

# **The transcendent function in ecopsychology: Intra-psychoic conflict resolution in wilderness therapy**

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## **Abstract**

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Theodore Roszak's conception of ecopsychology (including his eight basic principles) recognises the importance of an individual's ecosystem or environment on interpersonal connections and intra-psychoic processes. Ecopsychology also acknowledges the commonplace role of bipolarity, contrast, and conflict in nature, between individuals or groups, and within an individual. This paper, thus, begins by arguing that bipolarity, contrast, and conflict, are consistent phenomena for natural entities, such as between and within non-human-animals, and between and within human-animals. Nonetheless, the conflict within human-animals, or individuals, is the primary focus of this paper. This conflict within an individual, expressed in terms of ecopsychology, is between one's unconscious and conscious mind. This paper continues, arguing that Carl Jung's transcendent function model, which is introduced as a third position, retaining aspects of both sides of the unconscious and conscious, may be used to resolve inner (ecological) unconscious conflicts. The transcendent function is explored in terms of drawings, dreams and, more specifically, wilderness therapy, a phylum of ecotherapy. In wilderness therapy, the unconscious mind is symbolically expressed in terms of nature – and that which it invokes in us in our non-urbanised environment. The transcendent function manifests as a conflict resolution state, following a thoughtful conscious reflection and interpretation of our wild unconscious.

**Keywords:** conflict resolution, ecopsychology, ecological unconscious, transcendent function, wilderness therapy

## **Introduction**

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This paper will initially define, briefly, Theodore Roszak's (1933-2011) ecopsychological paradigm. This paper continues, arguing that bipolarity, contrast, and conflict, are consistent phenomena for natural entities, such as between and within non-human-animals, and between and within human-animals. It is important to note, however, that the conflict within human-animals, or individuals, is the primary focus of this paper. Based on ecopsychology, the conflict within an individual is between one's unconscious and conscious mind. This paper argues further that Carl Jung's transcendent function model may be used as a third position, retaining aspects of both the unconscious and conscious, in order to resolve inner (ecological) unconscious conflicts. The transcendent function, however, is explored in terms of drawings, dreams and, more specifically, wilderness therapy, a kind of ecopsychology or ecotherapy. In wilderness therapy, nature provides us with a means to express the unconscious mind. It is argued, then, that the transcendent function manifests as a state of internal conflict resolution, permitting and harnessing conscious reflection of our wild unconscious to bolster intra-psychic wellness. What is ecopsychology?

## **Ecopsychology must be defined, naturally**

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Theodore Roszak (1992), who popularised the term 'ecopsychology', defines this relatively new discipline as a combination of ecology and psychology. Ecopsychology is, then, the combined environmental and human balance, and the protection of both, added to which are political aspirations to uphold healthier ecosystems and societal human psyches. Wilderness therapy is a phylum of ecotherapy or nature-based psychotherapy in which ecotherapy is the treatment process of the discipline of ecopsychology (Tarkan, 1997).

Roszak (1992) listed eight principles as the foundation of ecopsychology. First, at the mind's core is the ecological unconscious, the repression of which has led to 'insanity' within industrialised society. Second, the ecological unconscious – at some level – represents the living record of the universal evolutionary development of cosmology, physics, chemistry, biology, physiology, and psychology, with which we need to get in contact. Third, most therapies attempt to reduce the isolation between people, their families, and society, whereas ecopsychology attempts to additionally heal the fundamental isolation between person and nature. Fourth, healing techniques to recover one's animistic quality within the ecological unconscious, to enhance the ecological ego, include religion, art, drawings, dreams, experiencing the

wilderness, and the insights of deep ecology. Deep ecology is a contemporary ecological and environmental philosophy that advocates the innate value of human- and non-human-animals, as well as other living entities, regardless of their utility to humankind. In addition, deep ecology advocates environmental ethics, natural interconnectedness, wildlife conservation, human population control, and simple standards of living (Barry & Frankland, 2002). Fifth, the ecological ego matures in terms of a sense of responsibility toward policy, the natural environment, and other human beings. Sixth, ecopsychology attempts to demystify masculine and feminine stereotypes, to re-evaluate political structures and policy, and the domination of nature, by drawing on some insights from ecofeminism (see Biehl, 1991). Seventh, ecopsychology questions the extent to which humans have become an urban-industrial culture, without rejecting some life-enhancing mechanisms of our species' technological genius. Last, ecopsychology holds that, synergistically, the rights and needs of humankind compliment the rights and needs of our planet.

Ecopsychology, then, is essentially the idea that human beings can be motivated and reassured by nature, their primary landscape, even though the chaos of urban cities have influenced the means to achieve understanding and growth (Roszak, Gomes & Kanner, 1995). In ecotherapy, as opposed to most other therapies, connections between humankind and other forms of life, such as animals and plants, and various environmental ecosystems, are considered along with the intra-psyche component and connections between individuals (Clinebell, 1996). Hence, ecopsychology, its basis, reflects upon these ancient connections long since repressed, and asserts the necessity of the survival of the environmental world for the survival of humankind. Within the framework of ecopsychology, Roszak et al (1995) state that polar opposites are as commonplace and integral for the fabric of existence by way of production and/or continuation. Are the bipolarities, contrasts, or conflicts, between and within non-human-animals, a naturally occurring phenomenon?

