

Ecopsychology: An Introduction and Christian Critique

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In the last three or four decades, environmentalists have made us aware of industrial civilization's often harmful impact on the natural world. However, these warnings have only rarely led to any really significant, pro-environmental changes that make a difference in how we treat the environment. Ecopsychology is a new area of psychological study and practice whose aim is to use established psychological principles to help us understand our tendency to destroy the environment, and to help us change our behavior in ways that allow us to live more responsibly, harmoniously, and sustainably in the world. This paper examines some of the more prominent ecopsychological perspectives and critiques them from a Christian point of view. A Christian ecopsychology that is in harmony with Christian theology is required.

It has become common to attach the prefix "eco" or the word "environmental" to various descriptions of human activities. Thus we have eco-politics, environmental economics, eco-theology, eco-feminism, environmental ethics, and more recently, eco-terrorism. Each of these eco-activities suggests that there are important environmental issues that need to be resolved. In 1960, psychoanalyst Harold Searles noted that the non-human environment plays a significant role in human psychological life. He introduced the idea that, in understanding human behavior, psychology and ecology are linked in important ways. Theodore Roszak (1992) coined the term "ecopsychology" to describe this linkage. Environmentalist Paul Shepard (1973) suggested that "the environmental crisis signifies a crippled state of [human] consciousness as much as it does damaged habitat" (p. xvi) and he argued that we may need to start solving the environmental crisis by addressing first the psychological dimensions of the problem. Roszak (1992), a historian who has become a prominent spokesperson in the new field of ecopsychology, advanced Shepard's idea by modifying the Jungian concept of the collective unconscious. He described an "ecological unconscious" as "our inherited sense of loyalty to the planet" (pp.13-14) and our modern, environmentally destructive lifestyles as a "repression" that weighs heavily upon it. He goes on to argue that "believing that we have no ethical obligation to our planetary home [is] the epidemic psychosis of our time" (p. 14).

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In this article, I will first discuss two very different worldviews, one that has created and maintained the current environmental crisis and another that seeks to correct our destructive way of living in the world. An alternative, Christian ecological worldview will be proposed. I will then briefly describe the new field of ecopsychology by discussing Fisher's (2002) proposal concerning four tasks of ecopsychology. Some of the key contributions of the major approaches in psychology to an understanding of and/or a way to bring change to our destructive way of living in relation to nature are also provided. I will then offer a Christian critique of Fisher's and of psychology's (especially humanistic psychology's) perspectives.

Environmental Worldviews

In clinical psychology, before we plan and provide treatment for a client, we must determine if there is a legitimate psychological problem and provide a reasonable assessment of the nature and severity of the problem. This is no less the case with eco-psychology. The client here though is not an individual, couple, family, or therapy group. Rather, it is a whole culture. Although not unanimous, there is now general agreement that we as a Western culture do have an environmental problem, one that is rapidly becoming a global problem, but there is much disagreement concerning the etiology, symptoms, and prognosis of the problem.

It has been argued that environmental activists tend to exaggerate the gloom and doom scenarios they present (Lomborg, 2001). Consequently, not all are in agreement that we are facing an environmental holocaust. In fact, there are those who argue that human ingenuity, economics,

and technology will enable us to solve our current environmental problems without necessitating any real change in our lifestyle (Simon, 1981; Simon & Kahn, 1984; Suzuki & Dressel, 2002). Beisner (1997) argues that Christian environmentalists sometimes also make exaggerated claims about the extent and likely consequences of current environmental problems. Nevertheless, the prevailing view among responsible environmental organizations, both Christian and secular, and the general public in North America and Europe, is that the environment is worsening. The rapidly increasing human population straining the earth's carrying capacity, the accumulation of harmful chemicals in our oceans and waterways, air, and in the soil, and the rapid depletion of resources caused by the voracious appetite of consumerism are the usual suspects.

There are psychological and religious dimensions to what Winter and Koger (2004, p. 17) call the "boomster" and "doomster" visions of our planet's ecological status. Both speak to distinct psychological needs, assumptions, and values. The rhetoric produced by both sides in the environmental debate indicates that they have become quite polarized because of the distinctly different worldviews held and defended.

