

ECOPOIESIS:

ECO-HUMAN THEORY
AND PRACTICE



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ECOPOIESIS:

ECO-HUMAN THEORY AND PRACTICE

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Contents

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Editorial 3

In search of the eco-human paradigm: theory, methodology, concepts

Kopytin Alexander

The eco-humanities as a way of coordinating the natural and the human being . . . 6

Stephen K. Levine

Ecoipoiesis: Towards a poietic ecology. 17

Alekseyev Sergey

The human dimension of environmental culture: The eco-human approach . . . 25

Practices and technologies of the eco-human approach

Alexandrova Natalya

Priorities for the development of ecological education in an art university 34

Burganov Igor

Implementation of ideas of ecopsychology in the urban environment 41

Lopukhova Olga, Gazizov Kayum

Equine-assisted therapy and learning: Theory, practice and relation with ecopsychology 46

Aesthetic and artistic dimensions of the eco-humanities

Madeline M. Rugh

Sitting on the edge of wonder. Art and animism in the service of person and planet healing 56

Interview with Teagan White. Dvornikova Alexandra 62

Interview with Beverley A'Court. Kopytin Alexander 70

Events. Book reviews. Interviews

Book review: James Miller, «China's "green revolution": Daoism and the quest for a sustainable future». Stephen K. Levine 80

Book review: "Environmental expressive therapies: Nature-based theory and practice". Fedotova Anna 83

Daoism and ecology: An interview with James Miller. Stephen K. Levine 86

Exhibition review. "The coming world: Ecology as the new politics. 2030-2100". Kopytin Alexander 89

Dear Reader:

Today marks the first publication of the web-based, open-access, peer-reviewed journal, *Ecopoiesis: Eco-Human Theory and Practice*. The journal introduces a new trend in science and culture as a whole: the eco-humanities, uniting contemporary ecology in all the diversity of its research areas with the human sciences. The eco-humanities establish the eco-human paradigm — the paradigm of sustainability and the nature-friendly evolution of humanity in the 21st century. The human being, in its self-knowledge and interaction with the environment, is at the pulsating core of the eco-humanities, where nature and humanity comprise two subsystems of a single subject: eco-humanity. The traditional distinction between human beings and the environment which surrounds them is no longer capable of accounting for the world in which we live. It has not only become clear that we have shaped the environment to such an extent that it has inaugurated a new epoch, the Anthropocene, but also that we are shaped by that same environment in our very existence: human beings are ecological beings. We cannot understand ourselves without taking that into account.

The recognition of the global environmental crisis and the crisis in the milieu of the humanities compels us to acknowledge: ecology needs the humanities as much as the contemporary humanities need ecology and environmental awareness. The environmental and moral imperatives today are two sides of a single imperative for the survival of mankind and of the world. We are in search of a renewed perception of the humanities, based on the revival of our natural essence which needs its recognition and reasoned justification in a new eco-human paradigm. The cultural and environmental situation also needs a new generation of human technologies, inventive activities in the whole complex of human sciences — philosophy, pedagogy, psychology, art history, cultural studies, linguistics and, of course, the arts and culture as a whole.

All these factors have prompted us to create this journal as a living forum of theories and practices that aim for the harmonization of human needs and planetary life in the interests of sustainable development, the creation of eco-humanity as a new coordinated reality of the human being and the natural world. The journal invites dialogue and co-operation between ecologists, philosophers, physicians, educators, psychologists, artists, writers, musicians, designers, social activists, and business representatives in the name of eco-human values, human health and well-being, in close connection with concern for the environment.

As well, we encourage cross-disciplinary dialogue, cooperation and research between the creative arts and the new eco-human approaches and sciences, such as ecology, ecopsychology, ecotherapy, ecopedagogy, ecological medicine, ecoaesthetics, ecological management and other related fields.

Humanity's care for its earthly home, the natural world, cannot be carried out only on the basis of understanding the disastrous path of the uncontrolled exploitation of natural resources, or a sober calculation of economic and environmental realities. All this must be supplemented by the growth of environmental consciousness, changing the attitude of humankind to the planetary life, itself and its environmental essence.

Ecopoiesis cannot be achieved without a love for the earth and for the beings, who inhabit it, including ourselves. Along with conscious awareness, this loving care must arrive with its capacity for creativity and creation. May Ecopoiesis reign over our journal as an expression of the interaction and interpenetration of living systems and their cooperation with each other. We need both biological and cultural creation for the co-evolution of humanity and nature.

The Editorial Team:



Sergey Alexeyev



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Section

In search of the eco-human
paradigm: theory, methodology,
concepts



THE ECO-HUMANITIES AS A WAY OF COORDINATING THE NATURAL AND THE HUMAN BEING



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Abstract. The article outlines the main content of a new interdisciplinary field of eco-humanities, combining ecology and the conglomerate of human sciences. The main subject of eco-humanities comprises the study of the nature of the human being in the process of self-knowledge, and its system of relations with the environment, thereby generating an ontological wholeness of the human being and the living environment. The characteristics of the eco-human approach is given as a pathway to the understanding the human being; when it is considered as a self-conscious part of the united subject of the study, “The Nature — The Human Being”, in which both “The Nature” and “The Human Being” constitute two subsystems of a single subject of eco-humanity.

The problem of environmental consciousness is defined as one of the leading ones in the eco-human approach, especially in such a humanities discipline as ecopsychology. The phenomenon of Love is designated as one of the key phenomena of the humanities and its ecological counterpart — the eco-humanities. When considering this phenomenon, the concept of Ecopoiesis is introduced as a form of ecological intimacy implying the interaction and interpenetration of different living systems and their connection with each other. Ecopoiesis is conceptualized as an eco-human mechanism of biological and cultural production and a factor in the co-evolution of the Human Being and Nature. As a constructive component of eco-humanities, a new generation of eco-human technologies is designated as a method of transforming a person with his/her attitude to the environment, oneself and one’s own ecological essence.

Keywords: the eco-humanities, the eco-human approach, environmental awareness, ecopoiesis, eco-identity, eco-human technologies

Introduction

Currently, the global environmental crisis has become a reality. The transition of the global environmental crisis into an ecological catastrophe is a matter of time during which mankind can either take certain steps in order to prevent it, or remain in the same positions of uncontrolled exploitation of the natural resources. Attempts are being made to solve the global environmental crisis in various ways — not only by implementing a sustainable development model, which, among other things, assumes technological reorganization, but also by introducing environmental education, working with the environmental awareness of people.

The environmental crisis is taking place against the backdrop of the humanities crisis. In many

countries, the volume of humanities and various arts studied in primary and secondary schools, colleges and universities is declining. One gets the impression that society is turning away from the very subject of the humanities — the human being — switching to other subjects of interest, primarily subjects of high-tech production and consumption.

The near future is even declared as an upcoming “end of the human being”, at least in its former form of being. The fate of the human being in the “post-human” age, the age of techno-humanism, is discussed. This idea is not new. Back in the 20th century, post-humanist movements were inspired by the idea of the superman, as proposed by Nietzsche, and then by the post-structuralist position (M. Foucault). Already in the XXI century, this

idea flourished thanks to the successes of the information civilization.

Against this background, human knowledge sometimes declares itself as one of the factors in the development of high technology. Steve Jobs admitted, for example, that technology alone is not enough, «it is technology married with liberal arts, married with the humanities, that yields us the result that makes our hearts sing» [cit. 15].

The human component is really often presented in the achievements of contemporary civilization as providing a certain impact on human life. The creator of Facebook, Mark Zuckerberg, for example, studied ancient Greek at school and specialized in psychology at Harvard. According to him, “Facebook is psychology and sociology to the same extent as technology.” [16]

And yet, as M.N. Epstein [13] admits:

“...it is no coincidence that the achievements of giants such as Apple and Facebook are perceived primarily as technical. The point is not only that they are calculated in digital parameters, in units of speed, power, popularity, value, financial investment, stock exchange, etc. The initiative of these achievements of civilization comes from scientific and technical disciplines and companies that attract the humanities to cooperation. The humanities themselves do not put forward any initiatives with an equally wide civilization potential and generally do not show significant interest in the practical results of their research” (p. 5–6).

Thus, the crisis of the humanities is now obvious. They lose their main meaning and purpose, often turning into an instrument of marketing manipulation, playing the role of a servant of geopolitical forces and high-tech companies. Postmodernism- with its characteristic position of relativism and a skeptical attitude to the human foundations of culture- has also made a significant contribution to the humanities crisis that has developed rapidly over the past decades of the 20th century and at the beginning of the 21st.

The degradation of ecology and the humanities suggests a certain connection between them. In order to overcome the crisis of human knowledge, and at the same time, find a way to prevent the development of the ecological crisis into an environmental disaster, society needs to go through a profound reformation of the entire human paradigm and rethink its subject and

purpose. We must admit: ecology needs the humanities as much as the modern humanities need ecology and environmental thinking. The revival of the human being as the main subject of the humanities, possessing a creative, spiritual essence, cannot be realized without a radical change in their attitude to the environment and the natural world. Eco-humanism as a new paradigm of the human being as included in sustainable relations with the environment can become a necessary doctrine for providing their more harmonious co-evolution. Considered not only as a general ideological doctrine, but also as a field of constructive innovations, the eco-human platform can generate eco-human technologies that can be applied in education, medicine, the social sphere, as well as the wider cultural context. Such technologies can serve not only the well-being and health of human beings, but can also change their environmental consciousness and behavior.

Theoretical foundations of the eco-humanities

Initial definitions of human knowledge, the humanities

The humanities are sciences that specialize in the study of the human being and its manifestations in a cultural environment. In contrast to the natural sciences, which study the phenomena of the surrounding world as objects with which a person enters into subject-object relations, the humanities study mainly inter-subjective relations. This means that the knowing subject enters into dialogue with the phenomenon under study, communicates with it using a certain communication method, a language, and seeks to understand this phenomenon in the process of dialogue.

The humanities as a combination of human sciences that study the human being and humanity cover philosophy, cultural studies, religious studies, philology, linguistics, pedagogy, psychology, literary criticism, art history, anthropology, ethnography, cognitive science and some other sciences. The term “the humanities” is preferable to the term “the human sciences” in those cases when it is necessary to emphasize the unity of human knowledge, the commonality of approaches used in human sciences, as compared to

those used in the natural, or social, or technical sciences.

“The humanities establish an area of self-knowledge and self-creation of the human being and humanity. Whatever human science works are written about ... — everywhere, we see the image of the human being in its various incarnations. We compare ourselves with them, we find commonality and differences, which means we understand ourselves more deeply and at the same time become more human” [13, p. 14].

The humanities study the world of various human manifestations, “helping a person as a subject and object of knowledge to understand and express oneself; understand other people and communicate with them; understand other cultures and historical periods; understand the goals of humanity and the course of history; consciously build our personality in creative interaction with other individuals and cultures; therefore, to be a person in the full sense of the word, a worthy representative of humanity” [13, p. 14].

Ecohumanism. Eco-human approach. Eco-human paradigm

Traditionally, ecology is not included in the humanities, but considered to be close to the natural sciences, since it studies the world of natural objects, the interaction of living organisms and their communities with each other and with the environment. At the same time, there is reason to consider ecology as a meta-science, uniting all spheres and methods of scientific knowledge, including the humanities and their methods.

Moreover, the recognition of the connection of ecology with the human sciences is becoming urgent at present, since without this factor, a fundamental turn in our approach to solving the environmental crisis cannot occur. Without this, the approach to solving this problem will be based mainly on technological measures, but not on changing the consciousness and self-consciousness of a person and one's relations with the natural world. In order to introduce ecology into the context of the humanities, to accept the eco-human approach, it is necessary to reconsider the traditional concepts of subjectivity in relation to the natural world and inter-subjectivity, with reference to the interaction of the human being and nature.

The essence of the human being and its subjectivity in the process of its self-knowledge and in the system of its relations with the environment establishes the ontological foundation of “the human being together with the living environment”, as the main subject of eco-human approach, the eco-humanities. It is necessary to clarify what “the human being together with the living environment” as a main subject of the eco-human approach is, and what ontological status it has.

Consideration of the natural world from the perspective of relations between the human being and the environment, according to V.I. Panov [12], frames such an understanding of these relations, which traditionally has as its basis the epistemological logic of object-object and subject-object relations. According to this paradigm, the human being and nature are separated and oppose each other, assuming, depending on the specific subject of research, the active role of the “subject” acting on the environment or its components, or the reactive (passive) role of the “object” receiving the impact from the environment.

This paradigm is presented in the minds of modern people in two ways. “On the one hand, it is recognized that technological developments caused the ecological crisis. On the other hand, it is proposed that the same technological developments can also be used to solve the environmental crisis, but this, however, creates the danger of new environmental problems arising from overcoming old ones” [12, p. 12–13].

One of the most refined options for overcoming this contradiction is the psychology of environmental consciousness, which raises the question of overcoming the anthropocentric type of consciousness that dictates the subject-object type of interaction with the natural world. This type of consciousness should be replaced, by the eco-centric type of consciousness that implements the inter-subjective interaction between the human being and the natural world [4, 5, 14]. The necessary condition for this is the subjectification of natural objects and the natural world with their ability to perform subjective functions. However, the “world of nature” is not considered from the standpoint of its own subjectivity (that is, nature itself is not recognized as a subject), but from the standpoint of a subjectivity, which a person gives to nature in his subjective, personal attitude to it. “In this sense, despite the inter-subjective relationship of “the human being” to the “world of

nature”, they are considered opposed to each other, as with the subject-object relationship of “the human being” to the “world of nature”, that is, within the epistemological paradigm” [12, p. 13].

A different, ontological, paradigm is possible in the analysis of relationships in the system of “the human being and the natural environment (natural world)”. According to this paradigm, nature acts as the universal foundation of the diversity of natural forms of being. This radically changes the meaning of the relationship between the human being and nature and, accordingly, the meaning of the ecological paradigm. At the same time, the human being acts as a natural form of being, and the human being and nature are not opposed to each other as separate entities, as they are in the system of relations as “subject and object”, “subject and subject”. The human being is considered as an active self-developing part of nature, which implements in its self-realization the general (universal) principles that ensure the self-realization of nature itself in various forms of its manifestation, including the planet as a whole, and as part of the global natural environment.

“Thus, the formation (being) of the system “humanity — planet” acts as a product of a holistic ontological subject that implements in its development universal and common natural principles of the creation of forms of being, common to “humanity”, “planet” and the psyche as different forms of being, but in the ontological plane obeying the principles common to each of them and, at the same time, irreducible to each of them” [12, p. 14]. They are subjects of joint development, communication, cognition and activity. In relations with each other, they give rise to an ontologically holistic entity with the ability of “expressive and speaking being” (as expressed by M.M. Bakhtin) [1, p. 8].

This property of the environment as having an ontological essence common to the human being and through it acquiring the ability of “expressive and speaking being” has been repeatedly expressed by those who strived to understand human beings— philosophers, poets, artists, visionaries.

In his letters, Vincent van Gogh reveals the pivotal role of nature for creative endeavors. In one of his letters to his brother Theo (Wasmès, June 1879) he explains: “I know no better definition of the word art than this, ‘Art is man added to nature’, nature, reality, truth, but with a meaning,

with an interpretation, with a character that the artist brings out and to which he gives expression, which he sets free, which he unravels, releases, elucidates.”

In another letter (The Hague, Sunday, 3 September 1882) he even explained his creative method based on his relatedness to nature when he wrote:

“I’m glad that I’ve never learned how to paint... I don’t know myself how I paint. I sit with a white board before the spot that strikes me — I look at what’s before my eyes — I say to myself, this white board must become something — I come back, dissatisfied — I put it aside, and after I’ve rested a little, feeling a kind of fear, I take a look at it — then I’m still dissatisfied — because I have that marvelous nature too much in mind for me to be satisfied — but still, I see in my work an echo of what struck me, I see that nature has told me something, has spoken to me and that I’ve written it down in shorthand. In my shorthand there may be words that are indecipherable — errors or gaps — yet something remains of what the wood or the beach or the figure said — and it isn’t a tame or conventional language which doesn’t stem from nature itself but from a studied manner or a system. Herewith also a scratch from the dunes. Standing there were small bushes whose leaves are white on one side and dark green on the other, and which constantly move and sparkle. Behind them is dark wood.” [2, p. 47]

A similar meaning was set forth by Marina Tsvetaeva who claimed that “Nature through the human being ‘processes itself to its glory’”, or that “the work of art is the same work of nature, but must be enlightened by the light of reason and conscience” [10, P.92].

Possessing the ability of cultural production, the gift to generate speech and text, and understand them, the ability for conscious activity; a person turns natural objects into “expressive and speaking being.” In order to recognize nature and natural objects as objects of human (eco-human) discourse, it is necessary to proceed a priori from their perception in the context of human history, recognizing the expressive potential hidden in the depths of Nature of its ability to communicate with humans, as well as its ability, like humans and through humans, to comprehend.

So, the eco-human approach can be defined as the field of human knowledge, an approach to cognition of the human being, when it is considered as

a rational and self-conscious part of a single subject of the study, “Nature — the Human Being”, in which both “Nature” and “The Human Being” comprise two subsystems of a single whole, the single subject of eco-mankind.

The eco-humanities are the totality of human sciences that study the human being, the field of self-knowledge and self-creation of humans on the basis of comprehension of its inclusion in the dual subjective entity of “Nature and the human being”. The eco-humanities are associated with the recognition of the ecological/natural essence of the human being, its perception of oneself as an “environmental subject”, the recognition of one’s eco-identity.

The eco-human paradigm is a system of human knowledge, concepts and ways of thinking, including theories, research methods, postulates and standards, in accordance with which subsequent constructions, generalizations and experiments in the humanities can be carried out; in other words, those studying the essence, properties and manifestations of the human being and humanity as parts of the whole subjective entity “Nature and the human being.”

The eco-human approach, methods and technologies are currently inventions of the humanities, and comprise new human ideas, new means of their embodiment in the form of cultural practices, creative organizations and forms of cooperation. The eco-human approach covers those areas of culture that are studied by the humanities: linguistics, literature, art, philosophy, pedagogy, psychology, religion, cultural studies and others.

It must be admitted that the term “eco-humanism” was used by Mikhail Epstein, but in a significantly different sense, as a kind of addition to techno-humanism or as one of its sections. In the definition of M.N. Epstein [13], “eco-humanism is the study of those forms and characteristics of the human being that are gradually archaizing, falling into the historical past in connection with the development of the technological environment and the corresponding technical skills and attitudes” (p.129).

Ecologization of the human being, as defined by M.N. Epstein, is what remains in the human being after the transfer of its organic and intellectual functions to technology or artificial intelligence. Eco-humanism is a niche of a “natural” person who has not undergone technical

transformations, but remains in nature and culture, within the framework of the specific form of homo sapiens, which was the only form of human being until the 21st century [ibid, p. 129]. Further: “The subject of eco-humanism is the specificity of a person, not reducible to a machine, a person as a native of a ‘conservative’, natural environment, a suffering, mortal creature, physically imperfect, creatively gifted, culturally daring” [13, p.129-130].

The problem of environmental consciousness as central for eco-humanity

The problem of environmental consciousness is central for the eco-humanities, especially in such an eco-human discipline as ecopsychology. Environmental consciousness mediates human interaction with the natural, man-made, informational and other types of environment. This problem goes beyond ecopsychology research and is the subject of a number of sciences such as ecology, pedagogy, philosophy and others. The importance of studying environmental consciousness is due to the onset of the global environmental crisis, which led to the establishment of the sustainable development model under UN auspices.

The problem of environmental consciousness is addressed, in particular, by the Laboratory of Ecopsychology of Development, the Psychological Institute of the Russian Academy of Education. An analysis of the subject of research on the ecopsychology of development and types of ecopsychological interactions shows the possibility of a special methodological position in determining the psyche as an object and subject of research. According to this methodological position, the psyche is considered as a form of being, generated as a systemic quality in the process of human interaction with the world [12, C.3]. The research approach used in this case draws special attention to the system of relationships between the human being and the environment (natural, social) in determining the object and subject of research [6, 11].

As a psychological phenomenon, environmental consciousness is seen as inclusive of cognitive, emotional and behavioral aspects. It is also considered as the condition of a person’s being at different developmental stages and in interaction with different types of environment. Environmental consciousness is considered to be a human willingness to responsibly treat the

environment and an ability to use environmental knowledge, ideas and skills in different spheres of life. Environmental consciousness also acts as a worldview component that determines the corresponding behavior of a person in environmentally problematic situations [12, p.6].

At present, technologies for the formation of environmental consciousness are given more attention as they are one of the leading constituents that provide sustainable lifestyles. However, the efforts undertaken appear to be insufficient to ensure qualitative changes in environmental consciousness and the behavior of most people.

*Love from the viewpoint
of the eco-humanities: Ecopoiesis*

According to the concept of environmental consciousness, which defines the general logic and the purpose of its development in the direction of the ecocentric type of consciousness [4,5,14], the subjectivity of natural objects is considered to be nothing more than a “reflected” subjectivity of the human being. The perception of the natural world as a totality of objects, characteristic of the anthropocentric type of ecological consciousness, excludes the experience of any human emotions addressed to nature as the subject of inter-subjective relationships.

The ontological paradigm that examines the relationship of the human being with the natural environment (the natural world) sets a new perspective on the appraisal of the interactions of the human being with the environment, and changes the meaning of the ecological paradigm. With this approach, the human being is considered as carrying out its own development and, at the same time, as involved in the self-development of nature as a whole. This is manifested, in particular, in the emergence of the noosphere, defined, according to V. Vernadsky, as the new state of the biosphere, the highest stage of biosphere development, the planetary “sphere of reason” [3, 17].

Thus, the system “humanity — planet” acts as a united ontological subject that implements universal, common principles of the formation of various forms of being. These principles are the same for mankind, for the planet, and for the psyche as different forms of being, but “in an ontological plane obeying the principles that are common to each of them and, at the same time, irreducible to each of them” [12, p.14].

Recognizing Nature (“the natural world”) as a subject of the discourse of the humanities (eco-humanities) means perceiving it as an integral part, a subsystem of a greater whole, such as eco-humanity. The existence of this two-sided subject is historical and is associated not only with the ability to express oneself through text, but also with the ability to experience such a particular feeling as love. In the whole system of the humanities, love as a powerful human emotion assumes one of the central places, since it affects the spiritual, creative essence of the human being. Love has a special place in spiritual culture as the complex of the intangible elements of human existence in different historical eras, accumulating the meanings, laws, spiritual values, customs, symbols, myths, language, knowledge and experience.

