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How Integrative Psychotherapy Can Address the Anthropocene Crisis[1]

Brigitta Mowat

Integrative psychotherapist; Minster Centre, London

Summary

The main focus of this article is an attempt to address the questions of how and why the human species considers itself separate from ecosystems, and what needs to shift in our thinking and theorising so that we can be part of, rather than split off from, the more-than-human world. Four clinical vignettes serve to illustrate the interplay between the 'eco' and 'psycho' embedded in the socio-historical and clinical context. Suggestions regarding how psychotherapists and psychotherapy trainings could address the split between the human and the more-than-human world, and engage with the climate and ecological crisis, are proposed.

Keywords: ecosystem; more-than-human; climate and ecological crisis; ecological awareness; ecological collapse; apathy; social justice

Introduction

The greenhouse effect was first hypothesised by Joseph Fourier in the 1820s, and then John Tyndall in the 1860s. History shows that industrialisation was too much of a cultural priority to take any notice of these early warnings. Even though so many articles have been published since the 1960s warning humanity of the catastrophic consequences of a warming planet, evidently not enough is being done to cut CO_2 emissions.

How are people coping with the apparent political apathy that is failing to address the climate and ecological crisis and thus failing humanity? Droughts, rainfall and storms are increasing in both extent and ferocity, leading to serious flooding, wildfires and general devastation. Mental health issues are on the increase as the effects of planet warming are unfolding, causing death and displacement of many species, including humans.

The main focus of this article is that of addressing the questions why the human species has considered itself separate from ecosystems, and what needs to shift in our thinking and theorising so that we can be part of, rather than split off from, the more-than-human world.

I will use four vignettes, three from the literature and one from my own clinical practice, to explore the interplay between the 'eco' and 'psycho' in the clinical context. Two of the vignettes illustrate brief interactions between an ecologically aware client and a human-centric therapist dating back to 1995 and 2019 respectively. The third discusses an intervention between a human-centric client and an ecologically aware therapist dating back to 2008; and the fourth comprises an extract where both client and therapist have ecological awareness and are concerned about the climate and ecological crisis.

Suggestions are put forward as to how

psychotherapists and psychotherapy training could address the split between the human and the more-than-human world,[2] and I discuss why and how training syllabi and Standards of Education and Training documents (SETs) need to be updated.

Global Warming Has Been Known about for Decades

Reviewing the history of global warming, Richard Wiles (2018) found that the Stanford Research Institute had delivered a report to the American Petroleum Institute warning of the consequences of rising CO_2 levels back in 1968. The report stated that if left unchecked, they 'could bring about climatic changes' such as rising Earth temperatures, the melting of the Arctic ice cap and rising sea levels. In 1988, NASA scientist James Hansen, considered the father of climate-change awareness, testified before the American Congress that global warming had begun. This announcement made international headlines, which turned Hansen into both a hero and a villain. George Marshall, author of *Don't Even Think about It. Why Our Brains Are Wired to Ignore Climate Change*, asked Hansen why so many people do not accept climate change. Hansen's reply: 'The answer is very simple – it's money. The fossil industry is making so much money that they control our governments, the media, and everything they tell us' (Marshall, 2014, p. 40).

The biologist Paul Ehrlich predicted that 'a shattering collapse of civilisation is a near certainty in the next few decades due to humanity's continuing destruction of the natural world that sustains all life on Earth' (Carrington, 2018, online). The likely event of a collapse of civilisation is now much more in our collective awareness (Read & Alexander, 2019). Ecological collapse is already happening, and some people are preparing for how best to adapt (Bendell, 2019).

Voices ahead of Their Time – Where We Are Now – Where Do We Go Next?

In the nascent days of climate-change awareness, the psychiatrist and psychoanalyst Harold Searles was one of the few voices in the psychotherapeutic world to speak out. I have asked myself why there has been, and continues to be, a relative deafening silence from psychotherapists.

