

Healing the soul of the World: Towards Co-Evolutionary Psychotherapy in the Ecological Collapse Era

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ABSTRACT

The article explores the transformative and political role of psychotherapy in the anthropocene era, proposing a perspective of co-evolutionary psychotherapy capable of dealing with individual and collective discomfort linked to ecological collapse. Climate trauma, loss of biodiversity and eco-anxiety highlight how contemporary psychological suffering is intrinsically ecological, requesting an approach that exceeds exclusively intrapsychic cure. Through Ecopsychology and Ecopsychotherapy, the natural world becomes co-angry in the therapeutic process, favoring reconnection, resilience and political agency. The Jungian perspective on ecological imagination suggests that archetypes, dreams and natural symbols reflect the relationship between the individual psyche and the soul of the world, while the psychotherapy of Gestalt underlines the importance of the incarnate contact as an ethical practice of reconnection with it, the other and the environment. By integrating these traditions, co-evolutionary psychotherapy is configured as a laboratory in which inner experience, community relationships and ecosystems interact, modeling each other. This paradigm not only promotes psychological well-being, but also supports an ethical and political commitment, opposing the extractive logics and enhancing the shared responsibility towards the natural world. In this vision, taking care of the soul of the world means taking care of the ecological and symbolic dimension of human existence, recognizing the indissoluble link between psyche and environment. The article invites to rethink psychotherapeutic practice as a space for coexistence, in which archetypes, body contact and ecological reconnection generate new forms of meaning, action and resilience in the contemporary crisis.

Keywords: Ecopsychology, anthropocene, psychotherapy, gestalt, jung.

INTRODUCTION

Anthropocene and Sense Crisis: Psychotherapy is Called to Transform.

We live in an extreme and contradictory time. The anthropocene, a geological era in which human activity has irreversibly affected the planetary balance, does not only represent a climatic or biological challenge, but constitutes an existential condition that permeates collective consciousness. Our perception of the world and ourselves is constantly mediated by ecological trauma: climate change, loss of biodiversity, pollution and destruction of ecosystems act as psychosocial factors that amplify anxiety, solitude and disorientation. In this context, phenomena such as eco-anxiety and solstalgia emerge, forms of discomfort that directly connect individual suffering to planetary changes, revealing a dimension of the intrinsically ecological psychic symptom. As discussed in "Nature and Psyche" [1], these forms of suffering are not only individual, but reveal an ecological root that obliges psychotherapy to redefine their paradigms.

Traditional psychotherapy, centered on the person or on the group, risks being insufficient if it does not consider the network of interdependencies that binds the individual to his physical, social and cultural environment. It is

no longer

possible to limit yourself to intervening exclusively on individual symptoms; It is necessary to integrate a perspective that takes into account collective and planetary wounds. As Gianni Francesetti [2] observes the phenomenal field in which psychological pain is manifested is always co-built: the suffering of each individual cannot be separated from the ecological and cultural context in which it emerges. In this light, contemporary unease appears as a manifestation of the disconnection between the human being and the earth, a disconnection that must be faced not only therapeutically, but also ethically and politically.

The challenge for psychotherapy in anthropocene era is therefore twofold: on the one hand, it is necessary to recognize and work on individual and collective sufferings, on the other it is necessary to develop theoretical and practical tools capable of include the ecological dimension as a co-built of the psyche. This challenge implies a radical transformation of the therapeutic paradigm: the cure is no longer an exclusively intrapsychic process, but an act of reconnection with the world. In this sense, talking about "cure of the psyche" also means talking about "care of the earth", and vice versa.

Ecopsychology as an Transformative Paradigm: Beyond the Traditional Clinic.