Boomsters defend the dominant, modern Western worldview characterised by a belief in abundance and progress, growth and prosperity, a faith in science and technology, and a commitment to a laissez-faire economy, limited government intervention, and private property rights (Winter & Koger, 2004). This worldview is deeply embedded in the Western mind and has grown out of the Enlightenment, the scientific and industrial revolution, and European colonialism. Nature is typically viewed as being composed of inert, physical elements and inferior sub-species, that can and should be owned, transformed, or made available for human use and entertainment by individuals seeking private economic gain, and whose work results in progress defined as economic development (Winter & Koger, 2004). Defenders point out, with some justification, that the positive outcomes of this worldview have included a science and technology that have solved many practical human problems, a sense of freedom and opportunity, a creative, hard-working population, and a lively, economically viable culture that is forward-looking and progressive. However, they then too enthusiastically accuse doomsters of following the lead of the "hellfire and brimstone"

preachers of a previous generation, in predicting a coming environmental hell from which we might be saved only if we adopt and practice a new ecological worldview. Environmentalist doomsters are then (mis)diagnosed as neo-Marxists with "utopian visions," as being obsessive and perfectionistic, and having a kind of global panic disorder (Clausen, 1990).

On the other hand, many environmentalists point out that the Western boomster worldview has had a huge, and too often detrimental, impact on the earth and on the majority of people who do not benefit from all that it has produced. They point out gross inequities in terms of over-consumption of resources, massive waste production, significant and serious loss of biodiversity, global warming, and destruction of ecosystems throughout the world. Environmentalists also argue that the world's carrying capacity will soon be over-extended because of the exploitive lifestyle encouraged by the Western worldview as well as by the rapidly expanding population in many third world countries. Unfortunately, many who agree with the environmentalist critique have adopted a worldview that is ecocentric and generally influenced strongly by a more traditional pantheistic (i.e., god is in the world, god is the world, and the world is god), and a postmodern (i.e., the rejection of the predominant social influences of religion, capitalism, etc. and the adoption of an individualistic, experiential view), New Age spiritualistic (i.e., a widely varied, individualistic, quasi-religious experience that borrows from various mystical traditions of world religions and includes shamanistic, neopagan, and occult influences) view. In contrast to the modern, mechanistic view of nature, this approach sees nature as alive and imbued with spirit. Instead of private ownership of the land, proponents of this view argue that land cannot be owned but only shared by all those, human and non-human, who inhabit a particular place. Those holding this view also see humans as needing to be cooperative partners with all other species sharing a common habitat rather than competitive individualists, and as relating to nature by entering into harmony with it in a sustainable way rather than as dominators and owners who use nature to advance their own progress, growth, and material wealth. Environmentalists claim that the boomsters are in denial, choosing to ignore the scientific evidence of environmental decay and pandering to the current economic power structures. This attitude,

critics say, allows the boomster nations to continue to hoard the earth's resources, often at the expense of poorer ones, and their denial enables them to avoid feeling guilt, fear, and despair over the real state of the earth. Roszak (1992) refers to this way of living as "madness." Others are even more descriptive, referring to the exploitation of the earth as evidence of "ecoalienation" (Clinebell, 1996), or as "gaeaphobia," "ecophobia," and "ecomania" (Van Tine, 1999).

A Christian Critique

A Christian worldview differs from both the dominant Western worldview and the New Age spiritualistic, environmentalist worldview in important ways. Rather than being either anthropocentric or ecocentric, the Biblical ecological worldview is theocentric, focused on God as the creator and sustainer of all that was made. Everything God made is good and God loves and cares deeply about the planet and all its creatures formed from the inorganic substance of the earth, and living on it. But creation is in the first place all about God, not about either human material gain, power and dominance, nor about the survival and sanctity of all species or being one with Nature. All of creation, living and non-living, was created by and exists to praise God!

