
Therapy and Ecology: Viewing the Natural World Through Systemic Lenses

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Over the past fifty years **systems theory has had** a significant influence on numerous disciplines. Ecology and some models of therapy have integrated these systemic ideas, thereby opening up new meanings and new ways of responding respectively to environmental concerns and to **emotional distress**. Parallels can be drawn between how the two disciplines have developed **systemic** ideas and applied them for the purpose of change, **and each has** a contribution to make to the other. Systemic therapy has developed tools of inquiry that can assist in raising awareness of environmental issues. Ecology, in its turn, challenges therapy to include an ecological context in its understanding of the human condition.

This article is part of a search for connection between therapy and environment. To continue separating my work as a therapist from my sense of loss, sometimes dread, at the immense negative impact humans have on life's ecosystems is increasingly senseless and irresponsible. Considering mental health and human connection without considering environmental and ecological meaning borders on the insane, given the likely events that are about to unfold in the natural world.

Although there is some awareness in our field of the seriousness of environmental issues, an air of indifference seems to prevail — a presumption of knowledge mixed with strong beliefs that environmental awareness has nothing to do with therapy. This reticence is parallel to the initial opposition the therapeutic profession showed when concepts of power and patriarchy were raised for consideration, or when the psychodynamic was challenged by the systemic. In a world where awareness of environmental issues is expanding; where there are rumblings of discontent even in professions as conservative as economics and law about their own complicity in environmental fall-out; where insurance companies are worried (usually a good indication that something is up); and where governments are beginning to recognise that very soon environment will be their major concern —the question looms: Where is therapy in such a world?

It is important to clarify what this article is not. The intention is not the setting up of a Green platform for

therapy. Rather, it is to grapple with something deeper and closer to home. What is happening in our field that justifies therapy positioning itself right outside, or at best on the fringe of, such an enormous issue? Is it that psychology and therapy, because of their concentration on selective human processes, have become locked into the same anthropocentric and egocentric ways of thinking that are central to environmental breakdown? How strongly do therapists participate in the belief that humans are at the centre of the universe, that human processes do have priority of place, and that human progress and self-satisfaction are about self-assertion in and on the world at every level? If we therapists balanced our anthropocentric focus with a consideration of the rights and intrinsic value of the rest of the natural world, then we might begin to escape a future in which we might be charged with having got it wrong.

Secondly, this article does not attempt to adequately represent science. Science contributes enormously to human understanding and benefit. This is not to say that there is not a place for stepping aside from science from time to time. After all, science did give us asbestos, DDT, agent orange, Chernobyl, chlorofluorocarbons and ozone depletion. Likewise it is not possible here to add to the melting pot economic critics such as Herman Daly, Hazel Henderson and Paul Hawken. There is no room here to consider the work of many lawyers who are now challenging international forums to widen the scope of law to include the rights of ecosystems and other species to endure, and the recent setting up of an Earth Charter in The Hague.

A third absentee in this article is ethics. No discussion of ecological problems is adequate without an examination of environmental ethics. Where are therapists in the debate that is now taking place in law, economics, education, politics and industry, on key ethical issues: the intrinsic value of

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all life forms and ecosystems; the duty of biodiversity preservation; responsibility for animals and stewardship for the environment; the duty to preserve for future generations; human relationship to resources; the ethics of sustainable growth versus sustainable development?

Human damage to the environment, and humanity's refusal to participate in change, have enormous implications for its perpetrators, as well as for other life-forms. Whatever the outcome, the planet itself seems set to last a long time yet, and nature, in some form, will have a process to go on with. But the fact that the evidence indicates that life on the planet is at a unique and precarious transition point would suggest that a logical response from intelligent beings would be to respond. How come therapy continues to sit in the wings?

Systems Theory and Therapy

Systemic ways of thinking began impacting on therapy in the late 1950s. Ideas such as feedback loops, cybernetic theory, and the interdependence of parts within and between systems began to take hold. Systems theory was introduced by the biologist Ludwig von Bertalanffy (1952), his interest being in principles of wholeness, organisation and the relationships between parts of a system and between a system and its wider environment. In the mental health field these ideas appealed to people disenchanted with the linear causality of Western thought. Medical and psychodynamic theories did not sufficiently describe their experience of working with people in relationship and in family systems (Hoffman, 1981: 5). This interest did not affect all therapy models, but it greatly influenced some areas, family therapy being one (Bogdan, 1984).