Ecopsychology, as an innovative and transdisciplinary approach that recognizes the profound interconnection between psyche and the environment, blossoms as a spontaneous movement to which psychotherapists, psychologists, counselors, educators, environmental educators, naturalistic guides, and other operators, sensitive to the theme, adhere. He was born in the late 1980s, in a study group at the University of Berkeley, initially conducted by Robert Greenway and then by Theodore Roszak [3]. It comes to light as a response to the split between psyche and biosphere, problematizing the traditional concept of mental health. According to this perspective, many forms of psychological unease derive from a traumatic separation from the natural world: the loss of contact with the earth, biodiversity and ecological cycles generates a sense of emptiness, impotence and alienation. Precisely from this theoretical and practical soil the ecopsychotherapy takes shape, which represents a further step: it integrates the principles of ecopsychology within the clinical and psychotherapeutic framework, paying attention to the relational field which includes not only therapist and patient, but also the natural environment as co-party of the treatment process.

Ecopsychotherapy is not limited to suggesting nature as a therapeutic background, but considers it an active co-agent in the formation of psychic experience, a silent but powerful interlocutor who facilitates healing and transformation processes.

In this perspective, the therapeutic setting expands: not only room and word, but also paths, plants, animals, atmospheric time, and therapeutic metaphors to be used in the therapeutic process. Ecopsychotherapy invites the therapist to become a reconnection facilitator, and the patient an ecological subject, part of a wider field that includes non-human. Imagination, rituality, sensory experience are central tools.

Authors such as Joanna Macy [4] and Andy Fisher [5] underline how eco -psychotherapeutic practices are not deserving well -being exercises, but tools of cultural resistance: through reconnection with the natural world, the individual develops agency, resilience and political awareness. In this sense, ecopsychology represents an epistemological transition for psychotherapy: it is not a question of adding natural elements to traditional practice, but of redefining the entire conception of mental health, considering it inseparable from the well -being of the planet.

Ecopsychotherapy as a Political ACT: World Care = Cure of the Soul.

Ecopsychotherapy represents a natural extension of the ecopsychological perspective and, at the same time, an act of personal and political care. It is not a simple playful experience or an escape strategy from everyday life, but an approach in which the relationship with the Earth becomes therapeutic and transformative.

Recent research confirms the clinical and social relevance of these interventions: Bifulco et al. [6] highlight how climate trauma generates collective psychological effects – anxiety, depression, sense of loss and

alienation. In this context, ecopsychotherapy acts as a practice of resilience and cultural resistance: it promotes reconnection, stimulates action and restores meaning to individual and community experiences.

The Ecopsychotherapeutic Act therefore has a political value: taking care of the Earth means participating in a process of ecological justice, counteracting extractive and consumerist logics, promoting a sense of agency that goes beyond the individual.

As Joanna Macy and Mary-Jayne Rust highlight, the therapeutic gesture is intertwined with ethical commitment: psychological well-being and environmental care are two sides of the same coin, where internal transformation fuels social transformation and vice versa. This is possible if we consider the concept of *biofilia*, born from the hypothesis made by the biologist Edward O. Wilson according to which human beings have an innate trend to seek connection with other forms of life and natural systems. [7]

Recent quantitative studies [8, 9] show that practices based on ecological reconnection contribute to a reduction in eco-anxiety and an increase in psychosocial resilience, providing empirical support for the transformative dimension of ecopsychotherapy.

The effectiveness of these practices depends on ethical attention to the quality of the experience, the sustainability of the activities and the depth of the relationships that are established. Ecopsychotherapy is thus configured as a laboratory of co-evolution, in which the human subject and the natural world mutually participate in the construction of meaning, well-being, responsibility and love.

From this perspective, caring for the world becomes a shared political act: therapy extends into the public sphere as a practice of ecological citizenship, capable of generating resilient communities and widespread ecological sensitivity.

Critical Reflection - Between Greenwashing and Therapeutic Practice

In the ecopsychotherapeutic perspective, the reconnection between the psyche and the natural world involves not only a methodological orientation, but also an ethical and political positioning. However, there are risks of trivialisation. When nature is reduced to an aesthetic element or used as a rhetorical device, ecological concepts risk losing their ethical and transformative significance.

In the psychotherapeutic field, a form of therapeutic greenwashing can occur, when ecological themes are integrated in a superficial way - decorative rather than relational - without an authentic change of perspective. Distinguishing authentic ecopsychological practices from such phenomena requires ethical coherence, ongoing reflexivity, and interdisciplinary training.