From the perspective of the eco-human approach, a person’s ability to love can be represented as a property of the integral subject “humanity-planet”, implying its creative, spiritual essence, manifested in various acts of generation, creation and creativity. This ability can be denoted by the term “ecopoiesis,” derived from the philosophical concept of “poiesis” with its various interpretations characteristic for different historical periods.

For modern humanity, already on the verge of transferring its organic and intellectual functions to technology and artificial intelligence, love can act as a measure of authenticity, holism and interconnection. It may be that the niche of the “natural” human being which has not undergone technical transformations, remains in nature and culture, i.e. within the framework of the homo sapiens, which was the unique form of humanity until the 21st century. Love is also the ethical dominant associated with the determination of the roots of being, which allows the fragmented human being of modernity and its environment to integrate into new configurations of meanings, to gain the ability to connect and get involved in relationships not only with other people, but also with the natural world.

Erich Fromm in his work “The Art of Love” [9] claims that faith in the possibility of love is a rational belief based on the core qualities of human being. Love is the response of the individual to the problem of human existence, an attempt to satisfy not only sexual needs, but also the need to overcome one’s estrangement and loneliness. Love provides an interpersonal connection, a merging with another person. The recognition of love as a

key characteristic of both human subjectivity and that of other forms of earthly life means that love allows all living things to connect with each other during their co-evolution, generating new forms and meanings as a response to the limited existence of any individual natural object and species, including the individual person and humankind in general.

E. C. Wilson [28] formulated the *biophilia hypothesis*, which postulated a pervasive attraction, an “emotional affiliation” (p.31) that draws people to nature. S.R. Kellert [21] defined it as a “human dependence on nature that extends far beyond the simple issues of material and physical sustenance to encompass as well the human craving for aesthetic, intellectual, cognitive, and even spiritual meaning and satisfaction” [21, p. 20]. Likewise, this “emotional affiliation” that draws people to nature could also be related to the *ecological self*, originally coined by Arne Naess, in the 1970’s, and elaborated by J. Macy and M. Gahbler [26], to denote the radical interrelatedness of all life forms which broadens one’s sense of identity and responsibility.

The biophilic foundations of human relations with the natural world comprise a significant regulatory and adaptive potential, supporting species diversity and planetary life in general. However, this concept does not provide sufficient reason to explain love as one of the central states and functions of the human being and one of the key phenomena of the eco-humanities. The concept of Ecopoiesis is designed to provide the broader foundations necessary for considering the human being in its relations with the environment. The concept of ecopoiesis is derived from the Greek idea of poiesis that also has a long history as a philosophical category. The introduction of the ecopoiesis concept marks those changes that occur in the quality of the human being during the transition to sustainable development.

The nature and functions of Love (Eros), and poiesis, as its function are initially revealed in the myths and philosophical works of Ancient Greece. These phenomena are, in particular, described in such a work of Plato as “The Symposium”, [7]. This work is a philosophical and artistic interpretation of mythological images, primarily the figure of Eros, and reflects the views of Plato himself, his philosophical system, which represents his perception of love, the meaning of human life, and the nature of creative activity.

Eros is the Greek god of love, to whom Cupid correspond in Roman mythology. Eros was also revered as the god of fertility, who knew the primordial Chaos. In the Dionysian Mysteries it is called “protogonos”, in other words, the first-born. One of the earliest legends says that it was Eros who forced Uranus (Sky) and Gaia (Earth) to entwine and give birth to numerous descendants. A myth is also widely known that describes the relationship of Eros and Psyche — an earthly, mortal woman who, through love and marriage with Eros and fidelity to her relationship, acquires immortality.

Diotima, as one of the figures in the Platonic “Symposium,” describes how, through Love (Eros), mortals gain immortality. This happens on the basis of their creative need, their ability to generate, to create. Thus, poiesis is a function of Love (Eros), a manifestation of creative activity in the broadest sense of the word, supported by the human awareness of its own imperfection and mortality, and the desire to overcome them.

In the history of philosophical thought, the category of poiesis was developed further. In some cases, it is associated with sublimated acts of creative personal activity. Turning to this category, T.V. Surina [8] writes: “In Poiesis, culture physically embodies a spiritually previously existing (eternal) and spiritually non-existent, but having an intention to exist, striving to exist — a materialization of the spiritual and spiritualization of the elemental and natural. In Poiesis, nature, Physis ... processes itself into that which didn’t exist before.”(p. 68).

Martin Heidegger calls poiesis “birth”, using the term in its broadest sense. To illustrate the function of poiesis, he resorts to natural images: the blooming flower, the appearance of a butterfly from a cocoon. Heidegger also understands poiesis as a threshold event, a moment of ecstasy when something departs from its former state in order to become different.

U. Maturana and F. Varela proposed the concept of *autopoiesis*, which means self-construction, self-reproduction, replication of living beings, including humans, all of which are distinguished by the fact that their organization generates themselves as a product without the separation into producer and product. The concept of autopoiesis is one of the criteria that allow us to separate living things from non-living ones.

According to the theory of U. Maturana and F. Varela, living beings are distinguished by an “autopoietic organization”, that is, the ability to self-reproduce, “build” themselves, creating their own components [27, p.21]. Thus, a cell produces the components of its membrane, without which it could neither exist nor produce these components. The researcher of artificial intelligence, Ben Herzog, in his model of reason (psynet-model) considers thoughts, feelings and other mental entities as self-generating systems within the “system of magicians” [20].

During the last few decades the innovative ideas concerning the human creative function in the field of expressive arts therapies strive to integrate world traditions with their wider understanding of creativity into the scientific platform [24, 25]. As S. Levine [24] puts it, “Within the framework of expressive arts, we could say that poiesis implies the capacity to respond to the world in which we find ourselves. We suffer, both individually and collectively, when we find ourselves unable to respond, when this capacity for poietic action is restricted and we experience ourselves as being in a helpless situation... The work of the change agent in the field of expressive arts, then, is to restore the capacity for poiesis that the individual or community has lost, and to help them expand the range of play within which they can act.” (p.27).

He emphasizes that poiesis happens only in the world with others: “We have made this world together; this means that we can make it differently. The particular power of the expressive arts in the field of social change is to help us find our ability to make a new world together. Only by doing so can we leave to future generations a world which they will find worthy of response.” [ibid, p.29]

Rethinking the concept of poiesis from the viewpoint of the eco-human approach allows us to formulate the concept as describing the environmental contact, interaction and interpenetration of different living systems and their connection with each other, providing biological and cultural production. Ecopoiesis is a quality and mechanism of the co-evolution of the human being and nature, a conscious and responsible co-creation of humankind with the natural world, based on its vital (physical), emotional and spiritual connection with it. Through ecopoiesis, the human being, together with nature, and as part of it continues, learns and generates not only itself and its

meanings, but also various forms and meanings of earthly life.

Creative acts are rooted not so much in the need of individual creative self-expression in the traditional sense, but in the motivation to support and serve nature and life and achieve non-duality, a balance between natural and cultural milieu by embracing the transpersonal center of being [18].

Ecopoiesis cannot be achieved without love for the Earth and for the beings that inhabit it, including our own selves. Along with conscious awareness, this loving care arrives with its capacity for creativity and creation. Ecopoiesis reigns over planetary life as an expression of the interaction and interpenetration of living systems and their cooperation with each other. It enables both biological and cultural creation for the co-evolution of humanity and nature.

The concept of ecopoiesis assumes a greater significance as related to the human ability to get involved in meaningful environmental actions, *the art of biophilia* [22, 23] as a form of co-creation, in which human beings can participate together with other living forms that establish a wider community of subjects. Ecopoiesis as a creative environmental function and one of the functions of eco-identity is expressed through one's initiatives to care for and respect the environment, and to see ecosystems and local green spaces as a source of health and well-being for oneself and others who belong to both the human and the beyond-human-world.

The constructive humanities and eco-humanities. Eco-human technologies

In the new history, the constructive component in the methodology of the natural and social sciences has steadily increased, while in the majority of the humanities it has not been in demand. As recognized by M.N. Epstein [13], “The great paradox of the humanities is that by exploring the creative potential of culture, they are unable to realize this potential in their own activities” (p.13).

At the same time, the humanities can act as an arena not only for cognition, but also for creativity. As applied to the eco-humanities, this means not only comprehending, studying nature as a mirror and a part of the human being, using methods of scientific cognition and the arts, but also creating something new in the process of such study, engaging in the

multiplication of conceivable eco-human creations, generating their variations and competing models in order to maintain biological and cultural diversity.

Creativity in the humanities begins with understanding. This fully applies to the eco-human sciences. Recognizing the human being as a subject of planetary life is necessary in order to create and use new eco-human technologies necessary to generate eco-humanity as a new coordinated reality of nature and humanity.

Such technologies can be generated in a wide range of scientific disciplines (pedagogy, education, enlightenment, psychology, psychotherapy, medicine, and art) and applied in different social and cultural practices. The constructive component of the eco-human approach enables the following:

- To identify new areas of concern and explore new territories of knowledge, of scientific and artistic creation, and to realize the transformative potential of the humanities (philosophy, anthropology, cultural studies, linguistics, psychology, pedagogy) in their connection with ecology;
- To form and develop a complex of new human disciplines, such as ecopsychology, ecopedagogy, ecophilosophy, ecolinguistics, etc.;
- To support the constructive cooperation of eco-human knowledge with technical achievements;
- To develop new methods and genres of eco-human creativity.

The eco-human approach may have a special practical branch and its own ways of influencing cultural life. This is a practical branch of the eco-humanities, which can embrace methods of transforming the phenomena studied, notably, the human being with its attitudes to the environment and itself.

One of the practical branches of the eco-humanities can grow in the field of environmental pedagogy and environmental education, forming environmental consciousness and self-awareness. Its other practical branch can grow in the field of psychology (ecopsychology, psychology of environmental consciousness), penetrating from here to various empirical areas, such as counseling, psychotherapy, personal growth practice, work

with families and communities, coaching, organizational psychology and work psychology, and even further, in community psychology, developmental psychology, clinical psychology, psychiatry and neuroscience.

Constructive initiatives of the eco-humanities can be primarily applied to the problem of developing environmental consciousness at different stages of human development and in different environmental conditions. In the coming decades, these methods and technologies may become one of the factors of sustainable (co-evolutionary) development of humankind and nature. Eco-human technologies can also be developed in medicine, contributing to the prevention and treatment of somatic, psychosomatic and mental pathologies, and developmental disorders.

Conclusion

The environmental crisis takes place against the background of the degrading humanities. In order to overcome the crisis of human knowledge and, at the same time, prevent an environmental collapse, a reformation of the entire human paradigm and a rethinking of its subject and purpose are required. Modern human knowledge needs an updated concept of the human being, the return of his natural essence to him/her and, together with this, the creation of an effectively working practical framework in the form of new human technologies as well as creative activities in the whole complex of human disciplines, such as philosophy, pedagogy, psychology, art history, cultural studies, philology, linguistics, etc.

Understanding the current situation in the field of ecology and human knowledge allows us to recognize: ecology needs the humanities to the same extent as modern human knowledge needs ecology and ecological thinking. This article has outlined the main content of a new interdisciplinary field — the eco-humanities, combining ecology and the wide spectrum of human disciplines. The essence of the human being and its subjectivity in the process of its self-knowledge and in the system of its relations with the environment establishes the ontological foundation of “the human being together with the living environment” as the main subject of eco-human approach, the eco-humanities.

This article describes the eco-human approach as an approach to the study of the human being, when it is considered as a rational and self-conscious part of the single subject of the united subject, “Nature — The Human Being”, in which both “Nature” and “The Human Being” comprise two subsystems of a single subject, eco-humanity.

Love was identified as one of the key phenomena of eco-humanity and was considered from the perspective of the philosophical concept of poiesis. As a result of considering poiesis in the context of the eco-human approach, the concept of ecopoiesis was defined as an environmental interaction and interpenetration of different living systems, providing biological and cultural creation. Ecopoiesis is a quality and mechanism

of the co-evolution of the human being and nature, a conscious and responsible co-creation of humankind with the natural world, based on the vital (physical), emotional and spiritual connection with it.

As a constructive component of the eco-humanities, eco-human technologies were identified and defined as methods of transforming the human being with its attitude to the environment and itself. Eco-human technologies can be used in the field of pedagogy, psychology, medicine and other fields, in a wide cultural domain, forming environmental awareness and values, contributing to preserving and developing human and natural resources of the planet.

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ECOPOIESIS: TOWARDS A POIETIC ECOLOGY



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Abstract. In the age of the Anthropocene, ecological thinking needs to go beyond the opposition between humanity and nature and instead be based on *poiesis*, the human capacity to shape what has been given to us. *Poiesis* is traditionally thought of as referring solely to art-making, but it has the wider significance of shaping the world in response to our needs and, in so doing, shaping ourselves. The Western philosophical tradition, based on the search for eternal principles behind changing appearances, is unable to recognise the importance of *poiesis*, which validates the historical nature of sensory experience and the changing forms to which it gives rise. When *poiesis* restored to its rightful role as the basic human mode of existence, we can formulate an ecopoietic approach to ecology, one in which the concept of aesthetic responsibility, the capacity to respond to the world in order to bring about beauty, is central. This perspective has important implications for ecological theory and practice.

Keywords: poiesis, ecopoiesis, poietic ecology, aesthetic responsibility

Introduction: Philosophy and ecology

Can a philosophy based on *poiesis* contribute to ecological thinking? Does it even make sense to talk of nature as being like a work of art? In order to begin thinking about these questions, we first have to deconstruct the concept of nature itself. Too often “nature” is understood as a transcendental signifier, something that in its pristine essence underlies all our making and doing. The goal of ecological practice is envisioned as a “return to nature,” a doing away with all the depredations which humans have wrought upon it. The concept of “wilderness” is a corollary to this way of thinking. Wilderness is pure and good; but civilization has ruined it.

In fact, “nature” is always a product of “culture.” The two concepts belong together. Moreover, human beings are poietic “by nature” — we are shaping animals. Our instincts are not pre-adapted to our environment, as they are with other creatures. Rather we must shape the world around us in accordance with our needs. Thus even “wilderness”

is what we make by declaring an area to be territory off-limits to human use. It is “marked” as such and delimited; often it continues to be affected in accordance with our designs — trails are laid down, controlled burns are set, etc. “Nature” is something we make, not something we find. We cannot “get back” to nature, but we can shape it in a way that makes sense to us.

Often, however, our shaping does not “make sense,” i.e., it is not pleasing to the senses. If the need according to which we shape the surrounding world is one of maximizing profit, then we run the risk of making the world “senselessly.” Good illustrations of this form of shaping can be seen in the work of Edward Burtnysky, photography that vividly shows the ugliness of our designs (<http://www.edwardburtnysky.com/>).

As we shape the world, moreover, we also shape ourselves. We form our way of life by affecting the world around us. Thus we draw petroleum from the earth to fuel the cars that we use as transportation. We then become “drivers,” i.e., beings, who move by means of machines that have required fossil fuels to work. It is impossible to

overestimate how deeply the automobile has affected our existence. Our whole way of life, our economy as well as our ecology, is based upon it. If we ever were to shift to other forms of transportation, we ourselves would become different beings.

What can *poiesis* contribute to ecological thinking? First of all, we must understand what we mean by this term. In Greek, the word *poiesis* means making in general. All forms of production are comprehended by it. At the same time, *poiesis* can also refer to the particular mode of making in which something is made so that it can appear as made. The poietic work, what we call “the work of art,” shows itself, and in showing itself it shines forth as what it is. This showing manifests itself to the senses. Thus the statue is meant to be seen, the music to be heard, etc. The work is sensible; it can only be apprehended by the senses. Beauty, then, can be understood to be the sensible manifestation of appearance.

The traditional philosophical antipathy to the arts is easy to comprehend from this perspective. If philosophy aims to go beyond appearance toward essence, not to the way a thing *seems* to be but to the way it *is*, then *poiesis*, which aims at appearances, can only be an inferior mode of existence. For Plato, the arts deal with the changing world of the senses, whereas philosophy seeks the unchanging object of the intellect. For him, the chaos of sensible appearance is a hindrance to true understanding, based on the unitary essence of unchanging truth. *Poiesis*, then, is the enemy of truth [10, 607e].

From this point onward, what Plato called “the ancient quarrel between poetry and philosophy” is weighted on the side of philosophy [10, op.cit. 607b]. Even in Aristotle’s thinking, in which *poiesis* is understood as a kind of knowing, i.e., knowing by making, it is seen to be inferior to *theoria*, the kind of knowing that does not depend on the senses and which can grasp pure form by the intellect alone. The tradition of philosophy either denies *poiesis* any insight into truth or considers it to be subordinate to intellectual understanding.

It is not until Nietzsche that *poiesis* is restored to its central place as our fundamental mode of being and knowing. For Nietzsche, even philosophy is something *made*, and as such can be considered art, in spite of its own self-understanding. Nietzsche’s rehabilitation of *poiesis* implies a greater valuation of the sensible world as well. He even

accuses the philosophers of a “hatred of the earth” in their attempts to reach a realm of existence beyond the world of the senses. Philosophy’s “Being,” for Nietzsche, is only another name for what religions call “God” — the eternal principle beyond the ever-changing world of sensible appearance [9].

It is possible to see Heidegger’s phenomenological ontology as a continuation of Nietzsche’s fundamental project of restoring *poiesis* to the center of human existence. Heidegger’s task is to think what is as it appears to us; the opposition between essence and appearance, intellect and sense, being and becoming, is overcome once we give up the idea of an eternal unchanging world behind the world of appearance. Rather, being *shows* itself; the task of philosophy is to grasp its mode of disclosure [3, p.263].

However, the temporal manifestation of truth means that it appears in different ways in different epochs of history. We are historical beings, we live in worlds that are illuminated in different ways at different times. The philosophical understanding of truth as unchanging essence is a mode of disclosure that reveals the world to us in a particular way; but this understanding itself is historical and subject to revision.

In *Being and Time*, Heidegger tries to think the way in which our own existence manifests itself within the perspective of time. At this point in his thinking, Heidegger sees our temporal mode of being revealing itself as what it is not in our everyday on-going life, in which one moment seems to follow another, but only when we are shaken out of our complacency by an experience of dread (*Angst*), an experience in which everyday concerns fade away and we suddenly realize that we will die. If we do not try to escape from this moment of insight but instead grasp our mortality resolutely, then we can choose to exist “authentically,” i.e., to grasp our possibilities in a way that is proper to our own existence as finite beings [3, p.311].

From the beginning, Heidegger’s thinking was oriented primarily toward Being; his analytic of existence (*Dasein*) was a way to grasp our own being as a pathway toward the understanding of Being itself. As his thinking developed, however, it underwent a “turning” (*Kehre*) in which he attempted to look directly at the way in which Being is disclosed. In his essay, “The Origin of the Work of Art,” [5] Heidegger considered the primary

manifestation of Being to take place in the work of art, i.e., through *poiesis*. For Heidegger, *poiesis* is understood to be a mode of disclosure proper to finite beings, who live their temporality within an historical horizon. Art does not reveal eternal essences; rather a work is of its time; indeed it shapes its time by disclosing possibilities that were previously hidden.

Since art is itself a mode of showing, it is particularly suited to the disclosure of Being, a disclosure that is always historical. The work reveals the world in a new way; it shows the possibilities of our historical existence. At the same time, however, this setting-forth of the World is only accomplished by what Heidegger calls a setting-back into the Earth. There is something in the work that resists manifestation. The work itself is a struggle between World and Earth, between manifestation and hiddenness, a struggle that is put into place in the figure (*Gestalt*) [5, pp.63ff].

Heidegger's concept of "Earth" is difficult to understand, primarily because "Earth" refers to that which resists understanding. In one sense, it refers to the "material" of the work, that out of which the work is made. However, Heidegger does not intend the opposition between World and Earth to be understood as one between "form" and "matter." Thinking in terms of form and matter implies a violent imposition of a structure upon an inchoate material; this kind of thinking is still within the framework of the Will to Power, which, as Nietzsche saw, was the fundamental project of philosophy — to master the world by understanding it.

"Earth," therefore, is not to be understood or mastered, it is that out of which knowing and willing emerge. There will always be something that is unknown in the art-work; this is what makes interpretation both possible and necessary. Nevertheless, an interpretation proper to the work does not seek to go beyond its appearance to an underlying essence; rather it tries to let what shows itself show itself from itself — i.e., to let the work manifest itself more fully. "Earth" is what prevents the work from being subject to a totalizing knowledge; it is also what enables us to go always further in our understanding of the meaning of the work.

Heidegger's thinking of *poiesis* remains to some extent within the tradition of philosophy, even though he aims to deconstruct aesthetics as that tradition has configured it. The works to which

Heidegger refers still possess the "aura" which, as Walter Benjamin tells us, is in decline; they are the "great works" of high culture that the discipline of aesthetics has always prioritized. For the most part, Heidegger is only interested in the works that can change the world, the founding works of an historical epoch that compel us to understand our existence in a fundamentally different way.

Poiesis and aesthetic responsibility

In the field of expressive arts, as it has been developed at The European Graduate School and elsewhere, the Heideggerean notion of *poiesis* has been extended to apply to other modes of change, both individual and communal. Expressive arts in all its forms (therapy, coaching, education, conflict-transformation and peace-building) relies on an essentially poietic mode of understanding: we shape ourselves by shaping the world. The arts have the special capacity to take us into an imaginal world that enables us to see new possibilities in our daily lives. The role of the change agent, then, is to help others shape this world of the imagination in a way that affects them, that touches, as we say, their "effective reality," a notion analogous to H.-G. Gadamer's notion of "effective historical reality," the history which affects our understanding of our own existence [1, p.267]. The sign of this effectiveness lies in what we call the person's "aesthetic response," that sensory-emotional experience which is literally "breath-taking," which makes us stop and compels our attention to what is happening in the moment. It is akin to what Aristotle tells us is the beginning of philosophy: the sense of wonder. It is also, we might say, an experience of beauty.

The responsibility of the change agent is to help the other person find their aesthetic response, that which feels "just right," the "felt sense" of what is needed at the moment. "Aesthetic responsibility," then, is an essential component in all actions that aim to bring about change [7, pp.136-145]. Change agents cannot "produce" or "make" change; what they can do is to help others find the possibilities for change and the resources that are needed to accomplish it. Art-making then becomes an analogue for everyday life; we shape our world as we shape our works — and our works are one way we shape our world.



