

DUBLIN BUSINESS SCHOOL

**AN EXPLORATION OF NATURE THERAPY AND THE APPLICATION
OF ECOPSYCHOLOGICAL IDEAS IN THERAPUTIC PRACTICE.**

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'For too long we humans have withheld our allegiance from the sustaining earth, reserving our faith only for a mystery assumed to reside entirely beyond the sensuous. To return to our senses is to remember an older, indigenous faith that we have never completely lost —our breathing body's implicit faith in the solid ground underfoot and the renewal of light every dawn. It is this animal fidelity to the breathing earth, so easily overlooked or forgotten, that unites us with countless other species —and it remains the ground of every lasting ethic between persons, and between peoples. Faith in the wild and shadowed goodness of the Earth.'

(Abram, 2017)

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ABSTRACT

According to Jung and others, a changing relationship to the natural world has brought about a loss of connection. The outer disconnection between man and nature is also reflected in man's disconnection from his own inner self. In his work Jung explores the innate connection the human psyche has to nature through the collective unconscious. The aim of this research paper is to explore Jungian theory and Nature Therapy as a therapeutic tool in which ecopsychological ideas are introduced into a therapeutic practice.

The benefits of nature to stimulate restorative and healing effects on the human psyche are recognised, these effects support positive change at both psychological and physiological levels of our being. Jung's ideas have also informed the theoretical foundation of ecopsychology, which explores the relationship between the natural world and human beings through ecological and psychological principles. According to the biophilia theory, nature is rooted in our genetic biology and it argues that it is this biological programming which connects us to the natural world. It maintains the perception that humans and the natural environment are not separate from one another but are connected through the genetic hard wiring of the human psyche.

According to Jung the purpose of returning to nature is to invite and allow nature to heal us (Carl Gustav Jung, 2002, p. 19) This dissertation concludes that nature therapy or the 'return to nature, to heal', encompasses the application of ecopsychological ideas into a therapeutic practice. Nature therapy is a form of therapy which relies on the natural environment to achieve therapeutic goals. Not only is nature the venue but also an active part in the therapeutic process used to address the underlying disconnection between humans and their ecological home.

INTRODUCTION

Does nature have a role to play in the therapeutic process?

This dissertation aims to explore the concept of Nature Therapy. Firstly, this research paper will look at Jung's hypothesis relating to the human nature connection and examine how this concept has developed into theories and current understandings of Ecopsychology. It will then explore how these theories are implemented into practice through the application of Nature Therapy.

John Muir, an influential Scottish American environmental philosopher, noted the power of nature to give strength to the body and the soul. Nature is said to have a profound effect on our emotional and physical wellbeing. The physiological effects have been observed within studies in the medical and scientific fields. Frumkin (2001) argues that interactions with the natural environment can provide benefits to one's physical health. In Japan, scientists have studied the effects of walking amongst trees and found that 'Forest Bathing' or Shinrin-yoku, has positive physiological effects, such as blood pressure reduction, lower concentrations of cortisol, improved immune functions and greater parasympathetic nerve activity which improves autonomic functioning (Furuyashiki et al., 2019).

These studies show the positive physiological effects, but can nature have a positive psychological impact? Can the psychotherapeutic effect of nature be defined and measured?

Chapter one will explore the connection Jung made linking nature to the human psyche and his expressed concern for our growing disconnect with nature. He stated, 'The outer disconnection between man and nature is also reflected in man's disconnection from his own inner nature' (Jung, 1953, p. 759).

Concern for the loss of connecting to nature is one of Jung's main themes throughout his writing. 'The Earth Has a Soul' is a collection of these writings about nature, taken from various book passages, lectures, and personal correspondences. Jung's compared his concept of 'the collective unconscious' to the mysterious power of nature saying, 'as far as we can see, the collective unconscious is identical with nature to the extent that nature herself, including matter, is unknown to us (C. G. Jung & McGuire, 1987).

Chapter two will analyse how Jung's ideas were developed in the theoretical and philosophical understanding of ecopsychology. According to historian and Ecopsychologist Theodore Roszak (1992), Jung's idea of the collective unconscious is the most important concept for the development of an ecological psychology (Yunt, 2001, p. 102). Ecopsychology explores connections between human psychology, therapy and ecology. It examines the root of personal and social problems, connecting them to the dysfunctional relationship to the natural world.

