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ECO-HUMAN THEORY AND PRACTICE



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Contents

Editorial: the ecopoietic vision and the role of arts 3

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

Arran Gare

The theoretical foundations of socialist eco-civilizational progress. 6

Varvara Sidorova

*Understanding the relationship between culture and nature from the perspective
of the expressive arts 15*

Practices and technologies of the eco-human approach

Monika Wigger

Natural and artictic aspects of art therapy 24

Alexander Kopytin

Developing human bonds with nature through photography 32

In resonance with the Earth

Judith Greer Essex

The albatross and me 40

Jenna Montgomery

Clearing space for wildflower season 42

Alexander Kopytin

Thus spoke Taliesin 44

Stephen K. Levine

Earth our home 53

In resonance with the earth

Alexander Kopytin

Interview with environmental arts therapist Gary Nash 58

In memorial to John Cobb 63

THE ECOPOIETIC VISION AND THE ROLE OF ARTS

"O brave new world that has such beings in it."

(from Shakespeare's Tempest)

We live in a time of ecological crisis. The world we live in has almost been destroyed by industrial pollution, war, neglect and overdevelopment. The concept of the Anthropocene, the sense that today there is no such thing as nature independent of human activity, signifies ultimately that we have created a world in which we may destroy ourselves. We may well ask, what kind of beings are we that could do such a thing?

The concept of the Anthropocene tells us that we can only be understood in ecological terms. We indicate this with the term, "Eco-human," a term which itself signifies a shift in the Western conception of human being. From Plato to Descartes, we understood ourselves as separate from nature, distinguished by our capacity to reason. Now we see that we ourselves are natural beings, part of the world in which we live.

However, although we are part of nature, we do have a special relationship to it, indicating this by the term, "ecopoiesis." The word "poiesis," from the Greek for art-making, means a capacity to respond to what is given and to shape it in a way that aims at beauty. Of course, our shaping may aim at profit or domination rather than beauty, but even our mis-shaping shows us that we are, we might say, ecopoietic by nature. We are not only ecological but ecopoietic beings.

The complex issues of our human and societal development as ecopoietic beings are presented in the different sections of this issue of the journal.

The quest to create an ecological civilization, in particular, through the lenses of eco-Marxism, is considered in Arran Gare's article, *THE THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS OF SOCIALIST ECO-CIVILIZATIONAL PROGRESS*. It continues a series of publications on the ecological civilization presented in the previous issue. Though such terms as 'ecological civilization', or 'eco-Marxism' are problematic, they can be clarified by defining them through concepts deriving from ecology, and as such, the quest for ecological civilization can be seen as the quest to develop and realize an 'ecological culture', taking ecology as

the root metaphor for comprehending the whole of reality.

It is argued in the article that the concept of ecopoiesis, deriving from ecology, provides a bridge between the natural sciences and the humanities, providing the basis for the reformulation of the social sciences and political philosophy required to create a new world order, an order that is committed to augmenting the life of the biosphere and human communities at all levels, while facilitating the comprehension of humanity as part of nature required to achieve this. In the immediate future, this project involves upholding the rule of law internationally, integrating the quest for a multipolar world-order with the quest for a global ecological civilization.

In Varvara Sodorova's article, *UNDERSTANDING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CULTURE AND NATURE FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE EXPRESSIVE ARTS*, the way in which the human body produces the unity of the cultural and natural dimensions of the human being is considered. It is believed that the body acts as the natural basis of humans, connecting us with the organic foundations of natural life. At the same time, the arts act as a means of organizing and expressing different aspects of human bodily experience. Thus, the role of the arts is outlined. It is emphasized that the arts restore our connection with the body, nature and traditional cultures, returning ancient wisdom to humans in modern conditions.

Some advantages and the ambiguous relationship between nature and the arts are explored in the articles presented in the second section of the journal, *Practices and technologies of the eco-human approach*. In Monika Wigger's article, *NATURAL AND ARTISTIC ASPECTS OF ART THERAPY*, those issues are scrutinized on the examples of the works of artists and by clients' work in art therapy. The projects of some artists who turned to the depiction of nature or the study of human relations to nature, such as Joseph Beuys, Andy Goldsworthy, Claude Monet and Thomas Wrede, are commented on. Brief descriptions of examples of artistic design of a psychiatric hospital and of the reflection of nature through art in

the psychiatric hospital in Münster (Germany), as well as interaction with the natural world during art therapy, in particular, with patients suffering from oncological diseases, are given.

In Alexander Kopytin's article, DEVELOPING HUMAN BONDS WITH NATURE THROUGH PHOTOGRAPHY, the role of photography in providing a meaningful human connection to nature is analyzed and illustrated through some examples of using photography as a powerful means of developing ecological culture. Some reasons why photography can be a valuable tool of nature-based practices supporting the environmental consciousness are presented.

IN RESONANCE WITH THE EARTH section of the journal our vital human bonds to nature is further explored through the means of expressive arts. In this issue, this section includes poetry and artworks by Judith Greer Essex and Jenna

Montgomery and a new series of poems by Stephen K. Levine and Alexander Kopytin.

In the interview, British environmental arts therapist, Gary Nash, talks about the growing area of nature-based creative arts-therapy practice in the UK and environmental arts therapies initiatives that he and his colleagues have developed. He makes a special tribute to the memory of his colleague and the pioneer of environmental arts therapy, Ian Siddons Heginworth, who has sadly passed this year.

We also make a special tribute to Dr. John B. Cobb, who died on the 26th of December, 2024. He was a world-renowned process philosopher and process theologian, a leading figure of constructive postmodernism, and a pioneer of ecological civilization theory.

Stephen K. Levine

Section

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



THE THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS OF SOCIALIST ECO-CIVILIZATIONAL PROGRESS



ARRAN Gare

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Abstract. The quest to create an ecological civilization has been promoted for the most part by eco-Marxists committed to creating some form of eco-socialism. It is suggested in this paper that what is meant by all these terms is problematic, but they can be clarified by defining them through concepts deriving from ecology, and as such, the quest for ecological civilization can be seen as the quest to develop and realize an 'ecological culture', taking ecology as the root metaphor for comprehending the whole of reality. It is argued that the concept of ecopoiesis, deriving from ecology, provides a bridge between the natural sciences and the humanities, providing the basis for the reformulation of the social sciences and political philosophy required to create a new world order, an order that is committed to augmenting the life of the biosphere and human communities at all levels, while facilitating the comprehension of humanity as part of nature required to achieve this. In the immediate future, this project involves defending the United Nations and upholding the rule of law internationally, integrating the quest for a multipolar world-order with the quest for a global ecological civilization.

Keywords: ecological civilization, multipolar world, eco-Marxism, ecological culture, ecopoiesis, political philosophy, United Nations, rule of law

Introduction

A problem with the quest for an ecological civilization is that there is no consensus on what these two terms mean, and without this consensus, offering the theoretical foundations for ecological civilization is also problematic. To simplify things, I will align myself with those who see ecological civilization as a global civilization based on a very different relationship between humanity and nature than presently exists. To simplify matters further, I will take eco-Marxism working towards eco-socialism as a point of departure. Even this is problematic, as there are so many different interpretations of Marx, and Marx himself said if there is one thing that he knew, it was that he was not a Marxist, and socialism means very different things to different people. However, I believe a careful reading of Marx in conjunction with the work of the eco-Marxists points to what is crucial, and justifies seeing ecological civilization as a development of eco-Marxism in the

quest for socialism conceived of as subordinating markets to communities to unite humanity in all its diversity.

The contributions of Marx and eco-Marxism

Marx, following and building on the work of Sismondi, had identified and analysed the dynamics of a new socio-economic formation, later labelled capitalism, that originated in Western Europe, and having established itself, by its own logic had to expand and grow until it encompassed the entire world. This is the era of modernity. The ultimate goal of human activity in this formation is not producing goods that are useful, but the growth of capital, requiring a return on capital investments greater than the capital that has been invested, although this is underpinned and integrated with a vision of the future in which ruling elites will have total technological control

of nature and people. All other human activities and nature itself are understood and evaluated in terms of facilitating capital accumulation and the technological control required to achieve it. If useful things that benefit humanity are produced in this process, this is incidental. This way of thinking presupposes and advances commodification through which items in the world are evaluated in terms of their exchange value, and this formation has driven commodification extensively, to encompass the world, and intensively, commodifying more and more aspects of reality. The result is a highly dynamic system. As Marx and Engels put it in the *Communist Manifesto* [26, 475f.), it is characterized by:

‘Constant revolutionizing of production, uninterrupted disturbance of all social conditions, everlasting uncertainty and agitation distinguish the bourgeois epoch from all earlier ones. All fixed, fast-frozen relations, with their train of ancient and venerable prejudices and opinions, are swept away, all newformed ones become antiquated before they can ossify. All that is solid melts into air.’

The eco-Marxists, Patel and Moore [30], have shown how this drive to capital accumulation involves the constant drive to cheapen the cost of inputs, whether labour power or natural resources. This has resulted in these inputs, including people, being conceived as objects to be controlled efficiently by agents who initially saw themselves as outside nature. Patel and Moore show that right from the beginning the quest for cheap labour and materials was associated with imperialism, initially to provide slaves for plantations and cheap land and materials. Both slaves and the materials extracted were quantified and processed as nothing but objects. This objectification of reality, associated with commodification, paved the way for the atomistic, mechanist view of nature, society and people promulgated in the Seventeenth Century scientific revolution, which provided knowledge of how to achieve technological mastery of the world, although blinding people to the destruction of the processes within nature and society required for this technological control and for the economy to function. This mechanistic world-view was often conjoined with Cartesian dualism in which the masters conceived themselves as fundamentally different from and outside the world they were dominating. Cartesian dualism was largely superseded by Darwinian evolutionary theory and Social Darwinism characterizing evolutionary progress as

the domination by the powerful of the weak and the elimination of the weak, with organisms, including humans, conceived as complex machines, and the more powerful, as better, more efficient machines. This came to be known as the scientific world-view, implying beliefs with a claim to truth very different from and much stronger than those claimed by other societies or by the arts and humanities (which Thomas Hobbes argued, are nothing but rhetoric or entertainment). The human sciences were modelled on and designed to be consistent with this mechanistic world-view, beginning with what became mainstream economics, which was further defended through Darwinian evolutionary theory, and then the other human sciences. In this form these human sciences were also embraced as part of the scientific world-view [37]. This world-view, or rather, world-orientation, then legitimated and contributed to advancing the socio-economic formation that engendered it [8].

Imperialism associated with capitalism gave birth to what Immanuel Wallerstein called the world-system, differentiated into core zones, semi-peripheries and peripheries, where the core zones dominate the semi-peripheries through comprador elites, using them to exploit the rest of the population and the peripheries. Within this system there is constant struggle by countries and regions, often associated with wars, to rise within this system. The most violent wars are associated with struggles in the core zones for global hegemony, as when Britain replaced the Dutch Republic, defeating France, and USA replaced Britain, defeating Germany. The eco-Marxist Stephen Bunker, through his study of Brazil and Amazonia utilizing Richard Newbold Adams energetic theory of social power — according to which power is control over the meaningful environment of others, showed how this structure has engendered destructive exploitation of the peripheries for their natural resources, creating hypercoherent ruling elites so powerful that they can and do ignore the destruction they are causing to those they are exploiting and, ultimately, to their own environments. They are now destroying the global ecosystem. This is the world order in place at present. Ultimately, it is a world order driven by the quest of ruling elites for capital accumulation and world domination, where capital is power and where whatever is profitable is ecologically unsustainable, and whatever is ecologically sustainable is unprofitable.

From eco-Marxism to ecological civilization

With this background, what can we say about the notion of civilization, and then the notion of ecological civilization? The notion of civilization has diverse meanings and ambiguous connotations. It implies a development beyond barbarism, as an achieved condition of refinement and order. However, it is also associated with the conquest and enslavement of others who provide the conditions for the development of 'high culture', and eventually decadence. And then the term is used to characterize particular societies as civilizations — Ancient Egyptian civilization, Persian civilization, Greek civilization, Roman civilization, Medieval civilization, Chinese civilization, Indian civilization, Islamic civilization, industrial civilization, and so on. Theorists of civilization have examined the dynamics of civilizations as such, looking at the cycles from barbarity to civilization to decadence. They have also looked at the relations between civilizations, which have very often been in conflict with each other.

Conceiving of modernity as a civilization originating in Western Europe, succeeding Medieval European and Renaissance civilizations, facilitates further analysis of the nature of the capitalist socio-economic formation. The civilization of European modernity emerged from a civilization that had been in almost constant struggle with and under threat of conquest by Islamic civilization, and this had brutalized Europeans [8, ch.3]. Also, Europe, unlike China, was never fully united, and Europeans were further brutalized by constant warfare between kingdoms. Europe in this regard had much in common with the period of the warring states in China, which similarly was a period of both brutality and creativity. Throughout history, the development of the forces of production was not an autonomous process, as orthodox Marxists would have it, but often has been fostered by rulers as a means to support the military [17]. The imperialism of the Europeans was an extension of this militarism. While markets developed in medieval European society, especially Northern Italy, the rise of capitalism was, as the Austrian Marxist Karl Polanyi argued, a deliberate process of dis-embedding markets from communities and then imposing markets as a way of dominating people [4]. This is what happened in Britain with the control of trade and the enclosure of the commons, leaving people with no

other means to make a living other than working for others in factories. Such wage slavery was the successor to and built on the slavery instituted in Europe's colonies. The outcome of all this was that by 1914, Europeans were in control of 85% of the world's land surface. Imposing markets by military and political force has continued up until the present, and is clearly evident in the imposition of neoliberal economic policies around the world by the United States' military-industrial-intelligence complex, overthrowing governments that have stood in the way of this, as William Blum [3] and Michael Hudson [21] have convincingly argued.

It is important to recognize that this civilization was not monolithic, however. Mainstream capitalist modernity was associated with atomism (including atomic, possessive individualism) and mechanicism, imposed and then promulgated through the categories of economics, the categories serving as forms of life that Marx was critiquing. However, such thinking succeeded the Renaissance committed to reviving social relations and forms of thinking developed in Ancient Greece and Republican Rome. This tradition survived and was further developed as the Radical Enlightenment in opposition to the dominant institutions and forms of thinking of capitalism [22]. This culminated in the German Renaissance of the late Eighteenth and early Nineteenth Centuries [36]. This was strongly influenced by Leibniz who in turn was influenced by Chinese neo-Confucian philosopher Zhu Xi, but was greatly developed with the philosophies of Kant and his students, most importantly, Herder and Fichte.

Herder developed the notion of cultures and a conception of humans as essentially cultural beings participating in a dynamic nature, expressing themselves and realizing their own unique potentialities in this context. Different societies and civilizations were then characterized by their different cultures, and Herder called for respect for these, but also argued that there is an evolution of successive cultures towards greater humanity. Fichte also argued that there is moral progress through history driven by the quest for recognition leading to more and more adequate recognition by people of each others' freedom and significance. Synthesizing the work of Herder and Fichte, Hegel developed a conception of history as consisting of both cycles and successions of civilizations, with later civilizations advancing civilization not only through more adequate recognition, but also more adequate representation

and tools or technology. He referred to this as the development of Spirit rather than culture, but this was just a terminological difference. Schelling held similar views, but called for the development of a post-Newtonian physics, new forms of mathematics adequate to life and humanity, and proper appreciation of the significance of life as such. He also saw modern history as leading to the unification of the world through the market paving the way for a world-consciousness, overcoming the parochialism of particular civilizations, and creating global institutions to prevent wars. This would be a global civilization. Because of Schelling's later conservatism, Marx dissociated himself from and then ignored Schelling, but his vision of communism was really upholding this notion of a global civilization, building on the achievements of past civilizations but going beyond them to create a classless society free from the enslavement of people by ruling classes, and free from imperial domination, and as eco-Marxists have shown, free from destructive exploitation of nature.