Figure 1. Frame from the movie “Sin (*Il Pecato*)” (2018) by Andrey Konchalovsky

This shaping, again, is not a willful imposition of form upon the materials of a life. Rather it is a letting-be analogous to the ways in which images appear in art-making. Heidegger calls this *Gelassenheit*, letting something show itself as what it is [4, pp.55ff]. How can the individual or community take what has been given and allow it to find the possibilities proper to it? We cannot escape the historical context in which we exist, but we can act in such a way that we can discover new possibilities for meaning and beauty to emerge.

What would this perspective mean in ecological thought and practice? Can we speak of an “aesthetic responsibility” toward the earth? This would imply that it is our responsibility to shape the world a way that “makes sense,” i.e., that is pleasing to the senses, that, we can even say, is beautiful. We have to overcome the traditional opposition in aesthetics between “interest” and “beauty,” between what we need and what we value for its intrinsic form. “Beauty,” as Stendhal said, “is the promise of happiness” [12, p.66].

Ecology thus takes place within what Marcuse called the “aesthetic dimension,” the world that is manifested to the senses [8, p.xxiiff]. It “makes no sense” to think of an “an-aesthetic ecology,” a world in which sensible appearance is secondary to instrumental goals. We suffer in such a world, and we make others suffer as well.

A poietic approach to ecology would not begin with an abstract blueprint; “planning” is too often the imposition of an idea upon an environment unsuited to it. Rather, we must ask, what does the earth need? What possibilities are contained within our surroundings that can be developed in a way that touches our effective reality? This approach presupposes that there is a fit between the human and the environment, an a priori between what used to be called “man” and “world.” Despite all evidence to the contrary, it rejects the notion that human being is essentially destructive and that the only way to “heal” the environment is to remove it from human concerns, to, in effect, de-humanize it.

Certainly much of what we have done to the planet has been destructive; we cannot ignore the depredations that we have wrought on the world around us and on the creatures within it, including ourselves. But can we not see this violence as a consequence of our unwillingness to accept our limited place within the world, an attempt to become “masters of the universe,” to go beyond our finitude and ascribe unlimited powers to ourselves? The earth then becomes, as Heidegger tells us in his writings on technology, a “standing-reserve” (*Ge-stell*) for human purposes [6, pp.331ff]. Nature becomes “natural resource,” i.e., something at our disposal without inherent existence of its own.

We need to deconstruct the opposition between the “natural” and the “human,” an opposition which leads to the alternatives of a dream of unlimited control over the earth, on the one hand, and the vision of a nature “pure” from human contact on the other. As finite historical beings, we are “thrown” into a world we have not ourselves made; yet it is within our power to choose those possibilities which exist within this world in order to develop it in a “suitable” way, a way that is fitting for the habitation of finite beings.

This would mean, however, that we would have to acknowledge our own poietic nature, our existence as creatures, who shape ourselves by shaping the world around us. It would also mean to acknowledge our aesthetic responsibility for the ways in which we shape this world. How can we affect the world in a way that makes sense, a way that is pleasing to the senses, a way, indeed, that brings forth beauty? A poietic ecology would have to take these questions seriously without falling into the trap of a romantic conception of the natural.

The romantic perspective implies a world without the human or, at best, with a humanity that lives in “harmony” with the world without disturbing it. The pastoral image of the shepherd is sometimes used to evoke this: the human who dwells in pastoral simplicity by “tending” what is given to him. The metaphor of “shepherding,” however, does not begin to grasp the human situation. We are not shepherds living harmoniously in pastoral simplicity, we are builders and shapers who form both urban and rural communities in which to dwell. We *work* the materials that are given to us; we do not simply receive them. But this does not mean that we can disregard them, that we can

simply bend them to our purposes. We are not creator gods; rather we take what is given and *respond* to it. In doing so, we give it a new form; i.e, we transform it in accordance with its own possibilities.

There is a truth to the romantic view, however, that we need to pay attention to. The image of nature “in itself,” not distorted by human needs to master it, points to the hidden character of “Earth” of which Heidegger speaks. Beyond all our projects, there is something that fundamentally resists our capacity for mastery. “Earth” is what remains beyond our power; at the same time, it reveals itself as capable of transformation in specific ways, depending on the historical period in which we live. This quality of “Earth” shows itself in all our projects; in whatever we do, we encounter the limits of our power. We have to take account of the consequences of our shaping activities; in this sense, there is no “free lunch” in a poietic ecology. No technology, no matter how “sustainable,” will be without consequences with which we have to deal — and then the process of shaping will begin again. Of course, this does not mean that we cannot choose between technologies, taking into account both their effectiveness and their destructive potential; but it does imply that there is no technological fix for our environmental concerns, nothing that will provide a “final solution” to our relation to the environment.

Principles of a poietic ecology

What, then, might be the principles of a poietic ecology? The following are some of the perspectives that it would embody:

1. The human being is a shaping animal. We exist by shaping the world around ourselves.
2. In this process, our shaping is a response to what has come before us. We always exist in a particular historical world, and we take the form appropriate to this world.
3. Nevertheless, we are not determined by the world in which we live, nor by the form in which we find itself at any given time. Rather, we exist in the mode of possibility; we can choose to shape the world

and ourselves in a way that is not yet actual but that is contained potentially in what is already given.

4. Human existence is finite. Not only do we come to an end, as all beings do, but we can grasp ourselves *as* finite. This implies that we can respect our limits and recognize that we are not the masters of the world around us, nor even of ourselves.
 5. To shape the world in a way that is appropriate to human finitude would mean to develop an attitude of *respect for otherness*. “Earth” will always be beyond our power. In this sense, our proper attitude toward it is *awe*.
 6. As finite beings, we are in the world in an embodied way. We live in a sensible world, and we experience the world primarily through our senses. This is a receptive capacity, but at the same time it has a
- shaping aspect to it. We see what we look at, and we look at what engages our attention. Sensing is not passive, but neither is it pure activity — it is a responding to what is there.
7. Sensing has a cognitive capacity; our senses “make sense” of the world. It is not the case, as Kant thought, that the senses are “blind” and that it requires the logical intellect to impose categories upon sense data for meaning to emerge. Rather, there is a “pre-formation” of meaning in sensible experience; this provides the material on which the intellect works by developing its potential significance. In English, as in the Romance languages, “sense” means both sensory capacity and significance; the two are not divorced.
 8. If we are to live in a world that makes sense, then this world must be appropriate to our senses. It follows that we have a



Figure 2. Frame from the movie “Sin (*Il Pecato*)” (2018) by Andrey Konchalovsky

responsibility to shape the world “aesthetically.” *Aisthesis*, in its original sense, means pertaining to the senses. Aesthetics, then, refers to the way we sense the world; *poiesis* to the way we shape it according to our senses, i.e., aesthetically. This we can say that we have an *aesthetic responsibility* to the world.

9. Beauty is what pleases us aesthetically. It is what touches us through the senses and takes our breath away. The beautiful may not be harmonious and perfect in its form, as traditional aesthetics would have it. Rather beauty, within the framework of a poietic ecology, is seen to emerge from the awe with which we regard the world and the beings within it. A poietic conception of beauty has some of the quality traditionally ascribed to the sublime — that which surpasses our finite capacity to grasp it. Beauty could thus be said to be the apprehension of “Earth” in the world.
10. The arts have a special role to play in this framework. As modes of showing, they can reveal the ways in which we have made the world ugly; they can confront us with our an-aesthetic and destructive acts. At the same time, they can point towards what is possible. In their imaginative explorations, the arts show us what *can be*, not only what *has been*. The vision of beauty provided in art can serve as a guideline for all our shaping acts.
11. To speak of poietic ecology is to imply that nature can be considered as a work of art. This could be seen as a romantic attitude, were it not that within this framework, art itself is not understood to be the imposition of form upon matter, as it is in the traditional ontology that underlies Romanticism without its knowing it. If the work of art is itself a struggle between “World” and “Earth,” between revealing and concealing, and if “Earth” is essential to the work as its bearing ground, then to consider nature as a work of art is not to imply mastery over the environment. Rather, this perspective points to a different attitude toward the world around us, one in which we accept our responsibility for shaping the environment in a way that respects its otherness as well as our own capacity for affecting it.

Conclusion: Poietic ecology and environmental practice

The implications of a poietic ecology for environmental practice remain to be worked out. Nevertheless we can point to many examples where this framework has implicitly been employed. Any time when we see, for example, the development of a landscape that takes into account its natural contours and the particular materials which make it up, we can see a poietic ecology at work. Similarly, when urban redevelopment is designed in terms of the culture of the people involved and their way of life, there is an element of *poiesis* involved.

I am particularly fond, in this context, of Rousseau’s image of the contrast between the French and the English garden. The French garden, as he describes it, is developed according to an abstract plan. It has a formal quality which is appropriate to the social position of those for whom it is designed. The English garden, on the other hand, looks wild, as if it has developed “naturally.” In fact, it has been carefully tended to, but its shaping has taken into account the “natural” capacities of the land and the plants that can grow there. In Rousseau’s eyes, this “natural” chaos is much more beautiful than any “artificial” order. “Nature” here, of course, means not that which is wild and untouched, but that which has been shaped in a way that respects its otherness [11, Part IV, Letter XII]. Perhaps we should understand Rousseau’s concept of “natural man” in the same way: “natural” human being are the ones who shape themselves in accordance with their own capacity for beauty — in the words of Hölderlin as quoted by Heidegger, they “dwell poetically upon the earth” [2, p.270].

Human existence is poietic by nature, and nature is what we shape through *poiesis*. If we can accept our responsibility as shaping beings, our aesthetic responsibility, while at the same time respecting the limits of our powers as finite beings, then perhaps it will make sense to see “nature” as the work of art that it always has been. And then, perhaps, we can honor the earth, for in our relation to it, to paraphrase Saint Paul, “...we live and move and have our being.” [Acts 17:28].

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THE HUMAN DIMENSION OF ENVIRONMENTAL CULTURE: THE ECO-HUMAN APPROACH



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Abstract. The article explores environmental culture from the perspective of the humanities, using an eco-human approach in education, for the study of the socializing potential of environmental education in particular. The eco-human approach is considered as a new methodology in science and culture, applicable to the social sphere and education. The unity of learning and educational processes to establish an ecological culture of human beings and society as a whole is discussed. The author demonstrates the unity of ecological (natural) and educational (cultural, artificial) systems, and emphasizes an “educational ecosystem” concept. The application of an eco-human approach in a wide range of inter- and transdisciplinary studies, is also outlined, as well as the trend towards convergence of science and culture’s main concepts, in respect of their meaning as well as the technologies and approaches they use to assess their effects.

Keywords: environmental education, environmental culture, human dimension, the eco-human approach.

Introduction

2019 was declared the Year of the Theatre in the Russian Federation. I immediately recall the famous lines by Shakespeare, “All the world’s a stage, and all the men and women merely players.” Indeed, Shakespeare went on to say:

*All the world’s a stage,
And all the men and women merely players;
They have their exits and their entrances
And one man in his time plays many parts...*

An earlier version of this idea can be found in the aphorism by the ancient Greek writer Petronius, “*Mundus universus exercet histrionam*” (The whole world is engaged in acting), which adorned the pediment of the building where Shakespeare’s *Globe* Theatre was located. Voltaire also connected the Earth and the Theatre in his expression:

*The Earth is a huge theatre
in which the same tragedy is played
under various names.*

Recent years in Russian Federation were declared to be the years of drawing attention to social and environmental issues as well as to sustainable development:

- 2007 — Year of the Russian language;
- 2008 — Year of the Family;
- 2009 — Year of Youth;
- 2010 — Year of the Teacher;
- 2011 — Year of Cosmonautics;
- 2012 — Year of Russian history;
- 2013 — Year of Environmental protection;
- 2014 — Year of culture.
- 2015 — Year of Literature
- 2016 — Year of the Cinema
- 2017 — Year of Ecology
- 2018 — Year of the Volunteer
- 2019 — Year of the Theatre

These are vectors reflecting society’s efforts to implement its Sustainable Development Strategy as

a “co-evolution of society and nature” (according to N.N. Moiseyev). Each vector is directly or indirectly related to the UN Sustainable Development Goals approved in 2015. Over the past thirteen years, two years have been devoted to problems of ecology and environmental protection, and were aimed at forming an ecological culture. Ecology, originating in biological science, has become an integrative science with significant potential for the development of human qualities in human beings. The French ethnologist and sociologist Claude Levi-Strauss once used a phrase that many scholars in various fields of scientific knowledge quote today: “The 21st century will be the century of the humanities or it will not exist at all.”



Figure 1. Claude Levi-Strauss (1908–2009)

I believe that he was right. The tension and uncertainty in politics and international relations, the global problems of the modern world, the environmental, cultural, educational and other issues all invite us to consider the current foundations of the humanities as possible ways to resolve these issues. Scientists in the field of philosophy, sociology, pedagogy and psychology, as well as ecology, cultural studies, and humanities in general (A.V. Yablokov, N.F. Reimers, V.P. Zinchenko, M.M. Bakhtin, V.G. Kostomarov, V.S. Soloviev, V.I. Slobodchikov, N.M. Mamedov, A.D. Ursul, G.A. Yagodin, N.N. Moiseev, L.A. Verbitskaya, V.I. Danilov-Danilyan, S.I. Bogdanov, E.I. Kazakova, I.A. Kolesnikova, V.A. Yasvin, V.I. Panov, and others) emphasize the development of civilization according to a human paradigm.

At one of the conferences devoted to environmental education, the famous Russian economist, ecologist, and statesman, V.I. Danilov-Danilyan, expressed his position as follows: “Culture cannot grow without environmental culture, and

ecological culture cannot take place at all without appropriate cultural conditions. This is the human position of the ecologist!”

Methodological basis and research

This section aims to elucidate an eco-human approach as a new methodology in science and culture, in particular, within the social sphere and education. I.A. Kolesnikova noted that in the human sciences, the main reference point is the human being in his/her movement in time in relation to him/herself. I believe that specifically human qualities need to be “nurtured” in the human being, in particular, in the younger generation in order to make sustainable development possible. The humanities’ perspective is characterized by the ability of a person to enact human qualities in his/her life. I.A. Kolesnikova emphasized that the humanities are the meaningful attribution of human relations with nature, and can be perceived as the embodiment of a — “humanistic principle of humanity in the system of thinking, behavior, relationships, and the content of professional activity.” [5. p. 39]

In other words, when we speak of human qualities in the personality, we should bear in mind the ability of a person to correlate his/her actions with the highest measure that nature has “assigned” him/her. That is, what is “allowed” to the animal is not allowed to humans: the animal always acts on the basis of biological laws, and for humans there is a different grid of determination and orientation. All this means that in order to be a human being, a person needs to establish a dialogical connection with his/her human potentiality [5].

Returning to the idea of humanization, according to V.A. Kozyreva, the concept of the humanization of education should solve the problem of revealing the meaning of being a human in the world, through understanding the human’s place and role in the natural world as well as in culture. She believes that the main goal of education is to support the constructive person’s place in the world, and his/her skills to master the ways of interacting with it [4].

In the Introduction to “Human Qualities,” Aurelio Peccei, the first president of the Club of Rome,

writes: “The uniqueness of the human being as a species compared to all other living species is that he/she adapts to a changing environment and environmental conditions more at the expense of cultural than genetic mechanisms. Moreover, this is the only type of living creature that can cope with this kind of mutation, because it is the human being who is now the main factor in all changes on Earth. ” [11]

“Rethinking Education: Is Education the Welfare of All?” is the title of the 2015 UNESCO Report. The answer to the question is given by the ex-Director General of UNESCO I. Bokova in the introduction to the report: “The world lives in turbulent times. The world is getting younger; more and more people are linking their aspirations with human rights and human dignity. There are great opportunities for sustainable and inclusive development, while serious and complex problems remain. The world is changing, and education must also change ... Education should teach people how to live on our planet, which is under tremendous pressure today, learn cultural literacy based on respect and equal dignity, helping to bring together the social, economic and environmental aspects of sustainable development. ” [9]

The Environmental Code of St.-Petersburg defines environmental culture in the following way: Environmental culture is an integral part of human culture. It represents the level of moral development of society, including moral and ethical standards of human behavior at work, at home and on vacation, formed in the process of life and work of generations through a continuous environmental education, contributing to a healthy lifestyle, the spiritual growth of society, sustainable socio-economic development and environmental safety [1]. This definition is sufficiently capacious and systemic, but the question arises: How can this ecological culture be established, and is it possible?

It seems that as far as the human dimension of environmental culture is concerned, it should include the following components:

- environmental knowledge (knowledge in the fields of natural, technical and social sciences, etc.);
- ecological consciousness, i.e. the ability of a person to think about the environment and take environmental interests into consideration);

- environmentally sound behavior, characterized by the ability of a person to bring environmental knowledge and environmental consciousness into their daily action;
- a culture of feelings, i.e. moral “resonance”, empathy, experience, reverence for life (according to A. Schweitzer) [2].

The first component of environmental culture, environmental knowledge, is easy to measure by taking into consideration one’s response to tests or other tasks on knowledge of the fundamentals of modern ecology. The second component, environmental consciousness, can be assessed by observing how a person solves situational problems (cases). The third component, environmentally sound behavior, can be assessed by the methods of pedagogical observation and studying the activity of people in environmental activities (actions, contests, forums, movements, volunteering, etc.). A serious problem arises with the fourth component of environmental culture, the culture of environmental feelings, one’s ability to empathize. It is this component that must be given more attention in environmental education, and developed through human technologies, communication, culture and the arts.

I would like to refer to another quote from Claude Levi-Strauss, “A scientist is not the one who gives the right answers, but the one who poses the right questions.” It is possible to transform this sentence in the following way: Is it possible to use some environmental concepts and directions developed not by ecologists, but by representatives of the humanities for the environmental education of people?

Most often, new directions arising in modern science are analyzed from the standpoint of ecology, the ecological approach, and this, from our point of view, is valid. In recent years, complex concepts have emerged and even whole areas in which ecology (an ecological approach) is defined as having a certain relation to the human sciences. These attempts are often perceived negatively by professional environmentalists. However, we are trying to understand the justification of the concepts and the directions they indicate. We can consider two concepts widely known to the population: the ecology of literature and the ecology of culture.

The project “Ecology of Literature” appeared on the channel “Russia K” and is dedicated to the

most eminent writers of the twentieth century, their life and work. The project website <http://www.viprutv.com/m/133723/Ekologija-literatury> gives an explanation of the name of the program: The writer in the modern world is a cult figure, a creator of many significant events in the society. The Ecology of Literature, step by step, explores the space of literary thought.

The program studied the works of Russian and foreign writers such as Thomas Brussig, Tina Ubel, Yuri Koval, Nikolai Frobenius, Norbert Ni-man, Monica Maron, Andrei Makin, Vladimir Tendryakov, Yuri Trifonov, Konstantin Simonov, Rimma Kazakova, Boris and Andrei Strugatsky Lyudmila Petrushevskaya, Anatoly Rybakov and others from the position of the environmental approach, that takes into account moral, ethical, humanistic, and human dimensions of ecology.

“Ecology of culture” is a concept introduced by academician D.S. Likhachev. In his book “Native Land” (1983), he included a section called “Ecology of Culture.” Under the ecology of culture, Dmitry Sergeyevich suggested that we understand “the science of the unity of phenomena in the cultural space of a country inhabited by one culture-forming people, of the mutual influence of cultural and material space, of the peculiarities of the culture of regions inhabited by other nations that are part of the cultural space of a multi-national country.” [6]

This scientist designated the unity of culture and proposed to apply an ecological method of analysis of a multilevel system to the cultural space, developed in ecology over one hundred and fifty years, for objects of the biosphere. In the academician’s work, the goal of cultural ecology coincides

in many respects with the goal of environmental science. If ecology serves as the theoretical basis of many sciences for society’s protection and rational use of the natural environment, its various resources, then an ecology of culture is the theoretical basis for the preservation of culture throughout the cultural space, including architectural monuments and cultural landscapes.

The theoretical principles of cultural ecology, according to D.S. Likhachev, are as follows:

- Cultural ecology is a system, which is visible from the interconnectedness of its individual branches (music, architecture, literature, agriculture, crafts, etc.), as well as from the interconnectedness of the cultures of related peoples;
- Basing the national culture on a material medium, the people;
- The possibility of the existence of the people as a carrier of traditional culture only in the safe natural conditions of the national territory.

The scientist proposes that national literature, painting, and theatre in many respects express the peculiarities of the natural conditions in which the life of a nation proceeds. A number of articles in the almanac “Ecology of Culture” (Moscow. 2000), are devoted to providing evidence for this view.

Such an idea of culture is most fully reflected in the concepts of homo-sphere and ecology of culture specially introduced by D.S. Likhachev. In the article “Ecology of Culture,” he wrote: “I have long been talking about the fact that our ‘home,’ in which humanity lives, consists not only of the natural complex (which includes man as part of nature), but also of the cultural complex . We live in the midst of historical monuments, works of art, technical achievements, etc. Therefore, ecology, from my point of view, consists of two parts: part of nature conservation and part of preservation of culture. The latter is important as it concerns the very essence of man.” [6]

Meanwhile, the question of moral ecology has not been studied. Certain types of culture and the remnants of the cultural past, the restoration of monuments and their preservation are studied, but the moral significance and impact on the person of the whole cultural environment as a whole, its acting force, are not studied [7].



Figure 2. D.S. Likhachev (1906-1999)

World Heritage is an international megaproject proclaiming that outstanding cultural and natural values are the property of all mankind. In 1975, the UNESCO Convention for the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage came into force. Nature and Culture is a unity that requires understanding as a value and the only way into the future of mankind. The monograph “Ecological culture of the population: The view of Petersburgers” notes the regional specifics of environmental education, as manifested in the following directions:

1. Urban cultural and historical environment as an educational space for the environmental education of the population, creating a psychological and emotional climate aimed at the formation, creation and development of an environmental culture;
2. Urban research as a source of environmental education and a basis for the development of safe production technologies;
3. The natural environment (the suburbs of St. Petersburg) as an educational environment providing opportunities for implementing a variety of organizational and methodological forms of environmental culture in natural conditions [12].

A new term, the educational ecosystem, also needs to be considered here. It is a product of the ecosystem approach within the social sphere, including education. A study by the Agency for Strategic Initiatives (ASI) notes that the modern educational ecosystem is a multidimensional space that covers a wide range of human educational needs throughout life.

From the student's point of view, the educational ecosystem can be viewed in at least two dimensions:

- The locality / globality dimension means that the educational process should be connected with the local situation and relied on physical contact (for example, urban education, local projects in schools), but at the same time, it must be based on the global context and implemented in global interaction (for example, using global educational platforms);
- The person / technology dimension means that some educational experience can be

obtained only by personal communication with a mentor or can be digitalized [8].