Another point of departure from both the Western and Environmentalist worldviews is that God also made humans as special creatures, made a covenant with them, and gave them a unique and important task on the earth: to be stewards of creation. Thus, it is not humans that the rest of creation must serve, it is God. But humans are also not simply one among many of God's creations, equal to them and required, like them, to simply fill one of the earth's numerous ecological niches. Instead, humans were specially chosen, called to "be fruitful and increase in number," to responsibly "fill the earth and subdue it" and to "rule over" all earth's living creatures (Genesis 1:28). The first humans were then placed in a garden and given the mandate to "work it and take care of it" (Genesis 2:15). Subsequently, after man and woman disobeyed God and brought about God's judgment, they were told that they would experience pain and death. The earth too was "cursed" in that humans would experience hardship in fulfilling God's creation mandate while living on it.

One of the evidences of the curse resulting from the Fall is in the difficulty we have under-

standing and fulfilling God's mandate to "subdue and rule" and to "work and take care of" the earth. Theologians continue to debate exactly how these words are to be interpreted and implemented. However, among many Christians, this mandate is understood as God's call to humans to act as stewards in providing care of the earth and its resources, and to act as the agents of God's restoration work in creation (DeWitt, 1994; Nicholls, 1993; Young, [as cited in Beisner, 1997]).

The ecological damage humans create is at least in part a result of their desperate search for a home and the sinfulness they bring to that task. The earth (environment) was also subject to God's curse, and as a result, it "has been groaning" (Romans 8:22) and resists human efforts to cultivate and maintain it. The reality is that there are in creation plants and herbivores, predators and prey, the weak and the powerful, rich and poor, victimizers and victims. Yet, because of God's providence, all of creation awaits renewal. Jesus Christ, God's Son, came to earth, assumed human form and paid for the sins of humanity. In doing so, Christ restored his relationship with humanity and with all of creation. Thus, humans are called to protect, maintain and to help heal the suffering creation so that it too, as Psalm 104 reminds us, can praise God.

A number of Christian environmentalists and eco-theologians accept the growing body of scientific evidence about the serious state of affairs and the gloomy scenario they say we are facing in terms of the environmental damage humans cause to the earth. DeWitt (1998) for example, states that people of all faiths bring "degradation" to God's creation, resulting in "a global situation of serious magnitude" (p. 16). Perplexingly, Christians too, DeWitt says, "overlook, neglect, and in some cases even despise Christ's creative, sustaining, and reconciling works in creation" (p. 16). He goes on to specify seven degradations of creation that contribute to the environmental crisis: altering the planet's energy exchange with the sun, land degradation, deforestation, species extinction, water degradation, global toxification, and human and cultural degradation (especially of cultures that have lived sustainably on earth). Similarly, Granberg-Michaelson (1988) points out that "the gifts of life in creation are being poisoned and depleted" (p. 24). He continued, "As the environment deteriorates, human wholeness is diminished" (p. 24). However, Calvin Beisner (1997), an evangelical theologian, supports the boomster

position and, like Lomborg (2001), takes a rather different, more optimistic stance. He argues that a weakness of environmentalism (and he includes DeWitt's and other well known Christians' environmentalism) is its tendency to present false or highly debatable claims of environmental problems and their significance. He says,

Christians have a worldview ... and doctrinal ... foundation from which to offer a fresh perspective on the effect of human economic activity on the availability of resources. This fresh perspective, which sees resource supplies as increasing rather than decreasing as human civilization becomes increasingly adept at using the God-given powers of the mind to manipulate nature, is more consistent with both Biblical doctrine ... and historical data ... than the gloomy perspective of those ... who insist that the world is fast running out of resources. (p. 26)

Beisner illustrates that, unfortunately, Christians are also divided concerning the actual state of environmental affairs and the urgency to find solutions to the identified ecological problems. This makes the task of developing a Christian ecopsychology and of implementing a Christian environmentalism all the more necessary.

Fisher's Ecopsychological Perspective

While there are diverse perspectives in secular ecopsychology, most have in common a concern about our nature-destroying style of living especially in industrialized cultures and a proposal for an alternative, nature-connecting—but too often pantheistic—cure for this destructive way of living.