In his paper 'Unconscious processes in relation to the environmental crisis' (1972), Searles states:

> I think the ecological crisis is the greatest threat mankind collectively has ever faced [which] with rapidly accelerating intensity threatens our whole planet. If so staggering a problem is to be met, the efforts of scientists of all clearly relevant disciplines will surely be required. (p. 361)

As Searles predicted 50 years ago, the global community is indeed facing the greatest crisis in human history after 12,000 years of relatively stable climate. Chris Rapley (2013), Professor of Climate Science at University College London, asserts that we are collectively responsible for the driving forces that result from human activities, as well as capable, in principle, of taking avoiding actions. So far we have utterly failed to take the necessary actions.

Searles proposed that psychoanalytic theory could shed light on some of the unconscious forces preventing the global community from making progress: emissions are still rising at an alarming rate (IPPC, 2018). Searles identified apathy as one of the main reasons that stops the West from cutting emissions and consuming less. Apathy is a state of non-feeling and lack of concern, which tends to reside outside conscious awareness. In terms of the climate and ecological crisis, apathy is a powerful defence against unbearable pain about the future. Searles describes apathy as an emotionally depressed state: 'Is […] not the general apathy in the face of pollution a statement that there is something so unfulfilling about the quality of human life that we react, essentially, as though our lives are not worth fighting to save?' (1972, p. 366).

The question that arises is how analytical understanding can explain why, as a species, we are so belligerent and human-centred, especially as we can be aware of, and care for, other species. David Kidner and Paul Maiteny, who have articulated a psycho-cultural analysis of our current time, seem to be largely ignored by the psychotherapeutic community. In *Nature and Psyche* (2001), Kidner points out that industrialised monocultures conceal the character of our alienation from nature and, thus, prevent the emergence of effective solutions.

Searles located this jaded outlook on industrialised life partly in himself. He was well aware that the Industrial Revolution was in full swing, and that pollution was degrading the quality of life. He urged his fellow psychoanalysts and scientists to make a real contribution to meet the ecological crisis. More recently, climate activism seems to have cut through some of the political apathy. Times are so desperate now that many high-profile public figures, notably the former UN chief climate negotiator Christine

Figueres, are calling for civil disobedience, which is one of the tactics used by Extinction Rebellion and the Youth Strikes.

How can psychotherapists respond to the apathy, despair, anxiety and grief that so many people feel about the climate and ecological crisis? What can we learn from other disciplines that can enhance and guide our psychological understanding of the crisis we face?

In her paper 'Nature hunger: eating problems and consuming the Earth' (2008, p. 15), Mary-Jane Rust states: 'If therapy is to extend its practice from being human-centred, to recognise our relationship with nature "out there", we need a concept of self that describes how we are embedded within the web of life.'

The psycho-cultural priming of a disconnect from the web of life has gone on for many centuries prior to the Industrial Revolution. A pertinent example that illustrates dominion over more-than-human species is embedded in the Judeo-Christian tradition and articulated in the book of Genesis: 'have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the fowl of the air and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth' (Sancton, 1989, p. 4).

How Can Ecology Help Us Understand the Anthropocene Crisis?

In *Psychoanalysis and Ecology at the Edge of Chaos*, Joseph Dodd (2011) argues that ecology – the branch of biology that deals with the relations of organisms between one another and their physical surroundings – needs more joining up with psychoanalysis and psychology. The two disciplines (the 'eco' and the 'psycho') help to unmask the anxieties, deficits, conflicts, fantasies and defences in understanding the human dimension of the climate and ecological crisis. Importantly, the science of ecology places the human species in the context of ecosystems. Dodd (2011) proposed an 'ecopsychoanalytical' model that explores civilisation's highly ambivalent relation to the more-than-human world, and how we defend against it. Incorporating the 'eco' into psychotherapeutic practices would address our human-centric theories and ways of living.

Paul Maiteny (2008–9) points out that conceptually there are links between ecology and psychotherapy. Both, in distinct and complementary ways, are concerned with the structure, function and relatedness of aspects of nature, of which humans are seen as part of nature, i.e. humans need to place themselves within the ecosystem. He asserts that our human activities are causing ecosystems to break down and dis-integrate: '… it follows that the human psyche is the root origin, cause and catalyst of [climate and ecological collapse] changes' (2008–9, pp. 31).