It is ecologization as a methodological approach that is of particular interest for updating modern education. Its essence consists in transferring environmental laws, principles, and rules to the educational system at different levels (from the individual school to the national level) as living, social, open systems.

Returning to the humanitarian aspect of ecological culture, to quote the poet N. Zabolotsky's statement: “Poetry, painting and music serve as a mirror in which nature sees her appearance more clearly.” From the perspective of the eco-human approach, the role of the arts in contributing to rapprochement and coordination between human and environmental aspects should be emphasized; and there are increasing examples of artists' participation in promoting environmental ideas.

The pedagogical aspect of museum-based activity is systematically presented in L.M. Vanyushkina's doctoral research into the theory and practice of extracurricular education [3], in particular, theatrical events. In preschool and among primary school age children, puppet theatres play an important role, and the content of performances gives a special place to the relationship between different animals and humans. The pedagogical aspect of theatrical activities is also discussed in a doctoral study by T.N. Polyakova and is presented in her monograph [10].

The Year of Ecology in Russia (2017) in St. Petersburg opened with the music event “Musicians for the Green Planet” in the Music Hall. The concert program included works by Vivaldi, Tchaikovsky, Beethoven and other composers.

The Theatre of Young Spectators Bryantseva showed the ecological performance “The Face of the Earth” (directed by E. Safonova).

For many years in St. Petersburg environmental education widely used environmental film contests created by professional experts and amateurs, for example, the Green Look contest, as well as environmental drawing and poster contests, “The lens is the environment,” featuring photographs, together with creative performances by environmental groups, ecological fashion shows and other events.

Animated films, whose main characters are real and fictional animals, are also in demand both by children and their parents. Often, public



Figure 3. Fabio Mastrangelo, artistic director of St. Petersburg Music Hall



Figure 4. The play “The Face of the Earth”

environmental organizations protest against the participation of animals in circus performances. This is a problem that requires understanding and assessment from the standpoint of environmental ethics.

A person who has ever read the works of M. Prishvin, “Do not shoot at white swans” by B. Vasiliev, “White Steamboat” by Ch. Aitmatov, “White

Bim — Black Ear” by G. Troepolsky, “Grass” by Vl. Soloukhina will never be able to be thoughtless and indifferent to the world of wildlife. “Beauty will save the world,” as F.M.Dostoevsky once said. Nicholas Roerich added two words to this phrase: “Awareness of beauty will save the world.” The development of this awareness is a psychological, pedagogical and cultural task.

Concluding remarks

Having opened up discussion of the human dimension in environmental culture, several questions suggest further directions for inquiry.

- What is the educational potential of cultural and arts-based activities in developing the human dimension of environmental culture?
- What innovative forms of ecological education can cultural institutions of St. Petersburg provide today?

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Section

Practices and technologies of the eco-human approach



PRIORITIES FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF ECOLOGICAL EDUCATION IN AN ART UNIVERSITY



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Abstract. This article is devoted to an analysis of the current state of environmental education in an art university and the identification of priorities for its development. The goals and objectives of environmental education within an art university are presented. Negative factors causing a decrease in the level of environmental training at a university are identified. Examples of environmental education at the Higher School of Folk Arts (Academy) are given. Examples of artworks reflecting relationships between human beings and nature in the form of traditional applied art, which serve as a mandatory component of the educational approach, are presented. Directions for the development of environmental education in an art university are highlighted.

Key words: art university, environmental education, environment, educational standard.

Introduction

Artistic universities are currently implementing a multidisciplinary model of environmental education (EE). The model provides for the development of environmental education, which is included in the curriculum programs of various modules of the curriculum, as well as in the content of the academic disciplines of the module “Elective Disciplines.” Familiarization with the theoretical basis of the scientific disciplines of ecology at lectures on academic disciplines is reinforced by practical training, i.e. practical works, including open-air practices.

The generalized goal of multidisciplinary environmental education is the development of those basic theoretical and experiential foundations of ecology that are important for the student, as well as for the graduate as a subject of professional activity. Important tasks that are solved at the university on the way to achieving this goal are as follows:

- Obtaining knowledge about the biological, personal, social, artistic, technological and creative aspects of ecology;

- The education of students in the principles of focused communication with the environment. The basic idea of EE is to educate an environmentally competent, artistic profession of specialists, at bachelors and masters levels, based on the acquired environmental knowledge, skills and personal experience of communicating with nature.

However, the assessment of environmental knowledge and skills is not included in the final certification of students in mastering the content of academic disciplines. It is believed that the multidisciplinary model of EE used in education provides for the gradual assimilation of environmental knowledge and development of practical skills. This knowledge and associated skills, formed during the whole four-year (bachelor's degree), six-year (specialty) and two-year (master's) studies at the university, are revealed only in the last year, or rather, when completing the final qualification work. They can be evaluated in accordance with established professional competencies, which are independently put forward by universities. For example, the assessment of these competencies can be based on the demonstration

in the landscapes or scenes from the relationship between animals or humans and animals, the careful attitude of people to nature, and the taking into account of the environmentally sound use by students of the waste of artistic and creative activities.

In the Federal State Educational Standards (GEF), in the directives for “Painting” or “Decorative and Applied Art and Folk Crafts”, even in the module of general cultural competencies, environmental or nature-user competencies are not distinguished. There are competences indirectly related to environmental ones. For example, in the directive for “Decorative and Applied Arts and Crafts” (undergraduate level), competences were put forward: the ability to communicate to solve problems of interpersonal and intercultural interaction, the ability to realize the social significance of one’s activities and the responsibility for making decisions. If we consider that interpersonal interaction includes ecological and psychological requirements for a person, that social significance also implies environmental and social significance, and that professional responsibility is impossible without environmental responsibility, then the competencies established by the Federal State Educational Standard can be considered environmentally oriented.

However, as educational practice at the university shows, if the FSES does not clearly specify environmentally significant competencies, then their use by teachers is not provided for when creating curriculum programs. In this situation, there is a need to prioritize the development of environmental competencies by teachers of educational disciplines of the general cultural, professional and professional cycles and include them in the process of evaluating the learning outcomes and educating future bachelors, specialists, and masters.

The concept and experience of environmental education at an art university

We’ll consider this in more detail using the example of a specific St.-Petersburg art university, the Higher School of Folk Arts (Academy), which has existed since 2003. This institution provides training in several areas of art higher education:

- the main direction — arts and crafts and folk concepts and beliefs;
- specialty — painting, specialization “Artist-painter (church-historical painting).”

This university is the only one in Russia where artists are educated at the undergraduate and graduate levels in more than 20 types of traditional applied arts in our country. These include: Fedoskino lacquer miniature painting, Palekh lacquer miniature painting, Mstersky lacquer miniature painting, Kholuy lacquer miniature painting, Kirish art lace weaving, Vologda art lace weaving, St. Michael’s lace artwork, Izhevsk art lace weaving (Ivanovo line, Kadoma venise, sacral line, etc.), lower Etakil lacquer painting for metal, Kholmogorsk art carving in bone, Bogorodsk art carving in wood, lacquer painting for ceramics — Rostov enamel, etc.

The university has also developed the concept of environmental education. The program for its implementation provides for continuous environmental education and training, as part of all educational areas and all courses. This is an EE system, implemented not only in higher education, but also in secondary vocational educational avenues, since the university trains artists and secondary professional level practitioners.

The system-unifying and system-forming characteristic of EE is its view of an environmentally competent professional discipline comprehended by future artists of a certain qualification and the development of special personality qualities, such as awareness of the enduring value of life, nature, and activity in their protection. In view of the fact that EE is the fundamental basis of any practical activity, and the basis for sustainable development, the content of EE in the training of artists includes health-saving technologies, personal and socially significant communications, and environmental responsibility for ongoing artistic and professional activities. The listed content of education does not contradict, but rather corresponds to and reveals the competencies established by the Federal State Educational Standard for secondary professional and higher art education.

Already within the content of academic disciplines (philosophy, history, Russian literature, etc.) constituting the general cultural module of the basic curriculum for bachelor artists in the field of specific traditional applied art, the Higher

School of Economics presents: information on the development of environmental knowledge in the history of the art and crafts of Russia, the essence of ecologically competent art and technology work, the philosophical and social significance of ecology and nature management, etc. The environmental content of these academic disciplines is supplemented by information on environmental impacts, its objects of study, environmental laws and principles. This is because students enrolling in university from comprehensive school do not always have a clear understanding of the scientific areas of ecology (human ecology, social ecology, industrial ecology) and good knowledge of its fundamentals.

The educational module forming the basic part of the program includes such academic disciplines as: “Academic drawing,” “Decorative drawing,” “Academic painting,” “Theory and history of traditional applied art,” which are taught throughout the university. These disciplines introduce students to the influence of certain chemicals contained in oils and paints, as forms of pollution affecting the artist’s health and the environment, and teach protective measures against such chemical pollution. The influence of anthropogenic factors on the environment and humans is increasing; students need to know about these in order to take safety measures during their educational, professional and future professional activities [5].

In addition, thanks to the introduction of the discipline “Theory and History of Traditional Applied Art” into the training of artists, there is increased opportunity to study in depth the historical roots of traditional crafts, and at the same time their historical and environmental significance for the development of human activities; as well as environmental features of the materials from which crafts are made.

In the content of the discipline “Decorative drawing,” future artists learn to process an environmentally correctly executed (academic) drawing into a decorative one. The more faithfully and correctly from a bio-ecological point of view a drawing is made, the more accurate its decorative processing will be [3], which means that the quality of a particular artwork will increase. Figure 1 shows the decorative processing of plant nature, performed by a student O. Radaikina, studying at the bachelor’s degree in the field of “art metal”.



Figure 1. Natural and decorative corn drawings made by the undergraduate student. At the bottom of the picture is a jewelry item design

Hence, it is helpful to continue the formation of bio-ecological knowledge in the classroom in the disciplines of the art module of the basic part of the program.

The disciplines “Decorative Painting,” “Plastic Anatomy,” “Color Science and Coloring,” and “Academic Sculpture and Plastic Modeling,” within the art and performance modules of the variable part of the curriculum for the continuous development of environmental knowledge and skills which contain information about the characteristics of the image of plants and animals of certain regions of Russia.

Figure 2 presents a variant of decorative processing from a picturesque image of an animal made by a student in the course “Decorative painting.” Decorative processing of the full-scale image repeats the pose, movement, and general appearance of the animal. However, in accordance with the professional and artistic orientation of the artist’s education, the student performed a decorative process in the Nizhny Tagil style of decorative painting. This is indicated by features such as the carpal brushstrokes and roses depicting the beaver’s hair, as well as the thin curls called the binding in the Nizhny Tagil painting style.



Figure 2. A full-scale image of a beaver (A), and its decorative processing (B) in the style of Kholuy lacquer miniature painting. Tomasheva Oksana, a third year student.

A special place in this series of academic disciplines is occupied by Plastic Anatomy. From the standpoint of environmental vocational education, it is intended to form knowledge about the movements of the muscles of the body that are safe for humans, the bio-ecologically correct image of people and animals moving or in a static pose.

The academic disciplines fixed in the variable part of the program according to the types of traditional applied art, for example, in artistic embroidery, the disciplines “Design,” “Composition of artistic embroidery,” “Technology and materials science,” “Performing skills in artistic embroidery,” continue to form environmental knowledge and skills, but are somewhat narrow in their professional scope.

One of the examples of this is the content of training in the discipline “Technology and Materials Science” in the profile “Kholuy varnish miniature

painting.” The content of this discipline must necessarily include information on:

- the raw materials (the chemical composition of canvases for painting made from papier-mâché,
- the environmentally friendly process of creating tempera paints on a natural basis), art technology,
- The application of paints and varnish to a product that is safe for human health) and the environmentally significant physical, chemical, aesthetic characteristics of the art products.

In the content of the discipline, through curriculum and textbooks created for study, teachers at the Higher School of Economics will introduce environmentally significant raw materials, the safe and comfortable use of equipment and tools for the artist and the environmental characteristics of manufactured products.

Throughout their stay at the university, students are immersed in an environment that is comfortable for developing not only their creativity, but also possessing the property of learning to biologically and environmentally faithfully form traditional applied art products. For this, teachers enhance and equip the classroom environments and workshops with the best examples of products of traditional applied art and their projects. Students, studying patterns and projects, delve into the historical-geographical and artistic-technological aspects of specific types of traditional applied arts, especially the habitats and their picturesque style of imagery.

For example, in the art works of Kholuy varnish miniature painting, we find masterfully depicted mountains, rivers, waterfalls and lakes [1]. Biological accuracy depicts the nature of coastal slopes, and the appearance and composition of plant communities and scenes from the lives of animals and humans (see Fig. 3, 4). The lacquer miniature by L.L. Nikonov (Fig. 4) depicts scenes of river fishing, rural life and the creative process of the miniature painter. This work of art, due to its characteristic artistic and stylistic features, like other works of traditional applied art, immerses students in the world of studying the relationship between the human being and nature, an important component of environmental education and upbringing.



Figure 3. The plate “Who lives with fun, freely in Russia.” 2012.
Author: M.A. Ershov. Kholuy varnish miniature painting



Figure 4. Plate “My Kholuy.” 2014. Author: L.L. Nikonov. Kholuy varnish miniature painting

Another example of the artistically expressed relationship between the human being and nature is the dress “Solar Poppies” made by a graduate of a bachelor’s degree, V. Petryanova in the “Lace Artistic” style (Fig. 5).

The lace dress “Sun Poppies” is made in the traditional coupling technique of bobbin weaving. It is a unique modern product of lace art, in view of the fact that it does not repeat any of the known types of lace weaving (Vologda, Yelets, Mikhailovsky, Izhevsk, Ryazan, Kirish, etc.). This type of lace weaving can be attributed to the modern look formed at the Higher School of Economics. It is characterized by a combination of threads of different fineness, composition and appearance, as well as the inclusion of lace elements that were not previously used in lace art. For the first time in the history of lace art, a mohair thread was used both in the background (white mesh) and in the main pattern of the product.

Sun glare is depicted as the brightest white background grid. On it, decoratively executed poppies look not only beautiful, but also festive—the

feeling a person might experience when looking at poppies on a sunny day.

Garden poppies are very large flowers, and on the dress poppy flowers and leaves are also large. The hair-covered leaves of the decorative poppy are depicted on the dress using mohair thread. The natural ruggedness of the leaves and the general eccentricity of the plant are evoked by the dress, not only by the geometry of the leaf images, but also by the unevenness of the dress hemline and the sharply protruding leaves and flowers forming the neckline.

What is surprising in this dress is that it shows flowers from the “front” and in “profile.” And this is authentic from the standpoint of a person looking at flowers growing in front of him/her. Only one or two flowers are seen, as it were, from above (in front), most are seen differently. In conclusion, we can say that the student was able to perfectly convey the harmony, beauty and power of the poppy, as well as a sense of admiration on a sunny day.



Figure 5.
*Dress “Sun Poppies”,
created by V. Petryanova, 2015.
Materials: mohair, floss.*

The study of such works of traditional applied art motivates students to implement a creative idea using environmental interactions. And this becomes a necessary requirement for the performance of artworks in traditional applied art.

Conclusions

The examples given above illustrate the current state of EE in an art university, namely, increased attention to the study of the biological foundations of ecology and the transfer of environmental knowledge using artistic and technological means of expression in works. Given this, as well as strengthening the anthropogenic impact on humans and the living environment [2], the priorities for the development of EE in an art university are:

- Adjustment of the teaching curriculum for the disciplines of all parts and modules, to be carried out periodically by teachers, taking into account environmental issues, human health, the professional training profile and the biological and ecological level of students' knowledge and skills;
- Development of criteria-based assessment of students' environmental knowledge and skills and their inclusion in the process of assessing training in academic disciplines and practices;
- The ongoing search for, and application of, innovative methods, tools and forms of environmental education, taking into account the artistic orientation of the arts and the possibilities of the cultural and educational space of the university.

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IMPLEMENTATION OF IDEAS OF ECOPSYCHOLOGY IN THE URBAN ENVIRONMENT



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Abstract. The article considers the issues involved in organizing an urban environment, to be comfortable and safe for humans, to meet the complex multiplicity of human needs and contribute to the development of environmental awareness. Examples of environmental design projects implemented for improvement of the urban environment are given, taking into account ergonomic, aesthetic significance and architectural features of the area, as well as ideas of environmental psychology. The author, a leader of the design team, developed and implemented projects for the improvement and design of areas within Moscow. Such projects provide opportunities not only for comfortable leisure activities based on people's interaction with the natural environment, but also support for a nature-friendly lifestyle, thereby raising public environmental awareness.

Keywords: environment, environmental design, ecopsychology, environmental awareness

Introduction

In recent decades, throughout various fields of scientific knowledge, as well as in the practice of education, medicine, social work, and art, increasing attention has been paid to issues of human interaction with the natural environment. Issues involved in organizing the environment to be of maximum comfort and safety for humans, provide suitable conditions to meet the complex needs of human life, as well as education, treatment, labor, communication and recreation are discussed.

At the same time, modern concepts of environmental organization and human interaction with natural and man-made landscapes take into account the need to maintain ecological balance. These focus on minimizing damage to nature associated with economic activity. One of the important tasks associated with the implementation of modern approaches in the organization of the environment is the task of environmental education, the formation of eco-centric and

nature-centric types of environmental consciousness [1, 3]. These trends are associated with the recognition of serious problems in the relationship of human beings with the biosphere; exacerbation of global problems of human survival, the growth of psychological tension, stressful conditions and diseases caused, along with other factors, by disrupted human relationships with the natural world.

Modern developments in the field of environmental design and art education, as well as environmental activities of artists, together with ideas of ecopsychology and environmental psychology can be significant factors in improving human interactions with the more-than-human world. This article presents some innovative projects in the field of urban environmental design, in particular, a direction we will call "therapeutic environmental design." Such projects can be considered a sign of "greening" the activities of designers and artists, some of whom support the ideas of ecopsychology and environmental psychology, take into account research data in these areas and seek to bring to their work principles

and attitudes characteristic of these scientific and practical approaches.

Environmental design. Examples of projects implemented for the improvement of the urban environment

One of the actively developing areas of environmental design, the development of which is influenced by ecopsychology, environmental psychology and some other approaches related to the environmental movement, is environmental design. This direction is associated with the historically established practice of modifying the environment by utilizing the recreational potential of various institutional environments and natural landscapes. Empirical observations and experimental studies of the impact of the landscape on the health and well-being of people [4-10], as well as principles from ecopsychology and environmental psychology [1,2,3] have given environmental design new impetus for its development in recent years.

Taking into account ergonomic, aesthetic significance and architectural features of the area, as well as ideas related to environmental psychology and ecopsychology, the author of the article and head of the team of authors (Burganov I.A., Pronin A.A., Baranchuk A.K.) developed projects for several areas of Moscow; to provide opportunities for comfortable leisure activities based on people's interaction with the natural environment, as

well as to support a nature-friendly lifestyle and raise public environmental awareness. Two such projects are presented below.

“The route of quiet rest”

The first project, “The route of quiet rest”, was implemented in Zelenograd, Silino district, 11 microdistrict, on the territory of the natural complex of the 16th quarter of the Kryukovsky Forest Park. A strip was allocated and cut through in the 16th quarter of the Kryukovsky forest park and looped around.

“The route of quiet rest” runs along the contour of the development line of the micro-district with access to intra-quarter driveways, passing along residential buildings and creating a ring that borders the forest. It was a design concept that was successful and attractive in terms of composition and function. The priority when choosing planning solutions was to maximize the conservation of green spaces, so the route was chosen taking into account existing plantings and the existing road-path network of the forest park.

When designing, it is possible to equip ITabletset with an intelligent lighting and security management system, including video surveillance functions and outputting audio and video information to a control room and to remote access points. The system has a built-in WiFi router, which provides access to the Internet, including third-party users. For security reasons, IP surveillance cameras are connected to the system. They are called upon to monitor the rule of law by broadcasting the image to the dispatcher's console and recording it on internal memory and an external



Figure 1.
“The route of quiet rest”



Figure 2.
Information board with information about the types of birds that live in the territory of the Kryukovsky forest park

server. It is possible to connect “panic buttons” to communicate with the dispatcher, to call the police squad or ambulance. In addition, a compact weather station is connected to the controller, which provides the collection and transmission of weather data (temperature, pressure, humidity, gas contamination) to the server.

Along the entire route, park benches, bird feeders, information boards, recreational areas with various architectural forms, flower beds, and a platform for two dry closets and garbage containers are installed. Thus, the project ensures the recreational potential of the Kryukovsky Forest Park, integrating it into the system of residential buildings and the social infrastructure of the micro-district, providing significant opportunities for maintaining health and well-being and improving the quality of life of the population. Attracting attention to the local ecosystem, the species of local flora and fauna, and the accessible forms of participation by residents of the micro-district in environmental protection measures can also be recognized as significant effects of the project.

“Park of miracles”

Another example of environmental design practice is “Wonderland Park” in the SetunRiver Valley of the Western Administrative District of Moscow. The “Wonderland Park,” located in an open space on the banks of the river, was envisaged by the project as a multifunctional facility focused on the recreation and cultural leisure of parents with children as well as environmentally

oriented pastimes of young people and other age groups.

To create a park ensemble project, it was necessary to understand initially how people of different age groups and different social communities (families, children and the young and the elderly etc.) rest in the park, what recreational spaces and in the park ensemble they need, what time of the day and year different types of leisure activities are provided. Taking into account the environmental design of the park, in addition to creating a two-dimensional composition of the plan, it was necessary to turn to the design of the functional spectrum of the territory, including various activities for visitors. This made it possible to organize the park environment in such a way as to satisfy the wide range of needs.

In its design, methods of pre-project analysis were used, the results of which were taken into account in the development of zoning. The territory of the park is divided into the following zones: (a) cognitive zone (village of artisans, zone for holding lessons in agriculture); (b) a sports area; (c) a playground area; (d) a zone of quiet rest; (e) the area of the viewing areas; and (e) the main zone of the park.

Environmental design works were conceived of in two main categories of activity: environmental functions (practical component) and aesthetic value (artistic component). Both are embodied in the three-dimensional structure of the park and its detailed study (plantings, sites, structures). The area of landscaping was 19,200 m², including flower gardens occupying 451 m²



Figure 3. General plan of the “Park of Miracles”

The territory of the park is fully accessible for visiting groups with limited mobility. The park uses alternative sources of electricity. The project has a closed loop with lockable gates, which provides a full security regime, with the placement of indoor security posts.

