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The Nature of Burn-Out and the Burn-Out of Nature: The Sloth and the Chickadee. Socio-Psychological, Ecological, Sacral-Political and Ethical Implications. Jungian and Alchemical Perspectives*

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ABSTRACT *Beginning with the analytic field, this paper introduces the problem of burn-out as one of self-neglect that can be understood as ultimately suicidal. There follows a brief outline of the aetiology of the pathology, before indicating the direction in which healing may lie. The origins of a holistic worldview are being traced that allow us to see the unity in the complexities of the different facets: the ancient teachings of the Chinese alchemists that later were reflected in the* unus mundus *concept of, first Egyptian and Arabic, then European alchemical traditions. These ideas are linked with recent and current ecological concerns by drawing parallels between one of the most important European alchemist-healers of the past – Paracelsus – and, moving to recent modern times, Wilhelm Reich. Here, the focus is on the later period of Reich's work. With his holistic perspective, Reich cannot only be seen as continuing the alchemist traditions, but should also be respected as the first eco-psychologist. The paper leads to the spiritual implications of these ideas, towards a re-sacralization of analysis and radical (eco-) politics, and ends with suggestions towards possible solutions of the present dilemma of individual, collective and global burn-out in presenting the concept of 'radical hope'. Copyright © 2011 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.*

Key words: burn-out as an individual and collective issue, 'overwork culture', analytical/therapeutic theory and practice, Freud, Jung, Winnicott, alchemy, Paracelsus, Wilhelm Reich, eco-politics, re-sacralization of politics, radical hope

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PREFACE

> Self-love, my liege, is not so vile a sin
> As self-neglecting. (Shakespeare, Henry VIII, III.ii.444)

Let us begin with the sloth, bestowed with the name of one of the Seven Deadly Sins, that

> is a highly intriguing creature. Its only real habit is insolence. It sleeps or rests an average twenty hours a day. . . . The sloth is busiest at sunset, using the term *busy* here in the most relaxed sense. It moves along the bough of a tree in its usual upside down position at the speed of roughly 400 meters an hour. . . . Unmotivated, it covers four to five meters in an hour. . . . How does it survive, you might ask. Precisely by being slow. Sleepiness and slothfulness keep it out of harm's way, away from the notice of jaguars, ocelots, harpy eagles and anacondas. . . . [The] sloth lives a peaceful . . . life in perfect harmony with its environment. (Martel, 2003, 3–4)

And now, from the jungles of South America, where the sloth lives, to our habitat, or 'Welcome to the Age of Exhaustion' (Hall, 2009), as the *Observer Magazine* recently put it in an issue devoted to this subject:

> The British work the longest hours in Europe. Work-related stress is soaring and Britain has one of the highest rates of job insecurity in the world. . . .
>
> - Why do we work so hard?
> - Why do we put up with it?
> - What is the cost to our health, relationships and children?
>
> Technology was supposed to create a leisure society. Yet the British are experiencing unprecedented job intensification in every office, classroom, shopfloor and hospital as a cult of efficiency drives ever more exacting targets. The phenomenon has been masked by a type of management which promises much but delivers one of the most exploitative and manipulative work cultures developed since the Industrial Revolution. (Bunting, 2004a, back cover)

This was written five years ago by *Guardian* writer Madeleine Bunting in her exposé of what she called 'the overwork culture' (Bunting, 2004a), of a society where a health magazine's lead article suggests, 'Be a lean, mean, fat-burning machine!' (Bean, 2004), where a pop star defiantly states, 'better to burn out than to fade away' (Neil Young in Sandall, 2005, 26), and a product advertises with, 'Die of exhaustion not boredom' (Minx advertisement, 2006). The current economic climate is unlikely to have improved the situation. The question arising for me is: as analysts/therapists – and academics – *are we part of the problem or part of the solution?*

INTRODUCTION: UNREST ORIGINATES IN YOU

> Nothing that moves you, you are the wheel yourself
> That drives itself, and never comes to rest. (Angelus Silesius,1675)[1]

Burn-out: as we can see, the problem is not just a recent one. Would Shakespeare, would the German mystic Angelus Silesius, have spoken about this if it had not been a noticeable issue already then? From the 19th century we have Edgar Allan Poe's tale, chillingly titled, 'The

[1]***Die Unruh kommt von dir.*** *Nichts ist, das dich bewegt, du selber bist das Rad, was aus sich selbsten läuft und keine Ruhe hat.*

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Man That Was Used Up' (Hoffman, 1985, 193–5). A hundred years ago Jack London, writing manically until he apparently committed suicide at the age of 42, referred to himself as the 'Work-Beast' (in Sansom, 2010). From the mid 20th century there is Graham Greene's novel, *A Burnt-out Case* (2001).