Maiteny comments on how the human psyche is driven by unfulfilled and unfulfillable desires and strivings that are acted out in our consumerist behaviour, and that these deeper dimensions have been missed both by the green movement and by psychotherapists. Consumerism is conceived to meet our unfulfilled desires day and night. Our narcissistic pursuits override the fact that we are physically dependent on ecosystemic processes for our very existence. We so often pride ourselves on our intelligence, but no more than other animals do we think about food. We do not, for instance, think about the food we consume as being made by sunlight – processed by photosynthesis, and passed to us through the food webs of plants and animals (ibid.).

Looking at human behaviour from an ecosystemic point of view, we appear to be a species that is driven by arrogance, ignoring our utter dependence on other species. As mentioned above, the very fact that we positioned ourselves above nature as a species in the Western world is rooted in the Judeo-Christian doctrine laid down in Genesis (Sancton 2008, p. 4). From a psychotherapeutic perspective we are unconsciously defending against our sense of dependency and vulnerability, and this offers an explanation as to why we are not perceiving ourselves as part of the web of life. Psychotherapy ought to be conceived as an ecosystemic activity whereby we are fully conscious of our biological dependence, and conscious of how we get caught up with our instinctual drives, as exemplified in consumerism (Maiteny, 2003).

A Human-centric Psychotherapeutic Intervention

This first vignette in this article features Joanna Macy, who sought help from psychotherapy. Macy writes: 'Once when I told a psychotherapist of my outrage over the destruction of old-growth forests, she informed me that the bulldozers represented my libido and that my distress sprang from fear of my own sexuality' (Macy, 1995, p. 244).

This intervention, made around 25 years ago, reflects a psychoanalytic mindset of the late

nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The intervention suggests that the therapist was informed by Freud's libido theory, propounded in his *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* (1905). The theories on sexuality were born out of a political and social context of prevailing sexual repression in Europe. Can psychotherapy rise to the challenges of the climate and ecological crisis in the same way it rose to the phenomenon of sexual repression? Can psychotherapy theory challenge a human-centric positioning of self that exists outside of the ecosystem? What might an intervention based on ecological awareness look like?

Environmentally sensitive people might perceive bulldozers as symbols of human rapacious exploitation of Earth's natural resources such as coal, oil and forests. Framing Earth in terms of resources implies a deeply rooted unconscious orientation of thinking that is split from ecosystemic thinking. Furthermore, bulldozers could be seen as a weapon, given the widely held perception of nature as 'a dangerous and savage jungle, which humans must separate themselves from to become civilized' (Gillespie, 2020, p. 51). It portrays our ambivalent relationship with nature. We consume and egoistically destroy earth resources. We perceive the Earth as if it primarily exists for us. As a species, our relatedness with the web of life is disturbed and broken (Rust, 2008). As Sally Weintrobe (2013, p. 207) puts it:

> Our sense of entitlement to see ourselves as superior to other life forms [as, for example, laid down in the book Genesis], and the idea that nature is there to be tamed, have become deeply embedded in our cultural, religious and philosophical beliefs and political ideologies.

It is conceivable that this entrenched split position was there since humans began to inhabit the Earth. Perhaps as a species we have never consciously understood our dependence and relatedness with the Earth. It is possible that the urge to grow that we share with all other species is hard-wired behaviour that we can only address by becoming conscious of it. The problem may be that we are reluctant as a species to accept that we have to deepen and evolve our conscious relatedness as members of the planet. The aforementioned psychotherapist's interpretation to her client Joanna Macy illustrates the extent to which psychotherapy is part of a human-centric culture where problems are solved in the privacy of the psychotherapist's consulting room. The source of distress, exemplified in Macy's vignette, is typically located in the personal and intrapsychic domain which is deeply influenced by the socio-historical and cultural context in which we live. Interpreting Macy's comments from an ecological perspective, it seems to me that she was expressing her distress about the ecosystemically detached relationship we have with the Earth. An ecological perspective implies that we see ourselves within, and part of, the ecosystem.

Furthermore, Macy's response from an ecosystemic perspective might be seen as a protest against the prevailing neoliberal system characterised by a free-market economy, deregulation, privatisation and individualisation. In a neoliberal world, ecosystems such as old-growth forests that have typically developed over centuries are regarded as a resource that is there to be exploited. Ecosystemic awareness helps us hear and respond to clients' eco-rage differently.

