

Foundations of Ecopsychology

- 1. The Earth is a living system. Human beings are fundamentally interconnected with the earth and with all life. Neither the Earth's problems or humanities can be resolved without taking full account of this interconnection.*
- 2. Ecopsychology seeks to heal the alienation between person and planet, and to establish a healthy relationship between the two. The needs of the person are the same as the needs of the planet. The rights of the person are the same as the rights of the planet.*
- 3. Rather than viewing the ecological dilemma as a crisis 'out there', in our physical environment, Ecopsychology recognizes that human consciousness is intricately involved in creating and healing the ecological crisis. We are in a crisis of 'soul' and 'spirit'. There is a 'screaming' link between pervasive personal dysfunction and the ecological crisis.*
- 4. Ecopsychology calls for a new cosmology that embraces scientific models and understandings, spiritual teachings, ancient wisdom, and the land-based and non-Western knowledge of indigenous cultures.*
- 5. Ecopsychology calls for a profound revisioning of mental health and human consciousness. Today's dominant models of human consciousness and therapy are pathogenic and define the human being as an isolated, separate entity living in a purposeless, mechanical universe. A new vision of sanity and a new reality principle is needed. The psychology professions and the redefinition of sanity and mental health. Finding a larger context for its theory and practice: including the biosphere and Gaia. Hillman analogy of doing therapy in the below cabin of a sinking ship. Developing a sense of relational mutuality, a feel for permeable boundaries where we recognize that we are the world and the world is on fire.*

There is only one core issue for all of psychology. Where is the me? Where does the 'me' begin, stop? Where does the 'other' begin? Where does psyche stop and matter begin? The deepest levels of the psyche merge with the biological body (Freud) and the physical stuff of the world (Jung). The cut between the self and natural world is arbitrary. An individual's harmony with his/her 'own deep self' requires both a journey to the interior and a harmonizing with the environmental world.
- 6. The drive to live in harmony with the natural world and its rhythms is deeply imbedded within us. Suppression of that drive is just as disorienting and damaging as suppression of other human needs. The core of the mind is the ecological unconscious and suppression of this is the deepest root of madness in industrial society; open access to the ecological unconscious is the path to sanity. Wild, essential self must be recognized.*

The merger of psyche and nature has implications. The 'bad' place I am in may refer not only to a depressed mood, it may refer to a sealed up office, a set-apart suburban sub-division, or the traffic jam I commute in between the two.
- 7. The very notion of sanity must be redefined to include our planetary home. Today's psychology and therapy 'stop at the city limits, as if the soul might be saved while the biosphere crumbles'. We need an environmentally based definition of mental health. What would a psychology look like that is based on an ecocentric worldview rather than an egocentric one? By helping people adapt to a destructive society, are we doing more harm than good? Ecopsychology is an effort to salvage the more intimate bond between the ego and the world about it as the raw material of a new reality principle. The self with a permeable boundary whose skin and behavior are soft zones contacting the world instead of excluding it. The psyche is rooted inside a greater intelligence once known as the anima mundi. At its deepest level, the psyche remains sympathetically bonded to the Earth that brought us into existence.*
- 8. Ecopsychology embraces the goals of gender equality, racial equality, and cultural justice (honoring and learning from non-western cultures and indigenous peoples of the world). Multi-culturalism is a key foundation of this field. Ecopsychology's success will depend upon its ability to construct a genuinely multicultural self and a global society without racism. The field is limited now to its Eurocentric perspective and The Wonder Breeding of America.*
- 9. Ecopsychology deeply questions the essential sanity of our gargantuan urban-industrial culture, whether capitalistic or collectivistic in its organization. But it does so without necessarily rejecting the technological genius of our species or some life-enhancing measure of the industrial power we have assembled. EP is post-industrial, not anti-industrial in its social orientation. Each stage of human development and progress must transcend and include the previous stages and understandings.*