The main entrance to the park is a stylized entrance group of chopped logs with two rooms for its protection. The windows are decorated using a traditional carved border. The development of small architectural forms and sculptures within the “Park of Miracles” was carried out by the author of the article.

Russian national motifs, the best examples of Russian wooden sculpture and folk art, were the basis of the general design concept. For example, the “Craftsmen” series is a collective folklore image of the figures of people engaged in craft work, which was popular in the territory where Moscow is now located. These are the figures of a potter, lace maker, blacksmith, and masters of weaving and painting. A series of small architectural forms on the theme “Fairy Tale” is made based on animals from Russian legends and epics.

The use of sculpture and the characteristic elements of folk art in the artistic and aesthetic design of the environment of the “Park of Miracles” has a strong rationale. Art acts as a mediator, regulating and shaping attitudes to the natural environment. Solving the many tasks associated with the design of recreational spaces of a megapolis, environmental design contributes to the formation of cultural values, along with ecological culture.

Conclusion

Considering the design of recreational spaces in the context of environmental issues, we can recognize that the task of environmental design is to care for both people and the more-than-human environment. Designers need to create appropriate conditions to meet a variety of human needs (for safety, comfort and communication, health maintenance and enriching aesthetic experience etc.), on the one hand, while preserving the natural environment, its vitality and diversity, as well as cultural heritage, on the other hand.

The developers of the project used ideas from ecopsychology and environmental psychology in designing projects to support environmental lifestyles and consciousness. Modern environmental, eco-friendly design serves as a system of psychological mechanisms for the development of environmental awareness and provides the following functions:

- development of environmental attitudes among the population;
- correction of goals and strategies for interaction with ecosystems;
- supporting non-pragmatic forms of interaction with the natural environment;
- expanding human ecological space, a zone of personal responsibility for nature;
- supporting environmental culture and nature-friendly lifestyles.

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EQUINE-ASSISTED THERAPY AND LEARNING: THEORY, PRACTICE AND RELATION WITH ECOPSYCHOLOGY



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Abstract. The article discusses the basic theory and practice of equine-assisted therapy and equine-assisted learning from the standpoint of ecopsychology, as well as expressive therapy. The horse serves as a representative of the natural world and an archetypal image. The inclusion of horses in therapeutic and learning processes enables therapists to achieve various harmonizing and socializing effects, improve people's perception of the natural world and develop their eco-identity. The article describes different forms and models of equine-assisted therapy and equine-assisted learning. The role of playful interaction of the human being with the horse is emphasized as a form of inter-subjective and ecological contact. The general structure and examples of equine-assisted therapy and equine-assisted learning programs have been described.

Keywords: equine-assisted therapy, equine-assisted learning, ecopsychology, environmental awareness

Introduction

Psychological assistance, socialization and personal development involving horses have gained recognition. In the last two decades, new forms of therapeutic assistance and training, such as “hip-povention” [12], equine-assisted psychotherapy (EAP), equine-facilitated psychotherapy (EFP) [13,18,21], equine-assisted counseling (EAC) and equine-assisted learning (EAL) [20] have been developing. Other models of equine-assisted psychosocial activities include equine-assisted coaching and corporate trainings [14]. All these

models can also be attributed to ecotherapy [15], or animal-assisted therapy.

Different therapeutic and supportive practices involving horses can be divided into techniques based on horse riding training [22]; techniques based on interaction with the horse “on the ground” (without riding a horse) [17]; techniques for working with the image of a horse or based on observation of horses, but without direct contact with them, as well as combined techniques.

The organization of communication between the client and the horse creates the conditions for

gaining new experience and awareness of important aspects of interaction such as a feeling of closeness and trust, maintaining distance and awareness of one's autonomy [11]. An important aspect of the work is the reflection of the experience of interacting with a horse and its correlation with personality relationships in real life.

The client's interaction with the horse in the process of observing and caring for it, control of the horse, allows the facilitator to maintain various options for the client's contact with the animal, contributing to the correction of dysfunctional behavioral, mental and emotional stereotypes and the development of new ways of responding. In order to increase the effectiveness of reflection in the process of equine-assisted therapy and learning involving horses, some projective techniques can be used [7].

In all forms of equine-assisted therapy and learning, the horse acts as a representative of the

natural world. It cannot exist and be perceived outside the natural environment. Such perception can support a constructive dialogue with various other natural objects [11] and aid in the formation of eco-identity [5, 16, 16]. In these forms of therapy and learning, the horse is not only an element of the natural environment, but also a significant "other" subject, as well as a semantically significant metaphorical image, which can be filled with psychological and cultural meaning. The rich cultural connotations of the horse's image can be taken into account in equine-assisted therapy and learning, especially when expressive therapeutic practice is involved [5, 15, 16].

The development of environmental awareness, the formation and support of environmental identity (eco-identity) and of a nature-friendly lifestyle through communication with the horse are due to interaction, empathy, and identification with the animal as a subject.



Figure 1.
A horse is happily involved in human activities

General structure of organization of equine-assisted therapeutic and learning programs

Equine-assisted therapeutic and learning programs include several stages during which the gradual establishment and development of contact with the horse is facilitated. Usually, at the first stage, participants obtain knowledge about the psychological nuances of communication with horses, and also their significance in a cultural and historical context. Observing the horse's behavior and reactions become an important part of the early stage of programs. When observing horses (and horses are always watching people), a condition similar to that described by Gratoski in communication with dolphins arises: "Before starting communication, they observe. Something happens at this moment between us and — with us ..." [2]

The next stage is actually contact with the horses, an attempt to build a relationship with them (Fig. 2). Obtaining emotional, sensory-kinesthetic,

perceptual experience is supported by the organization of reflection through various activities, such as writing an essay, keeping a diary and discussions. A horse is a rather active and large animal that causes fear in most people that can be overcome by feeding the horse and by tactile contact.

Completion of the program implies the integration of new experience gained throughout the program.

Examples of implemented programs

Program for youth and adults, aimed at improving their psychological well-being [3, 6]

The basic principle in the development of a training to increase the psychological well-being of an individual when interacting with a horse is the development of trust. Students of the Institute of Psychology and Education of Kazan Federal



Figure 2. Establishing contact with the horse

University (KFU) took part in the program of their personality development based on their interaction with horses. The experimental group that attended the training included 30 students, and the control group included 60 students. The experimental group was divided into two sub-groups of 15 people each. The total number of sessions was five, about two hours each. Assessment of the effects of training was carried out using such questionnaires as:

Subjectification of a natural object by S.D. Deryabo and V.A. Yasvin, Psychological Well-being by K. Riff, and the Scale of Confidence by M. Rosenberg. Participants also provided verbal feedback and were invited to write self-reports in order to better assess their psychological dynamics. Statistical analysis of the comparison of the data in the control and experimental groups before and after the training was performed using the t-test and correlation analysis.

At the first stage of the training, the participants received knowledge about the psychological aspects of communication with the horse, and instruction about possible options for building contact with it. The next stage of the program involved actual contact with the horse, an attempt to build a relationship with her through interaction during feeding and cleaning. The completion of the program implied a reflection on the experience gained, which was recorded through oral and written feedback.

During the program, the participants significantly increased all measured indicators of psychological well-being (positive relationships, autonomy, environmental management, personal growth, self-acceptance, etc.), which is consistent with the results obtained by other authors in similar programs [11]. The students' level of trust, according to the Rosenberg scale, and the level of psychological well-being on most scales, according to the K. Riff questionnaire, significantly increased.

The participants emphasized such significant effects as a result of their involvement in the program as the removal of states of distress, the growth of self-confidence, increase in a sense of energy and the development of goal-setting in meaningful activities, a sense of autonomy and trust in oneself and others, and the attainment of inner peace. Moreover, about half of the students commented on the acquisition of a state of trust in tactile contact with the horse and removing the feeling of fear of it.

Thus, it was confirmed that interaction with the horse in group training work allows for self-acceptance, personal growth, self and environment management and contributes to the development of basic trust. It was also found that the subjectification of the horse was an important factor in the growth of psychological well-being of a person.

The program of correction of child-parent relations "Control and trust" [19]

In modern situations of child development, a frequent problem is the imbalance of control and trust in parent-child relationships. Distortion towards excessive parental control over the child has many causes and negative consequences. The reasons may be parents' anxiety, distorted attitudes in connection with their role as a parent, lack of confidence in themselves, etc. The excessive constant control, combined with a lack of trust, acts as a serious stressor for parents, violates harmonious relations with the child, and also negatively affects the relationships, interfering with the child's independence, responsibility and self-confidence. The opposite pole of connivance and indifference as well as the so-called "inconsistent" style of interaction with the child are less common, but also observed among parents.

Harmonious interaction is based on a relationship of trust and respect, as well as an adequate distribution of mutual responsibility and freedom. Such positions contribute to healthy, long-term, developing relationships and the formation of a healthy personality of the child. To do this, parents need to be aware of their feelings and fears, to gain experience of authentic contact and trust in relations with the child.

The training program "Control and Confidence" was developed to support improvement in the relationships between parents and their children based on the interaction of parents with horses in specially organized conditions. The program involves conversations with parents, the use of projective and expressive techniques, and exercises based on parents' interaction with horses (feeding, tactile and kinesesthetic contact, riding a horse, etc.). The program is also an original and attractive form of leisure and social activity, with the family spending time outdoors together, getting positive emotions and relieving stress. Sessions are held in a group comprising one or more families (parents and children). The program includes session classes held 1-2 times a week. The duration of each session is 1.5 - 2 hours (Fig. 3).



Figure 3.
Family activities
involving a horse

As a result of assessing the effects of the program, based on a qualitative analysis of the feedback of participants (mainly parents), the correction of inharmonious parent-child relationships was confirmed. In the first sessions, it turned out that parents who are characterized by the “hyperprotection” style show the greatest anxiety and nervousness when completing tasks for interacting with horses. In contact with such parents, horses showed tension and disobedience. In this situation, the participants had to change the style of their interaction with the horse to a more trusting one. As a result, the horse gave immediate feedback. It was seen how, as a result of the person changing her style of interaction, the horse changed her behavior, which became more calm and friendly. Such changes made a great impression on the participants, forcing them to

realize their main tendencies in their relations with children.

Feedback examples:

“... At first I was very afraid of horses and worried that they could do some harm to my daughter. The horse, it seemed to me, was moving unpredictably and could step on her feet, push or bite. But, watching the horse, I realized that nothing bad was happening. My daughter quietly cleaned the horse’s legs, bangs and tail, so I calmed down a bit. I was a little uncomfortable that my daughter is bolder than me when dealing with a horse. After I tried to convey my calm state to the horse and relax it, stroking it, I completely stopped being afraid. Now I’m sure that this horse loves me when my daughter and I comb her tail or mane, she is very calm and

will never attack us ... ” (35 years old mother of a ten-year-old daughter).

“... I remember very well the state when the horse finally allowed me to hug her head and stroke her forehead. At first I didn’t succeed: she took her head and left. It was useless to insist. When I changed my state, relaxed and stopped pestering her with a hug, she came up to me and let me caress her. This reminded me of the relationship with my daughter. I think it is connected with my attitude ... Maybe I am imposing my communication too much and should “loosen my grip a little”? (a 40 years old father of thirteen year old daughter).

The key exercises aimed at building confidence were “cleaning the horse”, “decorating the horse” and “feeding with the palm of your hand”, during which the participants received tactile experience in contact with the horse and felt the possibility of their influence on such a large and powerful animal.

Feedback example:

“... At first I was very afraid of the horse. I was afraid that she would bite me or hit me. Now this fear has completely passed. I really like to feed her by hand and feel how she carefully takes small pieces from my fingers. This cautious attitude of the horse towards me gives rise to reciprocal feelings in me. I really like to scratch her neck and see her pleasure. Now I am much more affectionate and caring for my children. Now we began to hug more often. The previous tension in relations with relatives has disappeared ... ” (30 year old mother of 8 and 11 year old sons).

Exercises, including the task of leading the horse along a certain trajectory, to stop and start again, to move forward or backward, are aimed at working with awareness of the tendencies of control and contact. Horses refused to perform movements with too intense and excessive control, and they could not be moved, even when a person used physical force. In addition, the horse would go its own way. In these cases, participants discussed the strength of control and its need, as well as the balance of control and trust.

If the participant adequately perceived his/her mistakes and corrected an attitude to the situation, he/she successfully completed the exercise with riding the horse. Some parents took several

sessions to master this experience. The exercise in which the parents were sitting on the back of the horse, which the child led about, was performed in some sessions, and it allowed parents to feel confidence in their child, to overcome the anxiety and the habit of their constant control over their child.

Feedback examples:

“... I first felt how inclined I am to control. I could not weaken my control, although I already saw that it was useless to restrain and pull, while my son very easily coped with this task. He was just a little ahead of the horse, very calm and confident. I can learn from him ... ” (35 year old father of an eight year old son).

“... The most striking impression for me was that my daughter was leading a big horse, on whose back I was riding. At first I was a little tense, but then completely unusual feelings came over me. It is so impressive when your well-being is in the hands of your child, because usually in life it is the other way around. My daughter very confidently and thoroughly completed this task, and I realized that she is a very responsible and reliable person ... ” (42 year old mother of a ten year old daughter).

Assessments showed that the “Control and Confidence” program allows participants to gain new experience in warm and trusting relationships with horses and, thanks to their immediate reaction, to identify unconscious attitudes in relationships with others, fears and negative models of relationships. Thanks to participation in the program, parents get a unique experience of self-awareness, understanding of their feelings and relationships with other people through work with horses.

Associative metaphorical cards “The Image of a Horse”



Associative metaphorical cards “The Image of a Horse” were developed for a phenomenological study of relationships, organization of feedback and reflection on the experience gained in therapeutic and learning sessions [15]. In the process of testing the set of cards, it was found that this set can be used in a wider context of psychological counseling, because even in cases where the

subjects expressed a negative attitude to horses, the associative-metaphorical context of working with horse images gave a positive psychological effect.

The set consists of 100 photographs, which represent horses in different states and relationships, as well as in interaction with the environment. Images of horses were chosen so as to evoke associations with different mental states, feelings and relationships.

The deck contains images that can be attributed to different categories. There are cards that emphasize individual parts of the horse (eyes, lips, tongue, mane, bend of the back) and focused on sensory-perceptual associations. There are cards where the horses are represented in movement or at rest. Such cards are intended for revealing mental states and experiences of respondents (confidence, loneliness, persecution, security, etc.). There are cards where the horse is an element of nature. Such cards are focused on the reflection of the value of the environment in respondents' own emotional development. Cards depicting pairs or groups of horses in different interaction situations are metaphors for relationships. Cards representing interactions between horses and human beings or other animals (cats, lions etc.) allow the respondents' identification with one of the figures and different types of relationships.

The use of this set of cards ensured the psychological safety of the counseling process. The identification of respondents with a horse in photography is based on subjectification of the horse as a natural object in which a person can comprehend his/her own psychological characteristics.

Thanks to the powerful environmental, cultural, emotional, motivational, and aesthetic potentials, the deck allows the development of imaginative and associative thinking, as well as environmental awareness.

Conclusion

The techniques and programs of equine-assisted therapy and equine-assisted learning were implemented and demonstrated their rich potential to improve participants' styles of interaction and well-being. The inclusion of a horse and its image in therapeutic and learning practice can be based on the principles and methodology of ecopsychology and ecotherapy and has significant prospects not only for solving therapeutic and developmental problems, but also for the formation of environmental awareness.

The given examples of therapeutic and training programs involving horses show that interaction with the horse supports the processes of self-acceptance, personal growth, self and environment management, helps to strengthen basic trust, develop communication skills, correct dysfunctional behaviors and emotional responses. Subjectification of a horse as a psychological mechanism associated with the ideas of ecopsychology is an important factor in the growth of psychological well-being of a person, the strengthening of a healthy self, and the development of eco-identity in the process of equine-assisted therapy and equine-assisted learning.

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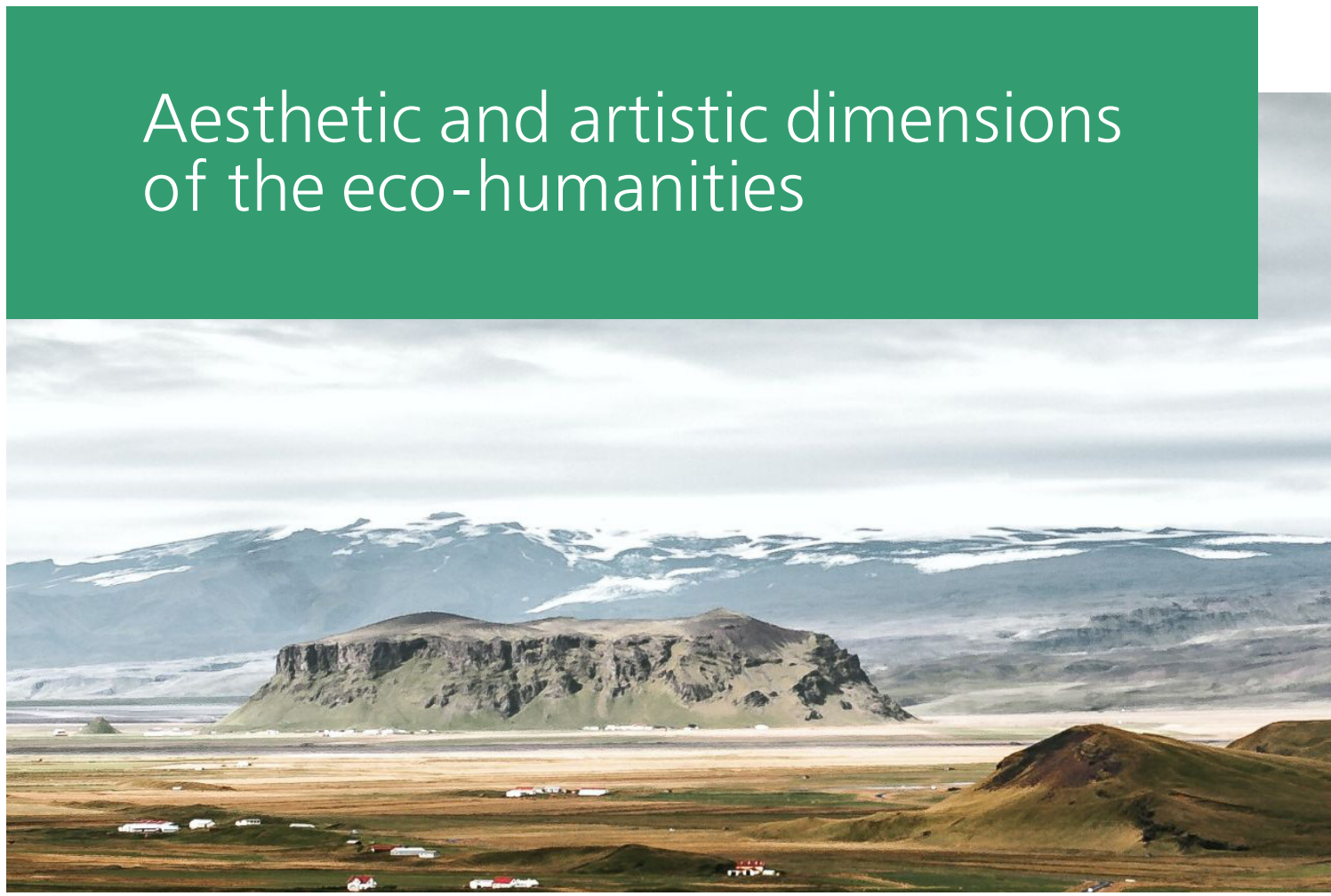




Section



Aesthetic and artistic dimensions of the eco-humanities



SITTING ON THE EDGE OF WONDER. ART AND ANIMISM IN THE SERVICE OF PERSON AND PLANET HEALING*

* Excerpt from the upcoming book *Everybody Speaks Blue Sky*



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Abstract. In her essay, American artist and art therapist Madeline Rugh shares her understanding of the relationship between art and animism, understood as endowing the natural world with life and a spiritual essence. Artistic creation and the work of the imagination not only reflect or imitate the world of nature, but also represent a meeting place for communication with it. One of the author's works of art and her literary-poetic narrative are given, reflecting her experience of reality, in which the world acquires its "sound", evoking a creative response in the author.

Key words: animism, art, artistic creation, image, more-than-human realm

Introduction

This essay describes my understanding of the interface between art making and animism. The connection between the two came to me, not from books, but from my direct experience with the living world since early childhood. And now, as an artist and art therapist specializing in (for more than 65 years) art as a form of listening to and engaging with the more-than-human world, I hope to share some of my journey of sitting at the edge of wonder.

"In the animistic reality everything is possessed of life or spirit. The old animistic sensibility is a sensibility that both Judeo-Christian doctrine and scientific objectivity have censored. Its loss to our worldview may even be at the basis of our ecological crisis and our spiritual discontent." [Roszak T., cit. in 3, p. 20]

I realize that my use of the word "animism" may cause some readers to reject this essay. But, I know of no other word in the English language that captures my direct and personal experience with the more-than-human world from

early childhood forward. So, at the risk of being misunderstood or maligned, I would like to take some time to explore animism before combining it with art and the way in which this has manifested in my life as an artist, art therapist and teacher.

Animism

Based on the quote from ecopsychologist and historian Theodore Roszak, an animist view of life is the antithesis of the Western mind trained to left-hemisphere dominance and hyper rationality. This worldview is paired with an economic engine for consumption and materialism created to satisfy the spiritual hunger left by our abstract, mechanistic and empty empiricism. Animism is not superstition or worship of nature. It is reverence for the created realm, for all life, it is a feeling of belonging, and of being an integral part of this vast and varied landscape. It is the full recognition that all things have spirit or soul, that all things are alive and aware. All children are born

animists. Animism is the oldest form of loving and honoring nature.

Very often the words animism and anthropomorphism are confused. There is an important distinction between these words and the experiences they point to. As has been stated, animism refers to the attribution of “life” or spirit in all things, that everything is alive and aware. Anthropomorphism refers to the attribution of human-like qualities, emotions and intentions to non-human beings and things. It is possible, given these definitions, that animism may be foundational and anthropomorphism one possible form of expressing or experiencing an animist foundational reality. However, it is important to realize that one may be “projection” and the other “reception.” Here are some recent writings about these two ideas:

Based on the quote from eco-psychologist and historian Theodore Roszak, an animist view of life is the antithesis of the Western mind trained to left-hemisphere dominance and hyper-rationality. This worldview is paired with an economic engine for consumption and materialism created to satisfy the spiritual hunger left by our abstract, mechanistic and empty empiricism. Animism is not superstition or worship of nature. It is reverence for the created realm, for all life, it is a feeling of belonging, and of being an integral part of this vast and varied landscape. It is the full recognition that all things have spirit or soul, that all things are alive and *aware*. All children are born animists. Animism is the oldest form of loving and honoring nature.

