ABSORBING THE IMPLICATIONS OF CLIMATE CHANGE FOR HEALTH: TOO MUCH TO BEAR?

This short paper was presented by Judith Anderson at an evening conference 28th September 2011 organised by the Catastrophes and Conflict Committee of the Royal Society of Medicine: Health information & Climate Change: Getting the message across http://www.rsm.ac.uk/academ/ccb03.php

Professor Hugh Montgomery began the evening with an absorbing, cogent presentation on The Predicted Consequences for Health. I started this contribution by asking the audience to sit quietly and breathe and become aware of the reactions they had to Professor Montgomerey's paper, whether bodily sensations, thoughts, feelings and then to tell the person next to the about their experiences. A brief group discussion followed, naming fear, despair, frustration and motivation to act.

In the paper I drew on research from Attachment Theory to develop a theme about the need for narrative in the context of inevitable traumatic reactions to Climate Change.

This is a painful subject; human-generated climate change and biodiversity loss are manifestations of the increasing threat our species pose to the planetary ecosystem, and therefore to ourselves, and because there is threat I think we have to factor in the effect of trauma on our capacity for thought. It is certainly painful for me in trying to think about climate change. I have been working in this area for some years, organising conferences, and many meetings, and I noticed in the process of preparing for this event a tendency for my mind to jump around, I found it difficult to concentrate, I kept hoping someone else had the answer, I found distractions to take me from the task.

One way of thinking about trauma is that it is a state in which the person affected by something that is too much to bear can't tell a clear story. Parts are blocked out, other parts of the story intrude in a way that is out of control, so the person is both fully in the grip of being affected, but finds it difficult to understand process, and reflect on those effects.

Environmental activists, people who are well informed about climate change and its consequences, sometimes, unless they have good self care techniques, describe symptoms similar to post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) with intrusive thoughts, and nightmares. For an account of this see Gilliam Caldwell's blog[i]. A colleague of mine adapted the Impact of Events Scale (a rating scale used to evaluate PTSD) to look at feelings about climate change. I have used it in discussion groups of psychotherapists as a starter to conversations about the emotional impact of climate change. What emerges is that not uncommonly, individuals report:

Intrusion – e.g. I think about climate change when I don't mean to, pictures of climate change pop into my mind, I've been having waves of strong feelings about climate change.

They identify with the following:

Avoidance – I've been actively trying not to think about climate change, I have a lot of feelings about climate change, but I haven't been dealing with them, I feel as if climate change isn't happening, or is unreal.

Hyperarousal – feeling irritable or angry, jumpy, having problems sleeping.

Clearly, those living with the threat of climate change at close hand, e.g. low islanders or even more importantly those affected NOW by extreme weather events, in part driven by climate change, are certain to be devastated and already overwhelmed by impending threat. Meanwhile witnesses to this, such as ourselves, are likely to be defending ourselves against the presence of this suffering to us.

I'd like to approach the subject further by way of an analogy from my work as an expert witness in Children Act proceedings. I am asked to assess parents, and the questions are broadly along the lines of – what's wrong, why can't they parent and what can be done to help, can they change?

Of course many of the parents whose children have been removed have very deprived backgrounds themselves, with neglect and abuse at home and in the care system. They have been in conditions where emotions have not been contained and need to recover the capacity to think, when it's not been fostered, modelled, or in some cases even permitted.

In making an assessment, one of the things I am looking for is what is called narrative competence. This concept derives from attachment theory….where the nature of someone's attachment style can be inferred not only from the content of what they say but from their way of talking about their history. Mary Main discovered that when adults talked about their emotional lives and their important relationships in growing up, their current emotional security depended much more on having an internally coherent and consistent narrative than on the actual story they had to tell. It didn't seem to matter so much for their current emotional security whether they had a happy childhood or not.

The question I am holding in my mind then, is – can the parent give an account of their difficult past in a way that shows reflection and meaning making? Or at the very least, do they show some signs of being able to use a process that will help them do this? So I may make a comment, feeding back a way in which their story might make sense to me to see if they respond. I have also had the experience of writing a report where children are removed and then seeing a parent a couple of years later when the next child is born. Sometime the parent will say 'it really helped to see the story about me written down, it all began to make sense', and they've used the process to begin to make positive changes.

What does not bode well is a dismissive avoidant style of narrative, dismissive of feelings, the child's and their own, dismissive of the concerns of others and any attempts to make meaning. Neither is the converse helpful, an enmeshed, pre-occupied and disordered narrative, where the listener is unclear who is being described or when, and the parent is resistant to attempts to help with standing back and reflection.

The capacity to reflect on the past meaningfully in this way is one good prognostic sign as to whether the parent can think about the child, and care for them; this then becomes useful evidence for the Court in deciding whether rehabilitation of the child may be possible.

I guess it's clear where my thinking is going.

The question for me is can we as individuals and collectively develop a coherent ecological narrative account of our own lives including our blindness about climate change. The story is complex one for each of us, involving not just the psychological but the economic, ethical, and in the broadest sense, spiritual. It's a tall order; can we include in that account an understanding of the personal and societal dynamics that have pressed on us that have made us unable to think and feel; can we include how individually and collectively we have lived in ways that aren't consistent with love for the future of our children, and our children's children.

Our capacity to care for the future and take action may depend on this. Of course, there is no value in staying stuck with self-recrimination, but our capacity to think depends on our recognition and containment of our history.

We cannot look after our children, the world's children, and I mean this symbolically, as well as literally, unless we do this.

As my work with parents shows we can't do this on our own, the ability to tell the story is relational and constructed in conversation.

A psychotherapy colleague, Rosemary Randall, developed a methodology called Carbon Conversations. This was driven by her appreciation of the vital part that psychology can play in bringing about social change. Carbon Conversations Groups offer a supportive group experience that enables people, in practical terms, to halve their personal carbon footprint. In the process of these groups they deal with the difficulties of change by connecting to values, emotions and identity. The method was selected by the Guardian as one of the 20 most promising solutions to climate change and featured at the 2009 Manchester Festival.

The importance of addressing the area of values, emotions and identity is also why the first strand of the climate change policy that psychotherapy colleagues and I are developing for the UK Council for Psychotherapy is to promote conversations amongst our colleagues, to raise awareness, to plan that every psychotherapy training includes a consideration not just of human relations but our relationship with the environment.

That seemed to us to come before our next 3 priorities, however vital, namely:-

2. Developing Links with other organisations and campaigning

3. Walking the talk by reducing our environmental footprint

4. Risk assessment for the organisation

Psychotherapists and psychologists have also contributed to Common Cause: The case for Working with Values and Frames, an important work which recognises that to facilitate change we need to understand the values and frames that individuals live by, in other words, what lies behind observable behaviours.

Creating a clear reflective narrative to take us forward to action is of course work in progress, perhaps the direction and intention is as, if not more, important than the end point. As Clive Hamilton says at the end of his book, Requiem for a Species: *Despair then Accept then Act* and each of these stages involves a complex process.

What if we can't do this? Unfortunately there are competing stories and here psychotherapy can contribute in identifying familiar ways in which we defend ourselves about what is unbearable, the 'defences' we work with every day in our shared attempts with clients/patients to change. Into the place of thought incapacitated by trauma, psychology can help to put words to ways we may be protecting ourselves from trauma – overt mechanisms such as denial and projection.

We notice subtle, powerful resistances to change.

It's not safe…

It's not safe to think about climate change, what will I feel, can I bear the grief, the guilt?

I'll lose my identity…

I'll lose my identity if I think about climate change, I love my lifestyle my cars, I won't be the same person.

It won't benefit me…

It won't benefit me to think about climate change, I'll have to give up so much, I'll lose my business, what about our lovely holidays, my parents in India, my kids in Australia, collectively what about economic growth.

I'm too angry and hurt…

I'm too angry and hurt to think about climate change; notice that hurt and anger are always two sides of a coin

Consumerism is an area where I suggest we can see that our capacity for thought has been degraded. The narrative goes: 'I/we can't manage without stuff, (in the developed world) we can have it when we want it, and as much as we want and not think about the consequences'.

I would like to suggest that what we really need is a different kind of materialism in the sense of valuing, honouring and respecting what sustains us; an embodied mattering of ourselves and the ecosystems we depend on, instead of displacing our preoccupation with matter into consumerism.

In one of the more thoughtful debates about the recent riots, there was a recognition that we all shared in the materialism of the looters. The UNICEF report on the welfare of UK children is damning of the way goods are substituted for time and love, with no return in the way of happiness. In Requiem for a Species, Clive Hamilton notes that even if in this generation we can curb our consumerism, 'the market has planted a poison pill deep within affluent society – a generation of children consciously moulded into hyper-consumers. In 1983 US companies spent $100 million annually advertising to children. By the end of the boom they were spending more than $17 billion. …….. A British study found that for 1 in 4 children the first recognisable word they utter is a brand name.'

Mary-Jayne Rust is a Jungian Psychotherapist who draws on her experience from the consulting room. In her paper Consuming the Earth she draws parallels between our over consumption and eating disorders.

It's as if we are stuck in a giant eating problem. We've trashed the family home and we've binged on all the reserves; oil and gas may well have peaked already, we overfish, clear-cut forests, and extract everything that can be sold for profit. Then we throw it up, undigested, into landfill sites.

Now we must rein ourselves in, go on a green diet, measure our ecological footprints, count our carbon calories, and watch carefully how much we consume. But this green diet won't work (she says) unless we also address the emotional hunger underneath the drive to consume.

She is addressing our dissociation from our sense of being part of a complex ecosystem on which we depend and which depends on us. We may know this but all too often we behave individually and collectively as if it were not the case.

So, in getting the message across we need to recognise that this may be traumatising, that the reactions in individuals and groups will be very varied and we are more likely to convey reality with compassion and understanding, and in a way that does not trigger others into reactivity if we have processed some of these issues ourselves.

* * * * *

28th September 2011

Other reading

Roszak T, Gomes ME and Kanner AD (1995) Ecopsychology: Restoring the Earth, Healing the Mind Sierra Club Books

www.ecopsychology.org.uk

CLIMATE ON THE COUCH: UNCONSCIOUS PROCESSES IN RELATION TO OUR ENVIRONMENTAL CRISIS

This paper is an exploration of our psychological attitudes underlying climate change and ecological crisis

The central question is whether psychological insights can contribute to the collective change we need to make towards sustainable living. Part One explores two major myths that underpin western culture: The Myth of the Fall and The Myth of Progress. Our readings of these stories keep us trapped in destructive ways of living. In particular, western culture has developed a long-held fear of wild nature, both inner and outer. Civilisation is experienced as a defence against nature. This stands in contrast to an indigenous worldview, where humans respect the balance that needs to be kept between humans and the rest of nature. How do we find a way of working with nature in this modern age? Part Two explores our personal responses to, and fantasies about, sustainable living. Consumerism has become an opiate of the people, in order to subdue our wild internal nature. Such an addictive relationship blocks us from thinking, and prevents us from taking action. Recovery involves re-inhabiting our bodies, developing what Naess describes as an Ecological Identity. Part Three explores how these issues might enter into our work as therapists, and how we might respond.

Guild of Psychotherapists Annual Lecture, London, November 17th 2007.

Published in *Psychotherapy and Politics International* 6(3): 157-170 2008

Link to paper on MJ Rust website

PSYCHOANALYSIS AND CLIMATE CHANGE

We seem to be sleep walking towards disaster.

Global temperatures have risen 0.8°C in the last century and are now set to rise well beyond 2°C by 2060, a figure universally regarded by scientists as the safe limit. The estimates provided by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change which have been derided by climate change skeptics as scaremongering, now look as if they will turn out to have been surprisingly conservative as the world warms faster then anyone anticipated. Only this summer sea ice in the Arctic Ocean retreated to a point that climate science had earlier thought would not be reached until 2030.

As the temperature gradient between Arctic and temperate regions diminishes the Jet Stream slackens and our weather is thrown into chaos – unprecedented heatwaves and droughts in the American Midwest and eastern Europe, prolonged wet summers in the UK and north west Europe. The impact of bad weather on food prices was last felt just two years ago when the failure of the Russian wheat harvest provided the trigger for food riots from the Indian subcontinent to North Africa, the latter acting as a catalyst for the 'Arab Spring'. So we can see the way in which climate chaos quickly transforms into social chaos and also the connection to a series of other predicaments – overpopulation, the depletion of natural resources, the destruction of bio-diversity, etc.

And yet, faced with accumulating crises, international agreement on action to mitigate climate change seems further away than ever and, once we have them, none of us seem to be able to give up our energy intensive lifestyles. To repeat, we seem to be sleep walking towards disaster. The last time this happened, when the USA and USSR threatened each other (and the rest of us) with mutually assured (nuclear) destruction (MAD), psychoanalysts spoke out (Segal 1987). This time the threat is greater because its nature makes it more difficult to respond to – it is distant rather than immediate, it will affect others first rather than ourselves, and the threat is not embodied in an obvious 'other' for we (in the West) are all implicated through our lifestyles.

How might psychoanalysis contribute to understanding the predicament we now face? Well this time, as before, some members of the psychoanalytic community, analysts and therapists, have begun working and organizing on this issue. One of the first fruits of this activity was realized on September 27th when the book Engaging with Climate Change, published by Routledge as part of the New Library of Psychoanalysis series, was launched at the Institute of Psychoanalysis. Edited by Sally Weintrobe, former Chair of the Institute's Scientific Committee, Engaging with Climate Change develops an interdisciplinary dialogue involving analysts, therapists, climate scientists and social scientists.

In this book and a number of other recent publications we can see how the psychoanalytic perspective contributes to several core questions. What has happened to our relation to nature to let such a crisis come to pass? What feelings does climate change arouse in us, how do we defend ourselves against these feelings and how do these defences undermine our capacity to engage with this new reality?

With the exception of Harold Searles (1960, 1972) psychoanalysis has had little to say directly about the first question. For Searles, our relation to the non-human environment was a crucial factor in our development from birth onwards. Against the fetish of the independent self which has been central to Western individualism psychoanalysis has emphasized the interdependent self. But Searles argued we must go further to a transpersonal notion of self which located the human being in a web of both human and non-human relations.

I think psychoanalysis approaches a more transpersonal perspective when it focuses on our relation to the nature within us, that is, our nature as physical beings and the frailty which

accompanies this. This 'fact of life' is one we find very hard to accept and our flight from physical vulnerability and mortality seems to have much to do with our illusions of omnipotent control over nature and our search for (consumer) distractions.

Both for the individual self and for society the issue involves the acceptance of limits and therefore the questioning of entitlement. And of course this means we are in the territory of depressive anxiety and ownership of responsibility for the damage we have done and will continue to do. Loss also makes its appearance. As we see the Amazon destroyed or coral reefs die out one by one this feeling can become so powerful it can lead to despair. Emotional numbing is one response to such despair and some research on the experience of those living in damaged natural environments suggests that apathy, far from being a sign that people care very little, arises because they care too much. Of course another defence against depressive anxiety is the manic defence, we take flight from despair by throwing ourselves back into the state of mind that ship-wrecked us in the first place, joining the frenzied partying on the Titanic.

More worrying still is what might be called the pre-depressive response to climate change and other crises. Concern, guilt and despair are pre-empted by terror and fear for which fight, based on splitting and projection, is the natural response rather than flight. Nature is seen as something vengeful and hateful that must be tamed and controlled. As Clive Hamilton points out in his book Requiem for a Species some businessmen and scientists, having ignored or scorned climate science, are now saying that if there is a problem then business and technology can solve it through geoengineering solutions such as the creation of sulphur dioxide aerosols to deflect the sun's radiation in the upper atmosphere. Such 'solutions' remind Hamilton of the verse "There was an old lady who swallowed a fly…". Or we might think of a patient who, faced with the chaos that omnipotent control has wrought upon his life, lurches intoxicated towards the control buttons once more.

Another form of fight locates all the badness in the other – the Chinese and Indians, the Africans with their large families, the rich and complacent West, and so on. Instead of the much needed cooperation our situation requires splits emerge between developed and developing countries, and between trading blocs and regions. Competition for scarce water resources already fuels conflicts in the Sudan, Mali, Israel and elsewhere. Boundaries soon become barriers which are anxiously patrolled to keep out the 'losers' as desertification and hunger results in mass migrations.

If this sounds gloomy then psychoanalysis also indicates how denial can be replaced by a growing capacity to face reality, and despair can change into hope. We also know how, in individuals and groups, powerful feelings can be contained thus lessening the need for destructive defences and conflict. Good work is getting done, not just by those involved in the Engaging with Climate Change volume but also by ecopsychologists and others. And here I would mention two other books published in 2012, Vital Signs edited by Mary Jane Rust and Nick Totten, and Psychoanalysis and Ecology at the Edge of Chaos by Joseph Dodds. Finally, and also in 2012, the Climate Psychology Alliance has been launched which seeks to provide a forum for dialogue and collaboration between different psychological approaches, initiated by psychoanalytically-oriented practitioners.

In New Associations, the magazine of the British Psychoanalytic Council, Autumn 2012.

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CLIMATE CHANGE AND HUMAN FLOURISHING

It is often argued that those concerned about motivating ambitious and proportional responses to profound environmental challenges, such as climate change, must construct a compelling and inspiring vision of an alternative future.

Many environmentalists seek to build this vision upon an understanding of well being: particularly the recognition that increased material consumption, at least in rich countries, does not equate with increased happiness and wellbeing. Nevertheless it could be argued that there is something missing in the vision being offered. A society where there was more time, more community and more allotments is not likely to mobilize the movement for change that the present crisis requires. We need a vision which reaches more deeply into the human condition and is able to face more troubling sets of concerns.

On January 15th 2010 an invited group of philosophers, social theorists, psychotherapists and climate change activists met to explore this issue at the University of the West of England. This is a previously unpublished record of a meeting.

Human Wellbeing – is it all relative?

There is no universal model of wellbeing and therefore no 'objective' way of measuring it. But whilst it may not be possible to find a model of wellbeing which equally suits British and, say, Kenyan society this is not to say that we cannot develop agreement about a model of wellbeing appropriate for our own society, that is, the UK.

We need political and cultural spaces in which alternative visions of wellbeing can be discussed and elaborated. Whilst we should be cautious about prematurely pushing certain viewpoints the urgency of climate change requires proactivity. Governments are terrified of upsetting people by drawing attention to the difficult actions required to tackle the problem we face. It is easy for debate to become polarized between a laissez faire approach which argues that the market will solve things and a form of green authoritarianism. What is needed is a government which can act with authority on this issue without being authoritarian. It can do this by:

addressing its citizens honestly as adults,
having the courage to risk short term electoral popularity by spelling out that there is no painless way of achieving the necessary change,
recognizing and containing the anxieties and resentments that responding to climate change entails
Why Aristotle?

In Western thought, outside of religion, there is a surprisingly weak tradition of thinking about what constitutes the good life.

Utilitarianism: This gives emphasis to human happiness, and specifically the greatest happiness of the greatest number. But happiness is a poor guide to the good society. Long ago Aristotle argued that the gratification of appetite and the pursuit of pleasure stood opposed to human virtue and, in the long run, the desire for more leaves the individual with feelings of regret, dissatisfaction and self-hatred. The utilitarian approach is often connected to Quality of Life approaches that emphasise subjective well-being.

The Capabilities Approach: This approach, linked to the work of Amartya Sen[1] and Martha Nussbaum[2], draws on Aristotle's thinking about human flourishing or eudaimonia. The Capabilities Approach is critical of utilitarian approaches to happiness arguing that 'subjective states are not the only things that matter' and that such approaches give support to economic models which emphasise self-interest maximization heedless of human relations and emotions.

The Capabilities Approach argues that social diversity draws attention to the 'role played by ethical principles in the design of the 'good' society'. It is an approach which stresses positive freedom, that is, our 'freedom to' achieve valuable functioning. Whilst Sen argues that what constitutes valuable functioning will vary from one culture to another, Nussbaum has argued that there is a set of broad capacities which apply to individuals in all societies. Her list comprises

Life

Bodily Health

Bodily Integrity

Sense, Imagination, Thought

Emotions

Practical Reason

Affiliation

Other Species

Play

Political and Material Control over one's Environment

Thus, for example, Nussbaum argues that the right to bodily integrity is a basic human right which is contradicted by practices such as physical and sexual abuse, female circumcision, etc[3].

But Aristotle's approach is rationalist. For example, he saw reason standing in opposition to emotion. In Western thought it tended to be religion which was more comfortable in talking about human passion. As a result we lack a tradition of secular humanism with moral and psychological depth.

After Aristotle

The purpose of the seminar was to explore ways of thinking about human flourishing which could build upon the Aristotelian tradition or offer new departures from it. Some of the lines of thought that emerged were these:

Prefiguration

Rather than imagining Utopias in the abstract we can 'imagine otherwise' by collectively improvising new ways of living

Such 'prefiguration' of possible futures is a core value in the Transition movement. Prefiguration is the practice of political imagination and for many involved in Transition initiatives acting together is a way of recovering agency

Psychoanalysis

Doesn't shy away from addressing the negative as well as the positive in humanity

Offers helpful ideas such as the 'containment' of anxiety, and the containing function of groups and institutions; negative capability – that is, the capacity to be in doubt and uncertainty; the recovery of projections which have led, for example, to the creation of enemies; 'depressive openness', that is, the capacity to remain receptive to the other rather than construe them as threat.

Intrinsic Value

The intrinsic value of things and people stands in opposition to instrumental value. The latter construes the other as a means to an end, the former sees the other, including nature, as an end in itself.

An intrinsic approach derives pleasure from the activity itself, from the journey rather than from the destination. If you have to ask 'am I happy?' then you can not be happy.

Biophilia

A concept from Erich Fromm and E.O.Wilson, a love of all living things, an intrinsic connectedness to other animals, a deep affiliation to nature.

New Humanisms

Martin Buber, Emanuel Levinas stress the depth of our relation and our responsibility to the other

Moral Imagination

Our moral imagination – our capacity to imagine the other, to act reparatively towards the other where relations have broken down, our capacity to recognize other peoples' rights and entitlements (including the rights of future generations) – appears to have grown over the last century, giving grounds for hope..

Central to mediation, restorative justice

Cosmopolitanism

Recognition that we live in an interconnected world society, that social diversity as opposed to social homogeneity promotes human flourishing and collective resilience, and that inclusive relations between peoples is to be preferred to the creation of excluding communities whether at national or local level.

Look towards the development of forms of global governance – the International Criminal Court at the Hague, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, would be examples.

Redefining production and consumption

What gets excluded from conventional measures of GDP? How is the wealth of a nation measured? This is a major area of rethinking at national and international level, the latest evidence of which is the Sarkozy Report[4]. Among other things this report notes that GDP mainly measures market production rather than government or household provision of goods and services. This links to longstanding feminist critiques of the concepts of work and production for the way in which they ignore domestic labour. The New Economic Foundation's Happy Planet Index argues that a "successful society is one that can support good lives that don't cost the earth". The New Economics Foundation has also been influenced by the Capabilities Approach. In their National Accounts of Wellbeing[5] they distinguish between Personal and Social Well-being in the following way:

Personal Well-being Social Well-being

Emotional well-being Supportive relationships

Satisfying life Trust and belonging

Vitality

Resilience and self esteem

Positive functioning

They define vitality as 'how far people have energy, feel well-rested and healthy and are physically active'. They see 'resilience and self esteeem' as measuring 'individuals' psychological resources and mental capital'. They see 'positive functioning' comprising autonomy, competence, engagement, meaning and purpose. Putting these together the authors define well-being as "a dynamic process that gives people a sense of how their lives are going, through the interaction between their circumstances, activities and 'psychological resources' or 'mental capital'".

So, a society might have a thriving civil society (religious and spiritual practices, cultural festivals and rituals, etc) and dense and extensive household, kinship and neighbourly networks, a close

and symbiotic relationship to surrounding eco-systems and yet have a low GDP. Hence the appearance of the concept of Gross National Happiness linked to the Centre for Bhutan Studies. Even in the UK there are a vast range of activities that contribute to the collective good that do not count in terms of GDP. For example, on any given night there are literally thousands of music gigs occurring throughout the country, mostly in non-commercial venues. This crucial dimension of British cultural life which stretches back over 40 years only 'counts' when it produces exchangeable commodities – likewise for organised sport, hobbies, the arts, and so on.

GDP is based on the exchange value of commodities not on their use value, hence the recent comment by Adair Turner, the Chair of the Financial Services Authority, that much of the banking sector was engaged in 'socially useless' forms of production. The use value or social value of an activity or product depends on its intrinsic worth rather than its price. In many Western societies there appears to be an inverse relation between value and price – most graphically illustrated by the scandalously low wages earned by those in the care sector. So 'care work' doesn't count at all in the calculation of GDP (because it is done in the home, by voluntary organizations or by government) and yet it is absolutely central to human flourishing. There seems to be considerable potential here for connections to be made between the concerns of the climate change movement, the social policy/welfare lobby and contemporary feminism.

We also need to rethink what we mean by consumption. What if we separate consumption from material goods? Arguably in a good society there would be greater consumption of public services – education, health, social care, transport – where by 'public' is meant funded by national or local taxes, communal levies or mutual societies. The production of services appears to be less resource intensive than the production of goods and services. Human services are central to the development of human capacities (see Nussbaum's list). In Europe the concept of Caritas, the roots of the word are in the Latin for 'love', is central to the ethic of service.

Is this an opportune moment?

Beneath the surface of British society a new structure of feeling is emerging which is beginning to doubt the link between wealth and happiness[6]. This has been fueled by growing evidence[7], including widely reported research by Unicef[8], which indicates that, for example, despite belonging to the fifth largest economy in the world British children are among the most unhappy in OECD countries.

Moreover, as the British economy pulls out of recession more slowly than most others the prospect of continued growth of the type we experienced over the previous decade looks increasingly improbable. Indeed the coming public expenditure cuts, which are the price of digging our banks out of their crisis, will further constrain the possibilities for economic growth.

It follows that irrespective of the climate change argument British political culture is likely to be more receptive to finding ways of uncoupling wellbeing from growth.

Politics, Utopia and Dystopia

The final theme that was around during the seminar could be summed up in terms of "human flourishing versus Mad Max". In the shadow of the failed Copenhagen talks some participants felt that any talk of human flourishing had to be emotionally resonant. When you feel like you might be on the road to apocalypse this might not be the place and time to engage with well-being.

We can learn to 'imagine otherwise' by glimpsing dystopia as well as utopia, the former can be an effective vehicle for social criticism. The psychoanalyst W.R.Bion noted that when groups become suffused with anxiety they resort to splitting and paranoia, they are simultaneously frightened and frightening. Some likened the impact of climate change to a kind of collective PTSD and Transition can play a key role in providing relief from isolation and a working through of toxic feelings. Some in Transition speak of 'dark optimism'. There can be no participation in projects of political change without hope/optimism. What spirit/ethic needs to inform the politics of climate change? Experimentation, learning (try everything, see what works), discursive elaboration (talk, argue), toleration of uncertainty, holding the space between denial and despair.

Written by Paul Hoggett (This is a previously unpublished record of a meeting:)

Paul Hoggett is a therapist, researcher and teacher. He is Emeritus Professor of Social Policy at the University of the West Of England and a psychoanalytic psychotherapist and a member of the Severnside Institute of Psychotherapy.

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Latest posts

CLIMATE CHANGE AND THE APOCALYPTIC IMAGINATION

This article attempts a psycho-social analysis of the apocalyptic response to actual or imagined disasters and traces two variants of this response – the redemptive and the survivalist.

Abstract

Climate change faces us with yet another in a long line of actual or potential disasters that have occurred over the last century. One powerful and recurring response to such events frames them as catastrophe from which either ⬚physical or spiritual escape is imagined. This article attempts a psycho-social analysis of this apocalyptic response to actual or imagined disasters and traces two variants of this response – the redemptive and the survivalist. Whilst such responses appear radical, I argue that they are essentially a defence in the face of despair that has already found expression within climate change science and activism. In contrast, I suggest that what is required is a realistic response to the possibility of climatic disaster, a possibility the probability of which cannot be known. The quandary we face is how to sound the alarm without being alarmist.

Paul Hoggett is a therapist, researcher and teacher. He is Professor of Social Policy at the University of the West of England and a psychoanalytic psychotherapist and member of the Severnside Institute for Psychotherapy.

Full article here

MODERN INSTITUTIONS, PHENOMENAL DISSOCIATIONS, AND DESTRUCTIVENESS TOWARD HUMANS AND THE ENVIRONMENT

Published: 27 January 2013

Environmental theorists frequently argue that human–nature alienations are to blame for the increasingly severe global environmental crisis.

This article offers empirical evidence that supports such claims. Data and theory presented here show that phenomenal dissociation— defined as the lack of immediate, sensual engagement with the consequences of our everyday actions and with the human and nonhuman others that we affect with our actions—increases destructive tendency and that awareness is not enough to curb destructiveness. This study begins to reveal some of the psychodynamics by which phenomenal dissociations lead to destructive tendency; discusses how modern institutions, organizational structures, and technologies propagate harms by mediating between actor and consequences; and argues that environmental psychology, which commonly focuses on attitudinal variables such as awareness and concern, must expand its reach to account for the pervasive phenomenal dissociations of contemporary life.

Kenneth Worthy studies the phenomenological origins of modern environmental crisis using an interdisciplinary
approach that integrates history, philosophy, psychology, phenomenology, and cultural studies.
He received his PhD in critical environmental theory at the University of California, Berkeley, and currently researches and teaches independently.

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The image is from Ken Worthy's article The Quietly Burning Earth: his latest article on Psychology Today on the "eco-apocalypse" of thousands of kilometers of fires raging across Indonesia right NOW.

https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/the-green-mind/201511/the-quietly-burning-earth

http://kennethworthy.net/

A JUNGIAN PERSPECTIVE ON THE MOST IMPORTANT ISSUE OF OUR TIME - CLIMATE CHANGE

Merritt calls for a paradigm shift at the cultural, social, political and spiritual levels drawing on Jungian ecopsychology in order to address the apocalyptic threat inflicted by human species on all others.

As Bill Clinton might say, "It's the environment, stupid!" Our devotion to science, technology and the capitalist system has culminated in a unique moment in the human relationship with the environment. Our species is at or near the peak of a prosperity bubble about to burst. We have exceeded the carrying capacity of the biosphere and we are still breeding. (1) We are overusing antibiotics and deadly bacteria are becoming immune to everything we have. (2) We are mining our precious water resources (3), coral reefs are dying as the oceans become warmer and more acidic (4), and most alarming, we are experiencing this as the very beginnings of the negative consequences of climate change. It will include massive droughts and floods, freak storms, the spread of diseases (5), famine, water wars (6), and the elimination of 30 to 50% of the species. (7) Experts tell us we may have but 10 years max to turn the Titanic around with regard to the most devastating aspects of climate change. (8) The apocalyptic conditions we are inexorably moving towards are truly in the archetypal domain, requiring an archetypal analysis and suggestions for dealing with it. Enter Jungian ecopsychology, a topic I have been writing on for the past 16 years, having just published the third of the 4 volumes of The Dairy Farmer's Guide to the Universe—Jung, Hermes, and Ecopsychology.

I discovered Jung while working on my doctorate in entomology in Berkeley starting in 1967. My area was insect pathology, using insect pathogens instead of chemicals to manage insect pests; Silent Spring had made a deep impression on me. Eventually I came to realize the ecological and political dimensions of Jung's concepts, and was able to bring my two backgrounds together within the developing field of ecopsychology.

The Blind Side of Psychology is its Relationship with Nature

Psychology has been painfully late in addressing environmental problems. Jungian analyst and archetypal psychologist James Hillman summed it up in the title of his book: We've had a Hundred Years of Psychotherapy--and the World's Getting Worse. (9) He noted that the environment we have ignored and mistreated is making its importance known to us through its pathologies, much like human pathologies made the reality of the unconscious known to Freud. (10) The collective psyche of our species is deeply disturbed by our collapsing faith in science and the redeveloping human limitations in confronting nature, and it has been more a heroic confrontation than an enlightened relationship. The field of ecopsychology began to emerge in the 1990s. It examines how our attitudes, values, perceptions and behaviors affect the environment. It calls for a reformulation of our political, cultural, economic and educational systems to enable us to live sustainably. Like deep ecology, it maintains that we are capable of a

far deeper connection with nature which will serve as a natural basis for protecting the environment. (11) Jung, who died in 1961, recognized the magnitude of the shift in consciousness necessary for these things to happen when he foresaw a paradigm shift coming in the West, what he called a "New Age" and the "Age of Aquarius" (12), a shift which will certainly and necessarily have an ecological base.

Jungian Ecopsychology

There are two focal points from a Jungian ecological perspective for facing these issues. First is Jung's challenge to become more conscious, which for Jung meant to bring as much light as possible into the unconscious. It is clear this must now include greater consciousness of our niche in nature and greater awareness of environmental problems. This requires a knowledge of science as well as the archetypal dynamics of the apocalypse which will emerge ever more strongly, prompting more polarization in our society and a movement towards unreflective extreme religious positions. (13) The second Jungian ecopsychological focus is on the archetypal energies imaged by Hermes. Language and communication, Hermes' domaines, are being manipulated 1984-style by corporate interests using eco-propaganda, advertising, and "greenwashing." One of the few hopes I have for humankind is for Hermes the communicator offering the possibility for easy and widespread dissemination of holistic messages and a new vision for humankind if we can develop one. Hermes leads the way or leads astray—it's our choice.

To develop a new vision I propose that we create a team of experts from all fields who can communicate well with each other as they provide a deep analysis of our problems as a species and develop a plan all the world leaders can get behind. This team would include ecologists, psychologists, economists, spiritual leaders, scientists, technologists, educators, and indigenous peoples.

There are many innate ecological aspects in Jung's system and in the practice of Jungian analysis that could be part of this vision. Jung talked about the people in our dreams as "the little people within" and emphasized the importance of being in relationship with them. This is an ecology of the psyche, quite the opposite of the conquering ego position presented by Freud. Freud described the relationship with our inner world much as he described our relationship with the environment. Within us is the "seething caldron" of the Id requiring a vigilant defense against the polymorphous sexually perverse inner child. With regard to the environment Freud wrote:

We recognize, then, that countries have attained a high level of civilization if we find that in them everything which can assist in the exploitation of the earth by man and in his protection against the forces of nature--everything, in short, which is of use to him--is attended to and effectively carried out [flood control, canals, agriculture, mineral extraction and elimination of wild animals]. (14)

Jung challenged us to unite our cultured side with "the two million-year-old man within," a goal that would help us use science and the arts to achieve an emotional, symbolic and spiritual connection with nature. (15) It would bridge a connection with the Native Americans and there deep and profound sense of oneness with Turtle Island—the North American continent. This dovetails with Jung's challenge to academia to incorporate a sense of the numinous. Without this, Jung said, we will never have a holistic educational system. (16) Carl Sagan, who as co-chair of A Joint Appeal by Science and Religion for the Environment, presented a petition in 1992 stating:

The environmental problem has religious as well as scientific dimensions…As scientists, many of us have had a profound experience of awe and reverence before the universe. We understand that what is regarded as sacred is more likely to be treated with care and respect. Our planetary home should be so regarded. Efforts to safeguard and cherish the environment need to be infused with a vision of the sacred. At the same time, a much wider and deeper understanding of science and technology is needed. If we do not understand the problem it is unlikely we will be able to fix it. Thus there is a vital role for both science and religion. (17)

Deep ecology calls for the deepest possible analysis of our dysfunctional relationship with nature, and Jung offers this through his examination of the evolution of the God-image in the West. (18) Myths and religions help establish and maintain basic attitudes, values, perceptions and behaviors, especially with regard to women, our bodies, sexuality and sensuality, and nature.

Complexity Theory Applied to Jungian Concepts--Experiencing Universal Processes

Most exciting for a scientist like myself is the application of complexity theory to basic Jungian concepts. Complexity theory has been put on a par with relativity theory and quantum mechanics in terms of its revolutionary and transformative ideas. I see it as the archetypal feminine in the world of mathematics because it focuses on such issues as process, the irrational and non-linear, the whole being greater than the sum of its parts, and sensitive dependence on initial conditions. With a given that humans inhabit and cultures evolve through symbolic systems, increasing psychic energy in our complexes ("hangups") causes them to morph and self-organize into a higher symbolic level, the archetypal. (19) Increasing psychic level at the archetypal level will cause it to morph and self-organize into the archetype of the Self which integrates all archetypes in the manner of an organism. (20) Using this approach, we can say that humans emotionally, symbolically, sensually and spiritually experience the basic dynamics of the universe, and by definition for our species to fully realize our niche we have to connect to ourselves, others, and nature in this manner. This involves creativity and the arts and a proper focus in our educational and psychological systems. (21)

Analyzing the Problem in the Collective Unconscious

Consciousness and every layer of the collective unconscious can be scrutinized for dissonance with regard to our relationship with the environment. (22) At the personal intrapsychic level, our relationship with the unconscious sets the pattern for our relationship with others and with nature, an example in complexity theory of scale invariance. Our family, especially attachment issues with the mothering figure, can lead to an anxiety, emptiness and a narcissism which consumerism and fundamentalist religions prey upon. Our national myths of the cowboy and conquering the wild West engender a conquering attitude towards nature and a religion of progress. Issues are compounded by the growing polarization in societies between believers and non-believers and the haves and have-nots. We are heading towards a dangerous period, especially in America, as it faces the archetype of decline—a problem for a country with an adolescent mentality epitomized by our myths of exceptionalism and the independent cowboy. Our hyper-independence makes us paranoid about any hint of socialism which many equate with communism. It is a revolutionary period (hexagram 49 in the I Ching) with the dangers of fascism increasing as economic, social and environmental conditions deteriorate. The Judeo-Christian religion established core values in Western culture which have little connection with nature, the body and sexuality. The Western Oedipal complex of human intelligence trumping the Great Goddess imaged as the Sphinx is poised to inflict the plagues of Thebes upon the entire planet and literalize John's apocalyptic vision. (23) Ecotheologian Thomas Berry described the Myth of Wonderworld as the myth of the West, now spread worldwide, as originating in John's Book of Revelation, the last book in the Bible. A thousand years of abundance and human perfections were supposed to precede the end of the created world. Humans decided to manifest the myth themselves when it didn't occur by divine grace. Berry writes, "The millennial myth was absorbed into, and found expression in, the modern doctrine of progress—which has seen humans trying to bring about this promised state through their own efforts by exploiting the resources of the earth." (24) Jung challenges us to unite our cultured side with the primeval ancestors, what he called "the two million-year-old man within" at the clan and tribal level of human relationships. Such a person would have a relationship with the animal ancestor foundation of the psyche like an indigenous person speaks of spirit animals. The deepest disturbance in our collective unconscious will be at the animal soul level, because for the first time in the history of life on earth, one species will be responsible for eliminating 30 to 50% of the other species. And through the consequences of climate change we will decimate the basic requirements for our life as an animal: food, water, shelter and a relatively stable climate.

Aldo Leopold and Our Ecological Niche

Aldo Leopold described a science that deepens our appreciation of nature, helps us realize our ecological niche, and makes us aware of how we are destroying the environment. (25) We must realize that the climate change problem is a species problem, not just an American or European or Chinese problem. We must appreciate the unique niche of our species in nature as the only species able to use science and technology to violate the laws of nature and exceed the limitations nature brings about through restrictions of food, water, and the spread of diseases. This makes it imperative for our species to be conscious and wise in our relationship with nature and oriented towards living sustainably.

"We are the Origin of All Coming Evil"

From the more cultural perspective, our educational systems must make us more cognizant of our cultural evolution, the evolution of our religious forms, and the archetypal dynamics of the God-image within. Jung said we need more psychology, and famously added, "We are the origin of all coming evil." (26) We have to teach a psychology that educates students about archetypes, the shadow and projection, and how to live a meaningful life, for Jung proposed individuation as the best antidote to consumerism. (27) The archetype of the provider side of the Great Mother with her desire for stability has captured our species aided by the wonders of science and technology giving us an abundance of food, clothing, shelter, cheap energy and good health. The fatal flaw is our lack of wisdom and a lack of collective social and environmental consciousness.

Corporations as Modern Day Monsters

Environmentalists and most scientists have been suffering from the Cassandra complex for several decades so the problem is not with science. (28) Jung's claim that big corporations are the modern day monsters (29) provides an archetypal take on corporations as persons and the Citizen's United Supreme Court decision. (30) The British Royal Society sent two letters to ExxonMobil in 2006 chastising them for funding organizations deliberately trying to confuse people about climate change, attempting to convince the populace there was serious disagreement among scientists about the human factor in climate change. One ad agency was the same one hired by Phillip Morris in 1993 to create doubt that second hand smoke can cause cancer as the Surgeon General's report in 1992 had indicated. (31) In a related story, I quote from the end of the 2012 Frontline program on PBS, "Money, Power and Wall Street": "It's very difficult to change gods, and in the modern age, our god is finance. Except its turned out to be a very cruel and destructive god." A very real aspect of a paradigm shift will entail a revisioning of the concept of corporations. They have the rights of a person but with no concern for children, grandchildren or the seventh generation; their only goal is to maximize profits no matter what. Corporations and large financial institutions are now above governments and international politics. Without changing the rights of corporations, strict oversight of financial institutions, and the elimination of tax haven shell-games, we are just rearranging the chairs on the deck of the Titanic—they will always be several steps ahead of us. I describe on my blog also on this site how I see the film Hunger Games as an analogy to our present political situation veering towards fascism, defined as the union of corporations with government. This is conveyed in a quote attributed to Sinclair Lewis: "When fascism comes to America, it will be wrapped in the flag and carrying a cross," not written by Lewis but expressing his sentiments.

Jung's Age of Aquarius will have an Ecological Focus

It will take the paradigm shift Jung described as a "New Age" and "Age of Aquarius" for our species to face and address the frightful realities of current and future environmental situations, our collective sense of guilt for the damage we continue to do to the planet and to the poor and disenfranchised who initially will suffer the most from climate change, and for our demonic role in the coming extinctions of millions of species on the planet. "Fate leads those who follow her, drags those who don't." Jung said what is not brought to consciousness comes to us as fate. We can either consciously adopt an ecological perspective or let fate as ecological disasters

eventually force such a perspective upon us, a perspective that will permeate all levels of human consciousness and behavior. To quote Jung, "We are beset by an all-to-human fear that consciousness—our Promethean conquest—may in the end not be able to serve us as well as nature." (32)

Nothing is currently being done that is big and bold enough to address the gestalt of conditions that are producing climate change, conditions at the personal, cultural, social, political, economic, educational, and spiritual levels. I am firmly convinced that Jungian ecopsychology can make a significant contribution to this necessary dialogue. This has been the subject of my 4 volumes of The Dairy Farmer's Guide to the Universe—Jung, Hermes and Ecopsychology. Volume 1, Jung and Ecopsychology, examines the evolution of the Western dysfunctional relationship with the environment, explores the theoretical framework and concepts of Jungian ecopsychology, and describes how it could be applied to psychotherapy, our educational system, and our relationship with indigenous peoples. Volume 2, The Cry of Merlin—Jung, the Prototypical Ecopsychologist, reveals how an individual's biography can be treated as an ecopsychological exercise and articulates how Jung's life experiences make him the prototypical ecopsychologist. Volume 3, Hermes, Ecopsychology, and Complexity Theory, provides an archetypal, mythological and symbolic foundation for Jungian ecopsychology. I present Hermes as the god of ecopsychology and offer his staff as an emblem for ecopsychology. Volume 4, Land, Weather, Seasons, Insects: An Archetypal View (January 2013), describes how a deep, soulful connection can be made with these elements through a Jungian ecopsychological approach. This involves the use of science, myths, symbols, dreams, Native American spirituality, imaginal psychology, and the I Ching.

Two promising areas are the Earth Charter which promotes "a sustainable global society founded on respect for nature, universal human rights, economic justice, and a culture of peace" (33) and the Transitions movement dealing simultaneously with climate change and peak oil. (34) Lester Brown's Plan B 3.O offers an astute and comprehensive analysis of environmental problems and many promising possibilities for tackling them in a Marshall Plan style.

Ten years is not a long time to bring about a paradigm shift, Jung's New Age, but the stakes are high. We are creating the conditions that will literalize John's dastardly vision of an apocalypse as he described it in the Book of Revelation.

Notes

1. Ralph Metzner, 1993, "The split between spirit and nature in European consciousness," Trumpeter 10, Winter 1993, p. 2.

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3. Lester Brown, 2008, Plan B 3.0: Mobilizing to Save Civilization, W. W. Norton & Company, NY, p. 69-75, 173-174.

4. http://www.reuters.com/article/2009/05/31/us-climate-oceans-E54U1ZB20090531 retrieved November 8, 2012.

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6. http://www.nytimes.com/2009/08/09/science/earth/09climate.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0 retrieved November 26, 2012. http://www.truthdig.com/report/item/the_sky_really_is_falling_20110530/ retrieved May 31, 2011.

7. http://www.climate-emergency-institute.org/species_loss_robert_m.html retrieved November 26, 2012.

http://www.independent.co.uk/news/science/earth-faces-catastrophic-loss-of-species-408605.html retrieved November 26, 2012.

8. An excellent website for the latest reports from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change is http://www.ipcc.ch/. Click on "Summary" and "Video".

See climatologist and activist James Hansen's concerns at:
http://www.guardian.co.uk/environment/2008/apr/07/climatechange.carbonemissions retrieved May 31, 2009.

Excellent updated information on the effects on the climate of the Canadian tar sands industry can be found at TarSandsRealityCheck.com. It counters the high-level pro-oil sands lobbying ongoing in Canada, the U.S. and Europe around the Keystone XL tar sands pipeline, and Europe on the Fuel Quality Directive.

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15. Carl Jung, 1977, C. G. Jung Speaking: Interviews and Encounters, W. McGuire and R.F.C. Hull, eds., Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ, p. 396, 397.

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19. DFG Vol. 1, p. 46-49; Hermes, Ecopsychology, and Complexity Theory, DFG Vol. 3, p. 87-132.

20. DFG Vol. 1, p. 35, 36; DFG Vol. 3, Appendix C: Self and Organism, p. 190-195.

21. DFG Vol. 1, p. 109-124.

22. Barbara Hannah, 1991, Jung: His Life and Work, Shambala, Boston, p. 17; DFG Vol. 1, p. 25.

23. Peter Redgrove, 1987, The Black Goddess and the Unseen Real, Grove Press, NY, p. xiv, xv, xviii-xxix; DFG Vol. 3, p. 151-153.

24. Nancy Ryley, 1998, The Forsaken Garden: Four Conversations of the Deep Meaning of Environmental Illness, Quest Books, Wheaton, IL, p. 207, 208; DFG Vol. 1, p. 134 note 9.

25. Aldo Leopold, 1949, A Sand County Almanac and Sketches Here and There, Oxford University Press, New York, p. 201-226; http://home.btconnect.com/tipiglen/landethic.html retrieved November 24, 2012.

26. Jung 1977, p. 436.

27. CW 18, "Return to the Simple Life," p. 582-588.

28. Cassandra offended Apollo and was cursed with the gift of prophesy but no one would believe her.

29. Carl Jung, 1984, Dream Analysis: Notes of the Seminar Given in 1928-1930 by C. G. Jung, W. McGuire, ed., Princeton University Press, Princeton, p. 538, 539, 542, 543; DFG Vol. 1, p. 77, 165 note 87.

30. Citizens United was a landmark 2010 Supreme Court decision that overturned decades of restrictions on corporations and unions from contributing unlimited funds to political campaigns, claiming the restrictions violate First Amendments rights of free speech. Corporations are considered to be a person in this regard. The 2012 elections were the first to experience the effects of the new law of the land.

A "must see" 2003 documentary is "The Corporation," a film based on the book The Corporation: The Pathological Pursuit of Profit and Power by Joel Bakan, a University of British Columbia law professor. An excellent description of the film on Wikipedia (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Corporation_%28film%29) lists the sociopath traits of a corporation if indeed it were a person, which means that the business form dominating the world's economic systems is sociopathic, period. Running beneath the credits at the end of the film is a list of websites that elaborate on particular topics and offers opportunities to get involved in rectifying the problem.

31. http://www.guardian.co.uk/environment/2006/sep/19/ethicalliving.g2 retrieved November 24, 2012.
http://www.guardian.co.uk/environment/2006/sep/20/oilandpetrol.business retrieved November 24, 2012.
An excellent video on climate change deniers is Potholer54′s latest video – "The evidence for climate change without computer models or the IPCC"
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OJ6Z04VJDco
His video "Science vs the Feelies" makes some great points with good humor besides.
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OjD0e1d6GgQ

32. CW 8, par. 750.

Prometheus was the Greek Titan who stole fire from the gods for human use, enabling progress and civilization. His punishment was to be chained to a rock and have his liver pecked out by an eagle, the emblem of Zeus. The liver grew back by the next day and again eaten, a scenario eternally reenacted.

33. earthcharterinaction.org

34. transitionnetwork.org

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www.ecojung.com

This talk was given at the Fordham conference, Jung in the Academy and Beyond: The Fordham Lectures 100 Years Later, held at Fordham University on October 26 and 27, 2012. It will be published in the Proceedings. Dennis Merritt, Ph.D., is a Jungian psychoanalyst and ecopsychologist in Wisconsin USA with considerable exposure to Lakota Sioux ceremonies. He is the author of 'Jung, Hermes, and Ecopsychology: The Dairy Farmer's Guide to the Universe

FOLLOWING THE RAVEN

This article compares Richard Nelson's nature writing about his experiences with the Koyukon tribe in northern Alaska and Carl Jung's work on the primitive psyche; it highlights the need for Westerners to awaken to the mystery of the universe beyond ego-consciousness.

Jung declares that one of the biggest tragedies of Western civilization is the loss of the numinous that has resulted in the dehumanizing of the natural world. Examining Jung's controversial use of the terms "primitive" and participation mystique, we discover that what modern man has considered to be a more "civilized" higher state of consciousness has been wrongly equated with ego-consciousness, thus resulting in a limited understanding of the unconscious psyche. This article points out that the way beyond the "cult of consciousnesses" is to attend to that which the rational mind does not understand: dreams, symptoms, and the presence of archetypes. By doing so, the Western heroic ego, along with its need to dominate and control nature, is dismantled, opening the door for a participatory relationship with both psyche and nature. Whereas Jung's work is highly theoretical, Richard Nelson's writing provides insight into the lived experience of these ideas. The aim here is not for Western people to appropriate that which belongs to native people but rather to learn that there is more mystery to the world than ego-consciousness is able to contain. This, says Jung, is the goal of individuation.

 For full text click here

LIVING ON EARTH: EMBODIMENT AND ECOPSYCHOLOGY

Published: 04 February 2013

Our human project of living on earth seems to have reached a crisis point,

 one which may entail the collapse of large parts of the planet's ecosystem. Although we as a civilisation probably know how to avert this collapse, there is very little likelihood – although still some hope – that we are going to do so. We know how to do it technically speaking; but we don't seem to know how to mobilise our social energy in order to take the necessary steps. This illuminates the sense in which, from another point of view, our project has always already been in crisis: we have never known a good human way to live on earth. As Rilke says in the First Duino Elegy (my own translation),

> *Even the knowing animals are aware*
> *that we are not really at home in our interpreted world.*

Full article here

First published in Transformations, the journal of Psychotherapists and Counsellors for Social Responsibility (PCSR)

Nick Totton is a body psychotherapist and started Embodied-Relational Therapy.

ANIMAL TOTEMS AND TABOOS: AN ECOPSYCHOANALYTIC PERSPECTIVE

What is an animal?

In addition to biological and ecological answers, the animal needs to be explored in its psychological and social dimensions. The animal has long been a symbol of human psyche and culture, from fairy tales to horror films, Oedipal pets to animal phobias, scapegoating and large-group symbols, philosophy to ideology and myth. This article explores animal symbols, totems and taboos, and their interaction with non-human nature, through the perspective of ecopsychoanalysis (Dodds 2011), combining, psychoanalytic, eco(psycho)logical and Deleuze-Guattarian modes of thought. Three animal-types are identified, and these are placed within Guattari's 'three ecologies' of mind, society, and nature, seen as in constant, complex nonlinear interaction with one another. Expanding Bion's 'binocular vision', we need to include along with individual psychology and social dynamics interactions with non-human nature. How does an idea or a phantasy impact on an ecosystem or social system? How do our own minds shudder upon collision with the hyperobject of climate change? These are some of the core concerns that ecopsychoanalysis seeks to address.

Full article here

TAKING COUNSELLING AND PSYCHOTHERAPY OUTSIDE: DESTRUCTION OR ENRICHMENT OF THE THERAPEUTIC FRAME?

This paper will explore emerging issues in the practice of counselling and psychotherapy in the outdoors, which the authors encountered when they took their clients outside of the traditional therapy room.

The outdoors is defined as natural areas and spaces, such as woods and parks which have been termed 'nearby nature' (Kaplan & Kaplan, 1989) and also more remote areas such as mountains and moors which are more isolated from civilisation, what some have termed wilderness (Mcfarlane, 2007).

Particular emphasis will be given to the 'frame' of psychotherapy and how aspects of this are affected by moving outdoors, in particular contracting in relation to confidentiality and timing. The relationship in psychotherapy will be explored in relation to issues of mutuality and asymmetry alongside the role of nature in the therapeutic process. Lastly the challenges and therapeutic potential of psychotherapy in nature will be explored.

Available Ecopsychoanalysis Blogspot

A CASE OF ECO-DESPAIR

What follows is the introduction to my book, *Moving to the Earth's Beat: the road back from eco-despair*. The book speaks to those who suffer from that malaise.

After being invited to join this forum I hesitated to do it. Why?
Because my voice is not that of a peer, it is that of someone who could have been your patient but who relied instead on his own self-analysis to find a way out of his own eco-despair.
Do I belong on this stage?
I am not sure but I venture onto it with the hope that my perspective will be of some use to you I hope, in your work with others who suffer from what may be this signature malady of our time and to answer some questions for you and me.

Introduction

What it's about

The funk hit me suddenly. In hindsight I can see that it had been building for a while, but when it broke out into the open it came as a surprise. It was both unexpected and hard to explain. There seemed to be nothing in my situation to be depressed about. I was in good health, and had people in my life I cared about and who cared about me.

I was one of four partners in a small consulting company located in Cambridge, Massachusetts. It was doing well. When I joined it there were four people in it: two partners and two staff assistants. I made it five. Now, seven years later, there were twenty-four of us in our Harvard Square office, and another dozen in our affiliates in the U.K., Holland, and Germany.

Our business was based on work we had done to identify elements of the thought process that successful inventors use in their work. We were the first in our field to make parts of that process explicit. The Random House Dictionary extracted a common noun from the name of our company, Synectics, and defined it as "the study of creative processes, esp. as applied to the solution of problems by a group of diverse individuals."

Clients hired us to run problem-solving sessions for project teams when they needed to do some fresh thinking. Initially we worked primarily with engineers and scientists from the Research and Development departments of companies such as Kimberly-Clark, General Foods, Exxon, and Johnson & Johnson. Then their marketing and organization development groups discovered us.

Ours was an unusual line of work. There was no short answer to the "and-what-do-you-do" question, but it was hard to conceal how pleased we were to be doing it. We existed at the wild edges of the business world, unconstrained by its conduct and dress codes. We could work in sneakers and sandals, and wear our hair long. At day's end on Fridays, staff members trickled into our second floor "living room," a roughly twenty-by-thirty-foot loft space in which we could both run sessions and party.

The long wall across from the entrance had two French doors in it. Three easels were mounted on the wall space that separated them. Black leather couches formed a big "U" in front of the easels, and an oriental rug covered the space between them. On it was a table made of a solid core door sitting on four wooden cubes cut from an old beam. Several other cubes served as end tables. A dozen or so directors' chairs provided additional seating. There was a long table behind one of the couches. When sessions were held on the floor, drinks were set out on it at the end of the day for the participants. Most welcomed that opportunity to relax after a long day, often with a working lunch and a couple of short breaks. On Fridays, it was the staff's turn to relax and party.

I enjoyed my work. I had no trouble giving it sixty or seventy-hour weeks because it energized me. It was both my work and my favorite recreation. And then, suddenly it seemed, that changed. It was as if I were my usual self one Friday evening, a different person at the end of the following week.

What happened? It took me almost a year to figure out, first, what ailed me and then to develop a remedy for it. I was, it turned out, like the miners' canary, among the early victims of an emerging virus, the one that causes eco-despair. Unlike the canary I was still walking and talking, though my spirit had a hard time getting out of bed. The first symptom was a growing awareness that our way of life had put us on a high-speed train headed for a nasty ecological crash. Then came the question that felled me: was there any reason to hope that we would be able to change course in time to avoid it, or at least to slow the train enough to minimize the damage?

I feared the answer was no. The train was propelled by a hyper-consumption lifestyle that we equated with progress and success for us as both individuals and as a species. We were addicted to it. I didn't think enough people could be convinced to quit or quit aspiring to it. In developed countries it would mean giving up too many conveniences that we considered our birthright. Like cars and air conditioning and ever-increasing supplies of electricity and running water, both cold and hot. In the developing ones it would mean letting go of the dream of attaining that lifestyle.

The impetus for the change was not going to come from our political and business leaders. It had to come from us, the consumers. Together we had a lot of economic clout — we accounted for two-thirds of the GNP in developed countries. What we needed was a consumer uprising that forced the invention of a different economic order. But I couldn't see it happening, because I'd lost faith in our collective good sense, and in the power of our big guns, Science and Technology. If you see your kind heading for a precipice and see no way to keep them from acting like lemmings, you are left with two choices. Stop caring about them and focus on getting the most out of your life while you can. Or get depressed. Why couldn't I settle for the first option?

I talked to therapists about my problem, but that didn't help, so I worked on it on my own. I got lucky and stumbled into an explanation of it in some books that happened to be sitting on my shelves. The authors included the psychologists Abraham Maslow and Viktor Frankl.

What I heard them say was that there is a part of us that transcends the boundaries of the personal ego. It identifies with its world — with other people, with other living things, with the earth. It experiences the pain of these "others" as if it were its own. It can be deeply bothered by the way things are out there. Such as injustice, or poverty, or the abuse of children or of the environment Not a reason to get bummed out if you feel that something can and is being done, by you or by others, about the wrong you feel needs to be set right, and that the fight can be won.

But this requires you to believe that the forces on your side have what it takes to prevail against those that create the "wrong." Difficulties arise if you lose that faith. You are then left with two choices: recover that faith or live with your pain.

This book tells the story of how I regained hope that we could change our ways quickly enough to, if not avert, then at least soften the blow of an ecological crash. I tell it now for two reasons:

Because it will be hard, for others who catch the malaise, to get the help they need to uncover its root causes. It's not easy to find therapists who in their practice make use of the findings of Maslow (and others who are part of what he called the "Third Force" in psychology). This was the case when I needed them, and it continues to be the case today. Why? The answer, according to several friends who are psychologists, is that their training focuses them almost exclusively on the non-transcendent part of our psyche. This is also why the needed help is unlikely to be found in publications by them, whether in books or blogs.

And I tell it now because it is no longer only my story or that of a few other kindred "miner's canaries." Eco-despair may prove to be the signature malady of our time.

An online article published by Time magazine is titled In Despair Over the Polar Bear. It begins with the story of a forty-one-year-old mother of two who "gets a stomach ache" every time she looks at a nearby volcano with a glacier at the top that has "definitely been receding over the years." It goes on to say that psychologists now have a name for her condition: "eco-anxiety, the overwhelming and sometimes debilitating concern for the worsening state of the environment." And, "As signs of global warming accumulate, therapists say they're seeing more and more

patients with eco-anxiety symptoms. Sufferers feel depression, hopelessness, and insomnia, and go through sudden, uncontrollable bouts of sobbing." *

Back in the early eighties there were no eco-psychologists of either the pop or the pro variety. The therapists I consulted focused on other possible reasons for my depression. The idea that we were heading for an eco-crash seemed at the time to be a far-out one, and if the threat was real there was plenty of time to do something about it. Yes we'd created environmental problems, but there were people working on them. One obvious solution to my distress was to support that work either directly or indirectly by minimizing my contribution to those problems — insulate the house, buy recycled paper, don't drive a gas guzzler, whatever.

A possible second explanation for my angst was that I hadn't outgrown my atavistic need to stay connected with the natural world. So go hug a tree, or spend time in a nearby National Forest. But I didn't think immersions in the wilderness would help. Even looking at pictures of such places deepened my angst — they made vivid what it was that we were destroying. Contact with the natural world did once feel good, but that was to happen again only after I emerged from my gloom.

Variations of those two commonsense remedies are what most eco-psychologists seem now to be selling. But if the angst is rooted in a loss of hope that we, collectively, can get off this train we are on or slow it down significantly, then these are at best temporary painkillers, not a cure for the ailment. I hope this book will help you to grasp the root causes of that angst and to put together a remedy for it.

To the extent that you are not as engaged in the fight to save our habitat as you would like to be, I hope this book will help move you past a couple of the things that held me back. One was not seeing clearly enough that I had a very personal, here-and-now reason to do it.

There is a consequence of pollution and habitat destruction that is being almost totally overlooked: its impact on our psychic health. A part of us is viscerally connected to the earth, making it sick invites souls sickness. But it's easy to ascribe its symptoms — such as anger, anxiety, and depression — to other causes. What I needed — and describe here — is a way to determine the extent to which these feelings are rooted in the realm of the individual ego versus that of the more connected self.

The second thing that held me back was loss of faith in our collective ability to avert or minimize the impact of an eco-crash, whether in our lifetime or that of our now and future children. I found hope in two places: evidence that we do have what it takes to win that fight; and reasons to think that we can increase the odds of doing that if we align ourselves more closely with the forces that work to maintain the health of the organism that is our biosphere.

This book also describes how a move to a more sustainable future can be catalyzed by the gifted storytellers among us, be they writers or rappers or moviemakers. If you are one of these folks and are not already engaged in that effort, I hope you will be moved to join it.

A preview of what follows

Have you caught — or are you susceptible to catching — a case of eco-malaise? Easy question to answer if you know you are depressed about what's happening to our habitat. But what if you have caught the malady and it's in an initial mild stage that manifests itself in subtle ways, such as a general increase in irritability or impatience or feelings of unease? In hindsight I can see that this is what happened to me, and that the resulting state of mind diminished my ability to bring my "A" game to my work for at least a couple of years.

Even after the problem broke out into the open as a depression, it took time to figure out its cause. I knew I was bothered by what we were doing to our environment, but why wasn't that reason to be moved into action instead of into despair? To answer that question I first had to answer another: was the cause of my funk something else?

The first part of this book is an account of what I needed to do to answer those questions. It was, in essence, an exploration of what made me tick, as an individual and as a member of our

species. I hope what I learned about myself will bring into sharper focus aspects of your own psyche in one or both of two ways: Yes, that's me too. No, not me, but it makes me think of something that feels more apt.

The questions I had to ask along the way were not new: Who am I behind the face I present to others and to myself? Why do I feel as I do about my world? What do I believe the nature of things to be, and to what extent is that based on secondhand ideas? Which of those inherited ideas keep me from being at peace with my world?

Old questions, but the act of asking them helped me tailor the answers so they felt relevant to me.

Part two of this book is about imagining a way forward. OK, I understand why I feel as I do, how do I get out of this pit?

What reasons are there to think it's not too late to avert or minimize the impact of the eco-crash for which I think we are headed? How do I rekindle faith in the power of our best instincts to win the fight to save our habitat? If part of the anwer is to be open to the idea that we might get an assist from the earth's equivalent of a health maintenance organization, how do I square that idea with my inner skeptic — the part of me I think of as my modern, hard-science-based sensibility? Can I see a way forward that doesn't require anyone else to do that squaring?

To find answers to these questions I had to pull together ideas about the nature of things from the viewpoints of both our scientists and traditional Native Americans. I hope going along on my excursions through those worlds will help you to create an antidote for your eco-despair, one that may or may not resemble mine.

RESPONSE 2 TO POLLY HIGGINS "THE EARTH NEEDS A GOOD LAWYER"

I appreciate very much the way you speak about your love of Earth, and your poems and invocations. Polly, it is wonderful to hear how far your work has come in such a short space of time.

As an ecopsychologist and also as the daughter of a Jewish woman who was nearly killed by the Nazis when she was 3 years old, I welcome Eradicating Ecocide because I see real value in naming what is happening and its scale and giving it its due status.

Relating with Earth as our larger self lies at the heart of ecopsychology. Recognising that our bodies are integral to Earth's body, just as are rock, soil, tree, corn, bird, mole, horse, spider, wind, sunlight, water … and all the other forms of life which may be crowding into your minds now. Allowing that our minds are integral to Earth's mind … Knowing that Earth too is part of a larger self and reaching for what that might mean …

"Recognising", "Allowing", "Knowing" … words we ascribe to mental activity, if we forget our body sense …

Body sense. Visceral intelligence. Embodied wisdom. Ours and Earth's. Earth's which is also ours.

These are expressions of ecopsychology, and there are many many more.

Underlying where we are now, at the start of the collapse of Earth's life support systems generated largely by human activity, are so many systemic factors. Ecopsychology proposes that underpinning them all is modern humanity's perceived separation from Earth.

Separated, individual consciousness is a vital aspect of being human, enabling identity, agency, desire and personal expression of universal, archetypal experience. Separated, individual consciousness allows reflection on what it means to be of the human species. It can, equally, reveal to us what it means to be of the whole Earth community.

In Vital Signs, the first UK-based ecopsychology anthology edited by Mary-Jayne Rust and Nick Totton, I wrote about the image in the Eden story of the barrier of a sword of fire and cherubim that God put in place to prevent the newly self-conscious Adam and Eve from eating the fruit of the Tree of Life "lest they become as Gods" as the Bible put it. As we know, the human species is wielding God-like power now. I suggest that the barrier of the sword of fire and cherubim can also be thought about as a description of the immense difficulty modern humans have in retaining a sense of connection with Earth, with Eden and the Tree of Life, once separated, individual consciousness arrives. Acknowledging that section of Genesis as our creation story and treating it as a dream, I focus on God's almost immediate association to the Tree of Life after the first couple eat the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, and I argue that this linking of the two trees, the only two in Eden to be named, may point to a developmental task. I accept their eating the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge as the moment of transition into individual self-consciousness, and I suggest that our developmental task hidden in this story is to cultivate equally our sense of interconnection and commonality with the rest of life here alongside our sense of human uniqueness. In modernity's cultural failure to recognise such a task over millenia, we have failed to wield our power lightly and so our potential for destruction, which mirrors and expresses Earth's own destructive forces, is coming to pass.

I also see the Eden story as an archetypal story, a myth in the sense that I once heard William Golding quoted as naming, "a truth that can only be told as a story". All the images I've seen of Adam and Eve shut out of Eden show them in utter grief and

desolation. A close-up of one by Renaissance painter Masaccio in 1427 is at http://www.artble.com/imgs/8/9/6/323596/636075.jpg. As possible archetypal images, I suggest they depict how being torn from interconnection with larger nature causes an unbearable rift, a tear in the psyche. An incalculable wound.

And of course an archetypal story speaks to what **is** as well as to what **was**. Those images reveal that there is a moment when we know what is lost. And, surely, what is lost is our sense of being part of Earth's extraordinary, abundant creativity, to which death and destruction are integral.

That moment of knowing what we have lost is pivotal – how we respond to it shapes all that follows. In my view, not having a cultural, storied frame, which includes Earth, for that transition from interconnected consciousness into separated consciousness is a critical factor in the trajectory Western civilisation has pursued. For without such a storied frame, what is lost is conscious, positive identification and relationship with Earth – and the potential to find one's small but valuable place inside a beautiful and terrible, sophisticated and complex larger whole. With that, we lose the appropriate context for the creative and destructive powers which ebb and flow through us, and so we lose the containment that comes from knowing that these immense powers derive from something larger than ourselves to which we belong. Looking at, say, a pride of lions devouring a buffalo to nourish their own lives – the sheer rawness of nature – can make it hard for us to want to belong and yet it is vital that we know we do.

When conscious identification with the first source of life is no longer available, I think that unconscious identification with one's own creations becomes inevitable.

Images of Adam and Eve outside the Garden reveal their sense of smallness, their shame, their abject poverty in their newly separated state. Another by Thomas Cole in 1828 can be found at http://www.mfa.org/collections/object/expulsion-from-the-garden-of-eden-33060. Without a storied frame for this critical juncture, I think what happens is an unconscious taking into the individual self the very powers one newly lacks access to which originate in and thereby properly belong to the larger whole.

Hubris, I think, is characteristic of this state, because what is unconsciously appropriated to the tiny self is too huge, and inflating oneself is the only way to carry it.

These are the conditions which spawn denial, and the continuum of behaviours that relate to it like knowing and not knowing, and knowing and not acting. For me, the first and main purpose of denial is to uphold and protect the core sense of one's own validity. I want to underline that: To uphold and protect the core sense of one's own validity. We can see from Cole's painting just how threatened the core sense of one's own validity can be when connection with the larger whole is lost.