A patient of mine who had suffered burn-out in her high-strung career, dreams:

> Being chased by two women, I get on a motorbike, but they throw grenades after me – or make the bike explode under me. I get burnt, my face is burnt. Poirot appears, wraps a sheet around me, but I cannot breathe. I have to poke a hole into the sheet.

She immediately associates, 'It's burn-out!'

A friend and colleague e-mails me, 'I'm just drowning in work – like everybody else!'

In recent years, hardly a week has passed by without articles in the popular press about overwork, stress and their dire physical, emotional, political and further effects. 'Sloth' for example, asks AA Gill (2004) in *The Sunday Times*, 'Is it a sin or a virtue? We have all the time in the world to decide'. A host of books have also been published on the subject: *Speed: A Society on Drugs* (Dany, 2008); *Faster: The Acceleration of Just About Everything* (Gleick, 1999); but also, *In Praise of Slow: How a Worldwide Movement is Challenging the Cult of Speed* (Honoré, 2004); *How to be Idle* (Hodgkinson, 2004); and *Meditations for Men/Women Who Do Too Much* (Lazear, 1993; Wilson Schaef, 1990). None of these texts, though, has been written by a (psycho-)analyst. I have only found one single text in the analytic field on 'burnout syndrome' (Cooper, 1986), published well over 25 years ago by the American psychoanalyst Arnold Cooper. Might we interpret an indication of resistance? What if we followed Andrew Samuels' 1996 suggestion of taking the public '[a]s our social critic – perhaps even. . . analyst' (Samuels, 1996, 295), and assumed that this touches a sore point that the profession needs to protect – that being what 'resistance' is about? Why this reluctance, especially, it seems, from analysts/therapists to look at an endemic addictiveness to self-abusive overwork that leads to burn-out, and is, ultimately, a question of life or death?

With all its implications – personal, social, political, ecological, ethical and spiritual – this is a multifaceted issue that is by no means a recent one, so an historical dimension needs to be added to look at its roots, not only in terms of the problem but also for possible ways towards its solution. This requires an interdisciplinary approach – which is akin to juggling half a dozen balls. And: I do not just want to keep them all in the air, I also want to safely catch them all in the end. So, let me start by outlining my project.

I have divided my paper into four different parts, each of which I develop out of the previous one. My argument is not linear, but rather follows a circular orbit, which is the way I believe the alchemical process portrayed in the alchemical *Rosarium* woodcuts, used by Jung in *The Psychology of the Transference* (Jung, 1945) needs to be understood: that is, really, with neither specific beginning nor end, always returning to the beginning in the cyclical arc of waxing and waning, death and rebirth.

Beginning with the analytic field, I shall first introduce the problem as one of self-neglect that can be understood as ultimately suicidal. Here I shall also give a brief outline of the aetiology of the pathology, before indicating the direction in which healing may lie. Corresponding to the epidemic proportions of the issue and its seemingly all-pervading nature, a very basic change in attitude is required. I shall, secondly, trace the origins of a holistic

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worldview that enables us to see the unity in the complexities of the different facets. I shall present this in the form of the ancient teachings of the Chinese alchemists that later were reflected in the *unus mundus* concept of first Egyptian and Arabic, then European alchemical traditions. I shall, thirdly, link these ideas with recent and current ecological concerns by drawing parallels between one of the most important European alchemist-healers of the past, Paracelsus, and, moving to recent modern times, Wilhelm Reich – both of them hotly debated (and derided) to this day. In this, I am particularly concerned with the later period of Reich's work that continues to be doubted as the work of a 'crackpot' (Hillman, 2006, 29) to this day. Echoing Jung's take on Paracelsus (Jung, 1942), and almost presenting 'Wilhelm Reich as a Spiritual Phenomenon', I want to show that, in actual fact, with his holistic perspective, Reich cannot only be seen as continuing the alchemist traditions, but should also be respected as the first eco-psychologist, as his ideas can be linked to both the ancient Taoist and alchemical teachings as well as to modern quantum theory. Already in 1968 RD Laing wrote about Reich, 'Even his later work on bio-physics cannot be so glibly confined to cranksville as it was ten years ago' (in Boadella, 1973, 8). In the concluding fourth part I shall tease out the spiritual implications of these ideas, towards a re-sacralization of analysis and radical (eco-) politics, which is how the healing arts started in the first place. I shall end my presentation with suggestions towards possible solutions of the present dilemma of individual, collective and global burn-out in presenting the concept of 'radical hope' (Lear, 2006).