In 'Wild Therapy', Totton (2011) states ecopsychology to be the study of human beings' psychological relationship with the ecosystems of which we are part, and ecotherapy to be the application of these ideas to therapeutic practice. According to Totton, an 'ecosystemic therapy' recognises that humans do not stand alone in the universe but are profoundly connected with and dependent on other species and entities with whom they share this earth.

Chapter three will investigate how nature is practically implemented into the therapeutic practice. Nature-based therapy is a therapeutic approach that is differentiated from traditional therapies in terms of its physical location. Harper suggests 'Nature is used both as a venue and medium for practice. It is used as a co-therapist and agent in the healing process' (Harper et al., 2019, p. 7). This therapeutic intervention uses nature to address the underlying disconnection between humans and their ecological home.

The 'Nature Therapy' approach is a framework developed by Ronen Berger. A key idea within nature therapy is the concept of the 'three-way relationship', between the client, the therapist, and nature. Each participant in this relationship can affect, and be affected by, the other. Nature is regarded as a force that has its own influence on a person. Totton believes when therapy is taken outdoors there is a dyadic change. As well as the other-than-human, he suggests one encounters the more-than-human aspects of reality that are much bigger than oneself. This awareness can contribute to the development of a broader perspective on life.

CHAPTER 1

Jung's Hypothesis

This chapter will explore the origins of Nature Therapy through the lens of Jung's hypothesis, which connects the natural environment to the human psyche. It will discuss why he thought the connection existed and his concern for our growing disconnect.

Connection

The idea of practicing transformation and healing rituals in nature is not new and can be traced back to ancient times when people were living in communities that were based in nature. Rituals performed by shamans or holy men within these communities would incorporate the healing powers of nature and are believed to be an ancient form of therapy (Berger & McLeod, 2006, p. 80).

Jung's formed an understanding of consciousness and personality through his studies in spirituality, culture, mythology, and dreams. Informed by many of the primitive traditions he studied, he believed that the earth is a living entity, declaring that we are not only upon the world, but the earth is within us (C. G. Jung & McGuire, 1987). He used the phrase 'participation mystique' to describe how indigenous people do not separate themselves from the environment and believe that what went on outside the self also went on inside of the self (Jordan, 2014, p. 16).

Jung believed the unconscious consisted of two layers. The first he called the 'personal unconscious' which contains repressed thoughts, feelings and attitudes from

childhood experiences, that remained close to the surface of the psyche. The second level of unconsciousness is the 'collective or transpersonal unconscious'. This, he believes is a level of unconsciousness shared by all humans which is genetically inherited and not formed by personal experience. It comprises of latent ancestral memories from our evolutionary past. He proposes that the human psyche has an innate characteristic imprinted as a result of our genetic developmental history. 'The form of the world into which, a person, is born is already inborn in him, as a virtual image' (Jung, 1953, p. 188).

Jung suggests that 'the outer world' or nature, acts as a prime psychological determinant in a way not dissimilar from that of the collective unconscious. He hypothesises this collective unconscious or unconscious humanity is not an abstract concept but a lived reality. It is similar to our interrelatedness with others and the natural world when perceived in the context of unexplainable experiences and events in either purely psychic or purely physical terms, such as intuitive dreams and synchronistic phenomena (Yunt, 2001, p. 102). By suggesting the collective unconscious is nature, he implies that nature is a manifested expression of the soul. 'It is identical with Nature to the extent that Nature herself, including matter, is unknown to us' (Carl Gustav Jung, 2002, p. 82).