One important, though non-Christian, perspective concerning ecopsychology is that put forth by Andy Fisher (2002). He suggested that ecopsychology is "a large, multifaceted undertaking" (p. 6) rather than a new discipline. He sees ecopsychology as a project with much potential but, because it is still quite new and has but a small literature, it has not yet had much impact. Though Fisher's perspective is clearly pantheistic, Christians ought to pay attention to the four, interrelated tasks Fisher describes for ecopsychology: the philosophical, critical, psychological, and practical tasks.

Fisher reveals his pantheistic perspective in describing what he views as the philosophical task of ecopsychology. This task is, according to Fisher, "to place psyche (soul, anima, mind)

back into the (natural) world" (p. 9). This task is derived historically from the dualistic notions of mind versus body, human versus nature, inner versus outer, which run through philosophical modernism and science. Modern psychology also accepted this dualism as its starting point in assuming that mind is all inside and nature all outside. If that were true, then indeed, psychology and ecology would have nothing in common. According to Fisher, the philosophical task of ecopsychology is to locate the mind in the world, "healing our dualism by returning soul to nature and nature to soul" (p. 10).

From a Christian perspective, Fisher's is an untenable position. It is not possible to put "mind, psyche or soul" *back* into nature when it was never there in the first place. Psyche (soul) is a God-given characteristic of human uniqueness in creation. What needs to be restored here is the notion that humans, because they are uniquely made in God's image, are therefore also very connected with and mandated by God to be the responsible caretakers of all things in creation.

The critical task of ecopsychology is one that Christians ought to be actively and passionately engaged in. This critical task is described by Fisher (2002) as engaging in ecopsychologically-based criticism. What Fisher has in mind here is that ecopsychologists be engaged in social analysis, criticism, and activism. Challenging our anthropocentric view of and relationship with the natural world is one example. This involves critiquing Western cultural beliefs, values, attitudes and social institutions that support our self-serving over-consumption of the world's resources and exploitation of the natural environment. In this respect, it is "deep ecology" and "ecofeminism" that have, so far, been the most influential critical voices in ecopsychology, according to Fisher. It is true that Christians have, in general, been far too silent in critiquing our culture and our personally and collectively wasteful and irresponsible lifestyles. However, Christians also need to be actively engaged in critiquing the problematic worldview and ethical assumptions of a pantheistic ecopsychology and of secular environmentalism, and to work towards the articulation and implementation of a Christian ecopsychology.

Fisher (2002) describes the psychological task of ecopsychology as deriving historically from our having become estranged from the natural world. It is this estrangement, Fisher says, that has produced the ecological crisis. Thus, ecopsychology ought to help us understand that we are part of

nature and therefore in relationship with all of creation. The psychological task is "to clarify how it is that we relate to 'nature' while also being an embodied part of nature, involved in its process ourselves" (p. 8). In my view, this is a legitimate and important task for ecopsychology. In the next section of this article, I will provide an outline of how the dominant theories of psychology have described human's relationship with nature.

As an outgrowth of ecopsychology's psychological task, Fisher (2002) describes its practical task. Ecopsychology's practical task is "to develop therapeutic and recollective practices toward an ecological society" (p. 12). This task is an especially broad one as "almost any existing 'psychological' activity (e.g., psychotherapy) can be placed in an ecological context, and almost any 'ecological' activity (e.g., ecological restoration) can be approached in terms of its psychological effects or benefits" (pp. 12-13). Fisher argues that the therapeutic practice of ecopsychology (referred to by others such as Clinebell, 1996, as ecotherapy) involves developing interventions to create a "life-celebrating society" (p. 12). Reflecting his pantheistic philosophy, Fisher describes various recollective practices aimed at recalling how our human psyches are embedded in and nurtured by the natural world. However, Fisher also emphasizes our need to experience a reverence for, a giving back to, and a maintaining of reciprocal relations with nature. Fisher's challenge to be a life-celebrating society is one that Christians ought to resonate with, especially since that life comes from God and is demonstrated so marvellously in the beauty, bounty and complexity of creation.