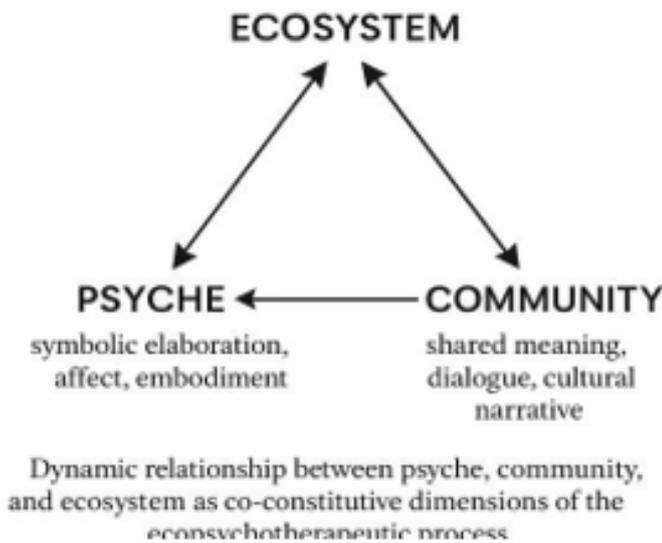
Psychotherapy, particularly in its ecopsychological declination, requires coherence between personal life and professional practice, openness to listening to the non-human and capacity for symbolic elaboration. As stated by Geniola et al. [10], the therapist's quality of life is a crucial factor to support truly transformative processes. Ecopsychotherapy therefore implies that the therapist does not limit himself to transmitting knowledge or techniques, but embodies the paradigm he proposes - living in resonance with the natural world and integrating ecological awareness into daily choices.

The opposite risk is that of perpetuating a "green" psychology of well-being, which ignores the political and symbolic dimension of the ecological crisis, emptying therapeutic practice of meaning. An example of therapeutic greenwashing is observed in certain "ecological wellbeing" retreats, where contact with nature is proposed as a relaxing or aesthetic experience, without addressing the relational, ethical and political dimensions of the relationship with the environment.

In such contexts, ecology is reduced to a consolatory framework, reproducing the same consumerist dynamics that ecopsychotherapy intends to transform.

From the Jungian tradition, Gestalt and ecopsychology thus emerges a model of care in which the psyche, community and ecosystem interact as co-agents in the healing process (Fig. 1).

Relational Field of Ecopsychotherapy



Jung and the Ecological Imagination: Archetypes, Dreams and Land as a Great Mother.

In the analytical psychology of C.G. Jung Psyche and Matter [11] are not two entities split, but both derived from the same uniform principle that crosses the whole world. The Jungian epistemological model finds its frame in a philosophy "in which all things are forever connected"; In fact Jung claimed that having separated the individual soul from the soul of the world has made sure that we have a personalistic and non -mythological concept of ourselves. The concept of an invisible world, but which in a synchronistic way connects and permeates all things, has been deepened by the representatives of the analytical psychology by Jung onwards, precisely to try to mend the wound produced by excessive sectorizations operating in western cultural traditions at the expense of the symbolic and imaginative ability of every human being. The natural environment is for Jungian psychology a visible manifestation of unconscious processes, archetypically founded by the activity of the collective unconscious, which guides and guides the biological development of the human being. In all its vast research on the functioning of the individual psyche, Jung has always traced the deep ties existing between the process of human identification and what intrinsically happens in the procedures visible in the matter, referring for example to the whole tradition of alchemists who, through the transformations made on metals, pursued psychological and spiritual growth. The symbolic language of the unconscious (dreams, images, artistic productions, etc.) always uses elements from the natural world to express states of the self and its development. As the psychoanalyst Lorena Preta writes: "We cannot attest to the image of an environment that is just an out of the representation that we have within us, and it would not be possible to build for example a city or a home or any object that man produces, without thinking that for some aspect the projection of our psychic more or less aware" is not "[12].