Central to these developments was the idea of circularity. Instead of diagnosing the etiology of an illness, and then treating it with verbal or medicinal prescriptions, therapists noticed circular feedback loops that were keeping problematic behaviours in place within the family system. All family members began to be seen as 'participating around problems' in ways that were keeping the problem alive by participants doing 'more of the same' (Watzlawick, Weakland & Fisch, 1974: 31). In the systemic view, people are connected to their environment (from a therapy viewpoint, this environment is primarily the family), and are influenced by (and themselves influence) thoughts, beliefs, patterns of behaviour and self esteem. These influences are either helpful or problematic to the individual. In a similar way, no one person or group is responsible for a city's pollution. Most 'participate around it'.

As a result of these ideas, the work of some therapists changed. Instead of looking for internal or pathological explanations or causes of events, they searched for ways to bring problematic interactions to the surface, to make these meaningful to the family, and to assist individual members to develop new ways of connecting and participating.

Cybernetic Theory

Cybernetic theory is significant in this regard. Cybernetics is concerned with communication, the regulation of information and influence, particularly how it controls the behaviour of biological, physical and chemical systems (Weiner, 1954: 25). Living systems, such as a family or an ecosystem, are adaptive and self-regulating (Cronin, 1988: 27). Any action in a system reverberates. In cybernetic theory feedback loops constitute the main ways of control and adaptation in self-regulating systems. A feedback loop occurs when a change of behaviour or influence shifts the system from its steady state. This change either assists the system or interferes with it. The introduction of alcohol, unemployment or a pattern of non-communication in a family, or the proliferation of carbon emissions into the atmosphere, are all possibilities for rendering unsteady the steady state of a system.

Cybernetic theory then, which links with systems theory, maintains that '... all change is maintained through stability, and all stability through change' (Rosenbaum & Dyckman, 1996: 246). A yacht is often off course and only by tacking will it reach its destination. A rocket en route to Mars is off course 95% of time; but through constant readjustments the journey remains 'in balance' and the goal is reached. Families are in a constant state of change: the birth of new members, the youngest begins school, adolescence, the youngest leaves home, retirement. Ecosystems are constantly changing: population increases and decreases, seasonally influenced changes, fluctuations in food supply. Both family and ecosystem are able to remain stable enough to sustain themselves over time amidst constant change. Likewise, both can founder if the changes that impact reach a certain threshold of unfamiliarity and pressure.

At first therapists applied cybernetics as if they were guiding the operations of a machine. If a behaviour, a thought, or a response was 'off target', and then the therapist's task was to 'strategically influence' the family to change so as to 'correct' its trajectory. Therapists thought in terms of simple feedback loops akin to thermostats. Later they began thinking in terms of biological and ecological systems (Freedman & Combs, 1996: 5). Second-order cybernetics (the therapist is part of the system) replaced first-order cybernetics (the therapist is outside the system and directs the action). Words like *co-evolving* and *co-creating* better described what some therapists were doing. Auerswald called this new paradigm the 'ecological systems' paradigm, defining a family as '... a co-evolutionary ecosystem located in evolutionary timespace' (1987: 321).

Gregory Bateson, Restraints and Difference

The anthropologist Gregory Bateson emphasised that cybernetic theory provides a 'negative' explanation of events, one more suited to understanding living systems. He contrasts this with the non-living world of billiard balls and galaxies in which positive explanation is sufficient. According to positive explanation, events take their course

because they are driven or propelled in that direction, and it includes ideas of force (Bateson, 1972: 399–400).

According to negative explanation, events take their course because they are prevented or ‘restrained’ from taking alternative courses. From this viewpoint family interactions and behaviours are best understood by focusing on different kinds of *restraints*, because it is these that determine the nature of interactions and which prevent resolution. These restraints include the beliefs, assumptions, expectations and values that make up the family’s map of the world. Restraints also govern the selection of information about events, how family members perceive those events, and consequently how the family will respond to the problematic. Existing restraints will select out all but a few possible solutions.

Withdrawing from, instead of criticising, a spouse, or increasing consequences for an adolescent who won’t do chores, may not be differences that make a difference. Adding another lane to a motorway is a difference, but it may not make a difference. Planting trees to sustain bird life is different, but unless those trees include species that provide food throughout the year, it will be a difference that doesn’t make a difference as far as the birds are concerned. Bateson argued that change only occurs when people are ‘in receipt of news of difference that makes a difference’ (Bateson, 1972: 453) and that it is primarily restraints that prevent this from happening. He believed that ideas or news of difference trigger collateral energy (which is always present, though often unavailable) in recipients. Readiness for change cannot be presumed (Bateson, 1980: 51). Working with restraints rather than causes or the origins of problems can be more helpful in changing people’s positions and behaviour, as a focus on causes invites people into blame and counter-blame, and into enduring arguments that stifle change.