Situating Marx's work in this way enables it to be formulated as the quest to create a global civilization based on rejecting and replacing, or at least, greatly modifying the culture of modernity and its embodiment in the dominant institutions and forms of thinking. Most importantly, this is the hierarchically organized world-system described by Wallerstein and Bunker. However, this will involve building on the achievements of past civilizations, including Greek civilization, the German Renaissance and some achievements of the civilization of modernity with its scientific and technological advances, and also the institutions developed to contain this civilization's oppressive and destructive tendencies. This can now be seen to include the notion of rule of law, including international law, the United Nations, various forms of socialism subordinating markets to the common good of communities, and post-mechanistic science. Post-mechanistic science, inspired by the German Renaissance, can uphold a different understanding of humans and their relations to each other and to the rest of nature, of the place of humanity within nature, and of the potential of humanity to change these relations.

Marx's main work can be seen as advancing a major part of this project, critiquing the categories of political economy, the forms of existence which still dominate the world. He was paving the way for their replacement by categories developed by

Herder, Fichte, Hegel and Schelling, among others, but this only became evident from his unpublished writings, and this replacement requires a broader project of replacing the categories defining physical existence in the sciences and the humanities (undertaken to some extent by Friedrich Engels).

Developing an ecological culture

As the Russian philosopher, Alexander Bogdanov, argued, overcoming capitalism has to be associated with creating a new culture that absorbs the best of all past cultures. While a new conception of the economy is required for this, what is at least as important is the development of a new conception of nature replacing the atomistic, mechanistic view of nature, a conception of nature which enables humans to be understood as essentially cultural beings but at the same time as participants in the dynamics of nature. Bogdanov aligned himself with developments in thermodynamics, an area of science largely inspired by Schelling [16, p. 9], and developed a general theory of organization, or Tektology on this basis, designed to provide a monistic worldview, allowing us to see ourselves as self-organizing participants in a self-organizing universe. This was a precursor to post-reductionist systems theory and complexity theory [12]. Through this work, Bogdanov was able to predict a global ecological crisis, and the importance of avoiding this, and his work supported Vernadsky's notion of the biosphere and provided support for the development of ecology in the 1920s in the Soviet Union.

On the basis of recent advances in thermodynamics and complexity theory, Ilya Prigogine [31, p. xiif] claimed that 'we are in a period of revolution - one in which the very position and meaning of the scientific approach are undergoing reappraisal - a period not unlike the birth of the scientific approach in ancient Greece or of its renaissance in the time of Galileo.' Prigogine and Stengers [32, p.68] argued that this would bring about a new alliance between science and the humanities. The furthest development of complexity theory has taken place in ecology. Ecology is the study of biotic communities, now usually characterized as ecosystems. Major advances in ecology involved appreciating the importance of recognizing symbiosis and creative emergence associated with new forms of cooperation in evolution, and the

role of life in geological processes, including soil formation and changes in the atmosphere, and the central role of thermodynamics in comprehending biotic communities, or as they are now called, ecosystems. Prigogine's work on non-linear thermodynamics and dissipative structures along with other developments in complexity theory, including work on morphogenesis by C. H. Waddington, Joseph Needham and Brian Goodwin and the development of hierarchy theory by Howard Pattee, Timothy Allen, Stanley Salthe and Alicia Juarrero, have strengthened the anti-reductionist tradition of ecology. Hierarchy theory is based on recognition that emergence of new levels of organization are associated with the development of enabling constraints, which in turn provide the basis for the exploration and realization of new possibilities [2, 23].

Salthe [33] has also integrated endophysics into this synthesis, the view that it is necessary to appreciate that we are part of the world we are trying to understand. Ecological concepts have been generalized, so organisms have themselves been characterized as highly integrated ecosystems. Vernadsky's notion of the biosphere has been revived and strengthened, with Lovelock characterizing the global ecosystem as 'Gaia'. Such work has enabled Jacob von Uexkull's biology and Peircian biosemiotics to be integrated into ecology, generating a new sub-discipline — ecosemiotics [25]. Vernadsky's notion of the noosphere was reformulated by the Russian/Estonian cultural theorist Juri Lotman, building on the work of Mikhael Bakhtin, as the semiosphere, providing the basis for characterizing human cultures and institutions as semiotic phenomena [11]. These developments provide the basis for rethinking the human sciences, integrating these with the humanities through the transdiscipline of human ecology, which can then support and advance ecological economics and ecological politics as the basis for formulating public policy.

Effectively, ecology has been developed into a comprehensive world-view based on an ontology of relational processes or inter-related patterns of activity, now able to challenge and replace the mechanistic world-view that, since the Seventeenth Century, has served as the foundation of the culture of capitalist modernity, a world-view recently revived through incorporation into it of information science [13, 16, 29]. As the theoretical ecologist, Robert Ulanowicz [35, p.6] argued in his book *Ecology, The ascendent perspective*:

'Ecology occupies the propitious middle ground. ... Indeed, ecology may well provide a preferred theatre in which to search for principles that might offer very broad implications for science in general. If we loosen the grip of our prejudice in favour of mechanism as the general principle, we see in this thought the first inkling that ecology, the sick discipline, could in fact become the key to a radical leap in scientific thought. A new perspective on how things happen in the ecological world might conceivably break the conceptual logjams that currently hinder progress in understanding evolutionary phenomena, development biology, the rest of the life sciences, and, conceivably, even physics.'

What became evident through ecology is that organisms, interacting with each other, transform their environments in a way that is conducive to their life, making these whole communities resilient in the face of perturbations. They do so through creating niches that allow individuals and species to explore new possibilities and developing in new directions. Conceiving of ecosystems as biotic communities, these 'niches' can be equated to 'homes' for the emergence and flourishing of component organisms, and also component ecosystems, insofar as these augment the life of these communities. Ecosystems consist of communities of communities at multiple levels. That is, biotic communities are 'ecopoietic', creating the niches or homes within which components can flourish and new living forms can emerge that augment the life of these communities [12]. When they do so, they are healthy; when they damage or eliminate such niches, they are sick, lacking resilience in the face of perturbations, and prone to collapse. Humanity is part of nature, and with its development through successive civilizations is now undermining the niches where the life-forms required for the health of the current regime of the global ecosystem are being severely damaged. An ecological civilization would be a global civilization reversing this, developing by augmenting life, providing the niches or homes in which life forms, both human and non-human, that do augment the conditions for other life forms, are able to flourish.

Realising ecological civilization

The second of Marx's *Theses on Feuerbach* [27] begins: 'The question whether objective truth can be

attributed to human thinking is not a question of theory but is a practical question. Man must prove the truth — i.e. the reality and power, the this-sidedness of his thinking in practice.' I have been arguing that a global ecological civilization requires the creation and advance of a new culture based on a more adequate understanding of life and humanity, including their possibilities. Further development of this ecological conception of the world is required. But there is also the problem of how to make this conception of the world practically efficacious, not only to put these new beliefs into practice, but to embody them in practices and institutions, making these a part of a new reality, changing the organization of humanity so that people are oriented in their lives to live in a way that augments life through augmenting the lives and conditions for life of the communities in which they are participants. That is, it is necessary to prove the truth of ecological thinking in practice.

One of the most important requirements for this the development of history, that is, stories showing how nature and humanity have developed deploying this ecological perspective. It is through stories that people situate themselves in the world and in history as agents involved in creating the future. Rethinking and rewriting history is not just a theoretical project, however. It involves individuals and communities at multiple levels, including nations and existing civilizations, rethinking their place in the world and its history, reorienting themselves through their stories, defining their place in broader histories, to create the future not only of themselves and their particular communities but the future of humanity and the biosphere. It requires the development of transculturalism as this was defended by Mikhail Epstein. As Epstein characterized this [6, p.298f.]: 'the fundamental principle of transcultural thinking and existence' is the '[l]iberation from culture through culture itself', generating a 'transcultural world which lies not apart from, but within all existing cultures'. This is the condition for creativity in the quest for truth, justice and liberty, for as the Russian philosopher Vladimir Bibler observed, 'Culture can live and develop, as culture, only on the borders of cultures' [6, p.291]. I am suggesting the notion of *ecopoiesis* as a transcultural as well as a cultural concept provides a way of thinking that facilitates this reorientation, giving a place to while aligning diverse cultures in this project, indicating what to aim at and what kind of world we should be striving to create.

An ecological world-view requires that we take our starting point the perspective of the whole, which as Mae-Wan Ho [19] argued in relation to the evolution of life, is the biosphere. The beginnings of this evolution involved the early biosphere providing the niches or homes where various new forms of life could emerge, beginning with procaryote cells, then eukaryotic cells, then multi-celled organisms and then communities of these, creating biotic communities with ecosystems making niches for more complex organisms and their interactions, eventually providing the niches or homes which made possible the emergence of human life, and then for the development of civilizations. These in turn have provided the niches or homes for the development of various kinds of communities, institutions and cultural fields, which in turn have provided niches where individuals could develop their full potential to augment the life of these communities, and thereby of humanity. Civilizations in order to flourish had to provide homes or niches for subordinate communities and communities of communities to flourish. However, as Joseph Tainter [34] has shown, most civilizations destroyed the environmental conditions for their existence. This is what European civilization was facing in the Fifteenth Century, and this largely accounts for its subsequent imperialism. A healthy global civilization of humanity will severely limit such destructive activity and provide homes for people, both as individuals and as communities, who in their lives are augmenting the conditions for each other, including the biotic communities of which humans are part. The struggle for ecological civilization can now be characterized as the struggle for homes in which individuals and communities at all levels can flourish, in doing so, aligning themselves with the quest to provide such homes for each other and for all living beings contributing to the flourishing of the current regime of the global ecosystem which has been ideal for humans, putting an end to greenhouse gas emissions, pollution by economic wastes, and destruction of more local ecosystems and species.

This conception of the world provides the ethics, political philosophy and science required to formulate goals and policies, and to act to create this civilization. Two of the most important works in ethical and political philosophy were Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* and *Politics*, works which strongly influenced Marx [24, p.94f.]. Aristotle argued that the first principle of politics is that the

polis should be organized to provide the conditions for individuals to achieve *eudaimonia*, that is, to achieve their full potential as human beings to live fulfilling and fulfilled lives as participants in the polis striving for its common good. This, he argued, involves developing the highest virtues through participating in the political and intellectual life of the polis. This principle can be developed and generalized through the notion of *ecopoiesis* to the whole hierarchy of communities and communities of communities within which people are participating, being committed to augmenting the conditions for life of all these communities insofar as they are involved in augmenting life [12].

‘Political’ life questing after the common good can include economic life, taking into account the health of all biotic communities, and intellectual life questing after truth and wisdom can include all cultural life, including history, literature and the arts as well as philosophy, mathematics and science [11]. *Ecopoiesis* as home making in this sense can be generalized to the relationship between all human communities, with broader communities having as their goal providing the homes or niches for more local communities, and this quest has to be seen in relation to these communities fostering the niches for other organisms, species and ecosystems participating in the biosphere [18].

By relating all this to ecology which incorporates thermodynamics, this generalization also provides the basis for examining power relations between individuals and communities at all levels, including those involved in major international power struggles. Building on the work of Richard Newbold Adams and Stephen Bunker on how power operates, provides guidance on how to engage in these power struggles, and also identifies what kinds of power relations are required for an ecological civilization to develop and flourish. Ecology also brings into focus the importance of developing enabling constraints in these power struggles, avoiding the tendency for power struggles to reproduce or lead to new levels and forms of oppressive and ecologically destructive domination. These should be seen as institutionalized constraints, re-embedding markets in communities, reducing markets to instruments of communities for decentralizing decision-making, while communities should be committed to augmenting the conditions for people, whether individuals or communities, to realize their full potential

to augment life and the conditions for it. These conditions are the ‘homes’ of people. This is the goal of eco-socialism understood as *ecopoiesis* — producing the homes in which virtues are cultivated and people can flourish and develop their full human potential.

It is impossible to go into detail about all that is involved in these power struggles, but a particular example illustrates much of what is involved. This is the development of international law which can be the basis for ending the brutal struggle for power between people that is the ultimate driver of ecological destruction. The legal system is a set of institutions that constrain people’s activities, facilitating more complex organizations and actions [14]. The first legal systems involved the rule of law, as in the Legalist philosophy of the Qin Dynasty in China where the ruler controlled people through laws and severe punishments, but was not himself subject to these laws. The Ancient Greeks realized the potential of formulating their own laws as enabling constraints providing the basis for freedom. This is the original meaning of ‘autonomy’. Inspired by Aristotle, legal theorists argued that enacted laws were only genuine laws insofar as they upheld justice and commitment to the common good. International law evolved into upholding constraints on nations to allow all nations to achieve self-determination.

One of the most important developments of this, coming at the end of WWII and initially driven by the US President, Franklin Roosevelt, was setting up the institutions of the United Nations, upholding international law based on justice and opposed to colonialism. With the collapse of the Soviet Union, the ruling elites of USA established a monopolar world order, reverting to rule of law, imposing law on other nations and peoples to facilitate the unconstrained exploitation of labour and resources of the entire world by transnational corporations, without USA itself conforming to these laws. This was associated with promoting and imposing neoliberalism, a doctrine rejecting any commitment to justice or the common good, freeing transnational corporations to plunder public wealth from the countries subjugated by this rule-based order [20, 21]. This has been characterized by John McMurtry [28] as the cancer stage of capitalism. This monopolar world-order is now being challenged by proponents of the multipolar world, working through the United Nations, upholding the rule of law and arguing that such law should be developed to achieve

ecological sustainability. This means that international law is being utilized to re-embed markets in the global community, integrating the notion of a multipolar world with the quest for an ecological civilization [18]. This is a significant challenge

to the hierarchical structure of the world-system dominated by the managers of transnational corporations and their political and military allies, and an important advance in the quest for an ecological civilization.

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UNDERSTANDING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CULTURE AND NATURE FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE EXPRESSIVE ARTS



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Abstract. The article examines the way in which the human body produces the unity of the cultural and natural dimensions of the human being. The body acts as the natural basis of humans, connecting us with the organic foundations of natural life. At the same time, the arts act as a means of organizing and expressing different aspects of human bodily experience. The role of expressive arts and therapy with expressive arts is outlined. It is emphasized that expressive arts restore our connection with the body, nature and traditional cultures, returning ancient wisdom to humans in modern conditions.

Keywords: nature, culture, body, expressive arts, protoshamanism, culture-oriented expressive arts therapy

Introduction

Human beings have two parents: nature and culture. Just as a person cannot exist without nature, with which we are in constant exchange, inhaling and exhaling, consuming food and sunlight, dependent on weather and slight fluctuations in temperature, neither can that person exist without culture, that invisible space of human meanings and ways of being and perceiving the world that makes someone human. It is not enough to be born in a human body to become a human, you need to grow up in the field of people.

We can imagine nature without a person and without cultural influence, but we can't imagine a person without nature and culture — our body is a part of nature. Were it not for the field of culture we would not become human beings. We live in bodies permeated by cultural values and meanings, worldviews, internalized in the process of communicating [28]. Our semantic vectors are determined both by human culture that is common to us all and by the specific characteristics of a particular culture. Each person develops in a specific cultural environment, rooted in the

physical features of the world, its geographical features and the landscape that is seen and felt.

This interplay between nature, culture, and human beings is the subject of several areas of scientific knowledge, such as cultural anthropology, psychological anthropology, ethnosemantics, ethnolinguistics, and even geopsychology. We can say that visible geography creates internal geography, the geography of the soul of the people (e.g., Berdyaev and Podoroga connected the vastness of the Russian soul with the vast landscapes of Russia) [4, 16, 17]. In a similar vein, Claude Levi-Strauss considered mythological coordinate systems as classification grids, where the dimensions are formed and fixed by specific features of the physical environment, thereby creating a version of the physical world as a text [12, p.12).