And those of us who study the unconscious see how particular energy centres within it insatiably gather to themselves anything that looks remotely relevant. The painters I have referred to show us a wound of such character and scale that it forms this kind of energy centre. Here I think a cluster gathers around the idea of being valid, a cluster made up of similar notions like being good and innocent. And a process develops in which, identified with one's own creations, one makes them very large and then lives inside them as expressions of validity, goodness and innocence – all as a way of defending oneself from knowing their opposites, which are equally present, unconscious and unregulated. What is also defended against is seeing the equal validity, goodness and innocence of anything that threatens this constructed identity – and so one has license to kill. Earth is the greatest threat to this constructed identity.

All this means that there is a real psychological state in which one is genuinely incapable of seeing one's own destructiveness. Polly described earlier how she has witnessed many people in the corporate world being unable to listen to and look at the damage that some of their activities have caused to local people, their ecologies and also to migrating birds. I think that what she observed is rooted in this deeper, genuine incapability to see one's own destructiveness. It is unfaceable. In this way, denial is doing its job – upholding and protecting the core sense of one's own validity.

I have come to think about the work of psychotherapy as creating the conditions in which the unfaceable can be faced. And one of the questions at the centre of the Climate Psychology Alliance is whether it is possible to create similar conditions at a more collective level to enable the unfaceable to be faced. I don't know if they define their work in the same way, but various people, including Paul Maiteny, Mary-Jayne Rust, Ro Randall, Tom Crompton and Zita Cox, have been experimenting with different models and the Alliance seeks to learn from, where appropriate support and, with them, build on their pioneering endeavours.

I think this work involves walking a tightrope between on one side boldness, strength, determination and confidence and, on the other, what might be humility. I think that creating the 'genuinely enabling conditions' that Polly seeks involves finding ways to deeply honour the state of mind which I have been describing, rooted as it is in the incalculable wound we all share. Otherwise we increase the need for denial and thereby strengthen its grip. I don't know about any of you, but 'deeply honouring denial' challenges me greatly. I have to find new ways to come to terms with and contain the kinds of feelings I imagine many of you also grapple with: frustration, fury, fear, hatred, contempt and even a desire to kill. Some are mine and some, not integrated by those who cannot face their destructiveness, are playing in the space between us and it can be hard to distinguish between them.

These perspectives have brought me to more consciously investigate my own needs to feel good and innocent as a way of upholding my sense of validity. I've been surprised by occasional new feelings of empathy with people who live their lives in opposing ways to me – what I perceive as Earth destroying ways – and there have been odd moments of desiring to get to know them better, which I put down to the empathy. I do fear being drawn into collusion, but if I can allow these feelings in more I'm hoping now I'll find a new language, one that, through genuine relationship, will open the door for them to turn and face the unfaceable. That's where I am in this experiment that so many of us have taken on and I hope it contributes something towards Eradicating Ecocide.

From CPA conference

16th March 2013 London

'Psyche, Law and Justice joining up human responses to ecocide'

Main speaker: International barrister Polly Higgins: " The Earth Needs a Good Lawyer

RESPONSE 1 TO POLLY HIGGINS "THE EARTH NEEDS A GOOD LAWYER"

Published: 25 April 2013

Polly Higgins, in framing ecocide as a war crime, bursts the gargantuan bubble of complacency that allows us to maintain the fiction that we are living in a time of peace.

We are living in the midst of a violent war being waged against Mother Earth and all her inhabitants. And, we are turning a collective blind eye to what has been called the 'slow violence'[iii] of this war. Polly's proposed ecocide act helps us take in the true scale of the violence.

Corporate law currently sanctions runaway exploitative greed by making it the prime legal responsibility of companies to maximize profit.   The law is the set of rules under which we live, and these are set to ensure ecological destruction. Polly has proposed new rules, and they have radical implications. An ecocide act as the fifth international crime against peace would criminalise those in power who attack life and support those in power who protect life; it would hold power to account and provide necessary legal clout for good and mindful leadership; it would value and protect not only human lives but all lives. Implementing the act would require a shift in our moral and philosophical frameworks and the act itself would empower this shift.

Responsibility for ecocide

A law of ecocide makes those who have 'superior responsibility' legally accountable for their ecocidal acts. Superior responsibility would rest with governments and CEOs of large corporations. In my response to Polly's talk, I will concentrate on how ordinary people may see the extent of their own individual moral responsibility for damage to the environment and for the violence that underpins this damage. Viewed from a psychoanalytic perspective, this is a complex issue.

The starting point for my discussion is the ongoing underlying conflict we all have between – very broadly speaking – two positions. One is our awareness that we share resources with others who are as inherently worthy of respect and provision as we are. The other position is our wish to take the lion's share and to justify this on grounds that we are somehow superior and special. The conflict between these two positions can be seen in childhood in sibling rivalry, and it plays out later in life in geopolitical conflict and issues of social and environmental justice. Morality begins with acknowledging the conflict and immorality begins with finding ways to dodge it.

The moral landscape of the common ground

When we think of ourselves in moral terms we tend spontaneously to visualize ourselves in landscapes[iv] that we imaginatively construct as phantasies[v] within the inner world of the psyche. I find it fascinating that, in phantasy, we tend to see our inner moral landscapes quite literally as patches of ground. I suggest this is because we are dependent for our survival on the ground – the earth, the soil – of the Earth and what grows from it, and our moral dilemmas centrally involve how we treat those we share ground with, whether well or badly. I will contrast two moral landscapes: that of 'common ground' and 'high ground'.

'Common ground' is visualized as an integral and shared landscape. On common ground we claim no moral superiority and we see other inhabitants in the landscape as just as entitled to life, provision and respect as we are. Common ground is the soil from which our concern, empathy and generosity grow; it is where we recognize that what we share most centrally with other inhabitants is that we are all alive, fleetingly and for now, all equally worthy of respect as life forms, and that resources are limited and we share them and compete for them. On common ground we also face our differences from other Earth inhabitants, and we learn where we fit in within laws of nature not of our making. We face helplessness, need, and mortality.

Common ground is rich creative soil. Awareness of common ground goes with a warmer, sadder and more conflicted inner emotional climate, one that involves mourning our sense of entitlement to endless idealized provision. We tend to feel grounded on common ground, and I suggest this grounded feeling conveys our sense of being attached to the Earth and in touch with reality. We tend to see common ground with the mind's eye as concrete and material, but it is an abstraction. For instance, common ground can be shared with all those who have lived and will live after us.

I suggest that we tend to visualize our moral selves and communities as living in a shared landscape is based on our profound understanding that we are part of nature. Within the internal world it seems that we configure our morality in ecological terms, where ecology is the study of the relationships that living organisms have with each other and with their environment. The word ecology is from the Greek word for home,[vi] and feeling at home with ourselves includes adopting a moral position vis a vis our living ecology. Psychoanalytic theory, by focusing mainly on relationships humans have with each other and tending to ignore relationships with non humans and with the environment, has unnecessarily restricted its view of mental life. The perspective I put forward here aims to broaden a psychoanalytic understanding of our internal world to include our ecological awareness. If we pay attention to mental phenomena, signs of our ecological awareness are everywhere to be found, for instance in the way in which the dreams of even those of us who live lives far removed from nature are regularly set in natural landscapes and 'peopled' by animals and plants of all kinds.

The moral high ground

The common ground of moral concern contrasts sharply with another psychic imaginary landscape, 'the high ground', a cold, barren and unsustainable place in which feeling 'super moral' or 'holier than thou' predominates. However, this is actually the landscape of immorality or amorality. The 'moral high ground' may be resorted to defensively when moral conflicts feel too much to bear.

Within the inner world of the psyche, the landscape of the moral high ground tends to be visualized as the top of a mountain or high rise building, an island cut off from the mainland, an idealised Eden-like special area or a 'gated community'. The high ground is kept segregated from territories imagined as 'down there', 'far away' or 'on the other side'.

From the perspective of the high ground, common ground is looked down on and so are nature and our ecological selves. We 'occupy' the moral high ground, and the act of occupation can be visualized as actively creating a fracture, a split, in the ecological internal moral landscape of common ground. The splitting is into separated chunks of landscape, kept far apart, designated 'superior' and 'inferior', to which we assign 'us' and 'them'. When one occupies the moral high ground, one has split the ecological moral self, and its landscape of common ground is broken and shattered into pieces. The act of mental splitting damages the inner representation of the Earth as the common ground that sustains us all and is a psychic ecocidal attack on our capacity to think in a concerned joined up way about reality. The 'high up' 'holier than thou' ground clung to most fiercely, I suggest, is a position of apparent exemption from having to face that exploitative values cause environmental damage and involve violence.

In a psychoanalytic perspective, we lead strange inner lives, where we move between split and more integrated psychic landscapes, between positions of moral superiority and entitlement and the ordinary pain of realizing we have caused damage to our beloved Earth and damage to our emotional links with her, damage that we want to try to repair. This is our human plight.

Freud (1923)[vii] provided us with a cogent reason as to why we tend to split into 'idealised superior us' and 'denigrated inferior them' when he made the profound point that we are not as moral as we would like to think we are, but far more moral than we realise. Freud was pointing to a basic fact of human nature, which is that morality is central in our lives and we have a deep human need to be moral and be seen as behaving in ways that are moral. As animals primed to relate socially, our morality weighs heavily in us and when we behave in immoral ways we can be easily plagued by anxiety, guilt and shame. Splitting into superior/inferior is an omnipotent way of trying to rid ourselves of anxiety, guilt and shame at our immoral acts. It provides a 'quick fix' magical solution. If we convince ourselves that those we share the landscape with (animals and certain other humans) are beneath us, not our equals, do not feel things as we do, or need less than we do, we are not so discomforted when we exploit them and treat them unfairly or cruelly. But 'superior/inferior' splitting on its own is not enough. So persecuted are we by the possibility that we are behaving in immoral ways that we need to take further steps to protect ourselves from the truth. We fill ourselves up with ideas that we have special entitlement to claim everything we want when we want it for ourselves, and we mentally arrange things such that we are in as little danger as possible of being emotionally touched by – and so also plagued and tormented by – feelings of concern for those we exploit. We denigrate them and consign them to distant chunks of landscape in phantasy, where we can keep them out of sight and emotional reach[viii]. We narrow our view to only those we include in our circle of concern. All these kinds of omnipotent phantasy tend to operate together and in this way we can kid ourselves we are superly moral when we claim the lion's share (and especially clever for finding our moral quick fixes). As Freud noted, we are not nearly as moral as we like to think we are. His other point, that we are more moral than we realise, I see as pointing to the way that deep down while behaving in immoral ways and pretending we are super moral, the moral part of us, also there, but kept in the shadows, knows the truth of what we are up to. It may experience mounting realistic anxiety and concern.

The psychoanalytic concept of phantasy is crucial to understanding how we construct the moral landscape in the internal world. A background sense of narcissistic entitlement to exploit others powers our tendency to split the internal landscape, while a lively sense of entitlement to know we share with others and a willingness to face reality powers our tendency to re-integrate our split inner landscapes. In other words, how we see the moral landscape in the mind's eye – whether ground is more split or integrated – is heavily influenced by underlying power struggles going on between different and radically opposed underlying factions within us, and the outcome of these power struggles determines which kind of phantasied landscape prevails currently within the psyche. We are mostly not conscious of these power struggles going on.

Moral choice

Do we have individual choice about how much we damage the environment and how much we make repairs? This is a complex issue. Paul Hoggett (2012)[ix] has outlined the way in which our disavowal of climate change – and the environmental damage this causes – is not best understood at an individual level but when seen as part of the current culture, which is a perverse culture characterized by a lack of concern. The perverse culture involves, in the terms I have been using here, a brutal attack on common ground.

Polly Higgins's work in this sense can be seen as a powerful expose of the laws that govern and prop up the perverse culture. Law that protects greed is perverse law that stacks the odds against moral behaviour. This perverse framing of the rules promotes mindless grabbing of resources. It is harder to heal our inner ecological selves in these circumstances as we are given no legal and structural backup to fight back and to make repairs, and, as I have argued (2012) elsewhere, we are actively encouraged in current 'Western' culture, to split into 'us' and 'them'[x].

Culture shapes us profoundly and frames how we see the world we live in. But even where we recognise the perverse culture and its effects, we have limited free moral choice within it. It is not possible to live currently in 'Western' societies without causing at least some environmental damage. This is because unregulated capitalism gives us products produced, packaged and transported in a way that currently causes extensive damage to the environment. Because of

this, every aspect of our lives, from the food we eat to our love and work relationships, involves us in our share of causing environmental damage. Currently, with the best will in the world, with Spartan practices, and even if we try very hard and 'walk our walk' with the lightest footprint we can manage, we cannot avoid some damage and stay alive. Literally. It is important to note here that I am not talking about an idealized view of being able to live in a way that causes no damage. Instead I am saying that we are, each of us in our own ways, currently unavoidably implicated in a perverse and violent system that is causing extensive ecological damage.

Moral injury

This problem raises the question of moral injury. Currently, ordinary people are both victims of and active combatants in the immoral war being waged against the Earth. They are the foot soldiers while those in power hold superior responsibility. Participation in immoral wars leads to moral injury. Moral injury is a new term[xi] being used to describe distressed and dysfunctional soldiers returning home from immoral wars, unable to find themselves, in mental pain and suffering from outbursts of rage often turned against themselves. Moral injury replaces the psychiatric diagnosis of PTSD[xii] in suggesting that these symptoms are a normal response to being placed in an abnormal position where one is prevented from acting according to one's inner conscience, and required to collude with violence one deep down knows is morally wrong. From a psychic point of view, the injury is felt when one faces the pain of seeing that the landscape of common ground, where one feels at home as a human being, is being forcibly shattered and fragmented on a daily basis, both by the culture and by the practices one is forced into participating in and colluding with. By landscape here I mean both the physical landscape and our capacity to maintain our internal landscape of common ground. Both the external landscape and the internal more integrated moral landscape are under heavy bombardment and attack.

I will try to convey my sense of the dislocation and distress of taking in such violence against Mother Earth through my experience of visiting Dachau with two friends. After being in Dachau, the physical place, each of us became lost and disorientated. I found myself standing on a vast parade ground, in a panic, having lost my two friends and not knowing how to find my way back home in a foreign land. One friend set off in the wrong direction on our way home and ended up head in hands not knowing which way to go, and the other friend suddenly started sobbing that evening on hearing some haunting music. It was, he said, as though beauty and hope had suddenly returned to his world.

I think the assault on our sense of hope that our love can make repairs is one of the most devastating results of the current ecocidal attacks, and it can leave us struggling with feelings of hopelessness as well as helplessness.

I will use another holocaust image to indicate the effect that the slow violence of ecocide may have on us. At Liebeskind's Jewish Museum in Berlin, we saw a sculpture in the hall of remembrance. It comprised thousands of tiny clay pieces, like discarded leaves, at the bottom of a huge dry well. I felt it as all those thousands of moments when I had ignored and forgotten, chosen lack of care over the difficulty of showing care. It was deeply affecting. Facing damage, especially irreparable damage one has caused, is the hardest of human tasks. Each time we disavow the environmental ecological damage that each of our small actions cause, we nevertheless register this damage psychically; we store it up and it can feel increasingly unbearable to face. We may end up not merely being seduced by consumer capitalism but further colluding with it because we feel not strong enough emotionally to face the extent of our collusion.

I have recently found on the web some important echoes of this, in blogs where people are beginning to address the issue of seeking forgiveness from themselves, and going through the details of what they have disavowed and are seek forgiveness for. It is so much harder to forgive the self when one cannot repair the damage. In this exercise they are also painfully seeking to reclaim their fractured inner living ecological selves, rooted in the living ecology of common ground.[xiii]

Conclusion

Polly has made a profoundly important contribution. A law of ecocide could hugely help ordinary people manage their guilt about environmental damage. It would do this by introducing proportionality about who is primarily to blame. By helping to heal our fractured injured minds, it would improve mental health as well as making the important repairs we still can make to the environment. Mental health depends on the state of our relationship with our primary good object, Mother Earth. Indigenous communities we chose to see as 'primitive' understood this full well, and those that survive are currently in the vanguard of those of us who are fighting back.[xiv]

Sally Weintrobe

16th March 2013 London

'Psyche, Law and Justice joining up human responses to ecocide'

Main speaker: International barrister Polly Higgins: " The Earth Needs a Good Lawyer

FLOOD DEFENCES

We face a real dilemma. To take the radical actions required to have a hope of mitigating dangerous climate change we need to both reduce energy use and switch rapidly to renewable sources for the energy that we do use.

Neither of these can be achieved without incurring individual and collective losses. For many of us one of the most sudden and dramatic ways we can reduce our energy use is by cutting out flying, but this means giving up things, not the least the exploration of areas of wild beauty in other parts of the world. But switching to renewable sources is not without costs either, particularly the collective costs to our landscape of installing solar and wind farms. I am very aware that people have different views about this, that for some the British landscape of moorlands, hills and estuaries is sacrosanct and once we start planting windmills in such places our renewable 'means' have undermined our climate mitigation 'ends'. But talking to friends who have this view and listening to local and national voices which oppose the spread of renewables I have become increasingly convinced that there is a strong element of denial in such standpoints.

Looking down from the Mendip Hills in early February 2014 a vast lake covered parts of the northern stretches of the Somerset Levels around Westhay and Godney Moors (an area where millions of starlings roost in the marshes at this time of year). Given that this was the part of the Levels least affected by flooding it really made you wonder what Britain would look like 50 years from now. By then the rise in global average temperatures may be approaching 2 degrees (in contrast to the havoc already being caused by our present 0.8 degree rise). Those friends of the British countryside (including the National Trust) who oppose proposals for wind farms such as the Atlantic Array (an opposition campaign spearheaded in North Devon by the reactionary populists of UKIP) would do well to consider what 'natural landscape' it will be that they are preserving through their opposition to renewables. There is a strong strand of conservative environmentalism which has deep echoes in traditional rural communities which is still in deep denial about the actuality of climate change and some of this could be heard demanding river dredging and other 'finger in the dyke' solutions in south Somerset.

During the 2014 floods the Somerset Levels were in the grip of what some people call a 'risk panic', a moment at which underlying social anxieties find expression in a particular crisis. Like 'moral panics' such as those surrounding child abuse, risk panics are ripe for exploitation by populists. Rather than the pillorying of a social services department for its failure to prevent child abuse in Somerset we saw escalating attacks upon the Environment Agency for its failure to continue dredging local rivers. Scapegoats are easy meat and conveniently provide a means of distracting attention from more systemic issues.

I found it particularly ironic (tragic?) that as vast swathes of the Levels disappeared under water for months on end for the second year running one group of residents who lived on the edge of

the Levels were eagerly waiting what they hoped would be a decision by the Planning Inspectorate to turn down a proposal by Ecotricity to build four windmills just to the west of the M5 south of Huntspill. According to the Huntspill Windfarm Action Group:

These huge machines are little but a large visual political statement of green intentions. If we have to have them put them offshore or in areas that do not affect local residents. Siting them in the middle of six villages on the Somerset levels is not the place to have them. SO if we are called nimbys for that that then fine.

The Huntspill group was affiliated to the European Platform Against Windfarms. I know little about this organisation but their propaganda clearly pits the 'little man' against what they construe as the powerful commercial interests involved in many wind farm schemes. The Huntspill Action Group's website also argues that nuclear is a much better alternative and quotes approvingly a recent article by Griff Rhys Jones in the Daily Mail (31st July 2013). Reading this I was struck by the following statement by this British comedian (no pun intended):

I am deeply worried about global warming: I accept the evidence without demur. The world is getting hotter, and we are going through serious climate change. But the fundamentalist green lobby — and those involved in sponsored research or subsidised industry — react to our legitimate concerns as if they are nothing more than selfish whining. They ask: 'Do you want to die in a horrible conflagration and for your children to starve to death as a result of global warming?'

I think Rhys Jones (who also advocates the nuclear power option) speaks for many who accept that anthropogenic climate change is occurring and yet who oppose green policies in the name of conservation. Now my own view is that the situation that we face is so drastic that we must use all means possible, which does not preclude nuclear, to move from carbon intensive forms of energy. But nuclear is high risk, expensive and takes so long to come on stream that it is poorly equipped to meet the urgency of our present situation and so we must prioritise wind, solar, wave and tidal.

I think the Huntspill Action Group provided a vivid illustration of what we could call 'flood defences'. Here they were, situated on the edge of the Levels, on land which was partially below sea level, land which will only exist in 50 years time if there is massive expenditure on local sea defences, opposing the very type of renewables initiative which, at a national and international level, could prevent the complete disappearance of the very landscape that they treasure!

Earlier I called this 'denial' but I've come to feel that 'denial' is a bit of a blanket term which needs unpicking. Let's look at some of the elements at work here. The flooding of recent years is what we call a 'harbinger'. It is signalling the approach of something (the destruction of landscapes, habitats and ecosystems such as the Levels as climate change gathers pace). The fact that for the vast majority of local people it does not yet seem to function in this way could be understood in one of three ways. It could be that people are still ignorant of the risk of dangerous climate change. Or perhaps people are not ignorant but lack the collective capacity to imagine something that seems far off in time (a failure of the social imagination). Or, finally, if they were to imagine such a future it would feel like a catastrophe so it is not imagined in order to avoid the anxiety. In this sense denial is not seeing what is in front of our eyes, it is a collective reluctance to know the truth or make the necessary connections.

But there seems to be a second element involved in ordinary denial, something that involves what I think of as 'internal propaganda'. This refers to the rationalisations, displacements, projections (blame the green fundamentalists), etc. which enable people who accept the actuality of human caused climate change to nevertheless evade responsibility for it. According to this

propaganda there's always another group who needs to act not us, or we would act 'if only' everybody else also did something or, even more fatalistically, what is the point of us doing anything at all, a fatalism illustrated in this remark by Rhys Jones:

Even if we hit that 15 per cent target (and we are still far away from that), it will make only the tiniest dent in world carbon emissions…..Meanwhile, look at what we stand to lose. Our heritage is being destroyed by solar plants and wind farms.

There is one issue that I think Rhys Jones has got right, the dilemmas we face about the siting of wind, solar and tidal projects are multiplied by the anarchic market methods through which our energy future is determined. As he notes,

this ugly and expensive intrusion is being left to the 'free market'. The result is random and opportunist. Wherever a stricken farmer or a greedy landowner can be bribed or hoodwinked by subsidy, we see a wind turbine or a wretchedly blank area of solar panels go up.

Of course to have a national energy plan would fly in the face of the neo-liberal perspective that Labour, Liberal, Conservative and UKIP are all hostage to. One thing we can be sure of is that the kind of drama being enacted on the Levels in the winter of 2014 is going to be an increasingly common occurrence as climate change begins to really bite. Is it that people still don't yet smell the fire or is it that they do smell it and have already become gripped by panic?

IN CONVERSATION: HILARY PRENTICE AND DAVID FELTHAM

Published: 18 March 2014

Hilary Prentice is a leading figure in the ecopsychology movement in UK.

(First published in Therapy Today March 2014 25(2))

Following her article 'Floods, Climate Change and Denial' Hilary Prentice talks further with Colin Feltham about the role that therapists could play by enabling people to articulate their feelings about climate change. This in turn could free people to change their lifestyles, support others with campaigns to help the planet, and collectively challenge the indifference of governments and industry. She invites therapists to engage with the profound challenge to our planet through compassion and mindfulness

Hilary, what was it that first brought you to an interest in climate change and what were your very first steps?

I attended almost the very first meeting organised by PCSR (Psychotherapists and Counsellors for Social Responsibility) in the mid 1990s. During the day possible theme or working groups were set up. I can remember some of the themes – money, class, refugees.... and I found myself putting up my hand and tentatively calling out, 'Err, the earth?' I don't think I had any idea beforehand that I would do that. On that occasion only a couple of us met, but we had an amazing conversation, mapping out on a large bit of paper our various thoughts and feelings. The ideas did not stop flowing and it was very exciting – we both felt the subject was hugely important.

Out of this an Ecopsychology group of PCSR was formed that, after a first year of finding our way, became very productive as well as rewarding and meaningful for all of us who joined. We continued to meet for several years and we went on to start writing, running workshops, speaking and teaching. Tania Dolley, who I met on that first occasion and I both felt we needed to find out what else was going on, and she put an advert in Resurgence magazine 'Calling all ecopsychologists', with my phone number. It was very moving to be phoned by people from all over the country, often saying things like, 'I thought I was alone with this, it's such a relief to talk about it...' From this we organised a first national networking day in 1997, and put people in touch with each other in an early UK Ecopsychology Network.

I still remember the very first workshop I facilitated on Ecopsychology. It was at a Mind conference in Scarborough and I really had no idea what would happen. About 14 people attended and, after a tentative start, I was very moved to discover that every single person there – mostly service users – had some special private place in 'nature' – in a garden, or park, by a river, somewhere – where they went for refuge and which was deeply important to them. And, stunningly, not one of them had told their counsellor or other mental health professional about this. Furthermore, when I opened up the workshop to include peoples' feelings about what was happening to the earth, the response was pretty consistent – to the effect of, 'I only let myself

think/feel about this for very short periods – I feel so intensely about it, it seems unbearable.' But there was appreciation at having a space where they could share about these things with support from others.

In what ways were you in touch with or out of touch with nature when you were growing up? I ask this because I think some of us have rural roots and sympathies but others, like me, are thoroughly urbanised! And there's the nature-deficit disorder hypothesis.

I didn't have a particularly rural childhood. My mother loved gardening. When I was at primary school a friend's family used to take us up on the Yorkshire moors, and there were family holidays from when I was about 10 for a few years with the Holiday Fellowship that involved walking days – these are very happy memories. Discovering youth hostelling in North Wales and the Lake District as a teenager, walking all day and sleeping somewhere fresh each night, was revelatory, and even at that age it was obvious to me that it was profoundly healing.

But I think 'thoroughly urbanised' people like you can also be drawn to this work. I have a London friend who swears she will never leave London and claims to love the smell of petrol – but her love for her North London allotment is legendary.

A widespread practice in ecopsychology and ecotherapy courses is to begin with each person telling their own particular 'Earth Story', urban or rural, usually in journal form. This begins with our earliest and childhood memories – of sky, birds and dandelions, sun and rain, holidays, pets, insects, pavements, parks, grandparents, days out with school, the first time we connected what was on our plate with what happens on the land... whatever comes up when we take a look. For many, writing these stories and sharing them is itself moving and revelatory. Our culture is so human-centred that these stories tend to remain unarticulated and, having never been listened to, not developed or integrated. This is very different from what happens in indigenous earth-based (and sustainable) societies, in which every child is taught a great deal about the greater than human world and the creatures and elements with which s/he shares this, and how to relate with them.

Like many, I was seriously taken up with climate change issues some years ago, then somehow reactions became mixed, doubts crept in, academics like Bjørn Lomborg persuaded many that climate change isn't the greatest priority for economic intervention. Or some dismiss it as not human made, and so on. Even among the best educated there are mixed feelings. How can we explain all this?

I also find this at one level quite mystifying and hard to understand. One part of me cannot quite believe that something so very important can be let slip onto the collective backburner. And it's not as though the effects of climate change that are already with us are all hidden from our view – weekly if not daily there is a news item about extreme, exceptional and never-before-recorded weather somewhere in the world.

But another part of me feels that it is pretty important to try to understand and make sense of what is going on here. In the anthology Engaging with Climate Change, edited by Sally Weintrobe, (Reviewed on this site) different insights and hypotheses are put forward, beginning perhaps with the more pragmatic level. There has been a concerted campaign of misinformation on the part of organisations often consisting of a very small number of people, that are directly connected to vested interests in the status quo. Clive Hamilton describes this process in his chapter on 'What history can teach us about climate denial'. He speaks of 'the aggressive adoption of climate denial by neo-conservatism' in the US, pointing out that, although in the 1990s views on climate change were influenced by science, at this point you can make a good guess at people's views in that deeply divided society by looking at their views about same sex marriage, abortion and gun control. In these circumstances, he says, 'facts quail before beliefs'. I was fascinated to read the three historical vignettes he offers, where good science was discredited by small numbers of active campaigners who found the new science or new information to be somehow deeply threatening to their view of their world and, implicitly, to have political implications that they disliked. I was amazed to read that in Germany, where he then

lived, Einstein's theory of relativity was regarded in just such a way, partly because he was an internationalist and pacifist. Einstein's work was apparently often accused of being 'un-German'; '"Jewish mathematics'' served the same function as "left wing science" does in the climate debate today,' says Hamilton. Einstein feared for his safety, and eventually left Germany in 1933.

As well as and, perhaps, because of this active 'denialism', there are now political and ideological associations around the science in the UK also, although views are less extremely polarised here. To those of us whose natural leaning is to question a culture of increasing inequality, intense materialism, the profit motive and the growth of global capitalism, climate change makes intuitive sense and is supportive of how we see the world. It would make sense that continuing economic growth in which we burn fossil fuels, mine the earth, farm the seas and cut down the forests in the interests of short term profit is going to have a destructive and increasingly de-stabilising effect on the entire global ecosystem, but to change these values and ways of behaving is in any case desirable. But, to those of us in favour of continued economic growth, who believe the current economic system is the best that can be had – well, climate science is probably made up by 'environmentalists' (read dubious person with worryingly hippy-like attributes) for their own gloom-ridden agendas.

But what I am pointing at here I think hints at a much deeper level to all this. The implications of climate science are in fact very profound – it requires a tremendous change in how we live and the values by which we live if we are to mitigate and then change course so that we are no longer producing the gases involved in anything like the way we currently do. These changes can be hard to contemplate, and I think many of us do quail just imagining them and find ourselves practising Weintrobe's 'disavowal', where the information is treated as too threatening to take on board, and so we live as though we know and don't know at the same time.

I also feel tempted to ask you what you feel has gone on for you? Really this needs to be an ongoing enquiry, best answered freshly as things unfold. Probably each one of us holds a piece of the jigsaw here.

Then there is the precautionary principle. Even if it's not quite as bad as the worst predictions, we should still take serious preventive measures. Do you see people accepting this principle?

The problem with this question for me is that it implies there is no scientific consensus about human-caused climate change in suggesting that we should act 'just in case'. But this is simply not true – readers may wish to look at www.skepticalsciences.com and also www.theconsensusproject.com. A review of 12,000 peer reviewed scientific papers on global warming and global climate change found that, of those that took a position, 97 per cent agreed with the consensus position: climate change exists and is caused by human activity (anthropogenic).

So perhaps this 'precautionary principle' is just one example of the subtle, or not so subtle, ways in which doubt is cast as to the existence of that consensus, and hence to the need to take action.

The other side of the denial coin is, of course, that concerns are renewed every time we have extreme weather. People are thinking, maybe this is due to climate change; governments should do something about it! People are already recycling, some have reduced their own carbon footprint, what else can they do?

Well, I fear I may already be putting myself in line for that ancient human process called 'shoot the messenger', so I would be very hesitant about suggesting what people should be doing!

But of course it is a very good question – many of us slip into disavowal because the situation seems so huge, and it can feel that nothing we do can make any difference. And it can be very painful to feel that our lifestyles are causing destruction - yet as individuals it is not possible to step outside the society in which we live. In the rich part of the world we are cast as the

'consumers' of goods, whether or not we really want that; the rest of the world tends to more obviously pay the price for this, but perhaps can also see what is happening more clearly.

In reality I think there are countless things we can do, if we feel inspired to do so. It is famously important to join with others, and there are many environmental projects around that support people to take action at the level or place to which they are drawn – from Friends of the Earth to the Climate Psychology Alliance to the Ecopsychology Network to the Transition Movement, from allotments and local food to ethical clothing and transport to community composting schemes to campaigning and signing petitions. One thing that is discovered over and over again is that, once we take action, we tend to feel better, insights come, community is built, and one positive thing often leads to another.

And of course in doing this we can learn, and gradually the consensus may shift so that politicians and others in power will have the support, as well as pressure, to make the difficult decisions that need to be made.

I have been particularly inspired recently by the actions of one single woman who has started a movement rippling round the world – Polly Higgins (see www.eradicatingecocide.com). A barrister working in London, she had a revelatory moment in court one day; she realised that part of the problem is that 'the earth needs a lawyer'. She saw the profundity of this insight, and put it at the centre of her life. She has been speaking and organising around the world, and at every level of human society, to make ecocide the fifth International Crime Against Peace. If we had a legal framework that changes the legal obligations and constraints on the corporate world, very many decisions would immediately be made differently. She is very clear that this is an idea whose time has come, as was the abolition of slavery. Many who profited from slavery saw that too initially as too radical, as something that perhaps sounded nice but would destroy the economic and social system. However, when a certain tipping point was reached the normative white view changed radically. It became simply indefensible that such a cruel and destructive system could be legally allowed to persist. Slavery was seen as degrading to the humanity of the perpetrators as well as devastating to victims. How could anyone think otherwise? And, of course, society did not collapse when slavery was abolished, but was slowly and with difficulty changed for the better.

I very much hope that the same will happen with ecocide, and that it will soon be unimaginable that there was once no law against this.

Turning to specifically counselling/therapy-oriented reactions, theories and policies, isn't it still the case that many therapists do not regard it as legitimate to bring climate change issues into counselling sessions unless the client asks?

I don't think anyone has ever suggested this would be appropriate – I certainly don't think my article implies that at all.

However, our culture is deeply human-centred/anthropocentric, focusing on human issues to the exclusion of the other than human – again, as though we are separate from and superior to all other forms of life. Inevitably, this has permeated counselling and therapy theory and practice as well as all other areas of life. One aspect of this has led to the reverse of what your question implies – when clients do bring thoughts and feelings about the other-than-human, they have tended to be interpreted as a projection or avoidance of the real issues, which are of course about human relationships. I have never forgotten being phoned in those early days by a rather senior training analyst in a prestigious organisation. She said that she was very moved to finally be able to talk about these issues. She spoke with intense feeling about a very beloved tree of her childhood that had been cut down despite her protestations. This had been deeply traumatic and sad for her – she still felt the grief, shock and outrage. But, she said, every analyst she had worked with had treated it as about something else – a human she had lost at some point, perhaps anger about something else. No one had ever heard and honoured the depths of her pain about her beloved tree.

In his book [Living in the Borderland,](#) Jungian analyst Jerome Bernstein begins by being very honest about doing the same thing to a client, until he finally 'got it' – his client's profound feelings and dreams were precisely as she was telling him; they were not, as he was constantly re-interpreting, about something else, something human-centred.

And, of course, if people don't think this is an appropriate subject for counselling, they won't bring it – and so our unconscious denial of our embeddedness in the web of life, with all the richness of experience that brings, continues.

My experience is that, where the subject can be put on the table, processing immediately starts to happen, and this is one reason why I would love to see ecopsychology/ecotherapy included in all training courses, for example. The psychosynthesis organisation [Revision](#) has a one year post-qualification course in ecopsychology, and there are many ways people can dip a toe in – look on the [Ecopsychology website](#) to find more. [Natural Change](#) runs week-long events in which personal work takes place both within a group and on the land – another good way to learn more.

Perhaps the major block to appropriate action is a frozen fear. If scientific data and predictions about rising temperatures can be trusted, things are looking very scary indeed. The myopic business-as-usual reaction is a kind of adaptation. Aren't therapists more used to helping people to calm down rather than panic or be alarmed?

I agree that things are looking pretty scary. I would describe 'the myopic business-as-usual reaction', to use your words, as more a 'defence' rather than an adaptation, however. Freezing in the face of danger is obviously not ideal if that stops us from acting appropriately to avert the danger, and I would not imagine many therapists would see supporting that as a skilful way of working with fear.

Creating safety so that people can open up and begin to process what has been avoided, feel the feelings, address the difficulty and start to think more clearly again is perhaps a more helpful short summary of what we do. But of course we need to start by exploring our own thoughts and feelings before hoping to be really present for others – whether in training courses, groupwork or individual work.

A very important point of yours is about alternative forms of, or venues for, therapy: either leaving the therapy room or actual therapy-in-the-environment, or encouraging greater immersion in outdoor activities like allotments, parks, trekking, equine therapy etc. But at the moment these are minority activities, and perhaps more obvious outside big centres like London.

I think they are happening in many places, from downtown Los Angeles to Israel to South African urban youth; from prisons to schools to psychiatric units. In the article I mentioned Jenny Grut's work with torture survivors on allotments; that took place in two areas of London. I really recommend her book [The Healing Fields](#) to anyone drawn to explore more how this kind of thing works.

Any final thoughts?

I closed my article with a question/invitation about bringing compassion to all this, and to me this is really of the essence. We know that blame, guilt and fear do not help us open up, grow, or make wise decisions in extremely difficult situations. Compassion and mindfulness can.

And for those living with flooding and other weather-caused damage, I wish all support. Very likely some counsellors in these areas have already been offering support, such as listening projects. We all have much to learn. I look forward to hearing in Therapy Today from others – the positive responses of the human heart as well as the profound questioning that are both being called forth.

Also available at http://www.therapytoday.net/article/show/4193/in-conversation/

FROM 'ALARMISM' TO FALSE OPTIMISM?

Published: 17 April 2014

I'm trying to step back and see the wood for the trees among the mass of news reports, magazine articles and blog responses to the IPCC's Fifth Assessment Report (AR5) on the impacts of climate change.

For whilst some of the messages coming out of AR5 are valuable – e.g. climate change is already happening and it's affecting everyone – others are slightly worrying.

One powerful narrative, anticipated by Fred Pearce in Yale Environment 360, is that the report signals a retreat from what he describes as the 'alarmist tone' of the Fourth Assessment Report of 2007. So rather that scare people the emphasis in the new report is more upbeat, on what people can do. The emphasis is on resilience rather than vulnerability. Whilst the 2007 report devoted just 2 pages to adaptation the new report devotes four whole chapters and resilience and adaptation are in fact dominant themes of the summary for policymakers.

A second narrative I can see developing appears to have been initiated by Andrew Lilico in the Telegraph in the week before the IPCC report was published, this was then picked up by the Economist on April 5th and the Atlantic on April 1st and by the climate scientist Judith Curry on her website Climate Etc. The basic theme of this second narrative is that AR5 signals 'the end of climate exceptionalism' by which they mean the end of the idea that climate change is a problem like no other (trumping other problems such as the control of global population or tackling global inequality). Rather, the new IPCC Report tends to situate climate change alongside a range of other factors such as public health, nutrition, access to clean water, the rapid expansion of massive urban populations in low lying regions, and so on. For Curry this introduces a healthy dose of 'realism' into AR5. As the Economist argues:

This way of looking at the climate is new for both scientists and policymakers. Until now, many of them have thought of the climate as a problem like no other: its severity determined by meteorological factors, such as the interaction between clouds, winds and oceans; not much influenced by "lesser" problems, like rural development; and best dealt with by trying to stop it (by reducing greenhouse-gas emissions). The new report breaks with this approach. It sees the climate as one problem among many, the severity of which is often determined by its interaction with those other problems. And the right policies frequently try to lessen the burden—to adapt to change, rather than attempting to stop it. In that respect, then, this report marks the end of climate exceptionalism and the beginning of realism.

Note the interesting slip here from 'we need to adapt and prevent' to 'we need to adapt rather than prevent'.

Interestingly enough the controversy about the economic impact of climate change, and Professor Richard Toll's much publicised criticism of the IPCC's redrafting of his part of the report, links both narratives. Toll has argued for some time that assessments of the economic costs of climate change such as the Stern Report have grossly overestimated the likely economic impact. Toll argues that the extra costs of $2°$ C warming are likely to amount to no more than 0.2 to 2% of world GDP or, as he puts it, 'half a century of climate change is about as bad as losing one years of economic growth'. Toll has said, "the message in the first draft was that through adaptation and clever development these were manageable risks, but it did require we get our act together". But whilst Toll's figures were cited in the final draft they were surrounded by caveats which suggested that many economic impacts (such as ocean acidification) couldn't yet be quantified and the eventual economic cost was likely to be much greater. For Toll this redrafting was proof, if proof were needed, that the 5AR, like 4AR, is still all about 'the four horsemen of the apocalypse'.

Some neo-liberal commentators have already taken Toll's comments as evidence that the costs of mitigating climate change (by switching to renewables etc) will be greater than the costs of doing nothing. So we can see a new trend emerging here. From outright denial we can anticipate a neo-liberal reconciliation with the scientific evidence on the basis that though climate change is happening the economic impact will be fairly limited and that in 'adaptation' there will be abundant opportunities for new sources of economic growth and development. Of course what the Economist completely fails to take into account are the other costs, that is, the non-human costs. Adapting the insurers' concept of 'loss adjustment' George Monbiot notes (Guardian 1st April) that we are being invited to collude with a process of writing off those parts of nature which will be unable to adapt. Indeed I can even glimpse a dystopian version of this neo-liberal position in which, as global temperatures push past a 2 degrees rise towards 4 degrees, new waves of capitalist accumulation arise based on the economic opportunities to be derived from programmes of defence, repair and adaptation to our trashed planet. In their book Resilient Life: The Art of Living Dangerously Brad Evans and Julian Reed argue that the concept of 'resilience' has become so fashionable precisely because of the way in which it prepares us for a coming world of endless insecurity and trauma.

Of course the interesting thing is that Pearce's narrative assumes that AR4 was 'alarmist in tone' whereas a growing number of climate scientists privately believe (and some, like Kevin Anderson publicly state) that the IPCC has been so anxious to gain the ear of policy makers that it has in reality consistently understated the degree of danger that we face. The more upbeat tone of AR5, with its strong emphasis on adaptation and resilience, should therefore give us pause for thought. Faced with consistent and overwhelming resistance to the climate change message from all levels of society (we can't just 'blame the politicians' that's far too easy) is a new common sense emerging which says we have to remain resolutely positive, avoiding anything 'scary' or which could make people feel in the slightest bit guilty, appeal to peoples' better nature and to our common interests, emphasise human resilience and inventiveness, etc.? Within the UK I think we can already see evidence of this trend in, for instance, the belief that we need to reframe our messages so that people don't simply dismiss it as 'green' or 'environmentalist', further that the very concept of climate change is a divisive one, it sets people apart rather than bringing them together.

What I'm worried about is that as things gets worse, as the idea of holding global temperature increases to 2 degrees is quietly dropped (as is already starting to happen), we are being encouraged to pull our punches and not do anything that might alienate those who hold opposing views. This is what worried me about the interview with George Marshall in Transition Network of March 20th. Speaking of people who have been affected by the recent flooding in the South West of the UK and yet still don't make the connection to climate change George says, 'what they are not receptive to is a direct challenge that therefore brings up all of their defences', and later, 'the solutions always lie in ways of talking, ways to behave that would involve…drawing people together rather than pulling people apart.' Well I have to say that whilst the psychotherapist part of me recognises the importance of avoiding judgemental stances and believes in dialogic approaches to change the political activist part of me wonders whether such 'softly, softly' approaches don't always need to be complemented by clear, angry and forceful forms of direct action. Indeed it's even more complicated than this. For I also recognise that no matter how hard a therapist tries not to be these things he will often be seen as judgemental, smug or condescending because that's how the client needs to see him at the moment s/he feels challenged. But if the therapist then stopped being challenging then all possibility of psychic change would disappear. Surely we need to be able to identify with the other and care about their plight and we need to be able to talk with conviction.

Which brings me back to the two narratives. Adaptation aims to preserve an existing lifestyle, and in adapting to flooding and other threats people are brought together. Thus it's attractiveness to policy makers compared to mitigation. And although adaptation is expensive it promotes 'business as usual' and an upbeat message – "see, the broken rail link at Dawlish to Cornwall has been restored in record time!" And meanwhile the urgent need for action to mitigate climate change is quietly forgotten as, in the very same week that the rail link is restored and the IPCC

Report is published, the UK Conservative Party decides that it will oppose onshore wind turbines in the coming general election.

Now I believe that in the UK the battles to support onshore wind and oppose fracking are both at the forefront of the struggle to sustain the mitigation agenda – onshore wind is the cheapest and most quickly operationalisable renewable whereas fracking directly contradicts the urgent need not to exploit new sources of fossil fuel (hence Bill McKibben's valuable slogan "Keep it in the ground"). And it is absolutely no coincidence that both the Conservatives and UKIP can oppose onshore wind whilst simultaneously being cheer leaders for fracking shale gas (even though the aesthetic impact on rural landscapes is probably similar). According to the Guardian report (April 5th) which revealed the new strategy, Conservatives believe onshore wind has become self-defeating, 'alienating people from the whole clean energy debate'. Now whilst I am happy to believe that some Conservatives such as MPs Anne McIntosh and Tim Yeo have a real commitment to clean energy it can't be any coincidence that both of them were deselected by their constituency associations earlier this year! The reality is that this guff about onshore wind being 'self-defeating' is simply a ruse to cover up 'the dash for gas'.

In conclusion, I'm very wary of the IPCC's attempt to strike a more 'upbeat tone' about climate change because the public do not want any more 'doom and gloom' and I'm even more wary of the idea now being trumpeted by some economic interests that, rather than being the fundamental issue facing humanity in the new millennium, climate change can be seen as one problem of many, none of which are inherently insoluble within the 'business as usual' paradigm. The threat of climate change seems more urgent and, in the UK, political polarisation on this issue is increasing not decreasing. In this context we surely need to adopt a twin track strategy. On the one hand our psychological knowledge can be put to use to support those already reeling from the effects of climate change (e.g. coping with fear, loss and uncertainty) and to communicate with the lay public in ways which draws together rather than pulls apart. On the other hand we need to fight for renewables and oppose fracking with even greater conviction, and this must mean sharp debate and political opposition to the UKIP led reaction against renewables currently sweeping parts of the UK including the Conservative Party.

EVERYTHING AND NOTHING: RADICAL HOPE IN A TIME OF CLIMATE CHANGE

Published: 18 June 2015

The author's reflection on the theme of Radical Hope (CPA conference April 2015), bringing his own thinking and analysis to bear.

'When the buffalo went away, the hearts of my people fell to the ground and they could not lift them up again. After this nothing happened.'

Plenty Coups, last great Chief of the Crow Nation.
Quoted in Jonathan Lear's *Radical Hope: Ethics in the Face of Cultural Devastation*

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In *The Guardian* newpaper of Saturday, March 7th 2015 there was a special cover with a single

quote in the top right hand corner. You may have seen it. The quote was from Naomi Klein's Introduction to her book, *This Changes Everything*:

'We know that if we continue on our current path of allowing emissions year after year, climate change will change everything about our world. And we don't have to do anything to bring about this future, all we have to do is nothing.'

Alan Rusbridger, who, after twenty years in charge, was retiring as editor of *The Guardian*, wrote – in the same edition – of his intention to foreground the subject of climate change in the paper before he goes. Journalism, he says, usually writes of events that have happened and ignores the future since it is unpredictable and uncertain. But, exceptionally, one possible future is very predictable. And it is explained by three simple numbers. Quoting from Bill McKibben – in July 2012's Rolling Stone – Rusbridger reminded us of them:

• **2C** - 'there is overwhelming agreement that a rise in temperatures of more than 2C by the end of the century would lead to disastrous consequences for any kind of recognized global order.'
• **565 gigatons** – McKibben believes we can pour 565 more gigatons of Carbon Dioxide into the atmosphere by mid-century and still have some hope of staying below 2C.
• **2795 gigatons** – this is the amount of carbon dioxide that would be released from the proven fossil fuel reserves that we are planning to extract and burn.

McKibben, who warned us about *The End of Nature* some 25 years ago, wrote in *The Guardian* on the Monday following Rusbridger's declaration, of 'a sea change….as the confidence in the old order starts to collapse'.

Given that our past track record suggests we are unlikely to stop the powers that be from extracting and burning fossil fuel reserves well over the 2C limit and that scientists now think we are heading for 4C+ sometime this century, **I would like to make the case for 'doing nothing'**. I have been thinking about this since the Climate Psychology Alliance (CPA) day in June last year (2014) at the Conway Hall. In the afternoon David (Wasdell) gave a summary of his Apollo-

presented in March 2014 to the Climate Challenge Conference convened by Climate Change Solutions in the I-Max Theatre of the Millennium Point in Birmingham, and gave us a copy of his paper, 'Sensitivity and the Carbon Budget. The Ultimate Challenge of Climate Science' to take home. I wasn't able to follow all the science at the time but was left with a strong sense of the hopelessness of the task, so much so that I failed to make any contribution to the discussion that followed at the end of the day about what we should do as a group in future. Was there really anything we could 'do'?

The source of everything

By 'doing nothing' I don't mean an idle or despairing, hopeless nothing but an active, thoughtful, contemplative 'nothing'. In our Western, industrious culture doing nothing often connotes something empty and vacuous, an idleness associated with a moral lack, an absence of virtue and purpose. But we know in our psychotherapeutic culture that holding back on our wish to act – doing nothing in the sense of not acting, just being there – especially when faced with extreme distress and suffering, can sometimes be the most therapeutic – if often the most difficult – 'intervention', for, along with compassion, it offers the support that allows a person to draw on their own inner resources.

In the East Asian cultures, 'nothing' – or 'nothingness' – is highly esteemed since it is seen as the source of everything. 'Nothing', in this view, is not the opposite of 'everything', everything comes from nothing. Ironically, science knows this because it believes the universe began from nothing with the Big Bang, something that was also understood by the writers of Genesis, the first book of the Bible – interestingly scientists are now beginning to wonder about the nothing that produced the Big Bang.

The central sustaining reality of Buddhism is shunyata – *sunyata* in Sanskrit. It is often translated as emptiness. This is not an empty but a full and infinitely rich emptiness – an emptiness from which everything emerges, what in the Zen tradition is known as the ever present 'origin', an origin both in and beyond time, space, and causality. In us it is experienced as the empty or original self. Again, it is not the opposite of the personal self but its source and host. In returning to nothing we are returning to our origin.

This is not to discount action or recommend a secluded life apart from social and political commitment but to suggest that an active life can be enhanced by periods of quiet and focused contemplation. 'Climate warriors' like McKibben and Klein are to be admired for their energy and thinking, but is hope and optimism alone enough? Klein shares McKibben's belief that the climate emergency is also an opportunity. McKibben says we won't defeat the fossil fuel corporations with rational and ethical arguments alone. This will be a fight and 'like most fights it was, and is, about power'. Their power lies in money and can buy political favour while 'our power lies in movement-building and the political fear it can instill.' Of course, there is less guarantee than ever that the 'movement' will win. But is not wisdom – the wisdom that comes with contemplation – the true power, win or lose?

Klein – a more recently converted climate warrior – sees the fight in terms of the defeat of deregulated capitalism and impressively links the struggle to all historical liberation movements – anti-slavery, anti-apartheid, race relations, global social justice, human and gender rights and so on. But climate change is, of course, more momentous than them all, for 'this changes everything'. Hers is a vision of the future that goes beyond just surviving or enduring climate change, a vision in which 'we collectively use the crisis to leap somewhere that seems, frankly, better than where we are right now.' Klein's title is wonderful, the more wonderful because her

book cannot exhaust the meaning she – or we – might give to 'everything changing', including the change to ourselves.

What is wrong with us?

This is important because in one sense climate change is about us rather than the Earth. Geologists and earth scientists reassure us that, whatever we do to it, our planet will regain its balance and regenerate without us – give or take some tens of millions of years. Mass extinctions are its means of evolution. If the dinosaurs had not been wiped out we might not have evolved. Perhaps we are not designed to survive, perhaps it's now our turn to disappear and the 'opportunity' lies in what we discover about ourselves in the process. The question is whether – or to what extent – we become aware of being part of the everything-which-changes before we disappear. One wonders whether this is in Naomi Klein's mind in her interesting introductory chapter when, for instance, she writes:

'So my mind keeps coming back to the question: what is wrong with us? What is really preventing us from putting out the fire that is threatening to burn down our collective house?'

The answer she gives herself is a simple one: the lowering of emissions is in conflict with deregulated capitalism, the reigning ideology. But does this really answer her question? Does this get to the heart of 'what is wrong with us'?

Again when she is writing about 'the politics of human power' – which is the real problem as opposed to 'the mechanics of solar power' – she reflects, in the process of researching for her book, that she has come to understand 'the shift will require rethinking the very nature of humanity's power….. a shift that challenges not only capitalism but also the building blocks of materialism that preceded modern capitalism, a mentality some call "extractivism"'.' She concludes that climate change isn't an 'issue' to add to the list of things to worry about – such as health care and taxes – but 'a civilizational wake-up call'. This comprises 'a powerful message telling us that we need an entirely new economic model and a new way of sharing this planet'. While one cannot but agree with her, is it purely about economics or might we ask what are the social, psychological and spiritual roots of 'economics' in the first place?

While one applauds the fighting spirit of warriors such as Klein and McKibben, a reading of the current climate science, as I have said, casts a shadow over their hope and optimism. George Marshall suggests that we are just not wired to contemplate the reality of a changed climate – which is why we have done so little about it for a generation or more. In his book *Don't Even Think About It: Why Our Brains are wired to Ignore Climate Change* he explores the reasons why and offers 'In a Nutshell' – his last numbered chapter – 'Some Personal and Highly Biased ideas for Digging Our Way Out of This Hole'. But in an unnumbered final chapter he offers a devastating statement about the depth of the real hole we find ourselves in – *'Four Degrees. Why This Book is Important'*.

The difference between two and four degrees

In this final chapter Marshall sketches the reality and possible consequences that lie in store. As he reminds us, since 2008 scientists are now more willing to warn that four degrees – rather than two – is the actual future we face. He quotes Mark Maslin, professor of climatology at UCL, telling the Warsaw climate negotiations:

'We are already planning for a 4 degrees centigrade world because that is where we are heading. I do not know of any scientists who do not believe that'.

Four degrees most scientists consider to be nothing less than 'catastrophic' but it is a figure increasingly on the minds of senior policy makers. With details that may be familiar to many of us Marshall describes how catastrophic it will be:

> • **Heatwaves** of magnitudes never experienced before – temperatures not seen on Earth in the past five million years. Four degrees is only the average, so temperatures over large land masses will rise far higher.
> • Forty percent of plant and animal species will be at risk of **extinction.**
> • Precipitous **decline in the growth of crops** world wide, exacerbated by drought, floods and increased weed and pest invasion.
> • Total melting of the Greenland ice sheet and, most likely, the Western Antarctic ice sheet **raising sea levels by thirty two or more feet** – this would put two thirds of the world's major cities under water, as well as large regions of countries.
> • **Once four degrees is reached there's no guarantee that temperatures would level off.**
> • A population of nine billion will not be able to adapt to these conditions.

Professor John Schellnhuber, one of the world's most influential climate scientists, speaking at a conference in 2013 on the risks posed by a four-degree climate to Australia, said: 'the difference between two and four degrees is human civilization.'

What is even more disturbing is the time we have left. 'So when will we get there?' The science around four degrees keeps moving but it's possible that it could be with us by the middle of this 21st century – in our lifetime! Where, then, does this leave our hope for the future? The challenge becomes ever more urgent: how do we begin to think about climate change and its implications? This is also a question raised by Paul Kingsnorth in a thoughtful essay – 'The Four Degrees' – for the *London Review of Books* (LRB 23 October 2014) in a review of both George Marshall's *Don't Even Think About It: Why Our Brains are Wired to Ignore Climate Change* and Naomi Klein's *This Changes Everything*.

'No amount of psychological awareness …..'

Kingsnorth writes out of his experience as an environmental activist for some twenty years – now disillusioned. Like McKibben in the past perhaps, he used to believe that if we just give people the information they need, they will demand action and then the politicians will have to act. But it's not that simple, in fact it's almost completely the wrong way round. He quotes Marshall:

'Everyone, experts and non-experts alike, converts climate change into stories that embody their own values, assumptions and prejudices.'

According to Kingsnorth 'the real problem comes when we start trying to cram climate change into our preexisting ideological boxes.' For instance, in the US climate change has been used as a weapon in the cultural war between left and right. As Dan Kahan, a professor of psychology, told Marshall, it isn't information but 'cultural coding' that forms the basis of our worldviews. If you're affiliated to the Tea Party anything an environmentalist says will automatically be wrong – and vice-versa. Even people who have lived through environmental disasters often remain oblivious to the wider climate implications. This applies to us all, including Naomi Klein. Kingsnorth acknowledges the quality of her analysis and exposure of the way private capital has bound the hands of government – as well as sucking in organizations that should know better – but he also makes the point that she could only allow herself to face the climate threat when she

had worked out how to fit it into her ideological box – framing her message 'as a "progressive" cause firmly aligned to the left'.

Kingsnorth ends his essay by siding with the view of Daniel Kahneman whom Marshall met and interviewed in a New York café. Kahneman won a Nobel Prize for his work on the psychology of human decision-making. 'This is not what you want to hear' he said to Marshall. 'I am very sorry, but I am deeply pessimistic. I really see no path to success on climate change…. No amount of psychological awareness will overcome people's reluctance to lower their standard of living. So that's my bottom line.'

Kahneman may have been pessimistic but he seems to have influenced and been greatly respected by some optimistic people, including the psychologist, Steven Pinker, and the economists, Richard Thaler and Richard Lazard. He is also admired by Salley Vickers, the psychotherapist and novelist, for his demonstration that 'ultimately we are not rational'. (*Observer* 16.2.2014) Kahneman's pessimism may be the result of his focus on the cognitive mind but perhaps he has also opened the door for those whose thinking takes them beyond both rationality and pessimism, including the psychoanalytic tradition of the modern West and also – I would add – the contemplative practices of all cultures.

Science and religion

Our Western scientific culture is uncommon in that science and religion are quite split off from each other. Science has rejected a divine creator but it no longer has a connection with any unifying metaphysical ground. One could argue historically that in seventeenth century Europe the emerging modern science made a pact with the Church – theoretically and practically – that it would not trespass on its religious domain if the latter would allow it to continue freely investigating the material universe. As a result science separated from religion and was able to proceed unchecked with its empirical revolution.

This may have led to the progressive achievements of the European Enlightenment but there was a downside – the development of a fundamentalist scientific materialism and a modern material mythology – split off from ethical, aesthetic and spiritual values. It also led to the division of knowledge into two polarized spheres – objective and subjective – with orthodox science having the power to ignore – even deny – not only any metaphysical reality but the subjective experience of the human mind itself.

We see what the scientific and technological power of the 19th century Industrial Revolution led to – devastating World War in the first half of the 20th century, the development of annihilating atomic weapons, and now the actual alteration of the Earth's climate. It's almost as if the threat of our possible extinction is foreshadowed in the absence of any psychological self awareness accompanying the scientific view. Perhaps this is why we cannot bring ourselves to think about the consequences of climate change. We assume we lack the inner resources to do so.

The philosophy of scientific materialism also led to the fragmentation of our knowledge and understanding. Science used to be a part of natural or moral philosophy. But without any integrating philosophy – or world view – our scientific disciplines – natural and human – have become so dissociated they have hardly been able to talk to each other. This is the real challenge and opportunity of climate change. Has it not now become the overriding context from which all our sciences should start, the new common denominator – or unifying thread – which could begin to integrate all our divided discourses? Perhaps It is the new meta-narrative, the common ground from which we could all begin to talk to each other again, if only we could find the courage and means to face it.

Psychotherapy

This is why the initiatives of the psychotherapy professions – Joseph Dodd's *Psychoanalysis and Ecology at the Edge of Chaos* and such collections of articles as Mary-Jane Rust and Nick Totton's Vital Signs: Psychological Responses to Ecological Crisis and Sally Weintrobe's *Engaging with Climate Change, Psychoanalytic and Interdisciplinary Perspectives* – are an important beginning. Dodds considers how psychoanalysis might begin to address itself to a *'Climate in Crisis'* and *Vital Signs* discusses the rich possibilities of thinking about the relationship between therapy and ecology while *Engaging With Climate Change* explores the urgent questions: why we don't engage and how we might begin to. The latter book addresses – and discusses – the complex levels of resistance – negation, denial and disavowal – and its many contributors analyse them from different social, political, emotional and psychological perspectives. This is a challenge because of the difficult feelings and thoughts the climate emergency evokes. In her introduction Sally (Weintrobe) also emphasizes the importance of facing up to reality as well as the need for a new ethics, an understanding of the nature of mind, and a revaluation of human nature itself.

Of course, this begs the question of what we mean by reality – or the Real – and how our understanding of mind and human nature shapes our ethics. Exploring these challenges may entail a far more radical transformation than we realize. Engaging with climate change – as Naomi Klein suggests – could change everything. Yes, it asks us to face our deepest anxieties and unfathomable thoughts but offers to transform us – and our view of 'reality' – in the process.

Perhaps this is already happening. We worry that we are not wired to think about climate change but perhaps at the same time there is a change going on inside us, despite ourselves. Perhaps our wiring, itself, is changing. We know about the plasticity of the human brain, but what could have more potential plasticity than the human mind? We may be looking at a very uncertain future but has life ever been so exciting as it is in this 21st century? Science may have given us the means to destroy ourselves but never has the Earth it discloses looked so extraordinary and magical.

Are we being re-wired?

For example we are beginning to feel and see the bigger picture, aesthetically and scientifically. In 1968 who was not moved when we first caught sight of Earth from space in that epoch-changing photo of Earthrise from Apollo 8 as it circled the moon? And in the early 1970s down here on Earth James Lovelock came up with the *Gaia* intuition – the sense of the whole Earth as a living system. What was initially a hypothesis eventually became a theory and was responsible for helping to integrate the earth sciences. If the Earth is the new symbol of transformation and integration, then the question today is whether the human sciences – and particularly psychology – can also become an integral part of 'the Earth Sciences'.

Cosmology is opening up the universe in extraordinary ways. But also at a subatomic level 'matter' itself is looking stranger and more mysterious than ever. There is a growing sense that it has agency – a life of its own – independent of us. The traditional solid dualities are dissolving. What used to be 'dead matter' is more alive than we realise and the distinction between organic and inorganic – animate and inanimate – is no longer so sustainable. This may be a new vitalism, experienced as much inside, as outside ourselves. Perhaps what is changing is less the world around us as the lens of the human mind through which we perceive it.

Other contraries are breaking down. The opposition between the 'human' and the 'non-human' is being questioned. Human nature is no longer so distinct from the natural forces out of which it evolved. To be part of a universal continuum takes us back in a way to the pre-modern teleology of the Great Chain of Being, except that the new chain is not a static structure but a dynamic one – a changing continuity. It evolves in time and doesn't need a mythic creator god.

Along with this there is also a new feeling about the simple fact of existence. There is a new interest in ontology – the fact of our being. Our future may be in doubt but we may come to feel more alive in the present than we ever have. Nor are life and death so much the contraries we in the modern world have made them. Death need no longer be the fearful mystery it has been. More mysterious and magical is life itself – how we come to be here in the first place.

These changes are also mirrored in the creative arts. Extraordinary are the infinite knowledge and interconnections that the world wide web reveals but more innovative is the aesthetic and integrative potential of the human imagination, whether in science, music, the visual arts, theatre and dance, or creative writing. Poetry and narrative literature are as alive as ever but there is a new romanticism to be found in writing on nature, a romanticism which explores how nature and culture are not separate but essentially intertwined. An example is Jay Griffiths' remarkable *Wild: an Elemental Journey*, a book which redefines and re-enchants the human relationship to nature and the wild. Griffiths put her boots on and went to live in such wild places as the Amazon, the Arctic, and outer Mongolia only to find that 'wildness' is actually 'home' to the humans and other species which live there, a protective, even 'kind' place, not the alien, frightening or uncanny wild which modern European Romanticism often made it.

What I am trying to suggest is that our experience of ourselves – our 'human nature' and the human mind – is changing and this may be as important – if not more important to us – as the fact of climate change. And if this is so, how are our human sciences – individually and collectively – responding, particularly for us, psychology and psychotherapy? The great nineteenth century Tibetan scholar, Jamgon Kongtrul, proponent of the *Rime* – non-sectarian – movement, wrote, reflecting the great and essential insight of Buddhism:

> *'Just realizing the meaning of mind encompasses all understanding.'*

In Jamgon Kongtrul's Buddhist analysis this is not just the human mind but the universe itself – and everything in it – as mind. This is a view obscured to our modern scientific culture. We limit consciousness to ourselves only but are beginning to realize how short-sighted this is. The human mind is an extraordinary phenomenon but it evolved and emerged from something larger than itself.

Psychoanalytic practice

The new discourse is that of the philosopher who thinks from Freud – that is after, with, and against him. Paul Ricoeur

The two great Western figures who initially explored human psychology through subjective, as well as analytic, experience were William James and Sigmund Freud. While James brought his 'radical empiricism' to bear on our experience of consciousness he remained a philosopher. Freud wanted to be a philosopher but remained a physician – of the mind – and teacher, though – in the famous phrase of W.H. Auden's 'In Memoriam' – he became 'a whole climate of opinion'. Freud created a school and, in doing so, devised a practice which students of his art could learn – and develop. The relationship between practice and theory is an interesting one but I have

always thought that practice precedes theory. Though theory can help practice, it cannot determine it.

Freud introduced a form of practice without which such innovations as the interpretation of dreams and analysis of the unconscious would have been far less effective. This was the mode of thinking known to us as 'free association'. As we know the traditional 'basic rule' in psychoanalysis – the 'talking cure' – is that the patient should report his thoughts without reservation and should make no attempt to concentrate, on the assumption that nothing he says is without significance and that his associations will lead to meaning and insight, insofar as resistance doesn't operate. Resistance does, of course, operate and traditionally much of the work is about analyzing the resistance. Freud thought resistance is lessened by relaxation and often increased by too much concentration. We sometimes forget that, of course, 'resistance' can also be interpreted positively – as an assertion of the human spirit.

Interestingly, as Charles Rycroft remarks In his Critical Dictionary, 'free association' is a mistranslation of the German *freier Einfall* which means 'irruption' or 'sudden idea' rather than 'association' and refers to ideas which present themselves without straining or effort. In this state ideas occur, or happen, to a person from somewhere beyond the rational or logical mind. As Rycroft goes on to explain, this technique enabled Freud to abandon hypnosis and allow the focus to be on the patient who alternates between free association and reflection. An alternative way of thinking about this process is that 'the patient oscillates between being the subject and object of his experience, at one moment letting thoughts come, the next moment inspecting them'.

Contemplative practice

For me there have always been similarities between psychotherapeutic practice and contemplative – or meditative – practice, but crucial differences too. Where Freud made the distinction between the relaxed, freely associative subject and the thoughtful, analytical, reflective mind classical Buddhist meditation, for example, also makes a twofold distinction between a calming, tranquil state and the special insight that comes with analytical examination.

In Sanskrit these are known as *shamata* – literally, 'dwelling in tranquillity' – and *vipashyana* – insight, clear seeing. *Shamata* is not so much relaxation as a still and alert state where particular attention is initially given to posture and breathing. These are thought to be important because without them insight is limited, even misguided. *Vipashyana* is not so much personal analysis as insight into what Buddhists call 'the three marks of existence': impermanence or transience, the truth of suffering, and what they call 'no-self', by which they mean egolessness, in an absolute sense. In fact, in the Buddhist understanding, nothing has a self-nature that is fixed, permanent and unchanging – at present most of us unconsciously believe that human nature is a permanent given.

Freud was a scientist but, as a man of culture, he also belonged to the European Romantic tradition. An important given in that tradition was the cult of the individual which is still a driving factor in our consumerist, capitalist society. From a systemic perspective a person is not so much an individual as an interdependency – whether one is thinking at the level of family, society, or the wider ecology – so a therapeutic practice that is based on interpreting a person's reality from the individual perspective only could be seen as limited, even oppressive. Everyone has individuality but it emerges from an interdependent reality.

A contemplative practice acknowledges this principle and would equate freedom with the realization of one's interdependency. Early Buddhism encouraged freedom through the individual

mind – the Hinayana, or narrow tradition of the arhat, practiced in isolation – but this became known as the lesser journey and evolved into the greater way – the Mahayana or the Bodhisattva tradition of enlightened compassion for all beings. The Hinayana and the Mahayana are not viewed as opposed since compassion for others requires an understanding of oneself, but without the greater view it is thought one cannot realize true freedom and enlightenment.

Knowing oneself

Contemplation involves a paradox which is about using the mind to understand itself – sometimes referred to as 'minding mind'. In his book, *Luminous Mind,* Kalu Rinpoche, whom the present Dalai Lama compared to Milarepa, the great thirteenth century poet and mystic of Tibet, wrote:

> 'The basic issue is that it is not possible for the mind to know itself because the one who searches, the subject, is the mind itself, and the object it wants to examine is also the mind. There is a paradox here: I can look for myself everywhere, search the world over, without ever finding myself, because I am what I search for.'

A paradox is a form of understanding that goes beyond conventional logic or reason and therefore cannot be grasped by conceptual thought only. Hence it is more amenable to the contemplative rather than the rational mind.

Tibetan culture had devoted itself for a thousand years to developing the art and science of meditative introspection, building on the profound Buddhist teachings and practices of India and China before them. Freud – both the phenomenological psychologist as well as the natural scientist – didn't have the benefit of East Asian psychological and philosophical teachings that we have today and relied on his own intuitive genius and place in Western cultural thought. As a result he was defeated by this paradox, never became the philosopher – the metaphysician, or 'metapsychologist' - he aspired to be and called his movement 'psychoanalysis' – ultimately a contradiction in terms since in the end the mind cannot be analyzed, only experienced and lived.