Of the many distinctions and possible differences that may be drawn from nature, only a few are transformed into ideas, and therefore actions, that endure. A key question in all this is not so much ‘What causes the problem?’ but ‘What *prevents* this person, family, company, city council, country ... *from taking an alternative course?*’

Ecology and Thinking Systemically

Linear thinking, the absence of a systems approach, has pervaded most fields of Western development. Theories of economic and industrial development have been built on linear paradigms such as ‘take-make-waste’ (Nattrass & Altmire, 1999: 7), and an understanding of the impact of this on environmental damage has only recently gained momentum. Although pockets of people for some time have pointed to the magnitude of these problems (Disch, 1970), what they warned of is only now being taken seriously. We have not been able to enter into a stable and respectful relationship with the natural world. Systems thinking is changing this.

Agricultural and industrial development have been destructive because of their tendencies to ‘linearity’ and ‘singularity’. The motorist decides to go to work, gets into his car, starts the motor, and sets off on his journey — all linear and singular thought processes and linear actions. No thought is given to the resulting carbon deposits left in his wake as they join with thousands of other travellers’ carbon deposits, all lifting into the atmosphere and contributing to a tonnage of carbon which overloads both atmosphere and ecosystems. We are only beginning to realise that a linear and singular approach does not enable us to control nature after all and, more significantly, we don’t even understand it! (Bosselmann, 1995: 49).

As systems theory re-directed therapists from linear to circular understandings, and from psychodynamic models to systemic and contextual ones such as family therapy, biology underwent a shift when its understanding of organisms expanded to include their interaction with other systems, thereby opening up space for ecology (Bosselmann, 1995: 109). Systems thinking in both fields (and our very experience when we listen to it!) reminds us that nothing exists in isolation and that systems are integrated wholes constantly in dynamic relationship with other wholes.

Damage to the environment and the threat to ecosystems is prompting growing numbers of individuals, public bodies and companies to take stock of human interaction with nature and to start changing their actions. It may not be coincidence that stress and dislocation in family relationships appears to be increasing and taking new forms, at the same time that ecosystems are beginning to fragment. Family systems need to build lines of direct and respectful communication, parents need to spend quality time (even if brief) with children and adolescents (the family’s emerging life and promise of posterity), and all members, parts of the system, need to know about and support each other in the different environments that they enter into differently. In a parallel way, global survival of our species (as well as others) may rest on the ability of its members to see themselves as participants in, as well as witnesses to, environmental and ecosystem destruction.

The Natural Step

Science may give us knowledge as to what is and what makes what work. It may tell us about the destructive courses we are on, but its descriptions and explanations don’t always offer ways of averting the destruction — they don’t offer ‘news of difference that makes a difference’. Too often, Swedish biologist Karl-Henrick Robert points out, we focus on analysis and have debates about dead leaves, when a systems approach would have us looking at the branches, trunk, roots and soil (Hawken, 1993: 53). Roberts founded The Natural Step to address the linear, environmentally destructive processes of corporate enterprise. Robert argues that systemic questions open up possibilities for preserving natural cycles of restoration, and

at the same time allow business to operate. Business becomes a friend rather than an exploiter of nature by allowing natural systems and resources to remain intact, and by developing policies of zero waste. In a word, problems are addressed at the level of whole systems rather than as parts that produce, are used and then discarded.

The Natural Step's four 'System Conditions' (Natrass & Altomare, 1999: 23) rise directly from thinking systemically. Substances from the earth must not increase systematically in nature (that is, extraction and reintegration must be in harmony); substances produced by society must not increase systematically in nature (products and the time needed for them to break down and reintegrate must be in harmony); the physical basis for the productivity and diversity of nature must not be systematically diminished (for example, replenishment of harvested species and soil protection); we must be fair and efficient in meeting human needs.