We can be concerned about the environment, for example, by doing our recycling without being aware of how ecosystems works, even in basic terms. It seems important that as a psychotherapy profession we reach beyond simply addressing environmental concerns, as the latter remain detached from ecosystemic thinking. In the Ecological Awareness Cycle outlined by Hawkins and Ryde (2020, p. 189) (see Figure 1), anger, as Macy expressed in her therapy session, alongside other emotions, is considered to be a psychologically healthy response.

An Intervention with an Eco-centric Therapist

The second vignette comes from a case study by Mary-Jane Rust (2008, pp. 74–5). I have chosen this particular example to illustrate some of the pitfalls that might be encountered by an ecologically aware practitioner. Rust's client suffered from a long-standing eating disorder and other forms of excessive consumption such as frequent flying to holiday destinations. Following the theme of destruction of forests, client Claire dreamed about the destruction of the rainforest: 'She is standing in the middle of a lush rainforest as termites destroy the trees. Finally, she is left alone, all the forest has been consumed and its inhabitants are extinct' (2008, p. 8).

Whilst Rust understood the client's dream in the context of Claire's eating disorder, she privately had associations of the clear-cutting of rainforests in many parts of the world – an activity that is greatly contributing to ecological collapse. Rust held back from sharing her personal associations, but decided a few years later to share her ecological concerns with

her client, who responded by accusing Rust of bringing her green agenda into the room (2008, p. 8).

In hindsight, Rust concluded that the green agenda belongs to all of us, and argued that the Western cultural agenda of prevailing individualism, consumerism and self-centredness needs to be examined as part of the therapeutic discourse (2008). Admittedly, back then Rust did not insist on the relevance of her client's dream in relation to the climate and ecological crisis. In the mid-1990s, when the session in question took place, people were far less aware of meta-environmental issues.

To conflate green, environmental and ecosystemic issues can be confusing. We have to understand the relatedness inherent in ecology and relational psychotherapy, and thus frame the crisis ecosystemically by understanding the actual relational and systemic dynamics of the climate and ecological crisis. As psychotherapists we need to reach beyond a factual understanding of the impact of exploitation and consumption.

How might we hear Claire's retort about Rust's 'green agenda'? It seems that on an implicit level, Claire was aware of Rust's disapproval of her high-carbon lifestyle. Rust commented that instead of Claire owning her vulnerable feelings such as shame and guilt, they were projected into her, which made Rust feel like she had done something bad to Claire (Rust, 2008). Lertzman (2015) notes that ecologically aware people tend to carry deniers' unconscious guilt and shame about their destructive life choices.

Coincidentally, Greta Thunberg, too, suffered from an eating disorder but for very different reasons. As psychotherapists we need to understand our own psychological and ecological dynamics as well as help clients to understand theirs.

I have chosen Greta's example as it illustrates why the source of psychological distress should not only be located in the personal domain. Tree Staunton (2016, p. 21) holds that eating disorders can be reflections of a cultural dis-ease. One of the triggers for Greta's eating disorder was watching the film *Plastic Paradise: The Great Pacific Garbage Patch* at school. In the newly published book *Our House Is on Fire: Scenes of a Family and a Planet in Crisis* (Ernman & Thunberg, 2020), Greta's mother Malena reveals that Greta was bullied at school, and that the school wasn't sympathetic to Greta's environmental concerns (Tapper, 2020). Greta turned her emotions into activism – which is one of the end-stages in the Ecological Awareness Cycle (Hawkins & Ryde, 2020, p. 189; see Figure 1). Whilst activism does address a sense of apathy, I think that from a psychological and behavioural perspective, activism is not necessarily an end-stage. Activists may not have had the opportunity to reflect on the psychological reasons why they became activists.

As people increasingly express their anxieties and concerns about the climate and ecological crisis, psychotherapists need to engage with it as they would with any other social-justice issue. The climate and ecological crisis needs to be framed as an issue of social justice because it is directly linked to colonialism, white supremacy and oppression. The psychoanalyst and academic Donna Orange asserts that colonialism by the West, with its exploitative attributes, is what really set climate change in motion; the later Industrial Revolution served to accelerate the process (Orange, 2017).

