

A symposium approach to psychology Towards and back to reciprocity and mutual co-existence

Dialogue: Ecology and Psychotherapy

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www.nature-and-healing.ch, www.symposiumetics.org

Intro

It was a big present and surprise to realize that at this conference topics are discussed which rarely can be found in contexts of psychotherapy or psychology: Posthumanistic thoughts and gender issues for example.

The ideas of decentralizing the concepts of self and I, to reflect deeper on autonomy and individuality and the inherent effect of patriarchal structures in our psychology schools and models.

All these perspectives are part of my work as a systemic, narrative nature-therapist. It was a big pleasure for me, also to bring in the voice of the non-human or other-than-human world into this conference and especially at the Dialogveranstaltung, together with Marie-Natalie Beaudoin and Stefan Geyerhofer.

Inspired by Gerhard Walters opening speech and his reference to the philosopher Rosi Braidotti, I remembered Braidotti's differentiation of Zoe and Bio. Both terms mean "life"; Zoe the organismic circular co-movements and Bio the extract of ones or entities lifeline. Bio became famous, Zoe should be remembered...

At the beginning of my professional career, I could work as a teacher and psychotherapist together with the experiential-educational project "Noah". I spent several months with young people in trouble and a dedicated crew of social workers at the Mediterranean, altogether we worked narratively on a book and maybe even more important for all of us: the effects of the sea, the winds, the landscape and the direct contact with the elements. Since then, I'm dedicating myself to practical and theoretical works, which embrace not only humans' system but also the non-human or other-than-human world.

What can therapists learn from ecological science and research and from the inputs of researchers at this conference?

Listening to this question the first thought that comes to my mind is that psychotherapies are mainly focusing **on** inner human worlds and their human social worlds. They are experts on human communications, emotions, so called psyche or soul, certain psychological structures and very often they are based on the idea of an autonomous individual being which must adapt to or assimilate with an outer world.

Ecological sciences, however, cannot afford a purely human perspective. They are driven by the questions of how life is organizing itself, what is going on while life is happening and how coexistence between all the different species and materials is working. In a way, they are also experts in communication, but in communication between human and nonhuman or other than human world. That makes a difference.

Out of my point of view the integration of this kind of ecological perspectives could be a nourishing lecture for psychotherapy and psychotherapeutically trained people.

As a systemic nature-therapist I'm fundamentally inspired by biology, political theory, gender studies, sociology and anthropology. Our doing and theoretical background wouldn't work without many inspirations out of this fields. It is remarkable that the explicit transdisciplinary focus at this conference can be seen as a reconnection to the very beginnings of systemic thinktanks. They had this multi-disciplinary attitude, the systemic schools of psychology derived from the connection between the natural sciences and the humanities approaches.

What would scientists advise therapists to look at from their research findings?

As already mentioned, many streams of biology, physics and environmental sciences have been dealing with "the doing of the living" since the 80's and 90's. They are connected to circular process thinking in reciprocity, they emphasize the importance of these facts, but it seems that they are not heard in a wide scale. The majority of the humanities as well as our social and political structures and institutions and their linguistic structures are noun-based. That means that linear mechanistic world views are still in the lead. Psychotherapy could probably contribute to this kind of learning. So, in my projection these scientists - let's call them the circular scientists would advise to look at this interconnected doing of living beings.

Following the hypothesis that if we come closer to this mutual reciprocal consciousness it also helps to find our place in the middle of this mess. It is probably an invitation to look at the way we look at our co-living (coexistence) and how we can create a space that respects the coexistence with others – humans, but also the non-human world and species of this planet.

What could be an additional focus in therapy?

Beside the expertise on inner and outer human relatedness it could be helpful to focus also on the non-human world and to the human relatedness and connectedness to the non-human world. Some nature-therapies or trans-personal approaches are doing that, of course based on a variety of world views.

Based on a simpoietic or nature-dialogue approach, there we can find a movement or a network of psychotherapists, and consultants following that direction.

The main idea is simply spoken that we humans and with us the planet are suffering from a lot of problems because we forgot that we are part of a bigger system. Consequently, we live in isolation. A lot of people suffer from the feeling of not being connected and being exposed to a hostile environment. Even worse they struggle with the daily confirmed possibility, that we humans are a hostile species that creates a lot of destruction.

Nature-Dialogues - A simpoietic approach

The simpoietic approach is an epistemological approach and is working mainly on perception and cognition. It is based on the biological fact that we are beings in reciprocity and living in a mutual and co-creating world. Everything that helps to reconnect and remember this fact is seen as worthwhile. The approach is differentiating three fields of training or learning.

1 The earth boundness and the experiences of living in nature and in simple forms of earth-oriented ways of living (sleeping on the ground, making a fire, and living outdoors). The main idea is to experience time in nature.

2 The memory practice widens our field of memories. The way we remember things has a great impact on how we interpret or create our present. Memories, present and future are interconnected. This approach goes into deep memories and integrates archeological-anthropological perspectives.

3 The 3rd field is around our capacity to act in resonance with our environment. Inspired by the sociologist Hartmut Rosa. The phenomenon of resonance is not only applicable to the living beings but also to all the materials we are living with, for better or worse. We are with all the things in an interconnected network / relation(ship), configuration. If we realize that life becomes even more complex, but it widens the possibilities of action.

Is there a fit between ecological research and our observations in therapy?

The ecological research is telling us that the ongoing extinction of species and the increasing temperatures in the atmosphere will cause a big change for a lot of people and the non-human world. It points out *that* it's high noon.

At the same time we can observe that our psychiatric institutions or other places of medical care are completely booked up, there is an increasing number of young people, especially females, which are psychologically in trouble, and we can observe an increasing number of fear / anxiety / panic attacks / and depression as well as domestic and other violence. Psychologically we can also observe high noon.

To bring in indigenous perspectives that point out that the earth and human beings are so interconnected that it's completely clear that if the earth suffers people suffer. There is no boundary or wall between the state of the earth and humankind.

Generally spoken: We cannot take care of ourselves without taking care of our niche or our home.

How can we use research and a scientific understanding of ecological changes and climate changes in our work with clients (e.g. fears, phobias, obsessions, depression, adolescent crisis, eating disorders, couples, families....)?

For people who are living in difficult situations it's important to realize that they can create or move their life.

When people can open their attention to how cooperation is working with / in nature and its elements; how air, grass, insects and so on are lively interconnected.

Then they often experience that they too are in a kind of interconnectedness in which they can move and are moved and can help and receive help at the same time. They remember that they are not a frozen prisoner, but with their movement they move someone or something else.

They find themselves back to an attitude of reciprocity and mutual coexistence and that's healthy.

Literature

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