In the last century the two traditions and practices of 'Western' and 'Eastern' cultures were thought to be very distinctive, even incompatible. Carl Jung's warnings about our difficulties – or unsuitability – in the Western world to engage in East Asian meditational practices are understandable, given our limited knowledge of the philosophy and psychology behind them at the time. But now we know much more, different cultural traditions are seen to be more complementary than we realized.

Many people in the West have turned prematurely to contemplative practices and teachings to address personal difficulties when they would be better starting with some form of psychotherapy which would help them first to establish some personal stability. As has been said, you need to have a self before you can think about no-self. But at the same time people genuinely turn to non-Western contemplative practices because they are thought to address existential and metaphysical issues which our modern culture – and psychotherapy – neglects.

The Secret of the Golden Flower

A contemplative practice will be experienced differently by everybody and grow out of a person's unique disposition and life circumstances. But there are some general understandings and guidelines within the perennial, or ageless, wisdom that have come down to us from all cultural

traditions. Take *The Secret of the Golden Flower*, for instance, that *Classic Chinese Book of Life* which Jung and Richard Wilhelm – its original German translator – made known to us as early as 1932. Thomas Cleary published a new and more complete translation from the Chinese in 1991 along with notes and commentaries informed by his extensive knowledge of Taoist and Chan/Zen literature and practices. His edition brings a clarity and depth of understanding that was lacking in the 1932 edition.

As Cleary explains in his introduction, *The Secret of the Golden Flower* is a lay manual of Buddhist and Taoist methods for clarifying the mind. Written some two hundred years ago, it draws upon ancient spiritual Chinese classics and describes a natural way to mental freedom practiced for many centuries. The golden flower symbolizes the quintessence of Buddhist and Taoist paths: 'Gold stands for light, the light of the mind itself; the flower represents the blossoming, or opening up, of the light of the mind. Thus the expression is emblematic of the basic awakening of the real self and its hidden potential'.

Central to this realization or awakening of the self is the conscious recognition of the original spirit – the true self – as it is in its spontaneous natural state, independent of environmental conditioning. In the text this original spirit is also called the celestial – or natural – mind, a subtler and more direct mode of awareness than thought or imagination – an invitation, perhaps, to step outside our ideological boxes. Cleary describes the experience of the blossoming of the golden flower as likened to light in the sky, 'a sky of awareness vaster than images, thoughts and feelings, an unimpeded space containing everything without being filled. Thus it opens up an avenue to an endless source of intuition, creativity, and inspiration. Once this power of mental awakening has been developed, it can be renewed and deepened without limit.'

The *Secret of the Golden Flower* is a manual containing many helpful meditation techniques but its central method goes beyond techniques, right to the root source of awareness. The core of this method Cleary translates as 'Turning the Light Around'. It is difficult to describe this in a few words but what is implied is that by turning in towards the light within yourself you become aware that it is not separate, or distinct, from the light within everything else,'outside' you. As the text puts it:

> 'The light is neither inside nor outside the self. Mountains, rivers, sun, moon, and the whole earth are all this light, so it is not only in the self. All the operations, intelligence , knowledge, and wisdom are also this light, so it is not outside the self. The light of heaven and earth fills the universe: the light of one individual also naturally extends through the heavens and covers the earth. Therefore once you turn the light around, everything in the world is turned around'. (III, 10)

Radical Hope

In this essay I have been trying to say that while, at best, the near future looks very uncertain and our chances of keeping the average global temperature below four degrees – not to mention two – are slim, at the same time we may be experiencing an important awakening within ourselves – psychologically, socially and spiritually. This may come too late to ensure our survival on an Earth potentially about to experience a sixth mass extinction – if our climate and earth scientists are to be believed – but we may be enabled to face it without denial and without giving in to despair. When Naomi Klein declares *This Changes Everything* she also implies 'This' includes a change within ourselves – more profound than she perhaps realizes.

Radical Hope, the title of the philosophical psychoanalyst, Jonathan Lear's book – which Paul (Hoggett), the Chair of the CPA, first drew to our attention and which we discussed at the CPA

day in Bristol this April – examines the paradox of a hopeless hope. This is a hope beyond conventional hope but also beyond despair – Lear writes of 'courage and hope' in contrast to 'mere optimism'. He describes the loss of the way of life of the indigenous North American Crow nation when the buffalo were wiped out in the nineteenth century and they no longer could do battle with the Sioux, their common enemy. As Plenty Coups, the chief of the Crow, lamented, 'when the buffalo went away the hearts of my people fell to the ground and they could not lift them up again. After this nothing happened'. But this 'nothing' proved anything but an empty nothing for out of it the Crow were able to find a new way of life.

In *Radical Hope* Lear describes how with the loss of their culture the Crow found themselves 'reasoning at the abyss' – they faced a 'radical discontinuity' with their past which involved 'a disruption in the sense of being', like 'a rip in the fabric of one's self'. Plenty Coups did not give in to despair but accepted the demise of his culture with courage and a faith that something would emerge out of the abyss. Accordingly at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier he laid down his 'coup stick' – the emblem of his warrior culture – acknowledging that the traditional ways of the Crow had to be laid to rest before a new life could begin to be imagined. What made his hope 'radical' was that it was accompanied by a faith in a future goodness. In Lear's words: 'Radical hope anticipates a good for which those who have this hope as yet lack the appropriate concepts with which to understand it.' This is what makes Lear's book a study in ethics.

Everything and Nothing

> The actual discipline or practice of the Bodhisattva is to regard whatever occurs as a *phantom* (dream). *Nothing ever happens. But because nothing happens, everything happens …… that "nothing happening" is the experience of openness.*

<div style="text-align: right">Chogyam Trungpa, Training the Mind.</div>

The parallels with the challenge to our own culture in a time of climate change are very clear. The big difference is when nothing 'happened' to the Crow, at least they had the opportunity of an actual future – a new sense of being could emerge, the rip in their fabric of the self could be addressed. Our 'nothing', on the contrary, implies the collapse of everything. The ethical challenge we now face is an absolute, not a relative one – how to conceive of a 'good life' – and a benign universe – when there is the possibility of no future at all. The questions multiply as we reason at our own abyss: how do we think beyond death? How is it possible to live ethically in the face of our own demise? What meaning can we give it? How must it change our view of ourselves? Where do we find the courage, faith and understanding we now need?

I have suggested one way of trying to answer this last question. For the Crow it was not about simply exchanging their traditional way of life for our modern one, so – for us – it is not about turning away from our own culture but seeing how we might begin to learn from others – learning ways that we could begin to integrate with our own. There is an intriguing question that runs through all the ancient Indian Upanishads, those sacred writings that are thousands of years old:

'What is that by knowing which all things are known?'

The answer in the *Upanishads* is: knowledge of the true or original self – incidentally a knowledge which enables a contemporary American exponent of the perennial philosophy like Ken Wilber, for instance, to write books with such titles as *A Brief History of Everything* and *A Theory of Everything*. Everything and Nothing are not opposites. Everything comes from Nothing. The question is, do we have the courage to face our Nothing?

As for an 'ethics in the face of cultural devastation' we are badly in need of this. The Tibetans have a tradition of seven-point mind training they have used for centuries. It is called *Lojong* and consists of 59 pithy slogans which are a means to awaken the kindness, gentleness, and compassion which are core to the training. Central to the actual practice is *Bodhicitta* or

'awakened mind'. There are two levels of bodhicitta – relative and ultimate. Relative is about attaining liberation through compassion for all beings and practicing meditation to achieve this, while ultimate bodhicitta is viewed as the vision of the true nature of everything – *shunyata*. Since we are currently facing the ultimate challenge, this teaching could not be more timely. A number of commentaries have been published but the ones I have found helpful – in addition to the original modern English translation by Chogyam Trungpa, *Training the Mind* - are Pema Chodron, *The places that scare you: a guide to fearlessness*, B. Alan Wallace, *The Seven-Point Mind Training* and the classic commentary by Jamgon Kongtrul – *The Great Path of Awakening* translated by Ken McLeod (2005 edition).

Although I originally began by making the case for doing nothing this is not a passive, but an active, mindful and meaningful nothing. The need to be active has never been more urgent but it is also a time for pausing and reviewing all our values - about who and what we essentially are. In classical China this was known as Stopping and Seeing. Climate change may be our ultimate challenge but it is also an opportunity. It is scary to think about what the future may hold, but it may well also bring an awakening.

Paradoxically, there is something strengthening about contemplating the worst that could happen. Only when we go beyond the hope of survival on the one hand and despair at the thought of catastrophe on the other can we really be empowered. In these very challenging times one way of avoiding despair at the difficulty of the task is to remember the third of the Seven Points of Mind Training:

The Transformation of Adversity into the Path of Awakening – when misfortune fills the world and its inhabitants, make adversity the path of awakening.

Tony Cartwright,
November, 2015

CLIMATE STORIES: A PSYCHOLOGICAL BAROMETER

Is *Climate Change* just a literal threat to our survival,one to which we need to accommodate by being more in balance and showing more restraint? Yes and climate is also a phenomenon of the imagination.

Almost every culture has stories about climate, such as Noah and his ark. To treat climate change literally as a technical problem to be solved or even as a medical problem for a high Gaian temperature is to ignore our intimate relationship with weather. The weather is as much inside of us in our dreams and stories of storms, fires, floods, earthquakes and tsunamis. We inhabit a psychological world even though we are estranged from the intimate co-habitation of our indigenous ancestors - the world is not really objectified, as our psyche re-constitutes it as 'our world'. We maybe ignorant of how much we owe to the rocks, plants and animals that have animated our imagination, but despite this they live in us.

Clients come with stories, stories of their dreams or their infection by others dreams that are living through them. The dream of progress, the heroic story of conquest and triumph, the poor-me stories of their victim and the depressive stories of failure, rejection and helplessness. Then there are the apocalyptic dreams. Not the rehearsed ones from Hollywood movies but the spontaneous one that reflect the growing collective disease that parallels what Jung recognised as prescient of the Second World War.

In his striking book, *Dreaming the End of the World*, Michael Hill analyses modern apocalyptic dreams such as those on the evocative themes of *"No Refuge, Invisible Poison"* and the *"Suffering Children"*, all of which could also be linked to the felt threat of climate change. Paul Hoggett and Penny Maclellan using a method based on Gordon Lawrence's Social dreaming matrix found that collective dreams constellated into themes such as *abandoned infants, aborted babies, monstrous births.* Paul Hogget suggests (pending publication), "At one level these dreams seemed to be about our anxieties regarding the vulnerability of life. But at a deeper level they expressed our anxieties about the carrying capacity of 'mother earth' ".

The weather acts as an unconscious barometer. On a bright sunny day our spirits are lifted. We want to engage and be engaged especially if there is a wind. When it is foggy, our thoughts may be clogged or we may drift into the mists of daydreams. Perhaps there is a reciprocal affinity between our internal weather and what we perceive outside our dwelling, such as in the wonderfully abbreviated "Seasonal Affective Disorder". This affinity deepens when we are camping with little of no separation between inner and outer. The weather envelops us. We may feel the rain as merciful or as drowning. We may attempt to escape or give ourselves over to it but it is difficult to deny its presence. David Abram, author of *"The Spell of the Sensuous,"* reminded us that "We're immersed in the mystery… our body is continuous with

Earth's body and our psyche is continuous with the larger collective Psyche" which includes the more than human as well as the human. "We live within the Psyche of the world."

When Bob Dylan sang, " You don't need a weatherman to know which way the wind blows", he was not speaking literally. Walking into a room, we sense the atmosphere – the emotional weather. It could be sticky or dangerous. It could be inviting and calm. There might be something brewing that we can feel without knowing what it is. Similarly with the start of a psychotherapy session in which each protagonist is waiting to sense which way the wind will blow.

It is not surprising that many words overlap between psychotherapy and weather. We have depressions and sunny times. We can be cool, hot, gloomy, fine, hazy and blustering. We can become flooded, it can be raining in my heart or I can be hoping that 'here comes the sun'. More enigmatic we can describe the weather as close without suggesting intimacy. From a dualistic viewpoint is difficult to know if meteorologists are borrowing from the psychological or if psychotherapists are creating metaphors. More likely there is a mirror operating between the energetic eddies of the emotional field and the equally uncertain perturbations in the weather. Our ego minds can not control either, so talk about the weather becomes this social banter for circumnavigating those complexities such as grieving, longing, delighting and empathising with each others sorrows and joys.

Tom Waits is more direct in his 'Emotional Weather Report',

> And a line of thunderstorms was developing in the early morning hours
> Ahead of a slow moving cold front, cold-blooded
> With tornado watches issued shortly before noon Sunday
> For the areas including the western region of my mental health
> And the northern portion of my ability to deal rationally
> With my disconcerted precarious emotional situation
> It's cold out there

The point of this story is that the *weather* and our *psyche* are inextricably interwoven. Living involves weathering and being weathered by the challenges and misfortunes of life. Yet our escapist culture attempts to insulate us from such vagaries. In the sixties there was a great piece of graffiti that read, "Corrugated iron is the character armour of the council". Perhaps in our era, it would read, "Health and safety regulations are a cultural defence against any vital signs of wildness."

This intimate mixing in which it is difficult to ascertain what belongs to whom is part of the therapeutic craft. Working with a client who we recognise as having many of the same wounding and personal difficulties as ourselves, requires special attention to possibilities of collusion and confluence. Moving from stories of weather to those of climate require a different sort of intervention, one that addresses the cultural complexes that beset us. These complexes (narcissistic, manic, depressive) are the drivers of so many implicit, embedded stories such as that of the solar hero who brings light and order to a world of chaos. Freeing ourselves from the addictive grip of that hero is a first step to cultural change. It does open the space for a different sort of hero.

> In this classic story of the 'Rainmaker' from the Jungian stable, we learn both of this new type of lunar hero and of an early climate intervention.
> A certain province in China was suffering a terrible drought. They had tried all the usual magical charms and rites to produce rain but to no avail. Then someone said there was a rainmaker in a distant province who had a good reputation. The local dignitaries invited him and sent a carriage to bring him to the drought area. In time the rainmaker arrived and on alighting from the carriage was greeted by the local officials who beseeched him to produce rain. The rainmaker sniffed the air, looked around and pointed to a small cottage on a hill just outside the village. He asked if he could reside there for three days and see if he could do anything. The officials all agreed and he went up and locked himself into the cottage.

Three days later storm clouds gathered and there was a torrential downpour of rain. The villagers were jubilant and a delegation, led by the officials went up to the cottage to thank the rainmaker. But the rainmaker shook his head and replied "But I didn't make it rain". The officials said he must have done as three days had passed and rain had been produced. The rainmaker replied, "No, you don't understand. When I alighted from the carriage in your province I recognised at once that you are all out of harmony and so it was no wonder it did not rain when it is supposed to. Being here myself I became infected by your disharmony and I became out of sorts. I knew if anything could be done then I would have to put 'my own house in order' first. And that is all I have been doing for the past three days!

Ending Reflections

It would be nice to think that the rainmaker is a prototype psychotherapist who through regulating himself was able to be the catalyst in that edge-of-chaos weather to bring the system back from its disregulation. While recognising that weather systems are inter-dependent with human systems, the present influence seems to be the other way round. Human systems have become so dysregulated that in a relatively short time span they have started to destabilise the Gaia system of regulating temperature and climate that have taken eons to create. The industrial heat pump of our consumer society, combined with its CO_2 emissions, is warming the planet. The effluence of this consumption pollutes rivers, seas, air and land to such an extent that the Gaia regulatory system cannot cope. What makes it perilous is that our wonderful capacity to imagine, allows us to ignore the evident feedback from our scientists and carry on as usual.

Symptoms of the pending crisis are not just in climate science. The dominant story in our culture is one of progress. For a capitalist consumer society to function we need to believe in the myth of progress in order to invest in it. Without this faith, the myth loses its efficacy and the uncertainty spooks markets and our belief in sustainability of our society. We are being confronted with recognising that our children's future will not only not improve on ours but they will be inheriting a degraded world in which survival rather than optimal pleasure will be the mode. Such is the power of the myth, that very few persons can confront this terrifying and salutary message. It could be that psychotherapists will recognise a new ethical obligation in their work to confront this denial in human terms rather than scientific ones. We will need to be crafting new stories that constrain the escapist phantasies and re-imagine what is desirable and sustainable.

WHAT ARE OUR NARRATIVES?

Why are the truths difficult? What sense does it make to have a sign in our shop window saying 'difficult'?

Strap-lines tell stories about what an organisation stands for. Our value as an organisation hinges on whether we can contribute to the difficult task of climate engagement. So we launch our new website with "Facing Difficult Truths".

Why are the truths difficult? What sense does it make to have a sign in our shop window saying 'difficult'? Massive social and psychological forces pull against a sound response to the climate and ecological challenges which face us. We're operating in a field where awareness and decisive action are both actively suppressed and instinctively repressed – hence the centrality for us of understanding denial in its various forms. Sally Weintrobe and colleagues have done pioneering work here, in Engaging with Climate Change Paul Hoggett has tackled head-on the difficulty, manifesting as hostility, resentment and controversy, of even using the word denial in this context.

So our narrative is, inescapably, about the need to do something extremely difficult, not just as individuals who are adept at screening out inconvenient and disturbing information. We share with other groups a counter-narrative to the dominant stories that have given security, meaning and coherence to whole societies. Such stories act as meta-narratives that are prevalent and endemic, such as that of the hero myth of domination and triumph or that of a consumer society. Even as the cracks in our dominant narratives become wider, messages that challenge it are forcefully resisted.

So what are the cracks that are appearing in this dominant narrative? They include:
• Loss of belief in financial security and the sustainability of economic growth
• Increased cynicism about government, institutions, regulation, the efficiency of markets (at the big issue level)
• Despair through lack of faith in the future
• Realisation that security through domination of Nature is hubris
• The increasing volume of warnings about climate and ecological disaster

These cracks can act as nudges to divest, or disinvest in what has maintained the old paradigm. But are there any new narratives to invest in?

Most of us in climate psychology would probably see the Transition movement as an ally. Richard Heinberg, in the Foreword to Rob Hopkins' Transition Handbook, applauds an approach that addresses tough realities but "ends up looking more like a party than a protest march". The founders of the Transition movement knew well that inspiring stories were vital to any successful movement and that it had to look like fun if it was to garner wide support. Transition has achieved great things and may yet prove to have played a decisive role, if we do manage to find a way to a sane and sustainable future. But after the heady early days, Transition activists were forced to realise that only a small minority of people want to go far down the path of trying to re-localise economies, or to look hard at the carbon costs of the things we have and do. However appealing the image in the Handbook of climbing out of the tarry pond of fossil fuel dependence, we still have difficulty giving things up to help make that happen.

In the gestation of the CPA in 2010, at a University of West of England event Seeing Futures, ecopsychologist Sandra White spoke on "Beyond Sacrifice". One of her conclusions was that the social conditions in which sacrifices are likely to be forthcoming do not currently exist. The globalised, consumerist version of wellbeing still has a very powerful grip. There are diverse psychological strands here, but one of the best known has become enshrined in economics. This is that we heavily discount future gains in relation to present losses. However clearly Lord Stern repeatedly spells out the vast future benefits of decarbonising our economy now, action has so far fallen well short of the mark.

Why does the vaunted middle class attribute of deferred gratification, or the willingness of parents to put their children first, often at great cost to themselves, fail us in this instance? As George Marshall, who generates new stories, explains so well in Don't Even Think About It; Why our Brains are Wired to Ignore Climate Change the threat still seems distant and abstract…..to most of us in the rich world where most of the harm originates. Separation of cause and effect is part of what makes climate change a wicked problem. Part of the difficulty we refer to is that of making the truth stick, as something both inescapable and pressing.

The word "inescapable" can evoke the opposite, a narrative path of human brilliance and ingenuity, our capacity to "escape" through answers to every challenge. This is double-edged. One of the favourite ideas of the Transition movement is to mobilise the collective genius of a community. Laudable though this vision is, the shadow of human brilliance lies in the techno-fix myth; the notion that business-as-usual will always be possible because of our infinite capacity to adapt to and manipulate our circumstances. Earthmasters, Clive Hamilton's tour de force on geoengineering, is perhaps the most powerful critique to date on how this dominant paradigm operates in our field.

Another narrative thread that is amenable to Jung's notion of the shadow is Paul Hoggett's thinking on Climate Change and the Apocalyptic Imagination. Hoggett's thesis covers a range of threats and historical settings. In the narrower context of climate change, it's not hard to see how the perverse excitement which can be derived from apocalyptic scenarios, has been latched onto by climate denialists, in their own narratives, as "climate porn". To counter this, and without exaggerating, we can hold in mind that research suggests that climate scientists over-compensate in the direction of caution to avoid accusations of alarmism.

Hoggett has also drawn attention to bias and our need to watch out for it in ourselves. Other things being equal, we would expect to welcome anything that might look like good news with open arms, say, the possibility of a decline in solar activity. But, we know that our opponents in the battle for hearts and minds will cherry pick and feed an anxious public with anything which appears to undermine the dire warnings emanating from climate science. This points to a critical element in our narrative. "Facing Difficult Truths" is not a command from any moral high ground; it is, first and foremost, a commitment to facing the difficult truths in ourselves.

My use of the word "opponents" brings us to "Enemy Narratives", arguably the outstanding theme in Don't Even Think About It: Why Our Brains are Wired to Ignore Climate Change and a point of tension with the other big climate book of 2014, Naomi Klein's This Changes Everything, reviewed elsewhere on this site. Splitting and projection are amongst the most powerful of psychoanalytic concepts and understanding their implications is part of what we bring to the table of climate discourse. Marshall's intuitive grasp of it is heartening. It enables him to convey an important message to climate activists. The difficult truth here is that we may be more attached to our enmities than we are to the need for self-questioning or alliance building. If we can face releasing our projective enmities while still being faithful to our vision, the CPA project will be enhanced.

What about hope? We want to be more than a forum, an intellectual group, re-organising deckchairs on the Titanic. In April 2015 CPA event Radical Hope and Cultural Tragedy addressed the question: in the light of the climate and ecological holocaust that is unfolding, what kind of hope is possible that is not blinkered or delusional?

There are certainly objective and scientific issues here, as well as psychological ones. There are still genuine uncertainties around climate sensitivity, the "carbon budget", tipping points and speed of sea level rise, also the adaptability of plant and animal species. These uncertainties cloud our view as to what mitigation of the holocaust is possible and what the timescale is for adaptation. The commonest view is that some mitigation is still possible (as well as essential) but phrases like a "rapidly closing window" do seem to have been around for rather a long time. Al Gore has spoken of flipping from complacency to despair, and George Monbiot of resignation to inevitable catastrophe being a self-fulfilling prophesy. There are no credible voices denying that we are in a deep crisis, but there is a spectrum of views, in each of which there are sub-spectrums of knowledge, recognition of uncertainty and philosophy.

So a CPA position on hope is work in progress. We have embarked on a project which combines pursuit of truth, living with uncertainty, and supporting each other as we mourn what is lost or going, while at the same time expressing gratitude for what we still have. One role we have is help make the resources of psychology useful to those who campaign and work in other ways for the change we need. Human and political tipping points cannot and must not be ruled out, however unlikely they seem. At the heart of our vision is a hopeful determined and courageous exploration of what is humanly possible.

MYTHS OF STABILITY: PUTTING CAPITALISM BEFORE CREATION

Jay Griffiths, writer and author of *Wild,* was speaker at the Radical Hope conference April 2015 see youtube link

Her paper was previously published in Orion November/December 2013

GriffithsMythsofstabilityOrion.pdf

WELL-BEING OF MISFORTUNE: ACCEPTING ECOLOGICAL DISASTER

Published: 14 October 2015

Today we are closer to the catastrophe than the alarm itself, which means that it is high time for us to compose a well-being of misfortune, even if it had the appearance of the arrogance of a miracle.

Rene Char (cited in Bataille)

The Climate Psychology Alliance (CPA) has developed an intimate interweaving of the three
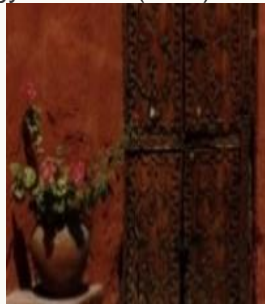
strands of the political, the psychology of unconscious process and the science of climate change to understand our culture's responsibility for and capacity to respond to planetary catastrophe. In this article I want to re-imagine what might prevent us sinking into a helpless despair as our world falls apart. And the world as we have known it is rapidly changing. As the French poet Rene Char suggests, actual events may be overtaking the scientific warnings. If the probable increase in temperature becomes 4C degrees rather than 2C, our civilisation is likely to collapse.

Rather than putting our efforts solely into attempting to avoid this catastrophe, I want to explore what happens psychologically if we were also to accept it. My conjecture is that our acceptance of the feelings accompanying terrifying fantasies about ecological disaster can transform our experience of the actual event.

Climate Psychology takes account of an intimate relation between our psyche and the world in its exploration of the meaning we give to climate events. As deep ecologist Wendell Berry has said, "The world that environs us, that is around us, is also within us. We are made of it; we eat, drink, and breathe it; it is bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh". (1993: 34)

Despite the illusion of separating from outer nature and living largely within our domesticated socially constructed world, climate events such as hurricanes, tsunamis, floods and earthquakes are threatening in symbolic as well as literal ways. It can feel as if we are under attack from nature.

I suggest that our present crisis is as much a problem of the degradation of our feeling and thinking as it is about literal environmental degradation. As psychotherapist Harold Searles (1972) says, "This outer reality is psychologically as much a part of us as its poisonous waste products are a part of our physical selves". To maintain our safe domestication, we have split off much of what feels dangerous onto our environment while at the same time suffering from contamination of our air, water and food from industry. What if we could reverse this projection and learn to take responsibility for our inner nature? This will not make the external difficulties disappear but we may be able to better engage them.

One of the pressures in this complex idea of climate change is the cultural hopes and aspirations for a future that maintains the comforts of a Western way of life. These are often egged on by such erroneous political messages as that of George W. Bush (2002), "We need an energy bill that encourages consumption." Despite these alluring attempts to maintain the status quo, the external realty is impinging. Whether it is economic stability, migration control, cultural identity,

religious beliefs, food and energy security, water abundance or travel availability to name just a few, none is certain. Our myth of progress is unravelling. This social and cultural turbulence reflects what scientists are telling us about the climate. We are beyond the tipping point (Wasdell 2014) where positive feedback effects lead to runaway climate change of disastrous proportions resulting in a different planet.

Even with this scary scenario, Norwegian psychologist Per Espen Stoknes (2015) points out in What We Think About When We Try Not To Think About Global Warming, there are many inspiring and heartening examples of meaningful actions to improve our quality of life, such as clean air, renewable energy and new approaches to animal welfare that are welcome news to most people. Re-wilding is another positive venture if more controversial with local people. Focusing on these positive messages rather than on very threatening scientific stories, can lead to communication that is likely to be taken on board by those who might otherwise shut down and defend against the catastrophic news.
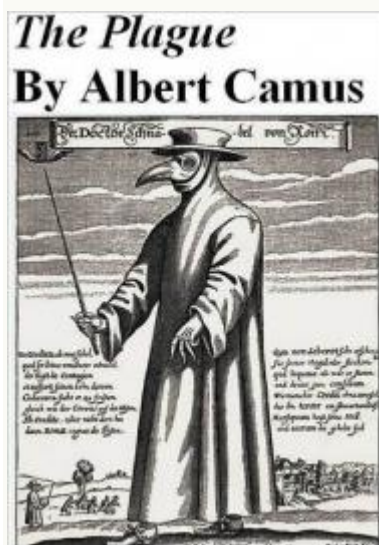
While focusing on positive examples is an excellent strategy and fits well with what George Marshall (2014) writes about narratives and social norms in Don't Even Think About It: Why Our Brains Are Wired To Ignore Climate Change, it does not grasp the nettle of the human destructiveness that underlies the race towards ecocide. It is clearly more helpful to communicate stories of green innovation than to rant about climate change and ecological disaster but there is a danger in being silent about our destructive propensities. Silence invokes that sense of taboo. What we are afraid to speak of falls into the shadow and becomes unspeakable and unbearable.

As Paul Hoggett (2011) writes in Climate change and the apocalyptic imagination,

> The two world wars, the Holocaust and the Cold War, with its attendant possibility of nuclear warfare, can be thought of in this light – each left an imprint on the collective psyche that could not be assimilated in some way. The growing recognition of the reality of anthropogenic climate change faces us with the same collective psychic predicament – how can we think in a realistic way about something whose implications are unthinkable? Like nuclear war, climate change threatens the imagination with excess.

Understanding the psychodynamics of defence against this felt threat has been spelt out in the anthology Engaging with Climate Change, edited by Sally Weintrobe (2013). It helps understand how unconscious processes such as denial prevent us thinking about climate change because the threat is too great – one analysis suggests that we may experience extreme climate events as punishment for our ruthless exploitation.[link to review].

In his chapter, Clive Hamilton compares our present situation to that described by Camus in The Plague in which the citizens of Oran deny the increasing signs of the plague, because they 'did not believe in pestilence'. Their initial avoidance of facing the truth gives way to terror as the reality of death becomes pervasive. Paul Hoggett commenting separately on Camus's The Plague writes,

If we move from the literal to the metaphorical meaning of the story then we can see how The Plague is an exploration of the infection of the social body……… So this is the plague that Camus speaks of. This pestilence of paranoia, hatred, denigration, despair, righteousness and moral outrage, othering, scapegoating, silence and turning a blind eye. As he says, 'everyone has it inside himself, this plague, because no-one in this world, no-one, is immune'.

 It is this infection of the social body that makes it so difficult to speak out because the social norms create a taboo. George Marshall (2014) makes a comparable point in clarifying how social norms create a conformity about what to do or not do – the so called 'bystander effect.

To face the difficult truth, to not be complicit in this infection takes determination and moral courage. I can sometimes see these challenges being played out in a client's dilemma. They want to take a challenging line of action – leave a marriage or a job that is false or dis-honouring - but cannot actually bring themselves to do it. On the surface it seems they are being faint-hearted or being over concerned with the opinion of others - yet when we explore deeper, we find that there is often an unconscious pay-off to their staying where they are. They are used to the comfort; they do not want the responsibility of living alone; they secretly like being dominated.

The denial of climate change may hide a collective fantasy of ecocide as an escape from facing into the harsh reality of our destructiveness. The collective outrage following the killing of Cecil, the handsome lion in Zimbabwe, holds both a conscious disgust but also a guilty displacement of the pleasure of killing. While we may brand wolves 'cruel' in how they take their prey, the human capacity for ruthlessly exploiting other species, killing for sport and wantonly destroying of our holding environment is in a league of its own.

In his last book, A Terrible Love of War, James Hillman pointed out that war is not an aberration but a constituent of human life. It contrasts with what many feel as the banality of everyday peace. Soldiers describe their love of war through the thrill, the glory, and the 'erotics' that surpass other experiences in intensity and triumphal pleasure.

Apocalyptic fantasies of war have permeated the imagination of our culture through films, video games and real time news reports. In the absence of risk such as war in our increasingly manic Western culture, many young people operate in a hyper-aroused or dissociated state. Self-harm is common as a means of managing unbearable feelings. Asserting a right to cut one's own body can be read as a powerful rejection of cultural norms that disempower and a perverse ritual of sacrificial initiation. (Gardner 2014)

Michael Ortiz Hill also perceives a collective rite of passage in his fascinating book, Dreaming the End of the World. Through studying hundreds of apocalyptic dreams, he sees the necessity of entering deeply into archetypal fears as a means of transforming a literal apocalypse into a potential initiation. Through coming to know these fears, they no longer bind us to acting out our unconscious reactions and an initiatory connection can ensue. In the face of the numinous, Hill writes (2005 XIX), our soul is stripped bare. "It suffers the raw truth of the moment, its conundrums and heartbreak, and witnesses the death and rebirth of the self/planet."

Strangely facing into the dream images of annihilation, of environmental disaster and ecological collapse can be liberating. He quotes from a woman who is an anti-nuclear activist:

It was weird, but in the dream the feeling was – well, this is it. It was not like we were freaking out. It was very 'Zen'. This is it. I feel like in my dreams, I've progressed from panic and denial to accepting that the Bomb is 'in me'. Out of that, I feel empowered to meet it.

What would an acceptance of ecological disaster look like? It would be a release from trying to escape the inevitable collapse of western industrial culture or from heroically trying to fix it.

Acceptance is not a passive resignation to fate nor is it intellectual recognition. Acceptance is the engagement with the difficult feelings we have previously been unable to bear. We become fully present with events just as they are so that we no longer wish that they were different. Facing into and accepting such a challenging reality as ecocide with integrity may bring profound transformation.

Camus's narrator, Dr Rieux demonstrates such active acceptance in sticking to his commitment as a doctor despite the inevitability of his own death from the plague. Clive Hamilton draws on Nietzsche's distinction of different forms of pessimism: pessimism of strength and pessimism of weakness. He characterises the strength of Dr Rieux as the acceptance of not being able to stop the looming catastrophe and yet not giving into this.

This dichotomy between strength and weakness may be too polarised; splitting the heroic character that endures suffering from the martyr who seems like a victim. If, as in a therapeutic situation, we substitute 'vulnerability' for 'weakness', we shift from a negative sense of surrender, as in being overcome, to the power that comes through letting go. This letting go is not of the past but a letting go to an unknown future. Typical clinical examples would be from those who have suffered a tragic event, such as a car crash, loss of a loved one or serious illness and have found through therapy that this creates an unexpected opportunity. The apparent misfortune opens a different door. This is the initiatory threshold that leads to a different life despite the defences against pain and re-traumatisation. As a species, we humans seem to be hesitant to open this door as if a cultural complex is attempting to defend an old collective trauma.

Through the Door
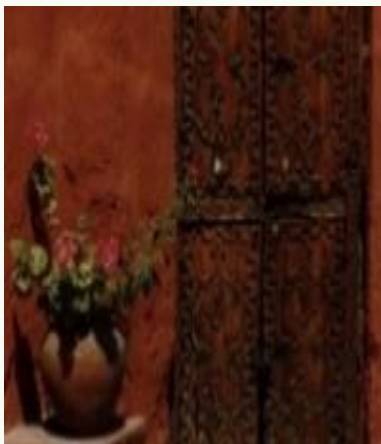
If one were to give an account of all the doors one has closed and opened, of all the doors one would like to reopen, one would have tell the story of one's entire life. (Bachelard 1964)

Interestingly, climate science has adopted the term 'vulnerability' to mean:

> the extent to which a natural or social system is susceptible to sustaining damage from climate change, and is a function of the magnitude of climate change, the sensitivity of the system to changes in climate and the ability to adapt the system to changes in climate. Hence, a highly vulnerable system is one that is highly sensitive to modest changes in climate and one for which the ability to adapt is severely constrained. (IPCC 2000)

So after millennia where we have treated the Earth as invulnerable, exploiting her resources and using her as a dumping ground for our waste, the scale of our misuse has reached that unexpected tipping point where we finally realise she is vulnerable. Getting it - that our

overconsumption is injuring the 'inexhaustible' planet we grew up with is difficult. Although common with many indigenous peoples, recognising that we can and do injure the earth is a significant shift in awareness.

This slow recognition of an apparent 'invulnerable' other's actual vulnerability has parallels in psychotherapy. I can painfully remember enduring weekly attacks from a client who ridiculed and denigrated my attempts to say anything. I knew I had not only to survive her bile but also to continue to offer interventions even though I knew they would be scorned. Eventually she asked me in a concerned voice, "How are these sessions for you, Chris?" I knew immediately it was a significant shift that opened the way to our reflecting together on this terrible passage in our journey together.

The importance of bearing such attacks is highlighted in Winnicott's much quoted sentence, "Hello object. I destroyed you. I love you. You have value for me because of your survival of my destruction of you"(2005: 120). It also reminds me of the shock and subsequent relief when a participant in an ecopsychology training declared with passion, 'I hate Nature'. In that setting, it took courage to speak such an unspeakable utterance and it relinquished any illusions that we were simply lovers of nature. Recognising our ambivalence towards the Earth – both our love, our adoration and our envious hateful feelings that are so often in the shadow – is an important if salutary acknowledgement.

Coming to terms with our destructive actions and Earth's vulnerability can leads to grief and remorse. We witness this regularly in the out-pouring of remorse from participants in ecopsychology courses. It is also witnessed by Antonio Machado is this poem:

> The wind, one brilliant day, called
>
> to my soul with an odor of jasmine.
>
> "In return for the odor of my jasmine,
>
> I'd like all the odor of your roses."
>
> "I have no roses; all the flowers
>
> in my garden are dead."
>
> "Well then, I'll take the withered petals
>
> and the yellow leaves and the waters of the fountain."
>
> The wind left. ……And I wept. And I said to myself
>
> "What have you done with the garden that was entrusted to you?"

Melanie Klein pointed to how children may symbolically attempt to make reparation to the mother after a hate-filled action. We could characterise this as the positive face of guilt that leads to remorse and the desire to repair rather than guilt as an experience of failed responsibility for being an agent of extinction. While we will not be able to repair the damage done to the body of Earth through our ruthless technological exploitation, we can act to mitigate its effect. This need for reparation links with social and environmental justice where exploiters can be brought to trial.

The trouble is that, as Camus said, "No one is immune." Large scale reparations for ecocide will need the framework of the law but we can make small acts of atonement, facing into difficult feelings, quieting our own hearts and act as an antidote to despair. Such conscious soothing of our troubled feelings rather than indulging in the escapist comforts on offer from our dissociated society may allow us to engage living (and loving) in a world quite different than the secure one with which we are familiar. We might even forsake our role as spectators, as tourists on the outside of this planet and become inhabitants of earth! Then this would indeed be a 'well-being of misfortune'.

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IN CLIMATE CHANGE, PSYCHOLOGY OFTEN GETS LOST IN TRANSLATION

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Why do we only allow a narrow sliver of psychological research to influence the discussion around climate change?

With the climate talks in Paris at COP21 fast approaching, we're seeing an unprecedented interest in what has been, for decades, a rather rogue yet burgeoning field: the psychology of climate change and environmental issues.

From Obama's call to engage behavioral sciences to inform climate change engagement, to Bill Nye's depiction of climate denial, it's now become acceptable to acknowledge that climate change is, in fact, not only a scientific, political, economic, technical, and industrial issue, but also a deeply psychological one. To reckon with this "super-wicked problem" effectively, there is a growing awareness that we cannot ignore the underlying psychological dimensions that inform engagement, innovation, and political response.

There's one question that appears to underlie virtually every report, book, and paper on the topic: Why are we not responding more actively and effectively to one of the greatest threats facing life on the planet today? Last week, a study was published in Perspectives on Psychological Science responding to this question, identifying "Five 'Best Practice' Insights From Psychological Sciences" for improving public engagement on climate change. The authors' aim was to distill "five simple but important guidelines for improving public policy and decision making about climate change." The paper reflects a growing movement to translate and bridge research findings with on-the-ground applications in policy, advocacy, and communities of practice. We need this kind of connection between research and practice, without question. However, we must ask: What about additional—and arguably critical—psychological insights that may be lost in translation?

Psychology is a very broad field, and there is no such thing as a "unified" psychological take on climate change.

The authors focus on five main points that many consider to be the most significant cognitive and communicative challenges to understanding climate change threats. Many of these findings have been reported and summarized by numerous climate change experts, most recently with George Marshall's book, and are quite established in the growing field of climate change communications. Specific insights include the difficulty in grasping abstract data about climate, the importance of social norming (a current hot topic in climate change engagement), the myth of extrinsic motivations like incentives for sparking behavior change (a topic Daniel Pink addresses in his work on motivation), and the issue of loss-aversion (there is also the term "solution-aversion" circulating, directed to those who reject any "solution" on the table). While these are all sound insights, they reflect a particular way of approaching the problem of climate change engagement, and they fail to keep in mind two things: Psychology is a very broad field, and there is no such thing as a "unified" psychological take on climate change.

While climate change psychology research has been developing since at least the early 1980s, we tend to equate "psychological dimensions" with a focus on cognitive, behavioral, and social

psychological research. These were, after all, the disciplines that informed the early pioneers in this field. The emphasis tends to be on attitudes, cognition, and risk assessment—branches recently popularized by behavioral economics and the work of people like Daniel Kahneman, Richard Thaler, and Cass Sunstein. While this work is all valuable, it doesn't encompass the entire discipline of psychology. Mistaking these parts for the whole of psychology risks limiting our ability to recognize what the full field can offer in addressing our most immediate and urgent challenges, whether at government-level policymaking or community-level grassroots organizing.

There exist other rich traditions in psychological research, originally focused on clinical and psychotherapeutic contexts, and these traditions also inform research methods. For those working in these fields—that is, working experientially and directly with people in a therapeutic or counseling context—the primary focus tends to be on how people manage distressing, often threatening information or experiences. There's a broad recognition in clinical psychology that humans engage—not only as individuals, but as social beings—in often less conscious or unconscious strategies to manage anxieties, losses, and trauma: denial, projection, splitting the world into good/bad, and so on. These are very human responses to confronting difficult news, including the unintended consequences of our industrial practices for life on the planet.

Perhaps particularly salient to climate change, clinical and psychotherapeutic psychology has a lot to say on the topic of anxiety, loss, grief, mourning, and despair. Understanding how humans relate to loss, even if it's anticipatory ("What is going to happen to my house/children/land?") may also help us appreciate why more people are not engaging at the levels required to truly turn the ship around. The response from a more clinical orientation is to practice compassionate "acknowledgement"—to demonstrate an understanding of what may be difficult, so that we can move quickly into solutions. (This was expressed recently by San Francisco-based psychotherapist Jared Michaels.) Such acknowledgement, as clinicians know, can help us soften our defenses and engage more creatively in problem solving. In the climate change field, we see that those working on the front lines of engagement, advocacy, and education tend to skip acknowledgement of people's fears, and focus instead on "solutions." From a psychotherapeutic perspective, this doesn't make a lot of sense.

The various fields of psychology can also inform one another through collaboration across these disparate disciplines.

The tendency is to assume any insights from these less-discussed fields lack pragmatic application, or are difficult to measure. This is a simply wrong. On application, we only need to look at the examples of some of the most successful campaigns in shifting public perceptions, such as Dove's 2004 "Real Beauty" campaign on body image and self esteem, to find influences by clinical practitioners. Innovations in research methodologies, particularly in psychosocial research and the design sciences, are enabling us to measure emotions and conflict through the use of more "human-centered" methodologies (also known as "human factors"), which has much in common with therapeutic techniques of in-depth conversation and attention to often unconscious desires, fears, and anxieties.

The various fields of psychology can also inform one another through collaboration across these disparate disciplines. For example, the authors of "Five Insights" include a section on how people relate with loss, stating: "Much of the media, scientific, and policy discourse around climate change has consistently invoked the idea of 'losses.' ... Yet, long-standing behavioral research has shown that people psychologically evaluate gains and losses in fundamentally different ways." From a psychotherapeutic angle, however, this is problematic. As Paul Hoggett, a social policy professor at University of the West of England and chair of the Climate Psychologist Alliance, notes: "It's a bit like saying 'don't confront people with the truth, because it will only arouse too much despair, rage, and so on.' Or, put another way, it would be a bit like a therapist encouraging a bereaved individual not to think about their loss, but to focus on the positives."

*　*　*

One of the most important insights from those working in clinical contexts on behavior changes is the recognition that we often experience competing values and drives that can lead to inaction or paralysis, also referred to as ambivalence. Clinical practices such as Motivational Interviewing (developed by two public-health practitioners) are designed to help people "move through ambivalence," mainly through a style of communication based on listening, empathy, and acknowledgement of where we may feel stuck. Such strategies include those infusing awareness-raising and engagement campaigns with empathy, reflected in initiatives as the Alliance for Climate Education, RepublicEn, Interfaith Power & Light, and ClearPath, which all seek to engage new communities in the climate conversation by acknowledging often unspoken, underlying concerns while offering a path toward action.

Perhaps one way to engage the "Five Insights" is to consider what may inform these particular challenges to facing climate change through the lens of anxiety, conflict, and what may feel like double-binds. Arguably, we are becoming aware of the damaging impacts of our practices while being stitched into a way of life that can be hard to shift, creating extremely challenging psychological and social tensions tricky to navigate. Knowing what we do about how humans manage distressing information and change, we may understand the resistances to engagement differently.

Perhaps we have trouble grasping the abstract nature of climate change because it's too scary to contemplate, unless there's a sense of a solution. Perhaps we need to not shy away from the potential losses relating to climate change, but to find skillful ways of acknowledging loss while turning our sights to the enormous opportunities we have for an even better life if we act accordingly. Perhaps, rather than focusing on only the cognitive challenges, we can come up with innovate ways of measuring the experience of climate change that include conflicts and dilemmas that can make it hard to respond, so we can capably support, facilitate, and enable collective forms of engagement. Then we'd really be on to something big.

* * *

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Catastrophic Consequences of Climate Change is Pacific Standard's aggressive, year-long investigation into the devastating effects of climate change—and how scholars, legislators, and citizen-activists can help stave off its most dire consequences.

A NEW IMAGINATION

Published: 02 December 2015

A vibrant new imagination is currently emerging of a different, sustainable future.

Fighting for this future means repairing environmental and social damage, and also repairing our hearts and minds damaged by our current culture of uncare. Understanding the toxic effects of this culture is crucial for change, as without this understanding we are in danger of imagining the future with blind, disaffected or despairing eyes.

To address climate change we need to care more. Only *felt* care gives us the strength to act for the good and sustains our will to act in caring ways in tough dark times.[i]

Care starts with a determination to face the real picture, and the real picture is that the present dominant culture in the global north – I call it the culture of uncare[ii] - actively undermines our capacity to care. It relentlessly promotes the false belief we can solve problems not in real ways but by rearranging our way of seeing the problems so they no longer have the power to disturb us[iii]. This is omnipotent, magical, thinking, akin to a fairy godmother waving her wand and instantly transforming a difficult situation into a carefree one. It may bring immediate emotional relief, but because it does nothing to address the problem in reality, it causes the problem, and our underlying disturbing feelings about it, to escalate.

The false belief that we can dispense with reality when it stands in our way or disturbs us has now entered a triumphalist phase. American neo-liberal politicians triumphantly refer to the reality-based community as a thing of the past[iv].

The reality-based community knows we are part of nature, do not control nature and we are highly dependent on what nature provides. No matter how much we big ourselves up and see nature as just a machine to be controlled by us, or a breast/toilet mother with the sole function of endlessly providing and absorbing all our waste[v], nature is there on her, not our, terms[vi].

The reality-based community also knows that nature includes human nature with *its* facts. Fact one: people are not inherently caring or inherently uncaring by nature; rather they struggle between a part that cares and a part that does not care. When we take this fact seriously, we know we need frameworks of care – both legal and moral - to keep our uncaring part in check and to support our caring part. We have witnessed frameworks of care dismantled in the era of globalization with frameworks ensuring uncare replacing them. Fact two: too much trauma, inequality and despair leads to volatility in the human climate with dangerous tipping points. The global economy has treated people like machines to be controlled, not real people who need certain conditions for civilized behaviour to be sustainable. The delusory false belief was these facts about human nature could be comfortably ignored because in the way of profit.

A false belief is an illusion when it can be given up and mourned. When a false belief takes hold in a more fixed way and is resistant to mourning it is a delusion. Our culture of uncare works to support the delusion that we can ignore climate reality by disavowing it. The pressure to disavow reality works in the following sort of way. Imagine when in full mourning for someone you love who has died, you are constantly reassured, "the good news is your loved one has not died after all". This is what you most want to hear, and it most undermines your capacity to face reality.

The cosmetic carrot

Here is just one example of the false belief at work in everyday life. I stand in my kitchen with two carrots on the chopping board, one from my allotment and the other from the supermarket. My allotment carrot is a bit bent in shape with furrowed skin. The supermarket carrot is clean, smooth skinned and tapers to a point. Supermarkets only sell what they call 'cosmetic' vegetables. Looking at the two carrots, I think, "I'm very busy", and I peel the cosmetic carrot. I promise myself, a bit guiltily, to use the allotment carrot tomorrow. Actually I don't, and by the time I do, a bit in the middle needs cutting out.

Most of us would recognize this sort of situation. What makes it stand out for me is the night before I watched Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall's TV programme on food waste[vii]. In it, he presented how, because

supermarkets insist on perfect parsnips, mountains of parsnips grown by our farmers are rejected and left to rot in the fields as too small, big, wonky or crooked. All are perfectly good food. One estimate is that if all the carbon generated by food waste were a country, it would be the third largest country in terms of emissions after China and the USA[viii].

I know that ugliness and squandering lies behind the shimmering appeal of the cosmetic carrot. By choosing it, I know I am implicating myself in a destructive system, gone out of control.

As best I can understand the situation, the thought, "I'm very busy " is a cover story to justify my participation in an organized system I deep down know is shockingly immoral and destructive. I often use busyness as justification when making choices that would disturb me if I thought more about them. 'I'm a very busy person' contains some truth – people lucky enough to earn in the global north tend to work very hard. But I think "I'm very busy" here means I'm special, and being special, I am entitled not to feel responsible for my actions. "I'm very busy" feeds a certain sense of self-importance. I sense I would feel lost without my busyness.

The culture makes it harder to face that my choice is a moral choice by not disclosing and reporting the waste. This is why Fearnley-Whittingstall's programme is so important. He gives us a potent visual image of its ugliness with his pictures of parsnip mountains. When he asked shoppers whether they would be happy to buy the parsnips supermarkets discard and leave to rot, all said yes and that the waste was shocking. Supermarket bosses said most shoppers prefer cosmetic carrots, and, if supermarkets fail to stock *even one item* that shoppers want, shoppers will desert them for their rivals.

Shoppers and supermarkets are in a perverse collusion leading to squandering and global warming. Shoppers *must* have what they feel entitled to and supermarkets *must* provide this. Supermarkets also actively shape these wants with lies and deception. As Laurel might have said to Hardy, look what a fine mess we are in.[ix]

We, the reality based community, can address this mess, but to do so we need to understand the relationship between globalization, the culture of uncare and the degree to which we as individuals are affected by this culture.

Globalization was driven by an uncaring mindset[x]. The plan was, "grab, grab, grab, now, now, now, and damn the consequences." Still unfolding, the project involved putting in place frameworks that guaranteed uncare. Wages of the many were driven down, wealth of the few soared[xi], trade agreements unfairly fixed who would profit and ensured no one would be held responsible; aviation fuel tax was kept low, despite there already being awareness of global warming. If this plan had been presented to the reality-based community from the outset, people would have been appalled, knowing it had to end very badly. They would have resisted taking part. This is why globalization was and is largely conducted in secret with its true aims hidden and obfuscated[xii].

Consent was needed for the global project to succeed, and the problem was people care. Trillions of dollars have been spent on attacking our bedrock capacity to care. This has been done primarily by: 1. Dismantling the frameworks that support our capacity to care and face reality. 2. Boosting the uncaring part of us by promoting greed and an exaggerated sense of entitlement[xiii]. 3. Denigrating the idea we have basic dependencies[xiv], and 4. Promoting the delusion that all the damage caused and the misery and pain felt could be instantly fixed through magical thinking[xv].

How did omnipotent thinking work in my case, faced with the two carrots? As best I understand this, I suggest my thinking became distorted at the point when I began to have moral pangs of guilt and shame at having chosen the cosmetic carrot. At this point I severed a connection with the person in me who had worked hard on my allotment and had enjoyed this; who knows from experience that allotment carrots taste very good. I severed my sympathy for the person in me who *is* working too hard and who needs a break. These aspects of myself were pushed to the margins. This involves active psychological distancing[xvi]. My thought "I'm entitled to the ideal cosmetic carrot because I'm a very busy person" was not compassionate, interested or concerned. It felt cut off from care.

In order to cut our felt links with the part of us that cares, we need to rearrange the way we see our relationships in the inner world of the mind. Specifically we need to distance ourselves from the part that cares. In this example I kept central and close to me the part of me that sees myself as busy because so important and entitled. The more caring part of me that feels conflicted and sees the difficulty when I act in environmentally destructive ways, was kept at a distance by a stance that in effect, says, 'don't bother this busy person with these small conflicts and concerns.'

The culture comes in at the point where I might keep the more caring part close by me, face the conflict and mourn the false idea I can banish pain by rearranging my mental furniture. The culture is firmly on the side of using any argument and any means to keep me in the uncaring dissociated mindset, split off from the part of me that cares[xvii].

Our false belief supports a picture of the world as a place where nothing is lacking and nothing needs to be given up. When we see our idealized picture assailed by weird weather, food shortages and desperate climate

refugees, we, the entitled ones, believe we can and will still find ways to carry on as usual. Our culture protects this false belief at all costs.

We all want a fairy godmother

The fairy story of Cinderella clearly conveys what is involved with the false belief that real problems can be magically solved through acts of omnipotent thought. Cinderella is exploited with a hard life, no real prospects and no freedom. Her position is grim; she has no invitation to the ball, no entitlement. Then a fairy godmother appears.

"The fairy godmother said to Cinderella, fetch me a pumpkin. Her godmother hollowed it out and tapped it with her magic wand, and the pumpkin was changed in a flash into a beautiful golden carriage. Then she told Cinderella to fetch six mice that she turned into beautiful dapple mouse-grey horses. Next she waved her wand over a plump rat and changed it into a coachman. Six lizards were changed into footmen. The fairy godmother said to Cinderella, "well then, now you have all you need for going to the ball. Doesn't that please you?" [xviii]

This fairy story conveys the peculiar mental state that our culture promotes when it fosters the delusion that difficulties can be instantly 'fixed and removed. In my example, my real position was in the kitchen facing my disgust at the way the global economy is framed, struggling with trying to make moral choices within this framework, facing the abject position this system truly places me in and how little entitlement to care and be caring it offers me, and allowing this contact with reality to strengthen my will to oppose this system wherever and whenever I can. Instead, I waved a magic wand, transformed my inner world into one where I was self importantly, busily, off to the palace, the place where I am spared moral pain and anxiety.

Cinderella's only two options are a world of grime and exploitation or a fairytale world of imaginary riches. This is split, idealized, black and white, either/or, thinking in which the only options are being abject or special. Our culture promotes black and white thinking. It encourages identification with celebrities, who are perfect, ideal and entitled, and it lets us know if not in the special in-group, we are abjectly non-entitled to any consideration. The false idea is we can instantly join an idealized in-group through an act of thought, by waving a mental wand.

Idealization undermines our will to act. It falsely leaves us believing that being not ideal means being abject; also because it is highly self centered, it blocks us factoring in the effects of billon of us acting in the same way. Idealization also blocks the mourning that comes with facing reality: hey presto, everything is as it was; no need to mourn.

Being pulled into idealization is very different to having ideals. Idealization is regressive whereas having ideals supports growth and mental development. Ideals constitute our noble most moral self. We may not be particularly conscious of our ideals, but they are there in the background of things and they guide us towards behaving in a moral way. Being in touch with ideals requires humility as it involves seeing where, realistically, one falls short of them. In this position one's focus tends to be more on how the other is feeling than how the self is feeling. Having ideals helps one to see how one is treating others and what it might feel like to them to be in a relationship with us.

The culture of uncare attacks our ideals as our ideals help us resist the pull to idealization[xix].

The New Imagination

The people walking to Paris right now for COP 21 and the people doing all they can to combat climate change are powered by a new imagination. This is the caring imagination we need to build a sustainable world. It is an imagination guided by ideals of caring behaviour and it sees the ugliness and destructiveness behind idealization[xx].

This imagination has psychological elements that have been in place as long as there have been people. In this sense the new imagination is in part a very old imagination. It is also new, as only in the last 50 odd years have we grasped that our collective way of behaving is destabilizing the earth systems we depend on. It is *very new* because only now do we grasp at a more feeling level that tackling climate change means addressing that it is caused by humans, which means all of us. We were told this in the late 1970's but we never really took what it meant on board.

Homer's described care's ancient struggle with uncare in the Iliad:

destructiveness, sure-footed and strong, races around the world doing harm, followed haltingly by … (care), which is lame, wrinkled, has difficulty seeing and goes to great lengths trying to put things right.

Homer. The Iliad, Book 9:11, lines 502ff[xxi].

Here care has admirable qualities but is too weak. Uncare, like a self-centered, triumphant, toddler runs amok with care, like an ineffectual parent, endlessly trying to clear up uncare's messes.

Care in the new imagination is more authoritative and firm. It sees the problem cannot be addressed from within the established order of things[xxii]. It sees the need to establish firm, legally enforceable and effectively monitored, frameworks of care that can contain uncare and stop it from gaining the upper hand. It stands up to uncare, does not give way to uncare's persuasive arguments, or appease uncare, or allow uncare gradually to corrupt its ideals. It knows there is too much at stake and too little time left. The new imagination is care come of age. It represents the moment the human race grows up and faces reality with real accounting and real arithmetic.

The new imagination is historically new because only now, with scientific and technological advances and satellite pictures, can we more fully appreciate the Earth's otherness, majesty, fragility, limits, and as comprising complex interconnecting dynamic systems that support life. All this enables us to love the Earth more fully and in a more mature way, and be very concerned to see the Earth so damaged. The new imagination helps us face our true dependency on and indebtedness to the Earth. It opens our eyes to the need to share resources with other humans and other species living now and in the future.

It helps us give up and mourn the narrow- minded phantasy of the Earth as an idealized breast/toilet mother to exploit and think we can control. It helps us face we have no magic wand to fix damage we cause and we need to fix what damage we can in real ways.

It recognizes we are a unique generation, in a new situation, tasked with a heavy burden of care about climate change. The last generation did not have the full picture and if we leave taking care to the next generation or even to ourselves tomorrow, it will be too late.[xxiii] It recognizes we face a full-blown emergency but also knows we can address it, with existing technology and with our existing knowledge of mind and of culture.

The new imagination is already flowering in people right around the world. That it has yet has insufficient political legitimacy is not to underestimate its huge strength.

Conclusion

We have only recently begun to take in that climate change, being 'human caused', means all of us carry our share in responsibility for addressing the damage. While this is hard and painful to take in, it is not cause for despair. We have the means and the will to address the damage, but to do so we need to see that damage clearly and appreciate that it has been to our own hearts and minds as well as to mother earth.

This is the text of a presentation given to the conference organised by Confer The Psychology of Inspired Collective Action at the Tavistock Centre, London on November 21st 2015.

Also available on this site is Paul Hoggett's paper from the same event: Sustainable Activism

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[i] Daniel Barenboim (on BBC2 TV's Newsnight 18.8.14) put it that, "*We have to continue and when we don't believe we have to make (ourselves) believe and eventually we can make way*"

[ii] For more on the culture of uncare, see http://www.sallyweintrobe.com

[iii] See Hoggett, P. (2012). Climate Change in a perverse culture. In Weintrobe, S. (2012). (ed) *Engaging with Climate Change: Psychoanalytic and Interdisciplinary Perspectives.* Routledge: London and New York for a discussion of disavowal of climate change by establishing virtual targets for reducing carbon emission without intention to meet them. The UK Green Deal is a good example.

[iv] The phrase "reality-based community" first appeared in a October 17, 2004 *New York Times* article by Ron Suskind titled, "Faith, Certainty and the Presidency of George W. Bush." The full quote by an aide of GW Bush, refers to the reality-based community as a thing of the past. "The reality-based community believes that solutions emerge from a judicious study of discernible reality. … that's not the way the world really works anymore. We are an empire now and … we create our own reality". The quote is often attributed to Karl Rove.

[v] See Keene, J. in Weintrobe, S. (2012). (ed) *Engaging with Climate Change: Psychoanalytic and Interdisciplinary Perspectives.* Routledge: London and New York fr the idea of the Earth as a breast/toilet mother.

[vi] Ro Randall called this the 'No of Nature'. See Randall, R. (2009). "Loss and Climate Change: the cost of parallel narratives". *Ecopsychology*: 1 (3) 118-129.

[vii] See Hugh's War on Waste, first shown on BBC1 TV on 4.11.15

[viii] See Rosie Boycott, food advisor to the Mayor of London, in the Huffington Post (18.11.2015) who reports that "roughly a third of the food grown worldwide is wasted. The scale of that waste is staggering. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, food wasted globally would be enough to end world hunger multiple times over. If food waste was a country, it would be the third largest carbon emitter after the US and China". http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/rosie-boycott/food-waste-supermarkets_b_8581468.html

[ix] Laurel's catch phrase in the Laurel and Hardy films was actually, " Well, here's another nice mess you've gotten me into." In referring to the mess we are in, I have shifted this from one side blaming the other (which is usually what happens when people start looking at a mess) to a situation of perverse collusion.

[x] Globalization as such was not the problem. The problem was the mindset driving it. See Weintrobe, S. (2015). The Culture of Uncare, Bb Gosling Memorial lecture, Bridge Foundation Bristol. http://www.sallyweintrobe.com/category/talks-interviews/

[xi] See Piketty, Thomas. (2014). *Capital in the Twenty First Century*.

[xii] For an account of the way globalization undermined legal frameworks of care, see Naomi Klein's (2014) *This changes everything*. Penguin: New York

[xiii] We are currently addressed predominantly as consumers of generic services, not as passengers on trains, pupils at school, patients in hospitals, shoppers, readers of books and so on.

[xiv] Thatcher for instance said, "I came to office with one deliberate intent: to change Britain from a dependent to a self-reliant society—from a give-it-to-me, to a do-it-yourself nation".[xiv] Her sleight of hand was to conflate dependence with passivity in a way designed to leave people feeling that to acknowledge their true dependencies and true social obligations was to reveal an unhealthy passivity. See Speech to Small Business Bureau Conference Feb 8th 1984. http://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/105617

[xv] See Weintrobe, S. (2015). *The new imagination in the culture of uncare*. Keynote address to Sheffield School of Architecture International Conference 10 – 12 Sept 2015: "Architecture and Resilience on a Human Scale". http://www.sallyweintrobe.com/10-sept-2015-the-new-imagination-in-a-culture-of-uncare/

[xvi] On creating the distanced other, see: Cohen, S. (2000) States of Denial: Knowing about Atrocities and Suffering. Polity Press: London; and Weintrobe, S. (2012). On the love of nature and on human nature in Weintrobe (2012) (ed).

[xvii] For instance many of my social groups would tend to say, "don't be so hard on yourself; your tiny individual actions are not going to save the world; it's all hopeless anyway/technological solutions will be found so there is nothing to worry about." Also, the media keeps the big picture off the front page, and so on. All these positions support business as usual. For more detail about this, see talk and interviews section of sallyweintrobe.com

[xviii] This description of the fairy story is taken from Janine Chasseguet-Smirgel, (1985) *Ego Ideal: Psychoanalytic Essay on the Malady of the Ideal.*Psychoanalyst Chasseguet-Smirgel brilliantly captures and discusses the essence of disavowal.

[xix] For example Margaret Thatcher's attack on ideals by promoting individual self-interest and undermining people's identity as citizens.

[xx] Pope Francis in his encyclical said we have turned the earth during this era into a pile of filth.

http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html

[xxi] translation by Michael Brearley, unpublished.

[xxii] Naomi Klein brilliantly explains why in *This Changes Everything*. op.cit.

[xxiii] "We are the first generation to feel the impact of climate change and the last generation that can do something about it." Obama, The Guardian 4.7.15. But Obama does not appear to have embraced the New Imagination. At the same time as saying this, he gave Shell Oil the go ahead to drill for oil in the Arctic The danger is this is an instance of the 'as if' false belief that the problem can be fixed in virtual not real ways. (Shell have since abandoned the idea of drilling in the Arctic, but other oil companies are showing interest).

CLIMATE CHANGE AND A COUPLE OF NEEDY CLIENTS

Published: 16 March 2016

"We're the only species on the planet ever to document our own extinction"

Quote from the Guardian 20th November 2007

The Guardian, 20 Nov 2007As therapist to therapist, let me get straight to the point. I need some help with a couple of clients. My first challenging client is a mother of a certain age, indeed a grandmother and great grandmother multiple times over. Wise, wrinkled and worn, she's a tough old bird who over a very long life has survived a lot of ups and downs. Her problem now is her large and chaotic family who still live in her house and have nowhere else to move.
So far, she's been the archetypal Good-Enough Mother, trying to teach her children by example – and with the occasional slap on the wrist – the consequences of unsustainable behaviour. But her family don't get the plot. They have little idea of healthy boundaries, or hygiene, or the importance of delaying gratification. They eat and drink the fridge empty the minute she puts something in it, and they're heating the house and burning fuel and resources like there's no tomorrow, squabbling incessantly that all the mess is someone else's fault.

Our elderly but previously robust client is finding it increasingly hard to cope, and she fears that her family's dysfunction will be the end of all of them. We're her therapist. What do we do? So, to our second client –and I suspect you may be grasping by now where I'm taking us. This man is one representative member of our first client's household, who's been told by doctors that if he doesn't address his self-destructive behaviour – his smoking, his drinking, his addiction to fatty and sugary foods, his lack of exercise, his thinking only of his own immediate pleasure – then he's going to die. Probably quite painfully and probably quite soon.

On the bright side, this client has listened to the doctors sufficiently to come into therapy. He's perfectly intelligent, but his response is not untypical. *Can't be happening to me. Let's get a second opinion. A third. A fourth.* Perhaps if he tries minor adjustments to his lifestyle, he can avoid the radical surgery, the chemo and radiotherapy, the massive life changes which the doctors say he must make.

As this client's therapist, our dilemma is how to help him to realise that the doctors are right and that he really must change.

I guess you know by now who I'm talking about. Client one is of course Gaia[1], our Earth Mother, the planet we live on. Overcrowded, running out of resources, but above all heating up at potentially catastrophic speed as global warming gases build up in the atmosphere.

Our second client is ourselves – humankind. Desperate for that second, third, fiftieth scientific opinion which will tell us that the prognosis isn't so bad. That maybe it's not our fault. That maybe the earth just does heat up and cool down once in a while, quite naturally, that just some small adjustments will be enough, and that we'll get through this. We all want to be lied to about climate change. It's just too big. Right up front, then, my appeal in dealing with these two clients. How do we calibrate the message that things, this time, really, honestly, are very serious? How do we avoid propelling our client straight from denial to despair? How, in the words of a recent *Guardian* article, does one cry wolf, but gently?[2] How do we break this bad news? There's already good evidence that on matters of climate change, as the media and politicians begin to talk more of what is happening, people are swinging straight from ignorance and denial through alarm to numbing and weary boredom. You will have heard the arguments. The Greenies and other Cassandras have constantly got it wrong. The ozone layer, acid rain, nuclear power or

nuclear winter, the Millennium Bug, and now this. Just another scare story. We just don't want to listen any more. And anyway, there's nothing we can do.

The debate is over: here are the facts

I'll return to the issue of breaking bad news, but let me for a moment be that boy coming off the hills and seriously warning of the wolf. The truth is that if we – I, and you, as well as the Americans, the Chinese, all of them out there – carry on living and consuming, driving, burning, thinking and just living as we currently do, and do not make massive changes very soon indeed, then human civilisation will end, if not in our own lifetimes then possibly as early as in those of our children or grandchildren. It's that bad – in effect a terminal diagnosis that raises profound questions about how we as humans order our affairs. Our politics, our economics (the systemic failure, as described in a report last year to the British government by Sir Nicholas Stern[3], of the market system), our thought systems, the way we elect our governments, the way we practise journalism or organise our health services. None of which are, if we're honest, truly fit for purpose for the challenges of the 21st century. The truth is that it won't be enough just to drive a Prius hybrid, change our light bulbs to energy savers or ban plastic bags or set up a climate change helpline. If the most serious of consequences are to be averted, all those things must be done and much, much more. The arguments and the evidence are now clear, but for perhaps all too understandable but potentially catastrophic reasons of human psychology, the message is neither truly getting through nor being acted on. In a nutshell, and as has been powerfully argued by the former American Vice-President Al Gore in his Oscar-winning film *An Inconvenient Truth*, the debate over whether climate change is happening, and whether it's human-induced, is over. That's a bald scientific fact which we as therapists in particular now need to understand – confirmed in the plainest of language by the respected Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) in its fourth report lastmonth[4]. Just as there was once heated disagreement about whether the sun revolved round the earth or vice versa, or over the nature of gravity, this matter is resolved. The disagreements are no longer about whether global warming is happening or whether it's caused mainly by humankind, but rather about just how much time we have left to correct things, and whether it might already be too late. Scientists advising the IPCC[5] talk of a window of less than 10 years – TEN YEARS! – to start making the massive global changes that might give humankind a chance of survival. In the meantime, ordinary people the world over continue with their ordinary lives as if nothing untoward was happening. Coverage of the last IPCC report in most British media lasted just one day, before they returned to business, celebrity and Christmas preparations as usual. True, newspapers, radio and television are increasingly reporting strange happenings in nature – unusual floods here, unprecedented drought there, the disappearance of butterflies, collapses of bee populations, Arctic melting, the disappearance of ski runs in the Alps, hawthorns blossoming in the autumn. But where is the comprehensive and universal articulation of an overarching, corrective narrative of imminent danger which might give ordinary people the motivation and the tools to respond properly? One is reminded of tourists in Sri Lanka at Christmas 2005 who excitedly and naively, and tragically, explored the rockpools uncovered by are treating sea withou trealising that this meant they were about to be hit by a Tsunami.