The problem is that we cannot establish direct contact with nature without the mediation of conceptual “cultural glasses.” We cannot go back to primitive thinking or primitive perception, but we can try to look at nature and ourselves as a part of nature, through the prism of ideas that are free from the demands of consumerism and aggressive expansion, and are instead built on the

foundation of co-creation. Following Wendell Berry, an American farmer and poet, we can flip the traditional view to one where nature, the surrounding world, or a specific landscape, do not belong to us, but we and our bodies belong to it, and thus move away from anthropocentrism [5, p.143]. This co-creative interaction with nature can be experienced through the expressive arts, because they involve a creative act that is inherently renewing and fresh, allows us to go beyond our limited perceptions and establish our own, subjective, poietic contact, not in a conceptual way, but as a living and embodied experience, free from utilitarian purpose.

Since we cannot get rid of cultural mediation in our relations with nature, why not use it more consciously, by drawing on the experience of those cultures in which different traditions to the body of nature have been preserved? Art forms created in the bosom of similar cultures can act as mediators, and offer a kind of framing [7, p. 89] for understanding the practice of expressive arts and directing the work of consciousness, as any art form does. At the same time, these art forms can allow for a subjective, creative encounter with the third [7, p.131], a process which involves not conceptual, but bodily, experience.

I want to emphasize the complex and multifaceted nature of the interaction and mutual influence of culture and nature, and to call it “ecopoietic interaction” [13]. We can say that the play of ecopoiesis takes place in ourselves, in our consciousness-body, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, in the visible manifestations of culture.

During various stages of the development of humanity, there have existed different relationships between nature and culture. For a long time, there was a kind of invisible contradiction between the culture of civilization — something cultivated and developed — and nature, which was perceived as wild, hostile, chthonic, subject to impulses, and so on.

At the same time, many cultures preserved the myth of a certain Golden Age. According to Mircea Eliade [6], this myth dates back to the time of the Neolithic Revolution, and can be considered a reaction to the emergence of agriculture. In the myth of the Golden Age, before the beginning of agriculture, human beings lived in complete harmony with nature. Nature was depicted as a garden of Eden, and human beings were natural, innocent, and unencumbered by internal contradictions and social conventions. The people of the

Golden Age were imagined to be able to control the elements and animals or to speak to them without feeling separate. In traditional cultures, the land and nature were perceived as living organisms. Nature was treated as a living body, was revived and personified, and the land and spaces around were endowed with sacred qualities, giving rise to a sacred geography. In Russian traditional culture, characterized by an emphasis on relationships and family ties, Mother Earth and Father Heaven were perceived as a part of a large family. In Indian culture, the entire embodied world was represented in the form of the Sacred Cow.

In many traditional cultures where protoshamanism and primitive animism are not lost (e.g., in the traditional culture of the Indians of South America and the Indigenous peoples of the North) the land and the nature are perceived as “a gigantic sentient being influenced by the same force that influences us” [15, p.29]. That is why many Indigenous peoples identified themselves with the land they lived in, even taking personal names that reflected natural phenomena or places in the surrounding landscape, for example, “Moving Cloud,” “Low Mountain,” or “Deep River.” In such names, we see an expression of identity that is based on the merging of oneself with the surrounding world. For example, the Australian aborigines of the Yimithirr tribe connected the parts of the body with the cardinal directions, feeling and defining their bodies in relation to the large body of the earth [15, p.29].

The way of interacting with nature is largely determined by a specific culture. We see differences even in the European view and attitude toward nature. Stephen K. Levine, in his article on ecopoiesis, gives examples of the English and French garden as ways of organizing the space of nature, where, in the first case, a person leaves the possibility of naturalness as part of the landscape, and in the second, forms a garden with greater order and regularity [13]. We can also recall Japanese and Chinese gardens, the pinnacle of the human ability to connect nature and spiritual experience, combining man-made and natural things. Europeans and Russians very often make a clear distinction between the spiritual and the material worlds, and consider them total opposites. The material, objective world is perceived as not worthy of much attention. Our research into Russian culture confirmed that this opposition is deeply rooted in the minds of the people [22, 23]. There

is no such metaphysical opposition in many Eastern countries. The source of the ancient Japanese views of the world, for example, is Shintoism, which is based on pantheism and primitive animism — the idea of the soul of the world living in every object, of the animate nature of things as they are in nature. Hence the astonishingly careful attitude of traditional Japanese culture to the external objective-natural world, the aversion to violence, the refusal to change nature and the cult of the natural, the untouched, that which is not made by human hands.

It is worth noting, however, that the relationship between nature and culture in Japanese culture is not as simple as it might seem at first glance. The traditional consciousness of the Japanese makes a kind of u-turn, from nature to culture and back to nature again (nature — culture — nature). We can say that the main trait of Japanese culture is placing artful emphasis on the natural character of a natural object. Such external and internal work of consciousness gives the natural object a specific cultural content that emphasizes and manifests its nature, without transforming or violating it. Examples of this include Japanese gardens or the Japanese art of admiring *suiseki* stones. Untouched, uncultivated nature in itself is not an object of interest and admiration for the Japanese, but a Japanese garden, carefully cultivated and conveying the beauty of wild nature in its ideal form, becomes a focus of attention for them.

Cultural attitudes to the body and nature gave rise to a clear division between spirit and matter, which in turn led to the separation between them that we observe in the modern world. Despite all the differences in views of nature, in the modern western world, the dominant attitude stems from the Judeo-Christian worldview. According to this belief system, nature is perceived as matter, which is passive, not feeling, can be subjected to violent manipulation and disregarded and wasted by human beings if it is profitable.

In the modern world, as a result of various factors caused by culture, urbanization, technocratization, and globalization, we can see four main points of rupture. These are: a) broken connections in relationships with our body; b) loss of connection in relation with nature; c) rupture of connection between people (e.g., the loneliness people experience in a metropolis); and d) loss of the connection with traditional cultures. Feelings of separateness and isolation are, in fact, the cause

of many mental illnesses and internal conflicts of people living in the modern world. Therapy with expressive arts aims to bring back these lost connections, helping clients to restore subtle contact with their bodies, with nature, with others, with the wisdom of traditional culture, ultimately leading to a renewed sense of co-creativity with the entire world. The pandemic has greatly deepened these aforementioned divisions, but at the same time, it has outlined new trends, such as the need for closeness to nature, which strengthens the processes of attunement to it.

Body of nature — nature of body

We live in bodies that are essentially a bridge between the natural world and the cultural world. The body contains the senses, but the philosophical question remains: what does a rose smell like? Without our senses, we cannot perceive this; and the senses can also be compared to “glasses” that are necessary for perception but are not without their limitations. At the same time, we must remember that our physical body consists of the same chemical elements or the same primary elements as nature, the earth.

In speaking about the body, we first of all speak about “the body felt from the inside, about the mobile, pulsating, changeable element of internal sensations, impressions, excitements” [26, p.9]. The body “turns out to be that space that hosts in its living elements an interference and integration of the external objective world, the world of language, the world of culture and the inner world of man” [ibid., p.10]. Many areas of modern psychotherapy (body-oriented therapy, dance-movement therapy, process-oriented therapy, and others) as well as expressive arts therapy, pay attention to subtle bodily reactions and perceive the body as a highly organized entity that stores the memory of all events and is constantly in a state of responsiveness to external and internal stimuli. However, unlike many other forms of therapy, the expressive arts deal with living expressive corporeality, with a body filled with meanings and sense; a speaking, thinking, feeling body; a body that turns into a sounding pipe organ. We look at the experience of creating things here and now, not trying to interpret this language, but simply staying in it, offering a kind of translation into another language that speaks for it. We cultivate this ability of the body to respond, to experience any

content of consciousness, to be both feeling and expressing and to give voice to the knowledge of the body.

Our basic ideas about the world are rooted in the body and our feelings. They are formed in early childhood and are based on the experience of the exploration of the physical world, which later becomes material for constructing metaphors and describing the world. For example, an angular, spiked figure will be perceived as dangerous and therefore evil, while a soft and round figure will be perceived as kind [2]. According to Arnheim, to understand the depth of mind you have to understand physical depth [1]. Familiarizing herself with the physical world through sensory impressions and experience, the child masters a certain primary language. We return to it while working in the territory of the expressive arts, but at a new level, remembering the polymodal foundations of consciousness and connecting it to our higher functions, the ability to see beauty and to create. Nevertheless, any kind of language or art, be it music, drawing, or poetry, is still experienced at the bodily level. The body is the integrator within which psychic intermodal life takes place [26].

Metaphors, however, allow us to identify the features of bodily experience in a cultural context. Metaphors can be mediators and messengers in the therapeutic process; using the methods of intermodal expressive arts therapy, they can give rise to an image or a drawing, and can be expressed, explored, and transformed in dance or music. The body and the engagement of bodily experience play a substantial role in these psychotherapeutic paths. George Lakoff and Mark Johnson argue that movement and bodily experience are at the basis of cognitive functions as well, such as categorization, metaphor, and mathematics. Primary metaphors (e.g., top = strength, lightness = joy) come from bodily experience [11]. Direct sensory perception is categorized and can subsequently be stored in memory in the form of images, which in turn are the material for creating basic and complex metaphors, as well as new images that can contribute to the “crystallization embodied in an art-work”. [7, p.31].

The body plays a defining role in our understanding of reality, as the body is the key to understanding what is happening to us, while metaphors allow us to identify the features of bodily experience in a cultural context. “The fact that we express our state using metaphors, and that

others understand us, is, in fact, a cultural phenomenon and involves the combination of different references, positions and forms of experience” [11, p.16].

Culture shapes physicality as a set of methods of treating the body, its appearance and internal manifestations, the relation to the body and its parts, the placing in space, the interaction of its parts, the nature of the movements, and so on. So we can talk about the culture of the body and of different bodies: the Russian body, the Latin-American body, the Chinese body, and so on. We can talk about the impact that not only cultures, but also subcultures, have on the body; for example, we can examine the post-Soviet body, or urban or rural bodies. The experience of the expressive arts creates awareness of the cultural meanings that fill the body, thus reviving the repressed and colonized body. At the same time, expressive arts offer a different view of our larger Body of Nature.

We can draw parallels between how a person treats their own body and how they treat the Body of the Earth or the Body of Nature. Expressive arts and other modern psychotherapeutic approaches offer a new perspective on corporeality, wherein the body is not inanimate, passive matter, but a living, feeling, and thinking body, filled with cultural meanings while being part of nature (a body-mind approach). This view of the nature of the body causes a tectonic shift in our relations to the Body of Nature and the Body of the Earth: they, too, are no longer viewed as inanimate objects but as living organisms, complex and meaningful, and our bodies are part of them. Stephen K. Levine proposes to move the body out of the control of conditioned attitudes, formed primarily in European culture and subjected to Christian influence, according to which the body is sinful, dirty, and defiled. He asks us to decolonize our own body.

Such action requires great inner work of restoring our integrity and unity with spirit and the matter on the one hand, and on the other hand, the return of a pure view of the body and nature that has been repressed by Christianity. Shaun McNiff called intermodal art therapy a kind of neoshamanism, and shamanism has always played a large role in establishing and recovering connections [14, p.26]. We can say that expressive arts therapy and the expressive arts in all their manifestations are becoming a new anthropological practice, actively using the languages of art and the bodily

dimension to return to and maintain the integrity of human existence in the modern world.

Establishing a connection

Art forms and the process of creating a work of art are mediators, conductors, and means of adjusting consciousness that allow one to establish a connection with various levels of external and internal reality, including the body, nature, and others. Art, household items, rituals, ceremonies, language, and etiquette are a set of culture-specific means of tuning in to consciousness. Art, literature, and religion are canonized states of consciousness, internalized by culture's ways of tuning in to consciousness and dealing with one's mental life. Vygotsky, in his book *The Psychology of Art*, regarded art as a "social technique of feelings" [27, p.5].

In virtually all cultures that have preserved the traditions of animism and protoshamanism, the attitude to the Body of Nature and the nature of our bodies is different: they are not perceived separately. The use of traditional art forms, born in the bosom of similar cultures, and used in the context of expressive arts, makes this tuning possible. Such practices can include, for example, talking with nature, the earth, and the elements through natural objects, the practice of exchange, the offering of ritual food, the practice of ritual offerings, and so on. Working with natural found objects is one of the methods of modern eco-art and nature-oriented therapy with expressive arts, which, in fact, brings back an ancient way of talking with the world. In many traditional cultures, we find this way of speaking through found objects or through the manipulation of objects.

Art from different cultures in its various forms may be made therapeutically within "culture-oriented expressive arts therapy" [24, p. 267]. For example, the Russian round dance, like many circular dances, offers to our experience the cyclical nature of things, their connectedness, unity, movement in a circle, and a culture-specific way of living cosmogonic processes at individual and collective levels. There are a huge number of traditional patterns of the round dance; each of them has a specific meaning and sense. Another example is the traditional Indian drawing of mandalas and patterns on the ground, called *kolam* or *rangoli*. It is an invitation to the deity, serves as

a connection with the ground, and, at the same time, helps us to experience volatility and impermanence, as the patterns made with rice flour quickly disappear under the feet of passers-by, are blown by the wind, or are eaten by insects. This art form allows one to live, through dialogue, an experience of unity with the external world.

The art forms of a particular culture used in the context of intermodal expressive arts therapy become both the framework and the means of adjusting the work of consciousness, which "expand the range of the play" [8, p.79] and allow us to build new relationships with the body, with nature and with others. Any act of poiesis, of creating something new, whether a drawing, dance, or some other art form, becomes a mediator that helps to establish a connection with certain realities through the body. We are not limited to using traditional art forms for such work, but in them we can find collective meanings that seem to be wired and encrypted within us. These meanings begin to be assimilated and experienced on a subjective level, as if discovered again during the act of poiesis, through interaction with the particular art form and co-creation with others.

In the context of expressive arts, the art form itself can also be modified. For example, instead of using a ritual Tibetan drum, where the text of a prayer is written on a round surface and then repeated when the drum rotates, I suggested that my clients wrote poetry on circular sticks, rolled and polished by sea-waves and bleached by the sunlight. The text was written in a spiral; it could be read many times like a mantra or a prayer. I called them "poetic sticks." Paolo Knill gives the example of using sculpture like a sentinel or a guard in the garden, which refers to the tradition of ancient boundary deities, placed at the borders as patrons [7, p.40].

In the modern context of expressive arts therapy, we can use art forms born in the bosom of a culture or even subculture, which may include digital culture. We can use photos, Instagram stories or any form of social network presence that represents a modern manifestation of the invisible network of the god Indra, which enables people to feel resonance and contact.

Our experience has shown that distance and separation do not impede such work. For example, one of the ways of ritual tuning in to each other while working on Zoom is to show your ritual meal, a fruit or a sweet. It becomes a kind of

offering. The fact that we have mirror neurons and intermodal brain memory ensures that we can taste and smell the strawberries, even if we only see them on the screen, and thus we can experience belonging.

Even more surprising is the fact that others understand us even when we communicate remotely using computers and amplify our verbal language by the language of movement or by making images or drawings that generate an emotional response. The most adequate way we can describe this experience is by using the concept of multiple resonances. In creating resonances on different levels, we can experience a sense of connection and unity, even in online work: “collective resonance” [19], “aesthetic resonance” [24], “interpersonal resonance” [20], “somatic resonance” [18].

In the pandemic age, modern technology also serves as a conduit that helps to establish a link between our minds and bodies, since any movement of consciousness is experienced on the bodily level. Even when we are sitting at the computer, our body feels the involvement. Here we have a new phenomenon of remote communication, experienced through other means developed in our culture. Digital technologies and means of remote communication are, in fact, instruments of culture that help us to establish the connection both literally and figuratively. In our remote work on the seminar “The Body of Nature — Nature of the Body,” we established a connection with nature, with our bodies and with each other. The technical equipment — essentially aspects of our culture — served as a mediator for finding a connection with nature.