Looking at colonial history through the Freudian lens would suggest that perhaps we need to accept that the id drive played, and continues to play, a factor in our desire to dominate, grow, expand and consume ever more.

Engaging with the More-than-human World, as if It Is a Different World?

In his book *Non-Human Environment in Normal Development and in Schizophrenia* (1960), Searles declared that psychotherapy is largely based on the assumption that human development is shaped by human relationships alone:

> …the non-human environment is considered as irrelevant to human personality development […] as though human life were lived out in a vacuum – as though the human race were alone in the universe, pursuing individual and collective destinies in a homogenous matrix of nothingness, a background devoid of form, colour and substance. (p. 3)

Searles was in the 1960s one of the lone and outspoken voices that talked about the separation between man and the more-than-human world. The statement conveys an obvious form of separateness that is inherent in the culture of psychotherapy. There is an assumption that humans play no role in the evolution of the ecosphere. As a profession we urgently need to become conscious of this ecosystemic split in our thinking and theorising.

Nick Totton (2011, p. 25) points out that this human-centric perspective on human development is partly due to psychotherapy having developed in tandem with, and having been shaped by, urban Western culture, which culturally kept itself separate from the more-than-human world. It is important that we endeavour to repair the rupture with the more-than-human world in the same way we seek to repair interpersonal ruptures. The 'nothingness' Searles is referring to is symbolic of a collective blind spot in the human species. We are blind to our instinctive desire to consume, which leads to excessive and unsustainable acquisition that plunders Earth's resources. In this id drive to 'have', we are keeping ourselves separated from the ecosystem.

Maiteny (2008–9) observes that it seems almost impossible for humans to stop behaving in this way. The reason for this, so he explains, is because it seems hard for us as a species to move past our id-oriented egos and superegos that are fixated on survival and attachment anxieties. These behaviours are hard-wired in us, and influenced by cultural norms. Therefore, to live an ecosystemic life has to be a conscious step. Can we find new ways of living that are ecosystemically embedded? What would life look like if we considered ourselves as part of the ecosystem, just like every other species? The film *Extinction – the Facts* (2020) by David Attenborough helped me to understand the principle of ecosystems and how we are destroying them.

I believe that psychotherapy has an important role to play in addressing the dilemmas inherent in a consumerist society by creating places for reflection and dialogue about our conflicted relationship with the more-than-human world. After all, the word 'therapy' itself comes via the Latin *therapīa* from the Greek *θεραπεία* (curing or healing); we ought to extend our healing intentions to the more-than-human world. Furthermore, caring for the more-than-human world challenges the traditional stance of many practising psychotherapists to attribute everything the client presents to human relationships, as illustrated by the Macy vignette discussed earlier. Relating everything a client brings to the internal world and the therapeutic relationship as though there was no external world is surely an absurdity in the light of all that we now know.

Totton's (2011) concept of 'Wild Therapy' locates the more-than-human world firmly in the therapeutic field – perhaps an example of integrating ecosystemic thinking in a psychotherapeutic process. Like Searles (1960), he asserts that 'therapy has so far tended to focus obsessively […] on human beings and their relationship with each other, to the exclusion of the rest of the universe' (2011, p. 190). Whilst therapists are not there to judge, moralise or convert clients to their own ecological stance, Macy and Rust's experiences exemplify the intersubjective nature of the therapeutic encounter. In both cases, the psychotherapist's beliefs and attitudes rubbed up against those of their clients. From a relational perspective, this kind of interpersonal stuckness is framed as an impasse, a much-discussed topic in contemporary relational theory (Black, 2003; Maroda, 2019) and others. Impasse situations that cannot be resolved often end up in clients leaving therapy because neither side feels that the other is able to hear their concerns – as I try and illustrate through my next vignette. To incorporate the more-than-human world would require an ecosystemic relationality, not in the sense of us and it, but as embedded in it, and it as embodied by us.