ANALYSIS

> Essentially, one might say, the cure is effected by love. (Sigmund Freud, 1906, letter to Jung)

Those who initiated the clinical work, also, right from the start, inflicted their own pathology on it by setting the standard for overwork in analysis: Freud 'worked nine to eleven hours a day with his patients and then, at eleven at night, settled down at his desk to write' (Clark, 1982, 145). 'At present I am devoting ten hours a day to psychotherapy,' Freud wrote to Jung in 1906 (Freud and Jung, 1974, 12). And Jung is known to have said, 'Patients eat me' and 'I have far more work now than I can do' (in Bair, 2004, 376). Some 20 years ago I read Christopher Bollas' *The* Shadow *of the Object: Psychoanalysis of the* Unthought *Known* (Bollas, 1987; my emphasis). Right at the start, he writes – and there are not many things I read that long ago from which I can quote almost verbatim, but this one does stick in my mind – 'When I practise psychoanalysis, seeing ten people a day five days a week. . .' (Bollas, 1987, 10). From where I am looking today, I would call this not only self-abusive but abusive of the other(s), his patients, too – but these two always go together: abuse of self mirrors abuse of others. The culture of overwork is deeply rooted in our psyche – hence my immediate and lasting awe at Bollas' casual remark. From a Jungian perspective, we may understand this as a being stuck in the negative pole of the archetype of the wounded healer: rather than being aware of their wound – 'Physician, heal thyself!' (Luke IV: 23) –many analysts seem to masochistically idealize it. And this, of course – since 'Actions speak louder than words!' – is being transmitted to our patients.

Thus, like a virus, something truly deadly may pass from analyst to patient in the dialectic relationship. I see it as the analyst's task to pick that up and stop that process. Cooper states unequivocally that 'it is clear that the analyst has an obligation to know a good deal about

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what frightens him. . . what brings out his sadness' (Cooper, 1986, 578) – might we add, 'what brings out his or her depression'? 'In gloomy moments,' Cooper continues, 'it has sometimes seemed to me that the life course of too many analysts begins with an excess of curative zeal and proceeds in the latter part of their careers toward excessive therapeutic nihilism' (1986, 577) and he links this with cumulative burn-out. We may well understand Freud's increasing pessimism as well as Jung's bitterness in the later years of his life in this way. Today we think in terms of a work/life imbalance. Over 30 years ago, the German psychoanalyst Wolfgang Schmidbauer spoke of the

> 'Helpers' Syndrome' [as] the incapacity that has grown to become part of the character structure, to express [and, I would add, even too become aware of] one's own feelings and needs, combined with the seemingly omnipotent, impregnable façade in the area of social services. (Schmidbauer, 1982, 12)

Schmidbauer gives a chilling example in the form of a nightmare in which a member of the helping profession traces a whimpering sound to a garden shed, where he discovers a skeletal child, half dead from thirst, covered with dirt and cobwebs, wedged in between old junk (1982, 15). Is it this that too many analysts 'need to hide out of sight', as it were? Is the subject of self-neglect not being touched because it is 'too close to the bone', 'touches a raw nerve'? Often it seems that men tend to be easier cut off from their feelings, their needy selves, as the rat race in the 'Overwork Culture' (Bunting, 2004a, 2004b) seems to encourage characteristics that may traditionally be regarded as masculine: the manic defence of hunting for more, more and more, ever higher achievements in order not to have to bother with the near-corpse in the shed of the unconscious. Is it a mere coincidence that it should be a *woman* analyst, Sabina Spielrein, to recommend long holidays? After observing, in 1929 that, 'psychoanalysis exhausts . . . It follows that the. . . psychoanalyst requires an extended holiday, probably longer than . . . a 2½ months summer break' (Spielrein, 1987, 343).