Naming what is happening

Let me pause for a brief moment. Are you, like our second client, finding this difficult to read and to hear? Is this something you don't really want to know? Perhaps you would rather put this magazine aside at this point, or turn your attention to something less disturbing. In naming what's happening in ordinary conversations, and with clients, I'm acutely aware how easily people can be shut down and put off. So the temptation is to sugar the pill, to focus on the opportunities rather than the threats. But without a felt and not just a thought understanding of how urgent this is, will people really change? I fear not. So, please bear with me as we return to what's actually now a very straightforward narrative. In the space of less than 300 years, from the start of the industrial revolution to when very much later this century we might achieve a carbon neutral global economy, we are in th eprocess of pumping back into the atmosphere,

through the burning of oil, gas and coal, an amount of carbon which Gaia took 300 million years to capture. That's a process one million times faster than that which laid those reserves down. Gaia managed for a while to absorb the extra, but she's showing every sign of no longer being able to cope. She has a fever. Even with the delayed greenhouse effect of the industrial revolution so far, we're already committed to a global temperature rise of most probably two degrees centigrade. And – this is the really alarming piece – scientists who have been at the forefront o funderstanding how Gaia works, notably James Lovelock[6], now warn of a tipping point, to which we may already be committed, of some two-and-a-half degrees heating, beyond which the feedback mechanisms which have kept the planet cool for millions of years flip, and start to accelerate rather than moderate temperaturerise. The consensus-driven, cautious and measured IPCC continues to argue in its latest report that the current trend of climate change can still be averted, as it puts it, at reasonable cost. But for the first time, it is also now warning of the likelihood, if the world continues with business as usual, of 'abrupt and irreversible impacts'[4].

Irreversible impacts

Let's consider some of those possible impacts. If the Earth approaches six degrees of heating, which is within the IPCC's range offorecasts for this century, scenarios being taken very seriously[7] could include:

- o Extensive melting of the ice caps, and, combined with the heat-driven expansion of sea volume, sea-level rises of several metres. That would irreversibly flood coastlines and some entire countries, and cities such as Shanghai, London and New York. The consequences for the global economy and humanwelfare would be dire.
- o The melting of tundra and permafrost, and the release into the atmosphere of huge quantities of methane, a much more potent greenhouse gas than carbon dioxide.
- o The drying out and possibly the wholesale burning of the Amazon rainforests and their transformation into dry savannah.
- o The disappearance of Tibet's and South America's glaciers, and with them the summer river flows that water the agriculture o fhundreds of millions of people.
- o The desertification of Northern China, North Africa, Southern Europe and much of the Western and Central United States.
- o The death of carbon absorbing algae in the oceans and the collapse of fish and food chains as the seas warm dramatically.
- o All of this leading to hundreds of millions of refugees on the move, and death on a scarcely imaginable scale.
- o And if you think it may not be as bad as scientists are warning, almost every indicator of change is happening faster than the previous worst-case scenarios.

So what has this got to do with therapy?

Let us consider again the clients with whom we opened, and the analogy of breaking bad news. As any doctor is now trained to understand, bad news – of the death of a loved one, for example, or of a terminal diagnosis – has to be conveyed with compassion and kindness, but also clearly, honestly and directly, without beating about the bush. The bearer of such news can't make the fact of the message any less painfu lto the person receiving it. One does not amputate a leg in

slices. As a therapist, you may indeed already have had clients coming to you with fears of what climate change will mean, for themselves and especially for their grandchildren. How do you respond? I have no data to prove it, but I can imagine that quite soon, within years and not decades, and possibly as a result of some particularly serious natural disaster, public opinion on a global level will at last begin to grasp the meaning of what is happening, and suddenly be very, very afraid. Speaking with Carl Jung, we may experience a seismic shift inconsciousness as a presently hidden collective awareness breaks the surface. And we must profoundly hope that the shift does not come too late. So, if as therapists and counsellors – and, indeed, as journalists writing that first draft of history – we presume to be at the leading edge of human consciousness, I believe we should prepare ourselves in three important ways.

We must first inform ourselves of the simple science of what is happening, and address our own denial and avoidance – and be ready to deal with the existential fears for ourselves and those we love which will be revealed when we do that.

Second, as therapists and as fellow human beings, we must seek to help our two opening clients – Gaia and her children – to work together to understand the threats that face them, and together empower both ourselves and those who govern us to make the choices and changes that might yet avert the worst.

Third, some might wonder whether there's any point in engaging with therapy if things are so bad. I think that's wrong. Just as we would continue to work lovingly in a hospice, for example, with someone who is dying, we also need to work lovingly with each other and our clients as we openly address the meaning of climate change. I am personally not optimistic, but we must still hope that a miracle cure may yet be found, or that our immune systems will mobilise in time to fight the infection. In addressing the dangers we now face as individuals, as families, as communities and as a species, we need to show realism, clarity and courage, but also congruence and compassion. Whatever the outcome.

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This article is abridged from a draft prepared for the December 1 London conference of the BACP's Association of Independent Practitioners, on the theme of Trauma, Keeping Cool in a Crisis.References:

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A DEPTH PSYCHOLOGY EXPLORATION OF CLIMATE CHANGE

Published: 17 May 2016

How a Jungian perspective can shed light on our reluctance to engage with the issue and how Jungian Psychology can break through these

barriers and actively engage in creating a more flourishing world.

90 minute webinar by Climate scientist, Jungian analyst, and author, Dr. Jeffrey Kiehl. Published on Mar 29, 2016.

Dr Kiehl's book Facing Climate Change: An Integrated Path to the Future, Columbia U. Press was puplished 1st March 2016

https://youtu.be/Wdt2UrqGq3c

SOCIALLY CONSTRUCTED SILENCE? PROTECTING POLICYMAKERS FROM THE UNTHINKABLE

Published: 27 June 2016

The scientific community is profoundly uncomfortable with the storm of political controversy that climate research is attracting. What's going on?
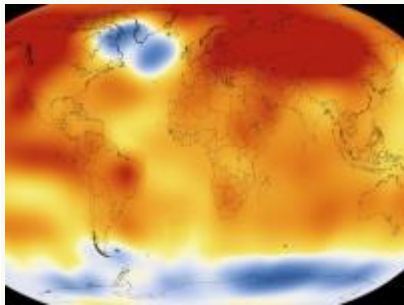
Some things can't be said easily in polite company. They cause offence or stir up intense anxiety. Where one might expect a conversation, what actually occurs is what the sociologist Eviator Zerubavel calls a 'socially constructed silence.'

In his book *Don't Even Think About It*, George Marshall argues that after the fiasco of COP 15 at Copenhagen and 'Climategate'—when certain sections of the press claimed (wrongly as it turned out) that leaked emails of researchers at the University of East Anglia showed that data had been manipulated—climate change became a taboo subject among most politicians, another socially constructed silence with disastrous implications for the future of climate action.

In 2013-14 we carried out interviews with leading UK climate scientists and communicators to explore how they managed the ethical and emotional challenges of their work. While the shadow of Climategate still hung over the scientific community, our analysis drew us to the conclusion that the silence Marshall spoke about went deeper than a reaction to these specific events.

Instead, a picture emerged of a community which still identified strongly with an idealised picture of scientific rationality, in which the job of scientists is to get on with their research quietly and dispassionately. As a consequence, this community is profoundly uncomfortable with the storm of political controversy that climate research is now attracting.

The scientists we spoke to were among a minority who had become engaged with policy makers, the media and the general public about their work. A number of them described how other colleagues would bury themselves in the excitement and rewards of research, denying that they had any responsibility beyond developing models or crunching the numbers. As one researcher put it, "so many scientists just want to do their research and as soon as it has some relevance, or policy implications, or a journalist is interested in their research, they are uncomfortable."

We began to see how for many researchers, this idealised picture of scientific practice might also offer protection at an unconscious level from the emotional turbulence aroused by the politicisation of climate change.

In her classic study of the 'stiff upper lip' culture of nursing in the UK in the 1950s, the psychoanalyst and social researcher Isobel Menzies Lyth developed the idea of 'social defences against anxiety,' and it seems very relevant here. A social defence is an organised but unconscious way of managing the anxieties that are inherent in certain occupational roles. For example, the practice of what was then called the 'task list' system fragmented nursing into a number of routines, each one executed by a different person—hence the 'bed pan nurse', the 'catheter nurse' and so on.

Ostensibly, this was done to generate maximum efficiency, but it also protected nurses from the emotions that were aroused by any real human involvement with patients, including anxiety, something that was deemed unprofessional by the nursing culture of the time. Like climate scientists, nurses were meant to be objective and dispassionate. But this idealised notion of the professional nurse led to the impoverishment of patient care, and meant that the most emotionally mature nurses were the least likely to complete their training.

While it's clear that social defences such as hyper-rationality and specialisation enable climate scientists to get on with their work relatively undisturbed by public anxieties, this approach also generates important problems. There's a danger that these defences eventually break down and anxiety re-emerges, leaving individuals not only defenceless but with the additional burden of shame and personal inadequacy for not maintaining that stiff upper lip. Stress and burnout may then follow.

Although no systematic research has been undertaken in this area, there is anecdotal evidence of such burnout in a number of magazine articles like those by Madeleine Thomas and Faith Kearns, in which climate scientists speak out about the distress that they or others have experienced, their depression at their findings, and their dismay at the lack of public and policy response.

Even if social defences are successful and anxiety is mitigated, this very success can have unintended consequences. By treating scientific findings as abstracted knowledge without any personal meaning, climate researchers have been slow to take responsibility for their own carbon footprints, thus running the risk of being exposed for hypocrisy by the denialist lobby. One research leader candidly reflected on this failure: "Oh yeah and the other thing [that's] very, very important I think is that we ought to change the way we do research so we're sustainable in the research environment, which we're not now because we fly everywhere for conferences and things."

The same defences also contribute to the resistance of most climate scientists to participation in public engagement or intervention in the policy arena, leaving these tasks to a minority who are attacked by the media and even by their own colleagues. One of our interviewees who has played a major role in such engagement recalled being criticised by colleagues for "prostituting science" by exaggerating results in order to make them "look sexy." "You know we're all on the same side," she continued, "why are we shooting arrows at each other, it is ridiculous."

The social defences of logic, reason and careful debate were of little use to the scientific community in these cases, and their failure probably contributed to internal conflicts and disagreements when anxiety could no longer be contained—so they found expression in bitter arguments instead. This in turn makes those that *do* engage with the public sphere excessively cautious, which encourages collusion with policy makers who are reluctant to embrace the radical changes that are needed.

As one scientist put it when discussing the goal agreed at the Paris climate conference of limiting global warming to no more than 2°C: "There is a mentality in [the] group that speaks to policy makers that there are some taboo topics that you cannot talk about. For instance the two degree target on climate change...Well the emissions are going up like this (the scientist points upwards at a 45 degree angle), so two degrees at the moment seems completely unrealistic. But you're not allowed to say this."

Worse still, the minority of scientists who *are* tempted to break the silence on climate change run the risk of being seen as whistleblowers by their colleagues. Another research leader suggested that—in private—some of the most senior figures in the field believe that the world is heading for a rise in temperature closer to six degrees than two.

"So repeatedly I've heard from researchers, academics, senior policy makers, government chief scientists, [that] they can't say these things publicly," he told us, "I'm sort of deafened, deafened by the silence of most people who work in the area that we work in, in that they will not criticise when there are often evidently very political assumptions that underpin some of the analysis that comes out."

It seems that the idea of a 'socially constructed silence' may well apply to crucial aspects of the interface between climate scientists and policy makers. If this is the case then the implications are very serious. Despite the hope that COP 21 has generated, many people are still sceptical about whether the rhetoric of Paris will be translated into effective action.

If climate change work is stuck at the level of 'symbolic policy making'—a set of practices designed to make it look as though political elites are doing something while actually doing nothing—then it becomes all the more important for the scientific community to find ways of abandoning the social defences we've described and speak out as a whole, rather than leaving the task to a beleaguered and much-criticised minority.

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 This paper appeared originally on 6th June 2016 in the Transformation section of the Open Democracy website https://www.opendemocracy.net/transformation

Image Credit: By NASA Scientific Visualization Studio/Goddard Space Flight Center. Public Domain, Wikimedia.org.

CLI-FI: IMAGINING OURSELVES IN A CLIMATE-CHANGED WORLD

My hope is that cli fi novels and movies will play a big role in preparing humanity for what is coming down the road… Dan Bloom, cli-fi.net, 2015
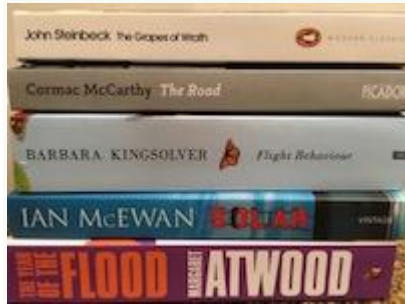
 One of the great gifts of this kind of fiction could be its ability to make the unthinkable more proximate. John Steinbeck, The Grapes of Wrath, 1939

The idea that the human practice of storytelling can help us engage with situations we would otherwise find too difficult or distressing to contemplate has been with us for a long time. As psychologists and psychotherapists, we witness on a daily basis the crucial role of narration, and above all of narration in the context of relationship, in an individual's struggle to come to terms with painful inner and outer realities. The stories our patients need to tell are not so much the general overarching stories ('my mother abused me') as the detailed specific stories ('my mother chased me up to my bedroom and gouged me with the ring she wore, under my T-shirt where the teachers wouldn't see.')

Fiction offers us a succession of such stories, personified in characters we can identify with or rage against and a number of practitioners have explored the ways in which it can help both therapists and patients. Martin Weegmann, who works with substance misusers, asserted recently that he has learned as much from Eugene O'Neill's harrowing and evocative plays as from the psychology and psychotherapy literature (1). Margaret and Michael Rustin have examined in detail the role of fiction in individual inner lives and in society more generally, making explicit links between fiction and the psychoanalytic work of rendering the unbearable bearable (2) (3).

The relevance of the general principle of storying to the specific situation of climate change was crystallised in 2008 with the coining of the term 'cli-fi' (an abbreviation of 'climate fiction'), introduced by journalist and climate change activist, Dan Bloom, who founded the cli-fi.net website. Bloom states explicitly that he does not own the 'cli-fi' term and that the genre should and will find its own way.

This article is by way of a review, a look at what cli-fi has to offer and how the genre has faired in the first eight years of its existence. In view of my particular range of knowledge and experience, I will be writing about novels rather than films, TV shows, poetry or plays – which is not to suggest that these are in any way less important.

The story so far is nothing if not complex. Some critics have treated 'cli-fi' as an offshoot of science fiction while others have accepted it as a stand-alone genre. Scott Thrill, a former WIRED magazine writer, has described cli-fi as a 'critical prism' rather than a literary genre (4). Some authors whose stories evolve in a context of a climate-changed world have embraced the term 'cli-fi', while others have disregarded it, explicitly rejected it or made contradictory statements. One of my favourite authors, Margaret Atwood, stated at one point that she preferred to refer to her work as 'speculative fiction' but later sent a tweet containing the term 'cli-fi' which immediately extended the reach and popularity of the term. The wheel is still in spin, the situation characterised by movement, energy and uncertainty.

The work that has emerged under the cli-fi umbrella is extremely varied. At one end of the spectrum is post-apocalyptic writing, portraying a future where society has been devastated by war, disease or environmental disaster of known or unknown cause, for example 'The Road' (5), 'The Hunger Games' (6) and 'Waterworld' (7). Standing in contrast to post-apocalyptic offerings - and growing in number - are books set in a time of transition, in an altered but still imaginable near future, for example 'The Heatstroke Line' (8), 'Flight Behaviour' (9) and 'I'm With The Bears' (10). Here, the reader will encounter no zombies, mutants or super-natural forces. Instead, he or she will have the opportunity to engage with imaginable near-future scenarios, exploring them through the eyes and actions of the characters.

As might be expected, the quality of the literary offerings is similarly varied. Some are written primarily for entertainment, with an imagined disaster serving merely as a device for wiping away the complexities of modern civilisation and paving the way for a series of spills and thrills. Others qualify as serious literature and are deeply thought provoking. A good cli-fi novel does what every good novel does – takes us inside the mind of one or more characters who find themselves facing certain challenges, such that we feel we are there with them, living through their trials and tribulations and experiencing the ways in which they themselves are changed by the situations they encounter. We do not need to re-invent the discipline of literary criticism in order to evaluate a cli-fi novel: each work can be judged on its own merits.

At the same time, there seem to be two pitfalls to which cli-fi is especially susceptible and which have been repeatedly highlighted by on-line reviewers. The first is the pitfall of didacticism. For example, one reviewer posted this comment on Annie Proulx's novel 'Barkskins' (11): 'Yes, the historical detail was quite interesting, and I learned about the early history of logging, but the book was written, it seems to me, to convey a message rather than out of a desire to write an absorbing and compelling saga.' Another reviewer expressed the same sentiment in stronger terms. 'This is environmental and ecological fiction at its most didactic and, for me, it was a lesson I soon tired of hearing. I ended up skipping large chunks of the book because I was basically bored.' Harsh words for Annie Proulx, an acknowledged writer of excellent literature.

The second pitfall, particularly for authors with a background in science or technology, is a tendency towards long-winded descriptions and explanations of 'stuff'. The following comment formed part of an otherwise favourable review of Julie Owen's 'The Boy Who Fell From The Sky' (12). 'Because this book presents a fully realized future vision, there is a fair amount of exposition. I found some of this exposition to be heavy-handed, breaking away from the scene to explain functionality or design specifics.' Another reviewer complains about authors who 'ram facts into the text' and cites this as a common problem with cli-fi literature.

Looking again to our experience as psychotherapists and the ways in which our patients' stories emerge and evolve, in small, partial and always provisional narratives, we might conclude that there is an inherent problem with the idea of 'a fully realized future vision', a view shared by Bill McKibben, who notes in the introduction to the short story collection 'I'm With The Bears': 'The problem with writing about global warming may be that the truth is larger than usually makes for good fiction.' (13) Too much information, whether in the form of political context or technological explanation comes at the expense of literature that can truly engage us and take us on an emotional and thoughtful journey we would not have made on our own. The difference is perhaps akin to the difference Bion describes between 'knowing' – as a consequence of subjective experience – and 'knowing about' – as a consequence of acquiring factual knowledge. (14)

Finally, what of the potential cli-fi readership? Are cli-fi authors writing only for the 'converted', for those already tuned in to the scale of the crisis, or can the literature reach out to a wider audience? In thinking this through, I was interested in comments made by Guardian journalist, Anna Karpf, in which she described herself as a 'climate change ignorer' (15). She explained that she fully accepted the reality of climate change but also found herself avoiding thinking about it because of the overwhelming sense of helplessness she felt when she did so. Most of us are probably 'ignorers', at least some of the time. We cannot function properly in our work and relationships if we are continually overwhelmed with distress or anger or despair, hence we have to find ways to regulate our emotional states or, in neuroscience terms, our levels of arousal. As readers will be only too aware, both denial and ignoring serve this purpose but at the expense of

thoughtful engagement and ameliorative action. We continue to function in our day to day lives while in the wider world the situation remains unaddressed and becomes ever more threatening.

Against this backdrop, climate fiction opens a window to knowing about the frightening and distressing situations heading towards us without our becoming overwhelmed. We can put a book down to give ourselves time to process what we have read. We can pause to remind ourselves that these things are happening to invented characters, not to us or family members or friends. We can inhabit the dual world offered by fiction, where one is both really and truly in the situation of a character while at the same time in one's own armchair at home. We have the opportunity to explore our emotional responses to the events that occur and exercise our problem-solving skills: 'What would I do if…?'

There are signs that the idea of entering a fictional altered world in order to engage with the difficulties and uncertainties associated with climate change is gaining ground. The book-selling giant Amazon now includes 'cli-fi' as a separate genre category, albeit without the inclusion of some of the titles we might expect to find there. Cli-fi modules have become part of the literature curriculum at more than one hundred colleges in the US, in various German universities and at the University of Cambridge and University College London in the UK. The first (as far as is known) cli-fi dedicated community book group has formed in Minnesota. And the first 'how to' book: 'Saving the world one word at a time', (16) has made its appearance – surely a sign of a coming of age!

Developments such as these have lead some to speak of a 'very energized time, where people in literature have just as much to say as people who are in hard science fields, or technology and design fields, or various social-science approaches to these things.' (17) On-line attacks on reporters, authors and course leaders, accusing them of peddling propaganda and indoctrinating students and readers, lend indirect support to the idea that these developments *are* substantial and important – important enough for climate change deniers to attempt to discredit those who raise their heads above the parapet. It was recently reported in the New York Times (05/08/2016) that members of 'American Rising Squared', an arm of the Republican research group, have been following and filming Bill McKibben and his daughter and 'naming and shaming' them as hypocrites on the internet by posting videos of them, for example, stepping in and out of their car. McKibben describes finding himself constantly on edge. 'To be watched so much is a kind of never-ending nightmare.' To be a cli-fi author, it seems, requires not only imagination and excellent writing skills but also a fair measure of courage.

Mutual support between people working in different disciplines, each in his or her own way confronting the narrative of climate change denial, is crucially important and cli-fi, along with reporting and campaigning, has its particular part to play. Fiction writers imagine their stories into being against a backdrop of facts and figures provided by scientists. Scientists increasingly acknowledge that facts and figures alone are not enough to bring about change and look to writers to play their part. 'We await the great play, movie or novel on climate change. Something to stir the soul, like John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath* did during the US Dust Bowl era.' (18)

From an author's point of view (I am currently working on a cli-fi novel), there is a desire not only to write an engaging and thought-provoking book but also to be *relevant.* In the 1930s, environmental destruction in the form of soil erosion was Steinbeck's relevant theme. In the 2010s**,** to be relevant is to have in mind a hotter/wetter/dryer/stormier world and, crucially, the socially and politically fractious situations that will arise as the changes gather pace and test our capacity to adapt to the very limits. In coining and promulgating the 'cli-fi' descriptor, Dan Bloom has done us all – authors and readers alike - a great service. An umbrella has been opened under which books and films and plays and TV series that engage with the greatest threat ever to have faced humanity can be gathered - and hence be found.

Maggie Turp August 2nd 2016

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PSYCHOSOCIAL AND CLIMATE PSYCHOLOGY RESEARCH IN IPCC REPORTS

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"Although psychologists have been investigating climate change and related subjects for decades… the value of psychological contributions is not yet widely accepted, nor are psychological insights and findings widely applied"

I write this piece after my second week in my new job at the Technical Support Unit of IPCC Working Group II. The reflections I offer are from a personal perspective, and should not be read as representing the views of the IPCC. I take a look at the position of psychology and psychosocial research in IPCC reports, drawing particular attention to a special report on 1.5 degrees, which is in the early stages of development. This report offers an opportunity to bring psychological dimensions of climate change mitigation and adaptation decision-making into the global frame where it has to date been largely absent. As Swim et al (2011) point out, "Although psychologists have been investigating climate change and related subjects for decades… the value of psychological contributions is not yet widely accepted, nor are psychological insights and findings widely applied" (p246). My analysis of a section of the most recent IPCC Assessment Report (AR5) bears this claim out, and I find it disappointing that not much seems to have changed since the paper was published (see also Clayton et al 2015). But we now have new opportunities to address this situation. As I go on to discuss, there are positive aspects that the climate psychology community can build upon - but it must act fast.

From the perspective of climate psychology, the Fifth Assessment Report (AR5) is a significant development on AR4. I have not analysed the entire report but in the 1150 pages of Part A of Working Group II (impacts, vulnerability & adaptation) contribution to AR5 (IPCC 2014), psychology is mentioned 36 times and has its own short subsection in the chapter on Contexts for Decision Making. Now the references are brief and undetailed with psychology largely listed as a factor in decision-making or mentioned in terms of impacts of climate change (namely psychological distress), but the value of psychology is acknowledged, as for example in this statement: "Decision support must recognize that human psychological dimensions play a crucial role in the way people perceive risks and make decisions" (p852).

As the climate psychology community is well aware, psychological dimensions interact with social factors and contextual forces in highly complex and often unconscious ways to shape cognition and behaviour. Developing understanding of the different types of psychosocial factors, how they influence mitigation and adaptation responses on cognitive, affective and behavioural levels, and how these factors can be strengthened (if adaptive) or inhibited/disrupted (if maladaptive) is vital for supporting adaptive action and for addressing social inertia. Simply informing people that these factors exist is an important first step just because so many psychosocial processes occur below the level of their conscious awareness. Making them visible by naming them enables people to make conscious adaptive changes to the way they respond to climate change and other aspects of ecological crisis, as well as enabling the design of more effective policy interventions. This is why it so important that psychology is included in the IPCC

reports, and especially in the Summary for Policymakers (SPM) as that may be the only part of the report that policymakers actually read. However, in AR5 psychological/psychosocial dimensions are not mentioned in the SPM. I do not know the reasons for this, but the absence helps explain why the situation Swim et al identify is occurring: quite simply there is a self-reinforcing feedback loop in play - if psychology isn't included in the Summary for Policymakers it is less likely to be accepted and applied by policymakers.

Now the new cycle of work to produce the next assessment report (AR6) and a number of special reports presents us with new opportunity. This is within a broader context of a shift within IPCC to focus more on solutions, which is likely to bring more social sciences content in AR6 than previous assessment reports.

The next scheduled report relevant to climate psychology is on 1.5 degrees (SR1.5), which is due out in 2018. This interdisciplinary report was invited by the governments coming out of COP21 last December. The background document prepared for the recent scoping meeting on SR1.5 has much to be excited about. I admit to being surprised about this. Reading it I was particularly fired up by points made about challenging scientific understanding beyond empirical evidence and underlying assumptions, drawing on different knowledge systems including learning from practitioner communities (and although not mentioned explicitly here but it is in AR5 - indigenous knowledge), looking at multiple ways to think of transformation and development, the emphasis on equity and ethical dimensions, and a call to maintain a holistic integrative systems perspective in the writing of the report. It refers to 'psychological' underpinnings of human responses, and 'psychosocial' is included as an area of expertise sought in participants of the scoping meeting. These themes will resonant I'm sure with many in the climate psychology community. A key topic is transformative challenges, which I see as the main area of contribution of psychosocial and climate psychology research. This is a topic that will become even more pertinent as we approach 1.5 degrees warming within the timescale of production of SR1.5, based on current trajectories. A comprehensive discussion of the psychosocial dimensions of mitigation and adaptation decision-making particularly in relation to maladaptive responses, and identifying pathways for overcoming social inertia and resistance, seems an important contribution that climate psychology can make to this report.

The next stage is for governments to reach consensus about the content of SR1.5 and for experts to be nominated as authors for the report. Work on AR6 will also soon start; experts will be nominated to be participants in a scoping meeting.

Now is the time for the climate psychology community to step up and make its presence felt in order to ensure that psychosocial dimensions are represented in the main body of SR1.5 report and in the Summary for Policymakers, as well as in AR6. There is a small window of opportunity because the schedule for SR1.5 at least is quite tight. There are a number of ways to get involved: getting nominated as an author or review editor, or sign up as an expert reviewer of the report. You can also alert those who are selected as authors to your published work so it can be cited in the report. New papers must be submitted for publication by October 2017 and accepted by April 2018. Organisations can also apply to be listed as an 'observer organisation' with the IPCC. This status entitles the organisation to nominate authors. Due to the time it takes for organisations to be approved, organisations starting the process now would not be ready to nominate authors for the special reports but they could for AR6.

Another opportunity is the expert meeting on the science of science communication that is planned in 2018. This will bring new AR6 authors together with climate communications experts, to sensitise authors about the psychological and sociological aspects of climate communication.

To end I wish to mention a further positive development, which is the new post that has been created in the Technical Support Unit of WGII for a specialist in psychosocial research on climate change mitigation and adaptation decision-making. Through a most serendipitous route, I am now employed in this science officer post, where I can draw on the knowledge gained through doing my PhD research on psychosocial factors affecting enactment of pro-environmental values. It is a junior role with a limited sphere of direct influence and with no research or authoring remit but the fact that I am here at all I find quite amazing. Perhaps it is a sign of desperation of climate scientists that despite all the facts and figures they work so hard to

produce, societal inertia is a still a major factor hindering our progress in responding adaptively to the life-threatening situation we have ourselves created.

In this article I have already mentioned disappointment, surprise, amazement and excitement in my new job; I think I would be wise to also expect frustration and despair. But for now I feel encouraged that psychological/psychosocial dimensions of human experience are being brought into the IPCC conversation. The challenge for the climate psychology community is to make sure these aspects are developed in ways that can support the design and implementation of ecologically adaptive policy and socially just decision-making.

For more information about the special report on 1.5 degrees and to view meeting documents visit http://www.ipcc.ch/report/sr15/. The form to apply for observer organisation status is at http://ipcc.ch/pdf/ipcc-principles/ipcc-principles-observer-org.pdf Information about IPCC process is on the main site.

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Nadine Andrews has recently joined the Technical Support Unit of Working Group II (impacts, vulnerability, adaptation) of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. Her role has specific focus on the social sciences and psychology. Prior to joining the IPCC, Nadine worked an an independent researcher, consultant, facilitator and coach using mindfulness and nature based techniques. She is a trained systems thinker and teaches mindfulness meditation and nature connection courses with organisations and the general public when she can. Her PhD is on psychosocial factors affecting enactment of pro-environmental values by individuals in their work to influence practices in the organisation.

ENVOYS OF EARTH: WHAT HORSES TELL US NOW

Published: 28 November 2016

Animal and Human - who is the guide?

Sometimes on this website we publish articles which have a broader environmental focus than climate change. This is one such piece.

In the first part the author examines the phenomenon of equine-assisted therapy, as an example of a revolutionary attitude to other species, in which they are seen as our therapists, teachers, guides, benefactors – in effect, as figures of authority. He describes the ways this is experienced and considers why it is so powerful therapeutically.

In the second part he argues that this position can neglect the other species' real needs for humans to be their guides, carers, etc. He examines contemporary unease with this latter position - among some eco-psychologists for instance - and attempt an integration of these apparent polarities. He includes a description of the states of heightened consciousness which can arise as we move into and beyond a more complete, dialogic partnership with other life.

Although his main focus here is on the human relationship with horses, he draws parallels with statements other writers are making about their discoveries with birds and plant life, implying that what is happening with horses has a wider significance.

I

The Advent of Equine-Assisted Therapy

For every species, it seems, there are individual humans who can feel a profound affinity. Partnerships with crocodiles, tarantulas, bison have all been reported. Mark Cocker (2013) gives eloquent testimony to the heartfelt human connection with birds, as a world-wide, cross cultural and multi-layered phenomenon. Any claim, therefore, that the bond with the horse is in some way unique, is open to challenge. Nevertheless, it can be argued that few other species have stirred the human imagination to the same extent.

The bond between human and equine pervades the spiritual history of mankind. Horses feature prominently in the earliest known cave paintings where they are portrayed with an exactitude and sensitivity which, it seems to me, can only arise from deepest appreciation. Generations of Siberian Shamans reached the otherworld on the back of their spirit horses. Gautama was conducted towards Buddhahood by Kanthaka. Alexander the champion of the European impulse was carried on his conquests by Bucephalus whom he had befriended when the animal seemed untameable to others. Mohammed was conducted on his night journey from Mecca to the Temple Mount at Jerusalem by the steed Buruq. Gawain, when he sought out the Green Knight to embrace and transcend the cycles and seasons of Earth, depended on Gringolet. Christian Rosenkreutz, carrying the secrets of hermetic wisdom, became visible to European culture in the guize of Rembrandt's "Polish Rider" (according to Rudolf Steiner's mysterious account). Jesus Christ – exemplifying the humility which is such a prominent feature of his teaching – entered

Jerusalem on the horse's "lesser" cousin, the donkey. But in a curious echo of the Alexander story, it was one which had never been ridden until he chose it.

Of course, alongside this exalted status, humans have simultaneously subjected the other species to enormous cruelty. The death toll of horses in World War One, or the appalling conditions in which horses are transported by lorry to European slaughterhouses, provide two of the innumerable examples. I would like to believe that the respect and appreciation, which I find in the exquisite prehistoric cave paintings, also prevailed at the vast Paleolithic killing sites (Kingsnorth 2013) which archaeology has unearthed; but I have no reason to assume this.

Nevertheless, the world is full of people who in some way feel thrilled and enriched by the existence of this species and revere it. Now, a further chapter has unfolded with the rise of equine-assisted therapy. In this activity, the horse offers a healing to humans which is seen as particularly potent at this time and in this culture of the post-industrial West. I have attempted to survey the methods used in this field, and the writings and the statements of both practitioners and clients, with both sympathy and critical attention, to find out just what this story carries. I have also wondered if it tells us something more generally about relationships between our species and the rest of the living world – and about the differing ways we perceive these matters, and the questions this leaves unanswered.

About ten years ago, I was a recreational horseman who had already explored non-verbal communication with horses at liberty in open space. I had become fascinated by the feelings of exhilaration and mellow fullness this kind of conversation induced in me. I then heard that a colleague in the counselling and therapy community had been to the U.S. to learn "equine-assisted therapy" with Linda Kohanov. Soon after, I chanced to hear of a new and entirely separate organization, the "Equine Assisted Growth and Learning Association". Since then, I have watched this field expand greatly, and I have tried to keep abreast of developments, which have included the founding of several other organizations and a growing number of independent practitioners. In these circles, the horse is frequently regarded as a benefactor of humankind, able to offer psychological healing with skills, attitudes and attributes to rival or outdo any human therapist. Sometimes, these methods are held to be effective in ways which other therapies are not.

The methods of EAT are usually a variation on the following: the horses are loose in an open space, so that their freedom to offer powerful response is considerable. Clients are asked to consider that the horses are aware of them and offering them feedback even before they enter the paddock or focus on them. They are asked to become aware of their own bodies, current emotions and pre-occupations, and to be prepared for the horse to offer insight into these at any moment. They are supported by a human guide in entering the horse's space and in approaching them, noting any reaction from the horse. Here people often register fear, nervousness, longing, sadness. Horses may offer close or playful contact, may suddenly withdraw, may ignore the newcomer, or become suddenly soft and drowsy. Humans may experience rejection or acceptance powerfully, may be re-assured - or propelled into unease and pain familiar from their past. From this point onwards the client is supported by the facilitator in understanding their own unwitting attitudes and gestures and then trying out alternatives – for instance an aggressive person may be asked to soften their body posture – and the changes in the horse's response to this is often immediate and profoundly validating. The tasks can then become more and more sophisticated. Eventually it is possible for a partnership, a dance of skill, poise and connection to arise – with a horse running, springing, stopping and turning in unison with the human. This can feel "as good as it gets", a golden moment of life smiling on someone to whom it might hitherto have only shown a scowl.

This has earned much media and public attention, such as Tracey McVeigh's Guardian article of 25th Feb 2012, "Not Just Horsing Around…psychologists put their faith in equine therapies", and a proliferation of television and radio items. With this coverage comes a growing volume of personal testimonies as to the far-reaching effects of these methods. These are striking for their qualities of gratitude and appreciation for the other species. Here are four varied examples; first, from a survivor of childhood abuse:

"Many people, like myself, experience abuse, many turning to self-harm, drugs or alcohol. I turned to a horse…the relationship with horses can heal the wounds of trauma…"(1)

Secondly, a young man who struggled through childhood and adolescence with autism and the social exclusion this entailed:

"I was suicidal, hysterical, upset and depressed with the bullying and hate in my life, particularly that aimed at me for having a so-called disability……..As soon as my hand touched Oscar's mane, I felt all the hurt and pain wash away to be replaced by love and friendship and hope for the future."(Avent, 2011)

A woman who had felt she was "poisonous to relationships" describes her encounter with a horse during a therapy session;

"I felt I was sinking into the safety of her deeply seeing, softly breathing, alive self…and I felt repaired."(2)

Lastly, a counsellor who participated in a weekend workshop:

"One woman is crying as she describes the quality of communication between Maud and me. Something about the way I directed Maud without being controlling moves me greatly…..I leave with the memory, in my body, of what it feels like to be really present with the horses, to hold my ground, to be directive and to feel nourished by their spiritual presence."(Banning, 2012)

As people in such examples attempt to describe exactly what it is that horses offer, the recurring perceptions seem to include benevolent strength, acceptance and lack of falseness:

"I found horses the only consistency in my life. They had power yet didn't have to use it. Being comfortable in their skins, what you saw was what you got. Through the relationship with horses I learnt that power and muscle doesn't mean violence, or physical skin to skin touch doesn't mean pain…These were messages I couldn't learn through traditional therapeutic methods." (3)

These experiences seem to be heightened by the element of risk. A horse can say "yes" or "no" to a human with the full force of half a ton of physical power and ten million years of sharply honed instinct. The animal can flee a human, or harm him in ways leaving no room for uncertainty about the intention; so when they offer willing co-operation, or show pleasure in someone's company, this carries greatly heightened impact and meaning. And if you're someone to whom life has repeatedly offered a series of "no's" – of rebuffs, of betrayals, of disappointments, then the horse's "yes" has even more meaning. As Lizzie Spender has written:

"A horse is no household pet, their size alone can imbue an edge of danger, and so there is the challenge of reaching an understanding with an animal that is powerful enough to trample you to death……..Horses are enormously strong, yet capable of infinite gentleness….They pick up instantly on moods and states of mind: fear, unhappiness, happiness, impatience, confidence or lack of confidence….Then there is the joy of riding a good horse; to be transformed from a plodding human, forever earthbound, to a creature that can fly…….." (Spender, 2005,133)

The degree to which they can immediately reflect and respond to human mood, attitude - and changes in these - is noted with awe. They often seem to show the human's unowned anger, fear, sorrow or resentment. When the human reclaims these feelings, allows them and moves beyond them, the horse frequently offers calm and co-operation. When humans whose boundaries have been violated, learn to assert their boundaries, horses show respect and acceptance. They reward clear intention, attention and enthusiasm with agility, grace and power. Something about that moment of willingness to respond, the horse's recognition of the human's well-meaning and vulnerable desire, is cathartic. After a demo session a colleague contacted me:

"The time we spent with the horses was more powerful than I had realized at the time...it has taken me to a place very close to tears. Now I feel their openness, their willingness to be met and my own resistance at the time. I thought you should have this feedback together with my profound thanks." (4)

This response can be direct, timely and accurate, but the aspect that gives it particular power seems to be that it comes from a non-human source. This gives it an air of miracle. In one example, a client had been talking about a painful history of "not being seen". Invited to go into the horse paddock, she stood by the horse who was grazing, for some time. She then told the therapist, rather shyly, "Really, I want him to lift up his head and look at me...". The therapist suggested she simply let herself wish for that. In the next moment the horse raised his head from the grass, looked at her face, and rubbed her gently with his head. She expressed surprise and wonder. But in addition to this, woman and horse then repeated the exact sequence again. A quality of heightened and tender awareness pervaded the remainder of the session.

This example of poignant response from another creature can be compared with others in non-equine contexts. Mark Cocker (2013) offers one:

"...a mother..lost her 22-year-old daughter in a car accident. Weeks after the funeral, 'something' told her to go through the french windows at the other side of the house and there, sitting on the patio, was a kingfisher that she picked up and stroked before the bird finally flew away. That moment of intimacy was, its author confessed, 'a mystifying solace to me over the years.'"

The regularity with which such events are now being witnessed with horses suggests that they can become an even more widely recognized aspect of our exchange with the living world. One thing which seems to be crucial is the vividity and lack of subterfuge with which horses display emotions, moods and intentions - their total authenticity. They have no shame in demonstrating

deep, mellow relaxation - in the lowering of the eyelids, the drooping of the head, the stillness of the legs; or intense alarm - in the sudden lunge away from a perceived threat (or towards it with teeth bared). In the presence of this, humans' reservations also begin to dissolve, and tears and laughter, terror and joy flow more freely. When we see that the most terrifying horse can become co-operative, the most compliant horse can be panicked by us, we also see the potency of human attitude and mind/body communication.

If there is an underlying unease in our society which is caused by lack of connection to the natural world - for instance the Nature-Deficit Disorder described by Louv (2005) - then this work is an antidote. Social psychologist Peter Kahn and colleagues (2013, 55-76) attempted to classify the types of transaction with nature which are crucial to humans' well-being. The events reported in equine therapy testimonies correspond to many of these. The horse's undiluted instincts and vigorous physicality restores a sense of earthiness and natural rhythm for which many have been searching for their whole life without knowing this to be the case. A whole missing dimension of existence can be regained.

At the same time, many of the relational phenomena which form the bedrock of the psychotherapy process seem to be magnified or are accelerated in equine-assisted process; transference – in which old and restrictive relationship patterns arise in a current relationship and become conscious; corrective emotional experience – in which warmth and approval which have been lacking hitherto are at last received; catharsis – in which repressed emotions are released; the I-Thou encounter – in which there is a mutual and pure recognition between two beings. These are steps on the way to self acceptance and towards increased scope for individual choice of behaviour, an opening of new horizons for those whose horizons have been felt to be limited.

Neuropsychology and biochemistry are beginning to be brought into the picture. In his work with autistic children Rupert Isaacson, author of the widely-acclaimed book "The Horse Boy", indicated that the motion of the human body on horseback (or for some people indeed, the sheer presence of a horse) triggers the release of oxytocin in the body which enables the learning receptors in the brain to open. Franklin Levinson, a horse trainer from the U.S. says "It has been clinically documented that just being around horses changes human brainwave patterns. We calm down and become more centred and focussed…..Horses are naturally empathetic. The members of a herd feel what is going on for the other members of the herd."(McVeigh, 2012)

Although "robust academic evaluations" had hitherto been "remarkably absent from the emerging literature base" in this field, in 2012 Rosie Meek, Professor of Criminological Psychology at Teeside University, attempted to apply them to a project with inmates at HMP/YOI Portland, and came up with a clear affirmation of "the potential psychological, cognitive, and behavioural impact." The programme focussed on "young men who have a history of conflict with staff and/or other prisoners; and those who may be especially vulnerable or at-risk of victimisation and/or self harm…" Its aim was to "teach psychological and emotional self-control through an intensive course with two specially trained horses." Her conclusions quote Franklin Levinson: "individuals learn that respect and compassion yield more rewarding experiences and co-operation with the horse than dominance and aggression. Indeed, the remarkable success of EAT programmes has led to claims that they represent one of the more effective rehabilitation techniques within the penal system today" (Meek, 2012).

Other researchers have supported the claim that this work greatly benefits clients suffering from PTS and those struggling with addictions. Leigh Shambo's 2008 study with a group of six women with histories of abuse and post-traumatic stress disorder concluded that they all had less anxiety and depression after a ten week horse programme, and this was further supported by data collected four months after treatment finished (Shambo, 2008, 120-125) A similar study by Randy H. Zasloff (2009) of ten clients produced similar results based on qualitative interviews. In both studies the failure of other therapies previous to Equine was reported (ibid, 127-130).

II

Other Stories

So the emergent story is one in which another creature, who could be dangerously hostile or indifferent, generously displays relational skills and profound empathic responses to humans in a way which heals to an extent which fellow humans alone do not. However, other voices in the equestrian world have asked the question, what do horses ask of us, and what deprivations do they suffer, which we might be required to make good? Without asking this question we may risk infantilizing ourselves, rather as if the animal's only purpose was for our benefit, thereby remaining deaf to our co-inhabitants on the planet. Could the answers also illuminate another question frequently asked today: if we are to cease the ecological abuses we have been perpetrating for much of recent history, then what posture must we assume towards other life?

I assume that horses in their "natural" state lived with an intensity far removed from the condition of most of their descendants, who are cared for by humans. They were born into large herds in which they could play, fight, socialize as they chose. They could migrate, form various bonds with others of their kind, mate and give birth, achieve status and role within the herd. When mating, competing, or engaging in other social interactions, or evading, fleeing and fighting predators, they could reach a pitch of arousal, alertness, strength, nimbleness. Of course, they were also subject to the vagaries of weather, season and shortages of food. They were pursued, killed and eaten, so that old age, sickness or injury meant being abandoned and quickly hunted down As far as I can tell, life was relatively short and frequently exhausting.

The involvement with humans has meant that the situation of many horses in the civilized world is more secure and in a way, softer. They are protected from predators and fed consistently and regularly. For some people, the main answer to the question of what horses ask of us is this: a life in green open spaces, freely moving among a group of their own kind; some might add that their coats should be fully grown in the winter and their feet free of the constriction of metal shoes. But even in this scenario, mating, birthing, confronting threats, vying with each other and bonding with each other is strictly limited. For most of the horse population, the first three activities are non-existent. So they never reach those high points of arousal and energy and are in this sense, less than they were. If we choose, we can assume the task of replacing that lost edge with a refinement of grace, strength and response through interaction and activities which we offer the horse. This can be seen in the work of some sports competitors, some practitioners of classical equitation or some unclassifiable but extraordinary horse communicators like Klaus Hempfling (www.hempfling.com). It can be seen in moments when a rider asks something challenging of a horse and the latter responds readily with accuracy, poise and power. This often entails the state known in equitation as "collection". Without human intervention this state is assumed at times of high arousal, such as when the possibility of mating arises. It is literally uplifting (the back is raised and movement elevated), it stimulates the highest energy and awareness. It seems beautiful, stirring, heavenly.

Although what we often see in the dressage ring is a substitute version, some rare humans can evoke the genuine article in a horse without strain and without any mechanical equipment. Through profound understanding and communication they bring the horse to a completion, which fulfils human and horse together. It challenges any notion that they might be better off without us, and has quite a different quality to that of a horse following humdrum and repetitive routines of domesticity. When I see them moving at liberty in collection they seem to me to be even more contented than when they're just peacefully grazing in the field. That is, I concede, my perception. But if it's accurate, we are actually replacing through partnership what we have taken away through domestication. This is ironic and in a way, absurd, because, having made the horse's life safer, we now seek to enhance it through challenge. But perhaps it nevertheless represents our most honourable and conscious contribution to the welfare of these fellow living beings. Perhaps it is what they ask of us.

Theodore Roszack (1993) saw the Deep Ecologists like Arne Naess as rejecting the notion that humans were in any way "above" or apart from the eco-system "whether as master or steward."(ibid: 234). Any residue of the old story that we were appointed by God over other life was seen as human self-aggrandizement. With a capacity for ecological folly as great as our ingenuity and intelligence, we had lost any claim to superiority over other life forms.

Exemplifying this position, Alan Bleakley (2013) writes of "the anthropocentrism rife in the ecology movement, characterized by the idea of "stewardship" of the earth". He goes on, "It is not us who will save the animal, but the animal will save us". But others, ardently and honestly seeking a position from which to respond to crises like that afflicting bees worldwide, have arrived at concepts like "Guardianship". Jessie Jowers, one of the founders of a charity called the Bee Guardian Foundation, described this, in conversation, as quite different from any kind of rulership. It recognizes that we do have immense power, our decisions affecting the well-being of innumerable other species. It calls on us to express that power in attuned and reciprocal dialogue with those species, and assumes these things are possible. My earlier evocation of consummate horsemanship carries echoes of this position.

The unease and confusion this dilemma can provoke for humans today is exemplified by the account feminist author Jenny Diski gives of her foray into horsemanship. She wrote a frank and very contemporary investigation of the human relationship with animals (Diski, 2010). In it, she gives voice to the widespread human reaction against domination of other species, and she finds herself feeling this particularly, after her visits to a local riding school. After a couple of attempts at riding, during which she witnesses a minor accident and experiences a lot of helplessness on horseback, she reaches the conclusion that: "I had no desire at all to give this or any animal instructions. I didn't want to be in charge of a horse, to dominate it, even in the most benign way....I had no taste for being a 'master'......It was why I had never had a dog....They (horses) are essentially slaves" (ibid, 274-275).

But actually, if we read her account carefully, we find that she does seem to have glimpses of something other than domination and submission. She concedes that she and the horse "were supposed to have a relationship. Maddy (the horse) knew this and was explaining it to me: I am not a machine that you knee as if you were putting me into gear, I am a responsive creature that you have a dialogue with."(ibid, my italics throughout) She also realizes that the horse often reflects what the human unwittingly presents. She recounts the anecdote of the rider who was "tense and erratic in the handling of the horse, his mind not on the animal, really" and whose horse, therefore, had "stopped paying attention to the rider just as his rider had stopped paying attention to him and went out of control, refusing to follow his instructions". She concludes that "the relationship and movements between human and animal can become so subtle as to be invisible to the onlooker. To be in control of a horse, it's necessary to be able to communicate with it, and to enable it to communicate with you. I can see the fascination of that, but I still don't want to be in control." (ibid, 277) Paradoxically, she also dislikes the opposite, writing that she has "been on a ship in a storm in the Bay of Biscay and felt more in control" (ibid, 278). The distinction between control and dialogue doesn't seem to be significant to her and she concludes by withdrawing from the engagement. She doesn't want to be in charge or out of control or engaged in subtle dialogue.

In responding to this, I would claim that although I have learnt how to claim authority with a horse, I have also learnt that this can only be done up to a point, at which I meet the unassailable authority of the other. In this, it's just like all other relationships. The horse is essentially a partner and we have conversations. I can state categorically that there are times when the horse disputes with me and then I have to change, that at these times the horse is a deft teacher of self-awareness and wellness. To give an example, I sometimes ask a horse, from the ground, to bring his neck and back into a state of roundness and rock backwards onto the hindquarters (this is to increase balance and suppleness). When I ask patiently and softly the horse usually does this. But one day I was in a brusque and impatient mood – although I wasn't aware of that till afterwards. So my body tone was stiff and the message in my hands was curt and unyielding. And the horse simply reared up on his hindquarters – a clear statement of "no". And I realized what I'd been doing. I breathed and softened and eased up, and asked again. This time the horse performed the exercise with calm attention. To me, this is not about control. It is about how to ask in a way, and at a time, which enables the other to answer "yes".

There is another underlying paradox in this position: if we truly achieve some kind of Guardianship, it is because we are appointed to it, elected even, by the other creature(s), having earned it. This occurs when we are also able and willing to play the other roles of pupil, servant or partner of other life – when we put ourselves in the child role more than the parental one. The

lesson of horsemanship is that the horse gives his most gracious moments to the person who knows exactly how to ask, who understands most fully what he is asking, and who most appreciates the response; who asks in a way which flows into the horse's own inclinations and potential.

In this scenario we have the power to complete the picture, to consummate the process. Hempfling states: "The person at the horse's side has the possibility to 'finalize' this act of creation, to perfect it (Hempfling,2010.132)......The human being awakens the spiritual in the horse, and by doing this, he confirms and releases the spiritual being within himself." (ibid.133) This may suggest the special status for humans renounced by Deep Ecology. But instead, it may offer a reconciliation of the polarity between anthropocentrism on the one hand, and complete lack of engagement on the other.

The paradox is highlighted even more acutely by horsemanship author Dr. Deb Bennett (2014), writing about mounted horsemanship exercises:

"The rider is 100% responsible for all outcomes; there is no such thing as 'resistance' coming from the horse......The rider has to see the world as the horse sees it....."

The rider has to be as much "present" as the horse, or more so; this can only happen when the performance is not the primary objective, but maintaining inner equanimity is."

If I reword this in order to apply it to other contexts, it would become something like "When a conflict with nature arises, we don't blame the other, we reappraise and change what the human is doing. Empathy is the basis for all transactions. It is not the outcome that's top priority - the quality of consciousness and of relationship, which the human embodies, this is the top priority". Such attitudes inspire me to hope that this model of horsemanship contains the makings of a new relationship to other-than-human life.

But if we stay with Dr. Bennett, my project then seems to run into difficulties, because her next "primary lesson" is:
"The rider has to be firm enough so that the horse realizes that you mean to govern and guide him."

Moreover, I had in fact omitted from the earlier quote her stated priority "to teach, guide and protect the animal at all times".

So this could be an all-too-familiar case of anthropocentrism and colonization. But I doubt it, if her earlier points are truly embodied at the same time. If they are, what we end up with is not a controller and controlled, it is more like two dancing partners. During interaction with a horse at the most sensitive levels of horsemanship something happens which goes beyond dichotomies of dominion/ subjugation and disengagement. When it happens, the two dancers are active and calm, responsive and free. Many horsemen and women have experienced this and struggled to put it into words. Some use the phrase "following the feel" to refer to a state in which the horse instantly and effortlessly picks up human intention and responds to it. For both parties, this is intensely rewarding, and the horse participating in this needs neither threats nor rewards.

Horses have a language based on claiming and yielding space. It can be observed or learned, particularly when it is being enacted through the movement of feet - one horse moving their feet in response to another, moving away from or into a space. At other times the signals are virtually imperceptible to an onlooker. If both parties are claiming and yielding, then meeting happens in the dynamic tension. If only one party is doing either the claiming or the yielding, there is no meeting, only conquest. Carolyn Resnick's (2005) description of the "waterhole ritual" she witnessed among feral mustangs, which involves two horses alternately pursuing and fleeing from each other, is a graphic example. The flux between claiming and yielding veers towards dance, and indeed the way male and female sometimes partner each other in flamenco, with alternating advance and retreat, can be seen as a sort of human dramatization of this kind of language.

This often produces meeting and partnership at a very tender and intimate level. In my view, it leads towards a relational state beyond it, in which neither claiming nor yielding are taking place.

Real togetherness replaces them: each wants what the other wants. This can be felt between horse and human on foot, or horse and rider. It can also be felt between human and human in sexual play, in sport, or in shared creative endeavour of other kinds, such as musical duos. Often we have to go through the potentially more confrontational stage of claiming and yielding space, to get to it. Knowledge and recognition of each other has to come first. But we are talking here of a closeness with other life which might include the claiming and yielding of space and power, but which reaches a condition beyond the limitations of either.

I can find further illumination of these zones of mind in a context which, initially, might seem very different. Herbalist Nathan Hughes describes the conditions which enable him to find a profoundly personal exchange with the plants he uses for healing. He asks "What would it be like to approach a plant slowly? How would it feel to ask permission to come closer? What would it mean to honour and respect the invisible, yet felt, boundary between yourself and the plant? How would it feel to approach with humility and a simple request in our hearts; 'I am honoured to meet you and would very much like to know you better'." (Hughes, 2014,18)

Hughes balances two opposing principles in another dynamic tension. One, that complete respect for the beinghood of the other is essential for dialogue to emerge and for us to perceive the essence of the other. The other principle is that what we perceive, even when we have such respect, directly reflects our own character and identity. "We live in a hall of mirrors. But, deep within each mirror is an image of the true plant" (ibid, 37). As we balance these, "we can start to reclaim a plant led and directly experienced approach to finding the medicine of our local plants." These attitudes create the same preconditions as those for the kind of horsemanship Dr. Bennett is advocating. It leads ultimately to a place of intimate encounter. To convey the quality of such meeting, Hughes quotes Rumi:

"Don't fear this melting away of boundaries between lovers.......When we don't hold to our images and expectations of the other, our beloved can be like the moon, fresh every day, new every time he or she melts into us.!" (ibid.)

In similar vein, Margot Lasher (2008) coins the term "thirdness" to describe the state she reaches with dogs, when there is total co-operation which is free from any sense of one overpowering the other.

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III

Summary

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The experience that seems to underlie the statements made by clients or participants in EAT is that the other-than-human world responds to our suffering and our need. This reconnects us with the childhood assumption that other creatures understand and sympathize with us; this assumption is one which many of us lose, reluctantly, as we move towards adulthood and rationality. This is a substantial loss, leaving us more alone in a more meaningless world.

The reconnection which some people achieve later in life includes the sense that the other recognizes our affinity and empathy. This goes beyond the position routinely voiced in conservationist and green circles, which acknowledges our dependence on the other-than-human world, but regards it as unresponsive to us, so it becomes up to us to save it (from extinction, exploitation, devastation, etc.). That position omits the degree of mutual knowing and recognizing, which lies at the heart of many individuals' experience in EAT or activities akin to it. This, I submit, is why it offers an added dimension to environmental and psychological enquiry. It implies that other life can be very aware of us, and can join with us in the adventure of healing.

In the testimonies of the EAT participants the horse appeared as the guide and teacher. In those of the skilled equestrians like Bennett and Hempfling, it seemed at times to be the other way round. Both testimonies are accurate in their context, both positions are incomplete. The horsemanship adepts would also acknowledge that horses have been their benefactors many times over. Therapy clients who embarked on more permanent and sustained partnerships with horses would have to address more of the latters' needs. In the end, if we honour all aspects of our relationship with this creature, we hold to both versions and neither, because we move beyond the limits of either. Perhaps there are lessons here as we attempt to find a new way of being with the other-than-human world more widely.

At a recent conference on the relationship with animals in Bio-Dynamic agriculture, Ueli Hurter (2015) asked the question "What is 'dignity of life' for an animal?" His answer was; "The human being is higher than the animal and needs to be its guide; the human being is equal to 'brother animal' and the human being is also lower than the animal since the latter possesses specialized skills. Without these mankind could not live as it does on the earth." While I am far from agreeing with every nuance of this statement I do recognize it as an example of someone managing to hold simultaneous truths which seem to be in opposition. This may be what is needed as we seek to liberate our thinking in order to face the challenges ahead. Holding simultaneous positions which seem contradictory, and dancing nimbly between those positions, might be one of the conditions with which we need to become more comfortable.

Kelvin Hall. 26.4.16

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Notes.
1) Personal testimony used with permission
2) Notes written after a session by a client in EAP, offered to me during my research and used with permission.
3) As in 1)
4) Message from colleague after informal horse demo.

Photographs by Clare Spelling

ATTITUDES TO CLIMATE CHANGE MITIGATION IN LOCAL AUTHORITIES

Written by Gill Westcott

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How do elected councillors and their staff talk about climate change?

Talking about climate change is difficult – likely to induce a sense of helplessness, guilt, fear of future impacts, fear of personal change and all the rest of it - and taking practical action is often inconvenient. No less so in local government, which is in theory obligated to do something about the UK's climate impact. So how do our elected councillors and their salaried staff deal with this situation?

Starting in 2010, I interviewed 39 councillors and officers in 7 different authorities in the South West, to find out whether attitudes to climate change made a difference to what action was taken to reduce climate impacts. Central government policy has certainly had a very profound impact on what is done at local level, but there were still significant differences between authorities, in how far they would discuss climate change mitigation and in the measures they would consider and implement. It was fascinating to see how one or two senior individuals, without perhaps changing individuals' inner beliefs, could affect attitudes in an organization as a whole. I also learnt something about the changing acceptability of discourse on climate change.

Initially – in the '90's and early 2000's – global warming was not an easy topic to address in corporate environments, though some councils undertook pioneering action to mitigate climate change.[1] During the mid 2000's this changed with the introduction of financial incentives and funding for energy efficiency programmes, and subsequently for renewable generation. Conversation about these measures could then take place on the consensual ground of finances. With austerity and the abolition of these financial incentives the situation has changed again. Local authorities have lost 30 – 40% of their funding and are facing difficult decisions about cuts even to statutory services. The socially created silence about climate change[2], if it ever left, is back with a vengeance.

Most of the respondents were selected for their involvement in areas such as energy use, economic development, recycling or planning, which impact upon authorities' greenhouse emissions. A few doubted that climate change is happening .
"We hear a lot about global warming, and yet, everything is pretty much colder really." - councillor
Some doubted that humans were causing climate change.
"It's a natural cycle. It's going to happen no matter what. I do believe that" - councillor
"I studied physical geography...Yes, it's changing now quite rapidly, but it's changed just as rapidly in the past, before man's influence. As far as I'm concerned the jury is still out on what man's involvement in that is"- councillor
Both these groups were in a minority; literal denial of climate change was small, but denial about the implications (as perhaps with many of us) was immense. This was reinforced by a high degree of ignorance or apparent vagueness, about timescales, likely scale and impact of warming and the presence of tipping points.

One councillor spoke candidly about the need for corporate action on mitigation, but became far more animated about preserving 18th century Flemish brickwork. This does not necessarily reveal absence of care, but Flemish brickwork can be eulogized in public without fear of crossing socially sanctioned boundaries. Anxiety is not a feeling which councillors are supposed to show. Better to bemoan 'short termism' in local government, as many did, adding that there is little chance of this changing in the present cash-strapped circumstances, and revealing a sense of powerlessness in relation to the whole issue.

Some viewed climate change policy as a 'nice to have', like the arts, but not important "if you are a … single mother in [X estate] feeding your family of three young children, your most important

thing is that you clothe, feed and keep a home for that family. Far more important than working on sunshine or snow".

Besides, climate change could be a good thing: 'If you talk to most of the holiday makers who come down here in the summer, and if it went from 23 to 27 they'd be delighted'
Distancing could be achieved by flippancy: 'I would think it's incredibly difficult to, to say well if we continue doing this, in 3,000 years….. In 3,000 years the world may have disappeared and humans might be living on Mars. You know', or simply by a swift change of subject.

By contrast, a representative from Dawlish was extremely clear. The railway which forms a barrier against the waves is guaranteed for 20 years only; if maintenance is abandoned, councillors know that the line will collapse, and as sea level rises the town centre will suffer inundation under increasingly frequent storm surges.

In an area with an elevated landscape and beautiful coastal scenery, one councillor replied instantly to a question about climate change, 'I don't agree with windfarms'. In this and similar districts the issue was not climate change, but wind turbines. Planning applications were heard with angry crowds present. Vocal opponents had impressed upon some councillors that too little was known about changes in the climate to infer anthropogenic causation. Other councillors, well aware of human causes of climate change, told me they would not be re-elected if they supported wind (though at least one independent did so and was re-elected).

Wind developers had, perhaps unwisely, recruited environmentalists as supporters, heightening the controversy and aligning it with a right-left divide. Oddly, a survey in one of these districts showed that a majority of residents supported wind energy but this fact was not apparent to councillors. The political climate therefore seemed to owe much to articulate well-resourced retirees and downsizers, incomers attracted by the coast and moorland landscape, and those in the tourist trade who feared wind development would impact their income, marshalling climate scepticism as an adjunct to their position.

In some of the interviews, people gave shifting rationales for lack of action, which suggested that positions on climate change are sometimes better characterised as strategies rather than settled beliefs, to avoid accusation (whether outer or inner) that they ought to be doing more. For example, one officer employed, as it were, a three line defence:

1) he doubted the findings of climate science: *'everybody always says things are black and white but they never are.'*
2) Anyway the Chinese: *'There's no point in the West saving carbon emissions, if China and India are increasing by a bigger amount. What's the point?'*
3) Council members will likely veto major expenditure bids unless there is a strong financial return: there is no point in proposing projects on the basis of their carbon impacts.

Thus people were often ignorant of many of the scientific findings about climate change and how this might affect the South West, but in a way and to a degree which reflected their perceived material interests and/or scope for action. They 'know and don't know' at the same time, a classic element in the description of denial[3].

On the other hand there were many councillors and officers who worked urgently on emissions reduction in the councils' own estate, or to encourage carbon reduction by businesses and households. Though such individuals were found in every authority studied, some corporate cultures were hostile to discussion of climate mitigation and there were many dead ends. In these councils, only financial incentives would ensure that carbon reduction was considered apart from efficiency savings. On the other hand, in favourable corporate environments, often larger and urban authorities, systematic carbon reduction strategies were brought in. Even where this happened however, responsibility was often placed in a single department (eg Environmental Health), and commitment to carbon reduction did not impact much on planning departments.

"Very often you've got, it's a silo thing again, you've got a forward planning group drawing up core strategies and spending hours sweating over these things and then the people in development control just go on doing whatever they did, you know, it's quite difficult." Officer

Organizations as well as individuals can maintain splits where one part does not know what the other is doing, particularly where their financial interests are served by having as much new development as possible and the new National Planning Policy Framework (2013) offers few grounds, defensible when developers appeal, for councils to resist building of any kind.

Although most respondents agreed with the statement that 'our organization can play a part in responding to climate change', many, if not most, are deeply pessimistic that realistic mitigation efforts can occur. They know that national government does not prioritise the issue. They tend to pessimism on the chances of international co-operation on carbon reduction, and so resent the costs that these measures would entail.

David Ballard (2005) comments that changes to promote pro-environmental sustainable development require three conditions: Awareness, Association and Agency. His presumption that the preconditions needed to be fulfilled in that order was challenged during a six-month course for senior managers tasked to promote sustainability in their departments. He observed that only when they already had a real sense of agency, and had developed sufficient friendship and safety within the study group, were these managers open to taking in more fully the findings and implications of climate science. He concluded that agency is a prerequisite for successful action, and that it might not be possible even to take in full information about climate change unless both this sense of efficacy and the strong and supportive group were already in place.

In this local authority study, a sense of the possibility of real changes was a central characteristic of those willing to promote or carry out measures for climate mitigation. This sense of agency was also a distinguishing factor in people who rescued Jews in Nazi-occupied Europe, compared with 'bystanders' who didn't. Non-rescuers doubted their efficacy: 'What could I do against so many?' . Whereas rescuers suggested that what they had done was nothing special, anyone would have done the same. Underlying this, there is perhaps a sense of trust in the willingness of others to take action; trust is a central ingredient in the belief that one can make a difference. Hence the importance of perceptions of what other local authorities are doing (regulations of course provide the reassurance that others are not 'free riding' on the efforts of the diligent); and the salience of news on advances in renewable generation and carbon efficiency in other countries. It takes a specialist interest to find out, for example, that China is hitting its renewable energy targets two years early and its coal reduction targets four years early in 2016-17 ; India is investing more in renewable energy than the USA; Norway is planning to go carbon neutral by 2030 ...and so on.

One factor united respondents who were hopeful about climate mitigation and those who were not: they were all worried. Only 10% of those interviewed felt they were 'contented and confident that those who are now young will inherit a good future'. Most were aware that young people today and future generations are getting a raw deal; that we are letting them down. But they rarely expressed these worries, and certainly not in council settings.

Those who were already acting to promote climate change mitigation seemed more ready to mention their fears and anxieties. Perhaps those who were actively engaged also had enough hope to be able to acknowledge the dangers and difficulties of climate change and the concern that humanity might not prevent catastrophe. This may be why savvy community activists often involve people in positive actions without (at first) trying to tell them the bad news.

My research and that of others shows that conversation matters. So does information about the efforts other people, other councils, and other countries are making to reduce their reliance on fossil fuels and curtail greenhouse emissions, because it changes our estimate of the chances of acting together, and of success. Trust is a scarce resource; it can be built slowly and, as we see in the current political climate, can be eroded rapidly.

This article is based on a PhD thesis G. M. Westcott (2016) The role of subjective factors in local authorities' action on climate change in South West England. PhD, University of the West of England. Available from: http://eprints.uwe.ac.uk/28966

[1]However, a few local authorities achieved sufficient momentum to respond to the emerging scientific consensus. Keighley rolled out free loft insulation to all householders who would accept it

(over 60%); Merton insisted on all developments generating renewably on site a proportion of the energy they would use. Woking invested in experiments with various renewable generation technologies through their own (financially rather successful) company with its private wire supply.

[2]See Paul Hoggett and Ro Randall's paper on this site; also http://dotearth.blogs.nytimes.com/2016/10/20/climate-silence-goes-way-beyond-debate-moderators/?_r=3&mtrref=feedly.com&assetType=opinion&utm_source=Daily+Carbon+Briefing&utm_campaign=39e8be2079-cb_daily&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_876aab4fd7-39e8be2079-303422629

[3]Stanley Cohen, (2001) *States of Denial: Knowing about atrocities and suffering,* Cambridge

SUSTAINABLE ACTIVISM: MANAGING HOPE AND DESPAIR IN SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

Written by Paul Hoggett and Rosemary Randall

Published: 08 January 2017

A new generation of activists is developing a much healthier and more emotionally-intelligent culture

In her study of ACT UP, the direct action AIDS movement in the USA in the 1980s and early 1990s, Deborah Gould noted the powerful role that emotions play in animating social activism. She observed that any movement that seeks to make things better in the world has to manage despair.

We believe that this emotion arises because activists are haunted by the belief that they might lack the collective resources to address the damage and suffering they see around them, and which motivates their action. So in addition to its external opponents, a movement always has an internal, emotional enemy—a gnawing, repetitive, low-level fear and hopelessness that accompany the struggle for deep-rooted social change.

Over the last few years we have been interviewing people in the UK who have been involved in direct actions such as the occupation of power stations and airport runways. We wanted to explore how they managed the powerful feelings that are aroused by any exposure to the disturbing truth of climate change. As one young female activist put it to us:

"I know if I let open the floodgates it's there…I know what that depressive, overwhelming 'I feel lost' feeling is. I've had it. It's not something I enjoy."

In our own experience of movements for change from the 1970s onwards we've been struck by the way in which a failure to contain despair can lead to unrealistic hopes, built on a denial of and a flight from some difficult truths. The group 'puffs itself up' to make itself feel big. It overestimates its own strength and underestimates the power of opposing forces. It resorts to faith ('history is on our side') and magic ('come on everybody, one last push'). It prefers to engage in wishful thinking rather than face reality as it is.

This state of mind is one we often encounter in our work as psychotherapists. It's often referred to as schizoid—a state where everything is split into polarities: black or white, all or nothing. For someone in the grip of schizoid thinking the world is binary—there is no 'in between'. Everything is either one thing or the other, and the coin is constantly flipped between one perspective and it's opposite: either my marriage was the wonderful relationship I always imagined it to be or I was living a total illusion; either I have this special and exclusive relationship with my children or I mean nothing to them at all.