Conclusion

Nature and culture exist in the constant interaction of ecopoiesis. A person cannot exist outside their cultural and natural context. We can use cultural mediators and the language of the arts to create a situation of phenomenological presence and a subjective experience of belonging, which removes the neurotic division responsible for many problems of modern individuals. In the context of intermodal expressive arts therapy, we can cultivate the body’s capacity for expressive dialogue by postulating the unity of body consciousness. The human body, like consciousness, is saturated with cultural meanings and, moreover, with the meanings of a particular culture. In the context of nature-oriented expressive arts therapy [3] we can understand the body as a manifestation of the wisdom of nature, mediated by culture, and restore the connection with the body and nature, proclaiming the unity between the Nature of the Body and the Body of Nature. The way of relating to nature in a particular culture can be used in the context of culture- and nature-oriented expressive arts therapy through traditional art forms, which are conductors, mediators, and means of tuning in to consciousness and providing a space for the encounter.

Expressive arts restore our connection with our bodies, with nature, and with traditional cultures, bringing ancient wisdom back in a modern context, using modern forms and the infinite possibilities of consciousness to create something new, through the medium of modern technology.

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Section

Practices and technologies of the eco-human approach



NATURAL AND ARTISTIC ASPECTS OF ART THERAPY*

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Abstract. The article discusses the issue of the ambiguous relationship between nature and art, as shown in the works of artists and by clients' work in art therapy. The work of some contemporary artists who turned to the depiction of nature or the study of human relations to nature, such as Joseph Beuys, Andy Goldsworthy, Claude Monet and Thomas Wrede, are commented on. Brief descriptions of examples of artistic design of a psychiatric hospital and of the reflection of nature through art in the psychiatric hospital in Münster (Germany), as well as interaction with the natural world during art therapy, in particular, with patients suffering from oncological diseases, are given.

Keywords: art, nature, land art, oncological diseases, photography

Introduction

For the artist Josef Beuys, nature in its entirety was spiritual and spiritually animated. This included plants and animals as well as crystalline forms such as stone and sand. His art consisted of the need to research an in-depth, multi-dimensional awareness of the relationships between nature and human beings and to repeatedly bring this into a social discourse. His drawings of rabbits and deer created analogies with prehistoric cave paintings. As a result, he repeatedly made references to the origins of human history and to Indigenous peoples. Installations and performances always play a major role in the forces of nature and animals. In his performance in 1983, "How to explain pictures to a dead hare," Beuys can be seen walking through the rooms of a Dusseldorf gallery with a dead hare in his arms. For Beuys, the hare functioned as an ancient Celtic symbol for fertility. He had applied honey and gold leaf to his face and hair and his shoes were weighted down with iron soles that gave him traction.

The art historian Volker Harlan commented:

'When he explains the pictures to the hare, when he describes the deer, swan and other animals, not only when he sees animals, but also plants, soil, planets, the supernatural, etc. as the perimeter of human observation, it is the task of every human being to learn to understand this environment in order to learn to understand oneself, that is, to practice self-recognition by recognizing the world around us.' [7, p.108]

Beuys is serious, he wants to provoke, wants to generate something and even goes so far with his conception that he categorizes the contemplation and understanding of his conceptualization of art as an expanded concept of art "...even if it is only a sound wave that reaches another ear" [7, p.81]. Even as an adolescent, he was interested in many things, including understanding what it is to be human, and the philosophy of Rudolf Steiner. Characteristic of Steiner's natural philosophical view is his reference to the four elementary qualities: solid, liquid, gaseous, and heat, as well as to the levels of nature: mineral,

plant, animal, and human. Steiner found equivalence in nature and art for certain physical, psychological, spiritual, and social aspects of humans [13, pp.86–89]. Steiner's anthroposophical perspective has been established in specific educational and therapeutic concepts to this day. Waldorf education and anthroposophic medicine and therapy should be mentioned here as examples. Art and natural interventions have a firm place here, just as nature and art are inseparable for Beuys in the sense of an expanded concept of art.

Contradictions between nature and art

A nature-oriented, therapeutic approach extended specifically to art therapy is not yet in sight. Perhaps it is the contradiction between the two terms “nature” and “art” that makes it difficult to coalesce into a definitive natural art therapy.

‘Artistic appropriation of the natural world itself follows a structure of contradictions: on one hand, it removes an object from us by transforming it into a distant image, on the other, its state of imagery grants us the ability to experience it in the first place... It is the nature of art to not be able to understand it.’ [2, p.5]

The categorical separation of nature and art described in this way allows a distance from the two components in order to see which aspects from the respective areas can be used for one's own approach. The term “nature” in this context could be a reference to material and location — art using natural materials in a natural environment. Instead of working inside a studio, art would be created in meadows, forests, mountains, and along waterfronts using materials and conditions found on site. However, this is by no means an invention of art. Even in primeval times, humans unconsciously and consciously worked and shaped natural objects by stacking, layering, piling, trampling, lying, laying, scratching, gnawing, digging. Natural art or specifically land art uses, among other things, this original “processing” of nature within nature. The works created in this way, however, are still subject to change; they are subject to wind and weather, thereby changed and in the end, they fade away. From the artist's point of view, this aspect is inherent to the work.

Belonging to and interacting with nature

One of the best-known representations of the natural art genre, a variation on land art, is by the Scottish artist Andy Goldsworthy:

‘I am a part of nature, I don't see myself as being in opposition, and I think it's a strange idea to see us as separate from nature. Our lives and what we do affect nature so closely that we cannot be separate from it.’ [9, p.105]

His artistic works are a consequence of site conditions, time of day, weather and weather-dependent energy, as well as the abundant possibilities of the materials that he finds. In addition, most of his artistic works are site-specific and are abandoned on completion:

‘A rock is not independent of its surroundings. The way it sits tells how it came to be there. The energy and space around a rock are as important as the energy and space within. The weather — rain, sun, snow, hail, mist, calm — is that external space made visible. When I touch a rock, I am touching and working the space around it. In an effort to understand why that rock is there and where it is going, I do not take it away from the area in which I found it.’ [9, p.41]

Goldsworthy has no intention to possess the work of art that he creates within nature. The artist captures the coalescence of the moment and seizes its essence by taking a photo snapshot.

Conservation, preservation, collection, and storage, much like the processing of natural materials, are cultural achievements — skills and resources that are crucial for body and soul. Stored natural foods initially ensure the availability of basic food, but also enable access to emotional preserves. A glimpse at a shell from last summer's vacation can be exhilarating on cloudy days, or a snowball from winter, preserved in the freezer, can be disillusioning in its un-snow-like state. The objects, shell or snowball, have a representative function here — they are objects that resonate a feeling of longing. ‘We cannot grasp the snow, cannot possess it; if we try, it slips through our fingers, if we bring it into the house, it melts, and if we put it in the freezer, it ceases to be snow.’ [11, p.7]. Sociologist Hartmut Rosa's idea that one could experience resonance if only one could finally get the world or nature under control proves to be a fallacy. Nature enables us to recognize that not everything is available at all times.

Nature is the basis of our existence. The ways in which we perceive nature are also part of its reality. In being perceived, nature materializes in different ways, whereby this perception neither coincides with nor is independent of its reality. In this way, the boundaries between “nature” and “culture” are, in effect, a product of culture. Nonetheless, every culture must recognize that it only exists because nature exists, and so, we as natural creatures understand the reality of nature. [12, p.55]

Experiencing nature live has its own specific qualities. In everyday urban life, for example, we associate a walk in the forest, in the mountains, or by the sea with unwinding. Engaging with the natural world allows us a psychological, physical, and sensory reset. By experiencing phenomena such as distance, proximity, cold, heat, day and night, colors, surfaces, and elements, we are able to leave our daily routine behind in order to find a sensory, cognitive baseline. Abandoning the four walls of indoor space opens up new possibilities; we get moving, to the outdoors.

‘We step outside; however, this necessary step is not alone sufficient to truly experience the outdoors. ...it is only when we enter the real outdoors and simultaneously the metaphorical outdoors; when we loosen the ties to pragmatic orientation that determine our normal behavior in indoor space; when we no longer move within this outdoor space with fixed goals; rather, we remain open to the irregular presence of the larger space itself.’ [2, p.177]

In this situation, new, sensory, emotional, and physical experiences can be made. Every form imaginable to us is present in nature and has its unique properties. Experiences with nature can be varied and extremely contradicting: pleasant, uncomfortable, or frightening. Nevertheless, we continually allow ourselves to be inspired by the diversity and abundance of nature.

Nature as an evolving practical laboratory

According to Huppertz & Schatanek [8, p.123], ‘We can experience a strong bond with nature. This experience is the basis of many spiritual interpretations and speculations about the alliance between man and nature, the interconnectivity of all things or an essence that is the source all existence.’ One aspect of the “primordial source” can

be interpreted as analogous to maternal qualities. Accordingly, nature also allows regression and interaction with the primordial, and satisfies basic human needs, such as feeling connected and held, to touch and to be touched. “Sometimes everything intertwines so well that we cannot distinguish between what nature contributes and what we contribute (for example, when breathing or swimming).’ [8, p.287].

In this way, experiences of nature enable psychological and physical “development” to compensate for a deficit. Such experiences can be an important countermeasure. Of course, the natural world is not without contradictions and resistance. Existential borderline experiences through natural disasters are threatening and can profoundly shake our confidence in nature. Creating art within nature is not always harmonious. The unpredictability of wind, weather, tides, and the strain and unpleasantness experienced are uncomfortable. As a result, one’s mental and physical limits are challenged, sometimes destroying ideas. We, at times, question the basic principle of cooperation. Mother Nature does have a disagreeable side — and that can make perfect sense.

When we observe nature, we must not overlook that fact that she is a patient herself. Deterioration of flora and fauna, marine pollution, global warming — nature is beleaguered and needs our empathy and care. We inform ourselves, try to be mindful, and are righteously indignant about exiting agreements that aim to protect our environment. Despite this, we still look to the natural world to fulfill our need for peace, relaxation, recreation, spirituality, inspiration, pleasure, joy, desire, humility, and gratitude. In this instance, art facilitates access to the cultural manageability and availability of nature’s endowment. Pictorial representations (including plastic arts) offer the opportunity to approach the beauty, unpredictability, harshness, and destruction that the natural world endures and creates. Art enables us to examine nature, including our own, human nature.

Within the visual space of art, the natural world appears in such a way that every overwhelming emotional impact is always simultaneously controlled and distanced through the knowledge of the artistically created situation and aesthetic discernment. [1, p.55]

A work of art grounds nature, confines it, gives it a defined context, lends access to it, and

simultaneously provides a definitive perspective. At the moment of viewing, we are in a protected space; we have choices, we are not simply exposed to nature. This enables the recipient to get acquainted, to warm up, to move in closer; it also offers the opportunity to distance oneself if things get too hot or too stormy. Self-awareness within a natural landscape is always multidimensional. Unlike using paper, the outdoors has no formal boundaries, yet it refuses “to see the big picture,” demands the use of the body and the senses, ‘so that even the greatest foresight becomes blurry.’ [1, p.179]. We can never commandeer the natural world, or functionalize it as a backdrop. Being in the outdoors always implies being involved, whether by the sea, in the forest, in the mountains, or at home in your own garden.

Visualization of nature and one's own wellbeing — the painter Claude Monet

The painter Claude Monet (1840–1926) was being coy by claiming that ‘he could do nothing but garden and paint’ [6, p.260]. Unlike Goldsworthy, who works with nature, Monet dealt with particular intensity in observing nature, viewing it as a subject of research independent of a representation of reality, symbolization, or abstraction. Monet was fully engaged with daily studies in his “natural laboratory.” He conducted dozens of studies from a haystack alone. The motif probably had a particular charm in its simplicity, offering Monet a welcoming surface on which light and color could play and project.



Figure 1: Water lily pond in the Freiburg Botanical Garden (photo by Wigger)

His renowned, large-format oil paintings of evanescent subjects such as clouds, water, plants, and reflections completely engage the viewer, demanding absolute attention, analogous with the visually receptive demands of perceiving these subjects in the natural world. Despite the permanence of painting, when stepping forward and backward while viewing Monet's works, we find that visual phenomena of constant change can also be perceived, much like those that occur in the natural world through light and shadow, day and night or seasonal conditions. ‘To experience sight by recognizing oneself within the view’ is how Gockel describes the essence of Monet's endeavors [6, p.262]. As Monet aged, his eyesight deteriorated due to cataracts. The resulting alterations in his eyesight and associated depression were presumably terribly stressful and a huge sensory challenge for the painter.

‘The distortions and exaggerations of the colors that I now experience are frightening. If I were condemned to only see nature in this way, I would prefer to remain blind and remember its beauty.’ [Monet around 1926, quoted in 10, p.64]

During the time of Monet's acute illness, the natural world can be seen as an equivalent of the bizarre, threatening, and frightening, not only for individual physical, psychological, and social changes and the suffering of the resulting discrepancies, but also for the painter's irrepressible energy, and the way he faced and dealt with visual distortions. Monet experienced his own physical and psychological limitations while he was ill. In 1922, he was almost blind, but his painting did not stagnate.

He became inventive, pushing himself beyond limits; shapes became almost abstract and seemed to dissolve, and he found himself and his perception of nature anew.

The principle of plastic arts and sculpture in nature

Principles of nature and life can also be transferred to multi-dimensional forms of art. For example, let's examine plastic arts and sculpture. In a narrower sense, a sculpture describes the addition of plastic media, such as clay, wax, or paper, to form an object. The development

of a bone, a tree trunk, a stalactite through the deposits of calcite follows exactly the same principle.

A sculpture is created by reducing, removing, grinding, sawing, or carving. Equivalent processes can also be found in the natural world. The artist Josef Beuys speaks of a natural work of art. Every pebble is afforded its shape through the grinding process and thus becomes a naturally formed plastic work of art. 'One can of course imitate something similar, there are sculptors who try to imitate this, to imitate a naturally produced sculpture.' [Beuys in 7, p. 83]. Understanding nature through shapes, thereby learning about oneself within them could apply to plastic arts and sculpture. The sensory experiences with and within nature, the individual, sensory-related state of being impressed, as well as the interest in and the desire for perception itself facilitate experience and development.

Images of longing within nature— photography as a window

Permanent — that is, non-changing — representations of nature in the form of painting, drawing, and photography can evoke sensory experiences and effect emotions in much the same way as when we experience the natural world. Let us remember the aforementioned paintings by Monet. In 2005, as part of the redesign of a closed ward for acute psychiatric patients, several large-format landscape photos by the Münster artist and photographer Thomas Wrede were installed in the corridors and common rooms of the Clinic for Psychiatry and Psychotherapy at the University Hospital Münster. The decision was accompanied by an artistic design concept for the entire psychiatric clinic [3]

Wrede's works from the 2004 series "Seascapes" feature images of the sea, the sky, and the horizon, as well as beach tents and people playing or swimming. As the works were being installed, conversations about the sea were spontaneously prompted: "I've been there before." Memories were awakened; at some point, most people had been to the sea. The topic lent a feeling of belonging, and conversations arose. The horizon of the protected ward expanded through the images captured from nature.



Figure 2: Thomas Wrede: Beach and Water, 2004, VG © Bildkunst, Bonn

One older gentleman was so excited by the sight of the sea motif that he began singing the song "My Bonnie Lies Over the Ocean" and attracted astonished listeners. The photographs have been an integral part of the ward ever since. It must be noted that the viewers were not left to fend for themselves in front of the works. The positions chosen by Wrede, the perspectives, the precision of captured moments, the size and color of the photographs provide the viewer with a calculated composition that guides the perception process.