My friend and colleague Martin Stone (2010) quotes Gerhard Adler as having said, 'I need long holidays in order to be able to work with my patients, and I need to work with my patients in order to pay for my long holidays.'

So, what it this deadly virus that we need to be careful not to pass on to patients and students? One way of understanding the 'hereditary illness' may lie in the sphere of relating to the other – both within as well as outside of ourselves, the self/other issue that Otto Gross initially introduced to the analytic discourse. Irrespective of whether or not we believe, as Melanie Klein did – personally I do not – that 'the primitive', i.e. inborn, 'love impulse has an aggressive aim' (Winnicott, 1987, 22), it does make sense to me that with the Winnicottian 'good enough' mothering, as he put it, 'ruthlessness gives way to ruth, unconcern to concern' (1987, 22–23). We might speak of the birth of love from love received, and assume that this applies to both self and other. Lack of this, as Winnicott chillingly puts it, results in the feelings of 'going to pieces', of '[f]alling forever' and of '[h]aving no relationship to the body' (1987, 58). We may add that from the latter also correspondingly derives an alienation from the other in the direction of autism. These are issues of life and death: 'To be, or not to be' (Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, III.i.56), in the profoundest possible sense of the word. A way to protect against such 'unthinkable and archaic anxiet[ies]' (Winnicott, 1987, 61), and to survive them as best as possible, is to develop what Winnicott calls a false self that uses power to relate to both self and other. This, in a way, is identifying with the depriver/aggressor in an emotional manoeuvre that,

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again, Gross was the first to describe. In his terms the 'will to relating' gets replaced by the 'will to power' (Gross, 1919; cf. Heuer, 2001, 662–3).We come to favour 'unconcern' – being cool! – over concern, power over love. What is not given in love, we take by force: 'And if you're not willing, I use force', as Goethe writes in his 1782 poem '*Der Erlkönig*' (Goethe, n.d., 102). Winnicott speaks here of a 'manic defense', the attribute merely hinting at the panic of despair that fuels such action. More vividly, the relational analyst Sue Grand calls it 'the bestial gesture of survival' – the action taken to escape catastrophe and inflict suffering rather than bear it oneself (Grand, 2002, quoted in Benjamin, 2010, 55). Indeed, this violence, as Eckhart Tolle accurately states, 'is weakness disguised as strength' (Tolle, 1999, 36).

Again, we might also consider how this hostile attitude towards the other favours characteristics traditionally seen as masculine – hardness, coolness, aggression and action – over those traditionally seen as feminine: softness, feelings, receptivity and being. This finds its expression not only in the gender wars but also in a masculine-oriented warlike attitude against all that is regarded as feminine, and that is not just woman, but also body – as in matter, derived from mater, mother – as well as 'mother' (sic!) nature, i.e. the totality of the global and cosmic environment. The cleric Peter Millar writes, 'Hand in hand with the subordination of women has gone the neglect of the earth and an abuse of the human body' (Millar, 2007, 23).

Consider, for example, Lenin, speaking in 1920:

> Nothing is lovelier than the *Appassionata*! I could listen to it all day! . . . But I can't listen to music! It gets on my nerves! It arouses a yearning in me to babble about nothing, to caress people. . . But nowadays if you stroke anybody's head, he'll bite off your hand! Now you have to hit them on the head, hit them on the head mercilessly. . . though in principle we oppose all violence! (Quoted in Makavejev, 1972, 135–6)

Wilhelm Reich understood that the inner conflict portrayed here as also a personal, collective, political and global one of that which is alive against that which is dead(ened). This is how he understood the Christian parable of 'The Murder of Christ' (Reich, 1972). Reich called the resulting pathology 'Emotional Plague' (Reich, 1972). The prevailing negativity can thus be understood as a manic defence, driven by the despair to not stop and *be,* as that would entail a becoming aware of the unbearable 'archaic anxiet[ies]' (Winnicott, 1987, 61), of which the underlying true self certainly is aware. Understandably, this knowledge needs to be suppressed, i.e. depressed, and this depression blanks out positive vision. Due to inner depression being thus projected onto the outside world 'the end is nigh', one way or the other. This creates a fear industry caught in the vicious circle of an ever increasing fatal dialectic with an addictive appetite for misery, suffering and catastrophe – just watch the news tonight.