One of the most painful and destructive things about schizoid thinking is that it reproduces the very anxiety it tries to manage. By creating an ideal state of affairs that can never be achieved in reality it opens the door to further disappointments, more desperate self-criticism, a greater

sense of failure and more crippling anxiety which can only be dealt with by further splits. In politics one obvious and much parodied example is the factionalism that often bedevils political groups and social movements.

However the problem goes much deeper than this: it can also affect the culture of otherwise healthy groups. In movements around climate change we can see it at work in a series of unhelpful binaries like this: 'the only realistic thing to do is change the system' versus 'we are powerless to change the system, so must focus on achievable changes in our communities and in our own lives.' Another common binary is 'all or nothing.' We throw ourselves into an all-consuming commitment which, because it is all consuming, demands an immediate return. Then, when reality proves recalcitrant, despair sets in. As one of our interviewees put it:

"...there's definitely a danger of tying your whole sense of worth and purpose to this challenge that is so much bigger than you and is never ending."

This binary is often linked to another which is 'now or never.' In climate change work this manifests in the belief that 'we must all act now or it will be too late,' a belief that can all too quickly slip into the perception that it is already 'too late', and that processes have already been unleashed which are irreversibly leading us to catastrophe.

However, one hopeful sign that also emerges from our interviews with the current generation of climate activists is that they are developing a much more emotionally-intelligent culture. Direct action places activists in vulnerable situations, and rather than resorting to a macho denial this generation seems much more prepared to acknowledge their vulnerability. Many activists also seem able to take up a more proportionate response: times of intense engagement are often followed by a period of taking a step back and giving due attention to self-care and self-reflection.

Many of our interviewees described a kind of proportionality to their engagement, where they could let go of their painful knowledge for a time, relegating it to the background while continuing to work on a practical project. "I think I don't think about it," explained one. "I've accepted it, found my own kind of path of how I live my life with those kinds of things going through it." Rather like someone who has learned to live with a life-limiting condition like diabetes, these activists were no longer obsessed with climate change but concerned to act as effectively and dynamically as they could to counter its worst effects.

There were a number of elements at play when this balance worked well. The first was a sense of excitement and pleasure in the actions themselves. "It's just really fun...if you don't have fun day to day, you are going to burn out way quicker," explained one interviewee. The second factor was giving conscious attention to building a cohesive group with a high level of trust, with proper debriefing taking place after actions and support offered to anyone who is distressed or traumatised by their experiences.

Some of our respondents also emphasised cohesion: "there's an incredible sense of solidarity that comes out of doing a direct action," said one, while others focused on the capacity of the group to accept and understand each other's vulnerabilities: "we have Activist Trauma Support, we have medical support, we have debriefings, we have a really good way of helping people. We know what burnout is now. We know what post-traumatic stress disorder is," said another.

Another important element was an awareness of the kinds of practices that can counter the intensity of being involved with such a difficult subject—things like time spent outdoors, in meditation, or with family. For one activist it was her father's presence with a banner at all of her court appearances that mattered. Others spoke of a profound relationship with nature, the inner practice of yoga, or time spent walking with the dog after an intense day's work.

Finally, the sense of building a movement that might prefigure the kind of society they hope will emerge in the future was hugely sustaining to almost all of our respondents—the conviction that they could create a world in miniature that was more caring, more responsive and more inclusive; in other words, a community. As a result, many of those we spoke to have begun to talk in terms of 'sustainable activism,' one that can survive for the much longer term. As one of our interviewees put it:

"The struggle will always be there for justice and for those kinds of things ...there's no utopic end point is what I mean. It will always be evolving and changing and I see my... there will always be another struggle somewhere…"

Sustainable activism has what Gramsci called a 'pessimism of the intellect' which can avoid wishful thinking and face reality as squarely as possible. However it also retains an 'optimism of the will', an inner conviction that things can be different. By holding optimism and pessimism in tension, sustainable activism is better able to handle despair, and it has less need to resort to binary thinking as a way of engaging with reality. It can hold contradictions so that they don't become either/or polarities and can work both in and against the system.

Whilst it believes there can be no personal change without political change it is equally insistent that there can be no political change without personal change. It insists optimistically that those who are not against us must be with us, and therefore carries a notion of 'us' which is inclusive and generous, one which offers the benefit of the doubt to the other.

Finally, sustainable activism holds that it is never too late. In the context of climate change it is able to face the truth that some irreversible processes of change are already occurring; that the two degrees limit in the increase in global temperatures agreed at the 2015 Paris climate conference may not be achieved; that bad outcomes are inevitable, and that some are already happening. Nevertheless it also insists that this makes our struggles all the more vital to reduce the scale and significance of these future outcomes, to fight for the 'least-worst' results we can achieve, and to ensure that the world of our grandchildren and their children is as habitable as possible.

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See also a paper from the same research project Outriders of the Coming Adversity

SCIENCE, EXPERTS AND THE MEDIA – KEY MESSENGERS IN A CONFUSED, INATTENTIVE AND SUSPICIOUS WORLD

Written by Catherine Happer

Published: 08 January 2017

The collective action problem of climate change

This is one of several presentations from the CPA conference London [The Psychology of Climate Action: New Perspectives on Leadership November 2016](#)

Presenter Dr Catherine Happer is a Lecturer in Sociology and a member of the Glasgow University Media Group, researching audience reception and social change. She is co-author of 'Communicating Climate Change and Energy Security', published in 2013. Before she returned to Glasgow University, she worked at the BBC developing and making Factual programmes.

First of all thank you for having me – it's really nice to be asked to speak about this question, this problem, I've been exploring for nearly six years now which is not the practical problem of climate change, of decarbonisation, but what I see as the collective action problem of climate change. This is about addressing a persistent conundrum – that in spite of widespread recognition of the seriousness of climate change and a broad awareness of the science, we have not seen any effective and sustained public demand for action.

So why is that the case? As we know it's very complicated but what I'm interested in specifically is the role of media and communications in this process. How have they inhibited the development of strong public sentiment and sense of priority in relation to climate change – and crucially how might they promote it?

So that's what I'm going to talk about, and I'm going to draw on a series of audience reception studies involving focus groups I've conducted across the UK.

First I want to say a few words on the conceptual foundation for my work – and that is that media and communications do not simply operate in a vacuum, but that they are both the product of social processes and reflective of power dynamics, but they also can be productive in themselves – with very real societal impacts.

Therefore, to fully understand this we need to look at: first, the cultural, political and production processes that shape media content, second , the way in which audiences respond to that content – and finally, the implications those responses might have for social action, both at the level of how governments respond in policy and how people feel and act both collectively and individually.

I am most interested in this moment when the audience and media meet – what makes people more predisposed to accept these arguments and reject others? And in the digital age, we also have to think about: why would some people share and comment on these messages and not others – and why prioritise these perspectives? How are these choices related to membership of particular communities both online and off? Ultimately, what is driving these processes of selection, evaluation and engagement?

Looking at climate change specifically then – so I mentioned already what we know, and that is that we have this phenomenon of what's sometimes called stealth denial. The sense that people may feel alarm at reading a report saying it's the hottest year on record and they somehow categorise it as not their problem or not something they need to think about right now.

So why are audiences disengaging?

One of the main reasons is a lack of clarity around the science. This is perhaps not surprisingly with such a complex issue. In fact I've seen real developments in this across the years I've been conducting research in this area – the confusion over the ozone layer, for example, is relatively rare now. Most participants if asked in surveys tend to agree that human activity contributes to climate change.

But this is where focus groups are illuminating on the complex nature of belief and understanding. We can look at the descriptive language used in reference to climate change; it's a 'dispute', it's a controversy', there's 'indecision' , it's 'confused'. The background to that is a widespread uncertainty about the degree to which the scientists are in agreement.

My research shows that scepticism should be seen on a spectrum rather than a fixed set of positions. The outright denial position is marginalised now – even sometimes ridiculed. There are boos and hisses on Question Time when Nigel Lawson speaks. But even amongst those who state a strong belief in anthropogenic climate change, there is a tendency to question the robustness of the data or the limits upon scientific knowledge.

So does the disproportionate time given to sceptics in our media lead to a public denial of climate change – no, but they have helped to sow those nagging little doubts about whether the science is solid enough to act upon. People feel that, with all these other priorities like immigration and the economy, there is a question about prioritising climate change – and this is compounded by a sense that there isn't 100% certainty. As one research participant noted: 'everyone thinks it's someone else's problem'. This is a very powerful strategy. Last year I conducted research in Brazil and China – climate scepticism in the media doesn't really exist – and my participants don't use these phrases and don't have these hesitations.

Returning to the earlier point about differing reception to messaging, how does this connect with the broader political and media culture people inhabit and their existing belief structures? My research also confirms something that is often talked about, and very much recently, which is the crisis in public trust. This to me is one of the biggest challenges we face.

There is currently a very widespread ideology of cynicism in relation to the information environment, the media and journalists. Once upon a time media bias was the concern of a particular branch of academia, now it's everyone's concern. That media bias does exist doesn't preclude the very negative impact of a default suspicion of everything that you're told.

So how do people work through this? Well, there's often a quite complex process by which they select and evaluate information. This comment from my 2014 research is fairly representative:

I scour it all [all media]. I think newspapers, TV, news channels I think they all have their own political agendas nowadays, and it's up to you to work out which one is telling the truth… I couldn't trust them as far as I could throw them. They're in cahoots with the military, the government… (Male, Small business owner)

There are two things here that are interesting to me. The first is, that in the digital environment, it's not the case that mainstream media are being displaced. They still remain at the centre of these processes – and very much the lifeblood of social media too. As such, they still have

agenda setting powers. So low mainstream coverage on climate change, on the BBC and so on, is mirrored by what people are talking about on Facebook, Twitter and other social media. There is no cycle of engagement on climate.

What's also interesting – if you ask people how they feel about these developments, that you can look at the BBC, the New York Times, Russia Today, the Sun versus the Guardian, almost all will say that it is empowering. There is a way of seeing through the bias and we are much more aware now.
But across all samples, when probed, participants concede that actually there is too much information. For every argument you hear, there is another to counter it. It's overwhelming. As this comment illustrates:

I think it's because we're exposed to so many opinions from people and, you know, a lot of the time it is conflicting opinions, you don't know who to believe, so it's a case of believing nothing instead of believing anything. (Female, Middle income)

On social media, a common response is to take sides in an almost instinctive way– and if that side happens to be one that reflects your own views about all information, all expert sources being corrupt, much the better. This is the Farage and Trump position, incidentally both on the sceptical side of the spectrum when it comes to climate change. They feed on powerlessness.

The background, of course, is a very low level of trust invested in politicians and other public figures. This is in the context of the Leveson inquiry, the expenses scandal, and the financial crash and that translates into a lack of faith in the decision-making process and democracy more generally. If ultimately we don't trust the decision-makers to act in the public good, then it's easy to disengage from climate change because they will not take the lead. Again, powerlessness is a defining feature.

How might we combat this? It's a genuine challenge and it is difficult but I did want to leave you with some positives.

The first point relates to messengers – and builds on the original statement about science. In spite of that construction of 'division and dispute' amongst scientists, we have seen an increasing move towards the science consolidating in the public mind. In the context of distrust, the one group that comes out top in my studies and most others in terms of trust is scientists, and other academic experts. I'm not wholly convinced by Gove's argument and I think the fallout from Brexit may see people reinvesting in experts. The problem is that we don't hear from the scientists and academics often enough.

And what could leadership originating in that expertise achieve in respect of powerlessness? Something very interesting happened a few weeks ago – in the neoliberal context, when decisions almost always seem to favour corporations over the public, we had the Uber ruling. Legal and employment experts won a victory in support of workers' rights. It sends out a message – we might not trust this government but expert leadership can force their hand to drive change.

The level of trust invested in scientists and academics gives them a great deal of public influence. Another recent example is the divestment programme which a number of universities, including my own, and the BMA, have signed up to. We have huge, respected, companies responding to arguments rooted in the scientific expertise no longer accepting profit from fossil fuels. This is not bad PR for the oil and gas industries – they really don't need our help in that area, it's about bad PR for governments. It's about moving public opinion towards a sense that feeding the fossil fuel companies is no longer acceptable. It is forcing governments to act even in the face of powerful pressures which dictate otherwise. So collective action rooted in science, I think can be hugely powerful and we need more of this – who might lead the legal and expert case against the third runway at Heathrow? Which group is going to lead the charge against Trump on the Paris deal?

My last thought relates more directly to the media. One of the significant shifts we've seen in journalism in the digital environment is the way in which content is led by algorithms. When particular subjects see huge audience spikes, social media buzz and so on, news outlets

respond by giving them more of the same. The algorithms tell journalists what the audience wants. So there is a need to generate a buzz – and working from the bottom up is something mainstream outlets, however ideologically set, will respond to.

The other side to this is that politicians also monitor social media – this has become a big part of the day to day job of their communications and PR people. Perhaps individual blogs and so on cannot reshape the media environment but collective sway can be significant and so it is crucial to generate widespread affective response on there, and build on that. But the crucial point is that lack of attention to climate change is not inevitable.

TAKING THE GREEN AGENDA OUT OF THE MARGINS: PSYCHOLOGICAL STRATEGIES

Written by Andrew Samuels

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First, therapy. Second, praise. Third, sacrifice. Fourth, apocalypse

This is one of several presentations from the CPA conference London The Psychology of Climate Action: New Perspectives on Leadership November 2016

Andrew Samuels has built up a practice as a political consultant working with leaders, parties and activist groups in several countries. He was one of the two co-founders of Psychotherapists and Counsellors for Social Responsibility and is a former Chair of the United Kingdom Council for Psychotherapy. He is Professor of Analytical Psychology at the University of Essex and a Jungian training analyst. His many books have been translated into 21 languages and the relevant ones are The Political Psyche (1993), Politics on the Couch (2001), and A New Therapy for Politics? (2015). His website is well known for its 'rants', spontaneous talks on a range of topics delivered straight to camera. www.andrewsamuels.com

What a meaningful time to hold this conference, as climate change slips ever further down many or even most political agendas.

Here's a summary of the short talk that follows. First, I'll link up some aspects of what I call 'therapy thinking' and climate change. Then, in the second section, I will assert that it's time to praise humanity and human artifice not to bury them, and pick out some items well deserving of praise. The next and third section takes a look at the political desirability and advocacy of sacrifice by those able to manage it and sets this in an economic context. Finally, I will probe what I see as a sort of addiction to apocalypse operating in the West just now.

Here's the summary of the summary: First, therapy. Second, praise. Third, sacrifice. Fourth, apocalypse.

(1) THERAPY THINKING AND CLIMATE CHANGE

In assigning me this title, the organisers have given me an unlikely task. Do climate activists or therapists ever really want to be in the centre? Of the people? A real mass movement? Can they be happy anywhere except on the margins? Or, if they do struggle to move into the mainstream, aren't they inevitably going to betray their values and ideals? Or waste their time?

Or, as George Marshall noted in his critique of Leonardo Di Caprio's environmental film 'Before the Flood', those celebrities and big names warning ever so articulately of the climate change catastrophe that looms are making things worse. Why? According to Marshall, they simply 'ignore entirely the global zeitgeist of popular cynicism about political leaders and institutions.'

Seriously, there is a key question to ask, and what follows is an inevitably partial and unsatisfying answer. If the facts – the truth – are known, then why is it proving so difficult to get majority buy-

in for the policies and actions that are needed? Is there a collective psychological problem? Or is the language and rhetoric being used by climate change campaigners not really working? Answering these questions is what I am struggling with in this talk.

So - I've been developing what I call 'therapy thinking' in relation to politics for more than 30 year in too many books for comfort. I have pointed out that such an activity is truly transpersonal, for politics, like spirit and soul, links people to each other and to whatever else is on the planet.

Therapy thinking in the context of climate change has become suspiciously easy. Therapists find it easy to be right when it comes to politics– because one invokes the 'maddening rectitude of the psychotherapist' in which the goal is to prove one's cherished theories – of archetypes, object relations, self-actualisation – to prove them correct above all else. That is why every single psychoanalytic comment on Donald Trump is 100% correct, even when they contradict. Easy to be right.

Some of the recent history of therapists' engagement with climate change has not been inspiring or reassuring. As the ex-chair of UKCP who encouraged the creation of a climate change policy as part of a diversity, equality and social responsibility agenda, I can only regret and deplore what seemed to have happened when the proposed climate change policy went to the next Board. Tree Staunton, who co-wrote the policy with Judith Anderson, quotes some dispiriting responses by members of the Board in a recent piece on the matter: 'This is a minority view'. 'Without sufficient grassroots support'. 'What does this have to with psychotherapy?' 'Political ideologies have no place in our work'.

So it may be a case of 'put not thy faith in therapists'.

This first section is coming to an end. It consisted of some critical comments on the role of therapists and therapy thinking in relation to climate change. The next section makes a positive proposal of what could be done to bring climate activism in from the margins.

(2) IT'S TIME TO PRAISE HUMAN ARTIFICE

If we really and truly and seriously want to mainstream ecopsychology and the psychological approach to climate change, then now is also the time to praise human artifice. On one level, I am thinking of praise not judgement for the entire dynamic range of human emotions - positive ones such as joy, hope and inspiration - and the negative and more difficult ones such as lust, greed, envy. It's impossible to pick and choose; to select only what is nice and appealing. Vitality is not the same as morality, after all.

It's also time to praise our cities, those great achievements of human creativity, aesthetics and social organisation. To praise our squares and piazzas, to praise our restaurants and rejoice in the drinking of alcohol or of coffee, to praise traffic and modern communications. To praise, too, brothels and hospitals, banks and schools.

This celebration is missing from much environmental discourse, as it has been from the beginnings. I don't think it is helpful to use the language of psychopathology – for example, as George Monbiot often does. Here's an example: 'We need to kick our addiction to driving'.

Alongside praise of artifice, it is also time to guard against any still remaining idealisation of Nature - for this is politically useless and intellectually weak. No-one really knows what 'Nature' means.
In his seminal book Man and the Natural World, Keith Thomas showed that our present conception of Nature has a complicated history. But it has a history. Nature changes its nature, so to speak. Thomas sets out the trajectory wherein by around 1800 the world was so irradiated by science, technology and industry that people felt 'begrimed, endarkened and smelly'. So they sought a sunny, clean and fresh antidote. If they could afford it, they bought country estates. If not, they merely dreamed of pastures and sang hymns about them. This swing to the opposite end of the spectrum – what Heraclitus and Jung called enantiodromia – led to and created the modern, romantic notion of Nature. We created Nature!

But by the end of the 19th century, we see another swing. This time against Nature. The fight back was led by Nature's great opponent Artifice. My favourite novel in this direction is A Rebours (Against Nature) by J.-K. Huysmans who was a huge influence on Oscar Wilde. This book, in all its imaginative perversity and impossible elaboration, is a paean of praise to artifice and I want to propose Huysman's thoughts like these for us to play with now:

'Nature has had her day; she has finally and utterly exhausted the patience of sensitive observers by the revolting uniformity of her landscapes and skyscapes. In fact, there is not a single one of her inventions, deemed so subtle and sublime, that human ingenuity cannot manufacture. Does there exist, anywhere on this earth, a being conceived in the throes of motherhood who is more dazzlingly, more outstandingly beautiful than the two locomotives recently put into service on the Northern Railway?'

I'll conclude this section by saying one more thing on the topic of human artifice, which is what I have ended up praising.

At an ecopsychology conference in Oxford in 2009, I gave a workshop also entitled 'Against nature'. In it, I distributed sample phials of many perfumes that Selfridges very kindly gave me. In pairs and threes, participants used the perfumes, applied them to each other, and compared notes. It was a smelly old exercise and a lot of fun.

Before we did the exercise, I asked who in the audience of around 150 ecopsychologists wore perfume or its male equivalents. Only one person said that she did. I asked who read fashion magazines in which perfumes are widely advertised. None, though one person said guiltily that she did it in the dentist's waiting room.

I then said that this showed why environmental activism might possibly fail and why ecopsychology had truncated itself. For those in the room had, at least as it seemed to me in the moment, got completely cut off from the role artifice plays in ordinary human life. Cut off, when you get down to it, from humanity itself. As far from the mainstream as one can get.

I am as frightened of the destruction of the planet as many people in the ecopsychology world. But I am also convinced that, if you look in the right way, there is much of value in the fripperies of fashion and consumerism and it is elitist to deny it. Depth is hidden on the surface.

I hope it's clear that I am not repeating the nostrum, more honoured in the breach than in the observance,that climate changers need to stop telling people that they are being very bad boys and girls indeed. Of course, this won't work. But what I am adding is something positive that can be conveyed about aspects of life everyone shares in to some extent or other.

That is the end of the section that has delivered an exploration of how we position nature and artifice. The next section moves on to consider the idea of sacrifice.

(3) SACRIFICE

In this much more depth psychological section, I am in effect linking the psychology of climate change with the whole question of sacrifice. It is becoming a consensus amongst those who write about climate change and sustainability that the climate crisis and imbalances of wealth under capitalism and globalisation are linked. Economic sacrifices are needed.

Because of this consensus, I have been wondering what some ideas about sacrifice might contribute, with climate change and economic justice in mind. We know that people will make sacrifices for their children, or for the sake of a cause they believe in, or in the hope of greater benefits in the future (what the economists call 'opportunity costs').

However, sacrifice is a much deeper and wider psychological and historical theme. Sacrifice lies at the heart of the Abrahamic religions (the aborted sacrifice of Isaac) but is much, much older as a propitiation of the Gods. Asceticism has a long cultural history as does martyrdom.

In Jungian psychology, we talk of the sacrifice of the ego for the flowering of the wider personality in individuation. In art and religion, we contemplate the sacrifice of autonomy and control to something experienced as 'other', whether inside or outside the self.

Maybe the time has arrived for psychologically minded people to begin to find an emotional basis for a programme of economic sacrifice, calling and naming it as such, rather than waiting for governments to bring it about by fiscal legislation or some other compulsory method - which they are anyway reluctant to do for electoral reasons.

That's all there is time for on sacrifice. I think it is important, if we are vthinking of changing the thrust of climate change or any other environmental campaigning, to find a new way of conveying the value, not only the desirability, of sacrifice. If I had longer, there are a number of fascinating experiential exercises concerning sacrifice that we could do. Anyway, now we come to the promised last section on catastrophe and apocalypse.

(4) ADDICTION TO APOCALYPSE

I want to discuss why, when it comes to climate change, it is still quite often a case of 'Eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow we die'. I want to give my own suggestion as to why there is the denial, disavowal and despair so many climate change psychologists write about in such interesting ways.

Yes, what follows is exaggerated - but as Theodore Adorno wrote 'In psychoanalysis nothing is true except the exaggerations'.

This is about what is called 'Apocalypticism' - the belief that there will assuredly be an apocalypse. The term apocalypse originally referred to a revelation of God's will, but now usually refers to the belief that the world will come to an end very soon, even within one's own lifetime.

This belief is usually accompanied by the idea that civilization will soon come to a tumultuous end due to some sort of catastrophic global event.

The notion that the world is coming to an end is fairly called 'archetypal', found in all religions, paths and 'ways'. This is what gives apocalypse the power to possess groups and individuals. Is this what has happened in relation to climate change? If so, then we have the beginnings of a theory as to why so many people in the Western countries have so little interest in the matters we are discussing today.

Climate change and planetary degradation inspire images of an apocalypse which one would imagine to be horrid but which may be oddly pleasing and reassuring. The breakdown will happen, nothing to be done about it. And that could be for some people an oddly reassuring thought.

Image of Lake Karachay - Image Courtesy: www.thespiritscience.net

Fantasies of an apocalyptic end are rooted in reality and it is right to point it out. But these may be deep signs of a self-punishing contempt for ourselves. Apocalypticism is not based on fear of an end but on desire of it.
Perhaps some people think we deserve to perish like this.
Perhaps it is a shadow element for many people here today, including me. It exists alongside our excitement at the idea of radical hope, the rise of a responsible tending for the planet, and the flowering of depth psychological interpretation of climate change denial, disavowal and despair. We desire, we actually want the whole terran temple to crash down. It is a tad exciting, a macabre spectator sport, a form of political pornography, masochism in an environmental setting.

Why do I end my talk on this note? Because I feel obliged to say, in inflated and prophetic mode, it is the very love of catastrophe that contributes to our paralysis. Apocalypse NOW, apocalypse as soon as possible. We climate change campaigners can't move to the centre if we don't think about this thing of darkness that is holding us back.

To die:—to sleep:
No more; and, by a sleep to say we end
The heart-ache and the thousand natural shocks
That flesh is heir to, 'tis a consummation
Devoutly to be wished

GOOD LEADERS AND BAD LEADERS

Good leaders give a home to our caring reparative parts

This is one of several presentations from the CPA conference London The Psychology of Climate Action: New Perspectives on Leadership November 2016

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 The psychoanalyst Irma Brenman Pick[i] said good leaders give a home to our caring reparative parts. She meant that good leaders 'contain' us. They:

- Take in how we are feeling in an empathic way

- Restrain us when our uncaring part gets out of hand

- Protect us from feeling too overwhelmed.

Good leaders also contain us by working to keep us physically safe and to keep the physical environment stable so that we have food and shelter. This must be their top priority as when our physical environment is unstable, we are more likely to feel psychologically unstable and overwhelmed.

A simple example brought this home to me. Several years ago I was in the desert with my husband. We were alone and without a sat phone but could reasonably expect a vehicle to turn up within about three days. We had food and water for a fortnight. Our vehicle, a 4x4, had two cabins. One day the door to the back cabin that storied our food would not open. In the hours that followed, we realised there was no way to get in. We even tried to break the toughened glass window. We could have driven out of there, but we decided to stay and to manage until help arrived. At least we had water from the water tank under the vehicle.

We also had some dried peaches. I gave half to my husband, and then I divided my pile into three, one for each day we might have to wait. I then ate all my peaches up in one go! I felt rather impulsive, greedy and ashamed; as though something had taken me over.

Being alone in a desert heightens awareness of how dependent we are on the environment and how fragile life is. Nonetheless, in this situation our physical survival was not threatened in any serious way.

Even a small threat to physical survival was enough to tip me into a state that I believe was uncontained. I was in touch with further anxieties – what if I became more uncontained? What inner chaos might this stress unleash in me? My point is it takes very little instability in the external environment for our inner stability to become overwhelmed. Faced with a threat to survival, while I'm pleased to find I did look after my husband, I believe I did lose my capacity to care for my future self when she depended on me to look after her.

Without going in for too much self-analysis in public, I believe what added to my feeling psychologically uncontained in that situation was that an infant part of me felt abandoned. At that moment I could not find in myself caring inner parents to help me contain my anxiety.

Our most primitive phantasy is finding ourselves with non–caring parents who leave us to die. The terror this inspires is contained by repeated experience with parents who do not let us die and do not abandon us[ii].

Our current reality is our political leaders show us through their actions that they abandon us and leave us to die and suffer. To be this uncared for is to find our worst nightmare coming true.

One kind of current leader offers us a form of pseudo virtual containment not real containment by offering 'as if' solutions[iii]. Not based on reality, they have the feel of a fraud bubble that must burst. This makes our caring reality based part even more anxious deep down. Examples are: 'vote for me and I will address all the concerns of your caring part. I make good speeches, but when with Wall Street, or with political colleagues, I will put profit first. This may be for a whole range of reasons. The net result is you will see me supporting the Paris Climate Deal and voting for new oil exploration. I am Obama[iv], I am Hillary Clinton[v], I am Angela Merkel[vi] caving in to the motor and energy industries and watering down agreed emissions targets.

Despite their differences, and despite the effort and struggle they have each put in, this kind of leader - when push comes to shove – is still far too inclined to bend the knee to corporate power in the wings. We needed them to walk the walk far more than they have done. The gap between what they have offered and what they have delivered is a fatal gap given the urgency of the need to act on climate. The earth follows the laws of physics not politics.

Then there is Trump. He offers another kind of pseudo false containment. I will look at him later. Both the 'as if' and Trump's forms of pseudo containment are based on lies and because they are, each is inherently unstable.

How did it come to this? The global economy, a neoliberal hybrid of the American beauty rose, is unsustainable. It always was. It has already caused staggering damage to people and to planet. It has grossly overburdened both and already tipped both people and planet into instability. It is incompatible with continuing life on earth. People see this more clearly now and they feel desperate, afraid, angry and abandoned.

By people I mean to include everyone, even the ten percent of the one percent whose financial interests the global economy has primarily served. We are all in this boat together and the idea the super wealthy will be saved in a Noah's yacht is a phantasy.

Globalization of trade is not the problem. As Thomas Picketty recently pointed out[vii], we need global trade. The problem is the ruthless mindset that drove globalization. This mindset treats people as there just to be used and exploited for profit. It sees people, present and future, as nobodies. A nobody is a person who has no power to elicit empathy and care.

The psychoanalyst Christoph Hering wrote a paper about the film Alien[viii] that I think gets to the heart of how people feel when dependent on leaders caught up in a ruthless mindset. He said,

"The alien is a truly frightening monster. ... it does not know any concern or mercy; it is devoid of any scruples or conflicts" ... It is the absolute evil".

The alien is a mindset that abandons people whenever peoples' interests conflict with profit. Profit always comes first. That is the unvarying rule, even when applying that rule means people will suffer and people will die.

Here is an example of how this mindset thinks: there is convincing evidence that crop pesticides called neonicotinoids are killing bees by causing bee colonies to collapse[ix]. The world's food supply depends on bees. Well it's a no brainer – sell the neonicotinoids, relentlessly pressure governments that resist their sale; let the bees die. Where's the profit to be made from taking care?

This is the mindset behind the financial crash in 2008 that left six million Americans homeless. It is the mindset that outsourced America's factories to countries where labour was cheap. Unconcerned about consequences, it is truly frightening, as Hering said. It sees profit on one side of the scale and suffering, death and destruction on the other, and it finds that profit outweighs suffering.

Trump spoke directly to Americans abandoned by the alien mindset. Here is part of his speech when he won the Republican Party nomination for President[x]:

(To the backing of the music from Star wars)

Friends, delegates and fellow Americans (Echoes of FRC! Here Trump presents himself as the powerful Roman Mark Anthony)

... I have visited our laid off factory workers and have visited the communities crushed by our horrible and unfair trade deals. These are the forgotten men and women of our country and they are forgotten. But they're not going to be forgotten long. These are people who work hard but no longer have a voice.

I am your voice. I am with you. I will fight for you. I will win for you.

... We don't want people compromised by terrorism in our country.

We are going to build a wall to stop the gangs and the violence and the drugs from pouring in.

I am the law and order candidate. We will make America strong again. We will make America proud again. We will make America safe again.

Trump is speaking to people traumatised and terrorized by abandonment. This is the terror he refers to. He offers them not genuine containment and genuine repair, but pseudo containment and pseudo repair. Let's go into his method.

He sets himself up as the strong man impregnable to attack. He has already built himself an inner psychological wall. He invites a rapid pathological identification with "I am strong. I am your voice". I suggest the invitation is not you can be like me but you can be me, right now, in phantasy and that way you will no longer feel pain and conflict. You are me and I am you.

Jumping in to this identification means internal conditions are instantly stable again. Apparently. There is no global warming. There is no drought in California. All that is horrible and dangerous is kept outside - in the Mexicans, in the weak corrupt Clinton woman. I/we, fused into one being, will keep them out and will lock her up.

I offer you an instant 'solution' to your pain. Because you and I are now one, we can freely arrange to pass desirable and undesirable bits of ourselves back and forth to the other.

Trump talks to people feeling abandoned economically. He also talks to people scared about climate change. He says, "climate change is a hoax". This strong man is very strong indeed; he apparently has supernatural powers to dispense with reality when reality gets in the way of immediate self-interest. Climate change never was. It was a conspiracy.

High up in his Tower, Trump invites his followers to refashion external reality and their own internal reality; in other words, to join him in being godlike. Lacking in this scenario is enough truth to halt the rise to hubris and magical thinking, one in which leader and led, fused together, overheat dangerous phantasy together rather than cooling it down.

Without sufficient containment by truth (from the media and the establishment) to hold him back, Trump's leadership style shows the drift to omnipotent thinking.

His rhetoric is a most cynical exploitation of people who are traumatised and in shock in order to gain power. It is an example, I think, of Naomi Klein's shock doctrine[xi] at work. Klein argued that people are easier to exploit when stressed and shocked. In the days following his election Trump has already revealed he has no intention of providing stability based on care. He has surrounded himself with staff whose track record is of bigotry and being willing to manipulate

truth to gain power. Immediately after the election shares jumped in pharmaceuticals, fossil fuel companies, armaments and private prisons[xii]. Trump has achieved a shift to the radical right that will further abandon the American people and the people of the world. Stephen Bannon, his Chief Strategist is crowing. In charge of the right wing Breitbart News he now sits at power's table.

I suggest it makes sense to view the rise in what is called the Alt-right as its reaction to a rise in people's capacity to care and to face their feelings more honestly. This rise in care threatens to make profits unstable. Financial stability is the only stability that counts to the alien mindset. It is essentially a paranoid mindset that keeps a beady eye on the threat care poses, and beefs up its military and police capacity to deal with that threat. Anything to protect profits.

To give up on people who voted for Trump; to call them stupid or deplorable or despicable in these circumstances I believe is to be infected by Trump's uncare. Adam Phillips[xiii] made I thought a profound point when he recently said that Trump leads his opponents (as well as his followers) to behave badly.

Christoph Hering offers a reason why this might be. He argues that in the face of the alien one may be driven to want to obliterate it by seeing it as entirely 'out there' and nothing to do with us. The real struggle is to realise that the alien is also part of one's own psyche.

When Irma Brenman Pick said good leaders give a home to our caring reparative parts, she meant good leaders help us to sort out, through hard psychic work, what alien parts belong to us and what alien parts belong to others in the external world. Sorting this out is the ongoing work of repair, which brings with it the possibility of forgiveness, understanding, moving on and also resistance. It mitigates destructive hatred, and the blind wish to kill the alien as the only apparent 'solution'.

To achieve power and facilitate a move to the right, Trump manipulated our rising feeling of hatred. The alien mindset is evil and hating this mindset is hate on the side of life. I think hate gets a bad press, actually. Good leaders help us to contain our lively hate and channel it in constructive ways. They help us use our hate to repair things.

But hatred is a volatile emotion and bad leaders influence us to turn hate into destructive hatred. That is what Trump did[xiv], and so did the Brexiteers, in my view.

Trump's victory did not come out of the blue. It happened in a context. The ruthless mindset has progressively attack structures that contain our uncare. They have unravelled the caring frameworks of the New Deal in the USA and the Welfare state in the UK. They are currently hammering at and attacking the framework of care that remains in the EU. The ruthless mindset sees care as the enemy, the spoke in the wheel of the profit engine. Peoples' care is the mindset's greatest impediment and obstacle.

My current work is on the culture the mindset funded to disable people's capacity to care. This culture[xv] has worked relentlessly to promote the idea that people no longer need to suffer the psychic pain and the moral discomfort that comes with being alive. This is close to the apocalyptic phantasy that we can annihilate all inner pain. The culture has denigrated and de-legitimized healthy awareness of our dependency on nature and on government that will protect them. It has promoted identifications with glamorous powerful celebrities as a short cut to facing feelings of difference, social envy and exclusion.

Trump uses mechanisms already at work in the cure to smash containment and foster pseudo containment.

Good leaders know the truth of what Kevin Anderson said in late 2013[xvi]: change is now unavoidable. We face change if we get our emissions down and we face change if we do not. Inaction on climate and on social justice has already led to political change for the worse.

Good leaders now need to help us to face the changes that go with transitioning rapidly to a low carbon economy and restoring greater social justice. They need to help us to resist the siren pull to seek pseudo forms of containment to ease our pain. We desperately need the stability that

good leaders can provide. It is based on truth not the lies the market requires to maintain its profits.

[i] Personal communication

[ii] Margaret Rustin wrote movingly of this terror of abandonment by parents in her discussion of Ro Randall's paper on ecological debt. See Rustin (2012). Discussion of Great Expectations: the psychodynamics of ecological debt. In Weintrobe, S. (2012). (ed). Engaging with Climate Change: Psychoanalytic Perspectives. London:Routledge.

[iii] See Hoggett P. (2012). Climate Change in a perverse culture. in Weintrobe, S. (2012). (ed) Engaging with Climate Change: Psychoanalytic and Interdisciplinary Perspectives. Routledge: London and New York.

[iv] Obama has faced relentless opposition from corporate (especially oil) interests in his efforts to reduce carbon emissions. He has taken a stand on climate, for instance playing a major role in securing an agreement at the Paris Climate talks in 2015 (he said it was the best he could achieve in the face of Republican opposition), putting forward a state-wide plan to reduce carbon emissions (see for instance https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-record/climate and, recently, ordered the suspension of construction work on a controversial oil pipeline in North Dakota to protect tribal lands. See for instance, http://www.npr.org/2016/09/10/493436447/in-victory-for-protesters-obama-administration-halts-north-dakota-pipeline . However, while ordering protection of Arctic waters from off shore oil exploration he has given the green light to auctioning sections of the Gulf of Mexico. He has supported the TTP and TTIP trade agreements that would significantly lessen environmental standards. See for instance http://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2016-11-18/obama-s-offshore-oil-plan-forces-drillers-to-focus-on-u-s-gulf

[v]In recent years, Exxon, Shell, ConocoPhillips and Chevron have all contributed to the Clinton Foundation. An investigation in the International Business Times revealed that at least two of these oil companies were part of an effort to lobby Clinton's State Department about the Alberta tar sands, a massive deposit of extra-dirty oil.

Did these donations have anything to do with the investigation found, Clinton's State Department approving the Alberta Clipper, a controversial pipeline carrying large amounts of tar-sands bitumen from Alberta to Wisconsin? "According to federal lobbying records reviewed by the IBT," write David Sirota and Ned Resnikoff, "Chevron and ConocoPhillips both lobbied the State Department specifically on the issue of 'oil sands' in the immediate months prior to the department's approval, as did a trade association funded by ExxonMobil."

Did they make Hillary Clinton more disposed to seeing tar-sands pipelines as environmentally benign, as early State Department reviews of Keystone XL seemed to conclude, despite the many scientific warnings? There is no proof – no smoking gun, as Clinton defenders like to say. Just as there is no proof that the money her campaign took from gas lobbyists and fracking financiers has shaped Clinton's current (and dangerous) view that fracking can be made safe.

https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/apr/07/out-of-time-climate-change-hillary-clinton

[vi] The German government bowed to pressure to water down its CO2 reduction targets for industry in the final version of its climate action plan, a document seen by Reuters showed. https://notalotofpeopleknowthat.wordpress.com/2016/11/13/germany-criticised-for-watering-down-climate-plan/

[vii] https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/commentisfree/2016/feb/16/thomas-piketty-bernie-sanders-us-election-2016

[viii] Hering, C. (1994). The Problem of the "Alien": Emotional Mastery or Emotional Fascism in Contemporary Film Production. Free Associations, 4:391-407

[ix] https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2015/oct/28/strong-consensus-that-neonicotinoids-harm-bees-analysis-shows

[x] https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-fix/wp/2016/07/21/full-text-donald-trumps-prepared-remarks-accepting-the-republican-nomination/?utm_term=.179bd84d21a4

[xi] Naomi Klein. (2008). The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism. Penguin: New York

[xii] See Rupert Neate Corporate Winners from Trump's election. The Guardian Nov 10th 2016. https://www.theguardian.com/business/2016/nov/10/corporate-winners-donald-trump-election-private-prisons-pharma

[xiii] See Adam Phillips (2016). Taste is problematic when it is a militant and aggressive narrowing of the mind. Guardian Oct 9th 2016. https://www.theguardian.com/society/2016/oct/09/adam-phillips-interview-the-vulgar-fashion-redefined

[xiv]Judith Butler argued that what she calls 'excitable speech', to the extent it is effective in stirring, rousing and wounding, can put the addressee out of their ordinary context, leaving them feeling out of control. I am suggesting this speech breaks through ordinary containment, for example pushing a feeling of hatred to become destructive hatred through use of hate speech, appeal to grievances and through demeaning remarks. See Judith Butler (1997) Excitable Speech: A politics of the performative. Routledge: New York.

[xv] Through media, advertising, political framing and pressure from social groups

[xvi] Anderson was speaking Avoiding dangerous climate change', Why we need radical reductions in emissions at the Radical Reductions Emissions Conference in 2013. See: https://vimeo.com/album/2648454/video/81836152

AWAKENING

Further thoughts on Radical Hope.

When misfortune fills the world and its inhabitants, make

adversity the path of awakening.

Jamgon Kongtrul, *The Great Path of Awakening* (Tr. by Ken McLeod)

(Tony Cartwright also publishes Essays, Articles & Book Reviews on Climate Change and Cultural Transformation on his website https://www.thetimelessaxis.com/)

This paper is a follow-up to one I originally posted, entitled 'Everything and Nothing', on the old CPA website in June 2015, but which was included in the new website in November of that year. The paper was partly a response to the CPA day on Radical Hope held in Bristol in April and an attempt to understand what is meant by 'radical hope', as distinct from simple optimism. I also tried to explore how we might return to some of the perennial, or ultimate, values we have lost sight of in these very uncertain times.

In 'Everything and Nothing' I referred to the scientific consensus that, as many who read this know, unless we curb our carbon emissions dramatically and quickly, we are heading towards an average temperature rise of four degrees this century, with all the implications for our 'civilised' way of life and for all life on Earth. The first step in any kind of 'awakening' must be awareness of this threat.

Yet awareness of climate change, and the threat of extinction that comes with it, seems impossible for many to contemplate. It is perhaps not so surprising that denial and business-as-usual is the common response. While Greens have been aware of the ecological implications of our consumer culture - and have been warning about it - for some fifty years the CPA has recently formed to ask why, when disaster now looms more and more clearly, too many people continue to ignore it.

Facing the reality about climate change today, as affiliates to the CPA realise, can be shocking and traumatising. No wonder we are drawn to despair. I was thinking about this after seeing Judith (Anderson)'s recent response to yet another article she was posting on the CPA googlegroup about the ever growing signs - this time the unprecedented event of hundreds of icebergs breaking off the Greenland peninsula and floating out into the North Atlantic. Judith's brief and understandable remark accompanying the link was: 'I expect some of you have read this report. Weep.'

Judith's comment also put me in mind of George Monbiot's impassioned and informed columns in the Guardian. I used to wonder how he managed to maintain his motivation as he fumed week after week at our relative political inertia in the face of mounting evidence of ecological

degradation. When would he also simply break down and weep? I asked myself. Did he ever feel like giving up?

But it's crucial we don't just despair. Nor do we have to. Why George Monbiot and many others don't give up is a good question, and one that we might do well to think more about. It raises for me an issue for the CPA. What do we do after we acknowledge our feelings of despair and hopelessness? I am not sure whether a purely therapeutic culture has an answer to this. Therapy, psychoanalytic or otherwise, will help and encourage us to face difficult feelings but I wonder whether 'therapy' itself is a sufficient response to the climate emergency. It may be a start but, in its anthropocentrism, is it still too entangled in a modern Western culture responsible for the emergency in the first place?

Perplexity

For manifestly you have long been aware of what you mean when you use the expression 'being'; we, however, who used to think we have understood it have become perplexed.
                              Plato, translated by Martin Heidegger in *Being and Time*.

We live in a time of great perplexity. There are the current local questions of why the U.K. voted to leave the European Community and the U.S. elected a president who seems temperamentally and intellectually unsuitable for the office. But more than this are the wider issues that perplex us: why, when we have the technology to feed the world, so many millions are starving and dying; why, when we devote so much intellectual energy to the science of economics there is a huge and increasing gap between the rich and the poor, within and between nations; why there is so much hate and anger in the world; why there are terrorist groups who kill themselves and others against all ethical wisdom; and why, of course, when we know our carbon economy is set to doom all life on Earth, we are doing too little about it.

Perplexity in itself is not a reason for despair. On the contrary there are those who think it is our natural condition. After all, we really don't know what the universe is for. Or what we are doing here in it. It was Martin Heidegger's view that the meaning of our being involves the questioning of it. In other words, who we are is an issue for us. In a recent book, *A Case for Irony*, the philosopher and psychoanalyst, Jonathan Lear, who also wrote *Radical Hope*, argued for the return of irony, not in the conventional sense of irony as clever or satirical thinking, but irony as real perplexity. He cited Socrates as a prime exemplar. When Socrates is interpreted as a dissembler and gadfly by his interlocutors in Plato's dialogues, they assume that he knows the answers to his own persistent questions when, in truth, he doesn't. Socrates is genuinely perplexed but believes this to be a more honest basis for an ethical, good, or excellent life, even worth taking the poison for! Only in perplexity can one discover true knowledge, attainable by first recognising our own ignorance and delusion.

There are degrees of knowledge and perplexity, of course, as there are certainty and uncertainty. Just before he died E.F.Schumacher, famous for *Small is Beautiful, Economics as if People Mattered*, handed the manuscript of his last book, *Guide for the Perplexed*, to his daughter, telling her that it contained the core of wisdom that his life had been leading up to. In the opening chapter 'On Philosophical Maps' he pointed out that, by looking for certain knowledge we may miss out on what may be the subtlest, most important and most rewarding things in life and he quoted St Thomas Aquinas, following Aristotle, that 'the slenderest knowledge that may be obtained of the highest things is more desirable than the most certain knowledge of lesser things.' 'Slender' knowledge indicates uncertainty and Schumacher comments: 'Maybe it is necessarily so that the higher things cannot be known with the same degree of certainty as the lesser things can be known, in which case it would be a very great loss indeed if knowledge were limited to things beyond the possibility of doubt.'

It is important that we leave room for uncertainty when predicting, as science does, the material consequences of our fossil fuel economy, if only to allow ourselves to think about climate change in more than just scientific terms. To contemplate its meaning and significance for us in a philosophical and existential sense may be as important as weighing up the practical consequences. Should the CPA be thinking about this? Perhaps there are more crucial things

than merely our survival. Perhaps if we gave thought to these we might be more likely to survive, along with the rest of life.

Contemplating climate change

Nothing compares to making the affliction itself into medicine.
The Secret of the Golden Flower (Tr. by Thomas Cleary)

The challenge of climate change may be the most difficult we face, given the threat to our existence, but its contemplation, beyond the question of our survival, may also lead to new and transformed understandings about ourselves and the universe we live in. As I have mentioned before, modern Western science may have provided us with the means to destroy ourselves along with all life on the Planet but never has the Earth it discloses looked more mysterious and magical. To think how we might also be a part of the mystery and magic could counter-balance the despair. The European Enlightenment tradition developed the simple belief that all knowledge might be accumulated in one hubristic encyclopaedic venture - a circle of knowledge - that contained all there was to know. And this remains a conscious or unconscious belief of many orthodox scientists, despite the twentieth century revolutions of relativity and quantum mechanics.

Science is, however, undergoing a new revolution, transforming itself from its adherence to the dogmatic assumptions of materialist and secular ideology and turning to an appreciation of the lifeworld within everything - from the endless reaches of subatomic matter to the infinite spaces of the cosmos, as well as to the immaterial dimension in the human mind and its place on the life spectrum. In fact the science of mind may be our key to bridging the imagined gap between the material and the immaterial worlds, and core to any awakening in this century.

This may also be the heart of an integral consciousness which Schumacher writes about and which can help 'guide' us through our perplexities. It is at the centre of any perennial philosophy. It is the 'unity consciousness' that Ken Wilber expounds in one of his most popular and readable books, *No Boundary*, written as a follow-up to his first, more difficult *The Spectrum of Consciousness. No Boundary*, subtitled *Eastern and Western Approaches to Personal Growth*, is a slim but comprehensive account and map of the world's psychologies and therapies, from psychoanalysis to Zen, existentialism to Tantra. It may be an important text for any psychological approach to climate science.

Integral consciousness

The spirit of integrative thinking applies to all our human endeavours. It is helpful to explore how the different psychological and therapeutic approaches relate to each other but more important is the integration of everything. No one discipline alone can tell us how to face climate change, the new meta-context for all our thinking. We all need, in the wise words of the American nun, Pema Chodron, to 'start where we are', but we don't need to stay there. What was heartening about last year's leadership conference in London, organised by the CPA committee, was the way it brought people together from different fields in a common dialogue. This has been happening elsewhere, of course, for some time but what was significant in this event was that the initiative was taken by the Psychology Alliance, signalling that there needs to be a dimension of psychological understanding in the overall movement. Interestingly, people from other fields seem to be much more open to a psychological perspective than psychological professionals sometimes are to ecological perspectives.

The value of an integrative and dialogic approach is that everyone learns from each other, both in how you learn what others are doing in their own spheres but what you also learn about your own speciality by trying to communicate it to people outside. There is a strong possibility that individual disciplines, 'psychology' for instance, may be transformed in the process.

This suggests that integrative thinking is not only about inter-disciplinary initiatives. The boundaries between different subjects may be radically changed but this may lead in turn to intra-disciplinary transformations as well as inter-disciplinary ones. This would also facilitate the creation of new and shared concepts, including the language used to express them. Psychologists and psychotherapists tend to be more conservative in this respect so it may be

more challenging for us, but exciting for those who take the risk. The integrative spirit also pervades the thinking behind the idea of a 'progressive alliance' today that promises to transform political thinking in the future.

The One and the Many

Integrative thinking is not just about seeing the pattern within our relationships with each other and with the subject areas that individually preoccupy us, but also about understanding what the anthropologist, Gregory Bateson, called 'the pattern that connects' within all things. The philosopher, Baruch Spinoza, who was a contemporary of Renee Descartes, was famous for his description of the universe as a single unity. In Spinoza's seventeenth century conceptualisation, God and nature are one 'substance', as against Descartes' assertion of the dichotomy of mind and matter which our modern scientific culture is built upon. Spinoza was accused of being a pantheist and atheist and excommunicated but, like the ancient Neo-Platonists, he could be seen as following Plotinus' notion of the One and the Many - the uni-verse as One, or as the Buddhists say 'One Taste', and the Many as the infinite emanations of the One, 'The Ten Thousand Things', according to the Chinese, which come from the One.

This touches on the core of poetic truth. When W.B.Yeats famously wrote in his 1920 poem, 'The Second Coming':

Things fall apart: the centre cannot hold
mere anarchy is loosed upon the world

and T.S.Eliot in *The Waste Land* asked and asserted around the same time:

What are the roots that clutch, what branches grow out
of this stony rubbish? .....only a heap of broken images

they encapsulated the sense of fragmentation and chaos that characterise our modern age. William Blake, however, had also expressed the life-enhancing potential of the poetic spirit in his 'Auguries of Innocence' only a little more than a hundred years before:

To see a World in a Grain of Sand
And a Heaven in a Wild Flower,
Hold Infinity in the palm of your hand
And Eternity in an hour

Beyond poetic truth

Poetic truth is no observer of conventional boundaries. It moves, as the philosopher, Alexandre Koyre, put it in the title of his classic book - which Blake would doubtless have approved of - *From the Closed World to the Infinite Universe*. It takes us beyond itself. Ken Wilber's notion of *No Boundary* is a re-description of the Buddhist concept of Emptiness, the experience of mind beyond conceptual or imaginative thinking. 'Emptiness' doesn't mean literally no boundary. It means that, while in a relative world there will always be boundaries, in an absolute sense the universe is a seamless unity without boundaries, An awareness of absolute emptiness doesn't simply efface boundaries, it allows us to keep redrawing them and bringing more clarity and vividness into our understanding of ourselves and the world around us. The shortest, perhaps most famous of Buddhist wisdom sutras - *The Heart Sutra* - reminds us that form, or structure, and emptiness go together. You cannot have one without the other. They are always re-defining each other.

We have lost touch with the sense of emptiness - the essential reality of absolute space, inner as well as outer - that helps us to redraw the boundaries. A boundary is not a fixed thing but a moving process. Nor is it just something that separates us, but the line that joins, relates and integrates. Like any membrane, though, it needs to breathe. It is our essential source of inspiration. We need to keep moving with it. And where best to start than with our own minds? In the psychological assessment of people in my work I used to draw encouragement from Andrew (Samuel)'s enlightened notions of the 'political' and 'plural psyche', as extending what we thought

of as 'psychological'. His books prompted me to think also of the scientific, economic, social and religious, or spiritual, psyche? In the end mind goes beyond all boundaries.

Who, or what, are we?

When an extreme is reached, there is a reversion.
The Secret of the Golden Flower (Tr. by Thomas Cleary)

What I am suggesting is that just as we face an unprecedented planetary emergency, so it is also an opportunity to redefine ourselves and ask who we essentially are. Andrew Simms, fellow of the new economics foundation, gave the first Coleridge lecture of the New Weather Institute in Bristol last year, which was published with the title: *We are more than this*. In it he highlighted how any 'new economics' hinges on the meaning we give to human nature. He suggested that neo-liberal economics is predicated on three assumptions about our 'dark' personality traits: 'Machiavellianism (tendencies to deceit), narcissism (over-inflated sense of self-worth) and psychopathy (lack of guilt and remorse).'

Simms goes on to ask whether humanity really does 'smell this bad' and to ask whether our notion of 'economic man' is ready to be 'removed from the centre of our theoretical solar system, much as the Earth once had to be replaced by the Sun to correct a similar mistaken belief.' This is a very interesting thought. Could it be that our modern human-centred psychology is akin to a Ptolemaic system that patches up a solar system with ever more complicated epicycles to prove deludedly that the Sun does go round the Earth? It was not until a thousand years later Johannes Kepler, following Copernicus and Galileo, emerged to put the Sun back in the centre and suggest that we were elliptically, not centrally, related to it - and the rest of the universe. It could be said that Kepler's de-centering of the Earth let light back into our thinking and prepared the way for Newton and the European Enlightenment? Perhaps we are ready for a new psychological enlightenment. Perhaps we are about to learn that we are here for the Earth, not that the Earth is here for us. Perhaps we need a Declaration of Human Responsibilities as well as Human Rights.

Is it time we let go of our fixed, hard-wired view of 'human nature' and realise we are now waking up to a more liberated understanding of ourselves? In the far-east there has always been the notion of an original Buddha, or awakened, nature beyond the idea of human nature. This is our essential nature, not separate from human nature but contextual to it.

At the same time a new global balance may be in sight between the world-views of East and West. While the philosophical and psychological essence of Buddha Dharma has been revered and developed in Tibet over the last thousand years, the West has evolved a social, political, and economic awareness - though, in its purely capitalist drive, lacking a sufficiently ethical dimension. Integrating the insights of the inner, psychological world of the East with the social and political understandings of the West would help us bridge the gap between the 'two cultures' - within and between different cultures - which has bedevilled our history.

Adaequatio

The beauties of the highest heavens and the marvels of the sublimest realms are all within the heart: this is where the perfectly open and aware spirit concentrates. Confucians call it the open center, Buddhists call it the pedestal of awareness, Taoists call it the ancestral Earth, the yellow court, the mysterious pass, the primal opening.
The Secret of the Golden Flower (Tr. by Thomas Cleary)

To effect this integration requires both traditions to acknowledge their limitations as well as their achievements. In the East there has been suppression of scientific and political evolution while the Western philosophical and psychological disciplines have proscribed a practice that promises to take them beyond scientific and analytic thought. In his *Guide for the Perplexed* Ernst Schumacher devotes two chapters to the principle of 'adequacy' which addresses the question of how we are enabled to know anything about the world around us. Plotinus said 'Knowing demands the organ fitted to the object.' In other words nothing can be known without there being an appropriate 'instrument' in the makeup of the knower. As Schumacher writes: 'This is the Great Truth of *adaequatio* (adequateness), which defines knowledge as *adaequatio rei et intellectus*: the understanding of the knower must be *adequate* to the thing to be known.'

Plotinus famously said in his essay on 'Beauty': 'Never did eye see the sun unless it had first become sunlike, and never can the soul have vision of the First Beauty unless itself be beautiful.' This is expressed in Vedantic thought as 'That Art Thou', illustrated and expounded by Aldous Huxley in the first chapter of his landmark anthology and study, *The Perennial Philosophy*, first published in 1946. It is the principle that we are composed of the very world we like to think we are objectively examining. In order to really know it, should we not also examine ourselves as an expression of that (objective) world that appears so perplexing to us?

In order to be 'adequate' requires us to develop a practice that goes beyond analytic thinking. Freud and the psychoanalytic tradition have shown us how to explore the personal mind and its passions but has stopped short of an experience of mind that goes beyond the personal. Jung, of course, went much further, as did other transpersonal therapists, and schools of systemic therapy have developed the reality of family and 'stranger-group' processes, demonstrating the connections between inter-personal and intra-personal processes.

But whereas the practice of contemplative 'science' has historically been regarded - and persecuted - as heretical in the West and confined to its poetic and literary traditions, in the East its mystics have been celebrated and revered. The challenge today is how to integrate the scientific insights of the inner world of the East with the material scientific and political knowledge of Europe and the modern West. Isn't this what a global consciousness should aim for, rather than simply establish an economic, trading globalisation? It's what the ancient Silk Road made possible, wisdom accompanying trade. Perhaps the spirit of the Silk Road has now begun to extend globally into Europe, the Americas, and beyond.

The value of integrative practice

An integrative practice encourages us to look beyond our own disciplines and see ourselves from other perspectives. Andrew Simms, suggests, for instance, how, from an alternative view of economics, we might also think differently about psychology. In a well-known parable Buddhism tells how we are all like blind people describing the nature of an elephant by assuming it is to be identified with the single anatomical part each can touch and feel. The shape of the whole elephant only becomes evident when we talk to each other and are able to form a composite or integrated picture.

I have been reading Pankaj Mishra's recent book, *Age of Anger*, about the 'great waves of paranoid hatreds that seem inescapable in our close-knit world'. It strikes me that he provides a good example of a fresh perspective from the East of the elephant of the European and Western mind. He would perhaps approve of this comparison because, in addition to his extensive knowledge of Western culture, he has also written a personal account of his own experience of Buddhism, *An End to Suffering*. His writings provide original insights into the Western mind from an Asian perspective, the outside as it were, while at the same time being more 'inside' it than many of us are. For me he impressively reframes European history and thought and is an example of integrative thinking on a global scale.

Entering into dialogue with others can be difficult and challenging because of the different technical or idiosyncratic languages everyone uses. It's enjoyable and rewarding, of course, to learn new languages, but it's also important to look for a common language or currency. Perhaps this would be helped if we were to focus on the common values that unite, as well as the different languages that differentiate us. The core value spheres are ethics, science, and aesthetics - or art - known classically as the Good, the True, and the Beautiful - or Sublime.

These value spheres apply to all our endeavours and it is important to think of them as a unity. Ethics has to be wise and aesthetic to be authentic or it becomes a mindless and unattractive morality. Science, whether natural or human, likewise should be ethical and sensitive to itself as also an art form to be true science or it becomes an instrumental and technocratic scientism. Art should also take account of the Good and the True to go beyond itself, or it can become purely subjective and self-referential. These are values we can measure all our different activities and thinking by.

Awakening to a timeless perspective

Finally I want to argue for retaining a wider sense of perspective amidst all the bad news now coming our way. I am always amazed at the equanimity and humour of the Dalai Lama and his fellow lamas around the world, maintained despite the killing of hundreds of thousands of their people and the destruction of countless Tibetan temples by the Chinese in the last century. They seem to know how to wear their suffering lightly. Are they aware of something we have lost sight of? Although the first great truth Gautama Buddha taught was the existence of suffering, this was followed by three other great truths which teach how to understand and overcome suffering. In the words of the *Anguttara-Nikaya*: 'He who recognises the existence of suffering, it's cause, it's remedy, and its cessation, has fathomed the four noble truths. He will walk in the right path.'

One of the causes of suffering is ignorance and the point of the Buddhist story of The Blind Men and the Elephant is to deepen our perspective on the world by opening our eyes to the views of others. Climate change and ecological depredation are our greatest challenge but they are also our greatest opportunity. Out of the seeming chaos all around us a new and exciting order may be emerging.

Yes, we need to see our specialised areas of knowledge and experience in a more unified and integrated way. But do we not also need to go beyond our purely human perspective, perhaps to reflect on Aquinas' 'slenderest knowledge of the highest things' or to see everything, in Spinoza's phrase, *sub specie aeternitas*, in the light of eternity?

One day the cosmos will continue, of course, without us. The Earth is a tiny dot, a speck in an infinite universe, as our cosmologists have demonstrated. But for now what a dot, what a speck! where life and mind, including *homo sapiens*, with all his imperfections, has emerged and evolved. The French mathematician and philosopher, Blaise Pascal - who was terrified by the vastness of space - wrote that while human beings may be, 'like reeds, the weakest thing in nature, they are thinking reeds'. He also reminded us we have hearts, and that 'the heart has its reasons which reason knows nothing of'.

The great metaphysicians testify that the sheer fact of life - of Being, of 'Isness' - is supreme. The death, or non-being, we so much fear, is not the opposite of life but included in it. In his famous essay,*'To philosophise Is to learn how to die'*, Montaigne, who thought we shouldn't be afraid of dying, reminded us death was a part of the order of the universe, an integral part of the life of the world. In other words death is not a thing in itself - neither our individual nor collective death. Nor does it have to have 'dominion over us'.

Moreover, while Life includes death, it itself is indestructible, as, incredibly, are we. We may feel like a drop in the ocean, but the indestructible ocean is in us, or, as the title of the Dalai Lama's book about modern science describes it, *The Universe* (is) *in a Single Atom*. Is it not time to realise our identity with everything around us? The unity of the great chain of Life - the One and the Ten Thousand Things - is the essential truth we need to re-awaken to, for it promises to sustain us through all our daily fears, anxieties, and terrors.

Tony Cartwright
May 2017

OXFORD CHANGE AGENCY EVENT - REPORT

Published: 08 January 2018

Notes from the day

Agency in individual and collective change

Climate Psychology Alliance with *Living Witness*

at

Friends Meeting House, 43 St Giles, Oxford, OX1 3LW
10.30 a.m. to 5 p.m., Saturday 2nd December 2017

To read the full report please click here

RESENTMENT AS A POLITICAL FORCE: FROM NIETZCHE TO TRUMP

Written by Paul Hoggett

Published: 08 March 2018
From the Conference 'Staying with the Trouble' 10th February 2018 in Bath

With authoritarianism resurgent across the globe there is lots of talk in progressive circles about these being 'dark times'. But what are the implications of such times for campaigning around the environment and climate change? How is the climate change movement affected by today's culture of grievance and intolerance?

Leaving aside Trump, in the European Union we have reactionary nationalist governments now in Poland, Austria, the Czech Republic and Hungary, and the Italian election could add to this list. So-called Liberal elites (and their concern for environment, migrants, womens rights, etc) seem to be under attack by authoritarian and nationalist movements everywhere in 'the West'. We tend to think of this as something unprecedented since the 1930s but of course it is not. In the early 1990s and in the heart of Europe upwards of 120,000 people, mostly Bosnians, died whilst the West watched helplessly and did nothing.

22 years ago, towards the end of this war, I was part of a delegation to Bosnia of UK trade unionists, support groups, journalists and intellectuals. Here I had my own encounter with the liberal elite. We were all staying in the Hotel Bristol in the war-torn city of Tuzla. What follows is taken directly from my diary extracts of that time (I have redacted the actual names of the two intellectuals who slighted me):

Three of them are waiting for the lift in the hotel. Two of Europe's leading liberal intellectuals and a 'Yugoslav' I do not recognize. As I approach they turn their backs on me, knowing I am one of the delegation.

They are discussing the Yugoslav's bright young son. Addressing the two intellectual celebrities, the Yugoslav says "he will write for you". One of them asks, "Is he in Belgrade?". "No, he is in New York now" the Yugoslav replies. I think to myself, this is how their networks operate, through conversations in lifts where favours are traded.

In the lift they pretend I am not there. Two of them leave on the sixth floor, the Slav on the eigth, and I am alone. These people who talk to themselves, in their capsules, protecting their 'liberalism' - protecting the right for people like them to talk to their friends.

That humiliating feeling (so familiar to members of the working class, to black people and women) and of being so insignificant in someone's eyes that they don't even see you.

Reflecting now I sense my own continued resentment towards this elite. How often I have ruminated on this scene. The shits, who did they think they were, indeed who do they think they are. How dare they do this to me!

And reflecting on my resentment I notice the bitterness, my injured narcissism, and the jaundiced eye I kept for several years for any good news concerning the failing political career of one of these 'stars' as he endeavoured to lead the Liberal Party in Canada.

This became my 'ancient wound', compare it to the following.

"Reporters in the Balkan wars often observed that when they were told atrocity stories, they were occasionally uncertain whether these stories had occurred yesterday or in 1941, 1841 or 1441." (Ignatieff, 1997)

Here Ignatieff refers to what Vamik Volkan terms a 'chosen trauma' - 1441 being the year when the Serbian Prince Lazar was defeated by Murat, the Ottoman sultan, at the Battle of Blackbirds Field. The exhumation of Lazar's remains by Milosovic's supporters 550 years later in 1989 was the prelude to the Serb's murderous aggression towards their Bosnian neighbours. Lazar's remains were carried triumphantly around 'Yugoslav' towns and villages as support was whipped up for a resurgent Serbian nationalism.

130 years ago, speaking in his essay *The Genealogy of Morals* of what he called the Master/Slave relationship, the German philosopher Frederich Nietzche said that whereas the noble and strong bear their suffering willingly the rest of mankind "excel in finding imaginary pretexts for their suffering….They revel in suspicion and gloat over imaginary injuries and slights…They tear open the most ancient of wounds".

Nietzche was speaking of what came to be known as *ressentiment*, derived from the French term which literally means to 're feel'. Now there is a short but significant slip from resentment (which English moral philosophers such as John Hume had noted was a legitimate response to injustice) to *ressentiment*. Nietzche sees the latter as the emotion of the weak - the response of those who bite their tongues, swallow their pride and repress their anger; who, resenting authority's sting, choose to sting another, weaker figure in turn.

Three decades later in 1912 Max Scheler wrote a book called *Ressentiment* that formally introduces the term into mainstream philosophy. He notes that for the weak both the impulse to anger and the object of anger are subject to repression, he adds, "since the affect cannot outwardly express itself it becomes active within. Detached from their original objects, the affects melt together in a venomous mass". *Ressentiment* then is a toxic cocktail of negative affects seeking an object.

Come in Trump.

For although Nietzche and Scheler see ressentiment primarily as an aspect of the human condition Scheler also brings a sociological perspective to the understanding of the powerlessness of the *ressentiment subject*. He argues that the affect only arises where the injured person 'places himself on the same level as the injurer…A slave who has a slavish nature and accepts his status does not desire revenge when he is injured by his master'.

It follows that what Scheler calls 'social ressentiment' is not a feature of traditional societies. As he says,

There follows the important sociological law that this psychological dynamite will spread with the *discrepancy* between the political, constitutional or traditional status of a group and its factual power….Social *ressentiment*, at least, would be slight in a democracy which is not only political, but also social and tends toward equality of property…*Ressentiment* must therefore be strongest in a society like ours, where approximately equal rights (political and otherwise) or formal social equality, publicly recognized, go hand in hand with wide factual differences in power, property and education." (*Ressentiment*, p.50)

Scheler also notes the vital role parliamentary institutions play 'as discharge mechanisms for mass and group emotions'. But this assumes the existence of political parties or movements capable of giving voice to social injustices. Where this voice is absent a palpable sense that 'no-one speaks for us' develops and the ensuing feeling of political impotence provides the condition in which grievances become suppressed and turn in upon themselves.

These are absolutely crucial insights (with enormous contemporary relevance) and one reason why Scheler has been so widely referred to by political theorists who have studied those populist and authoritarian movements and parties which emerged throughout the western world from the 1920s onwards. In his introduction to the first English translation in 1961 of Scheler's book *Ressentiment*, Lewis Coser notes its impact on the generation of scholars writing in the immediate aftermath of the rise of Nazism and the Second World War. And today Scheler's idea of social *ressentiment* is being deployed once more to understand times like our's where globalization and neoliberalism has generated massive inequalities both within and between nations, inequalities which have remained unaddressed by traditional political parties which are themselves in crisis.

So, on the one hand *ressentiment* is an aspect of the human condition, the reaction of the powerless to real or imagined slights, attacks and injustices. And then on the other, a mass emotion that emerges during periods of heightened inequality in democratic societies. Considered as an aspect of the human condition *ressentiment* is strikingly similar to the concept of grievance developed by psychoanalysts such as John Steiner, Sally Weintrobe and others. They see the issue in terms of what we might call 'the grip of the ideal', something you might regard as highly pertinent to a civilization currently in thrall to the promised lands of consumption, celebrity and various fundamentalisms (presently including of the national kind)

The unconscious phantasy of a perfect world, an original paradise, where loss does not apply underlies grievance from their perspective.
Considered psychoanalytically it is a sustained attitude of complaint towards the perceived injustices of life - time, loss, limits, otherness, one's own limitations and reality's laws and constraints. These 'facts of life' are experienced as an injustice barring the individual from possession of the ideal, facts that the individual feels both victimised and aggrieved by, the grievance smouldering on (being nursed) in a melancholic fashion. In this way the fantasy of the ideal is kept alive, the fantasy of a world in which time, loss, etc. does not exist.