The photographer is effectively on site as the works are viewed. For patients experiencing acute psychological crises, this can harbor an important auxiliary ego state function. Visual art can, in this way, serve as a controlled perception test in a titrated and filtered manner, effectively avoiding overstimulation. Acute patients, whose activity radius is limited to the dimensions of a psychiatric ward, are enabled to have an interaction with nature receptively through the presence of images of oceans and beaches.

Existential experiences with inner and outer nature

Water and sky are primeval. Walking on water is a biblical motif and, in essence, all life originates from water. With solid ground under our feet, we revert to this basic natural principle.

With her current work *On Water* in Münster's harbor, Erkmen offers an active, sensory space of experience in and above the water. A biblical, magical image of being able to walk on water reveals enjoyment, excitement, and fright. It opens

up the possibility to ignore the laws of nature. A collective, unifying feeling of it'll be alright arises among those who actively wade. I want to create a trustworthy space in the water... Water is difficult to handle, which makes it very attractive to me. I created an easy way to become acquainted with water: above it, in it, and yet, everyone is safe. It's a way of dealing with the element at its best. [4]

Life sometimes requires symbolic solutions, such as those offered by Erkmen when walking across her safely submerged footbridge. Confronting a life-threatening illness can be such a moment.

A tumor diagnosis triggers feelings of helplessness, existential threat, and deep despair in those affected. In addition, related treatments, such as surgery, radiation, and chemotherapy, are often cause for concern. Whether the tumor is benign or malignant, accompanying symptoms such as physical complaints, anxiety, and depression ensue and impact the quality of life of those affected.

The overall situation is complex, inscrutable, often difficult to grasp, and frightening. Those affected are faced with the task of accepting the vulnerability and dysfunctionality of their inner nature. They can't rely on anything anymore or take anything for granted. The rug has been pulled out from under them.

To trust that everything will be alright is essential in this situation; this is not naive, but rather courageous in a positive sense. Much like the way Erkmen uses wading to cross the expanse of water in order to reach the other bank, patients allow themselves the positive energy to look to the future.

Since 2012, patients with brain tumors have had access to art therapy in the neurosurgical ward of the University Hospital Münster in Germany. In addition to access to museums and the outdoors, the standard materials for therapeutic interventions in the form of active artistic work include natural materials such as sand, water, clay, wood, objects found in the natural environment, and plant material. In this context, dealing with nature with all your senses is of particular importance. The materials transform into a sensory exercise. A branch becomes a tree, a pile of sand becomes an island, a stone becomes a mountain — arranged in a defined space, designed and structured. The colors of an autumn leaf are scrutinized and enlarged as a painting, the structure of an orange is explored, the lines on the palm of a hand are drawn and transformed into a landscape. Sometimes a brain is modeled, which is not necessarily part of everyday perception but within these circumstances, is somehow inherent in nature. The invisible and the incomprehensible are expressed with the help of natural media. The artistic materials create a mental and physical balance that allows patients to take something into their hands and control it. In this way, patients are not just passively receiving treatment, they are proactively exercising control.

An excursion

May 25, 2012: A group of five young brain tumor patients, an intern, and I are sitting on the terrace of the painter's workshop. The conversation revolves around complicated organizational



Figure 3: *Sensory and magical — the installation On Water by the artist Ayse Erkmen during The Sculpture Project, Münster in 2017 (photo by Wigger)*

procedures in hospitals. We discuss communication problems with treating physicians and everyday bureaucratic hurdles. In the end, tumor surgery is the focus of the conversation. Patients describe their individual experiences. They question which physician and professional advice can be trusted to make important decisions demanded over the course of their exceptional disease situation. The surgery itself is usually classified as stressful or traumatic. The same applies to the entire in-patient phase. Patients exchange ideas regarding subsequent rehabilitation. The individual, altered relationship to their own body represents a plethora of issues.

S. decides to paint the view from the terrace onto the field as a landscape and chooses Indian ink for her medium. While the other patients are working on their spatula paintings in the workshop, S. positions herself at the communal table on the terrace. She asks how she can transfer the composition onto the picture surface, and I refer back to our drawing exercises. We measure our field of vision with a pencil, recognize gaps, overlaps, and proportions. I also take a watercolor paper to transport the view into the landscape. S. delineates her picture area onto the paper with an individual format. At the edge of the picture, she creates color samples...



Figure 4: Watercolor from May 25, 2012

In this young woman's watercolor, not only the visual, but also the emotional reaction to the tranquility of the landscape can be felt within the individual lines. The activity of painting not only reveals the image of a landscape, it also opens the possibility for intensive self-awareness: I paint; therefore, I still am.

In this instance, it is the view of a landscape, at others, the inspection of the intricacies of one's own hand, the peel of an orange, an autumn leaf, your life partner's feet — in the here and now. Through active art therapy, patients remain connected with nature and life itself.



Figure 5: View from the painter's workshop in Münster (photo by Wigger)

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DEVELOPING HUMAN BONDS WITH NATURE THROUGH PHOTOGRAPHY



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Abstract. The role of photography in providing a meaningful human connection to nature is analyzed. Some reasons why photography can be a valuable means of nature-based practices supporting the development of environmental consciousness are presented and illustrated with examples of photographs and projects that took place in different countries. Considerations are also provided which show why photography helps to explore and change people's perception of nature, to feel in control and appropriate the environment, maintain and develop ecological identity, and to develop mindfulness and a sense of physical presence in the environment.

Keywords: photography, nature-based photo-taking, personalization, subjectification of nature, mindfulness, narratives

Introduction

Currently, a “environmental turn” in the arts takes place. The arts play an increasingly significant role in the environmental agenda of humankind. Along with science, the arts present and make their attempt in their own way to solve key issues of the human relationship with the world of nature, have their own means of designating and solving environmental and human problems, their own methods of socio-psychological reflection, ways of thinking and acting.

As a form of visual art photography can reflect the environment and provide an opportunity to focus on natural objects and processes, help to find meaning in the environment, frame and re-frame the reality of nature, and render complex dynamics implied in nature. It can empower humans, help them to appropriate and personalize the environment and even come to more active participation in its design, management and restoration.

Environmental or nature-based photo-taking practices represent a growing segment of

expressive and creative arts, based on the new understanding of the role of nature in providing public and environmental health and establishing more harmonious and supporting relations of humans with nature.

The role of photography in providing meaningful human connection to nature

There are many reasons why photography can be a valuable means of nature-based practices.

Photography helps to explore and change people's perception of nature, develop environmental consciousness and knowledge.

One of the significant effects of photography is that ‘...the camera invariably gives people or objects some kind of distinctive meaning, relevance and status.’ [7, p. 28] Photography can help people to come to a new perception of nature and recognize its *meaningfulness and beauty*, even if people initially didn't recognize such qualities. This is also true when a ‘dark’ side of nature is being confronted. When we are focused even on the

most depressed, sad and colorless environment and start looking beneath the superficial exterior of things or places, we can often see some spark of life, healthy and unique aspects that characterize them. As Berman [1] puts it, taking photographs ‘...brings out the inherent qualities in the miserable, the poor and the oppressed, so that they become dramatically interesting. This is a paradoxical aspect of photographs that has echoed in therapeutic work.’ (p. 37)

Sontag [7] comments on the effect of photographic selectivity in the following way: ‘While a painting or prose description can never be other than a narrowly selective interpretation, a photograph can be treated as a narrowly selective transparency. But despite the presumption of veracity that gives all photographs authority, interest, seductiveness, the work that photographers do is no generic exception to the usually shady commerce between art and truth.’ (p. 6)

As President of the “Golden Turtle” International Wildlife Festival, underwater photographer Andrey Sukhinin puts it, ‘at present ‘photography promotes environmental values. Influencing the feelings and emotions of people through the positive energy of creativity which is perhaps one of the most accessible and effective channels for involving people in environmental protection, developing their ability to see the beauty of the natural world and understand its life and connection with humans. Photography use social and cultural codes that are understandable to everyone on any continent to communicate our common goal to preserve the ecosphere. He emphasized the role of Festival as an educational program aimed at photographers of all levels, from beginners to experienced professionals. The wildlife photography festival provides this target audience with the widest opportunities for communication and exchange of experience.’ [4]

Another wildlife photographer Michail Korostelev believes that the main thing that he understood is that many animals do not deserve a very bad reputation. It turned out that if he does not disturb them, observe carefully and with respect, do not forget that he is their guest, then they do not show aggression, do not attack, and let humans to be included in their environment. Thanks to this, he can shoot hippos, crocodiles, bears and sharks underwater.

Through photography, he even found a common language with animals and that a kind of

dialogue, when two sides understand each other is possible. ‘Sometimes animals do not want to communicate, often they just pass by. Sometimes fleetingly look eye to eye. But there are also long-term interactions. Sometimes it's just a game. But sometimes there were significant contacts.’ [5]



Photo 1: Michail Korostelev. Indian elephant. Andaman Islands. India.

Photography helps people to feel in control of the environment and participate in its management and restoration.

Since the goal of ecotherapy and eco-arts is to facilitate people’s interaction with the environment in order to achieve not only health-promoting for themselves, but also environmental health outcomes, photography can be used to promote human’s active position in their relationship with the environment and develop their perception of themselves as those who are able to exert a certain amount of influence on it. Environmental psychology supports the idea of *participation* and strives to enhance citizen involvement in environmental design, management and restoration. Nature-based photography can support achieving these goals. This can be a result of people’s better understanding of environmental issues and their relation to personal and community agendas. Often photography reflects various natural scenery and environmental public activities in order to bring public attention to environmental problems and ways to resolve them.

Photo-taking can even help people to feel safe and in control of the situation, whenever it evokes uncomfortable reactions as a result of being confronted with difficult outdoor situations and less ‘beautiful’ and pleasurable sides of nature. Sontag [7] emphasized that ‘To photograph is to appropriate the thing photographed. It means putting oneself

into a certain relation to the world that feels like knowledge — and, therefore, like power’ (p. 4).

Photography supports ecological personalization and subjectification of nature.

Our perception of the constructive human interaction with nature through photography can be enriched by concepts of *personalization* of the environment [2]. This concept is related to psychosocial aspects of human experience, a sense of territoriality, belonging, ownership and control over spaces and objects. Personalization can also be understood as a human behavior that aims to express certain distinctive features of the individual in the environment. Environmental photography can be understood as an *ecological form of personalization* based on the empathic and supportive human interaction with the world of nature. Photography and other activities involving creative personalization of the environment can promote an environmental ethic and a more active and participatory position in people’s relationships with the world around, as well as supporting their self-esteem and empowerment.

Personalization of the environment can involve *subjectification* of natural objects, which means

that natural objects and environments are perceived as having their own subjectivity, and are able to be in some form of reciprocal relationship and in dialogue with humans. Subjectification implies both empathy and identification with natural objects and perceiving them as sharing similar qualities with human beings.

An arts psychotherapist, and photographer, Carolina Herbert [3] has a passion for how the expressive arts, especially photography, can support us to respond to the complex challenges we face in our world today. She believes that slowing down and focusing in on a landscape, a moment when light brushes the earth alight after a storm or to gaze into an animal’s eyes in the wild is like an awakening of our relationship with the earth becomes real: ‘In times where we are increasingly disconnected or even separated from the wild, the therapeutic use of photography can draw us back into the intimacy that is at the essence of our nature. It can restore hope and a relationship of compassion, care and appreciation of beauty.’ As a photographer she sometimes feels ‘fully present to this sacred relationship, when is no longer separation with nature, we are of one spirit, one breath — such is this mystical participation, this union, this communion.



Photo 2: Monna Makkonnen and Miina Savolainen. ‘The Loveliest Girl in the World,’ 2006.

Photography helps to develop individual and group ecological identity

Through nature-based photography development of new characteristics of people's identity, in particular, eco-identity can be supported. According to environmentally-grounded personality theory, one's relationship with nature occupies a special role and is a vital factor in healthy personality formation and functioning. Thus, establishing an Earth-based sense of Self, an eco-identity based on human identification with the world of nature, has the same significance as one's relations with people. Our emotional bond with nature and the attachment of human beings to nature, together with our bonds with other people, are integral to the psychological growth of a person, beginning with the early developmental phase and ending with the final stage of the human lifespan.

Revealing and developing eco-identity can be achieved, in particular, through realistic or *symbolic/metaphoric self-portraits*, when people perceive natural environments or objects as representation of themselves. In order to support the formation of healthy ecological identities of children and young people, a Finnish photographer Miina Savolainen [6] developed *empowering photography*. While working in child welfare she started 'The Loveliest Girl in the World' project that spanned over a decade. It was the children and young people who could define how they were to be viewed in the photos. The natural environments chosen by them presented fictional and symbolic worlds through which they could express their inner experiences of themselves and others. Nature offered consolation, beauty, protection and embracing arms, and enabled the children to look at and overcome pain and loss. In the fairy-tale-like photographs, each individual's right to believe in her own worth and wholeness through healthy bonds with nature was brought to view.

Another photography project dealing with eco-identity is *Eyes as Big as Plates* based on ongoing collaboration between the Finnish-Norwegian artist duo Riitta Ikonen and Karoline Hjorth. Starting out as a play on characters from Nordic folklore, *Eyes as Big as Plates* has evolved into a continual search for modern humanity belonging to nature.

The series is produced in collaboration with retired farmers, fishermen, zoologists, plumbers,

opera singers, housewives, artists, academics etc. Since 2011 the artist duo has portrayed seniors in Norway, Finland, France, US, UK, Iceland, the Faroe Islands, Sweden, South Korea, Czech Republic, Japan, Senegal, Outer Hebrides, Tasmania and Greenland. Each image in the series presents a solitary figure in a landscape, dressed in elements from surroundings that indicate neither time nor place. Here nature acts as both content and context: characters literally inhabit the landscape wearing sculptures they create in collaboration with the artists.



Photo 3: Karoline Hjorth & Riitta Ikonen. *Eyes as Big as Plates* # Momodou Toucouleur (Senegal, 2019)

Engaging in environmental photography supports mindfulness and a sense of physical presence in the environment.

Some environmental photo-taking activities can be considered as a way of developing somatic awareness and an embodied sense of self in one's relation to the environment. This effect is most obvious as a result of environmental photo-taking activities which balance time between mindfulness and creative expression, when emphasis is placed on meditative journeys as a form of mini-pilgrimages in the 'green area.' Often, the projective nature of photo-taking activity enables a person's identification with natural objects and environments on a physical level.

Mindful photo-taking activities can be integrated into ecotherapy practices and support the goals of ecotherapy by fostering reconnection and a return to experiencing ourselves in the here and now as embodied beings. This requires attention to physical sensations in their relation to mental states evoked by one's presence and interaction with the environment. It should be emphasized that the healing powers of nature are enhanced by the degree of mindfulness and mental focus one brings to these interactions. People can immerse themselves in a state of presence in the environment, and use photography to explore experiential awareness and practice mindful attention by documenting responses to sensory stimuli. For instance, they can be asked to take pictures of what they move toward as pleasant and to also photograph what they experience as unpleasant, in ways that are used in a new mindfulness-based art therapy intervention, which represents an example of a palliative environmental program.

Through environmental photo-taking activities people can be encouraged to immerse themselves in a kind of meditation, with their absorption in physical and emotional processes on the one hand, and attentiveness to the environmental stimuli on the other. They can walk or act mindfully, keeping a sense of their presence in the environment with immediate experience in the here and now, appreciating their physical contact with the natural objects and sensory qualities of the 'green space' with its 'field effects'.

Mindfulness-based environmental photo-taking activities can include an introduction with mindfulness instruction and emphasis on the role of attention in health. Warm-up exercises involving breathing and relaxation and exploratory walkabouts in certain environments can be introduced as helping to provide deeper effects.

Photography as a means of confronting nature experiencing distress and illness.