In his autobiography, Jung speaks about interconnectedness to describe the phenomenological experience of atonement with the psyche and nature at the same time. The word 'individuation' is used to define this psychological connection to humanity or nature, since one's self is part of nature. It is a concept that describes the integration of the unconscious and conscious aspects of one's self (Corey, 2009). Individuation is lost or broken down when there is a lack of emotional connection or participation with nature. This outer disconnection between the psyche

and nature is also reflected in the disconnection from the inner nature and results in a sense of cosmic and social isolation which he suggests is the cause of neurosis. For Jung (1935b, para. 37), neurosis was an illness that extended beyond the individual body whose functions were disturbed. He viewed it as a psychosocial phenomenon that does not separate the neurosis of the person from their cultural setting. 'It is intimately bound up with the problem of our time and represents an unsuccessful attempt on the part of the individual to solve the general problem in his own person.' (Jung 1917, para. 18)

The interconnectedness of the psyche and nature is one of the key components of Jung's work, , 'No man lives within his own psychic sphere like a snail in its shell, separated from everybody else, but is connected with his fellow-men by his unconscious humanity.' (Jung, 2014, 10 para. 408)

Disconnection

Jung (1953) describes the dissociation of modern culture from nature as a cultural neurosis. In this, the modern cultural psyche is no longer aware of the unconscious power of nature that influences it to an indefinite degree. In Yunt's, (2001) paper on 'Jung's Contribution to an Ecological Psychology', he suggests many of Jung's writings on humanities and the understanding of oneself in relation to the world, indicates that one of modernity's primary problems is balancing human needs and desires with the distinct ecological needs of the natural world (Yunt, 2001, p. 97). Jung argued the world has become dehumanized as a result of scientific and technological advances. He believed that the speed in which these advances developed left the unconscious far behind, forcing it into a defensive position which is

expressed as a destructive force (Jung, 1953, p. 91). He alluded to the complex link between the state of the health of the human psyche and the environmental impact on the world, by stating 'It is becoming ever more obvious that it is not famine, not earthquakes, not microbes, not cancer but man himself who is man's greatest danger to man' (Jung, 1976, par. 1358). As scientific understanding advances in the modern technological society, the psyche feels isolated because it is no longer engaged with nature. When contact with nature is gone, so too is the connection to the profound emotional energy of nature. Disorientation and mental unease become apparent as the psyche is more isolated from the natural environment.

In order to heal Jung suggests that we must turn inwards, explore our unconsciousness and strengthen our connection with nature. 'The purpose of doing this is not to repair nature but to let nature affect us. A balanced interaction between human nature and nature requires that we also invite, allow, nature to heal us' (Carl Gustav Jung, 2002, p. 19).

Jung's work allows us to imagine the interconnectedness of psyche, nature, and spirit. Considering when he wrote his hypothesis, he has shown great foresight in predicting the impact technology has had on the human psyche and the cultural symptomology that is now so prevalent. While he wrote about the danger's society faced, he believed that the wounded and dissociated relationship with nature could be potentially healed.

CHAPTER 2

Ecopsychology

This chapter will investigate how Jung's ideas of the human psyche connection to nature have expanded and evolved to form the theoretical baseline of ecopsychology. It aims to define the concept of ecopsychology by examining the theoretical understanding of why we are connected to nature, why the disconnect has occurred and how to reconnect in the therapeutic process.

The area of ecopsychology has developed in the effort to articulate and explore the emotional and psychological connection with the natural world and the reciprocal effects of human-nature interactions. Cultural historian Theodore Roszak coined the term ecopsychology in his book 'The Voice of the Earth' (1992) to illustrate this innate emotional bond between person and planet. 'Eco' derives from the Greek Oikos which means 'home' and psychology the study of the psyche or soul. Ecopsychology is the meeting point of the fields of scientific ecology and psychological understanding. Ecologists study nature, while psychologists' study human nature it assumes these natures overlap. It is a space where ecological communication between mind and nature can emerge between disciplinary ideologies (Jordan, 2014, p. 14).

Roszak sought to place the psyche back into the context of the earth, 'the physical matrix that makes living intelligence possible' (Roszak, 1992, p. 320). This approach develops an understanding of the emotional connection between individuals and the natural environment and considers this link, to the web of life, as central to human wellbeing. Burns (2018) suggests it assumes that there is a dynamic process taking place between the two, not only for healing but also for an ongoing state of well-being.

By observing the psyche in relation to its earthly or natural home and examining the basic shift in relationship patterns that arise, it attempts to understand the human-nature relationship in the form of ecological communication.

Why we are connected to nature

Roszak (1992) argues that life and mind evolved in a continuous series of the physical, biological, mental and cultural systems. He proposes that the core of the mind is the ecological unconscious, a place where inherent reciprocity and connection to the natural world exist as the core of our being (Theodore Roszak et al., 1995, p. 14). By locating the human psyche in relationship with the natural world and understanding the relationship as reciprocal, it is therefore, the belief that the miscommunication between humans and nature, has led to distress in humans, non-humans and ecological systems.