## **Natural opposition**

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As is the case in virtually, if not all, societies, individuals encounter polar opposite concepts all the time. Numerous examples of this phenomenon exist: masculinity versus femininity, good versus evil, normal versus abnormal, and native versus foreign. Juxtaposing notions are also present within alternate conceptual frameworks. For example, one may consider the conscious versus the unconscious, the physical versus the meta-physical, or natural phenomena versus unnatural phenomena. According to the ecopsychology model, nature itself displays a basic law of contrast.

For example, during most actions resulting in biological reproduction in humans and other species, male and female sexual organs produce substances that fuse to bring about life and eventually death, another oppositional conception (i.e., life versus death). Additionally, following death, other forms of life are able to emerge functioning in cohesion with the law of energy conservation, which states that matter cannot be created nor destroyed, but merely changes from one form to another. In essence, then, the continuation of various species and even terrestrial existence itself may rest upon bipolarity.

It is acknowledged, however, that not all life forms make use of bipolarity for reproduction or continuation, or even have the need for an oppositional sexually predisposed mate. For example, a naturally occurring hermaphroditic disposition – the possession of male and female sexual organs – can arise in numerous species, both plant and animal (Dreger, 2000). However, even sequential hermaphrodites (organisms that are one sex at birth but change to another in later life – Warner, 1975) or synchronous hermaphrodites (organisms born with both sexual organs – Angeloni, Bradbury & Charnov, 2002) have bipolarity. Within the sequential group the desire for procreation can be strong enough for individuals in a species, such as clownfish, to develop those sexual characteristics required for copulation opposite to the ones they have had. In the synchronous group procreation is necessary to such a degree that two of this group, such as banana slugs, intertwine to impregnate each other. Additionally, Kolodny, Masters and Johnson (1979) discern that all human beings were hermaphroditic or, more technically, undifferentiated at the fetal stage, possessing Wolffian and Müllerian ducts and a genital tubercle. Leonard (2002) suggests approximately one in two-hundred thousand individuals will be born a hermaphrodite, either partially or completely developed. In this case the requirement for reproduction, if possible, would be the sexual organ(s) opposite to the dominant or functional one(s). In botany, plants that have both staminate (or pollen-producing male parts) and carpelate (or seed-producing female parts) are considered hermaphroditic, and are still capable of reproduction (Ashman, 1994).

The point is this: even though in some species an organism may not have a fixed sex (but still require a mate of the opposite persuasion), or may be of both sexes (but still require an intertwining of oppositional sexual organs, or simply possess opposite sexual organs to self-procreate), those oppositional forces are still necessary. Bipolarity is thus required for the continuation of all existence even if it appears more unorthodox than the norm. This means that hermaphroditic species in any form may be a fine representation of the transcendent function in terms of a

naturalistic frame of reference. In other words, hermaphroditic dispositions in natural reproduction may symbolise the transcendent function or a completely new, third position for reconciliation (Miller, 2000). It is thus argued that the presence of polar opposites between and within non-human-animals persists as a naturally occurring phenomenon. Does this notion of bipolarity, contrast, and/or conflict, remain between and within human-animals?

## **Us versus them**

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One can well ask what this transcendent function is, and how it relates to human beings. It is clear that an understanding of the natural disposition of bipolarity is necessary to explain the transcendent function as it relates to humans, as being a natural part of life. Disagreement and conflict between groups, tribes, nations, ethnicities, and religious groups, etc., have occurred throughout history. For example, the Egyptian enslavement of the Hebrews; between the Romans and those peoples they conquered; United States President Harry S. Truman's bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945; Nazi concentration camps; colonialists enslaving the indigenous peoples of Africa; civil war in the Congo; civil war between the Northern and Southern states of the United States, etc. The list of conflicts appears endless. The notion of a transcendent function, which involves oppositional constructs (Miller, Jung & Chodorow, 2004), can emerge as a means to effect reconciliation and conflict resolution between groups of humans.

Arguments and the divergence between or oppositional perspectives of groups of people have certainly not been resolved or reconciled at the same level of the argument itself (Roszak et al, 1995). For example, the conflict between Israel and Palestine diverges, reaching a tenor of argument that expresses the view that one side is at fault as the other side has attacked before, thus 'justifying' subsequent attacks. It is difficult, therefore, to find the solution to the ongoing strife. For one side to overthrow the other would not augur well for a true reconciliation. If, however, both sides at a higher level than that at which the divergence had begun, take responsibility for the events that befall them, a truce and reconciliation may ensue, incorporating remnants of aspects advantageous to both states (Miller, 2000). The transcendent function can be used for the purpose of conflict resolution between two opposite perspectives or conceptions at a new, third level, between groups. The question then remains: how does bipolarity, contrast, and conflict, or even the transcendent function, relate to an individual person?

## **The struggle within**

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In order to answer this question as to the internal struggle or conflict in an individual it is necessary to address the nature of the individual. According to Cambrey (2004), the dominant drive of the individual human psyche is to strive towards individuation, wholeness or completeness as a being (Jung, 1968; Hillman, 1997). This can be prevented by problematic occurrences within intra-psyche processing which may occur due to conflict or insufferable divergence within the psyche (Stein, 2006). The two oppositional forces involved in this conflict and that make up the psyche are the conscious and the unconscious in their entirety (Young-Eisendrath & Dawson, 1997). The conscious is distinct from the unconscious, and it is where surface level processing, such as planned action or calculation, occurs.