Interface Inc., A Company with a Difference

Several companies in different countries are applying the principles of The Natural Step in ways that radically change their modus operandi. For example, in 1994 C.E.O. Ray Anderson, a carpet manufacturer in the United States, announced that Interface Inc. would become the world's first sustainable and restorative company, committing itself to industrial ecology (Natrass & Altomare, 1999: 102). Its 'seven fronts' (Natrass & Altomare, 1999: 116–120) indicate the strong systems approach this company took:

1. *The Elimination of Waste.* The company keeps ownership of carpet tiles, maintains and replaces them, and recycles worn tiles. Waste carpet becomes the 'nutrient' for the next cycle of production.
2. *Benign Emissions.* In a systemic context emissions mean discharge of poisons into the air and chemicals into the soil, which mean greenhouse gases and chemical deposits in animal tissue, which mean interference with reproductive cycles, and climate change. Emissions had to be addressed.
3. *Renewable Energy.* Renewable fuels maintain equilibrium in nature; fossil fuels do not. The move to renewable energy needs to happen quickly.
4. *Closure of the Loop.* Interface Inc. endeavours to mimic nature where 'waste equals food'. That is, outputs become inputs. Research enabled fibre to return to fibre, backing to backing. Downcycling, which converts high energy products to low energy use, is avoided. For example, reducing complex carpet nylon to mere backing. Recycling, on the other hand, reduces the amount of resource required from nature, and reduces landfill.
5. *Resource-Efficient Transportation.* Packaging is made lighter and manufacturing brought closer to buyers; telephone and video link-ups replacing conferences saves travel emissions. Unavoidable travel and transportation

led to a 'Trees for Travel' policy. Trees are planted according to carbon emission estimates.

6. *Sensitivity Hookup.* A program of information provision and challenge to other business and to people generally was set up.
7. *Redesign of Commerce.* Responsibility was taken to persuade others to adopt a 'product to service' approach. Networking, a systemic process in itself, was emphasised. A greening of supply chains is operating with the purpose of eliminating Interface's human footprint.

A small but growing number of companies round the world are recognising that the systems that sustain life are in trouble, and that some fundamental changes in the way business is done must take place quickly. What is positive is the recognition that we can not only survive as a species but continue to develop, at the same time being in harmony with nature, as its stewards rather than its predators. Interface Inc. faced up to the restraints preventing change and achieved a difference that made a difference.

I am not claiming that Interface Inc. has resolved all the contradiction between respect for the environment and the prevailing capitalist belief that a healthy world means economic growth. But it does represent a change in focus that incorporates responsibility for the environment. More importantly, it indicates an effort to move on from conservation and sustainable growth thinking, to thinking in terms of sustainable development. These steps have been guided by a move from linear to systemic ways of seeing the world.

Systemic Therapy: Questions with a Difference

Therapy and ecology have the capacity to influence and enhance each other's work. In some cases, this is already happening. For example, therapeutic methods of inquiry and question selection offer tools for raising awareness and supporting programs for environmental change in community, organisational and industrial settings.

The kind of questions developed in systemic and contextual therapies are more likely to induce change, because the answers remain with recipients, who are invited to be experts in their own lives about what needs to be done. This is not to exclude the importance of giving information, making suggestions, doing research, even giving advice. However, the recipient is more likely to respond to the invitation, feel in charge of the change, be interested in alternatives, if asked an open question that 'fits' his or her experience, rather than being told what to do, which is more likely to close or threaten.

Even a simple question like 'What are your ideas about having an economy that supports your business and at the same time looks after the environment about you?' opens up a space for possible difference. It is akin to the question a family therapist might ask a couple: 'What are your ideas about ways to pursue your demanding careers while at the same time looking after your relationship?' The question invites a 'both-and' position. Companies discover these

questions are ‘... not only easier to respond to, but elicit surprisingly consensual agreement, from Greenpeace and unions to industry and religion’ (Hawken, 1993: 53). For example, issues regarding formaldehyde use arose and IKEA, a large Swedish home furnishings company, found itself asking ‘new questions’, of environmental relevance (Natrass & Altomare, 1999: 50, 53).

Opening Space

Opening space is an essential prelude to difference. Humans are often incapable of thinking past barriers of self-interest and self-satisfaction (Bosselmann, 1995: 5). Before people can move towards change there needs to be a registering of the possibility of change, for without this the restraints are too great. A way of addressing this, be it with an individual, a group, a company or a nation, is to open space for a difference that is meaningful. Taking, for a moment, the statement that our survival depends on our rising above not only race, gender, economics and national identity but also above ‘our species isolation’ so that we ‘enter the larger community of living species’ (Berry, 1990: 42), pertinent questions might include: ‘If we were to see ourselves as a species among species, how might we plan and plant our parks, river verges and coastal areas differently?’ Taking this theme further: ‘If I were to give these other species a voice, what might I hear them asking of me as I live my personal and business life?’ Parallel inquiry from a family therapist might include a question like: ‘If you had a way of telling your daughter that you care a lot about her, and that your outbursts result from a pressured work situation, how might her attitude towards you change?’

