**Towards a Dialectical Account of Eco-Neurosis: Developing a Framework on The Unconscious in an Age of Ecological Degradation**

***The Doctrine of the universal neurosis of humankind, if we take it seriously, therefore compels us to entertain the hypothesis that the pattern of history exhibits a dialectic not hitherto recognized by historians, the dialectic of neurosis. – Norman O. Brown, Life Against Death***

**Introduction: A Contemporary Rupture of Psychological/Ecological Proportions**

# Eco-Neurosis: The Hidden Reverberation of a changing Environment

Climate change is upsetting organized capitalist activity or "business as usual" (i.e., infinite growth, consumption, and a materialistic ethos) in contemporary life. In 2019, the United Nations Climate Summit in New York described climate change as the defining issue of our time. The importance of the Earth's climate is evident for humans as we need food, freshwater, fiber, timber, and shelter to survive and thrive. In an age of climate volatility owing to contemporary material excesses in over-production and over-consumption, capitalism's transformation of nature has developed negative environmental impacts and physical health concerns. At the same time, psychological research is also uncovering worrying mental effects due to the changing climate. The production of uncomfortable psychological effects now has a direct corollary with ecological doom; a burgeoning label for this occurrence is eco-neurosis. The “eco” in front of the name establishes that mental conditions can be related to environmental shifts or transformations, including climate change. Eco-neurosis is a new phenomenon that derives from the worries of humans in an age of a rapidly changing climate. In effect, climate change is not only altering “business as usual” but appears to be causing a mark on the human psyche.

This dissertation explores the phenomenon of eco-neurosis (EN): its causes, the history of the term, and the competing definitions and divided interpretations of the psychological phenomena. I begin by situating my analysis with EN and ecopsychology literature. Then, I discuss the importance of interrogating the sources of EN by adding Environmental Political Theory (EPT) as an added literature of significance. Next, I argue for the use of psychoanalysis as a lens to view the psychological effects of environmental changes: i.e., ecological problems are deeply rooted in unconscious motives and profound worries of climate catastrophe. Next, I engage the importance of adding Erich Fromm’s theoretical perspective to build my hypothesis. Then, I lay bare the foundational methodological framework of this project, which I have come to understand as a contemporary renewal of dialectical thought. Penultimately, I discuss the importance of adding Fromm into the EPT literature and interrogate his theoretical assumptions to provide a dimension to set up an “eco-unconscious.” Lastly, I provide a chapter-by-chapter breakdown of how the rest of dissertation will unfold.

In 2017, the American Psychiatric Association (APA)[[1]](#footnote-1) defined eco-neurosis as "a chronic fear of environmental doom."[[2]](#footnote-2) The APA claimed the acceptance of significant environmental problems that affect our planet may cause anxiety and fear due to environmental consequences of varying seriousness in people who have experienced the first/secondhand effects of climate change. The APA also observed that gradual, long-term changes in climate can also surface several different emotions, including fear, anger, feelings of powerlessness or exhaustion.[[3]](#footnote-3) True enough, a review within the study described cases in which fear of extreme weather approaches the level of phobia and the “unrelenting day-by-day despair” that can be experienced during an environmental disaster. Similarly, watching the slow and irrevocable impacts of climate change unfold increased worries about the future for oneself, children, and later generations, which become an additional source of stress and anxiety.[[4]](#footnote-4) Although there is no information on how much of the world population is suffering from this recent psychological reaction, experts say that as climate-related problems grow, so will the number of people who are experiencing eco-neurosis.[[5]](#footnote-5)

According to the APA, eco-neurosis manifests in various symptoms such as: sleep disorders, stress, anxiety, depression, and the development of posttraumatic stress disorder and suicidal ideations. As of today, there is no specific clinical diagnosis of eco-neurosis; self-reported presentations include panic attacks, insomnia, obsessive thinking, and appetite changes caused by environmental anxiety and fear.[[6]](#footnote-6) This new problem will keep evolving as the effects of the Earth’s altering climate worsen. The APA predicts a formal clinical diagnosis could come sooner rather than later.[[7]](#footnote-7) Granted, this is a developing occurrence that psychologists have mentioned will have more prolonged effects due to the increased intensity of climate change.