Conversely, the (ecological) unconscious is a proverbial warehouse of vast quantities of knowledge and imagery, unrestricted in terms of cosmology, by the history of human lineage (Jung, Adler & Hull, 1981; Roszak, 1992; Sabin, 2002). It holds the original proposal for humankind as a species and maintains the evolutionary steps taken as a species (principle two: Roszak, 1992). Like many other life forms, humans manifest information from previous generations by RNA (or ribonucleic acid) which, essentially, are messengers to our DNA (or deoxyribonucleic acid) structure (Lolle, Victor, Young & Pruitt, 2005). Thus, the primordial composition of humankind may reside within us even taking alterations in our body structure and other biophysical ties into consideration, such as prefrontal cortex developments. To gain the ability to access that vast storage of primal information could be advantageous, not only for the individual but also for a cohesive society. What can be accessed in the primal unconscious does not have to be abandoned or cause fear, as one may transcend the consciousness boundary to receive unconscious wisdom to sustain equilibrium within the human psyche.

The two oppositional forces of the conscious and unconscious lend virtue to the idea of a conflict within a single individual, and the resolution of these forces by means of the transcendent function, which shall be further explained. When the internal disagreement becomes overwhelming and conflicts seem unable to be resolved at the same level at which they were started (as discussed earlier), the possibility as an alternative or more agreeable means of resolution is necessary and desirable. This third or symbolic position acts as an intermediary function – an integrating function – to promote healing between the conscious and unconscious conflict, and retains elements of both (Papadopoulos, 2006). Ineffectual integration such as overlapping the conscious onto the unconscious or vice versa, excludes part of one of the

positions. In this regard, one may introduce an analogy to elucidate the danger that arises when one side overtakes or overlaps the other. According to the foundation myth of Rome, the twins Romulus (approximately 771-717 BCE) and Remus (approximately 771-753 BCE) were the founders of the city (Kahn, Hederman & Conrad, 2000). Following conflict over the site and name of the city, Romulus violently murdered his brother, Remus. After Romulus named Rome, he created powerful legions and abducted women from neighbouring regions to propagate his idealised nation. This pattern of conflict and jealousy leading to betrayal, injury, and even death is a familiar one in human history. To avoid and resolve conflict between the conscious and unconscious, the maintenance and consistency of a balanced integration and not the dominance of the one over the other, within the human psyche, is necessary.

In this regard, a symbolic fusion or transformation on a higher level seeks to include both conscious and unconscious – a shared position. According to Cambray (2004), the capability of this new position to unify the dichotomous concepts of the conscious and the unconscious is what Jung describes as the transcendent function. This approach not only puts an end to the intolerable divergence within the psyche, but also satisfies the innate primary goal of the psyche to be complete as a being (Miller et al, 2004). The transcendent function thus rectifies those problematic occurrences within intra-psyche processing. Analogous to the transcendent function's unifying capability is the conception of the Roman mythological characters, Castor and Pollux. The same characters are known in Greek mythology as Kastor (meaning 'he who excels') and Polydeuces (meaning 'very sweet') (Hamilton, 1999). Castor was a formidable foe face-to-face and Pollux, a fiercely prevailing enemy on a horse. Although the twins were unequal in their abilities, together they were a commanding force when in battle. The inabilities of the one were counterbalanced by the abilities of the other. Thus, a new position or the combination of polar opposites became a dominant force.

Based on the above it is clear that in order to remove the oppositional barrier between the conscious and unconscious one cannot censure the conscious or the unconscious. One should rather acknowledge the tension, and the union formed between the two, in which the unconscious presents a narrative to the conscious (Brehony, 1996). According to Roszak et al (1995), the ecopsychological experience attempts to draw out and on those past-generational modes of being, namely our ecological unconscious, into a conscious state of realism and reflection (Hillman, 1997; Jung, 2003; Sabini, 2002). By condoning the integration of these two, their

combined propensities introduce the transcendent function. This transcends information, creating a bridge between the conscious and unconscious, in which an individual can organically change their stance or viewpoint, without the need to destroy one or the other, unless desired (McWilliams, 2004). A more lucid explanation of this transcendent function is offered below.

An optimal visual representation of the notion of the transcendent function may be seen in the well-known Yin-Yang symbol. The Taijitu or Yin and Yang sign, as it is referred to in English, originates from ancient Chinese philosophy and literally means 'diagram of the supreme ultimate' (Palmer, 1998). This symbol communicates the processes of the universe. The outer circumference depicts all conceivable views of experiences and states of phenomena. The black shape (or yin) and the white shape (or yang) represent dichotomous aspects that interconnect within the circumference, creating a resultant expression. However, both shapes retain a minor quantity of the other within its realm. Additionally, each state is unable to survive without the presence of the other.

The circumference of the symbol may represent the entire psyche of the individual, whereby one shape may depict the conscious while the other depicts the unconscious. There exists a union of the two forces, acknowledging both elements, without the overlapping of one over the other. In addition, the inclusion of the opposite force within its own construct illustrates the ability to view the opposite perspective with respect to its own, whilst the circular nature of the design demonstrates the ability to continuously alternate between viewpoints. It is also interesting to note that earth and water elements typically symbolise the yin, and the elements of wind and fire typically symbolise the yang (Palmer, 1998). A harmonious balance is emphasised between the four commonly encountered elements of the globe. This is particularly significant in terms of the incorporation of the environment in the notion of the transcendent function, as will be expressed below.