At present the obvious ecological losses associated with the disappearance of species, landscapes and ecosystems, changes in weather conditions, disruption of the usual way of life or loss of livelihood become more evident and often reflected through art, especially, photography. By doing so, photography provides modest but compelling acts of regeneration, an adaptive response to healing not only of human beings, but of the

multitude of places on the planet that experience distress and 'illness.'

The arts become a front row seat to witness the happenings of our planet. As Sarah West [8] puts it, the dramatic happenings of our planet, politically and environmentally 'have been paired with a deeply cultivated, loving, personal relationship with the lands and waters, and stimulate people to center their life around advocating for creating spaces where we can heal — ourselves, our communities and the land — and fold us back into the web of connection. This intense connection with the earth has also meant a lifetime of experiencing eco grief.'

The visual scenery of planetary and ecosystems' damage evokes ecological grief as an emotional response to various environmental losses, especially among those people who until recently sought to maintain close ties with the natural environment and attached increased importance to this connection.



Photo 4: Philippe Echaroux. "Painting with Lights" (2014). Light projection onto the forest — light "graffiti"

French artist Philippe Echaroux gained worldwide fame in 2014 thanks to the project "Painting with Lights", in which he used a digital projector and light "graffiti", to project photographs of indigenous people's faces unto tree crowns as a screen. With this project, he, in particular, defended the tropical forest in Brazil, 600 hectares of which were destroyed as a result of predatory logging. Every day, 300 trucks loaded with logs leave this area. This means that 600 hectares of forest were cut down. And this continues, despite

the fact that, according to the Brazilian constitution, cutting down forests on the territory of indigenous peoples is prohibited. The projection of a face of indigenous people onto the trees of a tropical forest creates the impression that the forest has acquired its own agency.

Environmental photography facilitates narrative activity

Narrative construction can be effective ways to assist with appropriation and personalization of the environment via photography. When people create and tell stories that concern their relationship with the environment, they have rich possibilities to discover and maintain their individual or group identity, formulate complex earth-based meanings and bring their intentions and the sense of a goal into the narrative.

Creating narratives as a part of phototherapeutic environmentally and nature-based activities can activate these inherent qualities in people. Different photographic material can be used to facilitate narrative activity. This can be photo-albums or other personal collections of pictures, photos taken in various environments to illustrate certain events. Significant memories and biographical meanings can be revealed, for instance, when people are showing and commenting their photographs related to certain places and natural environments.

Since photo-taking is a process and a result of it can be a series of photographs able to facilitate narration based on a sequence of micro- or macro-events that took place in the process of picture-taking and are reflected in the photographs. These could be natural processes observed by a person and related to her/his inner reactions. Thus, one of effect of photo-taking during some periods of time can be story-making that helps with a sense of cohesiveness of their lives and perception of natural objects and ecosystems.

Nature-based photography can include some special activities facilitating narration, such as photo-journaling or keeping photographic diaries, illustrating personal stories, or some cultural and archetypal themes, poetry, or myths with photographs. People can present their narratives together with a series of pictures selected from those taken during their outdoor journeys. Creating narratives is also possible with the use of people's collection of personal photographs or albums, as a result of their choice of most significant photographs or a series of photographs related to their experience of the environment.



Photo 5: Leonid Tishkov. "The Private Moon" project

According to the plot of "The Private Moon" art project, a man saw a Moon falling from heaven in the attic of his house. He covered the Moon with a blanket, drank tea with her, treated her to apples, and then transported her across a dark river to a bank with lunar pines, descended into the lower world, and then returned back, illuminating the path with his personal Moon. Together with the Moon, man crossed the boundaries of worlds, fell into sleep, and became a mythological creature that can live in the real world as if in a fairy tale.

The romantic fairy-tale quality of the project is ambiguous: it allows us to see the world in a new light, to introduce notes of poetics, mystery, fabulousness, childhood, tenderness, care, reciprocity, contemplation into a person's perception, and highlights everything around. A meeting with the Moon revives in us the ability to perceive the world as a living universe,

sharing with a person the feeling of loneliness, pain, and the joy of meeting, and living together, and wanderings. In order to tell his story Leonid Tishkov constructed a lantern in the form of a moon and made many photographs of it installing it in different locations including those that experience ecological problems in order to attract people's attention to them.

Conclusion

Photography embraces various forms of creative activities able to support public and

environmental health and establishing more harmonious and supporting relations of humans with nature. This article presented environmental, nature-based applications of photography. Information on how photography helps to explore and change people's perception of nature, to feel in control and to appropriate the environment, maintain and develop ecological identity, to facilitate narrative activity in order to integrate various aspects of experience concerning people's relationship with nature, and to develop mindfulness and a sense of physical presence in the environment. was provided.

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Section

In resonance with the earth

We are pleased to introduce a new section of our journal, "In Resonance with the Earth." We see *poiesis* as providing the basis for human beings' creative responses to their environment. The arts in particular offer forms that crystallize these responses in ways that touch and move us. "In Resonance with the Earth" contains poetry, artworks, photography and poetic essays relevant to our theme. We encourage readers to find their own poetic ways of responding.



THE ALBATROSS AND ME*

*reprinted with permission from "POIESIS: A Journal of the Arts and Communication", 2024, Vol. 21



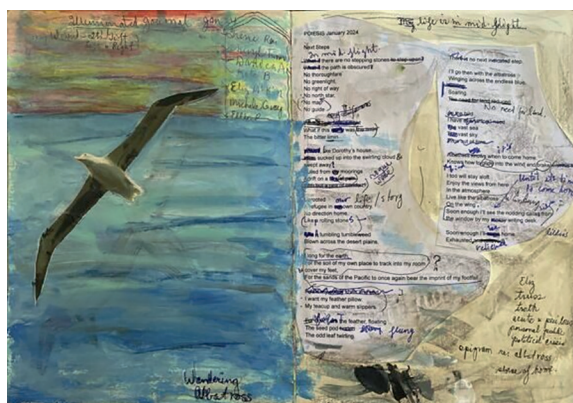
JUDITH Greer Essex

Ph.D. LMFT, ADTR, REAT. She is a professor at the European Graduate School in Saas Fee, Switzerland and founding director of The Expressive Arts Institute in San Diego. Judith teaches community art-making to facilitate large groups of people to cooperate and create together. In addition to community art, her special interests include embodiment, improvisation, women's issues, and androgyny. She has led development workshops and consulting for Sharp Hospital Coronado, Toyota University, Mercy Hospital palliative care team, GSDBA Chamber of Commerce San Diego, Alliant University, and San Diego Repertory Theater, among others.

When Steve Levine put out the call for submissions to *Poeisis: a journal of arts and communication* with the theme "Next Steps, New Beginnings," I contemplated my life: What is beginning and what are my next steps? Brain fog and lack of direction for my future seem my daily atmosphere. I have no secure footing, no definite plan. That unsettling reality crawled into my lap. Then came an image of the wandering albatross.

On occasion, an animal comes to me, either as a living creature or as a mental image. It says, "Hello," and we have an encounter. When this happens, I consider it seriously: the circumstances of our meeting, what I was doing when we met, what it was doing, and what sensations, emotions, thoughts, and memories I might have concerning our meeting. I do not consult a book on animal medicine—someone else's traditions and ideas. Instead, I consult zoological information about that animal: young or old, male or female, at rest or traveling, endangered or safe. I want to know the individual. The unique visitation by this being and our relationship can reveal its significance to me. I sit with the image and move in a way reminiscent of the animal, as if it had my body or as if my spirit could live in that body. Looking at many photographs of it, imagining myself in its body and locale, I draw it. This kind of research takes many hours. My journal holds my reflections. I glean and gather what messages I might receive from my four-legged, finned, or feathered family that can translate to my current reality.

As I contemplated the life of the albatross, at home in the sky, soaring for years at a time, sleeping on the wing, it brought me some measure of peace. Here was a creature who lived without knowing the next step. Could I take a lesson from the albatross?



In Mid-flight
There are no stepping stones,
The path is obscured.
No thoroughfare
or right of way
No green light
No north star
No guide
No map.

This is the bitter limin

Like Dorothy's house,
sucked up into the swirling cloud
And swept away;

Pulled from moorings,
adrift on a rogue wave;
Uprooted–
A tumbleweed tumbling,
No direction home.
I long for
My feather pillow
My teacup and warm slippers.
A feather is floating
A seed pod flung
The odd leaf twirling
No

next

indicated

step.

I'll go then with the wandering albatross,
winging across the endless blue
Soaring
No need for land

Vast sea

Vast sky

Soon enough I'll see the nodding calla lilies
Out the window by my writing desk
Soon enough

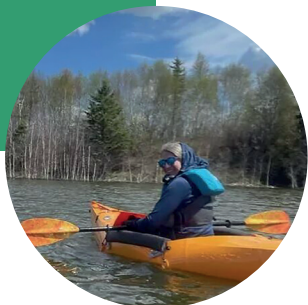
Exhausted

Relieved

Home.

CLEARING SPACE FOR WILDFLOWER SEASON*

*reprinted with permission from "POIESIS: A Journal of the Arts and Communication", 2024, Vol. 21



JENNA Montgomery

is a Canadian artist and polymath who currently resides in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, on treaty lands where reconciliation is still a work in progress. She has a CAGS in expressive arts leadership from the European Graduate School and is interested in the interplay between art, nature and community.

One morning while getting to know some new watercolour pigments, I had a decentering experience. It began as just a curious exploration of what the new pigments looked like on the paper. There was very little skill involved. I applied the paint in loose horizontal lines. Once I knew what these pigments were, I started varying my marks and the experience became more playful. Soon enough the little painting we see here emerged with something to say. Willing to stay with it, I moved into playing with words. The poem was the result. Now as I sit with this poem and painting, where I'm coming from and what is meaningful to me is reflected back. The community spaces that I knew prior to the pandemic are starting to reform and take life again. However, it has been slow, and there are valued communities that are still missing. I support the building of community but have never seen myself as a community builder. This little decentering exercise has shown me a door, and through that door, I can see that I do have the skills to build community, and I can start by clearing space. Once again, the principles of expressive arts have helped me to uncover the door to my own wisdom.



The threshold is there, right there
Open to all who lend their attention.
The gates have withered.
Attention is a commodity.

Behind the gates - dry, hard, barren
Desperately waiting
Begging I can almost touch it.
Can you?

To cross through is something more
Timeless, even

With leaf-bearing branches stripped from the gates,
You and I
sweep the sky
making space for the light to come through

Fields and pastures come to life
A newly sprouted carpet to run and dance upon
making place with the emergent

Tossing our shoes aside, baring our toes and ankles
Tender blades of grass, first tickle then poke
sharp until they bend under our weight

Chasing our steps, they spring back
elated and excited for what is to come.
Wildflower season will soon be here.

THUS SPOKE TALIESIN



ALEXANDER Kopytin

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I was inspired to write a series of poems called “Thus Spoke Taliesyn” by the poetic legacy of the poet of the Early Middle Ages (who lived in the 6th century AD), as well as the works of other authors who were influenced by him. In the image of this bard, in his very perception of the world, as far as one can judge from the relatively few surviving poems, I found the embodiment of the archetypal ideal of the Poet, who feels not only the human drama, but also the universe, our planet, his native Wales, and who is capable of communicating not only with his contemporaries, but also with nature itself and the Web of Life.

The historical Taliesyn is the oldest of the poets who wrote in the Welsh language. His name is associated mainly with the “Book of Taliesyn”. It includes poetry written in the 6th century by the historical Taliesyn, as well as texts presumably written in the 15th, 16th, and possibly earlier, in the 10th and 11th centuries. Taliesyn later became the hero of a legend written down or created in the 16th century by Elis Gruffydd, probably based on the oral tradition.

The biography of Taliesyn is almost unknown, and can only be reconstructed from indirect references in the poems of other authors. Taliesyn was a court poet and wrote poems praising those rulers in the territory of Wales in whose service he was. Through the Welsh cultural tradition, he could have been introduced to the knowledge of the Druids and apparently could also read texts in Latin, and, presumably, he was able to integrate the knowledge and practices characteristic of ancient Celtic culture with a monotheistic worldview.

More is known about the legendary Taliesyn than the historical one. He was credited with prophetic

abilities and a unique poetic gift. Later, in the era of romanticism and in the 20th century, he became popular among authors writing historical novels and works in the fantasy genre, especially those based on plots from Celtic mythology.

The appeal to the figure of Taliesyn and the attempts of various authors to endow him with certain sought-after qualities — wisdom, the ability to use creative imagination and vision, etc. — have something in common with attempts to idealize a number of other historical figures. One of them is, for example, the figure of Zarathustra, who is credited with the authorship of the Avesta — the scriptures of Zoroastrianism. At one time, his image inspired Friedrich Nietzsche to write the philosophical saga, “Thus Spoke Zarathustra” [4]. In this work, however, Nietzsche describes Zarathustra's personality quite freely and turns him into an exponent of those thoughts and ideals that characterize Nietzsche himself more than Zarathustra and his teaching. Nevertheless, finding a legendary character who raised key questions about human existence and its morality helped Nietzsche formulate his ideas about the death of God, the will to power, and the superhuman.

Just as Nietzsche found his Hero in Zarathustra, helping the philosopher formulate his worldview and view of the superhuman, I also found my Hero in the person of Taliesyn. Identification with him and the use of poetic language helped me express my own life experience and picture of the world, as well as my ideal of eco-human beings, characteristic for ecological civilization [3, 5].

In the few surviving original poetic texts of Taliesyn himself, as well as the texts of his imitators and followers, the theme of human beings’

connection with the natural world, their ability to identify with different creatures and elements of nature, an animistic view of the world with its ecological basis is clearly visible. It lies in the recognition of the connection of everything with everything, the unity of humans with their living environment. Developing the idea of identification with the natural world, potentially inherent in human beings, the archetypal psychologist James Hillman once wrote about personification, which helps to distinguish between the different subjective qualities of humans and natural objects. "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." [2, p. 14]

Such a perception of the world, according to Jerome Bernstein [1], is transrational (but not irrational), connected with the comprehension of life as a "sacred" reality, when "everything animate

and inanimate has within it a spiritual dimension and communicates in that dimension to those who can listen." (p. 8) Thanks to this, we enter into communication with the "Kingdom" of the living world, fall in love with it and feel its creative, poetic beginning. Poetry, artistic words and creative imagination do not simply reflect or imitate nature and humans, but represent a "meeting place" for communication and connection of everything with everything, which is facilitated by "the spiritual perception of the heart in agreement with the thinking brain and the expressive body" [6]. The poetic images inspired by Taliesyn's works are born with the intention and the capacity to be present in the "Kingdom" of the more than human, and can serve as a bridge or means of communication with the "soul of the living world" [6]. My poetic cycle includes 12 poems. Below are seven of them, reflecting the main stages of the journey and metamorphosis of the legendary Taliesyn.

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I am Taliesin

I have been alive,
I have been dead,
I am Taliesyn.
I know why the cow has horns,
Why the night is tender,
Why milk is white,
And the flower is voluptuous.
I was the doe and the hunter who hunted her,
I was the arrow that pierced the doe's body,
I was her blood that flowed onto the deathbed of grass.
I was the moon looking at the forest where the hunt took place.
I was the surface of the lake in the forest, listening to the confessions of the moon.
And the forest path along which in the middle of the night
A lonely rider hurried to reach the chambers of his beloved before dawn.
I was the blue salmon,
The grains that sprouted on the hill.
And when they gathered us, ground us, and kneaded the dough, and put us in the oven,
I turned into bread and fed the people.
And then I became one of them, who compared himself to bread.
The one who was judged,
Who ascended to the cross as a saving sacrifice,
But at the same time I was also a nail that pierced His body.
I was a shroud covering flesh and blood.
And His image was imprinted on me.
But I was also the one who is invisible, and who is eternally coming from the Source of Being.
I became a mystery, a law and a miracle,
Filling the heart, the spaces of the Earth and the heavens.
I was alive,
I was dead.
I was resurrected.
I am Taliesyn.