ALCHEMY

> You are the macrocosm. (Rumi, 1999, 4)

This holistic Reichian perspective where there is no separation between the individual and the world, the cosmos, and also none between the inanimate, the animate and the spiritual world can be seen as located in the alchemical tradition. Historically and geographically speaking, the beginnings of alchemy are lost in time and space. There is a debate whether it originated in China or Egypt (Holmyard, 1957, 23). Depending on different perspectives, and

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considering texts like the *I Ching* – Richard Wilhelm wrote, ‘it may safely be said that the seasoned wisdom of thousands of years has gone into the making of the *I Ching*’ (Wilhelm, 1980, xlvii) – and the writings of the Taoist masters, the older sources seem to have survived in the Far East. What is clear is that what we call alchemy from our Western viewpoint is a holistic worldview in the most profound possible way: not only is there no separation between science and religion – man (and woman!) and God – there is also none between the inanimate, the animate and the spiritual world. We are presented with what in the European tradition has been called ‘*unus mundus*’, one world, linked, all-pervaded by and consisting of different forms of energy, at times called Mercurius here, the messenger between the gods and earth, expressed in the maxim, ‘as above, so below’ and Tao, in the East: ‘That which produces and composes the universe is Tao, the undivided oneness or ultimate nothingness’ (Ni, 2008, 12). In the course of the previous century, cutting-edge science, in developing quantum physics, has, in a way, constituted a rapprochement to these concepts, after they had been split apart in the ‘Enlightenment’, prompting their revaluation.

One of the most important European alchemists and healers was Paracelsus. A recent biographer speaks of his ‘tender medicine, the profoundest basis of which was love’ (Meier, 2004, 11) and wrote, ‘Unique in his total work, of which only 10 000 pages have been [re-]published, is his perspective that embraces medicine, cosmology, psychopathology, magical aspects and political critique’ (p. 12). Already, nearly 450 years ago, Paracelsus (1493?–1541) admonished that ‘the good doctor . . . should not practise self-abuse’! (in ‘*An Excellent Treatise*’, quoted in Ball, 2007, 209). Yet, just some years earlier, Johannes Rütiner, a diarist of St Gallen, had observed that Paracelsus ‘sleeps but little, with boots and spurs and fully dressed, he throws himself into bed for three hours or so, then writes again’ (in Ball, 2007, 260). Interestingly, this self-neglect is mirrored by one of his patients, the renowned Erasmus of Rotterdam (1465/66–1536) – just not to exclude academics from our concern – who wrote after a consultation:

> At present I have no time for a cure, indeed I have no time either to be sick or die, for I am engaged in exacting studies. However, if you know something that might give me relief, please let me know it. (Quoted in Ball, 2007, 195)

Some 10 years later, a year before he died, aged 70, Erasmus regretted, ‘I have lived a long life, counting the years; but were I to calculate the time wrestling with fever, the stone and gout, I have not lived long’ (in Ball, 2007).

ECOPSYCHOLOGY

> The only myth that is going to be worth thinking about in the immediate future is one that is talking about the planet and everything on it. (Joseph Campbell, 1986, in Opus, 2009)

In the brief history of psychoanalysis during the last 120 years, Freud’s (1856–1939) initial focus on a one-person psychology shifted with Otto Gross (1877–1920) to a relational perspective. Gross also radicalized Freud’s tentative links between the individual neurosis and that of the surrounding society: he taught and lived an active engagement in revolutionary politics. ‘The psychology of the unconscious is the philosophy of the revolution’ (Gross, 2009, 78: ‘The analyst’s practice comprises all humanity suffering from

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itself'). Jung (1875–1961) developed these ideas further towards an intersubjective approach in the clinical setting and paralleled this by postulating a corresponding dialectical relationship between the human and the divine. Based on his study of alchemy as well as Eastern philosophies, Jung also assumed an unconscious interconnectness between human beings independent of time and culture – the collective unconscious.