Fisher's perspective concerning ecopsychology is but one of several rather radical, spiritualistic approaches. However, mainstream psychology has always focused on humans' relationship with nature, and on nature's (i.e., the environment's) impact on human behavior. The views of nature and of humans' relationship with nature as described in the dominant theories of mainstream psychology will be discussed next. In particular, what psychology has to say about our destructive way of living in the natural world and on what we can do about this will be emphasized.

Major Psychological Theories and Ecopsychology

Each of the major psychological theories has contributed to the Western view of the environment.

Freudian Psychology

Freudian psychology, for example, is a major contributor to the modern view of nature and, as such, it might help us understand some of the roots of our ecological anthropocentrism and destructiveness. According to Freud, nature is like the deep, unconscious id—wild, untamed, and needing to be mastered, controlled, subdued, so that its resources are available to us and it does not destroy us. Freud (1927/1961) wrote "the principal task of civilization ... is to defend us against nature ... [N]o one is under the illusion that nature has already been vanquished; and few dare hope that she (*sic*) will ever be entirely subjected to man (*sic*)" (pp. 15-16). According to Freud, we are mostly unconscious of our struggle with and attempt to subdue the environment. Freud also had a phallic (androcentric) view of nature. In his view, in a sexual encounter as in his relation to nature, man asserts and initiates, thrusts out, explores and embraces "Mother Nature" while the earth receives, responds, and (re)produces.

Freud saw science and technology as our primary defenses against the wild and unruly environment. From an ecopsychological perspective concerned with humans' tendency to destroy the earth, in Freudian terms, defense mechanisms play a significant role in our relationship with the natural world. They help us get what we want by masking our selfish passions and hiding reality from us, thereby reducing our anxiety. We use denial (perhaps sarcasm, avoidance, or humor) when our eco-unfriendly behavior is pointed out. We rationalize our materialistic over-consumption by convincing ourselves, for example, that we urbanites really do need and deserve to have that powerful SUV. We intellectualize the accumulation of toxic wastes in our immediate surroundings, displace our wasteful habits by recycling rather than reducing (which is more difficult), and we suppress our awareness and guilt concerning the carbon dioxide we emit by our exhaustive use of energy. There are many examples too of how we use repression (building homes on a toxic waste dump), reaction formation (sharply accusing environmentalists of extremism), projection (saying that what's good for developers is also good for the environment), and sublimation (sending donations to an environmental agency without changing our own wasteful lifestyle) as we live out our Western worldview. According to Winter and Koger (2004), object relations theory can also be used

to explain our irrational, over-consumptive habits as evidence of a "false self" that we adopt as a result of our affluence and the excessive demands we subsequently place on our "mother" object, the earth.

Behavioral Psychology

The behaviorist, B. F. Skinner, was one of the first psychologists to raise concerns about resource depletion, pollution, and overpopulation. His view of the problem was relatively simple and in marked contrast to Freud's. Skinner viewed the environment not as an enemy to be controlled but rather as the neutral but effective shaper of human behavior. He saw culture as a complex interplay of reinforcement schedules, many of which are variable and intermittent and therefore very likely to promote addictive, consumptive behaviors that are highly resistant to extinction. The behavioral approach in ecopsychology, unlike the Freudian, focuses more on Fisher's practical task in ecopsychology (i.e., on what can be done to change our environmentally destructive behaviors, rather than on examining the root causes of these behaviors). Environmental activists and lobbyists have too often used scare tactics or guilt in an effort to induce behavior changes in people, methods that are not very effective. Skinner pointed out that maladaptive behavior results when short term consequences differ from long term ones, as people are prone to respond mostly to the more immediate reinforcers. According to behavior theory, in order to change our eco-unfriendly behavior, we must modify or remove those contingencies that are currently reinforcing them. This may be accomplished with both antecedent and consequent strategies. According to Winter and Koger (2004), antecedent strategies include the use of prompts (e.g., placing recycling containers beside garbage cans in public places), incentives (e.g., providing a fast lane on freeways for vehicles with two or more people), and information (e.g., using pamphlets with attractive messages, TV ads with influential models describing some environment-friendly behavior). Consequent strategies may take the form of feedback (e.g., accurate information on a gas or electricity bill about energy consumption in the home), reinforcers (e.g., money for recycled bottles, tax breaks for responsible corporate behavior), and punishments (e.g., fines for over-fishing, littering and waste mismanagement).