Taliesyn's Metamorphosis

I have gone through a million changes.
I was in a cocoon, from which I emerged as a butterfly.
I was a seed that became a ripe ear.
I was a tree growing in a Welsh forest,
Giving shelter to birds.
And then I became a ship that ploughed the sea,
Opening new horizons.
Singing on the seven winds, having made friends with water and wind.
I was a landscape with three flowering willow bushes.
I was a spiral shell of a unicorn,
Carrying within itself the poiesis of earth and sky.
This land taught me the writing of stones,
Like the Tablets of the Covenant,
Revealing themselves on the path of a visionary.
I know the language of the wave.
I was a drop in the rain.
I was a sword in the grip of a hand.
I was a shield in battle.
I was a harp sounding in the hands of a bard,
I was a star in the eyes of a prophet,
Sprouted as a seed in the field of heaven,
Becoming the Universal Tree,
Gathering the fragments of a broken vessel on its branches,
When they turn green in the darkness of immeasurable emptiness.
I am the one who is given the ability to rustle the leaves,
Turning the pages of the Tree,
In whose chest all the sciences of the world are collected,
And a living heart beats.

The Great Path

Once upon a time, beyond time and space, the bard Taliesyn made his way in the darkness.
He was in the abyss, and he himself was like it.
The bard overturned the cherished vessel of being,
It shattered into countless fragments.
He released the energy and will to create that had arisen in him into the world.
“Let there be light! Let there be creation!” the bard exclaimed.
Thus, poiesis entered the world.

The bard continued his way among the stars,
Having become a poetic embodiment,
He himself was like the sounding stars.
He held the music instrument in his hands, played and sang tirelessly,
He shone in the darkness like a fragrant lily blossoming in the vastness of the universe.
“Let the Word be a flower and it will become melodious!” he uttered.
Thus, the expressive and speaking being of the world manifested itself.

Once on his way he picked up one of the fragments of the universe and saw the Earth.
“Oh, how beautiful she is!” - the bard exclaimed in his heart,
And the Earth was like his heart,
It began to beat and resound with firmament, air and water,
The fire of the sun warmed it, and it became a Song.

When the bard made his way on Earth,
A feeling of Home, his Promised Land and the will of the Family arose in him.
“Let the Earth be a Great Home, a blessed abode of Life for a huge Family!” - the bard proclaimed.
And he himself was like the Home and the huge Family living in it.
Thus ecopoiesis appeared in the world -
The creation of the abode of Life for a huge Family of different creatures and their polyphony.
And the bard played on the strings and sang along with Life in the Home.

He saw how different creatures multiply,
And how they die, bearing the Crown of Life, the Crown of Love,
Making its cycle on the Great Path.
“Let Love be the Crown of Life!
Let it be melodious, resounding under the sun and under the moon,” the bard proclaimed.
And Love became the Song of Songs.

The bard continued his path on Earth,
He became a mortal man.
He became like a bridegroom and a bride, a king and a queen, and he sang:
“Let you kiss me with the kisses of your mouth!
For your love is better than wine;
your anointing oils are fragrant;
your name is oil poured out;
Draw me after you; let us run.”
Your name is like poured incense,
Lead me along with you – let us run away!
O my groom,
O my bride,
O my king,
O my queen.
Lead me into your chambers!"

The bard continued his earthly path.
He was now the king and the queen,
And those whom they gave birth to,
He was also their Great Home and everything that fills it,
The Great Family of Life.

The bard returned to his origins,
Collecting the fragments of the broken vessel.
Finding his being, his Path,
Like the Song of Songs.

Hallelujah!

The poet sings.
So a tree rustles with its leaves
And reaches out to the sun, outgrowing itself.
So a summer shower, shining like a thunderstorm,
Enters the earth's bosom with blessed moisture.
So the waves beat against the rocky shore and call tirelessly
To push off from the firmament and sail away on a long journey.
So the moonlight shines on the mirror of the lake
And leads the fish, rising from the depths, to the starry sources.
The song of Taliesyn is in the ears of grain,
Giving themselves in the name of life,
In the sound of the harp
In the bottomless sky,
The dance of hands touching the transcendental strings,
The rays of dawn penetrating the darkness.
There is that song - the crown and the birth of mystery,
In it the word of life breathes,
Filling the chest with the spirit of peace,
Emitting a cry of praise: "Hallelujah!"

You will have peace

The dark green leaves of the holly shine,
The needles in the palm have found their shelter and oblivion.
The scarlet clusters of drupes have seen the light –
“You will have peace” – such spoke Taliesyn.

The trill of the linnet will wake you, and on the long journey
The morning will blow, hope will sparkle with dew,
The sun will be in an embrace with the beautiful earth. –
“You will have peace” – thus spoke Taliesyn.

The swift-footed doe goes down to the valley, breathing
The evening air, which is full of the scent of flowers.
Recognizing the invitation to copulation in the song of the cicadas –
“You will have peace” – thus spoke Taliesyn.

The Friday sun has descended beyond the horizon,
The Queen lights candles before the secret of the night.
The abyss is filled with the prayer of the moon and the bracha, the blessing.
“You will have peace,” – thus spoke Taliesyn.

Spell of Love

Hope shines over the world with the young moon,
The intricate song of the golden-winged honey-eater flows.
The feathered poet, intoxicated with the juice of the correa,
Speaks loudly: "Let love be swift-winged!"

Stars look into the river waters, hearing
The singing of the bard, who, listening to the flow,
Opening his heart to the source of life,
Proclaims: "Let love be full-flowing!"

To the rocky ledges on the Cambrian slopes clung
A rose with five petals - a flower-poetess
With a dark crimson mouth, it calls out to the sun:
"Let the flame of love burn as a source of life!"

With flesh and blood, valleys, sea, mountains,
The mystery of life that filled the earthly womb,
The sensual fabric of creation, insight, prayer,
The world exclaims: "Let love be embodied!"

Taliesyn's Posthumous Journey

Taliesin sailed posthumously to the source of life –
That which is hidden in the center of the Mystery and the Abyss.
Surrendering to the stream, he glided in the empty space,
Submitting to the breath of the world and the will of the earth.

And by night and by day, dwelling in languor and song
Listening to the guiding star, burning over the Abyss,
Having become dust, he heard the beating of the Great Heart. –
That which is called the poiesis of the world and the faith of the bard.

Having rejected the usual connections and meanings of the day,
In the darkness, seeing the all-powerful invisible source,
Love and creation, in which Taliesyn rested,
He returned to the light, heeding the cherished call.

In the Bay of Three Cliffs he appeared as the first ray of the sun,
Greeted the world in a hawk's free flight,
With a solemn song he came from the lips of the sky.
With his wings he embraced the whole world in the morning.

And the grey seals, blissfully lying on the beach,
And the gorse, peacefully blooming on the rocky ledge,
And the ship, standing in the Bay of Earthly Revelations,
With the awakened bard, and two lovers on the beach,
He sang: Let there be life!

EARTH OUR HOME



STEPHEN K. Levine

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Graduate School (Switzerland) of Postgraduate Pedagogical Studies (St.-
Petersburg, Russian Federation)

It has always been a dream for man to fly, to rise up from the Earth and find his true home in the stars. I say "man" since women have been assigned the role of being more earthly, attached to their bodies, to their monthly cycles and to childbirth. Now women have the possibility of choosing not to be confined exclusively to that role, unless, of course, men prevent them from doing so, for example, by outlawing abortion.

Nietzsche famously said that philosophy is based on a hatred of the Earth, an attempt to escape from the particularity of the here and now into the universality of the concept transcending time — thus becoming immortal. What then would be a philosophy based on a love of the Earth? Would we call it "ecopoiesis"? And would it mean that we accepted our bodily being in the world and our essential mortality?

Elon Musk, we know, has rejected this. For him, man's home is in the stars. SpaceX will make him immortal — or else he will die trying. He would become as a god; and Trump hopes to become one of his angels, perhaps his archangel.

For myself, as I age, I have become more and more aware of my mortality. This body will die, and I will die with it. The poems below are an attempt to accept that ineluctable fate. The Buddha has said that suffering comes from holding on when everything changes and passes away. To accept that would bring true happiness.

Some sixty years ago, in one of my first poems, I wrote,

"The beauty of flowers is a beauty of ending.

Let it die, O let it die."

The poems in this issue praise mortality. From dust we come and to dust we shall return. Earth, not space, is our true home.

1.

Listen
The earth is groaning
Is it dying
Or giving birth
Every death
A new beginning
Conduct
The funeral rites

2.

"This changes everything"–Naomi Klein

And it did
They tried to bring it back
But it was too late
And now we sit and watch
As the world ends
Not with a bang
But a conflagration
Pretty sight we say
As the flames turn to ash
And we all fall down

3.

Groveling
Mouth filled with dirt
Worms
Bugs
I am of the earth
Born from it
Soon to return
Human
Humus
Searching for stars
Eyes closed
I succumb

4.

Burn baby burn
Burn it all down
Then build baby build
Build a new foundation
One without cracks
And we will be immured
Safe and alone

5.

O what a beautiful world it would be
If
If only
If only we
If only we cared
Cared enough to fight for it
Enough to die for it
To live for it
Beauty is worth living for
Therefore choose life

6.

What did we do
To be so black and blue
Bruised and broken
We have met the enemy
And he is us
It's hard to keep beating ourselves
At some point we deliver the knock-out punch
And then we will rest
Only to rise
And be delivered again
I promise to hold you
To cherish you
To care for you
Until the end of days
Amen

Section

Events. Book reviews. Interviews



INTERVIEW WITH ENVIRONMENTAL ARTS THERAPIST GARY NASH

Abstract. In this interview, British environmental arts therapist, Gary Nash, talks about the growing area of nature-based creative arts-therapy practice in the UK and environmental arts therapies initiatives that he and his colleagues have developed. He makes a special tribute to the memory of his colleague and the pioneer of environmental arts therapy, Ian Siddons Heginworth, who has sadly passed this year.

Keywords: nature-based arts therapy, dramatherapy, environmental, nature, indigenous trees, ecopsychology

Brief note about the interviewee

Gary Nash, Dip AT, MAAT is a HCPC registered art therapist. Gary is a Co-founder of the London Art Therapy Centre in 2009, where he is a practitioner-researcher providing individual and group art psychotherapy and environmental arts therapy. He is a visiting lecturer at the Institute for Arts in Therapy and Education (IATE) and the University of Hertfordshire (UK) and co-editor of *Environmental arts therapy: Wild frontiers of the heart*, by Routledge, 2020.:



Photo 1: Gary and Ian (2018). *Images of Ian Siddons Heginworth.*

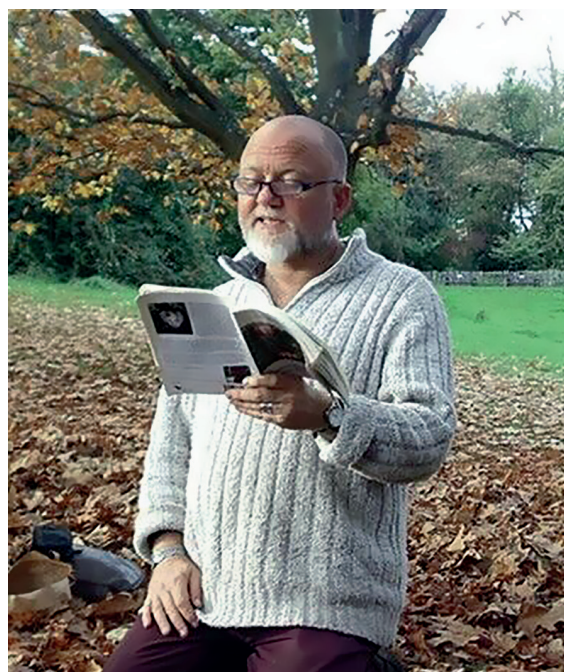


Photo 2: Ian (2018).

Alexander Kopytin (A.K.): *Thank you for taking up the invitation to contribute to the Ecopoiesis: Eco-Human Theory and Practice journal. Since we began this conversation your friend, colleague and the pioneer of environmental arts therapy, Ian Siddons Heginworth, has sadly passed. You have agreed to continue this interview to honour his contribution to the field of creative arts and nature-based therapy.*

You worked together with Ian in the field of nature-based arts therapies for some years, wrote a book, and participated in a series of environmental arts therapies initiatives. How did you find each other and what role did your collaboration play for developing nature-based arts therapies in the UK and elsewhere?

Gary Nash (G.N.): I met Ian after reading an article that he had written that made a connection between grieving and how Nature or natural spaces can hold us in our time of loss, pain, and suffering. I visited Ian at his NHS Wild Things Community Mental Health project based in Exeter in 2010. Following this visit I invited Ian to host a book launch event for his first book *Environmental arts therapy and the Tree of Life: A monthly guide for your soul's journey on this beautiful Earth* (2008), at the London Art Therapy Centre, and that event led to seasonal visits to run one-day workshops in North London.

Ian wrote the self-published book *Environmental arts therapy and the Tree of Life* following several years researching the material with his wife, dramatherapist Marianne Siddons Heginworth. They ran a series of year-long creative-arts-nature therapy groups that become known as the Circle of Trees groups. This period of collaborative research and the groupwork experiences provided the material, themes, therapeutic approach, and creative facilitation methods that we heartfully described in the book. Themes that reflect the changing seasons and metaphors that directly resonate with reference to indigenous trees, are woven together with mythic narratives and the therapeutic interaction between Ian as writer, therapist, and storyteller.

The turning of the year and the qualities and metaphors associated with specific trees, provide a gentle unfolding as we read the pages and attune

to the natural passage of time and step onto Ian's pathway into Nature. It was the material described in this book that Ian was keen to develop into a one-year training course. Ian worked with me and Hephzibah Kaplan at the London Art Therapy Centre to plan the curriculum, locate the local parks we could work in, and liaise with the parks authority to arrange outdoor teaching spaces. The first course was launched in 2013 and moved to Devon in 2022 where it continues to offer a post-graduate training in environmental arts therapy for HCPC registered or graduating arts therapist practitioners.

The workshops and courses that we developed over this time have led to a growing community of environmental arts therapists and led to the group exhibition *Touching Nature: Touched by Nature*, in 2020, and the joint publication, *Environmental arts therapy: Wild frontiers of the heart*, which we co-edited in 2020. The book was released just as fear of the approaching pandemic began to take hold, and the exhibition took place between nation-wide lockdowns in the autumn of that year, here in London.

Since 2022 we have returned to Highgate wood to deliver the Introduction to Environmental Arts Therapy course and workshops for art therapy students. These achievements are gradual and take time and are driven by the need to understand the vital connections between Nature, psychotherapy, creativity, and the environmental climate emergency.

A.K.: *The workshops and courses that you developed have led to a growing community of environmental arts therapists. Could you please say something about the training courses and some other fruits of your collaboration?*

G.N.: When Ian and I first started running the one-year post-graduate programme in environmental arts therapy in 2013 we quickly realised that training at this level would limit access to an area of practice that was being rapidly developing in many related areas of health and education. During the seasonal one-day workshops we had been approached by counsellors, psychologists, social workers, film makers, artists, and forest school and forest bathing practitioners who were disappointed that they couldn't go on to train and asked whether we could run a course that would introduce them to the principles of safe,

therapeutic practice outdoors, underpinned by the vision described by Ian in the following way:

Environmental arts therapy is a new and unique creative arts therapy that does not fit into any of the existing modalities. This is because:

1. Environmental arts therapy is practiced outdoors and enjoys a profound and intimate relationship with the natural world, inspired and shaped by the locations that it inhabits.
2. The foundation of environmental arts therapy is its unique relationship with the turning year (the cycle of the seasons) and metaphors, myths and traditions relating to each month, so its therapeutic processes are imbedded in the natural passage of time.
3. Environmental arts therapy is multimedia, combining visual arts, drama, movement, voice-work and ritual, all practiced outdoors.

