

Becoming and Being: A Response to Chalquist's Review of *Ecopsychology: Science, Totems, and the Technological Species*

Peter H. Kahn, Jr.¹ and Patricia H. Hasbach²

¹Department of Psychology, University of Washington, Seattle, Washington.

²Psychotherapy and Consulting Services, Eugene, Oregon; Lewis and Clark College, Portland, Oregon; Antioch University, Seattle, Washington.

We would like to extend our appreciation to Craig Chalquist for his thoughtful review and willingness to engage in this dialogue. And to Thomas Doherty, editor of this journal, whose idea it was.

Chalquist writes as both an urbanite and deep ecologist. He resides inside the hermeneutic circle, and outside, and espouses Gadamer even as he is critical of such jargon that can do more to obfuscate than clarify. And what this means for his review is that he seems at once both supportive of our book's thesis—and himself provides further evidence of it—even as he seeks to call into question our entire enterprise. Thus somehow, by the end of his review, he has given us everything and nothing to take issue with.

Our thesis is relatively simple. For tens of thousands of years, our species coevolved with nature and developed a deep kinship with the more-than-human world. It's what we refer to in our book as our *totemic selves*. Elizabeth Marshall Thomas (2006) calls it the Old Way. We are part of the Old Way. Its patterns and needs are with us still, although noticeable now in often-disjointed aspects of our lives. For example, we travel long distances to vacation in spots of natural splendor. We enjoy walking along the ocean's edge, romping with our dog in a nearby park, or partaking of some wine and cheese as the

sun sets from a bluff-top venue. Home prices are almost always higher when there is natural beauty out the window. Water views are especially valued. We enjoy gardening. Birding. We send flowers to people to cheer them up and to celebrate.

A profound experience of our totemic selves is the encounter with a wild animal Other—perhaps with a turtle or a bear or a gray whale. Such an encounter can stay in one's memory for a lifetime. Paul Shepard (1996) has written of how such encounters made us human and that the need for such encounters is with us still. But with the destruction of wild habitats and the loss of so many wild animals, these encounters happen too infrequently for too few people. Thus that totemic desire gets repressed and finds perverted forms of expression. You may have witnessed, for example, people throwing pebbles or bits of food at a wild animal imprisoned in a cage at the zoo, despite signage asking people to refrain from such behavior. The zoo visitors are not trying to hurt these animals but are trying to get their attention—to have that encounter such that the wild animal sees them, eye to eye, as they see the animal.

To flourish, as individuals and as a species, we need to find healthy expression of our totemic selves: our kinship with a more-than-human world. And at times we need to experience the wild—that which is big, untamed, unmanaged, not encompassed, and self-organizing—to be fully human. That totemic self, which includes the wild, needs to be central to any vision of ecopsychology.

But today's vision of ecopsychology needs more than that. For as we argue in the book—and as the contributing authors show—we have created a scientific culture, which embodies, fosters, and provides a formal structure to this beautiful part of who we have become: inquisitive, creative, investigative, analytic, reflective, and self-reflective,

and we are also now a technological species. Our science and technology have led to artifacts practical and sublime. The Hubble telescope, for example, has provided access to times and spaces within and beyond our comprehension. That said, our science and technology have also tended—and we believe unnecessarily so, and agree with Chalquist here—to separate mind and body, as well as nature and spirit, and to run roughshod over the natural world. Thus the challenge for a revisioned ecopsychology is to embrace our totemic selves and to integrate that with our scientific culture and technological selves.

In broad strokes, we think our position is concordant with Chalquist's position. Elsewhere in his review he is critical and suggests that our integrative vision is motivated by us trying to be popular, to gain market share. But, no. This vision is motivated by a recognition of the reality of what we have become culturally within the last several hundred years (scientific), who we have become as a species within the last 50,000 years (technological), and who, over a much longer period of evolutionary history, we've always been and still are (totemic).

Against this backdrop, there are two specific points in Chalquist's review that we would like to respond to. The first is a disagreement. The second is a clarification.

Ecotherapy: What Is It?