Social-Cognitive Psychology

From the social-cognitive perspective, human environmental behavior is a product of the information we gather and what we cognitively do with that information. We may behave irresponsibly because of wrong, limited, or irrelevant information, or because we are prone to selectively attend only to information that does not challenge our worldview. For example, what information among all the conflicting reports about the ozone layer, about global warming, the amount of timber remaining in old growth forests, and the safety of landfills, are we to believe and act on? We are also limited in our thinking by cognitive dissonance, various attributions and biases (e.g., personal and situational attributions, self-serving and confirmation biases), all of which cause us to persist in doing things that may eventually hurt us. We actively pursue irrelevant or inaccurate information to justify our self-serving behaviors. We are also subject to various prejudices and heuristics, and influenced by our preconceptions and expectations, which also affect our environmental attitudes and behaviors.

Social-learning theorists as well as social and environmental psychologists have also studied the interplay between social and physical environments, human behaviors, and the cognitive processes that lie behind those behaviors. For example, although the relationship between attitude change and behavior change is not a strong one, it is often necessary to change people's attitudes before they will accept some prescribed or recommended change in their lifestyle (e.g., using seatbelts, refraining from smoking). Various educational and information-disseminating strategies can be used to bring about such attitude changes but, especially with addictive behaviors, some of which are so characteristic of our lifestyle, it is not easy. We know too that it is important, where possible, to remove the barriers to behavior change. Some barriers may lie within individuals (e.g., lack of knowledge, denial, selective attention, lack of commitment, anti-environmental attitudes and beliefs), while others may be social or environmental barriers (e.g., income level, education, size of household and size of dwelling, initial costs, and social stigma, to name a few).

Changes in lifestyle may also be encouraged by changing the incentives to people's behaviors. This might be accomplished in some cases by what Garrett Hardin (1968), in his now-famous article, "The Tragedy of the Commons"

referred to as "mutual coercion, mutually agreed upon" (p. 1247). Similar to Skinner's operant conditioning strategy, Hardin argued that it may be necessary for those in authority to use the force of law to safeguard the commons. When this method is used, for example, to legally limit family size or to punish industries and governments that allow pollution levels to exceed a certain standard, the "mutual coercion" method has not proven to be very effective. Also, using incentives to change urban dweller's use of the private automobile (rewards for transit use for example), are usually offset by the greater incentives of comfort, convenience, and the relative low cost of using the automobile—due largely to the fact that the real environmental, social, and economic costs of producing and using gasoline are not included in the price (Murphy & Delucchi, 1998). Clearly, some incentives work better than others but it is indeed a challenge to identify those incentives that are really effective in changing our wasteful, consumer-driven lifestyles and habits.

Other Major Contributing Theories

Although these major theoretical approaches in psychology have much to contribute to our understanding of and potential to change our environmentally destructive behaviors, ecopsychology and its philosophical, psychological, and practical tasks (Fisher, 2002), have been much more dramatically identified with the humanistic and holistic approaches in psychology. Most of the ecopsychology literature currently available emphasizes a New Age spirituality, along with gestalt, transpersonal, and/or a Jungian depth psychology perspectives. Influenced by Native spirituality as well as Eastern religions (especially Hinduism, Taoism, and Buddhism), and by North American conservationism, Deep Ecology and ecofeminism, this approach developed in reaction to the Western worldview as well as the reductionism of scientific psychology and capitalist economics.