We can therefore liken *Ressentiment* to the continued nursing of a grievance and in nursing this grievance the individual

Takes the position of the victim;

And in doing so consoles himself that at least he is in the right.

The great thing about victimhood is the sense of one's own innocence, the responsibility for one's misfortune always lies with the Other and hence I (the bloke being ignored in the lift in Tuzla) have the consolation of being 'in the right' and this righteousness is an expression of my moral narcissism, it makes me feel good.

How easily this can infect politics. The forgotten white working class feels itself to be the victim of liberal elites who are more concerned for the welfare of minorities than for their own people. These elites have no respect for their own country and their soft, liberal views undermine respect for (white Male) authority and encourage various forms of depravity and criminality.

But we would be making a big mistake if we believed that *ressentiment* was something that only infected the white working class - the Brexit voters, Trump supporters, etc. There is a huge danger that what we might call reactionary *ressentiment* simply finds its mirror in liberal *ressentiment*, something which has undoubtedly been a feature of the so-called 'culture wars' in the USA. The right is only too eager to cast the struggles of black people, women and other oppressed groups as 'the politics of victimhood' and liberals are too often happy to oblige, often through a perverse idealisation of oppressed groups as if they have some kind of monopoly on good behaviour and 'being in the right'. And this has found a recent echo in the UK with disputes about safe spaces, no platforming, micro aggression and so on. How easily 'identity politics' or 'the politics of difference' can become a politics quite intolerant of difference, as we see today in disputes around the 'me too movement' between second and fourth wave feminists and between anglo/American feminists and French feminists.

And how easy it is for despairing environmentalists, people like us, to feel ourselves to be the oppressed victims of the complacency, greed and denial of others. We look at governments

doing too little and too late, we feel immersed in a culture which simply doesn't seem to get the urgency of the situation and then we console ourselves with the thought that we may be losing the struggle but at least we are in the right. How easy it is for us to fall back into our own virtue signalling and political correctness when eating our vegan food, buying our dairy-free or (having avoided the plane) travelling by train. How tempting for us, even though we know it is counter-productive, to preach and lecture rather than engage and listen. Facing a guilty middle class audience that is all too willing to assume the position of the offended victim we step right in and assume the role of the aggressor.

When you think about it, the inability to fully accept time, death, limits, loss and otherness is itself to some extent historically and culturally determined. For the idea that we have to live within our limits is nothing new for the global 80% who have been doing this all their lives. The paradox is that it is the 20% who are the most intellectually aware of this need and the least able to do anything about it. Least able because we are the most hooked-in to the carbon intensive practices of globalisation (with work colleagues and loved-ones spread across the globe) and psychologically least able because our sense of narcissistic entitlement is such that when the word 'sacrifice' is mentioned we imagine that it must refer to someone else for this could not possibly apply to us. Press the point and what you get is a wave of *liberal ressentiment*.

We, the global 20%, who are disproportionately responsible for the climatic destruction presently falling upon the global poor cannot quite bring ourselves to believe that it is we who have to make some sacrifices.

This indeed is 'the malady of the ideal', of a society which promises what cannot be given, a society such as those that now exist in developed capitalist economies in which a substantial middle class has been elevated above the conditions of bare survival. Finally freed from need via the development of capitalism's productive forces the global middle class now falls prey to the embrace of the ideal. Seduced, taunted and oppressed by the longing that it arouses we feel resentful, envious and ashamed and it is this that sows the seeds of what I now think of as *liberal ressentiment*.

Perhaps as Nietzche imagined, *ressentiment* is inherent to the human species but it is also being stirred and provoked during what may turn out to be our highest if not final stage of development. Recently termed 'the Anthropocene' by Earth Systems Scientists, we are now entering a new geological era in which an increasingly barren and angry mother nature is displacing the one that has nurtured us these past 10,000 years. If we are to avoid what some call 'the long descent' then breaking free of the grip of the ideal in all its forms must become central to cultural and political struggle.

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CLIMATE CHANGE: THE MORAL DIMENSION

This talk is about a troublesome bit of our human character: the exception in us[i]. One occasion I met up with my own exception was at the bus stop. It was raining, cold and windy, and I thought grumpily, "I wish I'd just taken the car!" Next, I imagined my grandchildren, now grownup, standing right next to me. I was in a bit of bad weather and they, in the future, were in extreme weather because of climate change. I heard petulance in my entitled belief I should not have to face any inconvenience. I felt ashamed, embarrassed and much less of a person than I felt I could be.

I believe I had emerged from a layer of disavowal in which I could know but not really know, with empathy and feeling, what climate change would mean for others. In a state of disavowal, I had kept my grandchildren far enough away to avoid any touching, listening and meeting of eyes. Here, they were back close to me. In my imagination, they and I heard my petulant tone.

I have no difficulty imagining my grandchildren in the future, hopefully going to university, having relationships and children of their own. My blind spot was about the effects on them of climate change.

Undoing a layer of my disavowal, I experienced a crystallization of conscience. I saw more clearly a petulant, entitled resentful part of myself that was saying to my more caring part, "I will go along with your carbon reduction actions, but only if I'm not actually inconvenienced".

I am quite capable of petulant resentment. I recognised my inner refusenik - this 'brattish' entitled person - as me, but I also saw it was not essentially who I am and can be. I believe I had been influenced by culture. Neoliberal[iii] culture through advertising, media, social group pressure and political propaganda relentlessly encourages the exception in us all. It invites us to believe we are special, it stimulates our greed and it encourages magical 'as if' solutions to life's problems. As Raymond Williams (1958)[iv] so cogently argued, we are mostly unconscious of a culture's effects. People under the influence of neoliberal culture are in particular danger of suffering what Bion called 'spiritual drift'. He meant moral drift but also loss of agency and creative thinking capacity.

Zigmunt Bauman (2014)[vi] said the 'logic of living' the neoliberal global economy imposes on us conflicts with our basic moral sense. Ordinary daily activities become fraught with moral dilemmas: do I take the car or the bus? Do I buy those flown in fresh vegetables with a high carbon price tag? Do I eat that chicken knowing it spent a miserable life in an automated animal feedlot operation (neoliberalism's word for a large farm)? Do I buy that book online from a company that employs people on zero hours' contracts?

The neoliberal economy violates most peoples' sense of what is right and wrong many times a day and staying with this knowledge can leave us feeling dispirited and overburdened. Who wants to be worrying about the future of the climate system when fetching the grandchildren from school? Who wants to face the guilt - the ongoing miserable sense of dirty implication - that goes with living in an economic system based solely on maximizing profit?

While it is not possible to live without causing some damage, the neoliberal economy is causing such damage that if it continues it will make life on earth not sustainable. I suggest that to know this at a feeling level, especially knowing we are collectively implicated, is to suffer and to live with a sense of great moral injury[vii]. Robert J. Lifton (2015)[viii] argued that recently more people have begun to shift from an 'unformed' to a 'formed' awareness of climate change. Formed awareness is awareness that climate change is a moral issue. I would add that formed awareness is also awareness that neoliberalism is a deeply immoral system that we are all part of.

I will now look in more psychological detail at the exception in us.

Being an exception

An exception absolutely refuses to give up these cherished false beliefs:

- I am entitled to believe I am an idealized version of myself
- I am entitled to whatever I want
- I am entitled to use omnipotent thinking to avoid psychic pain

The exception feels entitled to be it all, have it all and not feel guilty about this. My exception at the bus stop was objecting, 'I must have my comfort. Never mind the carbon'. I could avoid my guilt through using disavowal, a kind of omnipotent thinking.

Freud thought an exception is an ordinary 'refusenik' part of us that lurks in us all. We start out as her/his majesty the baby. Reaching the terrible twos, we demand the world sees things our way and obeys our commands. We struggle to accept our real position. Surely, we are entitled to the biggest slice of the pie? Psychoanalyst Murray[ix] called this kind of entitlement 'narcissistic' to distinguish it from a healthy sense of entitlement to a fair share.

Let's explore further the three core beliefs that exceptions cling to:

I am ideal

In reality, no one is ideal, and the world does not revolve round us.

I am entitled to idealized provision

This entitlement fans an avaricious form of greed[x]. The world and everyone and everything in it is eyed up as an asset to be stripped, only there to aggrandize the self.

'I want that, so I'll have it, regardless. I'm entitled' has becomes so ordinary in our culture that we do not notice our exception speaking when taking the bus not the car, or ordering an item from across the world online, or reaching for that fresh flown-in food item at the supermarket.

I am entitled to use omnipotent thinking.

Omnipotent thinking magically 'disappears' inner discomfort. Using magical thinking, we can restore a clear conscience and have no worries. As if.
Magical thinking is often accompanied by a feeling of triumph: I am superior to you. You have to suffer feelings that go with being a caring human being - like guilt and shame - whereas I can mobilize psychological mechanisms to make these feelings 'disappear'. I have a psychic wand at my disposal.

Taking seriously that there is an exception in us can sharpen our understanding of what Freud meant by reality. Reality is what stands in the way of the exception's sense of entitlement. Reality constrains, limits the exception. The exception wants to burst free of reality's bonds.

So far, I've talked about the ordinary exception in us. I now introduce a different sort of Exception. This Exception has seized power within the psyche. The mind is now in a state of moral deregulation. Care no longer has the power to rein it in.

Neoliberal ideology, currently the thinking of those in overall charge of the world economy is Exceptionalist in this sense. People in its grip tend to be:

- Self-idealizing and superior – including morally superior
- Feel entitled to whatever they want
- Feel entitled to use omnipotent thinking to assuage their consciences

Exceptions (capital E to indicate the power shift) are arrogant, the term arrogance well capturing the inner psychological picture of a power grab by the self-idealizing, exaggeratedly entitled, 'exceptionalist' part. The caring part of the self is forced to live apart - in 'apart-heid' - within the psyche, kept far enough away to have no felt influence[xi].

Rulers who are Exceptions are found throughout human history. I will give an example of one who lived three thousand years ago. This is psychoanalyst Karl Abraham's (1935)[xii] account of Amenhotep IV, the Egyptian boy king who believed he was the Sun God Re. Many ancient rulers believed they were deities, but Amenhotep carried things further. He announced he was son of Re, ordered all signs of his real father's life to be obliterated and arranged to be buried near his mother[xiii]. Next, he announced that he was Re. As Re, he claimed he was the source of all radiance and light in his kingdom.

Abraham used this story to illustrate omnipotent thinking. As Re, Amenhotep IV was caught up in a phantasy that he, omni-potently, could create the whole world. The world he created was an 'as if' psychic retreat of fake reality. Abraham clearly illustrated the stages involved: divorce oneself from real objects through splitting them into idealized and denigrated parts; identify with the idealized part; recast the whole inner representational world to suit wishful hubristic phantasy, disavow damage caused. Self-idealizing omnipotent thought-action can rustle up an imaginary 'as if' pain free inner world[xiv] to live inside in an instant[xv]. It can reshape the whole inner psychic landscape.

When people idealize themselves, damage does not feel real or weighty to them. They believe they can magically fix things that go wrong.

The 'what if' approach versus the 'as if' approach

Hanna Segal importantly distinguished two broad approaches to phantasy, the 'what if' and the 'as if' approach[xvi].

'What if' asks what if my phantasy were true? What would be the consequences? 'What if' type of thinking is the hall mark of the caring part of the self. For instance, what if I act as though I am superior and special, rules do not apply to me *and* I am entitled to whatever I want and not to feel bad about it? What would follow in the outside world and how would my way of being affect my inner moral equilibrium?

'As if' thinking proceeds 'as if' the phantasy is true. 'As if' thinking is the hall mark of Exceptions.

Segal saw the caring and the uncaring parts of the self as preoccupied with morality. The caring part is primarily concerned about the self's effects on the other. It wants to repair damage it causes, where it can, in genuine ways. To do this, it needs a truthful picture. For example, having undertaken 'what if' interrogatory work, it comes to the conclusion that, 'seeing myself as ideal, exaggeratedly entitled and an exception to ordinary inner moral checks, balances and struggles has harmed others around me and also harmed myself. It leaves me feeling guilty and ashamed. It leaves me in a de-idealized position, humbler, more aware of my needs, dependencies on others and feelings of love and gratitude towards them. It has led me to mourn my arrogant phantasy beliefs'. What we ordinarily think of as a moral position involves this sort of psychic repair work as well as practical repair work.

The uncaring part of the self is also concerned with damage and repair. However, its sees damage as anything that punctures its phantasy of being ideal and it 'repairs' the damage in 'as if' ways. They are designed to restore the wishful phantasy to what it was before the damage

was noticed. Here, when moral imperfection is noticed in the self, all effort is directed to restoring the self-image as ideal. This is 'as if' morality, created through omnipotent thinking. Segal called this manic repair.

Here is an example of what Segal meant by a manic repair.

I readily blamed the oil industry and the neoliberal establishment for the climate crisis, while not sufficiently noticing my own sense of exaggerated entitlement and exceptionalism. The oil industry and the neoliberal establishment are majorly responsible, but was I using their culpability to project my own culpability by maintaining, 'I'm not to blame; it's the system'? If so, that would be a manic repair to rid myself of feeling burdened by guilt. Blocking felt awareness of - disavowing - my grandchildren's fate would help me sustain that position.

When caught up in manic 'as if' repairs, a person is not psychically available for genuine reality-based repairs.

Neoliberal ideology

Neoliberal ideology, inspired by Hayek, popularized by writers like Ayn Rand and giving rise to free market economic theory, while it gradually gained influence after WW2, was still a relative outrider on the political fringe until the 1980s when it gathered support and was voted into power in Regan's USA and Thatcher's Britain.

Neoliberal ideology displays the hallmark traits of Exceptionalism: self-idealization (we are the ideal and our position is superior), exaggerated entitlement (man [sic] shall hold dominion and rules and laws do not apply to us), a drift to 'as if' omnipotent thinking and 'as if' moral quick fixes (we can ignore climate change as it is not quite real to us).

A self-idealizing, arrogating belief system is by no means unique to this ideology. As old as the human hills (we saw it with Amenhotep IV), it took on new force, scope and energy from the mid 18th century onwards with industrialization and colonialism. Industrialization encouraged a view of workers and nature as 'raw materials' to be exploited. Colonialism had bred a belief in superiority over other cultures, with splitting into superior/inferior based on prejudice used to justify the immorality of ruthless exploitation. The humanity and the entitlements of 'distanced others' were disavowed in 'as if' ways to quash moral qualms.

Neoliberals who came to power in the 1980s knew about climate change. The reality-based community asked what if we do nothing about it? Neoliberals embraced 'as if'. They acted 'as if' the problem of climate change could be addressed through extensive disavowal and manic repairs. That way neoliberal Exceptions could 'restore' their position to being ideal, exaggeratedly entitled and an exception to rules and laws, even the laws of physics.

It is beyond the 'broad-brush' scope of this talk more fully to argue the case that neoliberal ideology is an example of Exceptionalism. Just one illustration is neoliberal ideologue Ayn Rand's novel *Atlas Shrugged*[xvii] that vividly conveys Exceptionalism in its neoliberal form. Its main character Hank Rearden, defending himself in court, appears enraptured with his own superiority and superior creativity, wedded to the idea that he need follow no rules set by others. He argues with passion that only violent force used against him or incarceration will hold him back from doing whatever he wants to do. He is exaggeratedly entitled and believes he owes nothing to others whom he sees as expectant leeches wanting to suck from him and take from him what he alone created. He is not responsible to or for others, but it is clear he thinks they will be nourished by and benefit from his radiant creativity and largesse. Here he resembles the picture painted of Amenhotep IV who thought he was self-created and that his radiance trickled down and lit everyone up.

Rearden worships his individual freedom to the point of fetishizing it. This is freedom divorced from responsibility to or for others. He shocks with the revealing openness of his position, one normally kept hidden to respect moral probity. He presents himself as radiantly superior and he hides the ugly underbelly of what is required to maintain Exceptionalism.

It might be asked why a character like Rearden is so appealing? In the film version of the story, people in the courthouse start out listening in shocked silence but by the end they applaud him wildly. It goes beyond the scope of this talk to explore this, vital, question, except to say that Rearden appeals to the ordinary exception in us all. Which of us does not recognise a wish to be free of, untrammelled by, feelings of guilt and shame? Andre Green's view of Freud's death drive as the wish to achieve an inner place of quietude may well bear on why a position like Rearden's is so appealing. The inner quietude comes from using omnipotent thinking to rid the self of moral conflict and anxieties it generates. As if.

The idealized self sees itself as beneficent and all providing. Real people, the apparent recipients of this beneficence, are actually held in contempt, exploited and side-lined. One version of this phantasy within neoliberal ideology is trickle-down economics, the idea that neoliberals' riches will trickle down. In reality, we have seen increasing trickle up in the neoliberal age, with, as Ha Joon Chang[xviii] pointed out, rules fixed so the ladder is drawn up behind those in the entitled in-crowd.

Under neoliberalism, environmental harm done has tended to be addressed through quick fix manic 'repairs'. This enabled a moral position to be maintained in 'as if' ways.

Neoliberal culture

A global economy run on neoliberal lines will exploit people, harm the planet and squander resources. This is because the Exceptions driving it are in a mindset disassociated from care and responsibility. For the new neoliberal economy to function, people would need to be deregulated morally so they would not mind so much that the way they now lived was immoral and harmful. The culture neoliberals put in place would offer people 'as if' narratives providing them with justifications to help them feel less guilty living in the new economy. It would appeal to the ordinary exception in them and attack their caring part that held the exception in check. It would also attack cultures of care that held the exception in check.

Neoliberal culture grew out of, and greatly extended, consumerist culture that began to take hold with mechanization in the early 1920s, with advertisers such as Bernays, Freud's nephew, exploiting to the hilt Freud's discovery of the power of phantasy. Bernays' marketing interventions aimed to boost wishful 'as if' quick fixes and undermine 'what if' thinking. He was particularly effective in ways he found to corrupt the caring part of the self to draw it into 'as if' omnipotent thinking.

Consumerism grew out of greater understanding of how to manipulate people's conflicting relationships to phantasy. It appealed to already existing self-idealizing tendencies in people. Advertising and marketing was so successful that by the 1960s US culture was being described as the 'me' culture[xix].

During the neoliberal era, advertizing, mass media and general group culture worked to achieve a shift in the moral centre of gravity. Neoliberal culture, being responsive to the times, developed its techniques of psychological persuasion. Advertizing now reached ever more people, including children who had been protected from direct advertizing until Regan deregulated advertizing to children in 1981[xx]. With the digital age came penetration of advertizing into ever further areas of life.

Advertizers continued to repeatedly stimulate omnipotent identification with idealized figures (remember Amenhotep IV thinking he was the sun god). Branding under neo-liberalism became more sophisticated and as the damage caused by the neoliberal economy rose, 'greening' became prevalent and a part of branding. Greening - falsely suggesting the product was ecologically sustainable - was used to quell rising moral unease at buying the product. 'As if' fake perfect Eden-like worlds were offered to counter awareness that, as Pope Frances[xxi] put it, "we are turning our world into a pile of filth".

Neoliberal culture offers a collusive deal: move into a bubble-like psychic retreat from reality and you can do the shopping guilt free. You are an exception and as such entitled to have a nice day and not to feel any inner pain, especially guilt and shame.

Corporations spend vast sums crafting the hook to draw people into feeling entitled to employ omnipotent thinking to avoid feeling implicated in the damage. Feeling entitled in this way necessarily treats the caring reality oriented part of the self as not entitled, not worth it. That was the pain I believe I registered standing at the bus stop. I saw myself as worth more than the exaggeratedly entitled falsely 'worth it' position I found myself in. The caring part measures what to means to be 'worth it' on a different set of scales.

Neoliberal culture has relentlessly encouraged disavowal in the general population. The most serious example is disavowal that we are implicated in climate change. The subject tends to be dropped from conversations in the media, in social group discussions and in general culture, or if admitted, stripped of its urgency[xxii].

Walter Benjamin's depiction of Paul Klee's painting of Angelus Novelis vividly conveys our current historical moment. The angel of history turns away but is drawn to look fixedly at the past.

… he sees one single catastrophe, which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage and hurls it in front of his feet.[xxiii] .

I have argued that the *one single catastrophe, which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage* is the culturally driven upsurge in exceptionalism during the neoliberal era. We will only address climate change seriously when we break with neoliberalism. I believe that starts with the pain of seeing that we become morally deregulated when we collude with it. We need to take seriously the exception within us as well as the Exceptions currently running the economy.

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[i] For a far-reaching psychological analysis of exceptions see Freud, S. (1916). Some Character-Types Met with in Psycho-Analytic Work. *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume XIV (1914-1916): On the History of the Psycho-Analytic Movement, Papers on Metapsychology and Other Works*, 309-333

[ii] For a discussion of climate change disavowal see Weintrobe's and Hoggett's papers in Weintrobe (2012) *Engaging with Climate Change*. Routledge: London.

[iii] George Monbiot gives a clear succinct outline of neoliberalism. See: Monbiot, G. (2010). Neoliberalism – the ideology at the root of all our problems The Guardian 04/09/2016.

[iv] Raymond Williams. (1958). *Culture and Society: 1780 to 1950*. Columbia University Press. New York.

[v] Bion, W.R. (1948) 'Psychiatry at a time of crisis', *British Journal of Medical Psychology,*XXI,Part 2, 181-189.

[vi] Bauman, Z. (2013) Participant on Vetenskapens varld lot 23, stv (Swedish public broadcasting channel) aired 23.09.13. http:/www.svtplay.se/video/1480596/del-23

[vii] Soldiers are currently being diagnosed with moral injury as a consequence of participating in immoral wars. They too describe moments of crystallization of conscience, when they see that they are caught up in higher order military and political structures that makes it extremely difficult not to violate their moral code. See Puniewska, Maggie (2015).Healing a Wounded Sense of Morality. *The Atlantic*, JUL 3, 2015. http://www.theatlantic.com/author/maggie-puniewska

[viii] Lifton, R. J. (2014). *The climate swerve.*New York Times. http://www.nytimes.com/2014/08/24/opinion/sunday/the-climate-swerve.html?_r=2

[ix] Murray J (1964). Narcissism and the ego ideal. *J. Amer. Psychoanal. Assn.* 12: 471-511

[x] See Weinrobe (2010) On runaway greed and climate change denial: a psychoanalytic perspective, Lionel Monteith Memorial Lecture, London: Lincoln Clinic and Centre for

Psychotherapy, published in the *Bulletin Annual of the British Psychoanalytical Society*and on www.sallyweintrobe.com

xi For a discussion of this kind of dehumanizing splitting see Weintrobe, S. (2010). A dehumanising form of prejudice as part of a narcissistic pathological organisation. In Enduring Loss: *Mourning, Depression and Narcissism through the Life Cycle.* (eds) McGinley, E., and Varchevker, A., Karnac: London.

xii Abraham, K. (1935). Amenhotep IV (Ikhnaton) - A Psychoanalytic Contribution to the Understanding of his Personality. *Psychoanal. Q.*, 4:537-569.

xiii He ordered that her burial name show no trace of her ever having had any connection with his real father.

xiv Abraham was writing long before Steiner put forward his ideas on the psychic retreat from reality. See Steiner, J. (1993). *Psychic Retreats.*London: Routledge.

xv Wanting to 'feel special' is common and ordinary, and always involves some self-idealization. The degree to which we can get trapped in self-idealization may depend not only on individual personality but on our circumstances in life: how loved we are in reality and what in our environment keeps our omnipotence in check.

xvi Segal, H. (1994). Phantasy and Reality. Int. J. Psycho-Anal., 75:395-401.

xvii Ayn Rand (1957). *Atlas Shrugged.* Plume Books. Published (2007) by Penguin Books: London.

xviii Ha-Joon Chang. (2007). *Bad Samaritans: Guilty Secrets of rich nations and the threat to global prosperity.*Random House: London

xix See for exampleLasch, C. (1991). *The Culture of Narcissism: American Life in an Age of Diminishing Expectations.* Norton: London and New York.

xx IRVIN MOLOTSKY (1988). Reagan Vetoes Bill Putting Limits On TV Programming for Children. *New York Times*

xxi Pope Francis: http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html

xxii For a discussion of how this plays out in social conversations, see podcast by Weintrobe (2016): https://www.mixcloud.com/Resonance/frontier-psychoanalyst-ep-3-18-january-2016/

xxiii Walter Benjamin, "Thesis on the Philosophy of History," ninth thesis.

CONSCIENTIOUS PROTECTORS

Written by Lise Van Susteren

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.As an increasing number of activists are prepared to risk arrest in order to defend the Earth against fossil fuel capitalism. What role might climate psychology play in their defence?

The Duress or Necessity Defence

Activists threatened with prosecution are making increasing use of the "Duress Defense" (by Circumstance) in the UK and the "Necessity Defense" in the U.S. Is there a role for mental health professionals to play?

The 'valve turners': Activists faced jail time to briefly stop the flow of ...

As fear mounts and the consequences of harmful actions against human life and nature from dangerous policies and actions becomes ever more apparent, outrage at expanding, unchecked threats that increase our peril can be expected to rise as well. In the effort to protect society, and seeing it as the lesser of two evils, a growing number of individuals will be willing to break the law – risking arrest and even incarceration. Like the Conscientious Objectors, from whom they get their name, these Conscientious Protectors, will be acting on deeply held principle: at this time of accelerating danger to the planet they have no choice: either they take action to protect life, or by their inaction they will be complicit in its destruction.

The Legal Case for the Defence

The legal profession is the first line of defense for Conscientious Protectors – offering an increasingly used option:
in the UK Conscientious Protectors may plead the "Duress by Circumstance" defense.
In the US Conscientious Protectors may plead the "Necessity Defense".

The criteria needed to mount the defense revolve around key concepts: the danger is objective, the threat to bodily or other harm is serious, the response was proportional, and the act was one a reasonable person could be expected to take.

For details:
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Duress_in_English_law
https://legal-dictionary.thefreedictionary.com/Necessity+defense

In the US the defense is grounded in both common law (based on precedent) and in many jurisdictions by statutory law (the policy is spelled out). No statutory Federal law exists.

Could supportive mental health professionals help Conscientious Protectors defend themselves?

The legal system will be more responsive to the defense when it is shown that an individual's life "story" and personality profile reflect the values that led to the decision to break the law. This is where the experienced mental health professional has a role to play:
In the hands of a competent professional, a psychological profile can be drawn, showing that key characteristics are consistent with the individual's history, thereby reinforcing the themes of the defense and key points the lawyers will want to make.

Examples of key characteristics of Conscientious Protectors include that they:

- can break free of "group think"
- move from silence or apathy to action
- view themselves as personally responsible
- recognize dangers to society and the natural world (even when authority suggests otherwise)
- have the foresight to see how conditions will evolve to cause harm down the road
- are motivated by ethical/moral reasons (as opposed to financial for example)
- have a high degree of empathy
- are distressed by social injustice
- are willing to sacrifice personal safety and freedom in favor of a higher cause
- manage the anxiety at seeing harm by taking action even if this may cause personal difficulties or sacrifice

An effectively drawn psychological profile is no small act of support to the conscientious protector. A conviction on even a minor offence can follow a person "around" in official matters; some individuals will be charged and convicted of felonies. A convincing psychological portrait can make the difference between freedom and a long term in prison. The following sections outline some of the sources for this defence.

Psycho-Social Considerations.

"The Bystander Effect": In the aftermath of a violent murder in New York City (Kitty Genovese 1964) unfolding reportedly in front of scores of people who did nothing to stop it, studies were launched to answer a horrified populace unable understand how this could have happened. Social psychologists identified the "bystander effect" - driven by the diffusion of responsibility of a crowd, the anonymity, the feeling of not knowing what to do or the fear of not being effective, not recognizing the urgency - and the influence of the on the spot social norm – not taking action is normal – because that is what everyone else is doing. Often, due to this herd mentality, in contrast, when one person chooses to take action more will follow and successful interventions take place – and with the required urgency.

"The Upstander "effect": While the name "upstanders" was originally given to children who speak up when they see someone being bullied, it may be legitimate to broaden the term to include all those who speak up or take action when a form of "bullying" takes place - in this case when individuals speak up at seeing, unfolding in front of them, practices. and policies that are clearly harming society and the natural world.

Just as social forces lead to a bystander effect, those same forces, by promoting powerful social norms, can lead to an expanding "Upstander Effect".

"Upstanders" have been particularly active in campaigns to block the delivery, permitting and building of infrastructure for the use of fossil fuel s- pipelines, compressors, plants). The magnitude of the harm from burning fossil fuels is not only an immediate threat, but building infrastructure all but guarantees using an economic rationale for their continued use for decades to come.)

Psychological Considerations:

Much of this focuses on the benefit of taking action in the face of anxiety. Moods are the primary determinants of the content of our thoughts ("mood congruent cognition") In the cognitive regulation of emotions: Coping Dispositions, Cognition and Emotion, Krohne et al: 2002, 16 (2), 217–243 show that good moods produce good thoughts and negative moods produce negative thoughts. Negative moods, they find, breed focus on the self, while positive moods do just the opposite – they promote focus on the outside world. Krohne has suggested that few of us are likely to "have the goal" of staying in a bad mood – so taking action that has us thinking about others - focusing on the outside world - is a way to achieve "mood repair". That humans benefit greatly from redirecting stressful thoughts of personal discomfort towards actions that provide for the common good is now well documented in studies of brain function.

Taking psychologically restorative action, in the hands of a Conscientious Protector confronted by struggling with anxiety at scenes of present harm and future dangers, becomes a healthy coping mechanism, to deal with highly threatening conditions.

In his book "Yes – 50 Secrets of the Science of Persuasion" Robert Cialdini writes "For the most part, research has demonstrated that fear arousing communication usually stimulate recipients to take actions to reduce the threat." (p.35)

We also know from experience: taking action to correct a troubling situation is a healthy coping mechanism for distress because it replaces the feeling of helplessness with a feeling of empowerment.

Individuals with the profile of a Conscientious Protector may find that the legitimate response, in this era of constant threats to the very survival of the natural world, is to take action that may require breaking the law in non-violent civil disobedience.

Legal/Ethical Considerations:

The traditions, precedents, conditions and circumstances mentioned below encourage pro-social behavior– from stewardship of nature to ethical leadership generally. They should not be considered drivers of the decision to engage in civil disobedience as a Conscientious Protector but rather understood as consciousness raising backdrops.

English common law requires coming to the aid of a person in peril under prescribed conditions – when a family member, employee, guest on one's property etc. is in harm's way; In the U.S. when any person is in peril ten US states spell out that seeking aid or notification of the authorities is required (In France The Penal Code declares that failure to render assistance to a person in danger is a crime – potentially punishable by imprisonment. Photographers of the dying Diana were initially charged with criminal failure to render assistance).

Defence of Children and Young People:
Climate change is an existential threat to all of us, but the threat is particularly menacing for young people who will be at the center of the storm, literally, when conditions become more violent, the harm accumulates, and the inevitability of the destruction becomes more apparent.

Many young people know well that they are in harm's way. Some say they will not have children - because of the exposure to anticipated climate chaos and especially because of the carbon costs of putting another person on the planet. Some have admitted, painfully, that they are hoping for a pandemic to wipe out the offending species – humans. I have been told of discussions about "rational suicide" – and indeed have commented publicly on one suicide that was reported as triggered by the climate crisis.

A near universal legal and moral obligation for many professionals having contact with children (see addendum below) is to report evidence or even suspicions of child abuse or neglect. Failure to do so violates both the law and professional ethics in the UK, in all 50 states and US territories, and most other jurisdictions around the world. In some areas failing to report actions towards any vulnerable person – including the elderly and disabled – is a punishable offense.

Of no small interest to mental health professionals should be the call to recognize all violence being done to children either by inaction or insufficient action on climate.

As defined by the World Health Organization and children's advocacy groups, whether from direct acts of aggression or from neglect – (abandonment, living under conditions injurious to well-being) or, emotional and physical injury intentionally inflicted on children is considered child abuse. Given the current injuries, losses, displacements and deaths from extreme weather events as well as the dark scenarios of the future that are scaring and scarring children today, in the context of accelerating degradation and peril, whether we acknowledge it today or not, our progeny will recognize it for what it is: child abuse. In the case of inaction on governments' part, it will be experienced as state sponsored.

<u>Professional ethics:</u>
In their code of ethics professional health organizations and communities declare that members must take responsibility to care for the health of the public and betterment of society.

These legal and ethical underpinnings should be considered as mental health professionals assess the actions they may be disposed to take personally as well as with the evaluations they may make of the necessity and duress defenses of Conscientious Protectors.

Faith Based Considerations:

Every major religion has a statement calling for stewardship of the earth. Many specifically making a call for action on climate change.
In the Jewish tradition: Tikkun olam" is our collective duty to "repair the earth" through social action and the pursuit of social justice.
Among Catholics, Pope Francis not only wrote his encyclical "Laudato Si" spelling out our duty to care for each other and the whole of the natural world, but he specifically said climate change is a "sin".
An international symposium of faith leaders, academics and policy makers has gathered to discuss a unified call to action on climate to the world's 1.7 B Muslims.
Patriarch Bartholomew; was one of the first to specifically call on followers to take action on climate. He has declared: "The earth was entrusted to us as a sublime gift and legacy, for which all of us share responsibility…"

An error in translation? Hebrew scholars tell us that while translations of Biblical text state human "dominion" over animals – the correct meaning is quite a bit more "evolved" humans, in the corrected translation, have instead a grave responsibility to protect animals.

Mental Health Considerations

<u>Building Resilience:</u>
Becoming a volunteer: Studies show that the overall health, physical and mental, of retirees who take action specifically on the environment is improved: "Environmental volunteering linked to improved mental and physical health in retirees" http://news.cornell.edu/stories/2010/04/retiree-environmental-volunteers-less-depressed

<u>Bringing scary topics out in the open</u>: Age appropriate discussions and the actions taken in response to threats helps children build their own psychological scaffolding – as they model themselves after those around them in the effort to cope and adapt. Whether a nuclear holocaust or a climate one – the findings will likely be similar because the elements and dynamics are more alike than different.

In studies looking at the impacts of nuclear war on children, it was determined that parents who talked about their fears gave kids an opportunity to talk about theirs.

"…While there is nothing to suggest any correlation between the ways parents approach the nuclear issue and the incidence of clinical symptoms in their children, it may be that in families which fail to face the issue children experience a more subtle kind of distress. In almost all the families interviewed so far, children seem to be protecting their parents from their own vulnerability and anguish by not mentioning their fears…When families face the nuclear issue together they can begin to find constructive ways of coping with their concerns. The large majority of children we interviewed responded positively to these opportunities for open discussion; they said they felt better knowing what others thought." (Family Therapy Networker, 1982)

<u>Solastalgia:</u>
Solastalgia is a term coined by philosopher Glenn Albrecht to describe a form of psychological injury arising from human-caused damage or loss to the treasured places an individual calls home. The pain of these loses is more intense when a feeling of powerless to stop or change the process is experienced. Fighting off the mountain top removal that left vast tracts of once verdant land a grey moonscape, activists will remember the tears and frustrations of Larry Gibson, the

hero of the West Virginian hollows who for 30 years hung onto his land through shootings, robberies, threats and offers of money from the mining companies that coveted his land. Living in a tiny house staring out from the lushness of his place into the ruins he would ask "Ain't somebody going to listen out there"?

Additional examples of solastalgia in the Appalachian Mountains of West VA can be found here. communities affected by mountain-top removal coal mining practices can be found here. A google search easily turns up information on growing number of communities destroyed by wildfires.

Solastalgia was included as a condition affecting our mental health: The Lancet: "Climate Change on Human Health and Wellbeing" 2015 edition)

Biological transgenerational toll:
As we consider the biological underpinnings of the human need to take action against deteriorating environmental conditions, not only must we consider the deleterious immediate impacts of stress, but we must consider the long term impacts – which new research shows can also be genetic: Carried by an "on/off" switch – Transgenerational epigenetic inheritance" is the activation of a human gene for stress in the face of trauma that can be passed onto succeeding generations – compounding the overall emotional toll.
https://www.tribaldatabase.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/ICMN-All-About-Generations-Trauma.pdf

Undertaking psychological evaluations of Conscientious Protectors

Here are some tips for those from mental health professions who get involved in contributing to the defence of Conscientious Protectors.
Authenticity: The facts of the current issue evoke themes or experiences in an activists's personal history.

Among the standard questions that unpack a psychological history, especially revealing are those that "get at" unconscious drivers of action and show the consistency of attention to the relevant issues in the facts of the case or incident. The more these factors can be shown in a convincing light – the more likely the legal system will find that the defense is credible.

Examples:
What are
- your earliest memories? Feelings associated with them?
- key events in your life?
- dreams, fears, fantasies?
- how do you control or cope with anxiety?
- how would you describe your friends?
- your Interests, professional activities, academic background and skills?
The profiler will evaluate the answers to these questions alongside key characterological traits of a conscientious protector that suggest concern for others, sensitivity to danger, distress at social injustice etc.

An Example:
I don't remember the circumstances precisely – but our first conversation was over the phone. Michael and I talked about tree planting to offset carbon emissions. He also talked about kids – and how he was involving them in the project. While the effort deserved praise – due to the demands of other projects I did not pursue additional conversations with Michael.

Several years later I got another call from him – after some reflection I remembered who he was. I called back – and left a voice mail. Many weeks later he responded.

Michael gave he a brief run-down of the case and the necessity defense he would be pleading, He had been charged with 2 felonies and 1 misdemeanor. In a coordinated effort, four other

"valve turners" in 2 other states also temporarily shut down the Trans Canada flow of crude oil to the US.

After talking to his lawyer, it became evident that Michaels authentic defense would be a psychological evaluation showing that his life history was consistent with feeling action in this time of danger was a "necessity."

I agreed to do the evaluation.

Outcome: Though the other valve turners successfully mounted the necessity defense and were sentenced to community service (confirm) – they were from other states – the judge presiding over Michael's case refused to allow the plea to be entered.

Michael was found guilty and sentenced to a year in federal prison.

ECOLOGY, PSYCHOANALYSIS AND GLOBAL WARMING - PRESENT AND FUTURE TRAUMAS

Written by Climate Psychology Alliance

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The following are video links to the talks from this conference on 8th December 2018.:

Paul Hoggett: Slouching towards the anthropocene
- https://vimeo.com/tavistockandportman/review/307462685/dc2ea10c46

Delphine Mascarene de Rayssac
- https://vimeo.com/tavistockandportman/review/307463430/5a85d87619

Erica Thompson - https://vimeo.com/tavistockandportman/review/307463670/bce39ffbc0

Delia Hannah - https://vimeo.com/tavistockandportman/review/307463794/c9f8fbc161

Nadine Andrews - https://vimeo.com/tavistockandportman/review/307463950/aa0ff64132

Conversation Panel - https://vimeo.com/tavistockandportman/review/307464067/2482e87f41

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WHAT PSYCHOTHERAPY CAN DO FOR THE CLIMATE AND BIODIVERSITY CRISES

Written by Climate Psychology Alliance

Published: 12 June 2019

Apologies in advance, but I'm hoping that reading this will help you feel depressed – about biodiversity loss and our lack of progress over the climate crisis. The thing is, in these extreme circumstances, a bit of depression about the environment could be precisely what we need – it's the only sane response.

That humans are having an unsustainable impact on Earth may have a become a familiar message – but it is still a difficult message to hear. It presents us with a complex challenge given our reluctance to face change. Environmental campaigner Gus Speth once said he used to think the biggest problems facing the planet were biodiversity loss, ecosystem collapse and climate change. He believed that within 30 years, good science could address these problems. But, he continued:

I was wrong. The top environmental problems are selfishness, greed and apathy, and to deal with those we need a spiritual and cultural transformation. And we scientists don't know how to do that.

So who does know how to do that? Politicians? Economists? The problem with their solutions is the same problem that scientists face – they assume rational action from reasonable humans. But humans can be largely irrational. When it comes to the environment, we often function like well-meaning addicts, earnestly promising to quit polluting the seas, poisoning the air, exploiting the natural world – and then continuing to do exactly that.

A psychotherapeutic approach

So if we continue to look outwards for practical solutions, we will continue to fail. We also need to look inwards, at ourselves. And this is the job of psychotherapy – providing the emotional and relational maps to take us from catastrophe to transformation. As a member of the Climate Psychology Alliance (a group of academics, therapists, writers and artists) I believe that psychological understanding can help with the wide range of complex individual and cultural responses to the environmental crisis. Feelings such as anger, guilt, grief, terror, shame, anxiety, despair and helplessness are all appropriate reactions. But defences against these feelings – denial and disavowal – mean we have avoided taking the necessary action to address their cause. "Climate psychology" is a different kind of psychology. Rather than see these feelings as something to be "fixed" or "cured", we see them as healthy understandable responses – human reactions that empathise directly with the planet. There is also value in understanding how grief, loss and mourning can shape our responses to climate change. For if we block out our emotions,

then we are unable to connect with the urgency of the crisis – which may be one reason why we have so far failed to act sufficiently quickly.

A different picture

In practice, what we do in climate psychology may not look that different from other psychological approaches on the surface. What is different is what lies underneath – how we think, see, reflect and respond. This includes exploring the unconscious dynamics that get in the way of us facing climate change reality, and confronting our denial and apathy. By using our understanding of psychic pain to help people face ecological loss that is already happening, we legitimise their grief. And by adopting a "climate change lens" through which we can see how the crisis is increasingly shaping the world, and which can bring people to therapy, we help people understand their distress.

The result, if we are willing to engage, is what sustainability expert Jem Bendell calls "deep adaptation". We can change the way we feel about the crises, bring about a new connection – and then act. In our work we are increasingly seeing relationship fractures and personal distress stemming directly from the environmental crisis. Teenagers, for example, who feel alienated from their parents because they don't share the same concerns about biodiversity loss. I have talked with children who say they feel unable to trust their parents because of the older generation's lack of action. I hear couples talk of marriages unable to bear the strain of one partner living in fear of the future, whilst the other places their faith in technology.

Using a climate psychology lens builds dialogue between these different positions. And through understanding and empathising with each position, people can begin to understand each other. After a climate psychology talk I gave recently, a woman who attended with her teenage daughter contacted me afterwards to say that on the way home they had their best conversation in years. The parent had talked about her grief, guilt and fears that she could not protect her children. The daughter replied that she needed her mother's support to participate in the school climate strikes. They found common ground and a new relationship based on their fears and their need to take action together.

In cases of people suffering from eco-anxiety and similar issues, the hope is to find paths towards a new world shaped by a deepening understanding of our relationship with the planet and how our future is ultimately entwined with the survival of other creatures.

Then by using this understanding we can help navigate confusing, strange and frightening territories. Through acknowledging painful feelings, we can start to see them as holding transformational potential. It is this emotional growth that could save us. Depression is actually a step on the path that could lead back up to the surface.

As the American psychologist James Hillman said more than two decades ago:

Psychology, so dedicated to awakening the human consciousness, needs to wake itself up to one of the most ancient human truths: We cannot be studied or cured apart from the planet.
Caroline Hickman

Teaching Fellow University of Bath and CPA Exec Committee Member

Paper published in The Conversation June 7th 2019

HERE'S WHAT I'VE LEARNED FROM LISTENING TO CHILDREN TALK ABOUT CLIMATE CHANGE

Written by Caroline Hickman

Children are bearing the emotional burden of climate change more courageously than adults, but we owe it to them to share it.

Listen to your children when they talk about climate change, you'll learn more about how we should take responsibility for the mess, say sorry, and start to act.

Caroline Hickman of CPA and Bath University in her latest article in The Conversation

Eco-anxiety is likely to affect more and more people as the climate destabilises. Already, studies have found that 45% of children suffer lasting depression after surviving extreme weather and natural disasters. Some of that emotional turmoil must stem from confusion – why aren't adults doing more to stop climate change?

Talking with children gives a fresh perspective on the absurdity of doing so little about climate change, but it also exposes a troubling disconnect between what we say and what we do.

Adults are often guilty of cognitive dissonance when it comes to climate change. The UK parliament declares a climate emergency after voting to expand an airport. Scientists conclude that the Amazon rainforest is one of the world's best assets for storing climate-warming gases while large swathes of it are burnt deliberately to make room for methane-belching cattle. A vast coal mine is approved near Australia's Great Barrier Reef while its condition is downgraded from "poor" to "very poor".

Perhaps young people are simply less cynical and more capable of seeing clearly how irrational these decisions are. When I interviewed teenagers in the Maldives, one said:

We saw online that people in Iceland held <u>a funeral for a glacier</u> today, but who is going to do that for us? Don't they see that we will be underwater soon and our country will be gone? No one cares. How can you grieve for ice and ignore us?

Because of sea level rise, people in the low-lying Maldives have more to fear from climate change than most. The sense of injustice that young people felt here was palpable.

Climate change is like Thanos, wiping out half the world so the rest can survive ... we are being sacrificed.

The Maldives may disappear entirely by 2100 due to sea level rise. Guadalupe Polito/Shutterstock

There's moral clarity in the things young people say about climate change, but even at their age, there's a weariness. After all, young people use social media and are bombarded with bad environmental news as much as adults. Some may begin to normalise the mass extinctions they read about. A 10-year-old in the UK told me

It's normal for us now to grow up in a world where there will be no polar bears, that's just how it is for us now, it's different than it was for you.

My dilemma was in trying talk to children about climate change without upsetting them even more. But I also wanted to know how they really felt, subconsciously. Rather than hearing them repeat what they're told in school or hear from adults, I wanted to hear what this generation – people who have never known a world without the looming threat of climate catastrophe – thought about what's happening to the planet and their futures.

Healing the generational rift

I asked the children to personify climate change – to see it as an animal and give it a voice. If climate change could talk, what would it say? I hoped that by externalising that voice, they could talk more honestly than they otherwise would. Even so, I wasn't fully prepared for their responses.

You created me, and now you must face the consequences... You spoilt the planet for the children and animals, now I'm going to spoil it for you... Adults have made the world a worse place, so now I'm here for revenge.

Anger was the most common emotion that surfaced with this technique. These complicated emotions about climate change – perhaps difficult to express or articulate in conversation – surprised me, but they probably shouldn't have. Given the severity of climate change and biodiversity loss predicted in their lifetimes, anger seems appropriate.

What was also uncovered in these conversations was an enduring empathy for the creatures they share the world with. These children could recognise their own vulnerability in the face of climate change, but it didn't eclipse their concern for the natural world. Instead, they expressed solidarity and empathy with other species. One said:

Climate change is like the bug spray of nature, and people are the bugs.

I believe children are bearing the emotional burden of climate change more courageously than adults, but we owe it to them to share it. Listen to your children when they talk about climate

change, you'll learn more about how we should take responsibility for the mess, say sorry, and start to act.

ECO-ANXIETY IN FINLAND: A TALE OF A NATIONAL AWAKENING

Written by Panu Pihkala

Published: 15 February 2020

Numerous Finns have realized that they are not alone in their anxiety about the global environmental crisis. In the last 18 months, a small nation of five million people has started a national discussion about eco-anxiety.

Peer support groups are being formed, educators are starting to be trained to encounter these feelings, and a project aims to develop skills in the social and health sector to alleviate difficult forms of eco-anxiety. Alongside these events, social conflicts have also intensified, writes Dr. Panu Pihkala, a researcher in multidisciplinary environmental studies and author whose work focuses on these developments.

The word 'ympäristöahdistus' is a mouthful –even for a native Finnish speaker; but back in 2017, you hardly ever heard the word for 'eco-anxiety' in Finland. A few pioneers had addressed the psychological impacts of climate change since 2007, but this remained mostly unrecognized. The devious mechanism of "socially constructed silence" about eco-anxiety affected Finns as everyone else. (Sociologist Kari Marie Norgaard has become famous for her treatment of the phenomenon in Norway; see her Living in Denial from 2011).

In October 2017, two books about the ecological and climate crisis came out in Finland and gained a lot of attention. Hyvän sään aikana (ed. Hanna Nikkanen), which received much media coverage and several awards, included a chapter on the topic of emotions and climate change. I also contributed a book Päin helvettiä?, concentrating on eco-anxiety and hope. The biggest newspaper in Finland, Helsingin Sanomat, ran a 3-page story about the issues I raised and this helped to spark nation-wide interest.

In the following winter, the authors of these books were featured in numerous interviews in television, radio, and print media. Workshops were led, articles were published. Journalists, educators and psychologists started to talk about the subject. A support group for students with climate anxiety was established in a technical university in Helsinki, Aalto University, by psychologist Sanni Saarimäki and a university pastor, Anu Morikawa. Young people commented that they felt very relieved that eco-anxiety, a phenomenon which they recognized and now had a word for, was starting to be discussed in the public space.

Then came summer 2018 with a record-setting heatwave in the Nordic countries and forest fires across wide swaths of Sweden, Finland's neighbor. Extreme weather events had started to build in the 2000s; still, most people chose not to fully engage with the climate crisis – until it came to their back door.

After the heatwaves, in the autumn came the latest IPCC report, which warned of disastrous climate change and made demands for swift action. The Finnish media covered the report extensively – and this time it did not go away. These concerns famously found expression in the

actions of Swedish student Greta Thunberg, founder of the Climate School Strike movement, into which many Finns joined. These events seemed to wake the Finnish people up to the reality of climate change. There were large demonstrations, climate anxiety became a hot topic in media, and various organizations and businesses started much more ambitious climate programs. The national Finnish language research center picked "Climate anxiety" as its "new word of the month" in October 2018. Political parties and much of the voting public framed the Parliamentary election of March 2019 as a "climate election".

Backlash followed. While climate-minded parties and candidates increased their appeal, so did the right-wing candidates who disavowed climate action. Mostly, what was seen was so-called policy denial: climate change itself was not denied, but it was argued that Finns were such a small nation that it was not reasonable to do much. For the first time in Finnish history, identity politics were constructed also around climate anxiety, with some toxic masculinity expressed towards "those feminine weaklings who can't bear climate change". Young peoples' climate strikes met with mixed responses ranging from disavowal to support.

Here in Finland last spring, there was more research about eco-anxiety conjoined with efforts to build more support for coping. Polling shows the majority of Finns are "very" or "severely" concerned about climate change. And for the first time, those reporting actual eco-anxiety – children and youth, young adults, parents, grandparents– now also includes business executives and highly educated experts. As the severity of the climate crisis sinks in, it is leading to more action and more open expression of anxiety.

Eco-anxiety sufferers are forming peer groups, with single events and meetings proving to be more popular than longer duration groups: why is this? People seem to fear stigmatization, asking themselves: "Am I really so eco-anxious that I need to go into a longer discussion group?". Organizations focusing on the mental health and well-being of young people, such as Nyyti (student welfare) and the Finnish Association for Mental Health (FAMH), have turned their attention to eco-anxiety and are developing more supports. FAMH also commissioned me to do a new report about climate anxiety and international experiences in its alleviation (published 4th June 2019). Environmental educators have picked up the theme and there are initiatives to support those who work daily with environmental matters, such as conservationists. Artists have produced many creative reflections and also participatory workshops.

Ongoing research is conducted about the various emotions that people have as regards the ecological crisis. Results of a preliminary study by Nyyti (538 responses) tell of strong feelings of frustration (71,3%), a desire to work for change (59,2%), grief (52,4%), feeling inadequate (52,8%) or powerless (51,8%), and anger (44%). Anxiety (43,6%) and fear (40,2%) were also common. Another study is underway by Sitra, the Finnish Innovation Fund.

Thus, by Summer 2019, eco-anxiety had risen to the top of national consciousness here in Finland. Some resist it, while many others, particularly the young, have claimed it as their own. Many organizations promote problem-focused coping, often by working for social and political change. In addition, my work, and that of some psychologists and mental health organizations focuses on the importance of emotion-focused coping and meaning-focused coping. As the tide of bad news swells about the ecological crisis, emotional and existential resilience will be in high demand. Peer support certainly helps, but there is still a lot of work to do in setting up "safe spaces" where we can share our emotions about the existential crisis we face. Eco-anxiety has brought about a national awakening in Finland; it will be interesting to follow what forms of action and resilience result.

Links

Nyyti ry: https://www.nyyti.fi/en/yhdistys/
Finnish Association for Mental Health: https://mieli.fi/en

HOW GREEN IS YOUR MIND?

Written by Robin Shohet

Robiin Shohet wrote this prescient article in the mid-90s. With the current focus on climate change, it brings an additional perspective. The concepts of subjective and objective hate could also be very relevant to approaches to Brexit.

What people are doing in planting forests and saving the whales and so on is very necessary, and more of it should be done. Nevertheless, it is still downstream. Unless something is done upstream, that is, in the process of thought, it won't really work in the long run. (Bohm and Edwards, 1992)

…for there is nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so. (*Hamlet*, Act II, Scene ii)

Suppose you were a car and your brain/thoughts/mind were the exhaust pipe. Every time you had a negative thought, any negative thought, criticism or judgment – about yourself, another or God – your exhaust pipe would give off fumes. Would you be polluting the planet?

I believe that pollution begins in the mind. The Upanishads, an ancient Hindu text, say, "Where there is another there is fear". What I understand by this is that, as long as I see myself as separate and you as 'other', I will be frightened of you and our relationship will be polarised: if I am competitive, I fear you will upstage me; if I hate you, I will fear your attack; if I love you, I fear you will abandon me. The Course in Miracles talks about special love relationships and special hate relationships and sees both as the same: both arise out of duality or a sense of separateness and therefore both exist in fear not love.

Fear, I believe, is the source of all pollution. Fear lies behind the greed which fuels our exploitation of resources – fear that I must get what I can before you do; and what I get will never be enough because my greed is fear driven and therefore irrational. Logical argument has less power over us than our emotions do. For instance, everybody knows that smoking is not good for your health, yet people persist in smoking.

I think that some of the ecological movement underrates the self-destructive urge in each of us. According to psychoanalyst Harold Searles:

Unconsciously we harbor the notion that since we do not immediately experience the ill effects of pollution and the like, it will not happen to us… Mankind is collectively reacting to the real and urgent danger from environmental pollution much as does the psychotically depressed patient bent upon suicide by self-neglect. (Searles 1972).

Searles connects the need for more power over nature, more industry and more technology with our desire to be in control of everything in order to compensate for infantile feelings of helplessness and powerlessness. These feelings can evoke rage, which in turn evokes fantasies of destroying everyone – mother, father, siblings, the whole world – in order to gain revenge and prove our might. Unfortunately, as is not the case with a child, we actually have the power to make such fantasies come true.

I remember in my early 20s feeling quite depressed, hating anyone who was happy, and consciously thinking that I wished there would be a world war and everyone would be as unhappy as me and or be destroyed. As I get older, I allow myself to feel more connected to others, but my own feeling of powerlessness and helplessness still evoke in me terrible thoughts of revenge. I have moved from being a fantasy bomb builder, but am still a gross polluter when in such states. I have learned that one way of reducing the pollution I create is not to judge myself

and to overcome the shame of acknowledging my shadow by publicly speaking and writing about it as I am doing here.

In a book called *The art of hating*, the author, Gerald Schoenewolf, looks at the whole business of hating, or, as I have described earlier, having negative polluting thoughts. He makes the following distinction between what he calls 'subjective' and 'objective' hate. When we hate subjectively, we are concerned with the immediate need to protect ourselves, to be right, to teach a lesson, to gain an advantage, to defeat an opponent or to revenge ourselves on an enemy. Objective hating, on the other hand, involves sharing our feelings of animosity in a way that aims to increase our contact, and does not lose sight of the humanity of the other. It requires an understanding of others, oneself and one's motives, and the ability not to go into subjective hate when provoked.

When we are supporting a 'worthy cause', if we find ourselves feeling judgmental or ever so slightly superior, we can be sure we are into subjective hating. One of the characteristics of subjective hate is to deny our own aggression and to project it onto those deemed to be unenlightened. We become adept at provoking aggression in others in order to make our enemies look bad and ourselves look good. It is not surprising then that when the subjective hating of the polluter meets the subjective hate of the environmentalist a lot of anger is generated and very little in the way of solutions.

In a chapter called 'Us and them' (Peavey, 1991), the author tells how she prepared for a meeting with the president of a conglomerate who owned a local napalm factory. She and her colleagues found out as much as they could about the president's personal life, relating to him in his human context surrounded by the people who loved him and whom he loved. By the time the meeting took place, he no longer felt a stranger to them. Their aim was for him to see them as real people, not flaming radicals whom he could dismiss. They assumed he was carrying doubts inside himself about renewing a contract for his napalm factory and that they could voice these doubts in a non-antagonistic way. In approaching the meeting in this way, they had moved from subjective hate to objective hate and established a real, personal contact. The president did not renew his factory's contract.

Peavey asks some pertinent questions about the truths we must face in ourselves if we are to practise non-polarisation – that is, if we are to avoid creating 'otherness'. She realises that to work with social change without relying on the concept of enemies raises some practical difficulties. For example, what do we do with all the anger we are accustomed to unleashing against an enemy? Is it possible to hate actions and policies without hating the people who are implementing them? Does empathising with those whose actions we oppose create a dissonance that undermines our determination?

Saving our planet is as important a movement as there ever has been [*this was written in 1995*]. But unless I fully understand the mind of, say, the president of a napalm factory, I will be stuck in subjective hate and will therefore in my own way be as much of a polluter as he is.

The Indian sage Sri Ramana Maharshi commented that we thank God for the good things that happen to us, but not for the bad, and that that is a mistake. I was shocked, but I think I understand. As long as we divide events into 'good' and 'bad', we are at the mercy of our minds, caught in an endless cycle of craving for what we consider to be 'good' and having an aversion to what we consider 'bad'. This means that we constantly judge everything in terms of a limiting, dualistic frame of reference.

How does all this relate to ecology?

1. The seeds of destruction are in the mind and in the emotions. Telling people about the effects of pollution is even less effective than anti-smoking campaigns. Polluting the world does not bring us instant or direct feedback the way smoking can. Revenge can be an important component as much in those who pollute as in those who, in

their campaign against pollution, are simply hiding their subjective hate behind a 'worthy cause'.

2. A green campaign will, I think, be more effective if it includes some recognition of the divisive quality of human feelings and the human mind. Even as I write, I am aware of creating a new division in my own mind – between all those who have 'greened' their minds as well as the environment, versus those who just deal with the environment – a new hierarchy/duality.

3. When I look inside myself, I see how deeply polluting I am in my thoughts, regardless of my green credentials. Acknowledging this is a useful way of balancing any moral superiority I may try to claim. Perhaps it is true to say that anyone who is not enlightened will be polluting. Ramana Maharshi's ashram was run with great precision. Nothing was wasted. This was not because it was a movement, or a conscious attempt to save resources, but a natural by-product of an undivided mind.

4. This does not mean there should not be a green movement. I simply want to remind myself (again) that, whenever I think I am right, I can be at my most bigoted and most unable to reach out to those who oppose me, because of the degree of my subjective hate.

I do not know if the green movement has adequately addressed this issue of inner pollution and it may be one of the reasons why it is not more effective. To change the president of the napalm factory, Fran Peavey had to work very hard on an inner level to release her subjective hate. I know I have not reached that state. My inner world is still full of 'goodies' and 'baddies'.

A recent minor incident in my life indicates how big an investment there is in the world for us to polarise. I was rung up by someone making a television programme against circumcision, because I fitted all the criteria they were looking for. I am Jewish, male, articulate, have relived the trauma of my own circumcision in therapy and decided not to have my own sons circumcised. We were arranging dates for televising, when I said (influenced, I think, by writing this article), "You need to know that I can only be 95 and not 100 per cent certain that I have made the right decision. It could be that in later life my sons will be angry with me for robbing them of a tradition. If I say I am 100 per cent certain, I will, in my own way, become as rigid as those who fervently support circumcision. My wish would not to convert or be converted, but for my 5 per cent of doubt to meet with a pro-circumcision person's 5 percent of doubt, so we can dialogue and increase both our doubts and thus create more middle ground." At this point the interviewer said he would have to consult his boss and would ring me back. He never did. My fantasy is that my unwillingness to polarise on this issue would not make good viewing.

I would like to end with an anecdote which amuses me and with which my unloving self identifies. Many years ago, I went to listen to Paul Solomon, psychic and healer. He related the story of how the CIA became interested in him because they wanted him to help them tap the secrets of the KGB. When asked if he could do it, his reply was, "Sure. Anyone can do it. All you have to do is love the KGB more than you love yourselves". The secrets of the KGB remain intact.

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GETTING REAL -NEW ASSOCIATIONS ARTICLE 1

Written by Paul Hoggett

Published: 04 March 2020

A tragedy which is without precedent is unfolding in front of our eyes. We are witnessing catastrophic rates of species extinction and biodiversity loss, soil and ocean exhaustion and runaway climate change.

 I sit back and look at what I have just written. Somewhere inside me, someone is stifling a yawn. Blah de blah de blah. Perhaps I'm lapsing into hyperbole? I'm aware of a little voice in my head which says "Paul this is an exaggeration, you're in danger of making a fool of yourself." This little voice may be familiar to you, it's a voice that says 'don't get yourself in a state', it's one of the ways we do disavowal being creatures who cannot bear very muchreality.

So I snap out of my dissociated state and go and look at the two recent UN reports warning me of this tragedy. Hmmm. Now someone else pops into my head, its Greta the pigtailed clarion from Stockholm and she's saying "I am doing this because you adults are shitting on my future". It takes an Asperger's child to cut through the crap.

The IPBES Global Assessment Report on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services tells me one million species are facing extinction. Nothing like this has happened since the dinosaurs disappeared 65 million years ago. But wait a mo', that eminent earth systems scientist Toby Young, writing in May's Spectator, tells me that the conclusion of this report (compiled by 150 expert authors from reviews of over 15,000 scientific and governmental papers) "doesn't add up". That's a relief then.

Now I remember John Steiner's 1985 paper 'Turning a Blind Eye'. Here he suggests that everyone knew who Oedipus really was from the start, the storyof Oedipus is actually the story of a cover up. He notes, "(C)hance seems to play an important role in this process, as it forms the vital flaw through which the truth can be attacked" (1985, 168). Of course! Isn't there just a chance these 'expert authors' might be wrong? Nothing like this since the dinosaurs went? Come, come now. And I can hear someone telling me in a reassuring and fatherly way to get a grip on myself.

We need to find ways of encouraging these one-eyed 'fathers' of ours to read the two reports in question – the 39 page IPBES summary for policy makers and the summary of the IPCC Special Report: Global Warming of 1.5°C (https://www.ipcc.ch/sr15/chapter/summary-for-policy-makers/) – and help them bear their reality. For they make for grim reading.

For almost 20 years now, Earth System Scientists have been deliberating on the emergence of the Anthropocene. This new geological epoch has three distinguishing characteristics. For the first time in the Earth's 4.7 billion year history the imprint of a single species can be found everywhere; for better or worse this is the epoch of humankind. Secondly, and as a consequence of global heating, nature, for so long considered an object or resource for humankind to use, fights back. And as a consequence, the climatic conditions which appeared on Earth approximately 11,700 years ago and which have provided the basis for agriculture, settled life and human civilization are now being systematically destroyed (Lieberman & Gordon 2018).

The hidden hand of climate change, specifically drought and rural dislocation, has already been discerned behind the civil wars in Dafur and Syria, and the food price riots that kick started the Arab Spring were precipitated by the failure of the Russian wheat harvest in 2010. Social collapse has begun. Civilization itself is now on the endangered list.

Like an unconscious force, climate change begins to influence all aspects of global politics. Bruno Latour, the philosopher of science, insists that we can understand nothing about the politics of the last decades if we do not put climate change and its denial front and centre. Consider, for example, the riseof authoritarianism and nationalism. As Ian Angus notes, as early as 2003 a Pentagon report was envisaging a fortress-like retreat towards self sufficiency in the face of worsening climate change. Now the IPCC has included this strategy as one of its five Shared Socioeconomic Pathways, one which anticipates a rise of nationalism as "countries focus on achieving energy and food security goals within their own regions" (IPCC SSP for 2021 Sixth Assessment), a scenario which was anticipated a decade ago by the radical US journalist Christian Parenti who referred to it as 'the politics of the armed lifeboat'.

As the liberal political order fractures everywhere it is as well to remind ourselves that whilst full of good intentions liberal democracy has never veered from a 'business as usual' trajectory. According to the latest projections being prepared for the 6th Assessment Report this trajectory, depending on the pathway pursued within it, would increase average global temperatures by between 3 and 5°C by 2100. This would make for an intolerable world for our grandchildren.

This is where our collective disavowal gets us. Our direction of travel is clear and it is one increasingly incompatible with the idea of human progress. We all want to carry on with our business as usual, busily not seeing that it is in crisis. When you come out of disavowal it's usual to get swallowed up by anxiety, grief, guilt or anger and if this can't be contained to then drop into despair. Even when these feelings can be contained they continue to trouble us. We have to learn to face these difficult truths and then stay with the trouble. There's no cure for being human in these times. It's like a chronic condition, it's not going to get better and it may get worse; we'll have to learn to live with it, we'll have to learn how to flourish in spite of it.

How will we adapt to living in a society where spring has begun to fall silent, where climate refugees besiege the remaining temperate regions of the earth and where ecological austerity is no longer a matter of lifestyle choice but something forced upon us? In other words, how will we adapt to the kind of living that is likely in the Anthropocene if we continue on our 'business as usual' trajectory?

Since last summer's heatwaves and the IPCC Report on 1.5°C a great fear has been gathering, manifest in public meetings and on social media, and beginning to percolate into our consulting

rooms. It's more than thirty years since Hannah Segal wrote her paper on the threat of nuclear war (Segal 1987). Rereading it I notice both similarities and differences to the predicament we are now in. The same mechanisms of denial and disavowal in relation to the danger are to the fore. But the threat then was one of instant annihilation, probably of all of humanity, whereas now the danger creeps insidiously but relentlessly upon us, and upon some more than others. Back then Segal felt that our own destructive impulses were denied and projected into the other group, the Russians, against whose hostile intent we sought an imaginary deterrence. Now, as we systematically vandalise the living systems upon which we all, humans and nonhumans, depend, there is no enemy 'other' to blame. Our destructiveness is exposed starkly before us. It would be tempting to speak of 'species shame' if only it weren't for the inconvenient fact that those of us (white, middle class, western) who were and still are most responsible for this mess are those who, to begin with, will be least affected.

What part does the human condition play in this? We are a strange outgrowth of nature through which one part of nature has developed the capacity to become self aware, take itself as an object of contemplation and shape itself in a conscious way. And yet it is still of nature - human subjectivity remains trapped within the confines of the body, a body which suffers, ages and dies.

Perhaps only with the development of our modern civilization does humankind become partially aware of this tragic contradiction that inheres to being human. But we moderns seem to find this fact of life, our mortality, so difficult to bear. Our Promethean drive to master the universe appears like a manic defence against this knowledge and the annihilation anxiety that it elicits. We will become Gods. Progress, every extension of our control over the human and other-than-human, seems to be in part a flight from this unthought and unthinkable known

It is curious to observe how, in the years after their famous conversation on the subject of transience in 1913, Freud and Rilke almost appeared to change positions, Freud becoming more pessimistic and Rilke less despondent. In her preface to In Praise of Mortality, a collection of Rilke's poetry, the great environmentalist Joanna Macy puts it thus: "Rilke's is not a conditional courage, dependent on an afterlife. Nor is it a stoic courage, keeping a stiff upper lip when shattered by loss. It is courage born of the ever-unexpected discovery that acceptance of mortality yields an expansion of being. In naming what is doomed to disappear, naming the way it keeps streaming through our hands, we can hear the song that streaming makes".

I think that 'song' is the pulse of life, Eros. Perhaps only if we are prepared to stay with the trouble, stay peering into that abyss, that a new spirit might arise. The new generation of activists, perhaps represented by those Extinction Rebellion activists who brought pot plants and bookshelves to the occupied bridges across the Thames earlier this year, seem prepared to do just this. We ridicule them for their idealism at our peril, it is us who need to 'get real' not them.

With civilization on the brink Segal called upon psychoanalysis to play its part in the mobilisation of life forces and warned how the attitude of analytic neutrality 'can also become a shield of denial'. Speaking of those in the peace movement she argued 'we must add our voice clearly to their voices'. She also felt psychoanalysis had a specific contribution to make. Because of its understanding of the psychic defences, she argued we should be able to 'contribute something to the overcoming of apathy and self-deception in ourselves and others'.

Today there are many ways we can contribute to overcoming indifference to the climate emergency, from engaging with the media to support (if not active involvement) for campaigning groups, from life style choices which reduce our destructive imprint to developing new

therapeutic practices which, for example, support climate distressed children and their parents. But the first step is to engage honestly with our own reactions to this unfolding tragedy. Today, in relation to the climate emergency, an increasing number of BPC registrants are making this contribution via involvement in the Climate Psychology Alliance, a network established by BPC and UKCP registrants a few years ago.

If the psychotherapy professions are to make the contribution that is so urgently needed they must wake up to the unprecedented nature of the time of the Anthropocene that we are now entering. As Naomi Klein put it, 'this changes everything'. To carry on, business as usual, with our individual or group practices as if this darkening world didn't exist will become increasingly irresponsible.