Chalquist argues for the distinction between “two kinds of ecotherapy.” *Natural ecotherapy* refers to “the healing effects of being with plants, animals, and landscapes” and “to which everyone has access without having to hire an expert.” In contrast, *clinical ecotherapy* is “conducted as part of a professional practice” (Chalquist, 2012). He makes this point to argue against Patricia Hasbach's framing of the field of ecotherapy (in her chapter titled “Ecotherapy”). But, as Hasbach highlights, a major confusion exists in the ecopsychology and ecotherapy literature when it's proposed that healing in nature constitutes a form of therapy. If that were the case, then ecotherapy would occur almost every time a person goes for a walk in the park to feel repose, or gardens, walks along the seashore, climbs a nearby knoll, climbs a major mountain, looks up into the night sky, picks huckleberries on a sunny afternoon, or plays with a dog. The list is as endless as are the interactions with nature that improve people's moods, reduce stress, reduce depression, and allow people to feel happier and live longer. Interaction with nature can help us heal, physically and psychologically. No doubt about that. But that's not therapy. Our concern is that it only muddles the field to speak of it as “natural therapy” because what is being described is *natural healing*. Rather, to engage in ecotherapy, as Hasbach shows, there needs to be a triadic relationship that is composed of (1) a

person who is the subject of the therapy, whom we can call the client, (2) a human provider who is seeking to assist the client, whom we can call the therapist, and (3) nature. The provider may be a PhD clinician or a shaman. There is nothing that requires the medical model; but PhD or shaman, there is formal human structure to the intervention, and the provider bears certain ethical responsibilities.

The Warrior Ethos and the Power of Patriarchy

In the Introduction to our volume, we sought to distinguish five ecopsychological orientations—ecological unconscious, phenomenology, interconnectedness of all beings, transpersonal, and transcendental. Before offering them in the volume, we told the reader: “We offer them cautiously.” We knew there was no easy way to fully systemize the field but thought the distinctions useful, not only in characterizing different ecological emphases but by focusing on differing ontologies and epistemologies. What we see in Chalquist's review, as was present with Thomas Doherty's roundtable with us (Hasbach et al., 2012), was a concern that we had not taken seriously enough the ecofeminist orientation. Our point of clarification here is that we chose to include discussion of ecofeminism not as a historical orientation but as one of the issues we identified in our extensive Afterword with which to chart the future of the field. There we argued that many people mistakenly believe two interrelated views. One is that human violence to other humans is part of our essential nature and that war-faring societies have always existed. The other is that male domination of women is part of our essential nature and that patriarchal societies have always existed. We then brought forward a sketch of the historical record to argue against both positions. We conclude that section by writing:

Ecopsychology has done a good job of showing that cultures where men dominate women are usually cultures that seek to dominate nature. This has been important work. Our point here is to suggest that the work can be strengthened by connecting it to a substantive account...of Paleolithic and Neolithic history. (Kahn & Hasbach, 2012, p. 317)

We appreciate Chalquist's and Doherty's attention to this important issue.

Our thanks to Chalquist for his review. As we write in the volume, in a revisioned ecopsychology there is room for disagreement, as this is healthy for any evolving field. We also write that there is also room for diverse methods of ecopsychological inquiry: for first-person narratives of nature experience, for hypothesis testing and controlled experiments, for ethnographic accounts of human experience, and for the methods employed by neuroscientists,

architects, philosophers, anthropologists, psychologists, phenomenologists, epidemiologists, and paleontologists—all of whom are represented in this volume. And there is room for lay people, too—all of us who, in our own ways, enjoy nature's gifts and blessings and seek to deepen our kinship with the more-than-human world.

REFERENCES

- Chalquist, C. (2012). Review of *Ecopsychology: Science, totems, and the technological species*, edited by Peter Kahn and Patricia Hasbach. *Ecopsychology*, 4, doi:10.1089/eco.2012.0073.
- Hasbach, P. H., Kahn, P. H., Jr., and Doherty, T. J. (2012). *Ecopsychology* roundtable: Patricia Hasbach and Peter Kahn. *Ecopsychology*, 4, 1–9.
- Kahn, P. H., Jr., & Hasbach, P. H. (Eds.). (2012). *Ecopsychology: Science, totems, and the technological species*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Shepard, P. (1996). *The others: How animals made us human*. Washington, DC: Island Press.
- Thomas, E. M. (2006). *The old way: A story of the first people*. New York, NY: Farrar, Straus, & Giroux.

Address correspondence to:
Peter H. Kahn, Jr.
Department of Psychology
Box 351525
University of Washington
Seattle, WA 98195

E-mail: pkahn@uw.edu

Patricia H. Hasbach
541 Willamette St, Suite 208A
Eugene, OR 97401

E-mail: phasbach@northwestecotherapy.com

Received: November 13, 2012
Accepted: November 13, 2012