What remains excluded from an *unus mundus* perspective? Although all three – Freud, Gross and Jung – were medical doctors, they did not really concern themselves with the bodies of their patients, although Freud initially included practices similar to later body psychotherapeutic techniques; although Gross saw 'each psychical process is at the same time a physiological one' (Gross, 1907, 7); and although Jung developed a concept of a psychoid subtle body, an in-between state between matter and psyche. Correspondingly, also excluded was the world at large: matter, earth and the cosmos. For the Taoist masters and the alchemists, including Paracelsus, all of these were seen as just different aspects of the interconnected network of different forms of energies and their various manifestations.

The man who filled this gap with his work in our time was Wilhelm Reich (1897–1957). A pupil initially of Freud's, he incorporated working directly with the body into his psychoanalytic practice. This was based on his discovery that repressed emotions are stored in the body in the form of muscular tensions. If these became chronic, Reich spoke of a muscular or character armour. With him all current forms of body psychotherapy originated. Reich continued and expanded Gross's work on the links between psychoanalysis and radical politics – which cost him the membership of the International Psychoanalytic Association in 1934 at a time when this organization wanted to come to an agreement with the Nazis, who had been voted into power in Germany. Persecuted and exiled, his research, first in Scandinavia and later in the USA, led Reich to the manifestations of psychic energy first in the human body, then in matter, and he came to later discover it in the surrounding atmosphere and in the cosmos. His name for what the ancient Chinese had called 'chi', what the alchemists had, at times, named 'Mercurius', was 'orgone energy'. The American psychologist John P Conger, some 20 years ago, seems to have been the first to call Wilhelm Reich an alchemist (Conger, 1988, 12). The logo he devised for his work with bio-energy can be seen as a modern version of the staff of Mercurius, with the life energy flowing forth from a starting point, dividing into opposing forces in order to reunite – to create another beginning.

Reich's understanding of the close links between neurotic self-abuse and the neuroses enacted in society and politics, which he saw mirrored in the way we treat the environment, make him also the very first eco-psychologist. He worked not just psychoanalytically with people in a way that included body psychotherapy: his concerns were also political and ecological. Already in 1973 his best – because fairest and most comprehensive – biographer David Boadella wrote that 'his studies led ultimately to the planetary issues of human ecology, where the problem of pollution became a primary concern' (Boadella, 1973, 7). Following

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Gross, Reich was actively involved with revolutionary change in the 1920s and early 1930s in Germany and from his exile, and later developed methods of weather modification and control, thus, in effect, becoming the first eco-psychotherapist. He devised ways to collect and concentrate orgone energy to supplement emotional healing on an energetic level, and he drew parallels between the emotional/muscular armouring of people – which he understood as an inner 'emotional desert' (in Greenfield, 1974, 171) – and the alarming spread of deserts as well as atmospheric pollution. Reich recognized a 'planetary emergency' (in Greenfield, 1974, 137). He had a weather control apparatus built in 1952 and experimented successfully with it both in the northeastern USA as well as on an expedition to the Arizona desert in 1954/55, concentrating on 'rain-making' (p. 291) as a form of 'atmospheric medicine' (p. 186) as he called it. Einstein confirmed [several of] his findings and said it would be a bombshell to physics if Reich's findings were true (in p. 7). Yet with the all-encompassing range of his work that included also spiritual dimensions, Reich was so far ahead of his time that he became a despised outsider, whose later work was supposedly that of a 'madman' and hence not to be taken seriously – in spite of the fact that some of Reich's weather control experiments were later successfully repeated in early 1960s by Charles Kelley (1922–2005), a nationally renowned meteorologist (Kelley, 1961), and in the 1990s by James DeMeo in California, Israel and the southeast African Sahel Desert (DeMeo, 1992, n.d.; Bechmann, 1997). Heiko Lassek MD has successfully been treating cancer patients in Berlin for many years with orgone energy (Bartuska, 2004; Lassek, 2006).

'RADICAL HOPE'

> God is our hope and strength: a very present help in trouble.
> Therefore we will not fear, though the earth be moved,
> and though the hills be carried into the midst of the sea. (Book of Common Prayer)

Self-love, let us return to where we started from: 'Love thy neighbour as thyself' (Leviticus XIX: 18). With quantum theory, contemporary cutting-edge science appears to come full circle, in a sense, towards confirming – or, at the very least, moving towards confirming – much of what the ancient Eastern and Western alchemical traditions have been describing for thousands of years, that all and everything is interlinked in an ocean of energy. Thus 'matter', as Teilhard de Chardin stated, 'is psyche moving slowly', implying a world soul or *anima mundi,* which, conversely, would also mean that matter moving fast is psyche, energy, orgone or chi.