This article by CPA member Paul Hoggett was part of a special issue focusing on the climate emergency of New Associations, the magazine of the British Psychoanalytic Council. Helen Morgan, a Jungian analyst and former Chair of the BPC commissioned the articles that comprised this autumn 2019 issue. (British Psychoanalytic Council www.bpc.org.uk) Illustrator: Allen Fatimaharan.

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WHAT IS IT LIKE WORKING IN ORGANISATIONS THAT ENGAGE THE PUBLIC ON CLIMATE CHANGE? - NEW ASSOCIATIONS ARTICLE 2

Written by Rebecca Nestor

Published: 04 March 2020

Organisations that engage with the public – campaigning, educating - on this most overwhelming of problems are infused with the unbearable.

Elsewhere in this edition of New Associations, we are introduced to the growing body of psychoanalytically-informed scholarship on climate change. This work helps us to see the characteristic ways in which unbearable feelings (anger, grief, loss, shame, guilt and fear) evoke defences visible in human responses to climate change. My psychoanalytically-informed research suggests that organisations that engage with the public – campaigning, educating - on this most overwhelming of problems are infused with the unbearable at both individual and organisational level. In this article I use the systems-psychodynamic perspective to suggest aspects of the emotional experience of working in such organisations.

Systems-psychodynamics draws on Kleinian object-relations theory, including splitting, projection and projective identification. It is influenced also by the work of Wilfred Bion and his successors on groups, and by the socio-technical framework originally developed by Miller and Rice. One useful concept is 'organisation in the mind': the mutually-interacting relationship between the individual's internal psychic organisation and their experience of the organisation in which they work: their own particular response to an organisational dynamic. Within this concept, crucially, the working assumption is that the dynamics in a group reflect the dynamics in the wider organisation.

As part of my doctoral research, I am convening a small action-research group of people whose work involves public engagement on climate change. With members (including myself) from climate change charities both very large and very small, informal networks and local government, the group has been meeting regularly since January this year. We are trying to understand the emotional experience of our work as a group, in order to offer some insights into our organisations.

The first indication came with our difficulties in forming as a group. We have had confusions over location, two permanent departures, cancellations at short notice, differences over purpose and activities, and caring responsibilities felt as in opposition to joining the group. Despite these difficulties, and the pain and bad feeling they are associated with, we are still persevering, still meeting and interacting. I have proposed to the group that what we are experiencing may reflect the difficulties of co-operation and trust on this 'wicked problem' of climate change. I wonder too

if it indicates splitting and projection: note the opposition between caring and being in the group, and the perseverance, which reminds me of the way tenacity gets located in environmentalists while apathy is located in 'the public'.

A second indication derives from my attempt to structure one of our early meetings as a 'social photo matrix'. Intended in theory as a form of containing space, this design also arose from my own anxiety-fuelled wish for a short-cut to the group's unconscious. And it led in practice to an exercise in loss and broken connections – waiting for Skype to work, losing someone's photos, feelings of being kept at a distance by the technology and losing our human connections and therefore our ability to think. Rosemary Randall argues that in public discussion in the UK, the losses associated with the impacts of climate change are characterised as 'terrifying but far away', while the losses associated with technological solutions to climate change are 'completely excised'. It seems interesting that in our group, it was precisely at the moment of trying to use the technology of the social photo matrix as a quick fix that something was excised.

One further indication is to do with need, desire and judgement. As our group develops we have become more aware of the desire (which moves between us) for more care, connection and fellow-feeling than is available, of often feeling isolated and lonely and as if it is not possible both to be in the group and to have caring responsibilities; and of the feelings of judgement that come up, that others in the group (and oneself) are not doing enough, not giving enough, they (we) don't care enough for us, they (we) are inadequate. In our early discussions we acknowledged that our emotional experience of engaging the public on climate involves quite a primitive wish to move others, to get them to act. If getting them has a double meaning here it may relate to getting our basic needs met.

Over the years, organisations trying to engage the public on climate change have been characterised as getting people to change, and also as denying people basic needs (warm houses, hot water, plentiful food). The desperation evoked by this dynamic is there in our group.

There is more to our organisation in the mind than I have space for here. We have much to do to deepen our understandings of it, too, and to validate the connections between our group experience and what our organisations are bringing to us, and we to them. But I hope the characteristics sketched out here – splitting care and uncare, splitting tenacity and apathy, technology as a defence, desperation and judgement – are recognisable to others, as they are to me, as features of public discussions of the climate emergency.

EXTINCTION REBELLION EXPERIENCES: A PERSONAL PERSPECTIVE - NEW ASSOCIATIONS ARTICLE 3

Written by Rob Stuart

Published: 04 March 2020

On the 31st October, 2018, Extinction Rebellion declared itself in uprising against the UK government over its failure to act on the climate emergency. I joined the rebellion ten days later

and took an active role in the mass disruption that followed. We targeted government buildings, closed down six bridges over the Thames and, during the International Rebellion, occupied four major London sites. I was part of the first wave of rebels that closed down the roads around Marble Arch.

The rebellion has grown in size from a few hundred people in October to over ten thousand in April and continues to grow exponentially. We believe we are on the right side of history and are prepared to sacrifice our liberty in honour of our beliefs. During the International Rebellion, over one thousand ordinary people from all walks of life were arrested and jailed for their participation in non-violent direct action.

There was no trouble with the police. Indeed, Ken Marsh, chairman of the Metropolitan Police Federation, is on record as saying: "This is very, very difficult for us because my colleagues have never come across the situation that they are faced with at the moment. They are dealing with very, very passive people, probably quite nice people, who don't want confrontation whatsoever with the police or anyone else but are breaking the law."

We believe breaking the law is necessary to bring about change. We tried signing petitions, we tried writing to our MPs, we tried legal demonstrations – so far nothing has happened and we are now out of time. According to a recent report by the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), we have just eleven years to avoid social and ecological collapse. The IPCC represents the best minds in the field of climate science. Scientists are not generally known for their use of hyperbole. We are in a desperate situation.

I have been aware of climate change since I was a teenager. I remember the Kyoto Protocol, which was signed in 1997, and how hopeful I felt at that time. Everything changed in the new millennium. I remember the terrorist attacks, the long war, the failure of successive governments to listen to the people, the financial crash, austerity and then, in recent memory, the referendum on Europe. With every passing year, I lost a little more faith in the government's ability to act in the best interests of the people and prevent catastrophic climate change.

It is not easy to live in a culture of denial. Before joining the rebellion, I frequently felt anxious, depressed, angry and occasionally desperate. I did not feel as though I could talk to anyone

about how I was feeling, outside of a small circle of trusted friends, family and colleagues. I remember how people used to change the subject as soon as I mentioned the climate – as though the climate crisis was a taboo subject. All of that changed when I joined the rebellion and, for the first time, met others with whom I could identify.

I consider myself privileged to be able to speak openly and honestly about my feelings within a community that values empathy and respect above all else. We are developing an inclusive culture that welcomes every part of every person, including those parts that do not always seem coherent or cohesive. There are tensions and conflicts, of course, as one would expect in any mass movement with no obvious hierarchy. Nonetheless, we share a common goal and are committed to working through our differences together.

There is so much I would like to say about the rebellion, but I will end by sharing my experiences at Oxford Circus on the day the police confiscated our iconic pink boat. The boat had provided a striking visual focal point with the words "TELL THE TRUTH" emblazoned on its side. I loved that boat. In my mind, it came to represent love, inclusion, diversity, hope, defiance and, above all else, an unwavering commitment to the truth.

We had managed to hold the space for four days straight, reimagining the famous retail location as a place of celebration, with singing and dancing and music and play. Then, on the fifth day the police moved in, determined to reclaim the space. I remember arriving at the Circus to find a police cordon around the boat itself and the hundred or so rebels who had already 'locked on' for the duration. It had become impossible to get reinforcements to the boat.

I did not know what to do. I felt powerless to intervene. I desperately wanted to break the police lines, even though it would have meant certain arrest, but felt torn between my commitment to the rebellion and my commitment to my family, who had travelled with me that day. As I watched my five year old daughter draw chalk flowers on the road, to the sound of heavy cutting machinery, I feared for the future of the rebellion. More than that, I feared for my daughter's future.

As I witnessed the boat being slowly dismantled, I felt almost overcome by grief. Then, in that moment of near despair, something beautiful happened. Two rebels – I do not know their names – invited us all to sit down together, several hundred rebels or more. They suggested we convene a 'Peoples' Assembly', which is essentially a forum for sharing thoughts and feelings with a view to building consensus and commitment to a course of action.

We were invited to consider how we would help each other bear the grief of the coming climate crisis and build resilience within our communities. I knew immediately that everything we had been through so far – the struggle, the hardship, the discomfort, the pain, the sense of impotence in the face of state power, the conflict between responsibility to family and responsibility to the planet, the near overwhelming feelings of loss, grief and despair, the ability to support each other and make sacrifices for the greater good – I realised that these are the emotional experiences we must all work through together as a society, if we are to survive the climate emergency.

Please join us. The rebellion needs you.
https://rebellion.earth/act-now/join-us/

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NOAH'S ARKISM 21ST CENTURY STYLE - NEW ASSOCIATIONS ARTICLE 4

Written by Sally Weintrobe

"as I looked out into the night sky across all those infinite stars
it made me realize how unimportant they are".
Peter Cook, comedian

Most of us have been living in a bubble of disavowal about global heating. We were aware it was happening, but we minimized its impacts. What might people be feeling as they emerge from the climate bubble? There is no space here adequately to explore this, so I will look at just two issues.

First, we know people find it difficult to emerge from a psychic retreat from reality. They are in danger of feeling flooded with anxiety, shock, shame and guilt as they see the reality more clearly. They struggle with alterations in their self-view and may rage, grieve and find it hard to think in proportion about their own responsibility. They are tasked with 'working through', including working through depressive and persecutory guilt. When in the climate bubble, personal responsibility and guilt can be projected onto and spread out over social groups all 'in it together', 'it' being a high carbon lifestyle. When the bubble bursts, people are vulnerable to experiencing the shock of what was comfortably projected being suddenly returned.

For example, I was talking with a friend who said people are shooting kangaroos in Australia now. Kangaroos are dying of thirst because of global heating and people are shooting them because do not know what else to do. We sat in stunned silence before we both acknowledged we felt deep shame at being part of this.

Secondly, because we did not act earlier, damage is much greater now and the struggles we have with shame, guilt and anxiety are now more difficult to face and to work through. Some damage is irreparable and knowing we have been part of causing it may feel too hard to stay with. I have in mind, for example, John Steiner's paper on Sophocles' Oedipus at Colonus . Bereft of support, Oedipus put out his eyes and retreated to arrogance and omnipotence. Also, Hyatt Williams's point that facing the irreparable can lead a person to want to obliterate all knowledge that the destroyed object ever existed . I began with the Peter Cook quote as the danger is that our love of the earth could be obliterated if we do not work through what it means that the climate crisis is human caused. Obliterated would be the part of the self and the group that feels love and grief. The climate emergency, because it is being faced at such a late stage, now brings difficulties with working through of a tall order. Collective psychic work is vitally needed if we are to emerge from and stay out of the retreat.

Emerging from the climate bubble at this late stage is also likely to stir survival anxieties of different - and conflicting - kinds. We ignore these anxieties at our peril. One realistic anxiety about not acting on climate is that there will not be enough food, water, clean air and shelter. One realistic anxiety about acting on climate is we lose the freedom to ignore boundaries and limits and act as we please.

People emerging from a collective psychic retreat often feel reenergised and more alive. However, they are also vulnerable. They need the support of a culture of care that values truth and provides a non-persecutory atmosphere. They need the grounding that an understanding of politics can provide. These help to gain a sense of proportion when trying to work through issues of anxiety, shame and guilt. They also need strong leaders to help them face inner and outer climate reality. By strong leaders I mean empathic leaders able to withstand omnipotence and able to help people withstand their own omnipotence. Currently there is virtually no support of this kind. Instead we see the rise of 'strong-man' leaders shamelessly offering omnipotent quick fixes as pseudo repairs.

The political world we live in is now being called 'the crazy'. 'The crazy' needs considerable investigating, but it does seem to involve a rapid rise in contempt for inconvenient realities, laws and limits and increasing entitlement to use omnipotent thinking to bypass these in order to construct virtual realities. 'The crazy' is not just 'out there' in politics. It easily gets into us, and to stay sane in today's world we need to keep reminding ourselves of this serious fact.

I believe two factors are adding to 'the crazy'. The first is Exceptionalism. The second is mounting anxieties about the climate crisis, a crisis which in large measure Exceptionalism has caused.

Exceptionalism

Christopher Hering wrote a paper on a form of ruthlessness , one much studied in psychoanalysis, for instance by Eric Brenman who called it narrow minded and cruel . Hering said,"(it) does not know any concern or mercy; it is devoid of any scruples or conflicts". He called it "the alien". The alien is the disassociated ruthless part of a mindset that in my current work I call Exceptionalism. Exceptions regularly override their inner concern in order to preserve their felt entitlement to see themselves as ideal and special, to have what they want and omnipotently to arrange things so they need feel no moral conflict or unease. Apparently. A particular kind of entitlement ensures the ruthlessness. Here is an example: we know an oil-based economy leads us directly to global heating and to ecocide. Well it's a no brainer – continue with business as usual. Where is the profit in taking care? Taking care conflicts with our entitlements as Exceptions.

I argue that neoliberal ideology and economics is suffused with Exceptionalism. This mindset, on gaining global power in the 1980s, outsourced factories to countries where labour was cheapest. It outsourced its pollution. It was behind the financial crash in 2008. It takes no responsibility for consequences, and that makes it truly frightening. If it sees profit on one side of the scales and suffering, death and destruction on the other, it will find that profit outweighs suffering. It put in place a body of corporate law to support this position.

Neoliberal Exceptions also put in place a culture of un-care that works to set our inner exception free. This suits the needs of the neoliberal economy. The current dominant culture incessantly invites and nudges us to collude with corrupt and corrupting arguments. This, I believe, is not nearly recognised enough. Here is one small example. Teresa May responds to public pressure by announcing the UK will decarbonise by the year 2050. Then, (under reported) the government makes switching to solar more difficult with a new rule that VAT must now be applied to solar installations . Many people collude with what is largely an 'as if' repair, achieved with a target, and they feel more comfortable continuing with their life styles as usual.
The Exceptionalist mindset seeded the climate bubble, the largest and most consequential

bubble in human history. It bloomed voluminously during the neoliberal era, fuelled by the powerful in possession of oil and gas. It aggressively set omnipotent thinking free and it ignored limits. Hubris, greed and triumphalism were bound to soar in this era. For example, in 2000, after Putin won his first election, at his acceptance banquet his campaign manager Surkov made the shortest toast: "To the deification of power. To us becoming gods", he said .

Whitebook argued that the phenomenon we currently witness - 'the crazy' - involves a "break with (reality) globally, and construct(ion of) an alternative, delusional, "magical" reality" . This is the inevitably drift of Exceptionalism. 'The crazy' is also being manipulated and shaped to try to ensure that an oil-based economy can continue.

Noah's Arkism as a response to anxiety

All this is to introduce Noah's Arkism, a rapidly rising form of 'the crazy'. The idea, based on omnipotent thinking, is I will be saved, and the rest will be sacrificed.

In the biblical story of Noah's Ark, God sees mankind as wicked, meaning violent and full of corrupt thinking, and Noah as the one and the only good just man. God drowns all life in a great flood, saving only Noah, his family and representatives of animal species. They all board an Ark that Noah has built according to God's detailed instructions.

My argument is that 21st century Noah's Arkism is linked with awareness we are in a climate emergency combined with an awareness that there is currently a dearth of good leaders with the power to enact a New Green Deal. A New Green Deal would in my view quell some of the anxieties people are feeling. I see it in part as a vital measure to improve mental health.

Here are some examples of current Noah's Arkism:
1. Food, water and clean air are now threatened, and temperatures are rising. Being middle class, my economic position will save me. I must soon install air conditioning.

2. Being mega-wealthy, I can move to New Zealand. In the longer term, humans will have the technology to move to Mars. Not all humans obviously, but alpha types like me.

3. At least I am white and Christian. 'Strong man' leaders will save me. The price of passage onto the Ark is loyalty to the leader and accepting the leader's redefinition of who is 'us' (to be saved) and who is 'them' (to be sacrificed and kicked off the ark if they try to climb aboard).

Here, 'all of us' has morphed into 'a select group I am part of'. It is an omnipotently constructed phantasy involving a pseudo safe place, the Ark. People, under the pressure of survival anxieties, may build the phantasy according to detailed instructions given by leaders offering pseudo containment. For instance, Britain as an island Ark, with all wicked undesirable people kept out after Brexit through strict immigration laws. The US as a castle Ark with a stout wall to keep out all brown skinned bad people. Europe as an Ark with wire fences to keep out refugees who include climate refugees.

4. Another kind of 'Arkism' protects against unbearable feelings. For example, many climate scientists are currently suffering near unbearable feelings. I will save myself from these feelings by constructing for myself an impregnable Ark to keep the unbearable feelings in them (the drowned) and away from me (the saved). I am very expert at deflecting my feelings about climate reality. I do not notice that when I do this, I have thrown overboard the caring reality-seeking part of myself.

Christopher Hering said it is vital to keep recognising that the ruthless 'throwing overboard' alien is also part of us. I believe to do this we need to be talking now much more about the climate crisis and helping each other to face climate reality. The conversations we have with and about children are perhaps the most significant. We can choose to say how wonderful it is that the children are striking for climate and leave it at that and leave the problem with them (throw them overboard while sounding caring) or we can work with the children to support them and also work to help them to achieve a world they can live in.

I end with a conversation I heard recently. Someone said, how terrible that we are supposed to do all this repair work when the best we can possibly end up with is an earth that will still be damaged. Someone replied, yes, it is terrible but what is the implication? Do we think only 'the perfect state' is worth fighting for? Someone else said, young climate strikers don't seem to be thinking like that. They know the earth is damaged and they also know it's the only earth they have. They accept the damage and want to stop more damage. They are the realists. We who will soon be dead have the luxury of thinking it's too much to face and it's too hard to work to repair a world we have damaged. This is the sort of ordinary conversation I believe needs to happen on a big scale to help us work through the invidious effects of a culture of un-care that encouraged us to believe we could be excepted from facing reality because we were so ideally special. It gave me hope.

This article by CPA member Sally Weintrobe was part of a special issue focusing on the climate emergency of New Associations, the magazine of the British Psychoanalytic Council. Helen Morgan, a Jungian analyst and former Chair of the BPC commissioned the articles that comprised this autumn 2019 issue. (British Psychoanalytic Council www.bpc.org.uk) Illustrator: Allen Fatimaharan.

THIS IS AN EMERGENCY - PROPOSALS FOR A COLLECTIVE RESPONSE TO THE CLIMATE CRISIS

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A threshold moment

It is a difficult but important time to be alive as a human being right now at this threshold moment for our species' future. We are heading towards a global climate crisis of unprecedented proportion, with 97% of the scientific community agreeing that humans are responsible for dramatic changes in the Earth's climate system (IPCC 2019, Hoggett 2019, Wallace Wells, 2019). We are set for disruptive levels of global warming within our lifetime and may already have passed an irreversible tipping point. No place on Earth will be spared the consequences. Unless we dramatically reduce our CO2 emissions in the next decade (IPCC, 2019), we are on course for a humanitarian crisis of unspeakable consequences. Unfortunately there are peoples, cultures, animals and ecosystems on board of this neo-liberal trajectory who have been dragged here against their will.

Seventeen of the 18 warmest years in the 136-year record have all occurred since 2001 (NASA/GISS, 2018). We have witnessed the increase of devastation caused by fires, floods and storms in the last years and know that weather patterns will become increasingly unstable and unpredictable. Manmade plastics have contaminated the most remote and deepest places on the planet; the ice caps are melting; the oceans are acidifying and the rates of sea level rise suggest they may soon become exponential. These are the perfect conditions for feedback loops, that will increase the pace of change.

The IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) report describes 1.5C degrees of warming as 'dangerous'; warming around 3C as 'catastrophic'; and warming that goes beyond 4C as 'unkown, beyond catastrophic' (IPCC, 2018). No nation is currently on course to meet the target of CO2 emissions needed to keep global heating to the minimum of 1.5 C, set out in the Paris agreement. In fact global emissions are rising rather than decreasing. The University of Washington's climate impact group predict a minimum of 3C of warming by 2080 (Mote and Salate, 2009). What this means for our lifetime and the lifetime of our children is so scary to contemplate, that it breaks my heart to think what my daughter - what all of our children - will have to face.

Up to a million species are at risk of extinction worldwide. (Balvanera 2019, WWF, 2018). In the UK, reports (Carrington, 2019) point to the extinction of a quarter of all mammals and nearly half of all birds in the near term future.

Worldwide, there are around 360 million urban residents living in coastal regions that are less than 10 meters above sea level. In fact, 15 of the world's 20 mega-cities are at risk of rising sea levels and coastal surges (Centric Lab 2019).

Countries that are less affected by adverse climate effects will be likely to face an increase in migration. The World Bank states that due to climate change, countries needed to prepare for 140 million internally displaced people, in addition to millions of international refugees by 2050

(The World bank, 2018). This is a perfect breeding ground for authoritarianism, totalitarianism and fascism. We already see the effect of hostile border policies in the Global North.

Droughts, floods, storms and general temperature changes can easily result in crop failure , famine, malnutrition and put too much pressure on vulnerable food supply chains.

Of course those who already suffer from social inequality, poverty and marginalisation will feel the consequences of climate change the most. People in the Global South already experience these threats as a reality.

In the UK, Government figures show that over 14 million people, including 4.5 million children, were living in poverty in 2018 (Butler, 2018). With rising food prices this number will increase exponentially(Centric Lab, 2019). This is despite how little they contribute to the problem. Poor people consume far less than those who are wealthier, commute more via public transport, travel less, use less household energy, and consume less vanity goods. Climate injustice and the competition over sparser resources are likely to widen the social gaps that already exist in our societies and increase the risk of social unrest.

Warmer climates will also increase health risks through pollution, heat related deaths, malnutrition or the introduction of new diseases into areas whose communities are not sufficiently adapted. In 2003 alone, Europe experienced a summer heat-wave that resulted in 70,000 deaths (Centric Lab, 2019).

Given this diverse combination of stress factors and our lack of mobilisation, some academics (Bendell, 2018) predict a near-term social collapse and call for societies to prepare for this. In his much discussed 'deep adaptation' paper, Professor Jem Bendell (2018) broke with academic convention and spelt out what climate related social collapse would mean in terms of the ethical and humanitarian choices that we may have to face. What would we be prepared to do to protect our children? Would we be prepared to kill someone in order to defend our possessions or our food resources? Would we watch people die? Bendell has been criticised for scaremongering, but these questions reveal that there is a psychological dimension to the climate debate. How do we prepare ourselves psychologically for the uncertainty and the challenges the future holds? What psychological capacities do we need to foster and what supports us to bear unbearable news? And most importantly: what stops us from mobilising for radical change in the light of these facts?

The positivist approach has not paid off. For decades the scientific community assumed that we are logical and reasonable creatures that will adjust our trajectory if we have clear information in front of us. We have known about the risks of climate change for over 50 years and yet nearly half of the global CO2 emissions have been released into the atmosphere in the last 35 years (Ritchie and Roser, 2017), in our lifetime and on our watch. The irrational, chaotic, emotional responses of human nature were kept out of the story, which meant that our human capacity for denial, corruption and deflection has not been taken into account. We are paying a huge price for this myopia.

The failure to acknowledge the complexity of the human psyche is no longer sustainable. Climate change breaks down the artificial boundaries we have drawn between us and the world, between the personal and the public, between scientific data and our fallible human response to it. It is time to widen the lens and attend to the interconnection between the vast and wild human soul in its entanglement with a world that no longer allows us to reduce it to a mere backdrop. The effects of climate change impact on our mental health and in turn, our psychological response-ability over the next few years will alter the state of the world, one way or another. It is time for the psychotherapeutic profession to allow the world to enter our thinking, our theories and our consulting rooms.

Eco-anxiety and malignant normality

Over the last few decades depression and anxiety have spread like wildfire in the western world. More and more people sense that something is wrong without being able to name it. The fear and despair that some individuals experience in response to the ecological, social and cultural threats we are facing, has been given a label. Eco-anxiety is the new buzzword that makes the

rounds amongst climate aware mental health professionals. It is often used synonymously with climate change anxiety. I would describe eco-anxiety as heightened psychological (mental, emotional, somatic) distress in response to the climate emergency. The American Psychological Association (2017) references 'eco-anxiety' as a likely effect climate change may have on our mental health. The term 'anxiety' can however be misleading, as the range of symptoms is much more diverse. It can, in more severe instances, manifest as trauma reactions, depression, anxiety, insomnia, panic attacks etc. but shows up more frequently in higher levels of general anxiety, feelings of shock, being frightened about the future, feelings of grief, helplessness and numbness. These manifestations are creative adjustments to the current circumstances and generally a sign that we are alive and responsive to our context.

It is important to stress that eco-anxiety is not an illness or a 'condition' in the clinical sense. The climate emergency is extremely scary to contemplate and anxiousness is an inevitable consequence of facing the facts. Fear is a healthy emotion and only becomes problematic if the conditions needed for individuals to be heard and supported are absent. Distress in the light of climate change is therefore an entirely appropriate response to a dangerous situation. Appropriate treatment is at societal level and requires decisive political action to reduce CO2 emissions rather than an individualised and introspective approach. If eco-anxiety is treated as a pathology then 'the forces of denial will have won' writes Graham Lawton (2019) from the New Scientist and goes on to say 'what we are witnessing isn't a tsunami of mental illness, but a long-overdue outbreak of sanity'.

If eco-anxiety is the figure, then it arises out of a dysfunctional ground of malignant normality. It is the phenomenological field that the individual is contextualised within and not the individual that needs attention. The field has been diminished and depleted for too long whilst the focus firmly lay on the individual. The effects of this attack on our ground have been deflected or ignored too often by our profession. Climate change forces us to recognise that our sense of wellbeing is intricately linked to the wellbeing of our ecological surroundings. Maybe it is the ground that needs to become figural now.

Solastalgia, a term coined by the philosopher Glenn Albrecht (2005) is closely related to eco-anxiety and refers to the existential pain experienced when a place of belonging is subject to environmental degradation. The psychological harm that befalls individuals, communities or society when their environmental place of 'home' is in demise or when healthy ties between people and their ecological environment are severed is certainly known to indigenous cultures throughout the world and has been recognised in western societies for a while (Mitchell 1946).

Another frequently used term in relation to the climate emergency is 'pre-traumatic stress' or 'pre-traumatic stress disorder', a term that has been coined by the American psychiatrist Lise van Susteren (2017). She describes it as a before-the-fact version of classic PTSD, which for most of us who live in the Global North, is about anticipated trauma rather than trauma we have already experienced. For Zhiwa Woodbury (2019a), 'Climate trauma' represents an entirely new order of trauma, as it interacts dynamically with all categories of previous traumas and can trigger our residual personal, cultural, and intergenerational traumas that we carry within us. He suggests that we live in a traumasphere, which is characterised by pervasive and interpenetrating traumas that inhibit our innate abilities to respond to obvious dangers (Woodbury 2019b). We don't yet seem to have developed sophisticated ways of working with the collective forms of trauma that still run through the fabric of society. Intergenerational wounds, like the split between us and the living earth for example, may sit so deep that we may not even realise that they exist. Glendenning (1994) calls the tear between us and the world 'original trauma' and describes how this feeling of isolation that results from it has been completely normalised in western society.

I discussed the topic of eco-anxiety and climate trauma in a BBC current affairs interview and in a subsequent article in Therapy Today (Bednarek 2019). I expressed concern about the use of clinical language, such as 'eco-anxiety' or 'pre-traumatic stress disorder' to describe the wild and undomesticated human suffering in relation to our ecosystem's decline. Whilst clinical terms can communicate complex dynamics and map out the psychological terrain, the use of clinical language often calls for a clinical response. Symptoms are then seen as a sign of an individual's malfunction that needs to be repaired, in the same way as we use weedkiller to wrestle unwanted

plants to the ground. This attitude of repair is in line with our heroic culture (based on success and achievement), our individualistic outlook and our belief in progress that forms the background of a paradigm that is costing us the Earth.

There is a whole industry of self-help books and quick-fix therapy interventions devoted to eradicating unwanted feelings in our culture. Pharmaceutical companies have created a market that provides us with the means to sedate our pain, gently bringing us back into a sleepy state of mild discontent. Some forms of therapy and alternative health seem to aim for a similar appeasement. Even mindfulness practices are often decontextualised and used to disperse the discomfort that calls to us from a far distant seeming depth. But what if our symptoms are our last frayed connection to sanity? What if they are the last lifeline we have got left to re-ensouling our lives and our communities?

In my writing I try to rise up against the persistent cultural attack on the sacred connection that our grief can weave between us and the world. At precious times, when I allow my heart to break open to all the loss in the world, when I experience the weight of my shame, anger, helplessness and the bittersweet love and longing for a world that I have not related to enough, in those sacred moments, I don't recognise clinical terms as words that do justice to the wild beauty and majesty of my resonance with the world. In fact these terms feel like an insult. Reductive terminology, based on a positivist worldview, reduce my human nature to a narrow existence. I therefore see it as an act of soul rebellion to use poetic language, wherever I can, in order to remind myself and others of the magnificence and diversity of the human soul.

Whatever words we choose to describe our distress in relation to a declining world, the biggest problem we face is not anxiety, but a malignant form of normality that is characterised by a collective state of denial. Mass amnesia and anaesthesia are the threats that threaten the world as we know it. We forgot how to live in right relationship with the Earth and with each other and we numb the pain that results from so much emptiness. The dysfunction lies in the absence of adequate mobilisation in the face of danger. The pressing issue for our profession is therefore not eco-anxiety, but the absence of it.

How can we invite the state of the world into the conversation? How do we make the malignant normality figural, especially if therapist and client both participate in the same forms of deflection? How do we grieve something we may not even realise we have lost? These questions present our profession with unprecedented problems that certainly don't have linear answers. It is time we made space to discuss them.If we wait until it is too late and keep colluding with business-as-usual, we may well have a mental health crisis at global scale on our hands very soon, with both therapists and clients utterly unprepared to bear the consequences.

Collective deflection, denial, disavowal and a healthy sense of shame

I don't doubt for a moment that most people are concerned about the environment and wished climate change wasn't happening. Most people care deeply and want their children to have a safe future. So what is going wrong? We know that we are part of the problem - and yet we don't seem to act as though we can be part of the solution. We behave as though someone else will come along and make it all go away.

The Guardian recently published data that reveals that as few as 20 companies are responsible for a third of the world's CO2 emissions (Taylor and Watts, 2019). We have been sold the individualistic story that we should recycle more and use energy saving light bulbs, whilst big corporations have knowingly driven the climate crisis to this catastrophic point for humanity. They spent billions each year to lobby governments and hide the effects their businesses have had on the environment (Taylor and Watts, 2019). Whilst this illustrates the powerful invested interests that keep people ignorant and focussed on business as usual, we can't altogether put all the blame on the fossil fuel industry. We have all known about the dangers of climate change for decades and chosen to stick our head in the sand. It was convenient not to dig too deep.

Hope has become a defence mechanism that comes at a high cost. Blind trust that it will all be ok in the end, that bad things only happen to other people in far away places or that a great solution

will be found by clever people, resembles the attitude of a child's wishful thinking. Robert Bly (1996) tells us that we live in a "sibling society, " in which adults have regressed into adolescents who refuse to grow up. He illustrates how the values of modern society have encouraged a move into an adolescent place in relation to the duties of citizenship. Societal norms no longer ask citizens to be honourable, generous and noble, but encourage competition and personal gratification.

But it is adults we need right now. We need people who are willing to bear the unbearable mess we are in, show up fully, mobilise and offer what they can, not because there is a guarantee that it will succeed, but because it is the right thing to do. Now is not the time to play small and wait for someone else to sort it out. What the current times are calling for is the cultural transformation from an adolescent stance into a maturity, where we mobilise in our fragile, fallible, imperfect human ways and offer what we can to be of service to something greater than ourselves. We each have gifts and resources that we can contribute. Acting as if we matter is a form of soul rebellion against so much cultural numbing and deflection.

However, there is only so much bad news anyone can take. What we can learn from mythology is that staring straight into hell will eventually turn us to stone. Psychologically we tend to dissociate when we feel unable to deal with the enormity of the challenges we are facing. Through a process that the psychoanalyst Sally Weintrobe (2013) describes as 'disavowal', many are able to rationally engage with climate change data, whilst denying the full impact this data has on their lives. Positive bias, wishful thinking, denial, rationalisation, dissociation or numbing are all ways to deflect from the unbearable feelings we have to face. These mechanisms keep our cognitive knowledge separate from our felt and lived experience so that we can remain partially asleep, without urgency or motivation to mobilise. The more reality is systematically distorted or avoided in this way, the more anxiety builds up unconsciously and the need for further distortion increases. Whilst this process helps us to maintain an emotional equilibrium, it comes at a high cost to the Earth. When this defence is no longer possible, there is either further defence through anger and aggression or a collapse of the defence, which is likely to result in anxiety. The feeling of anxiety can therefore be a sign that there is enough support in the ground to allow a rigid deflection to dissolve.

Rather than attempting to rid people of anxiety, therapists can support individuals and communities to build strong containers that allow the expression and exploration of the full spectrum of emotions, without collapsing under it or turning away.There is an emotional range within which most people can sustain strong feelings without either dissociating and numbing at one end of the spectrum or going into blind panic at the other. This window of tolerance (Siegel, 1999) between hyperarousal and hypoarousal describes the range within which we can engage with difficult truths while staying connected. Therapists trained in trauma work will know how to support self-regulation whilst facing difficult feelings. But in order to be in a position to support others, therapists will have to face their own deflections and denial of what is to come in the not so distant future. There is a need for spaces where we can support each other.

At the point at which our defences soften, shame may come to meet us at the gates to recovery. Shame, this unpopular and unwanted feeling that holds us to account for our actions, has had a lot of bad press, and unsurprisingly so. Toxic shame is responsible for a considerable amount of suffering. I am not advertising a culture of blame and guilt, but am interested instead in the aspect of shame, which helps us to regulate our sense of belonging and defends against a loss of contact in relationship (Erskine, 1994). This aspect of shame holds us to account and asks of us to make amends in order to repair the rupture that our actions or non actions have caused. Shame is linked to the societal norms, cultural trends and values of the groups and subgroups we belong to. We feel shame when we have breached these norms and so shame can be seen as the feeling that governs relationships and group cohesion.

Maybe our group has followed the wrong Gods home. The degree of shame we feel for our participation in a system that destroys our life support seems to be minimal, whilst the feeling of shame about body image, career success, personal prestige or possessions are at an all time high. Whilst many clients feel tortured about unfavourable comparisons to their peers, I have never had a client talk about the shame they carry for their contribution to the genocide of

species, the responsibility for the horrors their children and grandchildren are likely to encounter or the shame of destroying the local ecology through the use of weedkillers in their gardens. This form of shame is so distant that most of us can't feel it because it would be linked to the values of relationship and inter-being with the world rather than the values of materialism and consumerism. The diagnosis for someone who has a complete lack of shame is a psychopath and shockingly the diagnostic criteria for antisocial personality disorder in DSM-V (2013,p.661) seems to describe our relationship to the Earth pretty accurately.

I am wondering if there is a need to create supportive containers that allow us to explore our shame in relation to our attitudes towards the more-than -human presences and the generations that are still to come. How can we allow ourselves to acknowledge the prospect of ecological devastation and feel the damage our lifestyle choices and convenience options are causing to other-than-human life forms and the future of our children without becoming paralysed? This is a question we need to take on as a profession and it may require the widening of our theories and practices.

Soul rebellion: Re-claiming, Re-wilding, Re-imagining, Re-ensouling the culture of psychotherapy

In addition to the individual mechanisms of deflection, the hedonistic and individualistic values of western culture have also had their soporific effect on us. We have collectively anaesthetised large parts of our human experience in order to fit into the machinery of capitalist growth (Bednarek, 2018). Capitalism has become a way of life that manifests in the fabric of our day to day existence. It has infiltrated our towns and cities, traded the idea of community for individualism, prioritises convenient lifestyles over their consequences, sold us stories of what 'we deserve' and what constitutes a happy life, whilst alienating us from the land and from each other. It has become part of our relationships, our marriages and part of the ways we relate to each other and ourselves.

Horrendous things have become normalised within our field of acceptability. All too often the capitalist machinery has forced us to give up on our primary human satisfactions for the sake of meaningless work that turns us into producers and consumers of replaceable goods or services. Our life experience and self worth is frequently reduced to career paths and we often describe ourselves in terms of a job title. Many people feel unnecessary, but have become used to this level of insult to their souls. Surely we were not made to hate Mondays, live for weekends and happy hour and raise our hands quietly to be allowed to speak. Surely we are not meant to be indoors on a beautiful day and light the magnificence of the dark sky with neon lights.

We assault the integrity of our human nature on a systematic level, neglecting almost everything that gives us deep satisfaction, such as participation with the rhythms of nature, being woven into community, expressing our aliveness through touch, song and untamed and undomesticated creativity. The gestures that have made us human for millennia have given way to sitting in front of a computer screen day after day. We then go home and watch television, shop online, get drunk at weekends and plan the occasional trip into nature as a form of recreation ground. Is this the expression of what we are meant to be at the so-called height of civilisation?

Many people can't tolerate this level of deprivation of soulfulness and meaning without numbing themselves - and yet good mental health is mostly regarded as the ability to function symptom free within the capitalist paradigm (Bednarek, 2018).

But as any recovered addict can tell you, there comes a time when the highs turn into lows, when the denied reality and all the damage that has been done comes crashing down. It is at this late hour that a tipping point signals that, in the name of survival, the soul needs to find a way back home. Awareness of impending collapse can therefore be an opportunity to open ourselves up to deeper questions of meaning that we typically postpone.

The concept of post- traumatic growth, tells us that positive, far-reaching psychological shifts can occur as a result of experiencing adversity. In that light, climate despair can invite us back to a fuller life. We can gain greater presence, depth, courage and wisdom through our willingness to

step through the gateway of anticipated suffering. If we are capable of experiencing pre-traumatic stress, then we can also expand through a process of pre-traumatic growth. People often behave generously in challenging circumstances, taking care of each other, improvising creatively, connecting in ways they may not have done in everyday life. And sometimes something emerges from those connections that is so utterly beautiful that the story of who we are can change fundamentally.

The poet Wendell Berry reminds us that 'the dark, too, blooms and sings, and is traveled by dark feet and dark wings' (1999, p.102). Miriam Greenspan, seems to agree when she describes dark emotions as potentially profound spiritual teachers. She says: "In our intervulnerability is our salvation, because awareness of the mutuality of suffering impels us to search for ways to heal the whole, rather than encase ourselves in a bubble of denial and impossible individualism' (Greenspan, 2008).

There are many acts of rebellion and one of them may be to invite each other into heartbreak. Grief is the primary way in which the heart softens. It eases the hardened places within us and helps us to remember what we have sacrificed. Grief is suffused with life force and has a distinctively subversive quality, 'undermining our society's quiet agreement that we will behave and be in control of our emotions (…) It declares our refusal to live numb and small (Weller 2015, p.9). If we allow the grief underneath our numbness to touch us, we can bring our exiled humanity back home and become more intimate with the state of the world. I see this act of reclamation as a form of soul rebellion.

In 'The Wild Edge of Sorrow' Francis Weller (2015) writes: 'Grief and love are sisters, woven together from the beginning. Their kinship reminds us that there is no love that does not contain loss and no loss that is not a reminder of the love we carry for what we once held close' (Weller, 2015 p.16). And of course sustainable change does not arise out of fear, but out of our deep love for the Earth and for each other. If we open our vulnerable hearts to the grief of what we stand to lose, we also open the gate to our gratitude for what we cherish, whilst we still can.

Grief is therefore an inevitable part of facing the current times. Nobody is exempt from it. We all face loss after loss with each new species that goes extinct. Whether doctor or patient, counsellor or client, teacher or pupil, no matter how rich or poor we are, the crisis of the environment reminds us of our shared vulnerable human nature. The question is not whether or not our hearts will get broken, the question is what meaning we ascribe to a broken heart. Do we follow our desire to patch the pieces together and guard this vulnerable heart with vigilance, or do we build up our muscle of the heart in order for it to grow and expand? Do we seek ways to avoid suffering or do we learn to bear the pain? How can we help each other to find out what lies on the other side of heartbreak?

Of course we can only let in the painful truth if we have ways of processing our grief. And so we need to remember that grief is not meant to be private; it has always been communal (Weller 2015). It is not meant to be a lonely and isolated experience that we only express in the hushed atmosphere of a psychotherapist's consulting room.

Interestingly most private therapy rooms are not set up to allow the wilder parts of human nature to emerge. They rarely support the wailing that needs to happen for some, or the raw and untamed outbursts of suppressed rage. The environment of the therapeutic office itself makes sure that clients often keep the range of expression of their humanity contained in quiet tears, that can be wiped away with readily provided tissues. By containing our human nature so tightly, we may lose some of our magnificence, power and grandeur in the exchange. I therefore wonder whether we need to re-wild some aspects of the support we are able to offer in our profession. Whilst there is no doubt that some people will need the safety of one to one support and the clinical expertise of a well trained psychotherapist, others may need community as an anti-dote to the extreme individualism that we have all been subjected to. After all, a collective wound may require collective healing.

In a time of crisis, we have the opportunity and maybe the responsibility to re-imagine our habitual ways of doing things. Psychotherapy can support individuals to create community and to transform their fear into meaningful mobilisation. Together we can create the resources and the support to face the magnitude of what is happening. It is an act of rebellion if ordinary and fallible individuals feel empowered to re-claim their agency. Each and everyone of us carries a gift that we can contribute to the greater good. In doing so, we un-domesticate and re-wild our capacities for connection and may re-ensoul our impoverished culture along the way.

Considering our ability to face dark times, it may be useful to remember that we didn't use to have to have an MA in grief counselling in order to attend compassionately to the fragility of our human connections. Communal rituals and ceremonies used to be a holding container for the expression of strong emotion. Nearly every indigenous culture has used ritual as a central way of maintaining the health of the community.The same is true for our central European ancestors. For tens of thousand of years, rituals provided the means by which the community addressed the need for healing and renewed its relationship with the place they lived. The urge to create ritual sits deeply in our psychic structure. Maybe it is time to remember the traditions that have operated in villages before therapists have privatised the experience of pain. Maybe we can put something else alongside individual support and take part in re-building communal containers where ordinary people are empowered to offer love and compassion to each other and remember how to hold each other in rage and in fear.

The work of the psychotherapists Joanna Macy (1999) and Francis Weller (2015) are examples of how ritual can be used to build community and affect change. Macy's 'the work that reconnects' (2019) uses ritual, group work and nature based experience to support individuals to transcend the artificial divide between 'self' and 'other. Weller runs communal grief rituals that have taken shape through his collaboration with the African Elder Malidoma Some, applying his own background in psychotherapy to Some's experience of village building. Weller defines ritual as 'any gesture done with emotion and intention by an individual or a group that attempts to connect the individual or the community with transpersonal energies (2015, p,76). He sees ritual as something that is indigenous to the psyche, but stresses that whilst we may have a lot to learn from indigenous cultures about the use of rituals in our communities, we cannot simply use their traditions and apply them to our land and our psyches. He views it as 'important that we listen deeply, once again, to the dreaming earth and craft rituals that are indigenous to us, that reflect our unique patterns of wounding and disconnection from the land. These rituals will have the potency to mend what has been torn (and) heal what has been neglected. This is one way that we may return to the land and offer our deepest amends to those we have harmed' (2015, p.77).

Together we can restore our dignity, learn how to love more fiercely, expand our focus beyond our own concerns and our own lifespan and include a wider range of humans and more than human presences in who we hold dear and whom we are willing to compromise for. From this perspective we may stop milking the world for our benefit and ask what the current situation asks of us, and then find the strength and the resilience to rise to it. It does not guarantee that we will succeed, but it is a liberating trajectory. Quoting the civil rights activist John E. Lewis, if not us, then who? If not now, then when?

A psychology of the environment and an ecological self

Einstein famously said that we can't expect to solve problems with the same thinking we used when we created them. In 'how wide is the field?' (Bednarek 2018) I explored the thesis that psychotherapy may need to re-imagine its discipline and expand its theories and practices in order to meet the demands of the time. John E. Mack (1995), a professor of psychiatry at Harvard, believed that we need a psychology of the environment, which requires an expanded psychology of relationship. The philosopher Arne Naess (1989) puts forward a similar idea with the notion of an 'ecological self', which transcends the common view of an ego-self, and sees the self as eternally embedded in the ecosphere. From this perspective environmentally conscious lifestyles can no longer be viewed as a form of altruism but need to be recognised as a form of self-interest.

Mack (1995) doesn't believe that a mere threat to survival will be enough to create this new relationship without a fundamental revolution in the sphere of western consciousness. In his opinion, a psychology of the environment needs to include a powerful spiritual aspect that reconnects us with the divinity in ourselves and in the environment. He calls to our profession to 'reinfuse (itself) with the imprecise notions of spirituality and philosophy, from which it has so vigorously and proudly struggled to free itself in an effort to be granted scientific status' (Mack, 1995, p.284).

Mack proposed in 1995 (p.287) that a psychology of the environment needed to include the following elements:

An appreciation that we have a relationship with the Earth itself, and the degree to which that relationship has become inimitable to the sustaining of human lives and those of countless other species.
An analysis of traditional attitudes toward the Earth in our own and in other cultures that may facilitate or interfere with the maintenance of life.
The application of methods of exploring and changing our relationship to the Earth's environment that can reanimate our connection with it. These approaches must be emotionally powerful, experiential, and consciousness expanding, opening us to ourselves in relation to nature.
An examination of political and economic systems, institutions, and forces from an ecopsychological perspective.
Discovering new forms of personal empowerment for ourselves and our clients, that integrate activism in the battle to protect our planet.

Widening our field of psychotherapy may therefore need to include practices which move us beyond the story of a separate self, practices which explore non-ordinary states of consciousness, and nature based practices that transcend a sense of separation from the world and our anthropocentric perspective.

The psychiatrist Stanislav Grof (2000) and his wife Christina, were early researchers into the use of non-ordinary states of consciousness. Their insights may be useful to expand the repertoire of our professional practice. In Jungian psychology the ideas of soul, archetypes and the collective unconscious transcend the merely human realm and ascribe agency to forces and presences outside of human control. Hillman (1995, p.11) observed that "the greater part of the soul lies outside the body' and noted that we live in psyche; psyche does not live in us. He speaks of the 'anima mundi', the soul of the world, and sees it as an entity in its own right that acts upon us and asks us to participate in its dance. The Buddhist master Thich Nhat Hanh (1998) stresses our state of 'interbeing' with a world that in his eyes has communicates with us if we re-learn to listen. These approaches may help us to re-imagine a different relationship to the world and stay open to the possibility that the world may be more complex than we currently give it credit for

Declaring a climate emergency

The psychoanalysts Rosemary Randall and Paul Hoggett (2019) conducted research with climate scientists and climate activists to establish how people who are exposed to the distressing facts of climate change on a daily basis manage psychologically. Their research showed that scientists often relied on positivist understandings of rationality in their attempts to manage their emotional responses, whilst the activists seemed more emotionally literate, building psychological support into their practice. Furthermore the activists had ways of transforming fear into mobilisation, which had a noticeably positive effect on their emotional resilience. As mobilisation is a positive way to deal with the mental health effects that the climate crisis has on us, I would like to propose actions that we can take as a professional body.

Organisations around the country are responding by declaring a 'Climate Emergency' and committing resources to address it. Councils in London, Liverpool, Manchester, Bristol and 23 smaller local authorities in the UK have already passed motions declaring a climate emergency, as have universities such as Bristol and Exeter. In the psychotherapy profession, the first associations (British Association of Dramatherapists) and training institutes have done so too. I

am therefore addressing the Gestalt Community in the hope that we will follow suit. I am reaching out, asking for help and support in acknowledging the danger we are in.

Each organisation has its own unique spirit and has to find their own co-creative way to mobilise. As an active member of the Climate Psychology Alliance, I would like to make some proposals as to how we may respond as a community. What I suggest is the following:

For the British Gestalt Community, membership organisations and training institutes to declare that there is a Climate Emergency.

For the Gestalt Community to work with partners, such as the BACP, UKCP, BPS and other national networks and mental health charities to lobby the UK and devolved governments on the psychological impact of climate change and to call on them to take wider action on making the UK carbon neutral in order to avoid a mental health crisis of unprecedented scale.

To make a commitment that all training programmes include opportunities for students to develop an awareness of how climate change and damage to the environment is impacting on individuals, and that all courses commit to incorporating environmental justice into counselling and psychotherapy practice.

For Gestalt training to explicitly consider the non-human world as a place of relationship, integrating theories and practices which explicitly explore the experience of being part of the living earth (see Field Theory, Living systems theory, Deep Ecology and Indigenous perspectives for possible inspiration). [SEP]
To commission and publish research, training materials and therapy tools, along with relevant training workshops and on-line resources, to support members to fulfil their ethical commitment to promoting environmental justice. To share good practice, seek dialogue between different schools and approaches and to bring awareness to this issue.

For the BGJ to include a category in their peer review criteria that asks contributors to acknowledge the interconnected nature of the human and the more-than-human world and to transcend the individualistic and anthropocentric paradigm.

For institutes, training providers and all conferences to pledge to make their operations carbon neutral by 2025. This could include using Skype, live streaming and/or other methods for interactive learning; working out carbon footprint year on year; establishing if the organisation is investing in fossil fuels - for example via banking - and to consider alternative options.

This paper was published in the British Gestalt Journal in 2019 following which they decided to adopt the proposal in the article about publication criteria. Steffi's other papers are available from her website

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THE PANDEMIC AND AWAKENING: SOME THOUGHTS ON THE CORONAVIRUS EXPERIENCE.

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As Wendy Hollway discussed in her April and May CPA newsletters, it is difficult not to see the connection between the challenges of the virus and climate change issues.

While we are all still in a state of shock with the global lockdown and have only just begun to think about what it all means, we are becoming increasingly aware that fundamental changes are taking place at all levels and there is no going back to "normal life".

At the same time there is a sense of relief for some of us that Coronavirus has broken through the unreality of our materialistic and high-consuming way of living. Who would have thought that a micro-entity could be responsible for confining the whole human race to their homes, leaving our cities deserted and quiet, emptying the skies of aircraft etc? It is impressive. What Greens have been campaigning about for decades, i.e. the reduction in global carbon emissions, the virus has achieved in a matter of weeks.

To be certain, the changes will bring much suffering. In addition to the mounting death count, the dislocation of life could be immense. Nor do we know how people will respond to this. It's possible things could get worse. Of course, the instincts of desire and fear that are in all of us, including, particularly, in the world's rich one percent, persist and will re-emerge when we return to a more normal life. But pessimism can be self-fulfilling. Human nature may be evolving. *We shouldn't close our minds to the possibility of human progress.*

The pandemic could be a step towards an awakening. There has been a dramatic emotional release during the past weeks, whether of true grief at the loss of so many lives and fear for what the future may bring, or, in addition, the altruism, kindness and sheer creative resourcefulness, even joy, accompanying it. Could it be that this also has implications for our psychotherapy traditions? We point out the short-sighted denial about climate change but perhaps we have more understanding, resilience and resourcefulness than we know.

Death awareness

Coronavirus is responsible for taking many lives. While this has caused great grief and loss, we should be aware that death - like birth - is not the opposite of life, but a part of it. Death is currently our essential taboo, perhaps our greatest denial. We forget that 200,000 people die every day on the planet - one and a half million a week, over seventy million every year! As the ancient philosophers reminded us, as soon as we are born our path leads to death, and its ever-present possibility is never more than a breath away. Death awareness, as Montaigne wrote in his essay, "To philosophise is to learn how to die", helps us, paradoxically, not to be afraid of dying. It seems we have "unlearnt" how to die, which is why we are so traumatised by it.

Economic changes

Could we be seeing the beginning of the end of neoliberal ideology and practice? Boris Johnson doesn't like the word "austerity" and tells us now there **is** such a thing as society. Moreover, government spending is up like never before. None of this, however, implies there is a real

ethical dimension to government practice. Or an understanding that the "free market" is not really free.

The rationale for the neoliberal view of the workings of the market economy is to be found in the concept of "the invisible hand", as described in Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations*. The invisible hand, in its economic identity, is assumed not only to be the essence of the free market but also the mechanism of industrial capitalism. Interestingly, Smith was originally a professor of moral philosophy and published his first great book, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* in 1759 and it wasn't until 1776 that *The Wealth of Nations*, which grew out of the earlier book, appeared. Would it be too fanciful to ask whether the invisible hand, as conceived by Adam Smith, refers as much to the faculty of "sympathy" within the human mind and heart? Sympathy, the feeling that most connects us and, along with pity and compassion, the ground of ethics, was for him a fundamental passion and is to be found in everybody: "The greatest ruffian, the most hardened violator of the laws of society, is not altogether without it".

Despite the influence of *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* in the eighteenth century - by 1790 it had reached its fifth edition - *The Wealth of Nations* has, as Amartya Sen points out in his introduction to the modern Penguin edition of *Moral Sentiments,* been interpreted without reference to the framework of thought of the earlier book, "to the detriment of economics as a subject". Could we now be reassessing the nature of modern economics? Could we, to adapt Bill Clinton's famous election catchphrase, suggest it's no longer just the economy, stupid?

Political changes

The central pillar in neoliberal ideology is the notion of minimal government, originally followed by Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan from their reading of F. A. Hayek, who tended to view the tyranny of Soviet Communism as his example of socialism. The Thatcher and Reagan neoliberal practice of withdrawal from responsible government must be in question. The failure of the politics of economic austerity and the dismantling of local government is now laid bare. The present Tory government in the U.K., for instance, are now having actually to govern, against their neoliberal ideological instincts. The next year or so will be a test of their ability to do so, after decades of withdrawal from governmental responsibility.

Austerity and Coronavirus

There is an alternative view of austerity to the economic one - psychological and spiritual austerity. In Asian cultures it is known by the Sanskrit word tapas, which is commonly associated with the ascetic practices of yogis and gnanis in secluded places. But in Buddhism it is thought of more generally as meditative practice, accompanied by right thinking, right livelihood and right ethics, and can be followed by anyone. It is not an extreme practice of renunciation but more of a "middle way" approach and doesn't imply a vow of poverty. In fact it is not recommended for people suffering from poverty, hunger or deprivation. True austerity of this kind cannot result from coercion.

A better word would perhaps be simplicity. In1981 the visionary activist, Duane Elgin, published *Voluntary Simplicity*, a guide to sustainable living. So popular has it been that he has produced two revised editions, the second in 2010. It is not a book about living in deprivation and poverty but about living in balance. It begins by describing the changes that more and more people are making in their everyday lives as a response to the dissatisfaction they feel about the materialism and high consumption of our carbon-fuelled modern society. Voluntary simplicity is a way of living according to the values of ecological awareness, frugal consumption and personal growth. Elgin believes these changes portend a potential revolution in our way of life, and a change in consciousness along with the practical changes. He is also aware of the great dangers to all life if we don't embrace simplicity.

Interestingly, the science writer, John Gribbin, has also written about *Deep Simplicity* in the context of Chaos and Complexity theory. In his introduction, entitled "The Simplicity of Complexity", he describes how he was still busily writing about "the old science" in the eighties when Prigogine and Stengers published their classic *Order out of Chaos* and James Gleick, his *Chaos*. Gribbin struggled to understand the complexity of complexity theory until he realised

that it is based on two simple premises - the sensitivity of any system to its starting conditions, and the principle of feedback. Understand these and you have a key to the staggering complexity of structures that are built up from them. It was James Lovelock who explained this to him. But Gribbin quotes Murray Gell-Mann, echoing Richard Feynman, that the complicated behaviour of the world we see around us, including the living world, is merely "surface complexity arising out of deep simplicity".

To me this raises questions for us: Is there a deep psychological simplicity we have missed, behind all the theoretical complexities of our diverse therapeutic models and modalities? Is there a unifying human spirit after all? And, if so, how do we begin to realise it? Some might argue that psychology is a therapeutic science and the idea of "awakening" is outside its discipline, but others appreciate that exploring the existential nature of mind, as, for instance, in the dialogue between Western sciences and buddhism, can also be of great therapeutic value. Sam Harris, the neuroscientist and writer, also takes up this theme in his book, *Waking Up*.

I wonder if the way we have to live under the lockdown will bring Elgin's simplicity revolution nearer. Of course there must be changes to traditional industries, particularly those heavily dependent on carbon sources of energy. Aircraft companies and the car industry are likely to be transformed, given that people's travelling habits will change. The tourist industry will also have to make fundamental adjustments. People are now talking of what kind of life will emerge as the lockdown is lifted. What would make the most significant difference is if our leaders, not just political but leaders in all walks of life - the "leading edge" - would embrace simplicity voluntarily, providing an example for all to follow. Jacinda Ardern, the prime minister of New Zealand, is just such an example.

Change of consciousness

It has been so interesting to listen to the personal lockdown experiences of everyone. It's also been refreshing to hear more from people other than politicians, whether the experts in the medical and other specialities, the "front-line" staff in the NHS and home-care sector, or we "ordinary" folk in our own homes. It's as if the conviction and authority of everybody's voices have been stifled for too long, and the virus has provided an opportunity for people to speak up. This is surely the voice of democracy working. Accounts have been so diverse but have also brought us together, a truly shared experience.

But there has also been a change in our consciousness of the ideas of space and time and this may be quite fundamental. Take space, for example. There has been a growing awareness, among Greens in particular, that globalisation, as conceived in its economic form, is so ecologically damaging. The "globalisation" that allows us in the developed world to jump on a plane and visit whatever corner of the planet we wish to has surely come to an end. Even more powerfully the pandemic has led us to question the globalised supply chains that bring food to the table, clothes to the shops, car parts to the assembly line and so on. This involves massive carbon emissions, far more than flying for tourism

"Stay at home" is a phrase that will resound into the future but staying at home for a while is not so bad for some. To deprive our bodies of commuting daily - or flying across continents regularly - can be a relief, and good for our physical and mental health. When we do travel it will be much more of an event. Besides, we can live and act locally at the same time as thinking globally, something Greens have always recommended. "Space" is now a mental more than a physical construct. We will find we can go places in our minds that are always denied to our bodies.

As for our sense of time, lockdown has been a revelation for those of us fortunate enough to have the means to survive without too much anxiety. When you have an empty diary one day is like another, the week and weekend hardly distinguishable. Time truly does stretch out, without an obvious beginning or ending, waiting for us to structure it. If we don't finish a thing one day, there will always be tomorrow. We can go as slow or fast as we like. It's a new experience, almost as if time is infinite, timeless in fact. We know the lockdown will give way eventually to some kind of boundaried "normal" life again, but what we do with our own time - which we may well have more of - may well be different for our experience of the lockdown.

Psychological implications

While the virus has threatened the whole structure of the modern capitalist system, it has challenged us to review our experience of ourselves as human beings. Many people have reported a new feeling about nature. Certainly nature herself has had some breathing space from us. Every morning I take an early stroll through a small nearby wood and have the distinct feeling that the birdsong has become louder and more exuberant. Whether this is actually so, or more a case of my hearing being more sensitive, I am not sure. Perhaps it is both, evidence perhaps that we are becoming aware that "nature" is within, as well as all about us.

The experience of lockdown has had its ironies and paradoxes. At the same time as we have been asked to self-isolate and distance regulate we have become acutely aware of how interconnected we are physiologically - a challenge to the notion of the separate self which underpins the possessive individualism of our modern market economy. The lockdown experience has also helped us to realise how inter-connected we are, mentally and emotionally. That interdependency extends, of course, beyond interpersonal relationships to the wider ecology, including nature, the whole planet and living universe. This leads to thinking about the "ecological self", even the "ecology of mind".

In addition the lockdown has been an opportunity to reflect. We've had the chance to think about what we are usually too busy to give time to - what the sixth century Chinese Buddhist master, Chih-i called, in the title of his book on meditative practice, "The Great Stopping and Seeing". The aim for Chih-i is to "stop" delusion and "see" truth, critically the truth about ourselves. Clearly, our attempts to address the climate and ecological emergency will fail unless we change within ourselves at the same time.

Our scientists tell us, amazingly, that the matter known to us through our senses is only 4% of what there is. The rest - 96% - is "dark matter" and "dark energy", which are a complete mystery to them. You could say that science is waking up to its profound ignorance, which some might claim to be the beginning of real knowledge. One wonders in turn what percentage of our human nature we understand.

Under-standing ourselves is not just something we can "know". It is not just a cognitive function. It is what we are, something we can explore and experience by going beyond our minds. Heidegger, thought of philosophy as "the un-concealing of being". It is a meditative act, a form of reflection and mindfulness, a means to awakening. Surely therapy can have the same aspiration. Exploring the reflective self is the door to discovering who we really are.

Tony Cartwright
May 2020

Notes

i Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, Introduction by Amartya Sen, edited with notes by Ryan Patrick Hanley, London: Penguin, 2009 (1759).
ii Duane Elgin, *Voluntary Simplicity: Towards a Way of Life that is Outwardly Simple, Inwardly Rich*, Second Revised Edition, New York: Harper, 2010 (1981).
iii John Gribbin, *Deep Simplicity: Chaos, Complexity and the Emergence of Life,* London: Penguin, 2004.
iv These issues are discussed in a variety of contributions in Gay Watson, Stephen Batchelor, and Guy Claxton (editors) *The Psychology of Awakening: Buddhism, Science and Our Day-to-Day Lives*, London: Rider, 1999.
v Sam Harris,*Waking Up: Searching for spirituality without religion*, London: Black Swan/Transworld, 2015.
vi Chih-I, *Stopping and Seeing: A Comprehensive Course in Buddhist Meditation*, translated by Thomas Cleary, Boston: Shambhala, 1997

AWAKENING: CLIMATE PSYCHOLOGY AND BEYOND

Written by Tony Cartwright

Perhaps, to wake up to the danger of climate change, we must also wake up to something in ourselves…

Wakefulness is the way to life […]
So awake, reflect, watch.
Work with care and attention.
Live in the way
and the light will grow in you.

"Wakefulness", *The Dhammapada*
(Thomas Byron translation)

You don't have to change to awaken, you only have to awaken to change.

Mark Epstein, *Going On Being*

In 2017, I posted an essay on the CPA website, entitled: 'Awakening. Further thoughts on Radical Hope'.[1] This current piece continues the theme, since waking up is absolutely central in this twenty-first century. In the original essay, I drew attention to two essential kinds of waking up: firstly, waking up to the evidence of climate change, our part in causing it, and what it means for the future of the planet; and secondly, waking up to ourselves. Perhaps it is awareness of this second form of waking up that will help us understand our denial of the first. After all, the challenge of climate change and mass extinction calls for a change in our own nature.

The focus of 'Climate Psychology', according to the CPA Handbook,[2] aims firstly to understand the defences of denial, the cultural factors that inhibit change and the difficulties individuals and groups face in negotiating change with family, friends, neighbours and colleagues. But it also highlights "the psychological resources – resilience, courage, radical hope, new forms of imagination – that support change". There is a problem with mainstream positivist psychology, which, in reducing "the human being to an object to be measured, controlled and then harnessed to the profit-making machine that now threatens our collective future", fails to offer "a deeper perspective". The CPA, in employing a 'psycho-social' approach, draws on an imaginative alliance of ideas and activists from depth-psychological and ecological sources, including "psychoanalysis, Jungian psychology, eco psychology, chaos theory, continental philosophy, eco linguistics and social theory". It also aims to "illuminate the complex two-way interaction between the personal and the political".

But is the depth of the 'depth-psychologies' – and the width of ecological awareness – deep and wide enough? Is it sufficient, for instance, to analyse our personal paralysis in the face of climate change? If climate change is a 'hyperobject' – something too big for our rational, scientific and modern minds to grasp – do we not need to call on resources that go deeper still? If our purely personal sense of agency is inadequate to meet the challenge, no wonder we deny, or fear, climate change, since it threatens to extinguish our personal identity.

A different kind of indifference

'Indifference to disaster', the subtitle of *Climate Psychology*, the collection of research papers written by CPA members and edited by Paul Hoggett,[3] may, as the CPA knows, hide an array of unconscious feelings below the surface and call for a dimension of intersubjective understanding

in all research work. But perhaps there is another level of 'indifference' that might help us face the existential dangers and empower our sense of agency at the prospect of catastrophe. What used to be called "divine, or poetic, indifference" is very different from personal indifference. On the contrary, it may be central to the psychological resources of "resilience, courage, radical hope, and new forms of imagination" that we see emerging in this new century. From a relative perspective, everything matters, every little thing; from an absolute view, nothing matters. There is a contemplative state of mind which knows – despite the horrors we are responsible for – that, in the words of the fourteenth century feminine mystic, Julian of Norwich, "all shall be well, all manner of things shall be well".

The word 'divine' summons up for the modern mind the myth of an omnipotent and intolerant God that the European Enlightenment turned its back on several centuries ago. But perhaps we need to revisit the sense of the notion of an absolute reality, from a philosophical, psychological and practical perspective. Our conventional, progressive scientific culture is blind to the idea of nature as divine or sacred but, as forms of nature ourselves, perhaps we can begin to look within our own minds for a depth of reality that goes beyond the personal, whether conscious or unconscious.

Though we in the West have a tradition that explores this kind of philosophical and psychological depth, it has historically been persecuted as heretical by the Church, or regarded as an irrational form of mysticism by modern science, unlike in Asia where it is a tradition that has been revered and cultivated. Perhaps, we in the West can learn from a tradition of introspective thought that is founded on thousands of years of experience. In fact, the immemorial tradition of spiritual knowledge is known to most of history's cultures; only our 'modern' society is asleep, or unaware of it, which connects to the way in which psychoanalysis, depth psychology, and behavioural and scientific psychologies are all essentially related to, and have emerged from, a particular cultural form and understanding of ourselves – i.e. 'the Modern'.

Contemplative and psychotherapeutic practice

Eastern and Western cultures used to be seen as very distinctive, though we can now begin to view them as part of an integrated whole. While it is sometimes difficult to see how anyone's individual life and activity can make a difference to the global problems we now face, at the level of consciousness, each of us can do more than we realise, particularly in the field of psychotherapy. Awareness is all.

The late John Welwood, the American psychotherapist and Buddhist, for instance, wrote for much of his life about the complementary nature of Asian contemplative and Western psychotherapy practices. He was drawn to the thought and practice of Buddhism in the 1960s, particularly through the writings of D.T. Suzuki and Alan Watts, and, at that time, found Western psychology and psychotherapy too narrow and limited. Later, however, he came to recognise the difference between the realisation of our sense of being in any contemplative practice and the actualisation of that being in our modern way of life.

By 'realisation', Welwood meant "the direct recognition of one's ultimate nature beyond the conventional ego" while 'actualisation' is about how we live that realisation in all the situations of our life. People can experience genuinely transformative changes as a result of an alternative course or retreat – however long or briefly – they might attend, but can find it difficult to sustain the sense of transformation when they return to their everyday life. Welwood concluded that the genuine changes have often not made sufficient difference to their sense of self, which seems to have remained intact and generates the same behaviour patterns as before.

'Spiritual bypassing'

This is partly because Western students are not always easily suited to the meditative practice and teachings of Asia. Nor is the Western psyche, with its personal and cultural problems, well understood by Eastern 'gurus' or Tibetan lamas, for instance, who may have had deep insight into the mysteries of the mind but come from a cultural world that seems to us more medieval than modern. Consequently, they sometimes fail to appreciate the personal difficulties Western

students experience on account of the culture of individualism and the concept of the individual self basic to modernity, and which can lead to a negative self-view. Welwood used the term "spiritual bypassing" to describe the attempts by Western students to practise 'spiritual' ways that are culturally foreign to them, difficulties their Asian teachers may not have appreciated:

"They (the Asian teachers) often do not understand the pervasive self-hatred, shame and guilt, as well as the alienation and lack of confidence in these students. Still less do they detect the tendency toward spiritual bypassing – a term I have coined to describe the tendency to use spiritual ideas and practices to sidestep personal, emotional 'unfinished business' to shore up a shaky sense of self, or to belittle basic needs, feelings, and developmental tasks in the name of enlightenment. And so they often teach self-transcendence to students who first need to find some ground to stand on".[4]

Clearly, this is an area where psychological work might serve as an ally to contemplative, or spiritual, practice. It would help "to bring awareness into all the hidden nooks and crannies of our conditioned personality, so that it becomes more porous, more permeable to the larger being that is its ground".

Beyond psychology

At the same time, Welwood recognises that spiritual work has "a much larger aim than psychological work". It involves "liberation from narrow identification with the self-structure altogether and awakening into the expansive reality of primordial being". Moreover, this kind of awakening can be glimpsed whether or not one is happy, healthy, psychologically integrated, individuated, or in fulfilling relationships. What Welwood was suggesting is that, prior to personal integration, "the increasingly desperate situation of a planet that humans are rapidly destroying cries out for a new kind of psycho-spiritual integration".[5]

Modern-day psychotherapists, who are also concerned about the urgent nature of climate change and ecological degradation, often wonder how their psychotherapeutic work can be relevant to the current state of things. But clearly, 'saving the planet' means little if human nature itself does not also change, since we are responsible for the crisis in the first place. In fact, psychological work can be crucial to people who wish to 'wake up'. As Buddhist psychotherapists like Welwood would say, it helps to be a functioning self before you can understand and practise "no-self".