Vittorio Lingiardi also in his beautiful text "Mindscape. Psyche in the landscape" [13] recalls the reader to the necessary and incessant relationship between psyche and landscape, to the establishment of that intermediate place where the human being stopped, lives, designs, remembers and above all imagine. Led by his formation of Jungian analyst and the traces left by literature, V. Lingiardi traces a path in which the concepts of the maternal environment, as a metaphor of natural and cultural environment together (that is, intended in a Winnicottian sense as the first place where the formation of symbolic ability in the human psyche is made) and external environment are configured as interdependent in their capacity as projective containers of human experiences. For this author, the members of the natural world "live in our mind, our travels and our dreams", constituting themselves as psychic objects deposited in our memory, from the first encounter with the gaze of the mother, a look that is the original place of the symbolic meaning of the relationship with the other. In the Jungian theoresis, the action of the primordial archetype of the Great Mother is based on a primordial state in which everything is intrinsically mixed with the others, is indistinct, fluid and elusive. Only subsequently from this unitary background emerge images that form a group of connected archetypes and symbols, which gravitates around this indescribable center. The multiplicity of images, qualities and symbols is already the

product of the fragmentation implemented by a consciousness that perceives, discriminates, separates and records at a distance. The multiplicity of the images now corresponds to a multiplicity of possible attitudes and responses of consciousness, which contrasts with the global and unitary response of primitive man. In the Jungian text "the philosophical tree", to trace one of the most important collective mythologists that humanity has in its phylogenetic psychic heritage. As Luigi Aurigemma writes in

his preface to the text: "The philosophical tree has as its specific object a particular aspect of the aforementioned drive of awareness that pushes man to question himself on the sense of his existing and his suffering and thus free himself from the original immersion in projective blindness: the aspect of natural development, of dynamism, of growth" [14].

The phenomenology of the symbol of the active tree associations containing both female and male principles: growth and life, but also the extrover of physical and spiritual development, growth from the bottom up and vice versa. Each tree provides protection, shadow, shelter, offers precious and nutritional fruits; It is rooted, it is solid and in love, it is for each of us symbol of death and rebirth in the cycle of life seasons. Furthermore, it is the tree itself, as a central mythologist of the individual psyche, that is often assimilated and symbolically perceived as a representation of the human body. For example, think that the projective test of the Koch tree [15] is based precisely on the assumption that the tree constitutes a universal symbol of the self, rooted in the "earth" (past) and stretched towards the "sky" (future). In his being alone but intimately connected with everything else, the tree and the man place themselves as a much closer entity than one might believe.

Given these short considerations, unfortunately we cannot evade the disturbing question of which relationship today we are asking our psyche and the world in full environmental and climatic crisis. What are the projections and introjections that are generated in our mind while witnessing the devastation of the natural world. Ultimately, it is to be wondered what the declination between the construction and destructive parts internal to each of us will be, the destinies that these drive and imaginative currents will travel in the future.

Gestalt as an Embodied Practice of Reconnection: Contact as an Ethical Action.

Gestalt psychotherapy, as well as its founders describe it [16], has a phenomenological-existential paradigm in which the human being is considered not an isolated entity, but an organism-in-realization always immersed in a field of interdependencies. In this perspective, the subjective experience is not limited to intrapsychic processes but a phenomenon emerging from a field co-construction of environmental, bodily, social and cultural factors.

The body enters the environment through a process: the contact cycle, transforming needs and stimuli into significant experience. The contact cycle represents the natural sequence through which the body opens up to the world, integrates what is relevant and retires to restore its balance [17]. Gestalt psychotherapy interprets cycle interruptions as alienation manifestations from the surrounding world. The restoration of contact therefore becomes an act of reconnection, which at the same time has clinical, existential and ecological value. The gestaltic paradigm allows you to read suffering not as mere intrapsychic dysfunction, but as a interruption of contact that directly involves the ecological and political dimension of experience [2]. In the edition of the anthropocene, characterized by ecological collapse and by the spread of unpublished forms of discomfort including eco-anxiety and Solastalgia, this perspective proves particularly fruitful: the loss of contact with the earth cannot be reduced to an environmental problem, but must be understood as a radical process of alienation, which is inscribed both in subjective dynamics and in collective configurations. As Merleau-Ponty points out, "perception is not a science of the world, it is not even an act, an already formed prerequisite, but the foundation on which all the documents are grafted and the world itself is constituted" [18].