In the article 'Is there a therapy for climate-change anxiety', Steffi Bednarek (2019) presents the case of Juan Camilo Jaramillo, who sought therapy for his eco-anxiety in Columbia. Juan was aware of climate change because of his work as a marine biologist and a lecturer in environmental science. Stress is apparently prevalent amongst climate scientists, which suggests a correlation between an appreciation of the facts about climate change and the emotions this evokes (Vince, 2020). Juan reported that when he expressed his despair about the climate and ecological crisis in his sessions, he got the impression that his psychotherapist did not believe that things were as bad as he perceived them to be:

> …although she doesn't tell me directly, I can see it in her eyes and in her facial expression when I talk about these issues. Sometimes I think I'm wasting my time talking to her about it; I'm sure she's not very interested in what I'm saying. (Bednarek, 2019, p. 38)

This is a difficult situation for clients like Juan to be in, and it poses a problem for psychotherapists who feel out of their depth working with clients who feel distressed about the degrading environment and ecological collapse. We might infer that those psychotherapists are dissociated from the climate and ecological crisis. This level of dissociation by a psychotherapist is an issue that would warrant attending to. Understandably, Juan feels deeply upset and alone with his 'negative Earth emotions' (Albrecht, 2019). He does not know who to turn to, to talk about his distress, as his partner and colleagues are similarly resistant to engaging with

his pain – but perhaps for a quite different reason: they feel his anguish about the climate and ecological crisis all too keenly.

Juan's experience in therapy is a call for psychotherapists to develop ecosystemic awareness – the kind of awareness that Attenborough's film *Extinction – the Facts* (2020) highlights. Our displacements and defences against the climate and ecological crisis, and what our conscious and unconscious vested interest are, constitute an important area for us to consider.

Bringing 'Eco' and 'Psycho' Together: Applying the Ecological Awareness Cycle

Peter Hawkins and Judy Ryde's Ecological Awareness Cycle (EAC) (2020, p. 189) brings 'eco' and 'psycho' into close proximity. The Cycle is based on Ryde's earlier White Awareness Cycle (Ryde, 2009), which was influenced by many writers in the field, in particular Joanna Macy, James Hillman, Sally Weintrobe and Donna Orange.

Figure 1 The Ecological Awareness Cycle (Hawkins & Ryde, 2020, p. 189; reproduced with permission)

Each of the stages is relevant in an evolving process of becoming more conscious about the climate and ecological crisis. They also help map where the process might have become stuck. The stages are transient and can shift within a therapy session. A more realistic depiction of what happens is contained in Hawkins and Ryde's visualisation of retrogressive flows within the Cycle (Figure 2).

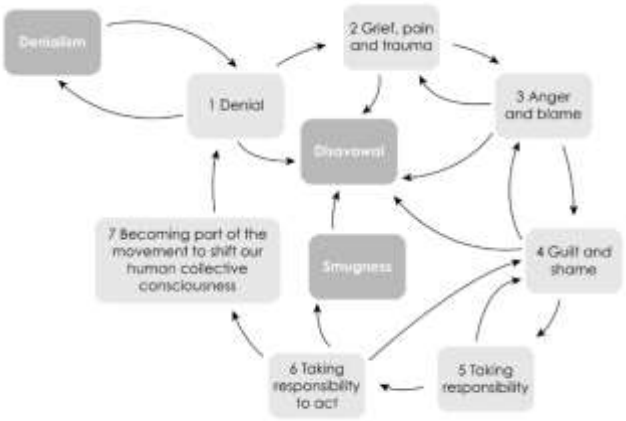

Figure 2 Retrogressive flows within the Ecological Awareness Cycle (reproduced with permission)

The Ecological Awareness Cycle Can Help Us Map a Client's Process

Sally is in her late twenties. She contacted me for psychological support. She wanted a therapist who could engage with her feelings about the ecological and climate crisis. Sally's presenting issues find resonance in the relational, systemic and ecological domain. The focus here is on the relational and ecological domain.

Sally hoped that I would be able to understand her distress about the climate and ecological crisis, and that I would support her activism. She was definitely right about both: I feel a sense of gratitude for people who are devoting their time to raise awareness for the climate and ecological crisis. Sally feels deeply sad that her parents don't understand this side in her. She has been arrested on several occasions and wanted her mother to be there with her during the trial, but knew that there was no point in asking her, as this would cause her mother too much anxiety. In childhood she was her father's confidante, and at an early age learned about her father's extra-marital affairs. She learned not to share and speak about many things that went on in her family, and we drew a parallel with why she might find it hard to express herself in Extinction Rebellion meetings.