According to Roszak (Roszak, 1992), Jung's idea of the collective unconscious conceptualises the unconscious human-nature relationship and is one of the most important concepts in ecopsychology. Like Jung's model, ecopsychology allows an understanding of the psyche as parallel with nature.

Jung believed that all humans were influenced by primitive impulses and the unconscious is the 'home' of the instincts. One attribute of this pre-rational part of the psyche is an unconscious identity with nature (Yunt, 2001, p. 102). Ashbrook (2003), a neuropsychologist, studied the effects of nature-based evolution on the human mind and believes that humankind's whole psyche comes out of nature and does not function separate from nature. Kellert (1995) points to the interdependent relationship between the natural environment, the development of the self and our genetic

evolution, suggesting that this evolutionary connection somehow resides in our genes. Our ancestral hunter-gatherer societies dependent on plant and animal species for their survival, radically changed when the agricultural revolution over 14,000 years ago began with the alteration and adaption of the natural environment to meet their needs.

The Biophilia Hypothesis is a theory developed by E.O Wilson, that proposes humans are biologically programmed in terms of genetics to seek connection with the natural world. Biophilia is part of the hard wiring of the psyche and as much a part of our genetic human history as is the need for love, interpersonal bonding, and family. It suggests human identity and personal fulfilment are not only dependent on our relationship to nature but also that the natural world has influence on our emotional, cognitive, and even spiritual development. This hypothesis supports the idea of an evolutionary relationship with nature that is not purely biological but is linked to psychology and identity (Jordan, 2014, p. 9).

The genesis of this innate connection has been formed through our evolutionary survival and become genetically encoded into our psyche. Maintaining the connection between the two is not simply a matter of survival but a matter of moral and spiritual well-being (Roszak, 1992, p79-80).

Why we have become disconnected

Although our evolutionary history has long established a connection with the natural environment, humans have become more and more disconnected from nature in the latest high-technology era. This growing disconnect is one argument put forward by Ecopsychology to explain the growing number of human psychopathologies.

For Kinder (2007) the beginning of industrialisation brought a shift to the concept of the self and identity as a result of being dislocated from the land. He argues that a rise in depression throughout society is a direct result of increasing disconnection from the natural world. This growing understanding claims the more this ecological miscommunication persists, the more ecological systems seem to be in disarray. Wilson (1984), suggests the more removed people become from the natural world, the more difficult they will have in understanding the struggle with which they are engaged, causing anxiety or irrational behaviour. This lost aspect of self-identity deprived of a deep relationship with the natural world is now shaped by a highly industrialised technological society driven by consumption. He claims humans have been repressed through industrialisation which has resulted in madness and rampant ecological destruction.

Totton (2014) suggests our hunter-gatherer 'wild psyches' have become domesticated, at a huge cost to both ourselves and the non-human world. This tension in human culture between the wild and domesticated is ever-present. If humans continue to destroy the natural environment in favour of urbanization then the planetary ecological system is in threat and will eventually collapse. He suggests human beings have tried to gain control over the world, over each other, and the other-than-human and more-than-human. In doing this we split ourselves off from the world. He cites an apt Ursula LeGuin quote, 'we learnt to live outside the world.' (Totton, 2014).

Roszak (1996) argues that industrialisation was not only what contributed to the human-nature disconnect but so too is the Cartesian split of mind and matter. He suggests that western psychology has placed emphasis on the individual and the individual's inner psyche at the neglect of the interactive relationship with the other

people, animals and plants of their environment. He cites Freud, who viewed nature as 'eternally remote. She destroys us – coldly, cruelly and relentlessly' (Roszak, 1996, p. 22).

He claims that Freud steered the search for emotional wellbeing in an inward direction laying the course for science and psychology to follow. This intrapsychic journeying reversed the orientation of therapy from the outward focus of traditional healers to one of inner analysis. The spatial metaphor that locates the 'psyche within' and the real world 'outside', resulted in 'psychotherapy that separated person and planet' (Huppert et al., 2005, p. 407).