In this perspective, contact cannot be reduced to a simple perceptual event, but must be understood as an incarnate and located process, in which body, affections, imagination and language contribute to the construction of the experiential field. This gives contact an intrinsically ethical value: it is not only what happens between two subjects, but an action that shapes the shared field and that inevitably involves responsibility. As Rainauli observed [19], the contact border is the place where the existential experience in its radicality occurs and, at the same time, the space in which the therapist is called to respond to the vulnerability of the other and

the world. Ethics, therefore, is not understood as a set of external rules, but as an emerging qualities of the way to enter into relationship.

Gestalt psychotherapy can therefore be interpreted as an incarnated practice of reconnection, which simultaneously concerns the relationship with yourself, with the other and with the natural environment. The corporeality becomes the original threshold of this reconnection: breathing, moving in space, touching the soil or tune in with the natural rhythm are not neutral acts, but experiences that root the individual in the vital plot of the ecosystem [1]. The bodily and sensory

experience, taken as a privileged access route to the field, makes it clear that every contact gesture brings with it an implicit choice on the way of living in the world, transforming psychotherapy into a shared responsibility laboratory.

The gestaltic perspective is in tune with the reflection of Hillman [20], for which the individual soul and the soul of the world are not separate entities, but inseparable dimensions of the same reality: the treatment of one coincides with the care of the other. The psychotherapeutic session, therefore, is not limited to being a symptomatic healing space, but becomes an opportunity for experimentation of new ways of being-in-the-world, in which the restoration of contact translates into an ethical gesture of reconnection and cultural resistance.

Gestalt psychotherapy proves not only as a clinical approach, but also as an existential, political and spiritual practice, capable of responding to anthropocene challenges through an orientation that places interdependence, embodied awareness and relational responsibility at the center. The contact, understood as an ethical action, is configured as well as the transformative nucleus that allows to regenerate the spider web of ecological and social relationships in which the human being is inscribed.

CONCLUSION - PSYCHOTHERAPY FOR COEXISTENCE

The anthropocene challenge is not only clinical, but deeply cultural, symbolic and imagine. A psychotherapy who wants to respond to this era must go beyond individual adaptation: it must participate in the transformation of the world and the regeneration of relationships between humans and non-human. In this sense, coevolution becomes the central paradigm: the therapeutic process is no longer an exclusively intrapsychic path, but a laboratory in which the psyche, the community and the ecosystem interact mutually, modeling each other.

The coevolutionary therapist is the custodian of thresholds: between human and non-human, between visible and invisible, between care and justice. It is not a simple technician of the mind, but a reconnection facilitator, capable of mediating between different levels of reality and of making the relationship with the natural world tangible. Healing the soul of the world means healing the part of the world that we ourselves are, recognizing that the inner and ecological transformation are inseparable.

In this context, coevolution psychotherapy generates new imaginary, new forms of relationship and new shared myths. It is a radically political and symbolic practice: it promotes ethical action, shared responsibility and individual and collective resilience. Only through a coherent commitment, integrated and deeply rooted in ecological reality, can the care of the psyche really become care of the world, offering a significant contribution to the crisis of meaning that characterizes our time.

In this perspective, the Jungian reflections on the ecological imagination and the management elaboration of contact as an embodied practice of reconnection converge in affirming the indissoluble link between psyche and world. Both traditions, although through different languages, indicate the need to recover a symbolic and bodily dimension that restores continuity between inner experience and planetary belonging. In this sense, the psychotherapy of coexistence is configured as a space in which archetypes and contact practices intertwine, favoring an ethics of the relationship that includes human and non-human. It is in this integration that the possibility of a therapeutic paradigm capable of dealing with the contemporary crisis not only on the clinical level, but also on the cultural and ecological crisis.

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