Having defined the transcendent function, above, it is now necessary to establish how it can be evoked. It can be seen that there are, through symbolisation, numerous ways in which the transcendent function can be summoned in order to unite the conscious and unconscious by drawing the unconscious to consciousness. A symbol is any type of unit that, in association with something else, creates a new identity. Hence, by evaluating the link between a given symbol and one's unconscious thoughts and feelings, one can express that link in a form that the conscious will grasp (Jung, 1968). Examples of methods that may evoke the unconscious into consciousness, and thus, the transcendent function to resolve intra-psyche conflict,

include drawings, dreams, and the predominant focus here, the wilderness.

## **Drawing**

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According to Jung (1968), drawings of various kinds, are used as a means of unconscious expression, depicted pictorially, for conscious interpretation. Even from an early age, children may express their desire for the transcendent function by pictorially, and pre-verbally, expressing their unconscious, accompanied by a desire for a simple understanding. In fact, numerous psychotherapeutic forms and models for healthy cognitive, behavioural, and emotional development concur that the early life stages of childhood are vital for a healthy psyche in adulthood (Mash & Wolfe, 2005). Ecopsychology is in agreement with this conviction and suggests that attempts to express one's ecological unconscious can be witnessed in several childhood activities, such as drawing and role-play, which retain remarkable symbolic similarities, regardless of culture or geographic region (principle four: Roszak, 1992; and see Jung, 2003; Sabini, 2002). Moreover, a young child's love of nature and a desire to draw out the unconscious evoked by that interaction can readily be witnessed (Malchiodi, 2002). Urbanised concerns of the 'city dweller' appear vacant in the child-like natural demeanor but distinguishable in later years due to a repression of the ecological unconscious, the rise of the urban environment, and interactions of the adults within it. To be clear, the 'city dweller' is assumed not to automatically have an unhealthy psyche, but rather, he/she may facilitate a healthier intra-psychic awareness by exposure to a primordial setting, such as nature and the wilderness.

Jung (1968; also see Sabini, 2002) considered that drawings or mandalas represented the unconscious by way of symbols and symbolic imagery, and held that paintings of mandalas enabled him to identify psychological stressors and disorders and thus work towards wholeness in personality and completeness in the psyche. In order to reconnect the conscious and unconscious realm, mandalas were often used in therapeutic situations. Mandalas, meaning 'completion', are interlocking geometric shapes or figures that may be seen in drawings, sand paintings, and in nature under the microscope, for example, a snowflake (Moss, 2007). It symbolically represents the enormity and interwoven fabric of the universe from a human view and is utilised for meditation. In addition, the intent of mandalas is "to access progressively deeper levels of the unconscious, ultimately assisting the mediator to experience a mystical sense of oneness with the ultimate unity from which the cosmos in all its manifold forms arises" (Fontana, 2005: 10). By drawing out the unconscious aspects

of stressors represented to their consciousness within the mandalas drawn by his patients, the transcendent function or third view permitted the individual to witness, consciously, unconscious aspects and, thus, unify their psyche. Therefore, art therapy can be a means whereby the transcendent function may be observed. Additionally, this Jungian influence can be seen in an individual's interaction with their dreams, which Jung thought useful as opportunities to reconcile the conscious and unconscious (Hillman, 1997).

## **Dreaming**

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Throughout history, and myth and legend, numerous references have been made to the context and content of dreaming. For example, during the Bronze Age – the time of the Old Testament in Judeo-Christian theology – dreaming was a direct interaction and exchange of ideas with God. This view was subsequently dismissed during the Middle Ages due an understanding that all humans dream and the lack of selectivity involved in being able to directly communicate with the deity (Powell, 2000). Another example includes the Mojave people indigenous to the Colorado River (they know themselves as, 'the Aha macave': the 'people who live beside the river'). Dreaming and interpretation of dreams by the shaman (medicine man) or religious leader were the foundation of Mohave life. They believed that the shaman acquired the means of prediction and prophecy from dreams (Cushway & Sewell, 1994). Although the role of dreaming has varied over time and place, there is much certainty about its relevance.

Dreaming is a feature discerned as common to all humankind, in fact, to most mammals, and is predominantly experienced at the fifth stage of sleep or at the stage where Rapid Eye Movement (REM) takes place (Allison & Cicchitti, 1976). This phase arises between an hour-and-twenty minutes and an hour-and-forty minutes from the commencement of sleep (Toates, 2001). Although humans may not recall most of their dreams, for perhaps their plans for following the day disallow reflective contemplation (Zinker, 1978), they do serve several integral functions. One of these is cognitively, for as neural activity occurs in the brain during REM sleep the neural fibres may have the opportunity to strengthen. In addition, physiologically, the body is given time to minimise stimulus-response activity from the external world (Toates, 2001). The psychological significance of dreams needs to be established, however, as does the way in which dreaming is related to evoking the transcendent function

Great debate exists over the significance of dreams. Some scholars state that basic neural activation persists randomly via sensory capacities, being mostly the agitation

and neural firing of visual and auditory cortices (Hobson, 2002), while others believe dreaming is central to an unconscious representation and symbolism that can be accessed in the conscious realm (Boa, 1994). Accordingly, one may assess the symbolism in dreams uttered by the individual's unconscious and brought to the conscious level of accessibility. These unconscious primitive symbolic representations, then, are understood as the paramount approximate medium of articulation but may not be completely comprehended by consciousness at the time (Johnson, 1989). Some scholars think that the conscious reflection of the unconscious representations evokes the transcendent function (Miller et al, 2004). How this evocation occurs is presented in the following, a brief example of a dream and dream-like interpretation.