Deep Ecology (Naess & Rothenburg, 1989) is a nature-centered paradigm that is much more a psychology and a religion than an ecology. It has a unique philosophy and worldview, as well as a prescribed lifestyle. For example, it stresses the intrinsic equality and value of all non-human species rather than their usefulness for human purposes (Gardner & Stern, 1996). Proponents of this view tend to agree with White's (1967) critique of the Judeo-Christian belief in the biblical

creation account, which he understood as endorsing an anthropocentric dominance and ownership of all of non-human creation. White had argued that this belief is the root cause of current environmental problems. This thesis has been largely discredited given the more general awareness of the pro-environmental biblical emphasis on stewardship of the earth's resources. However, the holistic approaches of Deep Ecology go much farther in emphasizing an ecocentric reverence for the land, the air and the water and equality among all aspects of the created world: human, animal, plant, microbe, air, water and soil. So too, the gestalt and transpersonal approaches articulate a rather pantheistic religious worldview, rather than a unique psychological approach.

One hypothesis supported by many humanistic ecopsychologists is the Gaia Hypothesis. The central feature of this hypothesis, named after Gaia, the Greek goddess of the earth, is that the intricate and complex interplay between organic and inorganic systems in nature is a homeostatic relationship that allows the earth, its atmosphere and all its creatures, to function as one gigantic living being. Roszak (1992) refers to this living creature as "anima mundi," a single being with feelings, intelligence and soul. No one creature or part of the system is seen as more important than any other. Various species—including the dinosaurs and, in the future perhaps humans, through their self-destructiveness—may be lost, but Gaia will evolve and live on, possibly with a new, non-human, dominant species. According to this perspective, through our own irresponsible activity, human beings have created "Gaia's disease." Global warming, for example, is referred to as Gaia's fever, water pollution as her acid indigestion, and ozone depletion as her skin condition.

Aizenstat (1995) extends Jung's concept of the human collective unconscious to a "consideration of the psyche of non-human experience," something he refers to as the "world unconscious" (p. 95). The world unconscious focuses on the "inner natures of the world's organic and inorganic phenomena" (p. 96), and encourages "an active psychological relationship" between humans and all other species and other non-living aspects of the world. Following this perspective, Conn (1995) argues that it is possible for those who are consciously aware of their deep and essential connections with other things and beings in the world, to feel "the pain of the earth" (p. 161). Thus, for example, Conn argues

that we need to be so connected with the earth and its inhabitants that we hurt when the earth hurts, experience the pain the grass feels when heavy footsteps crush it, and empathize with the suffering of Burrowing Owls as their numbers are depleted by habitat destruction (e.g., logging).

The humanistic ecofeminist perspective combines concerns about global and regional environmental problems with concerns about sexism and masculine domination of both women and of the environment. "Both problems ... reflect the Western male paradigm ... that stresses dichotomy, hierarchy, discrimination, domination, and exploitation" (Gardner & Stern, 1996, p. 55). Ecofeminists are critical of the Freudian concept of nature as feminine and they are especially critical of Western science and technology as male-dominated and patriarchal both towards women and the environment, and as justifying the exploitation of both. Ecofeminists offer instead an environmental paradigm that emphasizes the interconnectedness and sanctity of all life forms, and the creativity, sustainability, productivity, and bountifulness of nature (Gardner & Stern, 1996).

Roman Catholic theologian Thomas Berry believes that we need a radical new religion, one that includes an environmentally sound worldview and creation story (Gardner & Stern, 1996). This new religion will be earth-centered rather than human-centered, will emphasize the sacredness of the earth and the interrelatedness and interdependency of all living things, a view that is already found in many aboriginal and traditional cultures (Berry, 1988). However, Berry also wants to incorporate modern scientific ecology along with Native spiritual earth-values. The combination of traditional beliefs and values with science, Berry believes, will provide a radical new understanding of the oneness of all things and demonstrate intelligence in nature's design (Berry, 1988).

In summary, the gestalt, depth psychology, and ecofeminist approaches to humanistic ecopsychology argue that healing the damage that we have done to our planet requires more than a behavioral or cognitive shift. It also requires a shift in our perceptions of the world (gestalt perspective) and in our consciousness and spirituality (ecofeminist and Jungian emphases). Humanists argue that we must move from an emphasis on our personal self to an "ecological self." This requires that we also shift from our information-based, scientific awareness

of the planet to an experiential identification with and deep appreciation for the planet; from behaving on the world to being in it and in unity or harmony with it. It is a shift from head and hand to heart and soul. The lifestyle prescribed by humanistic ecopsychologists involves putting ourselves in situations that allow us to experience the natural world through wilderness experiences (such as a "vision quest") where one might encounter a mystical union with the planet, or through more common earth-connecting experiences such as gardening, walks in the park, outdoor meditation, nature art, and poetry. Undertaking projects that address global or regional ecological problems and doing them as part of our spiritual work is also recommended. So too is scaling down and practicing sufficiency; living simply and thankfully with less.