Sally suffers from severe eco-anxiety, which manifests somatically as irritable bowel syndrome. She cannot imagine bringing a child into this world, and like so many of her like-minded peers, she feels there is no point in having a career. Sally's eco-anxiety is perhaps amplified by the anxiety she experienced as a child in her family. I think it is

important that we bear in mind that with most clients there are multiple sources of distress at play.

Looking more closely at Sally's issues through the lens of the EAC (Figure 1), we can readily identify the stages that link with her level of consciousness. In her capacity as a climate activist we might say that Sally has passed through stage 5 (taking responsibility), stage 6 (to act) and arrived at stage 7 (becoming part of the movement to shift our human collective consciousness).

Whilst Sally can easily access her anger about our consumerist society that, from her perspective, has put her future in jeopardy, she also needs to process her family trauma (stage 2 – grief, trauma and pain; and stage 3 – anger and blame). Anger and blame seem to be more accessible for her, and she finds it hard to allow herself to grieve the impact of the climate and ecological crisis, as well as grieve the conflicted relationship with her father. We can see how what is going on in the world also finds resonance in her personal experience.

The therapeutic work centres around inviting Sally to feel sadness – an emotion that was not part of the emotional repertoire in her family. Emotional processing in the relational, systemic and ecological domain is vital because, as Joanna Macy and Chris Johnstone state in *Active Hope* (2012, p. 69), when people are open to their emotional experience, including despair, sadness, guilt, fury and fear, they feel a weight being lifted from them. My 'active hope' is that by facilitating spaces where people can process their emotions about the climate and ecological crisis, this can lead to a deeper understanding as to how we can embody both 'eco' and 'psycho'.

Reflections and Suggestions for Engaging with the Climate and Ecological Crisis

The vignettes outlined above raise important issues and questions for the psychotherapeutic community. First, I think it is vital that psychotherapists engage with the climate and ecological crisis personally as well as in the clinical setting. Mental-health issues related to the climate and ecological crisis are on the rise. Secondly, in the four vignettes I have tried to give a flavour of some of the clinical issues and dilemmas psychotherapists are likely to encounter. Thirdly, I have tried to argue how and why ecosystemic thinking can expand our field of enquiry and include the more-than-human world.

It is my hope that as a psychotherapeutic community we proactively engage with the mental-health issues that are rising in response to the climate and ecological crisis.

Speaking as a member of the United Kingdom Council for Psychotherapy (UKCP) / HIPC Assessment Board mandated to assess HIPC training institutions, I think it is vital that counselling and psychotherapy trainings raise awareness about the climate and ecological crisis and its effect on mental health by including it as a topic in the training syllabi. The climate and ecological crisis should be considered as a diversity issue, and it needs to be added as a core criterion in the UKCP Standards of Education and Training documents (SETs). The rationale for including it as a core training criterion grows out of a recognition that, as Staunton (2016, p. 21) puts it, the climate and ecological crisis is a 'marginalised issue that needs diversity awareness, i.e. a proactive approach of engagement and awareness of how this impacts diverse sectors of the community differently'.

Notes

1 I use the terms 'Anthropocene' and 'crisis' as they encapsulate the man-made degradation of our all-encompassing ecosystems on which all species depend, and to which all life contributes. The Oxford English Dictionary defines the Anthropocene as the current geological age, viewed as the period during which human activity has been the dominant influence on climate and the environment.

2 See Totton, 2011, p. 4. The terms 'more-than-human' or 'other-than-human' are increasingly used as a way of recognising that we as humans are not higher or more central than other species, and we have no right to define them as 'non-human' or 'animal'. In *The Spell of the Sensuous* (1996), David Abram uses the term 'more-than-human' to refer to the world as a complex of ecosystems towards which the appropriate response is love and awe.

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About the contributor

Brigitta Mowat is an integrative psychotherapist in private practice and a tutor and training supervisor at the Minster Centre in London. She is an active member of the Climate Psychology Alliance, and is currently doing a qualitative research study on how psychotherapists engage with the Anthropocene.