A man (who is receiving psychotherapy) embarks on a wilderness journey, as will be explained below, spending the night in a cave he comes upon. He finds a dry place to lay his sleeping gear, settles in, and falls asleep. That night he dreams that he was on a raft slowly drifting toward the edge of a waterfall. He has a paddle to direct the raft away from the direction of the current but it is covered with snakes and insects, like millipedes and hissing cockroaches. Even if he were to make use of the paddle, there are schools of piranhas in the river that could eat through the paddle and attack his hand. This situation prevails until the dreamer suddenly awakes. One may suggest that information is transferred to the man by symbols in his dream (Boa, 1994). The unconscious utilising symbolic-messaging transmits information to the conscious realm of the individual to be accessed and reflected upon, which is seldom expressible in logic or traditional linguistics.

Although the contents of dreams may be anarchic, chemically produced images or purposeful in their internal presentation, Clarkson (1989) mentions that humans' desire to address the content, to understand the substance of dreams, a partial reflector of their lives in order to gain an extensive overview of their entire existence. This is not very different from the Gestalt view that humans desire to fill a picture to make it full, and which acknowledges the meaningfulness of dreams at least in that sense (Perls, Hefferline & Goodman, 1951). When the hiker mentioned above understands his dream, he recognises that it has an encompassing theme, or rather conveys a message of victimisation. There is, however, no marginalisation of the man's personal experiences. He has been involved in a long and protracted divorce proceeding with financial complications integrated into the divorce agreement and his social isolation after his divorce plays an important role in his state of distress. The lengthy on-going worries and animosity that characterise the proceedings may

lead him to believe that no matter how hard he tries to finalise the matter, other issues will continue to arise. Continuous attacks from others lead him to attack himself, and, in turn, feel victimised by those around him, and even lash out at others. The dreamer needs to understand the blameworthiness he attributes to others in terms of an inversely proportionate concept as to personal responsibility. In other words, the more one accepts personal responsibility for one's life and choices made, the less one will blame others (and vice versa,) as the two are oppositional conceptions. In order to understand the interpretation of the dream one must look at the dream theory involved.

Jung's dream theory – described here with acknowledgement to Stevens (2001) – comprises several elements, and attempts to unify who it is that we think we are with who it is we actually are. The first idea is that dreams are a natural articulation of the unconscious that occurs autonomously from the conscious objective to dream. Secondly, dreams serve a compensatory function by instilling equilibrium in the completeness or wholeness of a person's psyche. That compensatory function may exist when displaying an opposite or emphasised role to the dreamer of how the conscious acts in everyday life. Thirdly, dreams contain actual archetypal symbols that can bring a transcendent function to the fore. According to Jung et al (1981), this presents itself as a conscious reflection and awareness of the dream, which is an unconscious entity, and rises to a higher realm in which one is able to reconcile seemingly divergent conceptions of oneself or events. At that point, the transcendent function enables this unified conception consisting of the viewpoint of both the unconscious, or dream-state, and the conscious, or non-dream-state.

## **Transcending the wild**

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In the same sense, the compensatory function of one's unconscious or dream-state correlating to one's conscious or non-dream-state is presumably mirrored within wilderness therapy, a phylum of ecotherapy as mentioned earlier, and a method which makes possible the evocation of the transcendent function (Davis-Berman & Berman, 1994; Hillman, 1997; Sabini, 2002). By seeing the wilderness as if it were a symbolism of the unconscious, the encounters in the wilderness, likened to the experience of dreaming, play a compensatory function to those accustomed to the urban lifestyle who have not reflected upon and been made aware of their archetypal primal unconscious (Chetwynd, 1982), thereby providing an opposite role or environment. This correlative outdoor experience of drawing the unconscious into consciousness calls to mind the transcendent function. This serves to assist in the

progression of an evolved and healthier state of the psyche. One should consider, however, that various therapeutic paradigms seek to revive the unconscious or unconscious memories and bring them to the forefront of consciousness to facilitate in the amelioration of the patient's mental state or psyche. What is it, then, that makes ecopsychology unique?

As is the case with most other paradigms, the effect of the amalgamation of the conscious and unconscious is sought-after in ecopsychology. The unique method, however, is to re-join the inhibited ecological unconscious, symbolic in the wilderness arena, with the urbanised, 'city dwelling' person's potentially less integrated and/or healthy psyche, which most other paradigms do not do (principle three: Roszak, 1992). Additionally, where other therapies seek to provide balance in relationships between individuals, parents and their children, and individuals within societal constraints, ecopsychology seeks to balance the forgotten relationship between human beings and their original environment, which would inevitably provide balance in those other areas as well (Clinebell, 1996). Why is the ecological unconscious drawn out in the wilderness?