At the same time, psychotherapy can open itself to the work of transformation and contemplative awakening by engaging with the processes of a wider integration. Conventional therapy has traditionally been viewed in the medical context of pathology, diagnosis and cure. Therapy as liberation is different; less, perhaps, about changing the content of therapeutic practice and more about practitioners themselves engaging with contemplative traditions. In doing so, a new sense of well-being in the therapist communicates itself consciously or unconsciously to patients and may well be reciprocated. Moreover, personal activism is more effective as a result of professional transformation.

The Cognitive Analytic Therapy (CAT) school is an interesting and progressive integration of cognitive and analytic approaches. Their reframing of 'object relations' as 'reciprocal roles' makes the complexity of object relations theory more understandable and practical for clients. Childhood relationships with significant others – benign or abusive – are formed internally, or reciprocally, and then taken, as a template, into adult life, conditioning future relationships. The aim of therapy is to review these reciprocal roles and 'revision' them, by way of beginning to free clients from childhood conditioning. The therapist works collaboratively and empathetically with a person to maximise the effectiveness of the therapy.[6]

What CAT and other schools of therapy don't consider, or theorise, is the template everyone is born with – the reciprocal role a person has with the whole of life, as it were, their ecological and universal inheritance. It is more ontological than purely physical or genetic and would make sense of that mystifying Zen question about the nature of the face you had before your parents conceived you. It goes by different names – destiny or karma, for instance – but points to the resourcefulness and resilience we all have beyond, and additional to, parental or family

inheritance. We may think of this as a form of soul strength, which opens us up to the infinite resources of Life with a capital L. Many therapists may be working with this potentiality, without being fully aware of it as a powerful therapeutic resource.

Awakening and Buddhism

In their introduction to *The psychology of awakening* – a book with contributions from many theorists and practitioners exploring the field of contemplative psychotherapy – the editors, Gay Watson, Stephen Batchelor and Guy Claxton (all Buddhist practitioners, as well as knowledgeable about the schools of Western psychotherapy), draw attention to the unfamiliarity of the concept of 'awakening'. What is awakening? What are we waking up from, what waking up to? Academic psychologists might question its relevance to psychology. But others, particularly outside conventional academic boundaries, would argue that psychology is also the study of mind in its widest sense, which includes study of what we think of as the soul, cognition, emotion and consciousness – individually and collectively.[7]

Buddhism, throughout its thought and practice, has always viewed psychology in this way and, as the editors write: "At this time, both practitioners of psychology and of the path of awakening realise that they have much to gain from each other."[8] As the Dalai Lama himself has always made clear, there are, in particular, two areas of dialogue between Buddhism and psychotherapy. One is the investigation of mind itself – particularly as consciousness. The other is that investigation for therapeutic reasons – how to help people live healthier, happier lives.

On the one hand, Buddhism's understanding of mind leads from orthodox science's purely objective and detached approach to reality to a science of embodiment and inter-subjectivity, as some schools of contemporary cognitive science are currently exploring. On the other, Buddhism offers, not only theory but a way: "This is a way of practice, a cultivation, a path towards change and clear sight leading to happiness, authenticity and connection." This is a path now recognised by more and more people, in all walks of life, as both profound and practical.

Nor is this a one-way relationship but a true dialogue. Interestingly, the authors ask:

"Can Western psychology's understanding of 'endarkenment' complement Buddhism's quest for enlightenment? Can scientific studies of consciousness and its relation to unconsciousness also help us to live more happily, more wisely, and can they be used in the service of spiritual progress?"[9]

The notion of 'endarkenment' presumably includes the exploration of the shadow side of psychological and social life, which the modern West has studied in depth. Shadow work, it should be remembered, leads to light, since light and shade belong together. Too much concentration on light neglects the shadow, but to remain in the shadow is to miss the light altogether.

Western natural and human science may have much to offer Buddhism, as it struggles and learns how to respond to a culture which is new and strange to it. Historically, Buddhism's success in transforming other cultures has been in tolerating and understanding the nature and cultural habits of other peoples. It does so by learning wisely from them, rather than controlling and dominating. In that way it transforms itself. With respect to the modern culture of the West, Buddhism is the one 'religion' not intimidated by Western science. Indeed, the one great contribution it can offer us is the science of mind, in its widest and most liberated sense.

What we can learn from Asia

There are three concepts, in particular, that Asian thought – including Buddhism – can bring to Western science and which we would do well to think about. These are the realities of 'emptiness', 'non-duality' and *buddha nature*.

'Emptiness', as a translation of the Sanskrit term, *sunyata*, can be difficult to understand, and even intimidating to the positivist Western mind, because of its supposed material association with 'void', abyss, or emptiness as vacuity. In fact, it describes the mind, but also implies a world

which extends our human consciousness to an awareness of space, openness, infinite possibility and fulness. It is the 'emptiness' of apparent forms – including the human personality – which are actually an expression of the infinite and ineffable reality, or spirit, that lies within them. It points to Life in its absolute essence. Hence the paradoxical notion of emptiness as a fulness. It is the 'modern' failure to understand that its own creativity is an expression of this absolute Life, or emptiness, that has led to the current global crisis, and the hopelessness and despair we feel because of it.

'Non-duality' – *advaita*, or 'not-two' – is based on an understanding of the unity of all things. We tend to think dualistically in terms of opposites as simply opposed, rather than also as complementary, though our poetic traditions know otherwise. William Blake, for instance, acknowledged that "without contraries there is no progress", but he also knew they were a continuum – the contrary of contraries. His celebrated one-line proverbs in *The marriage of heaven and hell* – "Eternity is in love with the productions of time" or "One thought fills immensity" and, likewise, the famous "Auguries of Innocence" – share his sense that the small is as full of significance as the great:

To see the world in a grain of sand,
And a heaven in a wild flower,
Hold infinity in the palm of your hand,
And eternity in an hour.

As a poet, Blake expressed the spirit of what the eminent writer on mysticism, Evelyn Underhill, called "the unitive life", a phrase which, in our own mystical traditions, captures the Eastern spirit of advaita, or non-duality.[10]

The third principle we would do well to think about – particularly the psychological professions – is that of *buddha nature*, which simply means awakened human nature. This has been characterised in Asia as 'original sinlessness', basic goodness or, even, perfection, despite, or including, all our flaws and imperfections. This suggests we have a source of infinite resilience within, if we know how to look for it, or simply trust that it is so.

This is in contrast to the Christian Church's heritage of sin and sinfulness that has too often characterised our religious life and left its mark on our psychological and psychoanalytic traditions. In addition to the importance of understanding and learning from emotions such as guilt, shame and grief and the feelings of hatred, malice and envy, Buddhism, for instance, also teaches about 'bliss' and the joy of living, qualities that were less understood, and appreciated, by pessimistic enthusiasts such as Schopenhauer and even Nietzsche, despite having written, *The gay science*, Shakyamuni Buddha taught the truth of the cessation of suffering, as well as its inescapability. Grief and joy are often close to each other and sometimes it is impossible to tell tears of either apart. The key to buddha nature is about turning your life into the cultivation of a practice. Today we might think of this as 'mindful' activity; awareness of one's better nature in whatever we do.

The importance of values

Another way of challenging our dualistic mind is to think in terms of values rather than ideological positions. There are three main value spheres – morality (ethics), science (truth) and aesthetics (art) – three values rather than the axis of two opposing stances of dualistic thinking. The three are a unity. Science, for instance, is also an imaginative art, as well as a quest for truth, and is best guided by an ethical truthfulness and political sensitivity. Equally, psychotherapy is both an art and a science, and should be based on ethics in its individual and social focuses.

The greatest value is the unity of each person's heart and mind. Buddhists declare that the experience of body, speech and mind in each of us has a universal quality. We all have a potential for pursuing the Good, the True and the Beautiful, however they are conceived and felt. The personal is the political, is the scientific, is the sublime, is the universal.

The Buddhist writer, David Loy, called the 'great awakening' the most important development in human consciousness,[11] evident in the increasing number of books and writings about it in current times. Sam Harris, the neuroscientist and best-selling author, for instance, wrote about "the mystery of consciousness" and "the riddle of the self" in his book about the contemporary spiritual search,*Waking up.* The book is, predictably, a polemic against traditional religion, which, in his view, can put our minds to sleep, but it's also a clarion call to awaken to our true nature. In his concluding chapter, he writes:

"It is within our capacity to recognise the nature of thoughts, to awaken from the dream of being merely ourselves and, in this way, to become better able to contribute to the well-being of others."[12]

Freud opened the twentieth century, as it were, with *The interpretation of dreams*, though he also conceived of a solid scientific reality this side of our dreams. By contrast, the twenty-first century is redefining reality in an immaterial as well as material sense. Buddhism has always thought of life as a bubble or a dream, as have Shakespeare and the poets – "we are such stuff as dreams are made of" – and now we are all waking up to the dream, which, for many, also seems like a nightmare.

At the same time, we are awakening to a new sense of self and to an awareness of the difference between who we take ourselves to be and who we really are. This awakening is crucial to the political and existential crises of our times. If the strategies of the left and the true populism – the authentic ethic of the common people, the heart of democracy – are to prevail against the rich, the corrupt, the vulgar and the elite, then a psychology of an awakened consciousness is essential to its success. Human nature, itself, will always be flawed. Reforming humanity is a Sisyphean task.

But there is, within our flawed nature, a seed of wisdom and goodness, a sense of shared identity that goes beyond the individual self, a solidarity that is known as buddha (awakened) nature. In my view, this is the key to democracy. Solidarity extends beyond our relations with one another. It has an ecological dimension, but also a sense that the spirit of ecology is to be found within each of us. We are a part of nature. Nature and culture are not distinct but an interconnected unity. Human culture is an expression of the whole universe.

The German philosopher, Martin Heidegger, suggested that the ecological dangers we now face mean the question of Being – who we are and "that we are" – is only too timely and that the prospect of our extinction raises these fundamental ontological questions for us in a new and urgent form. This is reflected in the teachings of the twentieth-century Indian sage, Sri Ramana Maharshi, who taught radical self-enquiry. For Ramana, the essence of meditation was to take oneself as the object and continually to ask the question: "Who am I?" This invitation to a new self-discovery may not guarantee our survival of climate change or the achievement of global social justice, but it will enhance our chances, and, at the same time, give us an experience of ourselves as the timeless and absolute beings we also are.

Footnotes

1. See the 'Papers' section of Explorations. This is also posted on my own website.
2. See the Handbook in the CPA website.
3. Hoggett, P. (2019) (Ed.). *Climate psychology: on indifference to disaster.* London: Palgrave Macmillan.
4. The article and quotes I draw on are from Welwood, J. (1999). Realisation and embodiment: psychological work in the service of spiritual development. In Watson, G., Batchelor, S. and Claxton, G. (1999) (Eds.). *The psychology of awakening: Buddhism, science and our day-to-day lives*, p.150. London: Rider. See also Welwood, J. (2002). *Toward a psychology of awakening: Buddhism, psychotherapy, and the path of personal transformation*. Boulder, Colorado: Shambhala Publications.
5. Welwood, J. (1999). Realisation and embodiment: psychological work in the service of spiritual

development. In Watson, G., Batchelor, S. and Claxton, G. (1999) (Eds.). *The psychology of awakening: Buddhism, science and our day-to-day lives*, p.143. London: Rider.

6. See Corbridge, C., Brummer, L., and Coid, P. (2018). *Cognitive Analytic Therapy.* Abingdon: Routledge.

7. Watson, G., Batchelor, S. and Claxton, G. (1999) (Eds.). *The psychology of awakening: Buddhism, science and our day-to-day lives.* London: Rider.

8. Ibid., p.vii.

9. Ibid., p.viii.

10. Underhill, E. (2020). *Mysticism.* Overland Park, Kansas: Digireads.com Publishing.

11. Loy, D. (2003). *The great awakening: a Buddhist social theory.* Boston: Wisdom.

12. Harris, S. (2015). *Waking up: searching for spirituality without religion.* London: Black Swan, p. 206.

CLIMATE PSYCHOLOGY & DEEP ADAPTATION

Written by Adrian Tait

Published: 30 March 2021

Co-founder of Climate Psychology Alliance, Adrian Tait, has recently contributed a chapter to a new book edited by Jem Bendell and Rupert Read called Deep Adaptation: Navigating the Realities of Climate Chaos, in which he explores the relevance climate psychology has to Deep Adaptation. The following is a piece that Adrian has written based on that chapter:

It was an honour to be invited to contribute a chapter for Jem Bendell and Rupert Read's forthcoming book *Deep Adaptation: Navigating the Realities of Climate Chaos.* It provided a welcome opportunity to explore the connections between Climate Psychology and the Deep Adaptation project.

In the twelve years since the Climate Psychology Alliance (CPA) first started to form, much has changed and much hasn't. Some of the change has been interactive – CPA has been on a collective journey through the psycho-social landscape of the climate - and ecological crisis, spotting and attaching names to its features: denial, grief, radical hope, cultural complexes, therapy for our times and so on. My chapter goes into all these. The landscape, both physical and cultural, has itself been changing, sometimes subtly, sometimes dramatically.

One defining purpose of CPA is the need for alliances – not just operational links and collaborations (important as these are) but deep-seated respect, mutual support, the love and sense of inter-dependence which arises from a common cause that transcends all of us in its magnitude. The co-operation between CPA and the Deep Adaptation Forum is a prime example of mutually supportive alliance. CPA has been able to share some perspectives from depth psychology as well as offering therapeutic backup. Deep Adaptation for its part helped to galvanise CPA's therapeutic aspirations and has done much to advance the core value embodied in our strapline: *Facing Difficult Truths.* Jem Bendell's 2018 Deep Adaptation paper gave focus to the warnings from climate science, challenged the taboo around the spectre of collapse and contributed to a shift in public awareness. That shift has, in turn, seen a widening and intensification of climate activism across groups and generations, although this has been constrained by the Covid-19 episode. Extinction Rebellion has played a big part in that.

Not surprisingly, there remains much resistance to discussing collapse, even amongst people who are otherwise allies. But its currency as a topic has, I suggest, done some much needed peeling-away of widespread disavowal. To modify the famous words of Yeb Sano after Super Typhoon Haiyan hit the Philippines in 2013 we, collectively, are all too adept at responding to climate chaos and ecosystem collapse with a proverbial, "Yes, yes, but not me, not now, not here."

At the heart of the common cause in climate and ecological awareness and action is the need to care better – for each other and for the greater-than-human world. Deep Adaptation is steeped in the psychotherapeutic and spiritual insight that we should not project our own failings and weakness onto others. But this emphasis on self-awareness must not blind us to the fact that a key reason why our alliances are important is that we face determined and resourceful opponents with strikingly different values from our own. We have to steer clear of "holier than thou" positions and at the same time recognise the thoroughly unholy alliance between petro-states like Russia and Saudi Arabia, the Murdoch Press and Trumpism. There is credible evidence for instance that, in a shift from hard denial to deflection and division, cyber-warfare is playing an increasing role in undermining the coherence of the climate movement. There is a public tide in favour of climate awareness, but we can't afford a repeat of the complacency following the award of a Nobel Peace Prize to Al Gore and the IPCC in 2007.

We have a tricky line to walk. As Deep Adaptation insists, the time is long gone when we could accept the narrative that all will be well if we just see the error of our ways and take sensible steps to correct them. But the message that we are really not above Nature, that the consumerist high emissions party must end (and the longer it lasts the messier the ending will be) remains a very hard sell. Entitlement and heavy footprint aspirations are so deeply embedded in our culture. Maybe it's out of our hands and we are over the long slow cliff already. Maybe zoonotic viruses or a pollution-induced collapse in human fertility will finally halt the rampage of the more greedy members of Homo Sapiens. Such blunt instruments would hardly correct the gross social injustices which are ensuing from climate and ecological decay, but they might at least herald in a re-stabilization of Earth Systems over the coming millennia. And maybe we can draw on Deep Adaptation to find a humbler, more stable way of sharing what's left of our planetary home.

Rupert Read's and Jem Bendell's book should help to give some fresh encouragement to those of us striving to find a sane and real perspective on where we are at this point in Earth's history and our own.

Adrian Tait.

28th February 2021.

The book is available to buy here.

ECO-ANXIETY, THERAPY AND THE ZONE OF ENCOUNTER

Written by Kelvin Hall

Published: 20 April 2021

The following quotations, from a variety of sources, portray in differing ways the essential but often unconscious bond between human and other life forms.

To be human, they imply, is to be in contact with non-human life to an extent which is not just close, but amounts to a mutual interpenetration of being:

"People aren't the apex species they think they are. Other creatures – bigger, smaller, slower, faster, older, younger, more powerful – call the shots, make the air, and eat sunlight. Without them, nothing." (Powers, 2018, p.356)

"You are a fully embodied being who has never separated from other biological beings both inside and outside your body, not for one second. You are sensitively attuned to everything happening in your world, which is why you end up blocking some of it, because you are afraid the stimulation might be too intense" (Morton, 2013, p.214)

"Life is a kind of unit… all one tissue in which things live through or by means of each other. Therefore trees cannot be without animals, nor animals without plants, and perhaps animals cannot be without man, and man cannot be without animals and plants." (Jung, 2008, p.207)

"The right hemisphere pays attention to the Other, whatever it is that exists apart from ourselves, with which it sees itself in profound relation. It is deeply attracted to, and given life by, the relationship, the betweenness, that exists with this other… We need the ability to make fine discriminations, and to use reason appropriately. But these contributions need to be made in the service of something else, that only the right hemisphere can bring." (MacGilchrist, 2010, p.93)

Motivated by such perceptions, I have, for the last 14 years or so, been advocating a version of psychotherapy which features *dialogic meeting* between human and other-than-human beings. Various fellow-explorers in the therapy profession have been engaged in the same venture. Among therapy modalities, this *zone of encounter* is particularly emphasised in animal-assisted or outdoor therapy approaches, but is by no means exclusive to them. My position has much in common with other writers and practitioners in the eco-therapy field. Other recent publications in this field include Duncan (2018), Jordan and Hinds (2016) and Rust (2020). The work of outdoor psychotherapist Ruth Allen received media attention recently in the form of a Radio Four 'Ramblings' feature (14 March 2020).The lineage stretches back at least to the work of Harold Searles (1960). Here I want to emphasise the significance of the zone of encounter as a resource in response to eco-anxiety and the role of psychotherapy in enabling this to be realised, and I will focus explicitly on that aspect in one of the following sections. This zone of encounter, which I will also illustrate later, features both in the content of therapy, for example, as a thread in biography which can be marginalised or validated, and in the process of therapy – as a source of powerful intervention by, say, animals or weather.

Featuring this zone can begin in the initial client interview; if, for instance, the therapist simply asks whether any other-than-human connections are important in the client's story. It can continue with the therapist offering careful attention to the appearance of such connections in the content of sessions; or with the therapist including in the process the actions of other-than-human beings as meaningful interventions. The latter is exemplified particularly clearly in equine-assisted therapy sessions, but can also happen spontaneously even in more conventional indoor sessions.

Consensus

Central to this prioritising of the zone of encounter is the now widespread notion that connection to nature helps us to recover from the mindset that has fuelled climate change, as well as enhancing our overall wellness and resilience. In the 2020 Academy Award ceremony, Hollywood actor Joaquin Phoenix felt able to spotlight the idea on a high-profile, mainstream cultural platform:

"I think that we've become very disconnected from the natural world and many of us, what we're guilty of, is an egocentric world view, the belief that we're at the centre of the universe. We go into the natural world and plunder its resources. We feel entitled to artificially inseminate a cow and when she gives birth we steal her baby, even though her cries of anguish are unmistakeable...."

Several books on climate emergency arrive at this point, for instance Sally Weintrobe (2012, p.206-207) advocates:

"A landscape.... shared between self and other humans and between self and non-human species... this common ground supports feelings of empathy, humanness and solidarity with other life forms, particularly in relation to issues of life and death."

Practitioners such as Mary Jayne Rust have spoken about such connection frequently. The now considerable consensus on this is exemplified in recent quotes from *The New Psychotherapist.* Ros Coward (2019) paraphrases Mary Jayne Rust:

"The challenge of climate change and the destruction of nature require a 'sea change' in psychotherapy's and psychotherapists' whole relation to nature. For example, she now accepts that humans can and do have deep attachments to the natural world and other species as they do to humans. If this comes into the consulting room, instead of approaching these attachments as metaphoric, she allows them their full place and meaning.... 'we need now to find a language about the relationship with the non-human world'."

Radhika Holmstom (2019) quotes Caroline Hickman:

"There is a transformational possibility if we move to a place of reconnection to the natural world... recognising that we are part of nature and engaging with our dependence on nature."

It is important to stress, at the same time, that definitions of 'connection' and 'nature' are open to considerable debate. Some have argued that we are never actually disconnected from nature – indeed that our search for security, comfort and longevity through technology is entirely natural:

"...it is the pre-human, other-than-human emotions in us, the instinctual ones we share with other species, that are fuelling ecological breakdown." (Maiteny, 2012, p.48)

From this perspective, as Maiteny proposes, human culture can be seen as nature's aspiration towards meaning. Nevertheless, as subjective perception of an authentic occurrence, both connection and disconnection can be intensely felt. I elaborate what I mean by the *experience* of connection, and the variety of forms this takes, at length, in writing and presentations elsewhere. (Hall, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2018). There I propose that this experience of connection can be cultivated and developed, and explore how to do this. Below I offer a summary of my thinking on this before attempting an amplification of its relevance to the phenomenon of climate and eco-anxiety.

The zone

In this zone of encounter, humans experience a high degree of lucid 'conversational' exchange with many other forms of life. This is often marked by mutual regard and understanding, empathy and various forms of sharing. This is a very *direct experience* of the reciprocal bonds which exist between life forms, the concept recurrently evoked in the current wave of ecological activism. For instance, on being arrested during a demo in London in autumn 2019, Extinction Rebellion founder Gail Bradbrook publicly referred to a particular ancient tree, well-known to her, for whose sake, she said, she was acting. The spectrum of the zone includes empathic, relational and therapeutic gestures across species, such as a dog who seems to respond to his carer's depression, or the kingfisher who, in Mark Cocker's (2012) account, visited a bereaved mother in the midst of her grief; also instances of 'I – thou' or intersubjective mutual attention, such as Martin Buber's celebrated horse meeting (1947, p.26). It includes functional partnership, signifying shared intention or endeavour (e.g. the recent collaboration between human and spaniel to find and save koala bears from Australian bush fires). In addition, it includes stranger phenomena such as 'shape-shifting' in which a human feels that they become the other and know their perceptions and sensations. Helen MacDonald (2014, p.195) vividly describes her alarm that, after months of sharing her life with a hawk, she was becoming one. I have also heard many cases of such 'shape-shifting' occurring spontaneously – for instance to a dog-owner in the middle of a routine walk. For some individuals, these various phenomena arise as readily with plant-life as they do for others with animal life. Herbalist Nathan Hughes has described this extensively in his books such as *Weeds in the heart* (2016). Even when my therapy sessions have been indoors, there have been important moments of inter-action with insects, domestic cats and sunbeams – and many other forms of life. Often these have occurred as if they were a comment on the client's ongoing issues, which has made them particularly memorable.

Comparing many accounts of such meetings – from published writings, research interviews and chance conversations – it is possible to identify conditions, moods and attitudes which favour entry to this zone. Among them are: grief; being lost (literally or metaphorically); childhood

openness; clear intention; species affinity; and a sense of the culture of the other (e.g. knowing the difference between a snake who is claiming respect for their space by adopting a 'threatening' posture, and one who is actually going into the attack). Sometimes the zone is opened up by trauma in childhood, or crisis in adult life. Paradoxically, it is also sometimes closed down through trauma such as the loss of a secure home. There are also modes of perception particularly conducive to entering the zone, and these include peripheral (rather than 'tunnel') vision, and awareness of contact boundaries over distance. Any of the aforementioned items warrant exploration at length, but some of them are exemplified in the following anecdote:

A family were in the mangrove swamps in Florida and the parents, who were particularly loose about such matters, let a small boy wander off. Eventually, they realised they didn't know where he was and went searching for him. They searched for a long time and were getting worried, when they came across him sitting quietly by the edge of the water.

They said, "Are you all right? Have you been worried that we wouldn't find you?" and he replied, "No, I've had a friend with me all this time," and he pointed down into the water.

They looked, and for the first time they saw the fully-grown alligator which was floating, still, on the surface. Very carefully and very quietly they beckoned him away. But ever after, he has felt comfortable in the proximity of reptiles and, in adult life, spends much time with them.

To give another example, the following incident happened to me a few years ago:

After I had given a talk on the human/other encounter, a woman in the audience told the following story. Soon after spending time with a famous animal communicator, she was in her garden. A blackbird was perched nearby. Managing to put doubt aside, she held in her mind a clear intention and image, that the bird would come to her lap. The bird then flew onto her lap and stayed there for some moments. That was her story.

But the next day I was sitting in my garden thinking over the sequence of events I have just described. As I did so, I suddenly felt something grasp my hair. I roused from my contemplation, startled, and saw a robin fluttering away from the top of my head, which was where he had alighted as I sat there thinking about the blackbird who had landed on the woman's lap. A sense of wonder, and a host of speculations interpreting this sequence of events, filled me.

Experiences in this zone often have a profoundly restorative and stabilising effect on humans, and this can be utilised when they are integrated into therapy. In an earlier article (2018), I referred to a woman who was "drowning in grief" and for whom the visit of a young fox to her garden helped her to feel that she still had a place in the world. At the time of writing that article, I did not know the sequel to this. The woman underwent another existential and relationship crisis later in life. This was triggered by some critical comments from a friend and then from a partner, which made her feel deeply isolated and inclined towards withdrawal from life and human contact. These arose against the background of a new bereavement – the loss of a beloved dog:

A parallel process then arose when her therapist, with whom she was working outdoors, made some comments which she heard as critical, and she came close to leaving the therapy. He offered the perception that, rather than rejections, such exchanges can be seen as attempts to achieve a fuller meeting, and can be responded to as such (invitations or opportunities for fuller meeting). She realised that it was possible to make a choice, and was on the verge of deciding to re-commit to the therapy. At exactly that moment, a very large fox entered the meadow, stopped about five yards from where they sat, and stared at the two humans, before eventually moving on. The effect of this was profound. Particularly in the light of her previous fox experience, it was as if she received a message of welcoming and encouraging, and affirmation of her belonging. Following this, she did indeed re-engage with therapy and her personal relationships.

I have arrived at some hypotheses as to why these moments can seem so powerful. One is that the behaviour of the animal is seen as more spontaneously authentic and congruent than that of many humans, for example the therapist who has a professional obligation to be supportive. The non-verbal dimension carries echoes of the pre-verbal world, which has, as Daniel Stern (1995, p.176; 2004, p.144) suggests, a pristine quality which is lost as consciousness develops in the child and experience is qualified by language. We are in the realm of 'implicit relational knowing'

– exchange unmediated by words, in a liminal place between the 'non-conscious' and 'lived story'. The 'positive mirroring' (Kohut, 2013, p.197) which the human receives, touches the heart to a degree which can seem to go beyond ordinary human communication and to carry great significance. The same applies when the animal performs other 'self-object functions', such as modelling behaviour which offers the human an example worth emulating (Kohut's 'idealising'). There is also the possibility that in such encounters we renew an intimacy with the living world which was lost through dislocation in previous generations, and through the increasing technological sophistication of human society.

All this means that such moments often have a wondrous and invigorating quality. Humans are in the *present moment* (Stern, 2004), an immediacy which clears away all superfluous and distracting thought. This is a relief from anxiety and a refreshment of our resources. Renewing contact with the natural world on re-locating in later life, David Hamblin (2007, p17) was unequivocal about the benefits:

"The effect on my psychological health has been great. From my windows I can see the trees and the fields; at night I can see the stars. I can walk in the countryside and breathe the clean air. I am aware of the seasons as never before. I feel happy, in a way that would not have been possible before."

Others describe a 'homecoming' which is more clearly a way of being than a place of dwelling. But the sense of restoration is just as strong, if not stronger. Ruth Tudor (2014, p.15) comments on moments of connection she experiences with horses:

"In those moments when mutuality is gained I lose sense of my ego and have a sense of the ecological self as whole and expanded.... It is the best feeling in the world!"

Although living in contemporary England, Ffyona Campbell (2012) nevertheless managed to feed herself entirely by foraging. She wrote:

"The world and everything in it became so beautiful to me in ways I had never seen before and all I could do was just stand there and letting it flood through me, filling me with wonder as though I was physically drinking in the magic around me..."

Lest I fall into the trap of promoting a sanitised version of nature, I might also mention other and very different encounters: the time when I found a decomposing tumour hanging from the underside of a horse, infested with wriggling maggots – parasites on a parasite; or the time I watched a cat repeatedly pounce on an already injured mouse, simply for the pleasure of doing so. But for me these only emphasise that if we seek to discover or renew intimacy with nature, we must countenance many differing and contrasting aspects. Indeed, climate change itself is an example of this on a vast scale. It is important, therefore, if we are to achieve a mature relationship with the living world, to countenance such events.

Furthermore, the way we perceive them is often deeply subjective. This is well illustrated by contrasting, varied, human perspectives on contact between predator and prey. On the one hand, David Attenborough (2016) states:

"…you must not pretend that animals don't feel pain. You mustn't pretend that an antelope just lay down and died and allowed itself to be eaten by a lion.... it's a messy, horrible business."

He is echoed by film-maker Benedict Allen (2011), describing in graphic detail the pitiless, agonised and lingering death of a zebra killed by lions:

"...the zebra often takes an hour to die once struck by the lion – they lie in agony, being consumed by the pride while groaning and pumping out blood. It is unedifying – and far too long. So the story has to be shaped and we understand that."

Barry Lopez (1978) and Ffyona Campbell (2012) seem to do the very thing Attenborough censures. The former writes of "a mythic contract acknowledged when wolf meets prey" (ibid., 93). He describes moments which suggest there is a dialogue leading to the death of the oldest, or sickest or most willing. He cites wolves abandoning the pursuit of particular caribou following gestures of refusal from the latter, whereas moose or caribou who are already ailing make

themselves particularly conspicuous to the wolves. He summarises by calling these transactions "a ceremonial exchange". He is careful to couch these observations in the language of speculation. Ffyona Campbell is less cautious. She writes:

"When an animal is hunted, adrenaline and euphoria wipe out the pain: At the point of capture, the animal experiences the most amount of adrenaline it can ever have and so the euphoria and lack of pain make it rise into heaven."

If we are to renew our covenant with other life, we may have to embrace paradox and contradiction. In spite of such divergences as that between Attenborough and Campbell, the assurance with which individuals can discover in the zone a sense of wellness and belonging is striking. Indeed, some people, for example Charlie Russell (2003) or Shaun Ellis (2010), actually experience this while in very close contact with our planet's most formidable predators. This restorative and stabilising effect, so eloquently voiced by Tudor and Campbell above, is particularly relevant to the issue of climate anxiety and the role of therapy in responding to it. It is especially appropriate in this context since it enables the individual to honour the pact which the climate emergency implies is broken. In the following section, I amplify this point.

Why being in the zone matters in a time of eco-emergency

The phenomenon of eco-anxiety is not actually new, but has come increasingly to the fore recently. In about 2009, I had a client who told me that the onset of depression in his life was triggered by the information delivered by his teacher in secondary school about the multiple threats to the environment posed by human activity. He told me it was his firm belief that much current anxiety and depression in the wider population actually had that origin. At the time, there was no objective evidence to support his perception, but in the last few years such unease has been voiced widely and in many different media. In a recent post on the CPA network, a correspondent wrote that he'd spent time as a client with two therapists, hoping for help with the distress he'd felt deeply as the implications of the climate crisis had sunk in. But neither of them seemed to him to recognise that the distress was justified, and this increased his despair.

Other therapists, though, have come to the firm conclusion that alarm is a sane and realistic response to the signals we receive from the natural world and the information we receive from the media. In recent months, with another of my clients, this has been one of the most prominent and recurrent threads in the work. She fears for herself and her children in an era of extreme weather events, the breakdown of society, and loss of food supplies. We have examined the history of trauma and dread in her biography and scrutinised the way these may colour her current reactions. Nevertheless, she is also adamant that she receives consolation from my support for her perception of the ecological dangers as real likelihoods. Her conviction motivates her to active participation in Extinction Rebellion campaigns and other forms of social initiative, such as setting up a network prioritising local community co-operation and mutual support. This approach to therapy means that I have to tolerate my own fears being present in the room when we work, as well as hers. At the same time, in such cases, I also look for opportunities to approach the zone of encounter. My reasons are the following:

1. If (and I am aware that this can be contested) the climate emergency is a symptom of our forgetting our interdependence with the natural world – a sign of our alienation from that world – then the *experience* of connection (not just the *idea* of it) represents a re-balancing towards an intimate knowing of the Earth (not just an abstract valuing of it). If the climate emergency does actually indicate a human society which has lost its sense of mutuality between life forms, and if that loss results in anxiety and distress, then this approach promises to reinstate quality of relationship between life forms as a felt experience. This is a step towards a change of values and priorities which must come about if we are to respond to the emergency, towards building *a culture of dialogic respect* for other life. Such a culture would, if it became widespread, guard against the ecological atrocities of the kind which have marred our

recent history .On his *Patterns of meaning* website, Jeremy Lent (2019) argues persuasively that, in spite of the gravity of the climate threat and the low expectations for our future which the scientific data definitely implies, trying to build an ecological culture is still valid.

2. The experience of (re)connection is deeply fulfilling in itself and an *antidote to addictive consumerism*. It is full of relational and therapeutic subtleties. It offers vital refreshment from eco-anxiety (as well as other anxieties). As well as testimony like that above, from Hamblin and others, Lucy Jones's book *Losing Eden*, just published (2020), gives a detailed first-hand account of her move from substance addiction to immersion in nature. One of the reasons is that, as I describe in my previous references to Stern, the latter offers full engagement in *the present moment*, and this is deeply refreshing.

3. There is a huge body of writing now which substantiates the beinghood and relational sophistication of the natural world. *That world warrants and is entitled to* our recognition of its soulfulness and responsiveness. Among the now copious literature supporting this view are the work of Wohlleben (2014, 2016) on trees and animals as social beings, Meijer (2020) on the range of communication methods ('languages') in the animal world, and veterinarian Caroline Ingraham, (2014) on the capacity of animals to self-medicate with great accuracy.

4. Political activism can support this recognition when it is seen as a *relational act of recognition towards the natural world*, and not just a demand for (say) legislation about the natural world. Activism can relieve anxiety by reducing the sense of helplessness, and the role of the therapist may be to encourage activism. It may also be to support recovery from the burnout which activism can easily bring.

5. If we and our world are going up in flames or drowning in floodwaters, I have the choice of being *with* it, rather than still behaving as if separate from it, *whether or not that makes a change to the final outcome.* Of course, there may be something absurd about extolling the wonder of mutuality, when the other party (and of course ourselves) is on the verge of calamity or extinction.

However, this also may take us towards a spiritual sphere of relational connection, beyond the usual perceptions of time, space and what is gainful. This dimension is conveyed for me in the extraordinary story which a colleague narrated to me a few years ago. Whether it is factually true, which I've been unable to verify, is less important than what it evokes. Although the events of the story are confined to the human sphere, it seems to me that parallels can be drawn with the relationship between human and other in a time of extinctions:

A nun who was a prisoner in a Nazi concentration camp witnessed a column of other inmates being herded to the gas chambers. Among them was a child, distraught and alone. The nun was not due for extermination, but she chose to join the column, take the child by the hand and comfort them, passing into the gas chamber with them.

In a way, this is an absurd gesture which didn't save either of them. In another way, this was a gesture of the deepest compassion and soulfulness. I can offer another relevant image from my own practice, which arose from a session which contrasted greatly with the bucolic quality of some equine and outdoor therapy sessions.

A woman once contacted me wishing to experience equine-assisted therapy. I arranged to meet with her, but on the day of our first meeting there were fierce winds, and a dust cloud, blown up from the Sahara, turned the sun over Western England deep red. It looked apocalyptic and people afterwards referred half-jokingly to that day as "the End of the World". We persisted with

our meeting and had an initial discussion in a secluded meadow where I often work, before taking a short walk to the next field, where the horses were. But the first one we came to was lying on the ground with his teeth bared, evidently in considerable discomfort. In fact, as became clear later, the horse was dying. It was suffering from severe colic on top of a stroke some days previously. Emergency care for the horse became the top priority. We spent time sending messages to the horse's carers and vet; but we also offered the horse the full measure of our company and attention. When the time came for the session's end, I suggested that the client leave while I waited for the vet (I later notified the client of the horse's death). Hypothetically then, this could have been a disastrous first session. But actually it was the beginning of a year's intense work on connection with animals, underpinned by the realities of death and the limitations of time. It seemed to me that the urgency of our attempts to respond to and accompany the dying horse on that first day gave the rest of our work a rare intensity.

Loss and restoration

In point 1) above I alluded to the profound sense of loss which many people are voicing. While the enormity of the current emergency may be unprecedented, the loss of *ecos* (home) which is looming for all of us has many resonances in past history and contemporary biography. These historical and biographical narratives feature the loss of both geographical location and the zone of encounter as a feature of human belonging. They reach back at least as far as the end of the Paleolithic age. Again, the extent to which there was a collective loss can be contested. On the one hand, Steve Taylor (2005) is very specific in his claim that human culture only became hierarchical, exploitative and aggressive following a disruptive climate event which brought the hunter-gatherer phase to an end. On the other, Adam Thorpe (2014) is more doubtful about the joys of our prehistoric conditions. He acknowledges some of the merits there may have been in a physically active, outdoor way of life, but adds:*"pain they had: torn-off kneecaps, bad teeth, the lot"* (ibid., p.109), and continues,*"We have no idea how women were treated in prehistory..."* and*"infant mortality has been calculated at 50 per cent."* He also asks,*"Were the bullies in charge, or the wise, clear-sighted priestly ones?"*

He concludes that, probably, it varied from place to place.

Yet the narratives of dislocation and loss are many and varied. Another arises in the work of cultural historian Adam Nicolson (2008). His historical focus is much later and more local. According to his thesis, in the period following the Black Death certain regions of rural England basked in a state of 'mutuality' in which all thrived, such that Lord Clarendon (writing of this time two centuries later) dubbed it "the garden of the world" (ibid., p. 218). This was brought to a devastating end by the Civil Wars. There followed the impoverishment of the labouring classes – so graphically illustrated in William Cobbett's (1830) eyewitness accounts in the 19th century – the changes towards more mechanised production and the depopulation of the land. Both the Arcadian phase and the decline are meticulously documented in Nicolson's account, from sources such as parish records, and this lends the narrative much credibility.

The several waves of enclosure in Britain, when common lands were fenced off to enable landlords to graze large flocks of sheep, deprived country dwellers of grazing, foraging, firewood and wandering rights; they therefore also lost personal engagement with their surroundings. Likewise, the Highland clearances of the 18th century (in which – according to some accounts – whole populations were forcibly removed to towns or to America) left an imprint of anguish and bitterness.

Moving even closer to our own day, Helen Macdonald (2014, pp.103-104) describes a sense of collective loss behind the widespread popularity of country walking in the thirties. According to Macdonald, ramblers:

"were looking for a mystical communion with the land; they walked backwards in time to an imagined past suffused with magical, native glamour: to Merrie England, or to prehistoric England, pre-industrial visions that offered solace and safety to sorely troubled minds."

Many of us must carry in our family history events like these; variations on the theme of lost connection. They may indeed have been handed down to subsequent generations in the guise of

unspecified anger, grief and longing. If the 19ᵗʰ century Irish famine and emigration is part of one's heritage, if one has African or Asian roots reaching back into times of slavery or colonialism, the inheritance of dislocation may be even more extreme. For the refugees and migrants of the present day, of course, the reality of dislocation is all too literal and immediate.

Moreover, within the biography of numerous contemporary individuals, there is a personal parallel to the historical narrative. Many people I've interviewed are adamant that profound connection and fluent exchange with their natural surroundings was normal for them in childhood, up to a certain age. Although this seems to be contradicted by some academic researchers in interviews with children and observation of children's behaviour, it does have some correspondence with Daniel Stern's account of childhood development, in which a complete immersion in the world becomes increasingly censored by conformity to the adult view (Stern, 1995, p.176 and 2004, p.144). Jerome Bernstein (2005, p.87) specifies that "borderland consciousness" – a profound identification with the natural world – prevails for children before six or seven years *"unless they are shamed or cognitively yanked out of it".*

One woman I interviewed remembers the *"ecstasy"* brought on by changes in the light and the wind as she looked out over the Weald of Kent in early childhood. She would wander freely and make dens. Then her family moved to inner-city Glasgow when she was aged ten, and there was a sudden and traumatic loss of all this. She spent decades finding her way back to a landscape in which she could immerse herself, the loss becoming a defining event in her life. Another remembers the time when *"everything was connected".* A third woman recounted her earliest memory; she was lifting earthworms to her lips, immersed in the sensual thrill of the contact. But she also remembers the anxious cry of "Stop her!" yelled from one parent to the other, who was at that moment in closer proximity to the child. She then recalls a childhood in which the natural world was kept distant and was regarded as a threat to cleanliness and order. Jane Goodall, (May, 2016) somewhat likewise, recalls being discovered as a toddler, in bed with a handful of earthworms, and sees this as a precursor to a lifetime's fellowship with animals, but one in which she had to argue resolutely for the validity of their emotional life, and therefore their soulful connection with us.

If humans maintain the ability to enter the zone, this may preserve something of value on which to eventually build a wiser future for our species. But even if that is far too optimistic, entering the zone can retrieve present time from total submergence in fear, anxiety and the losses of past or future. It can offer an image of restoration which is deeply heartening *whether or not* it ever actually changes the future. In cases where present time itself consists of trauma, as with the distraught child or the dying horse earlier, the existential decision to remain in the zone carries even more profound implications, and goes, I think, beyond the realm which words can adequately describe.

Postscript: Thoughts on climate action and dialogic relationship

If my underlying thesis is correct, if what these times require is quality of relationship with the Earth, then political activism can promote that end. But it cannot in itself achieve it (any more than anti-racist legislation eradicates racism). If psychotherapy can, as I've contended here, pursue and promote quality of relationship, then it is an important complement to activism.

If our activism is only a *reaction* to climate change, we may maintain a cycle of alarm, threat and counter-alarm which actually may have fuelled the catastrophe (for example, if humans' survival anxieties have propelled the development of technology and consumerism). If we *respond* to climate change we are initiating or resuming a *conversation with the Earth*. One of the lessons some of us in the equestrian community have learned, in our search for a subtle, relational horsemanship, is that if you want the other to attend, willingly and generously, then that is the attention you must offer. This may seem obvious and simple, but maintaining that level of attention is another matter; for one thing, it needs to be balanced by regard for one's own boundaries. Mutual response to each other's signals creates partnership, whereas reaction to perceived threats achieves either alienation and distance, or at best a kind of 'getting by'.

When I make a decision – to fly, say; to buy plastic – does this place me in listening mode? Or does that decision instead place me in a different mode, in which I cut off the voice of the other? Of course I gather information and make assumptions drawn from academic research or liberal media – that my carbon emissions are melting the glaciers, etc. But I also bear in mind those who, like Carlo Ravelli (2016), qualify the notion of scientific certainty:

"Science is not reliable because it provides certainty. It is reliable because it provides us with the best answers we have at present. Science is the most we know so far about the problems confronting us…. The answers given by science, then, are not reliable because they are definitive. They are reliable because they are not definitive…" (ibid., p.230)

But another test of the rightness of my choices will be in the felt quality of my exchange with the other-than-human world, and whether that world recognises, responds to and values the way I am. There is a deeply sensed, wholehearted and therefore subjective level of gauging whether what we do speaks to the Earth. This level is based on awareness of the space *between* self and other. This may be the closest some of us get to certainty. It is very much the realm explored by MacGilchrist in his magisterial volume (2009) on culture, values and the human brain.

I ask how my choices and actions place me *in relation to the other-than-humans*. Those actions may only be a gesture; they may only signify an attitude. But I have concluded the other-than-human world responds to gestures and attitudes. Everything we do has an aspect which is relational gesture towards the world around us. The response of the Earth is the gauge of the worth of that gesture. The response might be felt in our own body, which is a portion of the Earth, or in the flight path of an insect, or in a change in the weather. And we must decide what we perceive the response of the Earth to be. I find myself talking about several levels of response here. One is immediate: do my actions *now* receive a response from the world around me? Another level is long-term: will my actions in the present receive a response (from the weather, say) in the future? One can be relatively mechanical – do my actions reduce my carbon emissions and therefore (eventually and if shared with enough other people) limit global heating. The other is a subtle shift which takes place in my surroundings as I adopt a posture, an attitude, a mode of breathing. These may seem different, but I'm beginning to think that they overlap.

I find myself asking if it's sound to regard us as the stewards or guardians of the Earth, responsible for her continuance? Or are we the children of the Earth, subject to her benevolence or her power? Or are we the love-partners of the Earth, meeting her as one with whom we dialogue and dance? For me, the answer is yes to all three. Even though they seem to contradict, I submit that we need to inhabit each of these and combine them.

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CLIMATE PSYCHOLOGY: THE STORY SO FAR

Written by Inquiry and Dissemination group

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Climate change is not a scientific problem waiting for a technical solution. It's an urgent, frightening, systemic quandary involving complex planetary processes, human culture and politics, and terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems.

This document was developed over a couple of years by the Inquiry and Dissemination group of CPA, in consultation with the CPA executive and others.

It was originally prepared to meet the criteria for a Wikipedia entry, which is now here. Our original wiki submission was rejected, as we had included secondary sources. Some of the authors we then had to omit have now had primary source material published, which we can include. In addition, now that the wiki entry is live, we believe we will be able to add new references, including secondary sources.

Although expanded and edited since, it does not attempt to cover the full range and multiplicity of approaches to Climate Psychology.

The climate psychology perspective on climate change

Climate change is not a scientific problem waiting for a technical solution. It's an urgent, frightening, systemic quandary involving complex planetary processes, human culture and politics, and terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems.

The scale of this quandary stretches from emotions and affects[1] experienced by individuals, to meta narratives such as the Anthropocene[2] (Steffen, Crutzen and McNeill, 2007), the Chthulucene[3] (Haraway, 2016), and the concept of 'hyperobjects' as "entities of such vast temporal and spatial dimensions that they defeat traditional ideas about what a thing is in the first place" (Morton, 2013). Hyperobjects are hard to pin down yet permeate "social and experiential space" (Morton, 2013, p.27).

Climate change engenders fear, grief, despair and anxiety amongst individuals, and evasion, indifference and duplicity amongst the powerful. It forces uncomfortable dilemmas about social justice, personal morality and interspecies equity into consciousness. It challenges all of us both personally and politically, although how these challenges play out will be influenced by privilege, power, intersecting oppressions and life experiences.

The field of climate psychology

To work with these dilemmas, the field of climate psychology, which emerged in the Anglophone countries – the UK, USA and Australia – draws on a broad range of perspectives that include philosophy, the arts and humanities, and systems thinking. The core focus, however, is in psycho-social studies and the psychotherapy field; approaches that help us to understand the unconscious processes and emotions which influence people's thoughts, motivations and behaviour, particularly those which manifest in socially organised systems of defence in society. The power of feelings such as anxiety, fear, loss, grief, guilt and shame make it very difficult for people to face the reality of climate change and ecological destruction. They can lead to

processes of denial, which become embedded in the norms, language and structures of everyday life.

Climate psychology is a fast-developing field that is concerned not just to expand theoretical understanding, but also to develop new forms of research, inquiry, therapeutic practice, communication and conversation, and support broad-based practical and professional networks that are struggling to act on climate change.

The evolution of climate psychology

The roots of climate psychology can be traced back to the work of the psychoanalyst Harold Searles in the 1960s (Searles, 1972) and his reflections on the unconscious factors at work in modern humans' estrangement from nature. It has also been strongly influenced by ecopsychology, which had become influential by the 1990s (Abram, 1996; Roszak et al., 1995, Rust and Totton, 2012) with its strong emphasis on relations between human beings and the other-than-human natural world. As public awareness of climate change began to grow after the Earth Summit in 1992 and formation of the Kyoto Protocol, there was a rapid growth of interest in the nature of the resistance to this new knowledge and in particular to the concept of climate change denial.

The emergence of psycho-social approaches within the social sciences contributed to the evolution of climate psychology through the examination of the dynamic interplay between inner and outer experience, between personal and cultural/political values, beliefs and norms (Hollway and Jefferson, 2000). Such examinations help us to understand human responses to climate change more fully,

As the climate crisis worsens and commensurate action further lags behind, the risk of social systems collapse and mass displacement of peoples becomes ever more real. Consequently, greater attention is now being given within climate psychology to the relation between hope and despair, the nature of trauma and resilience, and the ways in which human subjectivities can transform in order to achieve the profound shifts necessary for securing the survival of life on this planet. This has been provoked both by the increasing number and intensity of specific climate-related disasters such as the 2018 and 2019 wildfires in California, the 2019 flooding in Mozambique and south Asia, and increasing social collapse and mass migration. Whilst the latter are not new for the majority of the world's people – indeed they have been the price the world's poor have paid for the prosperity of western capitalist societies – modern citizens now also find their peace disturbed by the prospect of dystopian futures. Such a prospect prompts questions of how to navigate through these times, and to enable the profound transformations necessary for as healthy and equitable life as possible.

Climate change and human emotion

The emotional dimensions of climate change have been explored through multiple lenses. For example, Rosemary Randall (2009) has examined several different types of loss – some a response to actually occurring destruction – using the phrase 'anticipatory loss' to refer to our awareness of losses not yet occurring but soon to come. The challenge of grieving such losses has been examined by Lesley Head (2016) and by Ashlee Cunsolo and Neville Ellis (2018) among others, whilst Caitlin DeSilvey (2012) has explored 'anticipatory mourning' as it manifested in threatened coastal communities. Glenn Albrecht (2005) coined the term 'solastalgia' to describe feelings of distress and grief at ecological destruction, in a study of two different contexts in Australia, whilst Renee Lertzman (2015) introduced the term 'environmental melancholia' to describe the experience of long-standing residents of environmental pollution around the Great Lakes in the USA.

Other studies have also looked at how emotions are regulated. For example, Paul Hoggett and Rosemary Randall (2018) studied the different ways in which climate scientists and climate activists handled powerful feelings, whilst Nadine Andrews (2017) investigated how sustainability managers regulated their emotions about ecological crisis in course of their work and the impact this had on psychological needs satisfaction.

Responses to ecological destruction may often be inchoate, eliciting a sense of unease and despair, particularly in young people (Majeed and Lee, 2017) in which it is difficult to give a name to what one is feeling. The concept of 'eco anxiety' is currently a popular way of describing this unease, particularly where it takes on more intense forms leading to sleeping difficulties and ruminative thoughts. Caroline Hickman and Steffi Bednarek (2019), among others, have challenged the normative frame of eco-anxiety that construes it as a pathology requiring treatment, rather than as an adaptive, healthy response. Susan Bodnar (2008) has examined the way in which a sense of unease permeated the lives of young people coming to therapy in New York City.

Climate change and human defences

The realisation that human actions are a major contributor to climate change can threaten people's material interests and their psychological integrity. The former can provoke 'denialism', a self-interested refusal to accept the scientific evidence, manifested both by individuals with comfortable lifestyles and by organisations, such as fossil fuel companies, who promote active and organised political resistance via the spread of disinformation (Oreskes and Conway, 2010). But climate change also arouses powerful emotions which are difficult to bear and may lead us to deploy subtler psychological defence mechanisms. Phebe Cramer (1998) makes the case for a clear distinction between defences and coping strategies – namely that defence mechanisms are unconscious and unintentional, and coping strategies are conscious and intentional – but, in practice, it is not so clear cut.

The most common form of denial, sometimes referred to as 'soft denial', is technically termed disavowal (Weintrobe, 2013). Here, the reality of climate change is accepted but in a purely intellectual way, resulting in no psychological disturbance: cognition is split off from feeling. Disavowal can be supported by a wide variety of psychological processes, including the diffusion of responsibility, perceptual distortion, rationalisation, wishful thinking and psychological projection. Approach coping has three predominant forms: active coping, which is direct action to deal with a stressful situation; acceptance, which is cognitive acknowledgement together with emotional working of through stressful realities; and cognitive reinterpretation, which involves learning or positive reframing. A distinction can also be made between proactive and reactive coping. Proactive coping, also known as anticipatory adaptation or psychological preparedness, is made in anticipation of an event, whereas reactive coping is made after.

Climate psychology considers whether coping responses are adaptive or maladaptive, not just personally but also ecologically – in other words, do the responses promote psychological adjustment and stimulate appropriate and proportional pro-environmental action, or do they serve to protect the person from having to make radical changes or take significant action? (Andrews and Hoggett, 2019).

Coping responses are not isolated psychological processes, they are a psycho-social phenomenon, culturally sanctioned and maintained by social norms and structures (Randall, 2013; Norgaard, 2011). For example, modern consumerism is influenced by the needs of a globalised, deregulated economy, founded largely on the principle that the polluter never pays, prioritising short-term profit and discounting or externalising true costs. This culture of uncare (Weintrobe, 2019) performs an ideological function. This is to insulate us from experiencing too much anxiety and moral disquiet. It provides us with justifications for what we know deep down is an inherently damaging way of living. Understanding the processes involved in coping with psychological threat, and how they influence agency and the capacity to make the changes needed, is critical, at both individual and societal levels. Becoming aware of maladaptive responses as they arise, offers the possibility for choosing a different response.

Cultural influences

Ways of managing the powerful feelings that would otherwise be elicited by awareness of climate change are supported by cultural mechanisms. A number of powerful cultural beliefs common to Western-type societies encourage processes of disavowal. These include entitlement,

exceptionalism and faith in progress. The idea, common to many people, that they somehow deserve or are entitled to what they have, that it is unfair to expect them to have to make sacrifices for the greater good, enables them to shrug off feelings of guilt or shame. This belief is embedded in the unequal relations that govern developed and developing societies (Orange, 2016). Exceptionalism is the idea that one is somehow chosen or special (as an individual, a group, nation or species) and therefore that the expectations or rules that apply to others do not apply to oneself. Exceptionalism is manifest in beliefs such as the human species is an exceptional species to whom the Earth has been God given, one's nation is an exceptional nation and therefore that the constraints that apply to other nations do not have to apply to one's own, and that I am somehow an exception and that the constraints (regarding frequent flying for example) that should apply to others do not apply to me. Faith in progress, foundational to the development of modernity, leads to the conviction that societies never generate problems for which there is no solution, and that science and technology will always save us. It therefore encourages wishful thinking and false optimism.

Psycho-social approaches offer a distinctive qualitative methodology for researching the lived experience of research subjects – a methodology that has been adopted by those seeking to investigate the way different groups in society experience climate change and environmental destruction (Lertzman, 2015; Hoggett, 2019; Andrews, 2019). Here 'lived experience' refers to the feelings, thoughts and imaginings provoked by climate change, and the meaning frames which both affect and are affected by them.

Trauma and resilience

Trauma occurs where an experience overwhelms a person's coping and defence mechanisms. This can lead to severe psychological disturbance, including repetitive thoughts and memories, dissociative states and panic attacks. Awareness of climate change itself, and its current and anticipated impacts, can and often does feel overwhelming. But climate change can also more directly impact upon mental health, as communities struggle to adapt to its specific effects, such as wildfires, hurricanes and floods (*Nature Climate Change*, 2018; APA, 2017; Doppelt, 2016).

Much of the research on resilience derives from studies of families living in extreme poverty and social deprivation. There is now a consensus concerning some of the cultural and psychological resources that appear to build resilience in the face of adversity. From a psychological perspective, one of the core approaches concerns the concept of 'containment' (Bion, 1962) – the capacity to take in and digest disturbing experience. This can be enhanced by being able to deploy perspective: seeing things in a different way and from another point of view. The role of a trusted other – an individual, family or group – can be crucial in this process, thus resilience is as much a relational phenomenon as it is something 'belonging' to the individual.

Thinking about resilience as a property of a social system takes us to the concept of 'transformational resilience' (Doppelt, 2016), which can be applied to both individuals and communities in terms of their capacity to adapt to the impacts of climate change. Here, adversity is used as a catalyst for finding new meaning and direction in life, and changes are made that increase individual and community wellbeing above previous levels.

Innovations in practice

There are a range of clinical, educational and engagement practices, that are informed by and draw on psycho-social concepts and methods, alongside imaginative approaches and indigenous wisdom traditions.

An example is *Carbon Conversations*, started in 2006 by Rosemary Randall, a psychotherapist, and Andy Brown an engineer. They created a unique psycho-social project that addresses the practicalities of carbon reduction, while taking account of the complex emotions and social pressures that make this difficult. Over 2,000 people have participated in facilitated carbon conversation groups in the UK and a number of projects around the world have also used Carbon Conversations, including groups in Australia, the Netherlands, Canada, Switzerland, France, Finland and Spain. Over the years, the project produced detailed, professionally

designed materials on carbon reduction, culminating in the publication of the book *In time for tomorrow?* in 2015 (Randall & Brown, 2015).

The existing research demonstrates that the Carbon Conversations approach has led to participants taking carbon reduction actions (Randall, 2009; Büchs, Hinton and Smith, 2015), is most suited to encouraging initial active engagement for those with existing interest in climate change, and provided participants with an opportunity to work through defences, feelings of loss regarding lifestyles, and potential ambivalences or inner conflicts about taking carbon reduction action (Randall, 2009; Büchs, Hinton and Smith, 2015).

Another strand of practice has drawn on the work of Joanna Macy and others, in *The Work that Reconnects* (Macy and Brown, 2015) and Active Hope (Macy and Johnstone, 2012). These approaches have developed a grounded and connected response to climate change through programmes of workshops and ongoing groups, and have been integrated into many forms of climate change engagement, such as Inner Transition and Extinction Rebellion (Hamilton, 2019). Research on The Work that Reconnects and Active Hope found that connections to self, others and the more-than-human world were strengthened; the workshops engendered a renewed commitment to, and agency for, active climate change engagement (Hathaway, 2017; Hollis-Walker, 2012; Johnstone, 2002; Hamilton 2020); most participants found workshops 'personally healing' (Johnstone, 2002).

More recently, the climate psychology field has seen the development of many outreach initiatives. These include imaginative approaches that see through the miasma of human cultural conditioning to emergent realities that could offer radical new ways of living, more in relation with 'nature' and the other-than-human (Weintrobe, 2015; Robertson, 2020): such as cooperative inquiry and support groups for activists (Gillespie, 2020); Climate Cafés; 'Through the Door' training programmes to equip counsellors, coaches and therapists to take their skills to the wider climate movement; workshops for youth climate activists; parent support groups looking at the impact on children and young people; how to talk to children about climate change (Hickman, 2019a, 2019b), and the development of therapeutic support networks for climate activists and others experiencing stress, burnout and trauma.

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See also:

These links to other, very relevant, Wikipedia entries:

- Ecopsychology
- Environmental Psychology

- Ecological Grief

Other useful websites:

- Carbon Conversations
- Climate Outreach
- Climate Psychology Alliance
- Psychologists for a Safe Climate
- The Work that Reconnects

Footnotes

1. **Affect**: Describes bodily sensations, or psychological feelings, without a specific object. These can be conscious or subconscious, such as anxiety.

2. **Anthropocene**: The term that describes a new geological epoch, where anthropogenic activities have altered and changed earth systems and become "a global geophysical force" (Steffen, Crutzen and McNeill, 2007). Debates about when it started range from the beginning of the industrial revolution in the UK, to the dropping of the atomic bomb.

3. **Chthulucene:** A term coined by Haraway to describe a third story, of entangled and interconnected beings, times and practices, which decentres the humans. "The Chthulucene is made up of ongoing multispecies stories and practices of becoming-with in times that remain at stake" (Haraway, 2016, p.55).

CLIMATE PSYCHOLOGY LITERATURE REPOSITORY

Written by Inquiry & Dissemination Group

Published: 25 May 2021

The Climate Psychology Literature repository brings together a wide range of sources of literature and information about aspects of climate psychology, and is constantly evolving. It includes links, abstracts and brief descriptions of academic and magazine articles, book chapters, links to talks and podcasts, and a growing number of Masters and Doctoral theses.

The repository is hosted by Zotero and can be accessed by clicking here.

How to search in Zotero:

Searching for material in Zotero can be done by typing in a keyword from a title, an author you are looking for or a publication year in the search box on the top right. Alternatively you can search using subject tags in the box on the bottom left.

Accessing papers:

Please note that some academic papers are behind a paywall. We are working towards providing access to free, pre-publication versions of papers by CPA members. If an entry is by a CPA member (noted as such under the Tags tab) look out for a link to the free version under either the Notes or Attachments tab. (This work is ongoing so please bear with us).

Links to related resource lists:

There are valuable resource lists that we do not wish to duplicate. Here are the links to existing lists and libraries, together with a brief description:

- ITRC Library: resources on building personal and psycho-social-spiritual resilience for climate change from ITRC (International Transformational Resilience Coalition)

- Climate Psychiatry Alliance Library: a library of resources of articles, podcasts and other materials that address the range of climate change and impacts on mental health.

We welcome more contributions. If you'd like to suggest something for the repository please submit details via this Google form after checking the following criteria for inclusion:

Criteria for Inclusion in CPA online Literature Repository on Zotero

To keep material selected for the repository relevant to Climate Psychology, as defined in the CPA Handbook it may be helpful to consider the following criteria when assessing suitability.

1. Literature that deepens an understanding of feelings and/or behaviours as related to the climate crisis at all levels - from the individual to interpersonal, societal and political.

This includes:

- exploring the emotions, affects and feelings that might come up when facing the climate crisis, e.g. grief, anxiety, despair, guilt, anger, shame
- exploring the defences that might be used to avoid the difficult feelings, and/or the unconscious processes at play, e.g. dissociation, disavowal, ambivalence, denial.
- exploring the conflicts, dilemmas and paradoxes that individuals, groups and societies face in negotiating change.
- exploring cultural assumptions and practices that act as barriers to us taking action on the climate crisis, e.g. materialism, consumerism, our relationship with, and view of, the other-than-human world.

2. Literature that has practical application for dealing with those feelings and/or behaviours as related to the climate crisis at all levels - from the individual to interpersonal, societal and political.

This includes:

- exploring psychological resources, such as resilience, (radical) hope, courage or imagination, or eco-psychological resources that examine our interaction with the other-than-human world.
- discussing effective climate communication and/or creative approaches to encouraging public engagement with the climate crisis
- offering resources that might support activists, scientists, those working in psychotherapy or policy makers.

A TIME OF DERANGEMENT - STEFFI BEDNAREK

Written by Steffi Bednarek

In this time of toxic normality, we need soulful connection with the world, writes Steffi Bednarek.

Illustrations by Amyisla McCombie https://cargocollective.com/amyisla

A Time of Derangement

Covid-19 and the climate crisis have forced us to acknowledge that we are not separate from the world. The heroic stories of eternal ascension, human supremacy, white supremacy, male supremacy and western supremacy don't provide the necessary answers any more. These ideologies have torn wounds into the fabric of the world that are so deep that they can't be healed by ordinary medicine. Most of us have become colonisers and colonised at the same time.

Recently we have seen some of the monuments to these ideologies tumble and fall. But we also have to ask what is engraved in us. How do we deal with the monuments that have been erected in our western minds during all these years of socialisation? What damage has been caused by introjected narratives and values? They are difficult to relinquish because they have become part of who we think we are. Collective amnesia and anaesthesia are symptoms of a pandemic of the western mind, covering up the emptiness and soullessness that western lifestyles engender. This emptiness and loneliness creates a hunger that makes us devour the world without ever being satisfied.

Good mental health is mostly regarded as the ability to function symptom-free within the capitalist paradigm. Many collective aspects of suffering stay well-hidden by the cultural privatisation of the psyche, which views this emptiness as an individual shortcoming, privately owned. It can then be worked on in self-improvement seminars or wellness retreats. In a personalised psychology the problem becomes interior and we try to "x or eradicate that which brings derangement to our door. But what if this derangement is not a dysfunction but the last frayed memory of what the human soul really longs for?

Many psychological shifts occur as a result of experiencing adversity. This entails a willingness to 'stay with the trouble' and face the derangement that is necessary for any maturation process to occur, including the maturing of a culture.

Illustration by Amyisla McCombie https://cargocollective.com/amyisla

The fertile void

There is much debate in the ecological community on how information should be presented in order to mobilise people. The assumption that we will change because of information or out of a sense of duty for the Earth, other species or the future of our species is prevalent, despite evidence that it has not been successful in the 50 years that we have known about climate change, while CO2 levels kept rising. The irrational, chaotic human responses and the psyche's capacity for fragmentation, denial, dissociation and numbing in the face of personal and collective trauma are not taken into account. This exclusion of the psychological dimension is a myopia that costs us dearly.

A radical step may be to pause for a moment and to admit that we are lost. Uncertainty is an uncomfortable position to hold in a culture that is based upon control. When the known reality is crumbling, the temptation is to grasp for surety, circumventing the necessary descent and the fostering of the ability to bear the unbearable void where the new is not yet in sight. For many, even certainty of catastrophe is easier to bear than uncertainty.

Gestalt therapy postulates that creative energy emerges out of the fertile void, and Buddhist philosophy talks about the nothingness that gives birth to worlds. Derangement and disorientation are not states we would ordinarily choose, but they are necessary catalysts in the maturation process. For fundamental change to happen, the toxic normality needs to be deranged, rigid structures have to be dissolved, so that things can come out rearranged. Acknowledging that we are lost forces us to acknowledge that we are not in control any more and

leaves us with no choice but to reorient ourselves. It is in these times that we truly experience that not everything is resolvable in linear fashion.

Containment

This maturational crisis requires individuals or cultures to master two opposing things: to provide a strong psychological holding container so that there is no collapse into fragmentation, polarisation or psychological breakdown, and at the same time to allow rigid structures and values to crumble and dissolve.

Without containment, experiences of derangement become traumatic, and I suggest that this is where we are currently. In a traumatised culture, only a certain aspect of society is free to develop, whereas parts of the culture remain frozen and dissociated, or hyperactivated and reactive. In this 'traumasphere' polarisations increase, our ability to respond calmly is inhibited, and the maturing of the collective culture is impossible. Only if we apply a trauma lens can we see that what looks like a lack of care may in fact be an unconscious adjustment to collective overwhelm. It is not cognition, but relationship, community and a reconnection of exiled parts that brings healing into traumatised systems. Collective trauma needs a collective container for collective healing. This is a process of literal re-'membering' of that which has been torn apart, turning towards the wounding in the collective culture in order to be free from its long shadows. It is an act of cultural soul retrieval.

The psychologist James Hillman emphasises the importance of recognising that the biggest part of soul lies in the world and therefore can only be accessed through engagement with the world. Rather than focusing on our own suffering, he encourages us to recognise that "the buildings are sick, the institutions are sick, the banking system's sick, the schools, the streets – the sickness is out there."

So, if that's true, in order for me to know my soul, I need to know what I am entangled with. It puts me in a conversation with what lies out- side of me, whatever this 'other' is. It could be another human, but it could also be a stone, a river, a mountain. The word for 'soul' in Latin is anima, so we are talking about re-entering a world where it is not we who are ensouled, but the world. And for me to know soul and for the culture to know soul, we have to enter the conversation. This would entail a courtship, a meeting in which we speak a different language, one that is not a progress-fixated rant, but a softly spoken language, one with fewer words and longer silences.

To re-ensoul is to shift from a notion of psyche that lives in our chest to an understanding that we dwell within a wider psyche of starlit nights, oak root and thunderstorms, or – as for many –that we dwell in a wider psyche of manicured lawns, car parks, shopping centres and neon lights.

Illustration by Amyisla McCombie https://cargocollective.com/amyisla

Collective trauma needs a collective container for collective healing

But this soulful other is not just found in Nature. The idealisation of Nature as the locus of untouched innocence as opposed to the corrupted city is an artificial divide that maintains the same fundamental split as the notion that there are Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. We are all descended from Nature and we all have Indigenous roots. The belief that we need to turn to the last untouched places in Nature in order to find soul creates devastation and soullessness in our urban environments and risks destroying the last vestiges of wilderness to feed our hunger. So the great turning is not a literal turning to flock into Nature. It is a turning of our attention towards a soulful engagement with the world. It is the capacity to move from the skin boundary to a state of interbeing, and to fluidly hold both the unknown vastness out there and the experience of this singular point of contact in this unique body. It is the capacity to step out of this anthropocentric bubble and to allow ourselves to be touched, known and undone by a non-human other.

It is in this territory that we encounter the fierce love and reverence that we may need to hold us steady while we undergo derangement.

In that sense, we can remember that we are never alone. We are always in community, always connected to something vast and immense. I believe this is what we really hunger for.

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