Searles (1960) also suggested that Freud failed to acknowledge the significance of the non-human environment in the development of human psychological life. Throughout our development, humans are active in a constant struggle to differentiate themselves, not only from other humans but also from the non-human environment. Ecopsychology views development as a rounded or holistic process that considers the historical, philosophical and cosmological relationships between people and nature.

Whether the disconnect is through industrialisation or the psychological split of mind and body Roszak (1995), states that contemporary culture has severed people's deep connection to nature, but there is an innate need to repair this relationship.

How to reconnect

Ecopsychology exists at the edge of several different disciplines and views the conventional forms of therapy as limited. It considered traditional therapy to be directed inwards to the intrapsychic working of the individual. Roszak (Roszak, 1992)

believes that by looking outside the traditional forms of psychotherapy, to a more multidisciplinary approach, including the relationship between people and the environment, new strategies can broaden the approach in tackling psychological issues.

Ecopsychology has developed an 'ecosystemic' perspective to therapy which does not separate the neurosis of a person from their environmental and cultural setting. As Barrows, suggests (1998) these therapeutic interventions reflect on the larger human-nature systems framework. The ecosystemic approach emphasises awareness and connectedness, both ideas follow from systems theory. It suggests we do not stand alone in the universe, that we are part of a whole complex system made up of interrelated parts. Each part of this system is profoundly connected and a change in any one part affects the rest of the system. Totton (2011) describes the theory as a way in which we see the world as a complex, self-organising and adaptive system. Nothing causes anything else in a linear sense, but everything mutually responds to everything else.

This ecosystemic framework extends the systems-based therapy beyond the human domain to include the natural environment and by shifting the balance back towards nature the therapy can connect with the ecological thinking which sees everything linked together.

Both Roszak (1995) and Wilson (1984), believe that restoring the balance between humans and nature remains critical to the psychological and emotional health of modern humans. Roszak (1992) defines the therapeutic basis of ecopsychology in the following terms. 'The goal of ecopsychology is to awaken the inherent sense of environmental reciprocity that lies within the ecological unconscious. Ecopsychology

seeks to heal the more fundamental alienation between the person and the natural environment' (Roszak, 1992, p. 320).

This chapter has shown how Jung's hypotheses have been developed into the theoretical construct of ecopsychology. These ideas will be explored further in the next chapter which examines how nature is used as a therapeutic tool and applied in a practical setting.

CHAPTER 3

Nature Therapy in Practice

This chapter aims to explore how the ecopsychology theories have been developed and implemented into therapeutic practices. It will describe what nature therapy is, identify how it works and how it is put into practice with reference to Berger's *nature therapy* framework.

In current literature, nature therapy is identified interchangeably with several terms such as ecotherapy, wilderness experience programs (WEPs), adventure-based therapy, wild therapy, outdoor therapy, and green therapy. For the purpose of this research paper the term 'nature therapy' will be used going forward.

What is Nature Therapy?

According to Clinebell (1996) Nature therapy is a form of therapy which relies on the natural world to achieve therapeutic goals and addresses the disconnect between humans and nature. The theoretical approach of ecopsychology is the main influence in developing this therapeutic practice that involves nature and like Totton, he suggests, nature therapy to be the application of ecopsychology. Burns (2018) implies that nature is the catalyst for healing and wellbeing. He believes interactions with the natural environment create a positive emotional state that helps the healing process by restoring a normal state of equilibrium.

Why Nature?

Nature therapy challenges the normal therapeutic model. It uses nature to emphasise interconnectedness and reaffirm the concept that the person is not an independent psychic entity but an interactive element of the environment. According to Totton (2014), nature has a subtle and profound effect that offers a direct route to authenticity. It is more than simply transporting indoor therapy into an outdoor setting as it requires an exploration of the relationship between humans and other forms of life. This therapeutic process is said to take place in two dimensions. Primarily in the traditional client-therapist relationship, but beyond this is a sense of interconnectedness with the natural world. It changes the dyad of the therapeutic relationship to include, what he refers to as, the other-than-human and more-than-human environment. The 'more-than-human' world is a phrase coined by Abram (1997) to define a world made up of multiple intelligences and earthly entities, to include humankind but which also exceeds human culture. It consists of sounds, movements, images and feelings at least as much as it consists of words. Totton (2014) suggests the therapeutic alliance changes to allow for this third entity, creating a triangular relationship. This client therapist dynamic changes, as both move along in a space that is dynamic and unfolding. Working with nature possesses qualities that allow opportunity for further understanding and exploration of the therapeutic work.