Following Nietzsche's, 'Man can stretch himself as he may with his knowledge. . . in the last analysis, he gives nothing but his own biography' (Nietzsche, 1906, I, No. 513; III., No. 369), for Jung, 'every psychological theory should be criticized in the first instance as a subjective confession' (Jung, 1934, para. 1025). When I survey the doom-laden field of eco-psychology from this perspective, I understand the apocalyptic predictions for a future that, so I am made to believe, cannot possibly be other than catastrophic, and there is nothing we can do about that anymore, as an all-pervading depression projected outward. Just as Jung – even with the hindsight of some 40 years – failed to see his own 'subjective confession', as it were in his dream of late 1913, where he saw all Europe flooded by blood, and had visions of rivers of blood (Jung, 1963, 199): rather than understanding the symbolism 'in the first instance' as reflecting the emotional catastrophe of his breakup with Freud, Jung, as Deirdre

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Bair writes, 'persuaded himself that . . . the dreams were "a true precognition of war"' – a possibility that I do not mean to exclude – 'and tried not to worry about them in a personal sense' (Bair, 2004, 243). Correspondingly, when, very shortly before his death, Jung writes that our 'immediate communication with nature is gone forever' (Jung, 1961, para. 585; cf. Bernstein, 2010, 16), this, I believe, is better understood in connection with his aforementioned resignative bitterness towards the end of his life than as fact. Somewhat provocatively, Eckhart Tolle writes more recently, linking the intrapsychic realm with the collective as well as the ecosphere:

> Negativity is totally unnatural. It is a psychic pollutant, and there is a deep link between the poisoning and destruction of nature and the vast negativity that has accumulated in the collective human psyche. . . . [Y] our perception of the world is a reflection of your state of consciousness. . . . Just as the images in a dream are symbols of inner states and feelings, so our collective reality is largely a symbolic expression of fear and of the heavy layers of negativity that have accumulated in the human psyche. (Tolle, 1999, 157, 164–6)

Winnicott, again, in his seminal paper 'Fear of breakdown' (Winnicott, 1989, 87–95), describes the psychic mechanism that we use to survive trauma – by definition, the onslaught of overwhelming feelings: they get split off. But they do not vanish: the repressed returns to haunt us in the form of terrors, anxieties of future catastrophes. Winnicott understands these as the traumas of the past that we have already survived – at the cost of current depressions. These hauntings do have an emotional purpose other than making our lives a misery: the feelings that were too much to cope with in the past demand to be dealt with. But passing them on like the proverbial hot potato by projecting – literally throwing them out – or passing them on to patients and students, is no way to do that. The conservationist does not at all need to be conservatory, yet, in this sense, the vast majority of eco-psychologists work hand in hand with politicians and the media in what has aptly been called 'the fear industry'. This is dialectically correspondent to an apparently growing addictive craving for misery. Already nearly 150 years ago the French poet Charles Baudelaire commented:

> Every newspaper from the first to the last line is a web of horrors. And this disgusting aperitif every civilised European takes for his daily breakfast. I do not understand how a clean hand can touch a newssheet without getting cramps of nausea. (Baudelaire, 1925, 356)

Let us turn here to the myth of Pandora. She is assumed by some to be a denigrated nature goddess; one way to translate her name is 'the All-Giver' (Panofsky, 1991, 4). The evil ways we usually associate with her are seen as the result of patriarchal defamations. In early versions of the myth she does not have a box but a huge storage jar. The mythologists Dora and Erwin Panofsky lay the blame for 'the box' at the feet of the already mentioned Erasmus of Rotterdam. Apparently he changed the storage jar to a pyxis or small box (Panofsky, 1991, 14ff.), a make-up case, thus pushing the story towards that of an alluring *femme fatale* carrying a box that is seen to contain all the evils of the world. But there is something else: the myth tells us that at the very bottom of this box, once all the evils have been released, there is hope. In view of what I have said so far, might we, from an analytical perspective, understand the mythical Pandora in one aspect as an anima/soul, holding for us all that which

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we have found impossibly overwhelming to deal with? And might the myth also be suggesting a solution to our dilemma in the direction of setting free the evils of the past, the evils that continue to be evil – and poisonously (self-)destructive – only as long as they are being held inside? And might that put us in touch with hope – hope that has thus far been buried under masses of re-/de-pressed trauma of the past?