The idea to develop an introduction course came in response to this request from the many creative people who attended the seasonal workshops that Ian delivered from 2012–2019. The course was designed to provide a practical and theoretical framework to consider when taking your practice outdoors. The first Introduction course enabled me to design and deliver a London based course run over a 4-month period and to work with Vanessa Jones and Ian to deliver the programme. Since the 2020 pandemic my colleague Vanessa Jones and I have returned to Highgate Wood where the course is continuing to give access to this much needed way of working.



Photo 3: Gary and Vanessa Jones (2022).

A.K.: *The book you co-edited describes the emergence of environmental arts therapy and its growth across the UK as supported through the training course based in London. Could you please, explain how you find that going along with the natural cycles and seasons and using an integrative arts approach are relevant for ecological or nature-based arts therapies?*

G.N.: The book *Environmental arts therapy: The wild frontiers of the heart* (2020) was written in collaboration with the first and second cohorts of the one-year course. We set out to develop a book that would look at the practitioner experience and issues from very different perspectives and contexts. We also sought to deepen research in this area by drawing from the wider field of ecopsychology. One intention was to describe how the work has been developing and to value what the creative arts therapies bring to this way of working. Finally, we wished to clarify what ‘environmental arts therapy’ in particular, has to add to this growing area of clinical practice and its unique contribution to taking therapy out of doors. All contributing authors were invited to submit a chapter that showed the diverse ways in which arts therapists were applying this approach. The book describes how UK based art and drama therapists are adapting their practice when working in natural environments and providing ‘safe, structured and accompanied creative therapeutic healing experiences’ as described by Kopytin and Rugh [4]. The theoretical themes are developed along with illustrated examples of clinical practice across a variety of settings and locations.

This book represents the gentle and committed tending of an approach to working therapeutically in, with and through nature developed over several decades. Although the term is relatively new, environmental arts therapy draws deeply from an ancient history, a timeframe in which human experience has always sought expression through different art forms in relationship with the natural world. At the heart of this approach is an acknowledgement of the complexity of human psychology and a recognition of the ‘wildness’ found in human nature. *Environmental arts therapy: The wild frontiers of the heart*, is a book about the emergence of a new creative therapy modality in the British Isles.

Underpinning environmental arts therapy is the attention given to the natural cycles and seasonal

changes. Behind the attunement to the changing seasons is an important reference to an older calendar that was used to mark the turning of the year, this is known as the Celtic Ogham calendar and is described in each chapter of Ian's first book. Reference to indigenous trees and the qualities of one specific tree each month of the year, anchors the book and the training course within the seasonal transitions of the turning year, thus drawing our attention towards the cyclical nature of time. Attunement to the subtle changes within natural environments supports the therapist and client in the shift from ego-psychology to eco-psychology and a development of the ecological-self as described by Martin Jordan [3]. The cultural and symbolic qualities of each tree enhance the intersection between human and other-than-human ecologies and is seen as enhancing the experience of trainees, therapists, and clients when working in the outdoor studio.

A.K.: *As far as nature-based arts therapies are concerned, what is particularly important for their understanding of therapeutic setting, the role of nature as therapeutic factor, the ways and goals of work and other aspects of therapy? Can you give some examples of how these ideas are developing in the UK?*

G.N.: The current research that I am developing seeks to evaluate what happens within the inner frame of therapy and how we interact differently as we facilitate the active elements of the triangular relationship when working outdoors, particularly with individuals [5]. What is becoming apparent is that the experience of therapy outdoors affects the senses and energy being exerted by both participants. This sensory dynamic influences the therapeutic process, affecting the expression of feelings, thoughts, and the creative responses that might be inspired by the natural studio. As I describe in Nash [6]: 'Another theme which emerges is how nature inspires us in multiple ways: sensory, emotionally, cognitively, and psychologically' and that our senses may shape an expressive response that differ from studio work: 'including a visual art response through sculpting, modelling, or land art, movement and drama expressed through the body and the use of voice, sound, and rhythm, allowing our experiences to be reflected back at us in nature' (p. 41). These experiences influence the therapist's facilitation skills and encourage a more body-aware and integrative approach when relocating the

arts therapies outdoors, and are of interest to the emerging and developing theory base.

A.K.: *It appears that nature-based arts therapies establish a new and vibrant field of practices in the UK in particular. What initiatives in this field you are now involved in and what activities will take place in near future?*

Following the publication of the book in 2020 and the impact of covid-19 that same year, Ian's desire was to develop a stronger connection with the wider environmental impact of climate change and its effect on our work as therapists. This is an area of development that the community of environmental arts therapists in the UK have been taking forward over the past two years. The publication of Jamie Bird's book, *Social action art therapy in a time of crisis*, published in 2022 [1], has accelerated our understanding of the arts, creativity, and therapy in the context of a social and political dimension. Jamie's work directly addresses the ecological frame that therapists' work within and positions environmental arts therapy within a social, economic, and politically engaged framework [2].

During the last two years I have also made a new connection, through Shaun McNiff, with the principal editor of the *Journal of Applied Arts and Health*, Dr Ross Prior. The special issue and conference event that we hosted in 2023 brought together the ideas and work of Vanessa Jones, Jamie Bird, and others in the EatUK network, and positioned environmental arts therapy in relation to art-based research, and community arts therapy. Ross is now supporting me to edit a special issue, summer 2025, Volume 16(2) on creativity, the arts, and the environment, which will bring these themes together. A call for papers has just gone out and will be of interest to your community.

This special issue will invite a range of arts media, art-based methods, and approaches to working with individuals and groups when bringing nature in or taking therapy outdoors. Ian's legacy will form a part of the editorial and Vanessa and I have written about EAT and the radical roots of art therapy. Jamie Bird and Pamela Whitaker will contribute and bring their approaches and influences to widen the theory base, and we also have an EAT trainee paper on working with a group in the NHS — so a strong beginning.

As well as these new developments, Ian always envisaged a gradual growth of the work as graduates

from the one-year course took his ideas forward in their practice. He loved the idea of planting seeds and watching new Circles of Trees therapy groups take root and grow around the UK. I hope that the EatUK network and Newsletter will continue to support this growth and provide inspiration and connection as we gradually build a community of arts therapists who bring Nature into their studios and take art therapy out into the world.

A.K.: *Thank you for sharing your memories and contribution to this growing area of nature based arts-therapy practice. Warm regards.*

Interviewed by:

Kopytin, Alexander

Doctor of Medical Sciences, Professor, Department of Psychology, St. Petersburg Academy of Postgraduate Pedagogical Education (St. Petersburg, Russia)

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IN MEMORIAL TO JOHN COBB

From: Center for Whitehead Studies, Zhuhai, China

We were shocked and deeply saddened to learn of the passing of Dr. John B. Cobb, Jr. on December 26, 2024. On behalf of all members of the Center for Whitehead Studies, as well as process philosophy scholars and researchers of Cobb's thought in China, we extend our heartfelt condolences on his passing and offer our sincerest sympathies to his family.

In the hearts of Chinese scholars of process philosophy, the esteemed Academician Cobb was a world-renowned process philosopher, a third-generation successor of process philosophy, a leading figure of constructive postmodernism, one of the earliest proponents of Western Green GDP, a constructive postmodern ecological philosopher, a pioneer of constructive postmodern ecological civilization theory, and a distinguished process theologian. He was revered as an "ecological sage," a philosopher, and a thinker dedicated to the life of the Earth and the shared destiny of humanity.

Academician Cobb's works, including *Is It Too Late?*, *For the Common Good*, and *Liberation of Life*, have had a profound impact on advancing the cause of global ecological civilization. His discussions on the philosophy of constructive postmodern organic education have significantly contributed to educational reform in China, particularly by promoting the study and practice of organic process education theories. His support for China's efforts in building an ecological civilization and his praise for China's achievements in this domain at international forums and in the media — hailing China as a global leader in ecological civilization — provided substantial encouragement for China's modernization and ecological initiatives.

The passing of Academician Cobb marks the loss of a world-class leader in process philosophy, a guiding figure in constructive postmodernism, and a passionate advocate for the theory and practice of ecological civilization. To us, he was not only a respected scholar but also a kind elder and a "sage-like" intellectual.

All researchers at our center, as well as scholars of process philosophy, constructive postmodernism, and organic process education in China, will continue to uphold and develop the ideas he so passionately advocated throughout his life. We will persist in advancing research on process philosophy, ecological civilization, organic education and so on, both in China and globally, ensuring that the light of process philosophy continues to illuminate our path forward.

We pray for Academician Cobb's eternal peace in heaven and hope that his thoughts and spirit will inspire future generations!

With heartfelt sympathy,
Haipeng Guo,
Director of the Center for Whitehead Studies

From: The Center for Process Studies (CPS), USA

It is with profound sorrow that we announce the passing of John B. Cobb, Jr., a visionary thinker, tireless advocate for ecological civilization, and a guiding light in process thought. As the founder of the Center for Process Studies, John's wisdom, courage, and unwavering hope inspired generations of scholars, activists, and spiritual seekers across the globe.

John remained remarkably active up until his final days, continuing to engage deeply with the issues that mattered most to him. However, after a fall a few days ago, his health declined rapidly. He passed away peacefully, surrounded by his loving family, on the night after Christmas — just six weeks shy of his 100th birthday.

John's life was a testament to the transformative power of ideas. From his pioneering contributions to process theology to his steadfast commitment to environmental sustainability and interfaith dialogue, John lived out the interconnectedness he so profoundly articulated. His vision for a more compassionate, inclusive, and sustainable world has left an indelible mark on academia and countless communities working toward systemic change.

At the Center for Process Studies, together with the Cobb Institute, China Project, Process & Faith, and many allied Cobb-inspired organizations, we are deeply grateful for John's unparalleled leadership and mentorship. His influence shaped not only our mission but also the lives of everyone fortunate enough to work with him. We are committed to carrying forward his legacy of wisdom, care, and transformation as we continue the work he so passionately began.

As we grieve this tremendous loss, we also celebrate an extraordinary life — a life devoted to fostering harmony, justice, and hope. John taught us that the world is an interconnected process, rich with possibilities for renewal, growth, and flourishing. His example will continue to guide and inspire us for generations to come. In recent conversations with friends John described death as a “natural part of life,” and “the next big adventure.” He added, “I do not expect my death to be a dramatic change in life, but one more gift of life.”

The Center for Process Studies

Thinking and practicing “Heaven, Earth, and Humanity”: Farewell to philosopher John B. Cobb

From: The International Confucian Association

The historical novel “Heaven, Earth, and Man” by Masashi Hozaka, published in 2006, was adapted into a TV series of the same name in 2009 and broadcast by NHK. Although Naoe Kanetsugu was a defeated general who followed the Toyotomi family against Ieyasu, the author has a tendency to highlight the losers, and uses the profound humanity of “reverence for heaven and love for people” to describe his life.

The words “Heaven, Earth, and Humanity” and “reverence for Heaven and love for people” can both be found in the Confucian classic Mencius. Although the common meaning of Heaven, Earth, and Humanity is recognized and used in the Chinese character culture circle that covers China, Japan, and other Asian regions, if it is translated into English from outside the Chinese character culture circle, for example from an American perspective, the expressive connotation and deeper meaning of each Chinese character will inevitably be relatively constrained. The translation will become wordy.

However, the concept of heaven, earth and humanity has been appropriately incorporated into the American process philosophy, and this concept is used as a basis for reference in the postmodern new civilization of “ecological civilization”. John B. Cobb, Jr., a member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and founding president of the Institute for Postmodern Development of China, is one of the main advocates. Although he is now 100 years old, he has been exploring a harmonious ecological civilization model from the interplay between the earth's ecosystem and civilization system since 1969.

His 1971 monograph *Is It Too Late?* is a valuable record of the ecological civilization as the foundation of the earth's new civilization. He later proposed a new method of “green GDP” with unique philosophical thinking in response to the criteria for measuring GDP.



Photo by Zhihe Wang: *Dr. Cobb in his Clermont residence, California, USA (Nov. 2, 2024)*

More than 50 years have passed since the Green GDP standard was proposed, and many species have already become extinct. Global warming is intensifying. The over-rapid industrialization of agriculture is gradually pushing society in the opposite direction of an ecological civilization. According to Cobb, the United States has destroyed rural civilization, and modern agricultural societies of the past have lost the opportunity to directly participate in ecological civilization. However, China still has room for not fully realizing modernization, and can choose to leap over the pitfalls of Western industrial civilization and directly connect to the orbit of ecological civilization, a new civilization. This is undoubtedly the historical opportunity for China to practice the ancient concept of heaven, earth and humanity.

Process philosophy and Mr. Cobb's hope for China to catch the vision of ecological civilization are based on the fact that the origin of ecological civilization is embedded in Chinese traditional culture for thousands of years. As early as the primitive stage, the Chinese tried to capture things through the perspective of the organic connection between all things. This instinctive understanding has input a simple ecological element into the teachings of Confucianism, Taoism and Chinese Buddhism. The Chinese characters that have been nurtured on this land also serve the same function, that is, in their respective organic associations, they are the main body of each other, respectively exuding the mechanism of forming words. It coincides with the world view and epistemological basis of organic correlation condensed in “Heaven, Earth and Humanity” and “Heaven and Humanity as One”. It is really a coincidence that this kind of thinking meets and blends with process philosophy, and in turn produces a healthy chemical reaction in the process of constructing an ecological civilization that is considered postmodern.

There is reason to believe that the cooperation between China's excellent traditional thought culture and Western process philosophy thinking is expected to provide a new knowledge base for addressing the major challenges facing humanity. It was with this hope in mind that Mr. Cobb planned and hosted the “Claremont International Forum on Ecological Civilization” for 17 sessions with participants from all over the world.

For me, a researcher of the Japanese philosopher and writer Miyazawa Kenji, there are similarities between Mr. Cobb's postmodern exploration and Miyazawa Kenji's practice 100 years ago. There is also a high degree of overlap with the practice of Adachi Hara, an agricultural philosopher and agronomist (Agricultural Primitive Theory, Agricultural Work Research, Rural Regional Research), leader of the

Grass-Cutting Crusade, and former professor at the Toyama University Junior College (born in 1930), who is deeply rooted in soil-based thinking.

More than 40 years ago, Mr. Adachi, taking his cue from the activities of Miyazawa Kenji, launched the “Mowing Crusade” and the “University of People and Land” in an abandoned village in Toyama, leading volunteers from all over Japan to explore the journey of pioneering a new civilization, starting with the “death of a society” caused by so-called industrial civilization.

Our predecessors have done their best to find the possibility of symbiosis with nature in the process of evolutionary development. No matter which way they look, their efforts are like a relay race that transcends the times, never letting up. However, on December 26, 2024, just before bidding farewell to the year, the obituary of Mr. Cobb was announced.

He stood tall at the front of the train heading towards ecological civilization, waving goodbye to the flag of heaven, earth and humanity...

May people live long, and may the organic interaction of heaven, earth and humanity be endless.

Wang Min*,
Vice President of the International Confucian Association

- * Note: Wang Min is a scholar in Japan. She was born in Chengde City, Hebei Province, China in 1954. She has worked and lived in Japan for 37 years. She is the first Chinese to receive a doctorate in Japanese humanities. She is currently an honorary professor at Hosei University, a distinguished professor at Sakura Merrill Lynch University, a visiting professor at Takushoku University, the director of the Zhou Enlai Peace Research Institute, an advisor to Japan's Asian Community Cultural Cooperation Agency, and the vice chairman of the International Confucian Federation. She has published more than 180 monographs and co-authored works, and was commended by the Minister of Culture. She was awarded the title of Private Ambassador of Sino-Japanese Friendly Exchanges by the All-China Federation of Japan. She was invited to the palace many times to communicate with the emperor and his wife.