For Totton immersion into this natural environment provokes a sense of being met with a deep level of calm acceptance, similar to unconditional positive regard of Client Centred therapy, which has a profound healing effect. Kaplan and Berman (2010) studied the restorative role of nature and believe this calming effect derives

from production of positively toned emotional states experienced in nature. Restoration is derived by the reduction of stress and arousal by blocking out negatively toned feelings. One of the key aspects of this healing setting is the potential to elicit what Kaplan describes as 'soft fascination'. Soft fascination happens when involuntary attention is engaged, and stressful direct attention is diminished. Clouds, sunsets, and moving river water captures our involuntary attention, allowing for cognitive reflection and making restoration possible (Russell, 1999, p. 17)

Nature Therapy Framework

Many have written about the therapeutic aspects of nature and contact with nature, but few have tried to reconstruct their knowledge into a formulaic practice. Berger, however, presents a fully developed framework in the form of 'Nature Therapy'. Some of the key elements to this framework are the therapeutic relationship, making a home in nature, performing rituals and the journey.

Therapeutic Relationship

Berger's Nature Therapy approach creates a therapeutic framework which uses the relationship with nature as its key reference point for therapy. By conducting therapy in nature, the environment is not merely a setting but a partner in the process. This symbiotic 'three-way relationship', between the therapist, client and nature can affect, and be affected by each participant in the relationship. Berger (2003) states that nature is a dynamic and live environment that is not under the control of either therapist or client. The therapist acts as a container or mediator while allowing the

client to work directly with nature. According to Berger (2006), the shift from client-therapist to the client-nature relationship helps reconnect the body, mind and spirit.

Home in nature

Choosing a place in the natural environment in which to conduct therapy can provide a challenge to the therapist, but Berger (2006) uses this issue and incorporates it into his framework. He encourages the client to find and make a 'home in nature'. McLeod (2019) relates this method of construction to the ancient concept of a 'sacred space'. The main function of this space across cultures and traditions was to create a space that was protected from the intrusion of evil and allowed the performance of rituals. He suggests this 'home in nature' comes to represent a form of 'secure base' within which difficult personal issues can be explored.

Choosing, creating and maintaining the therapeutic space is a key element in nature informed therapy. Berger (2006) states that the act of building a home can be used as a non-verbal method to invoke a range of themes to explore through symbolic representation, such as the material used to build it, the location and permanency or mobility of the structure. It allows the client to relay experiences and situations that are difficult to cope with, from a safe distance, through stories built around metaphors and imagery. It helps link the fantasy of dreams and wishes into the concrete real life and invites interventions to explore the gaps between the two spaces. The concept of 'between the spaces' is used to explore and integrate the fantasy and concrete worlds. Berger believes this approach allows the client to shoulder responsibility and ownership over the therapeutic process.

Rituals

Berger uses rituals to intensify personal contact with the natural environment. The concept of rituals is intentionally reminiscent of a time when communities lived with nature and were profoundly connected to it. These ancient rituals were regarded as extremely important and helped provide a sense of security and order in uncertain times. Jordan (2014) suggests rituals are present in religions as well as myths across the ages and were used to create a bridge between inner and outer realities. They were essential to social functions which marked major life stage transitions or negotiated difficult life passages. They have been used for centuries to reconnect the self with a sacred and spiritual deeper understanding.

Berger argues that as society has become increasingly urban, scientific and individualistic, rituals have lost their function. Megeed (1998) suggests that secular or individualistic societies may not have the common symbolic language and belief systems essential for the creation of rituals within multicultural groups. Berger's framework provides a space for the creation of ritual in fire and tea ceremonies. This process uses nature as an active participant in the process and helps reconnect people to the sacred ancient human nature alliance. It operates as a non-human medium which helps offer meaning and guidance. 'These rituals allow us to feel less isolated and to feel a greater connection to something beyond ourselves, helping connect with our understandings of universal truths' (Berger & McLeod, 2006, p87-89).