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In his book, *The Empathic Civilization* [8], Jeremy Rifkin considers anthropomorphism to be

an empathic ecological imperative representing an evolutionary shift in consciousness necessary for the survival of our species and planet. He refers to this form of awareness or development as “homo-empathicus.”¹

Traditionally, however, anthropomorphism has had a negative connotation in that it involves overlaying assumptions about the life and intent of other beings with human emotion or human attributes. This is a form of “projection” that may or may not hear the voice of the other. However it is very common in young children and may be our first form of connecting with the diversity of life around us. James Hillman, archetypal psychologist, adds the idea of personification as part of this process when he states, “personifying not only aids discrimination; it also offers another avenue of loving, of imagining things in a personal form so that we can find access to them with our hearts.” [6, p. 14] Rather than reject anthropomorphism as another human failing, I sense that it is indeed an early developmental stage necessary for the fuller expression of an animistic state of consciousness and remains purposeful in the cultivation of “empathy” and “access.”

Depth psychologist Jerome Bernstein refers to persons who hold and actively live by an animist view of the world as “borderland personalities”. Rather than view this animist state of mind as somehow regressive, primitive and irrational, he believes this kind of awareness represents a newly evolving state of consciousness specifically for the Western mind. Animism is not a “belief” — it is the resulting understanding of nature arising from direct experience with an en-souled world.

Split the wood — I am there; lift the stone and you will find me there.

Jesus (Nag Hammadi Library, Gospel of Thomas saying 77b)

“Borderland experience is not a “neurotic” experience; rather it is a natural evolutionary occurrence whose prevalence is rapidly developing. The evolutionary momentum is aimed at adapting and transforming the overspecialized (left hemispheric) western ego which is threatening the survival of the human species and the planet.” [2, p. 116]

Bernstein believes that what is perceived in this borderland state of awareness is *trans-rational* (not irrational) reality...sacred reality. It is *not a projection* of the individual. It appears to be direct

apprehension and communication with the consciousness of the “other”, whether that other is animal, plant or element.

“Everything animate and inanimate has within it a spirit dimension and communicates in that dimension to those who can listen.” [2, p.8] The “borderland personality” (or animist) does not see or experience themselves as separate from the natural world or above the natural world rather they feel deeply embedded in it and cared for.

This is and has always been my personal experience and it is what I wish to share with the reader who may also have had these experiences unacknowledged or actively discouraged when they were children. I also feel very deeply that our current environmental crisis can only be averted and transformed by a complete change in consciousness through coming into communion with the living world, falling in love and listening to the more-than-human realm with our hearts.

Art and Animism

Visual art is a form of “bio-mimicry” in that visual work is non-verbal. Its voice is composed of infinite arrangements of colors, lines, shapes, textures, and movements in direct synergy with the ever-changing colors, lines, shapes, textures and movements of the living world. It is the same language! Art is not just a universal language for humans—it is the cosmological language of form, the sensory realm from which we construct our very thoughts.

Art making and image work (which would include dreaming and reverie, poetry, dancing, singing, drumming etc.) are not just recording or imitating the beauty of the living world but represent a meeting place for communion and connection facilitated by the spiritual perception of the heart in coherence with the thinking brain and the expressive body. Our modern orientation has made the arts a commodity and a specialization of the gifted few, something for social critique, personal expression, entertainment, or adornment (for example). This differs from our ancestral orientation (understood in this essay as animistic) where what we now call “art” involved life-enhancing healing rituals and community celebrations of caring and connecting through song, dance, and image. [5] We only need consider the powerful

and exquisite images of animals in the Lascaux caves to realize the care, love and attention with which our ancestors greeted the living world.

Art making can serve many functions then, from extraordinary creative imagery by the highly skilled maker to simple and heart-felt recordings of the experience of being present to beauty and wonder. But there is more possible, familiar to artists across time and cultures. And it is from this place of “more” that I teach art as healing, as a form of listening to and communicating with the more-than-human realm.

Louise Cullen [3] in an interview by Alex Woodcock describes the perspective I am referring to in the following incredible quote:

“Images are doorways to heightened perception of the world. A meeting place, luminous, betwixt and between an enchanted place like shore and sand or forest and field. Finished work is a by-product or record of that meeting place.”

More than a mere visual record of an experience, imagery that is made *with an intention of being present to the more-than-human realm* can serve as a bridge or doorway to the deeper soul level of the living world. Work that emerges from this place may communicate information not immediately recognized during an experience in nature. The “more” of the encounter may reveal itself within the completed image in two ways: 1. In the visual language or structure and elements of an image that we observe and listen to with our eyes, or, 2. During the process of making — noticing the silent language and metaphors of our body selecting media, colors, arranging shapes and forms. An image, therefore, is not just a “picture,” it is a place, a language and a communion.

In addition, images that depict representational aspects of the living world are not always a metaphor for ourselves. The tendency to speak about images that arise from us (through us!) as “just” our own psychology is very limiting. While it is useful as a layer of the conversation, it is not the complete story. James Hillman [6] spoke of the image arising from the Imaginal Realm (from the soul) and having its own agency and purpose. For example, the Tiger that comes to you in the dreamtime is not just a metaphor for your feline instincts, it is also itself and has come to work with you of its own accord — it does not belong to you. This remains a powerful reminder to us when engaging the arts in the service of listening



Figure 1. *Sitting on the Edge of Wonder 6 "X9" Photo Montage. The author's artwork*

to the more-than-human world; that the “Other” has an inner life too, purpose and intention and a kind of consciousness, not the same as ours, but available to the ever-responsive and watchful multilingual heart.

So let's look at one image and one story as an example of how this communication through art and animism might work.

A story....It is late December, 2015...

I am eating breakfast with a very good friend, gazing out of her bay window at the *early morning shadows cast by leafless winter branches moving across a grey groove-barked tree*. We were discussing the looming environmental crisis: catastrophic global climate change. We wondered about our own behavior, what we were doing or not doing

to reduce our use of material resources, to stay within a carbon budget, to challenge the Western capitalist ideology of no-limits growth, materiality and patterns of unrelenting consumption. Going over and over a litany of actions and reactions: recycle more aggressively, change purchasing behaviors, reject massive long distance transportation of food, purchase of solar panels, dig a well for water and install a hand pump. Then we examined all the reasons that these actions presented a challenge; financial — solar panels are not affordable, environmental hazards of wind generators (which kill thousands of birds according to Audubon.org), the structure of the neighborhood and cities in which we live require driving in order to get to work, how to reject the cost and convenience of food found in grocery stores vs. that which is locally and/or sustainably grown but not as readily available, knowing we should participate in some activist effort but come home

exhausted by our work. Our enthusiasm to help, to change, is suddenly absorbed into a dark hole. We feel caught, heavy, trapped in the overwhelming structures of our comfortable but clearly unsustainable Western way of life.

We sat silently for a few moments absorbing this recognition and subsequent guilt over clinging to old familiar habits.

A blue jay, wearing the sky on her wings, alighted and began poking around for insects where a tree branch had been severed and the old but open wound now a shallow harbor collected very small amounts of soil, bits of seed, rotted wood, and moisture creating an abundant source of food for the Jay.

Psychotherapist Francis Weller describes this familiar impasse as arising from the two sins of Western culture, *Amnesia* and *Anesthesia*. *Amnesia*, because we have forgotten our place in the wider world leading to a sense of isolation and alienation. “What we forget allows us to do untold damage to our world and one another.” [9, p.xx]

Anesthesia, because our senses are numb as we try not to feel the overwhelming and intense grief and sorrow for the suffering of the planet. Weller notes that “whole industries have been developed to keep our senses dulled and distracted...we substitute alcohol, shopping, television and work to ward off our feelings of emptiness, grief and anxiety.” [9, p.xxi].

Weller further believes that our death-denying culture, part of the growth without limit ideology, is an integral part of our environmental crisis as death awareness and unexpressed grief are pushed into our collective shadow only to resurface in the form of death dealing epidemics of violence toward one another and toward the soil, forests, air and water upon which all life depends.

A few dried leaves are tossed by the wind like dice across the asphalt, tumbling pale tan to coppery brown. I can't hear them inside the house, but I know they are making a scratching sound as they skittle and roll to the other side of the sun-warmed winter street.

During our breakfast conversation ...*the shadows, the blue jay, the dried leaves were all speaking.* My eyes know this language. My heart followed it mutely while my brain and tongue were engaged in following the contours and textures of our conversation. The surprising title for my book

suddenly arose, “Everybody Speaks Blue Sky.” Were these shapes, patterns, beings, movements, colors, sounds just “background” to our conversation? This is one of the ways we in the Western industrialized nations see the natural world (if we see it at all)...as backdrop to our human drama this is part of the worldview that needs to change, that MUST change. Paul Devereux suggests that the living landscape may even enter into our neurological structures to guide our inner and outer reflections and responses to the land and to our own connective stories [9, pp. 247-248].

As we attempt to develop creative technological plans and struggle with scientific solutions in response to global climate change in *the absence of a radical worldview shift*, we can expect that our solutions will fall short and remain out of harmony—not unlike the wind generators that kill so many birds. The restoration of connection and communion revolves around listening to the world, learning from it again, asking for guidance.

Sitting at the Edge of Wonder

The image “sitting at the edge of wonder” was created in response to the “breakfast story”. In this image we see all the usual characters; the dry winter leaf larger than life, the tree branches have become sticks, shards and shadows, daylight Bluejay wings turn into indigo night sky. The movement of daylight to night, of Bluejay to indigo cosmos, of tree branch to splinters and shards is speech. A kind of shy “soul speech” which shuns the bright daylight of examination, preferring instead the velvety dark star sprinkled sky, as decay and breakdown become breakthrough. These visual shifts of form and color tell me to pay attention, that there was more to the experience than I was aware of. That is the threshold that art is, the window, not only the record of our gathering but a continued conversation. The image has its own timing...it speaks to me slowly, sometimes not at all until now (for example) as I continue to contemplate and listen to the image with my eyes, my heart.

The human figure is small. She takes her place among the things of the world, sits quietly listening, looking, arms grasping her knees in the cool of a winter evening. Her chair is composed of the same elements she observes. She and her chair belong to the elements, held by them,

decompose with them. Each form “listens” to the others through juxtaposition, integration, overlapping, holding, penetrating, flowing. I further realize that we are all; the leaf, the water droplets, the wood shreds, the chair, the person, the galaxies — surrounded and interpenetrated by the indigo night sky. Every kind of “body” knows the sky, is embraced and surrounded by it as am I, as are you.

During this conversation with my friend, with the living world, with my inner world, not only did I receive this title for my book (from which this essay is an excerpt), but a deeper awareness regarding the environmental trauma and drama we are witnessing and participating in that formed the matrix for the “breakfast story”... For me

that message is; we are all in this together there is a natural process underway that involves decay as well as dynamic growth. Keep your seat! Do not fear...everybody speaks blue sky... we are a contemplative process — verbs not nouns, in continuation, evolving, spiraling, contemplating, leafing, earthing, dying and birthing.

Art and an animistic sensibility are powerful partners in teaching us to listen, bringing us home to our interconnectedness and interdependence, showing us how “to speak *with* and *to*, rather than *about*” the more-than-human-world. [7, p.11]

It isn't the Earth that needs to heal, it is our world-view or state of consciousness and for that “*we need the Earth to help heal us.*” [4, p.16]

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INTERVIEW WITH TEAGAN WHITE

Abstract. Teagan White, an artist from Oregon, working as a volunteer in various environmental projects, gave an interview to the *Ecopoiesis* Journal, talking about their art and its relationship with nature and environmental issues. They shares her experience of co-creation with nature, her perception of death as a part of a holistic cycle of life and transformations of different life forms, and the role of art and creative self-expression for changing people's attitude to nature.

Keywords: art, environment, nature

Brief note about the interviewee:

Teagan White is an artist living in Portland, Oregon. They received a BFA in Illustration from the Minneapolis College of Art & Design in 2012 and are a member of the VACVVM illustration collective. Their paintings have been exhibited in dozens of solo and group shows across the United States, and they have worked with *Nature Conservancy Magazine*, *Smithsonian Magazine*, *Pangeaseed Foundation*, *Patagonia*, *Mondo*, *Nike*, *Target*, *American Greetings*, *Penguin Random House*, and many other



magazines and journals. In addition to their nature-related art, Teagan makes picture books and other products for children under the name Tiny Moth Studios, with six books published to date.

During their time in Minneapolis, Teagan was a volunteer in the Avian Nursery at the Wildlife Rehabilitation Center of Minnesota. They are currently a member of the University of Washington's Coastal Observation and Seabird Survey Team (COASST) and Oregon Shores' CoastWatch, two citizen science projects dedicated to monitoring ecosystem health and public land use, collecting baseline data to help assess patterns of seabird mortality due to natural and human-induced events.

A.D.: *Please tell a bit about yourself and your approach in art.*

T.W.: I'm a 29 year old artist and illustrator. I grew up in the Midwestern United States (born and raised in Chicago and lived most of my adult life in Minneapolis), and relocated to the Pacific Northwest in 2019. I make detailed, allegorical gouache and watercolor paintings based on my experience with nature, usually depicting animals that appear dead or struggling for survival.

A.D.: *Let's talk about your relationship with nature. How did it begin and evolve? How would you describe your connection with your land?*

T.W.: I can't pinpoint the exact origins of my affinity with nature, but for as long as I can remember I've felt out of place in modern society. As a kid I was less interested in making friends than in reading books about heroic mice and bats, or staring out the window trying to identify the birds I'd memorized from a field guide.

But I grew up within a huge sprawling city, so my relationship with Nature was definitely stunted until I moved to Minneapolis. There I began exploring urban forests, riverbanks and wetlands, taking trips north to Lake Superior and the Boundary Waters Wilderness. Finally discovering the private immensity of nature felt like finding a missing piece of myself, or like my soul opening up and pulling everything in so it could all become a permanent part of me: small brittle bones scattered in the dry grass, the shrill shriek of a fox nearby when the moon is high, the ceaseless lap of frigid lake water against a smooth slab of sun-warmed rock, the sagging weight of road kill in my hands, bits of floating ice that clink together like wind chimes until they melt to nothing at the river's edge.

I get around by bicycle only, which dictates what types of places I have access to, so I primarily experience nature at the fringes of human life. I

find beauty in railroad tracks overrun with invasive plants. I internalize the sadness of shorelines dotted with little pieces of styrofoam. There are all these threads of meaning I'm trying to unravel in the indefinable spaces where human activity ends and nature begins. For years I buried every animal I found dead in a bike lane; I feel strong kinship with the "pest" animals that live among us, that have adapted to cities or backyards or distressed remnants of habitat. They help me make sense of my own life.

Moving to Oregon was accompanied by a sense of loss; when the land you live on becomes a part of your identity and the way you understand and heal yourself, being uprooted is a little traumatic. But I quickly realized that even if the specific species or ecosystems around me were unfamiliar, I could still relate to them in the same way I always had. I've never been very interested in traveling to far-off places or seeking out impressive sights, preferring to choose a small number of places to visit frequently and learn about exhaustively. Like any other relationship, your relationship with a place becomes strong when you show up consistently, when you appreciate its beautiful complexity and stand witness while it changes and grows, when you are personally invested in its health and wellbeing. For me, being in love with a place and the things that live there conjures the same powerfully magical feelings that being in love with a person does, and at times I believe that nature reciprocates that love as well.

A.D.: *Tell us about your experience of co-creating with nature.*

T.W.: I have a hard time separating what is "art" and what is "nature" — if I'm being honest, I think that my real art in its purest form is the relationship with nature that I've cultivated over the years. It exists in the space between nature and myself and shouldn't need a physical form to justify itself, so the paintings that I make based on it sometimes feel like a disappointing failure of



Figure 1. “Least Concern” | 24 “x24” | gouache and watercolor on paper

communication. I paint anyway, a little because I enjoy it, a little because I once in a while believe in art’s potential to have a positive effect in the world, and a lot because my pretentious “pure art” has no value under capitalism and won’t translate into food or shelter unless I turn it into something marketable or useful.

These days I don’t so much decide what to draw, as nature asks it of me. I learned a while back that my best work comes from direct experience, and I avoid subject matter that doesn’t emotionally resonate with me. This doesn’t necessarily mean that I have to see a certain animal or plant in person to draw it, my work isn’t that literal, but it encourages me to put in the time of engaging with nature on a regular basis so that I accumulate experiences

that can potentially inspire future work. I’ve found that when I go to a natural place with an open receptiveness towards what that place might have to teach me that day, I’m answered with an avalanche of incredible experiences and the urgent need to share them somehow.

I’m very intentional about allowing nature to be my co-creator, but I’m also cautious about keeping a respectful balance between how much I take and how much I offer back. Besides supporting all our lives, nature has brought me so much joy, is the foundation of my career, and in many ways the art I make relies on the exploitation of the earth’s resources. I don’t think it would be ethical to use plants and animals as my subject matter without recognizing the ways that



Figure 2. "Moondance" | 8 "x10" | gouache, watercolor and colored pencil on paper



Figure 3. "Ash" | 6 "x6" | gouache and watercolor on paper



Figure 4.
*“Residue (slickness and silt; the
body’s remains as witness)”*
12”x18” | mixed media on paper

they are suffering because of us, depicting that with honesty, and using whatever influence or money the art generates to help protect and restore them. Art sometimes seems like an ineffective way to change anything, but when I take on other conservation-related roles — volunteering in songbird rehabilitation, removing invasive species and planting native ones, monitoring beaches to collect data on seabird mortality — some part of those experiences inevitably becomes subject matter for my art, as if my work isn’t complete until I’ve processed it by creating something as well.

A.D.: *I can see that the theme of life and death/the cycle of life inspires you a lot. Can you tell us why it is important for you?*

T.W.: Themes emerge in my work when I’m fixated on a concept that is new to me, and need to spend time looking at it from different angles to decide how I feel about it and integrate the

conclusions with my larger understanding of the world around me and my place in it.

When I was first becoming more familiar with the natural world, I was struck by how often I encountered death all around, and particularly by its unthreatening beauty. Most of us are taught to assign all sorts of negative qualities to death, to see it as ugly and as an end to something, and all of these perspectives betray a total lack of understanding of the harmonious cycle of life and death. So for a while I was fixated on depicting my revised understanding of death, as part of an intricate and life-sustaining system that I’m overjoyed to be a part of.

But over time my attention shifted to the deaths that could not be as easily celebrated: road kill, pest animals that are shot or poisoned for our convenience, the ones we treat with cruel indifference because they are only food, the forests we strip for lumber or clear for farmland, the

native plants displaced for prettier and more use-less species. Here the concept of a cycle is broken, and death is a sentence passed down by the unchecked power of a species that kills based on value judgments rather than need, kills not within sustainable limits but with the goal of extermination or with a heedless gluttony that consumes until there is nothing left; it's a barreling towards doom. As I learn more about the land I live on, I see fewer healthy cycles playing out and more irregularities triggered by collapsing ecosystems, poisoned air and water, human-fueled disasters, and climate breakdown. Each death I stumble across comes with uncertainty — is this one natural, or did we cause it in some way? So now when I draw death, I really do connect with the sadness and horror that society told me I should associate with it all along. But the death isn't what's scary. What's scary is seeing the places you love dearly fall apart before your eyes, and to feel complicit in their destruction. Ultimately, death itself isn't really my subject matter anymore, but has become a shorthand visual language that I'm trying to use to portray our entire human relationship

with nature, to process my guilt and hold myself accountable, and to focus my mourning on something smaller and less overwhelming.

A.D.: *How do you think relations between society and nature/environment should develop in the future? What is the role of creative expression in this development?*

T.W.: We need societies that are aligned with the land they live on, that respect the intrinsic value of nature irrespective of its usefulness to humans, and that understand that a realignment of human activity with nature is not only essential for the survival of our species but also a cure to all sorts of problems we have as individuals and as communities... There are indigenous cultures that have held onto these truths, but they are met with violent repression instead of looked to for leadership, and I don't know if any progress can be made until we undo the legacy of capitalism, settler colonialism, patriarchy, and anthropocentrism.

My partner and I sometimes laugh about Thoreau, who complained in the 1800s about fences



Figure 5.
"Hollow Bodies" | 11 "x14" |
 gouache, watercolor and colored
 pencil on paper



Figure 6. “*The Restless Sea*”
| 16 “x 20” | gouache,
watercolor and colored pencil
on paper

being built around private property... Wouldn't it be nice if fences were the worst of our worries? What would Thoreau have to say about oil pipelines, or plastic islands in the sea? But really, he was right to fixate on the fences, because the direst problems in the world today are all symptoms of the same worldview that created the concept of property. You can't just tell people not to put up fences; we need cultures of people who have a strong enough relationship with nature to intuitively understand that the very concept of a fence to keep people out or claim ownership over something that can never be yours is evil, who would never have the desire to build one in the first place.

I do think art can have a role to play in developing this kind of understanding in the world. Big changes of perspective only happen if they originate in a place of subjective truth, which can't be dictated by scientific fact or an authoritative code

of ethics. I think art can stir the emotional part of the brain that needs to be activated for you to take personal responsibility for a problem, instead of leaving it for someone else to solve.

A.D.: *Do you see any possible ways to overcome our estrangement from nature?*

T.W.: It's incredibly difficult for anyone living in a developed country or a culture that has lost its grounding in the ecology of their region, because the estrangement is so deeply ingrained and all-encompassing, and we've virtually lost all frames of reference for what a healthy relationship with nature would even look like. For me it comes in waves... Sometimes I feel an intense, blissful sense of understanding of and belonging to Nature, and sometimes I feel intensely foolish and embarrassed for thinking I know much of anything or that I'm anything but a burden to the Earth. But I think that's a good combination of things to feel.

One gives you purpose, and one wills you to action. Maybe the estrangement is not something we need to overcome, but something we need to exist inside of and allow it to motivate us. If you're even aware that you are estranged from nature, that's a good first step, because it means you're listening, and if you listen hard enough, I think you'll hear your own sorrow wrapped up in the sorrow of the Earth, and recognize that the only way to heal yourself is by working towards healing the world.