Let us pause here for just a moment, as there are two kinds of hope: one that grows out of what Freud calls 'turning away from reality' (in Lear, 2006, 116), an ignoring of reality, turning a blind eye. Clearly, this cannot be the kind of hope that the myth speaks of: there, it is a hope that is found 'at the very bottom', after all the evils have been faced in all their reality, or, rather, it is a hope that squarely does face reality, including all its shadow sides and evils. This, therefore, is what the American philosopher and psychoanalyst Jonathan Lear calls '*radical hope*' (Lear, 2006). In the context of his alchemical studies, Jung said, 'the shadow can contain up to eighty percent pure gold', its essence is 'pure gold' (in Tuby, 1984, 13). This perspective thus leads us back to the original Pandora as a nature goddess with a large storage jar that we may understand as a cornucopia full of life – life energy – in its multiple forms.

And this, finally, brings me to the chickadee, a small, titmouse-like bird of North America. In his book, *Radical Hope: Ethics in the Face of Cultural Devastation* (Lear, 2006), Lear develops the concept of radical hope on the basis of the biography of the Native American Crow Chief Alaxchiiaahush or Plenty Coups (meaning 'Many Achievements', 1846/7–1932). His lifetime nearly spans the century when the Native Americans faced cultural devastation and total annihilation: 'not only the loss of their entire way of life. . . but the concepts that made life meaningful beyond mere survival. . . . The young future chief was called to dream on behalf of the tribe when he was nine years old' (Eyres, 2009). He dreamed of the annihilation of the different Native American people and their way of life in the form of all the trees of a forest being blown down by a mighty storm, except for one: the tree that housed the chickadee, 'the most insignificant of all forest creatures. But the chickadee made up for in mental strength what he lacked in physical power: the chickadee was a great listener, willing to learn from others' (Eyres, 2009). The interpretation given by the tribe's elders was 'that the Crow should learn from the wisdom of the chickadee; not succumb to despair or go down fighting in a blaze of glory' (Eyres, 2009), as some of the neighbouring tribes did. The path Plenty Coups chose, based on his childhood dream, was with an immense courage to find an alternative to the tribe's warrior tradition and to arrange themselves with the overwhelming might of the whites. Fully facing their cultural devastation, his radical hope 'wagers a visceral trust that there is enough goodness in the world for things to turn out. . . alright' (Eyres, 2009), even if there is nothing rationally knowable on which to base such trust.

In ecological terms, Plenty Coups' listening to the chickadee unmistakably speaks not only of the necessity of 'an immediate communication with nature', as Jung expressed it, but also, in contrast to him and most current eco-psychologists, of a continuing potential to do so. To be clear, the communication I mean is, as Jerome Bernstein puts it, 'not a regressive return to a state once lived but is developmentally progressed in evolutionary terms' (Bernstein, 2010, 21).

CONCLUSION

Beginning with a sociological take on our current Western 'overwork culture', I have considered the extent to which we, in our field of analysis/therapy, are part of this problem or

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whether we might be capable of becoming part of its solution. I have given these concerns both an historical as well as a holistic dimension by tracing them back to the *unus mundus* perspective of the alchemists past and present, using Paracelsus and Wilhelm Reich respectively as examples. I have gathered these thoughts together in order to arrive, with the help of the Greek myth of Pandora, and the dream of a 19th-century Native American, at the concept of 'Radical Hope: Ethics in the Face of Cultural Devastation': in clear distinction to mere optimism, a profoundly spiritual trust in an unknowable future. Let us hope – dare I say, pray? – that we, too, can listen to the chickadee – and also learn from the sloth.

According to Wilhelm Reich, 'embracing lovers radiate a bluish light, orgone illumination, the same sort of light the astronauts saw in outer space', and he called on us to 'reactivate the natural vibrations within ourselves and society. Let the currents stream sweetly through. . . our muscles! Feel free to tremble and cry!' (in Makavejev, 1972, 32).

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