According to Jung (1956), adventuring and experiencing nature or the wilderness has an inherent capability to echo and expose the primal unconscious. The reason for this is that within our unconscious the remains of evolutionary unconscious behaviours, values, and cognitions of original humankind are present (Jung, 2003; Sabini, 2002). The inhibition of that ecological unconscious leads to a functional insanity within the urban arena, which is a relatively new environment when one considers the length of time humankind has existed without such intra-psyche barriers (principle one: Roszak, 1992). To lessen this lunacy an individual is required to re-attach to the environment originally provided for humankind, and wake the ecological unconscious residing within. Thus, in the wilderness – which excludes the remnants of contemporary urbanised value systems producing influence and confusion – archetypal processes begin to manifest, drawn out from the unconscious. Within visitations to this realm, our ancestral behaviours and cognitions emerge in an appropriate setting, making capable the alteration of subconscious processes in consciousness before they return. The intra-psyche balance is reinstated, whereby new views of realness correlate with the continual newness and regeneration of the environment (Roszak et al, 1995). One needs to know if and how one can enter the wilderness and achieve this.

This achievement is possible if wilderness trails are constructed or not. In a constructed trail, each feature of the path may be meant to elicit, intentionally,

particular symbolic responses (Jung, 1956). Alternatively, as different aspects of the wilderness may have different meanings for different individuals, unconstructed trails may also prove effective in eliciting unconscious emotional responses, and transfer them to consciousness (Abram, 1996; Hillman, 1997). In either case, the hiker may be required to participate in his/her journey from a place of ignorance and mysticism regarding physical features of the trail, and thus, during, may or may not understand his/her own transformation. Accordingly, the trained analyst arbitrates the transcendent function for those in wilderness therapy and thus assists in reconciling the conscious and unconscious to formulate a higher or third position (Davis-Berman & Berman, 1994; Sabini, 2002). Wilderness therapy has been shown advantageous for reconciliation between and within oppositional groups, such as those of ex-combatants (Panoussian, 2007), and, for various individuals who were uplifted to broaden their personal successes (Henochsberg, 2007). A wilderness trail, therefore, can evoke the transcendent function successfully, but one still needs to know specifically how it may operate.

Presented below is an extensive example of how the transcendent function's healing qualities come to the fore when a constructed wilderness trail is utilised. The experiences of the dreamer-hiker, mentioned earlier, are alluded to here. It is important to be aware that the following case is based on an actual person who struggled deeply with his experiences. Permission to replicate his story was attained. He is in his late fifties, recently divorced after twenty-seven years of a mostly unsteady and strenuous marriage, particularly in its middle and later years. A specialist in ecopsychology may map the wilderness trail along the same path of the marriage. The length of the trail may even equate with one kilometre per year of marriage, thus twenty-seven kilometres. The trail may include many obstacles so that it may encourage primordial unconscious expression into conscious realisation to promote a healthier well-being (Davis-Berman & Berman, 1994; Sabini, 2002).

The journey may commence with wondrous serenity, near a lake or stream, eliciting a placid calming growth within the unconscious similar to the initial stages of what may have been a joyous union of two people in the marriage, flowing like a stream in the same direction toward the same goals and ideals for their lives together. Within the stream fluctuating variability, the initial excitement and unpredictability of the marriage may draw upon several unconscious predispositions.

This man ventures onward into the forest, encountering animals, demonstrating strength into regions where the terrain is more obtuse or less clear. Here there may be trepidation, the need for security, and uncertainty concerning whether his

expected wants would flourish despite his fears. The unconscious may ignite representations of a symbolic nature with that nature having to be faced. The numerous tasks that the dreamer-hiker undertakes and endures, as he ventures through the terrain, may draw into consciousness his intention at the beginning of his marriage to strive to create a home, a secure family, no matter the obstacles, and perhaps reveal a prior intense struggle in attempting to sustain such a familial ideal. The generations-old trees around him act in a cohesive and unified manner and represent his previous desire for a consistent, solid and interconnected spousal and family environment, so much so that soon into the marriage, his desire for children and a family arose.

Eventually, having traversed the forest he reached a mountain, climbed and conquered it. With a symbolic understanding of adhering to the earth, being part of the world, a family, his grounding set, and achieving heavenly acclaim in his work to sustain that secured family, a sacred and unworldly unconscious expression is reinforced into conscious comprehension. This mountain may depict the optimal points in the marriage, such as the birth of their children, advancement in work, satisfaction with his home life, societal encouragement, and a general sense of overall wellness.

The descent from the mountain, however, may be more strenuous than he had planned. Loose rocks and pebbles may draw to consciousness the symbolic representation recognised by his unconscious as instability, lack of control, and the need for additional support from friends or family. He may experience greater obstacles, such as boulders that need to be climbed in order to overcome them. The symbolic depictions exuded by his unconscious consistently emphasise the true struggle and difficulties he had to face in his marriage and the fear of it failing. If the timing were 'perfect' in the wilderness, harsh weather conditions would ensue, thereby adding to the stormy state of affairs of the marriage.