In addressing our ‘fatal attraction’ to a growth and consumer driven economy (Berry, 1990: 38), another series of questions comes to mind: ‘If you were less attracted to this way of living, in what ways would your life be different? If there were alternative ways for you to live your life, what would they most likely be? If you came across ways that enabled you to spend less time and energy on this focus that is stressing you, what would you do with your newfound supply of time and energy?’ Again, the approach is systemic to address linear mind-sets. ‘In order to keep my factory going I must dispose waste somewhere’ and ‘In order to run this family I need to control things in such a way that everyone, including my partner, does as I say’ are linear mind-sets. The emphasis is not to tell a family or company what to do, but to explore with them alternative ways of being a family or company, ways that in the long-run will suit them better. Possible questions include: ‘If I were to tell you about factories similar to your own which have discovered ways to address the problem of waste without damaging the environment, how much energy would you have to pursue such alternatives? What if you knew these changes could increase your efficiency and output?’ In therapy: ‘Would you be interested in pursuing ways in which you could have a good relationship without having to pressure yourself to control her? If you were to

tell your daughter how worried and distressed you are at work, would she be more or less likely able to understand your outbursts?’

Restraint Questions

The removal of restraints moves people beyond thresholds that hold them to destructive patterns of behaviour. ‘Given that some companies are now finding ways to care for the environment as well as growing their business, what prevents you and your company becoming a leader in these developments? How come you continue to dispose of wastes in this way now that you understand the effects? In regard to waste disposal, what are you doing that is against your better judgement?’

Of course, these questions can also be asked of individuals — not forgetting myself! ‘If someone in your street was to take a lead in car-pooling, what is preventing it from being you?’ These restraints might include time constraints, anxiety about taking a lead, fear of people’s responses, or laziness. Restraints can be so big that they remove all sense of personal or communal agency — a ‘falling sky’ mentality which renders obsolete a discussion of ecological principles that might bring people together in an empowering way (Hawken, 1993: 202). Discussion round very simple questions may be enough to create hope: ‘What is it, do you think, that keeps people from seeing the difficulties we are creating through exhausting natural resources? What are your theories/beliefs/concerns about this?’ Verb forms like ‘might’, ‘could’, ‘would’ are more likely to open space; forms like ‘will’, ‘are’, ‘were’, ‘shall be’, which tend to lay down what is true, are more likely to exclude possibilities that make sense out of the recipient’s experience (Bruner, 1986). Encouraging people to enter an ‘as if’ world (Roth & Chasin, 1993: 190) invites them to live temporarily with alternatives to their present situations, increasing the likelihood of their taking such alternatives seriously.

Collapsing Time

Stuckness in people and organisations is experienced in the present even though it may be connected to familiarity with the past or fear of the future. People become ‘frozen in time’. Certain questions can create movement across time and in this way have the potential to unstick closed and linear thinking. White called this process ‘collapsing time’ (White, 1986: 89). ‘Let’s imagine that in two or three decades all ecosystems, including our own, are on the brink because of environmental destruction and contamination. As we look back two or three decades hence what do you think we would be wishing we had done differently from the year 2000?’ A parallel in therapy might be: ‘Let’s imagine your relationship picks up and we meet again in a month’s time. What will you be telling me about how things are, and how you managed to change?’

Some therapists call this type of question future-oriented (Freedman & Combs, 1996: 133). ‘Your company

has been very successful. Presuming this trend will continue, what sort of leadership do you expect your company to be giving by the next decade as society wakes up to the impending crisis resulting from our exploitation and destruction of the environment?' These questions 'cut into ideas of predetermination' (Penn, 1985: 301). A key aspect of sustainable and restorative thinking is that business is part of the problem and part of the solution (Nattrass & Altomare, 1999: 107). An exhausted planet is an exhausted economy (Berry, 1990: 73). Exploring questions that link and invite difference open up the new for both therapist and environmentalist.

