over the world over a period of eleven years. She found that many have studied the fields of energy that surround us. Such fields affect the energy or are the same type of energy of the human energy field known as Chi or Qi to Eastern masters. Though it has many names, it is understood as the life force. It cannot be observed without being altered by the process of our observing it. Now many are discovering how we could be affected by the unifying cosmic forces that until recently were intangible.

Quantum theory provides a mathematical and measurable framework for understanding systems theory, explaining that everything in the world is interconnected. The universe is a living organism and an interconnected entity. It is more than the sum of its parts. Every particle affects the whole and is important to the whole. This is what Eastern sages have stated for thousands of years as the effect the one has upon the whole and vice versa. The new spherical line of thinking invites us to expand our concepts to explore notions of wholeness in nature (Sheldrake, 1991) and the interconnectedness and interdependence of nations and nature in the ecosphere.

We can develop a new cosmology to help us work cooperatively with the energy of the earth in order to preserve our lives and the sustenance we enjoy from the earth. Zukav's and Bohm's observations on melding the philosophies of east and west promote the inclusion of ancient wisdom within science and philosophy. This need not be an end to science but may be an end of a science as mechanistic and linear thought as the sole way of approaching problems. Spherical thought includes a comprehensive approach to utilizing the fields of energy available to us.

Validation of intentional effects on particles and waves may help to expand man's consciousness to acceptance of the oneness of Gaia. In so doing it will promote peace, co-existence and the salvation of the planet through the renewed respect for the oneness of everything. This can help raise man's consciousness to include the awareness that the earth is a living organism of which man is but a cell, important but not ultimate, and that mutual and harmonic co-existence can save the earth before it is too late. Revolutionary minds are promoting research projects and encouraging replication of the same. (Boldt, 1999; Lovelock, 1989; Lazlo, 2004; Metzner, 1999; Roszak, 1995; Talbot, 1991; Thomas, 2005; Tiller, 1999; Wilson, 2002; Zukav, 1979). This literature review supports the notion that if humans combine efforts globally then the global problems may seem less threatening as we unite as one to resolve them.

Quantum theory is seen by many as integral to ecopsychological theories of oneness, of the whole. New physics has become a branch of Ecopsychology, demonstrating in scientific research that we cannot observe reality without affecting it. Interactions at a distance occur instantaneously. In observation, there is no objectivity since the observer to a great degree

influences that which is observed (Zukav, 1979). Quantum theory confirms there is no such thing as separate parts of the universe. Every part of the whole of creation interacts with every other part (Laszlo, 2004).

Translating this into a social metaphor, we cannot accurately observe and describe the world around us without observing what is simultaneously within us. "We are inherently, intrinsically connected to everything. So when we study reality we study ourselves" (Zukav, 1979, p. 56).

As a result of the new understandings of physics, everything becomes more relative. Einstein postulated that photons were guided by 'ghost waves.' Later, E.H. Walker determined that photons may be 'conscious' and according to Zukav (1979, p. 88), the guidance of the photons may be explained by Jung's theories on synchronicity. This new theory explains the concept of altering a photon's path by mere observation and is expanded to the deliberate altering of energetic waves by intentional observation. The usual perception of prayer then becomes altered to intentional thought and not supplication. Thought becomes action and deliberate intentions are shown to alter the collective consciousness in a positive manner – if kind and loving thoughts are deliberately held in focus during a meditative or relaxed state in which one connects telepathically with Gaia (Tiller, 1999). Such deliberate intentions and inner-actions have the potential to empower humankind to alter our destructive madness. We are thereby not powerless in creating positive change in the world.

### **Science and philosophy meld**

The science of quantum theory of the past met with spirituality of the far distant past when Bohm, a rare, open-minded scientist, began to study with Krishnamurti. Their deep philosophical discussions contributed to theories of quantum physics and to the exploration of truth, reality, meaning and thought. Bohm (1987) was notably supported by deep spiritual insight and he exemplified his commitment to wholeness, not only in his theories, but also in his epistemology (Keepin & Bohm, 1994).

Gary Zukav (1979) discusses his interviews with physicists and spiritual masters from diverse backgrounds. He determined that new scientific theories are in fact very similar to philosophies of the spiritual and philosophical of the past. We appear to be confirming the views of the ancient ones and granting them credence at the same time that we, as a modern western civilization, are coming into our own in our understanding of reality. Zukav states, "The 'end of science' means the coming of western philosophy, in its own time and in its own way, into the higher dimensions of human experience" (p. 327).

### **Summary**

As Zukav (1997, p. 324) states, "Reality is what we take to be true. What we take to be true is what we believe. What we believe is based upon our perceptions. What we perceive depends upon what we look for. What we look for depends upon what we think. What we think depends upon what we perceive. What we perceive determines what we believe. What we believe determines what we take to be true. What we take to be true is our reality. The central focus of this process, initially at any rate, is 'what we think.' We at least can say that allegiance to a



symbol of openness (Christ, Buddha, Krishna, 'the infinite diversity of nature,' etc.) seems to open the mind and that an open mind is often the first step in the process of enlightenment."

It is my contention that a spiritual renaissance is afoot and Ecopsychology plays a role in the regenerative powers of the collective consciousness of the world (Bessinger, 2002; Bonnett, 2002). My proposed contribution to Gaia, as a woman who wants to be a part of the revolution that Bohm and Tutu suggested, is to draw together like-minded people to meditate and telepathically send good intentions (psychoenergetics) to the world in a collective manner and thereby accelerate the enlightenment of the collective consciousness (Talbot, 1991; Tiller, 1999). It has been validated that such collective meditative powers can heighten the awareness of humankind, thus facilitating collective changes of behavior in the whole of humanity. (Permanent Peace, 1988)

The precepts of Ecopsychology are not novel. A number of initiatives along these lines have been growing in the US and elsewhere. For example, Hagelin, (2003) is developing Peace Centers in the USA and initiatives that he presents to the US Senate. There is US Peace Government; an affiliate of the Global Country of World Peace which was founded by Maharishi Mahesh Yogi in October 2002. This is a country without borders, designed to be a home for peace-loving people everywhere. Both the Global Country of World Peace and the US Peace Government are promoting new, scientifically proven principles and policies of governance in accord with Natural Laws and the promotion of reunification and the collective consciousness (see: <http://permanentpeace.org/evidence/index.html>). Other, similar organizations promote action and the awareness of our interconnectedness, such as the Save the World Project (Thomas, 2005).

Science, psychology, physics, ecology, politics and religion are all combining efforts to uplift mankind to a new dimension of thought. We cannot afford to segregate our theories and practices when the global issues we face are of such a vast and all-inclusive magnitude. We must reconnect to care for the environment, the planet and ourselves if we expect to survive to see the future. Integrated Ecopsychology is gaining momentum (Hillman and Ventura, 1996; Hibbard, 2004). Although all the revolutionary movements toward peace, saving the planet, the collective us and altering energetically the collective consciousness may not have been gathered yet under the umbrella of Ecopsychology, the common thread is evident. Psychologists, sociologists, politicians, and environmentalists need to join forces if we are to make a difference. After all, environment begins with the individual state of mind, its soundness, objectivity and awareness outside of the self.

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Subsequently, she designed *The Save the World Project* as her vehicle of change because the work of healing our quantum-physiology is moving at a pace too slow to correct the enormity of the world's environmental problems.

Our self-destructive madness cannot be altered until we reach a point of enlightenment that secures the belief of our global interconnectedness with the Gaia and it is essential to alter our present course in order to save the planet and ourselves. Today thankfully, the energy to change the future is in motion and it is an honor for all who participate in this revolution.

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