During his unsteady descent, he slips and falls. He may express emotions of extreme dissatisfaction with life, injustice, anger, and cries of victimisation. However, his slipping on a hard rock-strewn path is not the source of his extreme emotional outburst. Ecopsychology explains the action of slipping and the emotion expressed subsequently as a repetition of a pre-existing emotional configuration working internally (Stein, 1998). The emotional blueprint may be one that places fault on others, especially his former spouse, for unfortunate events during their marriage and after, adhering to a 'I am right, so everything that goes wrong is not my fault' policy. The divergence between his thoughts and feelings resulted in that unhealthy,

disproportionate expression of emotion (Roszak et al, 1995). Those emotional blueprints lay at the unconscious level but, at the breaking point of his outward emotional expression, it breached the surface of consciousness. At this point (and at many others along the way), he had the choice to reflect upon and alter his rather repetitive emotional blueprint before it returns to the unconscious level, to one of accepting responsibility or taking ownership of events without judging the perpetual 'wrongness' of others (Clinebell, 1996). Had he done so, the emotional configuration within his inner self would change and so would his emotional expression of similar future frustrations or injustices.

To further the arduous journey, perhaps an open, free-flowing cave could be introduced into the trail, as a closed cavern may engulf his intra-psychic growth. The outer regions of the cave may incorporate his consciousness and the inner, his unconsciousness (Davis-Berman & Berman, 1994). Inside the cave, his unconscious comprehension is brought forth to his conscious, as his consciousness is acclimatised to the environment. During this period, there are times of reflection of purpose and meaning on his capacity to escape the inadequacies of his marriage whilst secured by the overarching embrace of the cave. This is similar to the safety and council a confidant provided during the darker days of the marriage, and brings the man to tears, within the context of the anima, as the cave reminds him of the loneliness and sadness during those days (Sandford, 1980).

During the journey, he noticed increasingly that the land was polluted with litter. He became more and more certain that his journey had broadened his acknowledgement and conservation of nature, opening his eyes toward wasted opportunities in his life due to an inability to take ownership over his decisions and consequences, as well as the effect his behaviour has on others. Regardless of the magnitude of the task ahead of him, he began to pick up pieces of trash. Corresponding to a maturing ecological ego, he became deeply aware of that the destruction of the natural world might mean numerous other organisms' destruction (Barry & Frankland, 2002). He was accompanied by a healthier psyche, an advanced appreciation of the environment and of aspects that effect the environment negatively. He experienced, in a sense, a surge in his concern for himself, others, and for future generations (principle five: Roszak, 1992).

This type of ecological awareness stretches from governing policies and corporations to the individual. For example, the establishment in the United States of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in 1970 is an indication of an acknowledgement of the importance of environmental reservations and an ecological

awareness. Additionally, the production of chlorofluorocarbon-free (CFC-Free) refrigerators and aerosol cans, and a proliferation of companies that produce recycled paper, hybrid vehicles, and governmental water restrictions on usage, demonstrate a desire for environmental protection, and thus, a safeguard for our mental and physical survival. Groups such as Greenpeace and individuals who simply refuse to litter, disposing of their waste appropriately, illustrate the internal and external transfer of ecological recognition.

Finally, towards the end of the journey the dream-hiker arrives back at the stream. The stream begins to represent a symbol different to him from before. Perhaps, prior to the wilderness trail, he was only aware of their relationship on the surface, liken to the surface layer of the stream. However, following the wilderness trail, he became more aware of the unconscious processes occurring beneath the surface of his relationship, such as his blame of others building resentment in his spouse over years, liken to the deeper layers of the stream. As if reborn from the stream's power, he emerges glorious, thus engendering a greater general interconnection of his consciousness and unconscious. A clear depiction of the transcendent function thus has taken place, as has an overall move towards the re-connection within himself, between him and others, and between him and the environment, increasing personal empowerment and making possible a healthier psyche. It is noteworthy that the treatment that the psychologist enables individuals to make use of – by means of drawing, dreaming, and/or adventuring into the wilderness – is the development of the skill of transcendence. This enables them to gain insight into their unconscious experiences by comprehending the significance of and the rationale behind those experiences. One must ask how this process of transcending in the wilderness affected the dream-hiker.

Upon his return to his concrete living space, he stands in his garden, admiring with greater intensity, the wonder of nature. In the line of deep ecology, he believes that the living environment should be respected, which has also made him aware of his equal right to flourish. It is now not the expense of his plants, which catch his eye. He does not hope his neighbour will be jealous of his floral display this time. Rather, he now admires the orchids, as well as the simple, dry grass, the lacklustre, malnourished bushes, and the opportunity for growth. He no longer views them as external features to the self, but rather sees in them a closer connection to raw, natural, unvarnished, original humankind and his environment. According to McKean (2005), this interconnectedness or synergy between humankind and the environment describes the basis of ecopsychology (and principle eight: Roszak,

1992). Thus, provisions made available for humankind, such as nourishment and safety should be identically applied to the environment as both are considered interconnected (Warren, 2000).

It is necessary now to return to what our dream-hiker has experienced. While bathing and enjoying the benefits of modern sanitation, he is reminded of the stream he saw on his journey and he is now able to fondly reminisce about his ex-wife (Sandford, 1980) – ecopsychology is not, after all, against the notion or the presence of technology. It appreciates and embraces the advancements that humankind is capable of (principle seven: Roszak, 1992). If, for example, he were to slip and break his leg while on his outdoor therapeutic journey, he not only has the capability to create a protective splint from elements found in nature or from artificial, man-made equipment, but also may have learned how to do so via the internet and a smartphone. Ecopsychology is not against the idea of technology but does evoke the notion that people have become over-reliant technologically, and production-orientated. Humans have lost touch with the very nature they were originally joined with and with each other as sentient beings, as a result becoming largely disempowered by their technological and financially orientated dependence.