A Christian Response

How do we address these secular and humanistic psychological and practical perspectives in ecopsychology from a Christian point of view? Certainly we are called to be creatively busy in God's creation, imaging God's care for His garden. We are called to be prophetic about and to live as models of God's command "to act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with ... God" (Micah 6:8). We are challenged by God to renew that which we have broken, and to be redemptively busy transforming our lives, individually and collectively as a culture, in all of our coming and going in creation, so that all of God's creation may praise Him. Can psychology, especially the insights of ecopsychology, help us in this task? I believe it can.

Our estrangement from God and our determination to follow false gods can help explain our often selfish and destructive relationship with nature. Many insights gained from mainstream psychology are helpful in describing just how we go about this. Freud explained rather well I think, the roots of our Western alienation from nature and our "boomsterish" determination to dominate, possess and use without restraint that which God has provided for all His creatures. Our use of various defense mechanisms as well as the behavioral concept of intermittent reinforcement go a long way to explain our blind pursuit of material wealth at the earth's expense and by the exploitation of many developing nations. Many insights about human social behavior are also helpful in explaining our self-serving behavior in relation to

the rest of creation. Cognitive psychology points out the often irrational thoughts that characterize our wastefulness and destructiveness.

While a number of useful ideas about how we might use psychology to bring about a change in our eco-unfriendly behavior have also been put forth by mainstream psychology, the more prominent interventions in ecopsychology come from the gestalt and transpersonal schools. Thus, much of the ecopsychology literature describes our spiritual oneness with nature and prescribes a variety of nature encounter experiences as the way for us to heal the split between the planet and ourselves. Thus, the humanistic approach in ecopsychology has identified an important aspect of what's wrong with the way we now live in the world. It is a question of who or what we will serve. However, the spirit god that New Age humanism seeks to serve in nature is also as false as the consumerist god it challenges. The answer provided by these humanistic ecopsychologists is that it is ourselves and the spirit within the natural world that we need to learn to worship, is false. There is only one God, the Creator, Redeemer and Renewer of all creation. In all of our activity in creation and on behalf of the creation, we are called to serve God and God alone.

Although the transpersonal/humanistic approach is deeply flawed, it has some value in the emphasis it places on our need to be in a renewed relationship with nature. From a Christian perspective, this means that we need to recapture and live out our God-given mandate to be stewards of the earth, to work and keep the creation. In order to do so, we must live much more in harmony with it. Indeed, as the humanists point out, we must seek to understand creation/nature from more than a strictly scientific, technological and self-serving perspective. But do we need to worship the ground, the trees, and the grass we walk on or live as if we humans are but one species in a brotherhood/sisterhood of all living things? Of course not! But we are called to understand and deeply appreciate the trees and their place in God's creation order, to conserve and plant them, and to use them wisely. We are also called to appreciate, protect and live sustainably on the soil from which we are made and on which we live, grow our food and our grasses and flowers, and build our homes and our workplaces. And we are mandated to live in a loving, respectful relationship with the creation that God has placed us in as His image-bearers and fellow gardeners, until Christ returns.

To serve God as His stewards of the earth and to learn to live sustainably on the earth until the Lord's return, there is so much to do and the obstacles seem at times overwhelming. Ecopsychologists have recognized that the environmental problems we are experiencing today, and those predicted for our future, are deeply spiritual as well as psychological problems. Ecopsychologists also recognize that psychology may offer a variety of useful perspectives and tools in our efforts to live responsibly in the world. It is our task as Christians to redeem that message and, as Christian (eco)psychologists, to articulate, model, and promote a way of living in the world that honors and praises God, together with all of creation.

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