The Journey

Berger works on the concept of therapy as a journey and believes that a conscious physical quest in nature can elicit a parallel psychological and spiritual journey. This journey helps connect to the philosophical universal truths inherent in the cyclical nature of the natural environment. The repeated experience of sunset and sunrise or ebb and flow of the tide, can be used as collective symbols connecting us to the larger cycles of human life, the cycle of life and death, past, present, and future. Berger (2006) believes that connecting personal and universal cycles helps a person get in touch with the larger self and explore dimensions which extend far beyond the person-to-person relationship. 'This journey not only allows complex stories to be told, but it can also normalize them as they are present in the cycles of all living beings' (Berger & McLeod, 2006, p. 87).

Berger's Nature Therapy offers an alternative approach to traditional therapy practices by incorporating nature into the therapeutic process. It echoes the Ecopsychology philosophy which relates the importance of equilibrium between people and nature. This therapeutic approach produces a sense of interconnectedness and an awareness that can help develop a broader perspective on life.

CONCLUSION

This research dissertation set out to explore the concept of nature therapy and to examine if nature had a role to play in the therapeutic process. The purpose was to establish if nature therapy could be grounded in a theoretical background and to gain an understanding of how nature therapy works.

The first chapter established Jung's idea, which connected nature to the human psyche, as the core concept of nature therapy. Through a vast collection of his work he describes why we are connected and how we have become disconnected to the natural environment. His concept of the collective unconscious is identical to nature, as it has a prime psychological influence on the human psyche. This collective unconscious is a genetically imprinted ancestral unconscious, innate in every human, that exists on a deeper level to the personal unconscious.

There is concern towards the disconnection that has occurred as society's relationship with the natural world has changed through industrialisation. This outer disconnection between the psyche and nature is the cause of neurosis and in order to heal we must turn to the power of nature. His work has defined the unknown force of nature and allows us to imagine the interconnectedness of psyche, nature, and spirit.

Chapter two explored how Jung's ideas informed the theoretical understanding of ecopsychology. Ecopsychology explores the relationship between the natural world and human beings through ecological and psychological principles. It holds the view that nature and humans are not separate from one another but are bound up through the genetic hard wiring of the human psyche. The biophilia hypothesis is a theory which defines this biological programming that connects us to the natural world.

Like Jung, ecopsychology illustrates that disconnection with the natural environment is at the core of human psychopathologies. Roszak argues that industrialisation is not the only factor to cause this disconnection. The Cartesian split of mind and matter, steered the search for emotional wellbeing inward to an intrapsychic journey, reversing the orientation of therapy from the outward focus of traditional healers to one of inner analysis.

Ecopsychology concludes that by shifting the balance back towards nature, it is possible to connect with the ecological view of holistic interconnectedness of nature. Through reconnecting with nature, people are also reconnecting to themselves and to each other.

The third chapter defines the field of Nature Therapy as a form of therapy which relies on the natural environment to achieve therapeutic goals. Nature is not only the venue but an active part in the therapeutic process. This third entity changes the traditional dyad of the therapeutic relationship by creating a triangular relationship. Totton suggests that contact with the other-than-human and more-than-human environment can provide profound restoration and healing.

A review of Berger's Nature Therapy framework shows how Nature Therapy can be practically implemented. Through the techniques of building a home in nature and creating rituals that intensify personal contact with the natural environment, this framework accepts that nature contains resources that can support emotional, spiritual and mental well-being. One of the limitations of the literature on nature therapy is the absence of a clear link to mainstream counselling and psychotherapy approaches. However, Berger shows that nature itself has a psychotherapeutic purpose and that his framework can be integrated into any form of therapy.

The premise of this research was to explore the theory and understanding around Nature Therapy. This exploration of the human-nature connection has shown considerable evidence to support the positive, restorative and healing effect nature has on the human psyche. Future studies could examine the connection of spirituality to nature and how nature therapy can be adapted into mainstream counselling and psychotherapy methods.

Fundamentally this dissertation argues the theory and understanding of Nature Therapy and the application of it through the use of ecopsychological principles. It proposes a method to explore, relearn and heal the human psyche, through the use of a therapeutic method that incorporates nature in a formulaic framework that reconnects the disconnected.

'In every walk with nature one receives far more than he seeks' John Muir

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