One could also say that the transcendent function has permitted the symbolic transfer and ability to recognise alternate viewpoints that arise from the conscious concrete abode and the unconscious untainted wilderness. In other words, the preservation of the memories of the good times he and his ex-wife enjoyed together were symbolic of his newly found enhanced interest in the preservation of the environment. This surge in feelings of affection for a woman he could formerly not think about without some distaste, and the environment about which he was ambivalent, as well as providing greater acceptance toward future vulnerabilities with other potential partners, lends itself to what is expressed in Roszak's sixth principle (1992): namely, that ecopsychology gives recognition and pays homage to ecofeminism.

Warren (2000) stated that ecofeminism, a term coined by Françoise d'Eaubonne in 1974, fused the notions of feminism with ecology or environmentalism. Essentially, this movement seeks to explore and deconstruct the relationship between the patriarchal dominance over women and the destruction of the environment and agriculture (Mies & Shiva, 1993). Basically, men's control of land ownership and their abusive methods of productivity had resulted in a patriarchal dominance of women and the environment. For example, the continued neglect and destruction of male-owned lands in Kenya led to relegating the female workers to less productive wage-earning lands (Thomas-Slayter & Rocheleau, 1995). Ecofeminist thinking

seeks not only to remove a restrictive male dominance of the environment and women, but also a linguistic connection, with references to ‘mother nature’ or ‘raping the land’, to promote relations between individuals, and between individuals and the environment (Mies & Shiva, 1993). Ecopsychology strives to eliminate stereotypical terminology and perspectives of nature with regards to ‘masculine’ and ‘feminine’ traits and readily demonstrates the necessity and inherent connection humankind shares with the environment (Roszak, 1992). The consequences of this will be a comprehension that, by protecting the environment, he will find a symbolic means to protect himself and others.

### **The transcendent fundamentals**

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A final examination of the transcendent function reveals the appearance of two complementary and vital features. Regardless of the situation in which it occurs – such as in drawings, dreams, and the wilderness – the notion of a new, third position of balance and a general understanding of the ‘poles’ or positions on either end exists. To extrapolate, the initial feature of the transcendent function appears to be the balancing of one’s psyche, likened to Aristotelian virtue ethics, which desires a unified or centred disposition. That is to say, virtue ethics considers being on either extreme side of a disposition as a vice or inopportune, whereas holding the balanced disposition between the two extremes to be the virtue (Hursthouse, 1999). Accordingly, the second feature of the transcendent function is to be able to determine the parameters or ‘poles’ from which one may view, and thus derive a balanced position. For example, virtue ethics may regard ‘cowardice’ as undesired and as much of a vice as ‘foolhardiness’. However, virtue ethics acknowledges the attainment of a centred, balanced, third disposition between these two generally understood extremes, such as ‘bravery’, as the virtue. Its similarity with ecopsychology then rests in the lack of preference for one extreme ‘pole’, such as a desire for domination of the conscious (or the unconscious). Rather the preference rests in the balanced psyche or unified position, enabled by the transcendent function, consisting of a metaphorical fusion of both elements. In that, the parameters of ‘consciousness’ at one end and the ‘unconscious’ at the other may be only generally understood, but when, for instance, the unconscious is viewed from the position of the conscious, a third position may develop being a deeper intrapsychic awareness and a greater integration of the person into wholeness.

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## Conclusion

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In conclusion, the paradigm of ecopsychology has been explained in terms of its treatment processes, such as wilderness therapy, in promoting and infusing the notions of human and environmental wellness. The ever-present phenomena of polar opposites, especially in nature, were emphasised in relation to the importance of continuation and reproduction. This bipolarity, contrast, and conflict, was brought forth to demonstrate the same oppositional forces within group conflicts and relied on the idea that a third, new position needed to be attained in order to resolve these conflicts. In this particular instance, the resolution-state in an individual person was established as the union of the potentially conflicting conscious and ecological unconscious, or dormant warehouse of ancestral predispositions, which together make up the human psyche (Roszak, 1992). The symbolic union, arising from an integration of these constructs, occurs at the transcendent function, permitting an appreciation of either construct from the point of view of the other, thereby prompting individuation (Jung, 1968; Hillman, 1997). By drawing out these unconscious archetypes, experienced as symbolic representations to the conscious, one is able to attain individuation upon reflection and subsequent re-emergences into the ecological unconscious realm. Numerous methods, such as drawings, dream interpretation and wilderness experiences provide for this internal resolution. Wilderness therapy exposes the various features in nature, and in turn, symbolic presentations hidden in the primal unconscious, to consciousness, for a healthier psyche. Benefits include recognition of the self and the anima/animus in relation to the environment, and the necessity for protection and conservation of these. Additionally, the eight principles mentioned by Roszak (1992) were integrated into this discussion. Therefore, by being able to establish a balanced, third position of the psyche as well as the ability to view situations from oppositional constructs, one is able by ecotherapy and other means culminating in the arousal of the transcendent function, to utilise and comprehend the symbolism that pertains to humankind's ecological wholeness.

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## Acknowledgements

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I wish to thank Professor Leslie Swartz, from the University of Stellenbosch, South Africa, for his courtesy, inspiration and expertise.

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