

## **ECOPSYCHOLOGY PRINCIPLES**

*Our scientists seek a Grand Unified Theory that will embrace all things, all forces, all time and matter. In the past they have found no place for themselves in that unity. But their painstaking study of nature over the generations—a labor of honest inquiry and intellectual passion—has finally given the questing mind a significant status in the universe. What unity ultimately requires is closure. The circle of scientific theory comes round like the alchemical snake that bites its tail. What is must at last be known. Perhaps that is what underlies the eager unfolding of the natural hierarchy from the Big Bang to the human frontier: substance reaching out hungrily toward sentience.*

*Oddly, this seems to have been better known by prescientific humans who worked from myth, image, ritual. If ecopsychology has anything to add to the Socratic-Freudian project of self-knowledge, it is to remind us of what our ancestors took to be common knowledge: there is more to know about the self, or rather more self to know, than our personal history reveals. Making a personality, the task that Jung called ‘individuation,’ may be the adventure of a lifetime. But the person is anchored within a greater, universal identity. Salt remnants of ancient oceans flow through our veins, ashes of expired stars rekindle in our genetic chemistry. The oldest of the atoms, hydrogen—whose primacy among the elements should have gained it a more poetically resonant name - is a cosmic theme; mysteriously elaborated billions-fold, it has created from Nothing the Everything that includes us.*

*When we look out into the night sky, the stars we see in the chill, receding distance may seem crushingly vast in size and number. But the swelling emptiness that contains them is, precisely by virtue of its magnitude, the physical matrix that makes living intelligence possible. Those who believed we were cradled in the hands of God have not been so very wrong.*

*All this belongs to the principles of ecopsychology, but not in any doctrinaire or purely clinical way. Psychiatry is best played by ear. It is after all a matter of listening to the whole person, all that is submerged, unborn, in hiding: the infant, the shadow, the savage. The list of principles we finish with here is merely a guide, suggesting how deep that listening must go to hear the Self that speaks through the self.*

*1. The core of the mind is the ecological unconscious. For ecopsychology, repression of the ecological unconscious is the deepest root of collusive madness in industrial society; open access to the ecological unconscious is the path to sanity.*

*2. The contents of the ecological unconscious represent, in some degree, at some level of mentality, the living record of cosmic evolution, tracing back to distant initial conditions in the history of time. Contemporary studies in the ordered complexity of nature tell us that life and mind emerge from this evolutionary tale as culminating natural systems within the unfolding sequence of physical, biological, mental, and cultural systems we know as ‘the universe.’ Ecopsychology draws upon these findings of the new cosmology, striving to make them real to experience.*

*3. Just as it has been the goal of previous therapies to recover the repressed contents of the unconscious, so the goal of ecopsychology is to awaken the inherent sense of environmental reciprocity that lies within the ecological unconscious. Other therapies seek to heal the alienation between person and person, person and family, person and society. Ecopsychology seeks to heal the more fundamental alienation between the person and the natural environment.*

*4. For ecopsychology, as for other therapies, the crucial stage of development is the life of the child. The ecological unconscious is regenerated, as if it were a gift, in the newborn's enchanted sense of the world. Ecopsychology seeks to recover the child's innately animistic quality of experience in functionally ‘sane’ adults. To do this, it turns to many sources, among them the traditional healing techniques of primary people, nature mysticism as expressed in religion and art, the experience of wilderness, the insights of Deep Ecology. It adapts these to the goal of creating the ecological ego.*

*5. The ecological ego matures toward a sense of ethical responsibility with the planet that is as vividly experienced as our ethical responsibility to other people. It seeks to weave that*

*responsibility into the fabric of social relations and political decisions.*

*6. Among the therapeutic projects most important to ecopsychology is the re-evaluation of certain compulsively 'masculine' character traits that permeate our structures of political power and which drive us to dominate nature as if it were an alien and rightless realm. In this regard, ecopsychology draws significantly on some (not all) of the insights of ecofeminism and Feminist Spirituality with a view to demystifying the sexual stereotypes.*

*7. Whatever contributes to small scale social forms and personal empowerment nourishes the ecological ego. Whatever strives for large-scale domination and the suppression of personhood undermines the ecological ego. Ecopsychology therefore 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. Ecopsychology is postindustrial not anti-industrial in its social orientation.*

*8. Ecopsychology holds that there is a synergistic interplay between planetary and personal well-being. The term 'synergy' is chosen deliberately for its traditional theological connotation, which once taught that the human and divine are cooperatively linked in the quest for salvation. The contemporary ecological translation of the term might be: the needs of the planet are the needs of the person, the rights of the person are the rights of the planet.*

[from Roszak, T. (1992). *The Voice of the Earth: An Exploration of Ecopsychology*. Epilogue, pp. 319-321]