Note: *Teagan White's works can also be seen on their website. <https://www.teaganwhite.com> and in instagram <https://www.instagram.com/teaganwh/>*

About the interviewer:

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Figure 7. “Racket” | 14 “x14” | gouache, watercolor and colored pencil on paper

INTERVIEW WITH BEVERLEY A'COURT

Abstract. An artist, art therapist and a member of Findhorn Foundation Community, Scotland, Beverley A'Court, gave an interview to *Ecopoiesis* Journal about her holistic, Earth-based approach to making art and practicing art therapy. She talks about the connection between art, therapy and ecology, the role of the body as 'an environmental phenomenon' and her use of nature and natural materials and objects in the art making process and in therapy.

Keywords: art therapy, nature, environment, body, holistic

Brief note about the interviewee:



Beverley A'Court, BSc.Soc.Sci. (Joint hon. Phil. & Psych.), Dip. A.T. After a brief research career in Architectural Psychology, Beverley has been practicing art therapy since 1981, initially employed in acute and long term psychiatric services, learning disability, special and adult education, then pioneering holistic eco-art therapy via supervision, summer schools and courses for professionals and students. As a long-term member of the Findhorn Foundation Community, she has contributed to international conferences, festivals and sustainability education programs, and developed many applications of eco-art therapy. She is an advocate for the recognition of the place of poetic language, the body, ecology and cultural wisdom traditions in art therapy.

A.K.: *You have an artistic and art therapy background and were involved in ecological activism for many years. How can you describe the connection between art, therapy and ecology?*

B.A.: As an artist, art therapist, environmental activist and member of the Findhorn Foundation Community, the practical and even political question was and still is: *How can an ecologically inclusive paradigm be applied in art and clinical art therapy practice?* I rely on sensitive attention to the systemic interplay between the human being and the more-than-human environment, attuning to present-moment resonances between the authentic, expressive art-making and the activities of nature and wildlife.

My journey in art and art therapy since the mid-1980s has been to acknowledge, explore and integrate these related streams:

- the body and its role in the creative and art-therapeutic process,
- the presence and influence of local and distant ecological and cultural environments,
- the best of psychodynamic, relational wisdom.

The pre-historical, perennial roots of art were very much grounded in human beings' relationship with the environments which they inhabited. All our perception and cognition arises within our embodied existence. From a bio-cultural, evolutionary view, the arts appear to have been effective instruments for attunement and adaptation to the natural environment, such as developing perceptual and cognitive skills in discernment for survival and for establishing socially bonding rituals. Ancient art works are often our only or primary window into understanding our ancestors' lives, societies and beliefs. In addition,

ethological perspectives on the arts help us to understand the role of the body as the focus of adaptive activities closely interwoven with 'the behavior of art,' as Ellen Dissanayake puts it.

From stone tools, clay figurines, rock reliefs and cave paintings, from bone and horn puppet-toys, to ceremonial body ornament and costumes decorated with shells and stones, animal teeth, horn, fur and feathers, and later, metal jingles, and embroidered patterns of healing plants and dancing 'goddesses,' what we call 'arts and crafts' were a core element of everyday life, where clothing and every implement had to be hand-made, mostly from locally sourced materials and worked with in a visceral, cooperative process. This suggests a quality of attuned attention, an embodied presence of mind-in-body in relation to materials, 'mindfulness,' eloquently described by contemporary therapists seeking to integrate into therapy and care non-dual, holistic wisdom from Eastern traditions and discoveries concerning neuroplasticity and global ecological imperatives.

In environmental art and holistic art therapy, introducing natural materials and access to outdoor nature immediately stimulates action, interactions with nature; in art-making which vividly evokes and echoes the ancient traditional

activities of our hunter-gatherer ancestry: selecting, gathering, wrapping, weaving and binding. The assembly of 'fascicles,' bundles of visually or symbolically similar or categorically disparate natural objects, which together have meaning and signify some kind of power, is a frequent initial response to the invitation to make art outside in nature.

As an artist and art therapist, through environmental practices I also have come to rely on my own body as a sensitive instrument of resonance to the natural field. I believe that body, mind and 'environment' are always present and interwoven in art-making and art therapy, but the complex dynamics and effects of their interactions have remained largely implicit in our theoretical analyses. The body, its place within the web of life, its structure and movement, though central in making and perceiving art, have not been regarded as such. I believe that the body plays a very important role in environmentally-sensitive, earth-based art and therapy.

A.K.: *Could you please explain the role of the body as 'an environmental phenomenon' in the art making process and therapy in more detail?*



Figure 1. "Talking sticks." Beverly A'Court. Painted and decorated natural objects

B.A.: The following might be regarded as premises of a holistic art and therapy, in particular, holistic eco art therapy which I practice and have developed over the years:

- Including the body in the art making art process and art therapy leads to including the 'environment,' because we are spatial beings and all our activity is in relationship to our life-space and those beings who share in it.
- Our body is our closest 'wilderness,' our own territory of wild nature, most of whose vastly complex processes occur outside our conscious control, without our 'thinking' them into happening or directing them.
- Bodies as living systems communicate at gross and subtle levels, locally and at distance, with the field of interdependent living systems. We radiate and transmit

ourselves biochemically, electrically and via empathy, as we also sense and empathise with others' mind-body states, feelings and motivations, via our mirror neurons and other physiological systems.

'Health' globally increasingly means multifaceted 'well-being,' a state of body-mind-world in which individual and collective vitality and opportunity is maximized in concordance with other living systems. In therapy this is typically manifested as awareness, 'presence,' the ability to remain a fully embodied, connected, a compassionate and attentive witness to self and others, amidst disturbance and distress. Images from many cultural traditions of the fulfilled, happy, 'enlightened' or holy person often portray them within a complex natural environment, a landscape or garden, where they appear in peaceful harmonious existence with all life forms there, which are also in harmony with one another. The entire field is



Figure 2.
"Green Tara." Beverly A'Court.
Acrylic paint on canvas.

integrated, harmonised. The blessed person blesses the land. The footsteps of the holy person bless the path.

A.K.: *Could you please give an example of how the body is involved in art making and holistic art therapy?*

B.A.: The 'Gestural Drawing' technique I often introduce evolved as a tool to mindfully explore the body's inherent skeletal geometry and the natural gestural marks that emerge from resting in deep attention to this. It has become one among many forms of mindful, somatic preparation for outdoor eco-art therapy work as it invites authenticity within the micro-environment, the potential space of the large paper. 'Drawing' is facilitated to flow from the body as a form of non-doing, without direction and what Feldenkrais calls the 'white noise' of effort, contrivance & striving, while being witnessed as we monitor our felt sense. I also use 'breathing drawing' and the slow Tai Chi of writing-drawing your name as ways to meet the emergent authentic self with kindness and recognise its tendency towards harmony and both an 'emptiness' (of fixed, rigid identity) in a Buddhist sense, and meaning.

Such exercises reveal and relax habitual attitudes of mental grasping at agendas, desires, identity and outcomes, facilitating a more open, receptive psyche-somatic state in which to experience and listen to both the body-mind and the field of nature. The process of 'being drawn' rather than drawing, resembles the being 'drawn' along, 'called' by nature to follow a path, towards or into an unfolding landscape. A metaphoric resonance, mirroring how we move through everyday life, is often felt in such moments. The rich discipline of Authentic Movement has been a long term inspiration to me in this exploration.

The role of walking in the creative process and in therapy has its own traditions, often overlooked. Walking is associated with the rhythm and movement of mind and can be seen as a metaphor for how we move through the world. The power of walking to bring our body and creative mind into synchrony, to settle and awaken creativity in art, poetry and music, is testified to by painters, composers, poets, scientists and inventors. Walking facilitates loosening intensely focused attention on the logistics and mechanics of a problem to be fixed, in favor of a roaming awareness that scans the immediate bodily context and synthesizes

diverse elements from experience, creating new images, associations, concepts and insights. Neurologically speaking, in relaxing our default attachment to pre-practiced, familiar verbal concepts, we are providing opportunities to allow new neuronal pathways to develop, entirely new thoughts that let us cognize beyond established boundaries.

As far as therapeutic practice is concerned, in trauma work, for instance, the inclusion of embodiment within therapy can support the journey of recovery, for example in the use of somatic awareness practices to bring clients out of dissociation and post-traumatic flashback, providing short term 'fast aid' and longer term psycho-educational, self-help tools. Mindful body-environment awareness and eco-art exercises can support therapeutic aims by fostering reconnection, returning us to the ground of sensory experience, meeting ourselves and nature in the here and now, as an embodied self-system within a living, physical world-field.

During art therapy, clients spontaneously relate physically to, or find ways to embody their art works, extending them into the space and environment via postures, gestures, then into slow movement and occasionally vocalisation before, during and after art-making or by making marks from subtly emergent impulses and expressive gestures. With permission and support, clients can learn to notice the subtle emergence of somatic changes. They may make images of specific body parts, sensations, symptoms or whole body experiences and follow urges to somatically express their imagery in facial expression, posture and movement, dance, song and spontaneous prayer or poetry. Before, during and after art-making, clients can practice, here and now, embodying states unfamiliar or inaccessible to them in their everyday life and seek resonances in the natural world around them.

A.K.: *What particular environments, apart from working in the studio, do you use in your art and holistic art therapy?*

B.A.: We can extend the idea of the relational field around the artist and the client and art therapist to include place and its inhabitants as significant contributors to our inner development and life. I use various natural environments, wherever I am working. In Findhorn I encourage clients to use the studio, surrounding garden, woodland and

beaches, and to notice and include objects and life forms encountered there in their installations and constructions.

Shamanic earth-based traditions, and many contemporary Indigenous societies, have always viewed the health of one person as interdependent with the health of all the systems in which they participate: family, land, animals, ancestors, god-spirits of place, and respect nature's ability to perceive and involve us and to 'talk back.' Fairy tales abound with whispering forests, talking animals, and saints and heroes who can converse with more-than-human life forms. Nature and her creatures, including our industrial surroundings, erupt into our awareness via loud sounds or sudden shifts of light/dark and other presences, at moments in therapy instantly recognisable to clients as precisely timed, marking a subtle inner impulse and amplifying its significance, or,

during ceremonies, for example, as support for healing rituals.

It is a reciprocal relationship: as art therapists we do not simply use nature merely as a passive scenic backdrop, exploitable for inspiration and resources. We attend to the relationship, to what happens between client and nature and to the client-art-nature-therapist field, just as many indigenous communities use ceremony and ritual to re-establish and harmonize the person-world relationship, often using the arts as the bridging medium.

In open door sessions, I invite the client, if they wish, to loosely include the garden in their awareness and to look and venture outside if, or when, they feel a 'call,' sometimes initially to go to a place that intuitively feels right for them. Invariably this place has some supportive or challenging meaning for them, and an encounter occurs



Figure 3.
"Birch Shaman." Beverley A'Court.
Natural and non-natural objects.

which enters and colors their therapeutic process. Therapy itself, at times, becomes a narrative, in which causal and other significant non-causal, but significant, connections, appear. Complex, synchronistic field phenomena occurring during eco-art therapy, especially during the client's art-making, can be observed to have a powerful catalysing and clarifying effect, 'speaking' directly to the client's imagination.



Figure 4. "Carbon Footprint." Beverley A'Court. Natural and non-natural objects.

A.K.: *Is it also possible or relevant for your art and art therapy to use some nature even while working indoors?*

B.A.: Yes, definitely, I advise arts therapists to do this, to include some living nature in the therapy space (even though of course it, we, are all ultimately 'nature'). Art therapists report that even a single flower or plant becomes a focus for attention and some kind of anchor in the natural world. For example, I keep a basket of driftwood forms, bones, shells, feathers and stones, on show and available during sessions both for my own art and for clients to choose to handle, to hold onto, especially when speaking of traumatic loss and to bring some part of their awareness into

the present, to awaken and nurture their senses and at the same time to invite subliminal wonder; where the wood came from, from what tree, bringing them ever more present in their bodies and connected to the wider sphere of the natural world. Forest trimmings and driftwood from the sea-shore embody the natural elements of the area, with their qualities as once-living material sculpted into organic forms by wind, sand and salt-water. Clients report comfort, warmth, softness and solidity from these objects, which often appear in the art works in various ways, symbolically holding physical and emotional experiences and memories. The 'talking stick,' carved with traditional symbolic forms and the antler horn-handled Scottish Highland walking stick and hazel or willow wands of Celtic tradition also often feature in clients' art, crafted in distinctive ways expressive of the person's emotional concerns and life needs.

Some objects we find, or which find us (I call these 'given' objects and advise clients to choose these rather than take living plants, etc., for their creations), seem to be already 'art,' others we deconstruct and re-assemble to make art. Archetypal forms emerge from our interactions with found media: faces, figures, tiny houses, birds and ships are common, naturally dynamic shapes found in wind- and water-worn wood and stone. Bird-forms often morph into boats and vice versa.

When we make art from found or given materials, there is often a feeling that they belong back in the world with work to do and should at some point be returned to nature or placed in another significant location. Often their final destination arrives in the mind as they are being made, and this becomes part of their meaning.

A.K.: *How do you think your approach to art and art therapy is connected to the eco-human paradigm with its emphasis on the unity and co-creation of the human being and nature?*

B.A.: The holistic eco-human paradigm informing art and therapy is an alternative rationality with its own internal logic requiring appropriate modes of thinking and practice. Buddhist, pre-Buddhist and Taoist meditative, yogic and Western pre-Christian and Christian contemplative traditions have all informed my understanding and therapeutic approaches. We honor the 'integrity' of eco-art, valuing it as one of many



Figure 5. “Ice Ship.” Beverley A’Court. Natural and non-natural objects, gouache on paper.

non-verbal-conceptual forms of knowing, emergent from the communion of subjects, in the process of ‘making meaning’: the inter-subjective space, where the impulses of self-directing life forms meet and communicate. Honoring embodied experience and our clients’ creativity frequently challenges conventional perceptions and values, but art historically has carried this role and demonstrated great power to energize, liberate and evolve new perspectives on reality. Environmental art and art therapy offer opportunities to validate, and advocate for, forms of ‘communion’ between sentient subjects; special relationships with the more-than-human world, characterised by recognition of a shared reality and a tenderness and intimacy that many people lack or marginalize in modern life. These experiences have a potential to restore a damaged sense of self, an ‘eco-identity’, and a power to contribute to the multi-faceted consciousness and well-being associated with inner and outer sustainability.

Holistic eco-art therapy invites and empowers clients to become their own eco-artist-healers, to attune deeply to their nature-within-nature for communing with nature’s vast field and to listen inwardly and outwardly for its song and find ways to express this. As global medicine increasingly includes eco-bio-psycho-social factors, art and art therapy assume a unique role in revealing the creative, healing self at work within the field of causes and conditions, potentially contributing to the reframing of many areas of care, attending to the root causes of body-mind and planetary conditions.

Note: Beverley’s works can also be seen on her website. holisticartherapy.wixsite.com/painthorse

facebook page: [Painthorse holistic eco art therapy](https://www.facebook.com/Painthorse-holistic-eco-art-therapy/). Introductory videos and workshop images. Some works and workshop images can also be found at: beverleyacourt.wordpress.com



Figure 6.
“Arctic Circle.”
Beverly A'Court.
Acrylic paint on canvas

About the interviewer:

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Reference for citations

Kopytin A.I. (2020). Interview with Beverley A'Court. *Ecopoiesis: Eco-Human Theory and Practice*, 1(1) [open access internet journal]. — URL: <http://ecopoiesis.ru> (d/m/y)



Section

Events. Book reviews. Interviews



BOOK REVIEW: JAMES MILLER, «CHINA'S "GREEN REVOLUTION": DAOISM AND THE QUEST FOR A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE»*

* reprinted with permission from the journal CEAT, Creative Arts in Education and Therapy: Eastern and Western Perspectives, (2019), 5(2), 113–116
<http://caet.inspirees.com/caetojsjournals/index.php/caet/article/view/192>

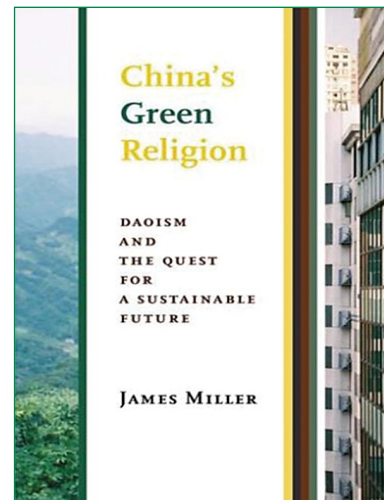
Abstract. This review outlines Miller's argument that the Daoist tradition offers an important perspective for ecological thought based on the pervasion of nature in human existence and the porosity of the human body. Somatic practices can build a basis for the aesthetic perception necessary for ecological action. The reviewer suggests that there is a possible convergence between Daoism and the thinking of *poiesis* that shows the importance of the creative and expressive arts in ecological theory and practice.

Keywords: Daoism, ecology, *wu-wei*, cultivating the Dao, somaesthetics, poiesis

James Miller's book is an important contribution to ecological thought from the standpoint of the Daoist religion. In Miller's view, the current search for a sustainable future for human beings and the planet as a whole is undercut by the Western tradition in which nature is conceived of as something outside of human existence. In this tradition, nature is an object that confronts human beings as subjects. Nature becomes a resource for human development. Sustainability, then, is understood in terms of the preservation of a nature that is being spoiled.

From a Daoist perspective, however, nature is to be understood as creative self-emergence. It has its own subjectivity, a subjectivity that it shares with all beings, including humans. The human body is porous, and nature pervades our existence. We are not outside of it, confronting nature as an other. Instead, Miller sees Daoism as providing a liquid ecology, one in which the Dao flows into and out of all beings as *Qi*, or liquid vitality. This is a radically different conception from the Western one governing modernity.

Miller is careful to note that he is not proposing a form of "Orientalism," an essentialist reading of an "ancient" Chinese culture that we must recover. Rather China itself follows the Western model, and the ruthless destruction of much of the Chinese landscape is seen as a necessary consequence of development. This process is justified by an interpretation of the Confucian tradition, in which patriarchal authority is vested in the leader



Book cover of *China's Green Revolution: Daoism and the Quest for a Sustainable Future* (<https://cup.columbia.edu/book/chinas-green-religion/9780231175869>).

who follows the mandate of heaven that has been granted to him.

Daoism, instead, is a dissonant element in Chinese culture, one that provides an alternative model for development, based on neither authoritarianism nor passive acceptance. Rather, the Daoist conception of action is understood in terms of the principle of *wu-wei*, usually translated as "non-action." *Wu-wei* is sometimes understood as leading to quietism and withdrawal from society. Miller, however, sees it as a process

of catalysis. Change agents who act in accordance with *wu-wei* are catalysts. They do not bring about change but, rather, intervene in such a way that subjects are empowered to undertake the action that is necessary for their own creative self-transformation.

This seems to me to be similar to Thoreau's and Ghandi's conception of non-violence, which was used by Martin Luther King in the civil rights movement in the United State and by others elsewhere, and also the philosophy of experiential education, in which the responsibility of the teacher is not primarily to instill knowledge into the student but to help him or her to develop their resources in their own specific way. It is also like the therapeutic process. In expressive arts therapy, in which therapists' interventions stem from the "aesthetic responsibility" to help clients find their "aesthetic response," their affective-bodily experience gives them a sense of their resources that is necessary to make life-change possible.

In fact, Miller sees the greatest barrier to sustainability to lie in modern individuals' experience of themselves as isolated subjects separate from the world around them. One of the characteristic features of modernity is the creation of a "buffered" sense of self (the term is Charles Taylor's), a self-protective device that aims at insulation from the impingements of urban life. In perhaps the most interesting part of the book, the author develops the notion of "cultivating the Dao," a process of self-development through meditation on texts and through physical disciplines such as yoga or t'ai chi. Here he makes reference to the work of Merleau-Ponty who saw the body as providing our access to the world, in contradistinction to the *cogito* of Descartes. Our bodily inherence in the world is a recursive process in which we both touch and are touched. Indeed, Miller suggests that Descartes' *cogito ergo sum* (I think therefore I am) be replaced by *tango et tangor* (I touch and am touched).

However, Miller goes beyond Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of the body, using Richard Shusterman's critique of the notion of the spontaneous activity of perception by stressing that, in the modern world, we need a discipline of "somaesthetics," a training of bodily experience that gives access to a connection between self and world. Miller also criticizes Merleau-Ponty's "reluctance to speak about the depth of the inner body where the material experience of the world is actually

generated" (p. 116). He quotes Sundar Sarukkai who speaks of yoga as providing a "continuous, conscious grasp of the inner body" (p. 117). To Miller, in contrast to modernity's "buffered" body, such disciplines "can provide the aesthetic or sensory foundation for ecologically sensitive patterns of behavior" (p. 118). Therefore, to overcome our experience of separation from the world around us, we need not only new ways of understanding our inherence in the world but also somatic disciplines that will give us an experience of the porosity of our bodily belonging. This will provide an "affective" relationship to the environment that can underpin the new cognitive understanding that we need.

Miller is clear that the changes in our relation to our environment that are necessary for sustainability cannot be achieved through individual activity alone. Rather, he writes of the ethical and political transformations that a Daoist-inspired ecology requires. In addition, he reminds us that change also means a transformation in our sense of the sacred, a theological or cosmological transformation. Miller was trained as a theologian and understands the need for a radical revisioning of our place in the universe. He sees in Daoism what we may call a post-Christian or post-monotheist basis for the "green" or "dark green" vision that has been set forth in some versions of ecological thought. This aspect of his thinking could be developed further in future work.

I also see the possibility for a more developed conception of the role of the arts in a Daoist ecology. When the arts are grounded in the concept of *poiesis*, their function in human existence is seen as more profound than the mere representation of things and events. Rather, *poiesis* is the fundamental way in which human existence takes place. We shape ourselves in response to the way the world around us affects us and, in so doing, shape the world anew. This activity of shaping is a receptive one, not to be understood as creation, in which form is imposed on inchoate matter. Rather we are guided by what comes to us as an image or felt sense and respond accordingly, "following the image," in James Hillman's phrase. The profundity of the arts and their impact on human experience rests upon this more fundamental character of human existence as poietic. Perhaps ecology could also be seen as *poiesis*, not so much a product of technology but rather as an essentially artistic process of receptive formation (see my article, "Nature as a Work of Art: Towards a

Poietic Ecology,” in E. Levine and S. Levine, eds., *New Developments in Expressive Arts Therapy: The Play of Poiesis*, 2017). The creative and expressive arts then would have an important role in developing this new worldview.