Ecology's Challenge to Therapy

Ecology and the environmental movement are, in their turn, making an impact on a growing number of therapists. As therapists sit in their rooms helping couples to resolve their conflict, assisting parents to raise their children, listening to individuals in their grief, anger or confusion, the air outside gets more polluted, landfills grow, endangered species become extinct while others become endangered. All the while, the economics and resultant lifestyles of taking-making-using-wasting flourish. What is the meaning of therapy in such a world and what is the responsibility of the therapist? (O'Connor, 1989: 70).

The march towards egocentricity, self-fulfilment and individualism was a powerful influence on how therapy developed last century. The 1980s, for example, have been described as a time of 'glorification of the individual, of me, mine, the self and the celebration of being good to oneself' (Walters, 1990: 54). Psychology, psychotherapy and most models of counselling are very individual-focused, inner-focused disciplines. A different emphasis is emerging. 'Having my self' or 'being my self' can become narrow and disconnecting as well as freeing and linking. Connection needs include not only the contexts of family, culture, gender and class, but other species, and the very ground we walk on.

Precedents have been set. In the 1960s Milton Erickson encouraged depressed people to grow a garden or climb Squaw Peak, the highest mountain in his area, and to reflect about what they saw and heard. He directed an agoraphobic and reclusive woman to make known her talent for growing African violets (Haley, 1973). Erickson was challenging therapy to see mental health not simply as congruence between experience, behaviour and self-concept, but as congruence between self-concept and nature.

If psychology and therapy took on an ecocentric world-view rather than an egocentric one, a very different perspective might be introduced into therapy rooms (Aizenstadt, 1995: 98). Depression, for example, might be seen as an inevitable response to the manic condition of the world. We might question the notion that mental health is primarily about individuality, self-concept and healthy relationships, and consider that 'psychological illness is connected to our damaged relationship with nature' (Neville, 2000: 13). If therapy is to be a part of what envi-

ronmental and ecological proponents state is imperative for ongoing life on the planet, changes in therapists' thinking and practice will be necessary.

Empathy for All Species

For fifty years, counselling has been based on therapeutic conditions such as empathy, acceptance and congruence (Rogers, 1951). We might well ask why we don't apply these to our relationships with other species and the planet. We seldom enter the world of other species with empathy, or accept the ways of their ecosystems, and we are constantly in a state of incongruence, seeing ourselves as inhabiting environments rather than being a part of them, and often destructively. Making this link may mean accepting that our repression of an ecological consciousness is at the core of 'collusive madness in industrial society' and that 'open access to the ecological unconscious is the path to sanity' (Roszak, 1978). Berry describes humanity's condition as akin to autism:

We find ourselves in an autistic situation. Emotionally, we cannot get out of our confinement, nor can we let the outer world flow into our own beings. We cannot hear the voices or speak in response (1990: 17).

Ecology and environmental awareness are challenging therapists. Firstly, to become more aware themselves: for example, to enlarge the scope of their reading, to participate in recycling and resource-use restraint, taking time to link with nature, linking with organisations that have these interests. Then, in their work, they might include corners of waiting rooms as a place of environmental information; develop images, stories and metaphors that speak of other species and human impact on environment; work with ideas of connection and context that include environment; re-examine models to include ideas of synergy and the 'wholeness' of systems; and assist people in stepping outside themselves and their anthropocentric pursuits to include the concerns of other species and the planet.

Conclusion

Humans are becoming more aware of the life-cycles of ecosystems and their vulnerability in the face of humanity's industrial, economic and anthropocentric focus. Systems theory and the voices of ecology and environmental concern have challenged therapy to re-align its emphasis to include a focus on ecology, both in therapists' own lives and in their work with clients. Developments in therapeutic methods of inquiry, developing the art of questioning, is a contribution therapy can make to ecology. In turn, ecology is providing therapists with important new knowledge, information that therapy will have to integrate if it is to truly address mental health in the broadest sense.

Just as this journal issue is finalised, I add a work-in-progress note. My work is definitely changing in the therapy room; the connections and parallels between people's responses to each other and to the natural world

are making a powerful impact. I have received enthusiastic response from people who attended my paper at a recent conference, with reports of having integrated the ideas in their own work with positive result. I recognise that my own work has moved on beyond what I have written in this article. It's exciting for me, and I know that a lot of my therapy is changed for good now: particularly couple work, but also family, and certain areas of one-to-one therapy. For several years I 'just' knew there had to be connections in therapy that have to be made in our time — time that is fast running out — and writing this recent paper has assisted me in becoming even more clear about this.

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Editors and their Sheds: Psychosis

‘but neurological experts

with kind blueeyes ...

said that electric shock treatment

should do the trick ...’


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