I have not done justice in this review to the detailed investigation of the Daoist tradition that is contained in James Miller's book. Miller has a deep understanding of this tradition and recounts the ecologically relevant parts in ways that would well reward the readers' attention. For example, his treatment of the tradition called “The Way of Highest Clarity,” in which internal visual meditation is utilized to bring the sacred dimension of existence into the body of the adept, is particularly interesting in terms of the notion of cultivating the Dao. I can only recommend an intensive study

of this book for a deeper understanding of the contemporary relevance of the Daoist tradition for ecological thought. As Miller himself suggests, such an understanding, accompanied by heightened aesthetic perception, may help us not only in pursuing the goal of sustainability in the sense of preservation, but also a more vital conception of nature as *flourishing*, one in which human beings and their environment are brought into a mutual process of creative self-development.

Reviewer:

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Reference for citations



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BOOK REVIEW: “ENVIRONMENTAL EXPRESSIVE THERAPIES: NATURE-BASED THEORY AND PRACTICE”

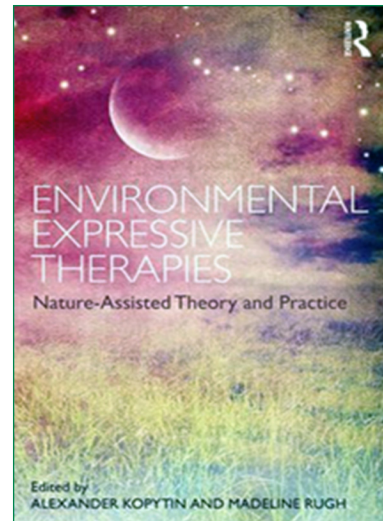
Edited by A.I. Kopytin and M. Rugh.
New York: Routledge/Taylor & Francis, 2017. — 266 p.

Abstract. The review outlines the book “Environmental Expressive Psychotherapies: Nature-Friendly Theory and Practice” as reflecting the development of new health-promoting approaches and types of psychological support based on the alliance of nature and the arts. The book reflects the conceptual foundations of the new approach, as well as the variety of forms and methods of work using fine art, music, narrative activity, play activities, performance and therapeutic ceremonies.

Keywords: art therapy, Earth-based, ecopsychology, ecotherapy, environmental expressive therapy

Publication of the book *Environmental expressive therapies: nature-based theory and practice*, edited by Alexander Kopytin and Madeline Rugh by the publisher Routledge is a significant event in the expressive art therapies milieu and related fields of the health-promoting practices based on the creative expression and human interaction with the environment. The book makes a significant contribution to the development of new therapeutic approaches and arts-assisted learning methods based on the alliance of nature and the arts. The range of innovative approaches to treatment, education and social work, based on the creative interaction of human beings with the natural environment, is gradually expanding. However, they remain poorly known to most professionals, in particular those dealing with mental health issues. In the United States, the book evoked a considerable interest and required by many libraries in the country, including the Case Western Reserve University library, where I recently completed my graduate studies at the Department of Applied Social Sciences.

I got an idea of expressive therapies earlier, when I learned art therapy at the post-graduate diploma course in art therapy in Russia. However, reading *Environmental expressive therapies: nature-based theory and practice* greatly expanded my ideas about the use of environmental, nature-based approaches in expressive therapies. At present, an emerging field of ecological, nature-assisted expressive therapies along with other scientific disciplines and therapeutic approaches related to



Book cover of *Environmental expressive therapies: nature-based theory and practice* (<https://www.routledge.com/Environmental-Expressive-Therapies-Nature-Assisted-Theory-and-Practice/Kopytin-Rugh/p/book/9781138233089>)

concepts of ecology and the environment, such as environmental psychology, ecopsychology, ecotherapy, ‘deep ecology’ and eco-health, etc., reflect the increasing preoccupation of many people with reestablishing positive, sustainable ways of relating to nature. These approaches represent a response of the growing multi-professional community to the global environmental crisis and its efforts to encourage a shift in approaches to use therapy not only as a way of achieving personal

health and well-being, but as a way to improve people's relationships with nature too.

Environmental or ecological expressive therapies (eco-arts therapies) establish a new approach to nature-based therapy, or ecotherapy. "Nature-based expressive therapies are characterized by their original theoretical framework, which includes, a paradigm, and forms of therapy that bring the arts and nature together to provide beneficial effects both for human and nonhuman worlds. This new approach strives to achieve well-being and multiple treatment goals for individuals, families and communities and promote sustainable styles of life through people's involvement in expressive and creative activities in relation to environments in which they live" [1, P.2].

The spectrum of expressive therapies embraced in the book is broad and includes either specialized therapeutic approaches using one particular expressive form, such as art therapy or music therapy, on the one hand, or those based on the integrative arts approach, like expressive arts therapy, on the other hand. Other expressive therapeutic specializations like creative writing and play therapy, as well as therapeutic systems integrating expressive arts and other nonverbal therapies, such as animal-assisted therapy, wilderness journeys, adventure therapy, contemplative practices in nature, and some others enrich this spectrum.

The book is one of the first publications related to nature-assisted expressive therapy. The role of ecopsychology in supporting nature-assisted expressive therapies should be emphasized. Environmental psychology or ecopsychology is a field of study that examines the interconnections between environments and human beings with their emotions, cognition and behavior. As environmental sustainability issues became of greater concern to society, the field has increased its focus on how humans affect, and are affected by, environments. In an effort to raise environmental awareness and promote sustainable lifestyle, environmental psychology develops, and empirically validates, practical intervention strategies.

The ecopsychology/environmental psychology field is broad and includes a number of special therapeutic approaches embraced in the ecotherapy spectrum enhancing people-environment interactions and personal well-being.

The mission of ecopsychology, as proposed by T. Roszak [1] is to validate that an emotional connection to nature is normal and healthy, and that

it is possible to make the environmental movement more effective by appealing to positive ecological bonds. Ecotherapy is a therapeutic strand linked to ecopsychology, which includes nature-based methods of physical and psychological healing which involve different forms of human interaction with the natural environment, such as garden therapy (horticulture therapy), therapy by immersion in the natural environment, adventure therapy, therapy based on restoration of the natural environment, animal-assisted therapy and some others.

The book includes highlights of the work that expressive therapists from different parts of the globe have accomplished over the last several years to meet environmental and sustainable development challenges and establish a new platform and instruments for therapeutic practices. The book has been edited to provide practitioners not only with the new theoretical perspectives, but with methods and tools that can help them to incorporate nature into their daily work with different populations and patients, their varied needs, and clinical and psychosocial issues.

The book consists of the two parts. The first part of the book, "The emerging paradigm and theoretical constructs of environmental and ecological expressive therapies" presents theoretical foundations of these therapies. Madeline Rugh (USA) explores the new, environmental perspectives on human health, ego, self and human development from the planetary view.

Alexander Kopytin (Russian Federation) defines the role and the functions of the arts in providing meaningful and mutually supporting human connection to nature. He also presents basic theoretical assumptions of environmental expressive therapies related to the idea of therapeutic setting, personality development and creative human function. Ronen Berger (Israel) presents theoretical foundations and principles of his Nature Therapy method and some issues that concern the professional development of Nature Therapy and other environmental, nature-assisted expressive therapies.

The second part of the book presents a wide spectrum of nature-assisted expressive therapy practices with different target groups as well as rich empirical material related to self-development practices based on human creative interaction with the natural environment. Jean Davis (USA) shares her experience of drawing from nature.

Mary Raynolds Thompson and Kate Thompson (USA and UK) explore the three circles of self and existence, from ecological and existential perspectives, and demonstrate specific writing techniques for each part of the model.

Janet A. Courtney (USA) considers some advantages and ways of utilizing the metaphorical elements of nature as "co-therapist" in ecopsychology play therapy. Beverley A'Court (UK) explores the art of mindful walking in earth-based art therapy. Dina Schapiro (USA) outlines the main ideas related to the Marble House project and presents the transformative quality the project offers the artists due to their absorption in the natural environment and an 18 century mansion.

Eric Pfeifer (Germany) presents outdoor music therapy and other nature-related approaches to music therapy as well as current research and case vignettes that exemplify their applications with children and adolescents. Lia Naor (Israel) focuses on the concept of human wholeness as a key component of healthy human development, cultivated and nurtured through the natural environment. Sally Brucker (USA) outlines both the principles and practice of incorporating the use ceremony and ritual in the work within the broader frame of eco-arts therapies. Finally, Straja Linder King (Canada) presents her original method of Animal-Assisted Art Therapy (AAAT) and her personal experience of human-animal bonds.

This book is a significant step forward in the exploration of mutually healing bonds of human beings with Nature. It is a rich source of ideas and practices that can stimulate not only expressive/creative therapists of different specializations, but a wider circle of mental health workers and artists, those employed at educational, social and cultural institutions, and all those who seek new avenues to promote human and environmental health and well-being. The book opens up new prospects for the use of natural factors in treatment and presents the foundation for nature-friendly theory, methodology and tools.

I hope the book will promote professional contacts and the exchange of ideas and experience for a growing global community of specialists striving to unite the healing potential of nature and the arts in various fields of their work. The book also draws the attention of the international professional community to its responsibility in the face of the environmental challenges and the need to join efforts in the interests of human and environmental health and well-being.

Reviewer:

Fedotova Anna

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DAOISM AND ECOLOGY: AN INTERVIEW WITH JAMES MILLER*

* reprinted with permission from the journal CEAT, Creative Arts in Education and Therapy: Eastern and Western Perspectives, (2019), 5(2), 113–116 <http://caet.inspirees.com/caetojsjournals/index.php/caet/article/view/192>

Abstract. The interview focuses on James Miller's thinking about the relation between Daoism and ecology. Miller believes that, to develop a foundation for ecological sustainability, we need to break down the separation between human beings and the world we live in. This can be done by Daoist techniques of bodily cultivation, based on the concept of the body as porous and interpenetrating with the environment. Practices such as these will lay the groundwork for an aesthetic foundation of ecology.

Keywords: China, Daoism, ecology, Qi, bodily cultivation, tong (interpenetration), aesthetic transformation

Brief note about the interviewee:



James Miller, PhD, a leading authority on Chinese religion and ecology, is Professor of Humanities at Duke Kunshan University, Chair of the Division of Arts and Humanities, and Co-Director of the Humanities Research Center.

Stephen K. Levine (SKL): *Your recent book, *China's Green Religion: Daoism and the Quest for a Sustainable Future*, brings together your thinking on religion, Chinese culture, and ecological sustainability. Can you tell our readers how your background and experience led you to develop in this direction?*

James Miller (JM): My work on Chinese religions and ecology goes back twenty years to when I was a graduate student. I attended a conference at Harvard on Daoism and Ecology and was so taken by the experience that I became the coeditor

of the conference proceedings, published by Harvard University's Center for the Study of World Religions in 2001. Since then I have continued my work on religion and nature in China.

SKL: *Your recent writing focuses on the problem of the relationship between human beings and nature. What do you see as the main problem in the Western conception of this relationship? How do aspects of traditional Chinese culture offer us an alternative to our usual way of thinking about nature?*

JM: Of course it's hard to generalize about a "Western" conception of nature, but I think it is fair to say that Western modernity established its dominance when a chain of binary dichotomies coalesced in the social imagination. These binary categories—modern/primitive, science/religion, Europe/non-Europe, White/non-White, mind/nature, spirit/matter, human/animal and culture/nature—have come to define our modern approach to nature and environment. Chinese approaches founded in yin-yang thinking are much more conducive to an integrated approach to thinking about ecology.

SKL: *You use Daoism, specifically the concept of Qi, as a framework that can help us reconceive our thinking about ecological sustainability. What is it about the Daoist tradition that enables us to do that?*

JM: Qi refers to the life principle or vital energy that animates the cosmos. All things are comprised of Qi and thereby have a connection to and influence upon all other beings. This means that ethical principles about life are not confined to the human world (do not steal), but also to the nonhuman world (do not pollute waters). These principles have been enshrined in Daoist ethical codes going back some 1500–2000 years.

SKL: *You emphasize that we need not only a theoretical transformation but a practical one, based on bodily cultivation. How can we achieve this?*

JM: Daoist cultivation techniques are based on paying attention to the flow of Qi in and through the body. The starting point is being aware of one's own breath. Anything we can do to break down the distinction between the inside and outside of our bodies is valuable.

SKL: *You have written about the Daoist notion of a porous body and of nature as spontaneous and self-transforming. Can you say more about this? Are there tendencies in contemporary Western thought that bring us closer to this perspective?*

JM: One of the key concepts that I elaborate in the book is that of *tong* 通, which can be translated as pervasion or interpenetration. Basically, it is a key Daoist term that indicates that the body and the cosmos are mutually interpenetrating. The body is

fundamentally defined by its nine orifices, and if we think of the skin as a porous membrane on top of that, then we can begin to visualize ourselves as constantly processing energy and material from "outside." So rather than think of the body as a static object which changes slowly over time, and the environment as a collection of another set of static objects that also change slowly over time, think of the body and the world together as a set of mutually interpenetrating dynamics of matter and energy. This view shares some similarities with the vitalism of Western thinkers such as Bergson. It also emphasizes the primacy of the body, similar to the thinking of Merleau-Ponty.

SKL: *Since our journal has the mission of building bridges between East and West through the practice of the arts, it would be of particular interest if you explain the aesthetic dimension of the kind of transformation you envisage. How is the aesthetic dimension tied to your conception of the body's porous relationship to the world?*

JM: The aesthetic dimension is the foundation for ecological transformation. The way that we perceive, sense, and experience the natural world in relation to our own bodies is fundamentally an aesthetic activity. From this aesthetic foundation we then develop the ethics and politics to transform our world into an ecologically flourishing one.

SKL: *Can you tell us what constitutes an aesthetic foundation in your view? How can we transform our bodily experience of the world in such a way that it can serve the process of ecological transformation? Are there specific Daoist disciplines to do this?*

JM: Yes, there are many Daoist practices that in my view aim towards the integration of the inner body with the cosmic body. These are done with the goal of producing a transcendent or immortal body for the Daoist practitioner. I'm not interested in these religious disciplines per se, but rather the underlying aesthetic principle that it is possible through embodied ritual and meditative practice to change one's perception of the world. This is important for me because I think that the environmental movement has largely functioned at a legal, political, and scientific level and has failed to engage the mass of ordinary people on an embodied, physical way. This has only started

to happen recently as people realize that their own personal health is bound up with the health of the environments that they live in.

SKL: *In what way would the transformation of bodily experience to develop an aesthetic relation to the world lead to the kind of ethics and politics that you are speaking of?*

JM: When people realize that their own health and livelihood are compromised by pollution and climate change, then this inevitably produces a change in ethics and politics. Too often, however, environmental ethics has followed a quasi-Christian trope of “saving the world” as though the world is something outside of us that needs our care and attention. It is hard to persuade people to think of the “environment” as an object of ethical concern or to organize politics around the transition to sustainability so long as people think of this as something extrinsic to their own interests. But as soon as people realize that sustainability and flourishing are about their own health, wealth, and prosperity, then there is less need to make ethical or political arguments in favor of some imagined idea of care for the earth.

SKL: *We usually think of “aesthetics” as the philosophical discipline that studies the arts and their place in human experience. Do you see the arts as having an important role in the kind of transformation of which you speak? Are there examples of this in Chinese culture, e.g., Chinese landscape painting?*

JM: I am in favor of all means of helping people to realize that their own life depends on the life of the planet. As I mentioned above, too often, this has been couched in rational, intellectual, scientific arguments. But what this failed to notice is that people’s lives are not changed so much by rational argument but by embodied experience.

I think that all forms of embodied experience, including the experience of art as a sensual, aesthetic experience, can do an enormous amount to fill in the gaps that science and reason could never fill.

SKL: *Contemporary China itself seems to be in an ecological crisis. What tendencies in Chinese culture mitigate against this, if any? Politics in China today operates in a centralized and top-down manner, as opposed to the spontaneity of wu-wei. Can a Daoist perspective on nature be put into practice in such a situation? Can philosophers and artists assist in this transformation and, if so, how?*

JM: My students at Duke Kunshan University are deeply concerned about environmental issues because they recognize that their future is being compromised by the (in)actions of their parents’ generation. I find that they are largely ignorant of anything from traditional Chinese philosophy and religion, except for some conservative Confucian values. Philosophers and artists are key to bringing the power of Daoist values and ideals back to the center of Chinese culture. Frankly, however, this is enormously difficult because the education system is dominated by science, technology, and English language learning. The positive side of this is that there is enormous appetite in China for learning about how Chinese culture can contribute to ecological issues.

Interviewer:

Stephen K. Levine

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Exhibition review. “The coming world: Ecology as the new politics. 2030–2100”

The exhibition “The Coming World: Ecology as the New Politics 2030–2100” is a major environmental exhibition project that was held at the “Garage” cultural center in Moscow from June 28 to December 1, 2019, reflecting the stance and ideas of contemporary artists, theorists and activists about ecology and environmental issues. The exhibition was curated by Snejana Krasteva and Ekaterina Lazareva. It brought together historical and new works by over 50 Russian and international artists and occupied the entire Museum building. It took a look at a future already in the making, when the environmental agenda is becoming one of the main political questions.

The time period indicated in the name of the exhibition refers to two dates from the field of popular science and science fiction classics. According to many forecasts, for example, the forecast of the famous ecologist and demographer Paul Ehrlich, the date of the exhaustion of world oil reserves and, accordingly, the end of the oil age, was 2030.

The science fiction writer Arthur Clarke in the 1960s denoted 2100 as the year, when human life will be able expand to other star systems. Thus,

the exhibition refers to a certain period in the future of the planet and civilization, when the exhaustion of the planet’s natural resources can occur and, at the same time, the development of technology will make the colonization of other worlds possible.

The spectrum of topics reflected at the “Coming World” exhibition revolves around two topics — environmental protection and an expanded understanding of ecology. The first topic is related to the idea that the issues of climate change, the extinction of biological species, pollution, renewable natural resources, overpopulation, etc. can no longer be perceived as secondary and should become crucial in everyday politics: in the economy, in everyday life, education and leisure etc. An expanded understanding of ecology is associated with the recognition of the close connection of biological, technological, social and political systems. In this case, ecology is understood from the point of view of the continuous interaction of humankind, other biological species, and inanimate nature.

The project opened with John Akomfrah’s six-channel video installation ‘Purple’. Using archival



Photo: John Akomfrah's installation Purple

footage and newly shot film from across several continents, the British artist has created an impressive saga about global warming and its effects on human life and the planet's biodiversity.

The exhibition featured a number of historical works that marked turning points in humanity's relationship with nature: from sixteenth-century tapestries to the invention of land art in 1969, which made nature an artistic medium. The emergence of land art and environmental art coincided with a surge of interest in environmental protection, which led to the development of ecological policies at the state and public levels. In the half-century that followed, art went through various stages in its relationship with ecology: from rendering the objective world to seeing it as a system and from irony to practical solutions for everyday life.

The field of environmental art has developed alongside an increasing awareness of ecological matters and the rise of the environmental movement since the 1960s. However, "Once an area of interest for a relatively small group of people, art that addresses environmental issues has in the last five years become part of the artistic mainstream." [1, p.6] Art possesses its own means of solving the problems facing the planet. The artist's role is not, however, to provide definitive answers to these problems. "Unlike the scientist, who must follow established scientific methods, the artist is free to question and redefine anything or everything at any stage, to be wide-ranging and open to all possibilities... As a result, artistic projects are able to withstand a far higher level of risk than typical scientific experiments, which often come with expectations of tangible results or even profit for their funders. They can engage local communities and garner broad support in ways that science alone can rarely do. They can offer tools for reflection, discussion, awareness and action that lead to new ways of thinking about and of being in the world. And they can bring about real change — sometimes deliberately, sometimes unintentionally — that has lasting benefit, whether to the few or to the many." [1, p.8]

A spectrum of engagement with nature through art is wide and embraces different positions from objective observer to active intervention in order to provide positive effects on the environment and our behavior. Environmental psychology helps to expand our understanding of the arts as a representation and dynamic form of the constructive interplay between human beings and

their surroundings. One of the important concepts of environmental psychology which can help to support the ecological application of arts is that humans are engaged and purposeful in their relation to the environment.

Although environmental issues are generally discussed in terms of real life and political action, art can be a unique medium in the development of ecological discourse. Art can serve the environmental agenda, empowering its agents to employ both abstract and concrete thinking, embodying intangible relations, and synthesizing processes. In short, art epitomizes an ecological way of thinking. Ultimately, the environmental question is the most universal contemporary agenda. It is the only one that can unite people across the planet, allowing them to experience a tiny personal action as something political.

The exhibition has been developed in dialogue with artists and activists and has helped to conceptualize exhibition practice from the environmental point of view. The design was determined by the ambition to reuse structures and materials from previous projects. Where possible, works were reconstructed on site according to the artists' instructions instead of shipping them, in order to lower the project's carbon footprint. Some art pieces were produced especially for the exhibition, and around 10 are new versions of existing works, some of which were created in collaboration with local expert communities: beekeepers, jellyfish and water purification researchers, and halotherapists.

Other projects present artistic strategies that involve direct social action, such as Wooloo's open community, Human Hotel. Committed to the ideals of responsible consumption, the project team chose not to produce a paper exhibition guide. Garage published an e-catalogue, mobile and audio guides of the exhibition, and a video dictionary of environmental terms in Russian Sign Language developed by the Museum's Inclusive Programs Department.

From mid-September, part of Garage Atrium was occupied by a new project for the exhibition "The Coming World: Ecology as the New Politics 2030–2100", a large-scale biomorphic sculpture by the group Numen/For Use made from cellulose adhesive tape. Resembling a semi-transparent tentacular structure or a rhizomatic plant inside of which visitors can wander, the corridors of interconnected cocoons will reproduce the architecture we observe in nature. In some places, an emphasis



Photo: Doug Aitken, *The Garden*

was placed on performative works inside the exposition, which allowed the audience to convey a more emotional perception of the world and the interaction between man and nature.

During the exhibition, there was also a large-scale eco forum “The Coming World,” including thematic tour modules. Accompanied by experienced guides, visitors could receive answers to the most pressing questions on the topics “Atmosphere,” “Water,” “Evolution,” and take a fresh look at the relationship of a person with the environment. The project could be visited individually in company with an audio guide or together with an excursion group.

The exhibition “The Coming World: Ecology as a New Policy” was a major event, marking the cutting edge of the development of contemporary art

as part of the environmental movement and the reality in which modern humanity exists. It also reflected the future with its potential scenarios for the development of humanity and the environment, which is created today by both nature and human hands. These scenarios of the future today are largely determined by the efforts of artists, scientists, environmental activists and of the growing circle of the nature-friendly and environmentally-sensitive public.

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