Adding to this problem, due to academic silos, a fragmentation of research frameworks on eco-neurosis renders a dark road of competing definitions. Consequently, scholars are using different terms for the same, or at least similar, psychological dispositions. For example, Panu Pihkala describes it as “eco-anxiety,”[[8]](#footnote-8) Daniel Goleman dubs it “eco-angst”[[9]](#footnote-9), Valimaki and Lehtonen call it “environmental neurosis.”[[10]](#footnote-10) The differences remain in the roots of each orientation. For example, Pihkala chooses eco-anxiety to describe all anxieties related to the ecological crisis;[[11]](#footnote-11) Goleman describes it as the moment a new bit of unpleasant ecological information about some consumable product plunges us into a moment of despair at the planet’s condition;[[12]](#footnote-12) Valimaki and Lehtonen describe it as an eco-anxiety rooted in a cognitive dissonance toward the apparent independence of man with nature and the illusion of full autonomy concerning nature.[[13]](#footnote-13) What each of these approaches shares with the other is the connection between the rapid occurrence of extreme climate events and human psychological dispositions that derive from this damaging instability.

Furthermore, the term eco-anxiety is a recent neologism currently debated and discussed among social psychologists, social scientists, and climate activists. Panu Pihkala mentions that during their recent research on eco-anxiety, the materials gathered and found over a long period of interdisciplinary research on related themes resulted in partly intertwining research fields.[[14]](#footnote-14) Pihkala identified these research fields or questions as:

* explicit studies about eco-anxiety, and the standard definitions of eco-anxiety
* social and political sciences
* theories of existential anxiety
* psychodynamic and psychosocial research
* research on pathological forms of anxiety and anxiety disorders
* studies about ecological emotions and ecological affects
* general theories of anxiety[[15]](#footnote-15)

These research fields make it known that the study of the terms “eco-anxiety,” “eco-angst,” and so on are deeply interdisciplinary and should be understood as a manifold of collected research from various fields from the hard sciences to the social sciences. The interdisciplinarity of eco-neurosis (EN) research has also identified general points of connection Pihkala notes that among general scholars of anxiety a basic point of similarity in studying EN is that it is future-oriented i.e., it is worry about the impending doom in relation to the non-human world that also involves uncertainty of what form that doom will take, A compendium of ideas within the research suggests that uncertainty, unpredictability, and uncontrollability of the human/environment relationship are important factors of EN.[[16]](#footnote-16)

Social and political science scholars emphasize the social dimension of EN: for example, there is a long tradition in the social sciences of discussing the results of modernity and postmodernity as bringing on a new kind of “age of anxiety.”[[17]](#footnote-17) In general, it points out that the fragmentation of traditional sources of norms and meanings brings individuals much more freedom, and simultaneously an increased possibility for feelings of anxiety. When this is combined with rapid changes in societies technology (social media, metaverse, NFTs, cryptocurrency, etc.), individuals are faced with constant uncertainty and stress.[[18]](#footnote-18) Another pattern in social science research is the tendency of social science scholars to define EN and climate anxiety by using the general term anxiety i.e., related to uncomfortable changes in the social order of things.[[19]](#footnote-19) One differentiating point of this dissertation is to ecologize and discuss the connection between society and nature adding an ecological dimension to social research will vivify and enhance social and individual research on anxiety.

On the other hand, climate psychology scholars talk about EN as a case-by-case issue. EN is not defined as an official disorder within psychological research; this is in part because the field of psychiatry has only recently started to pay attention to the impacts of the ecological crisis and research is now growing on the complex matter of EN.[[20]](#footnote-20) At the same time, psychological scholarship believes that pathologizing EN necessarily leads to medicalization and hospitalization. The critique of this is that conceptual flexibility of what we mean by pathology needs clarification (Norman O. Brown via Freud argues that anxiety is a pathological phenomenon that is experienced universally by the mere compromise of joining civilization) Still, climate psychology differentiates between “healthy” and potent forms of EN that may require mental health care.

Thomas Doherty points out “the relationship between psychopathology and eco-anxiety is complex and requires contextual case-specific analysis.”[[21]](#footnote-21) Indeed, my perspective employs complexity to differentiate itself from these two positions by planting two flags: one, in response to the emphasis of the social dimension in political science I aim for a dialectical interpretation through the triadic elements of the social, individual and nature. Second, scholars in psychology divide pathology by unadjusted and unproductive definitions of wellbeing concerning EN. However, I claim that distinction itself is a part of a more general sickness of Western society. Therefore, EN is another reaction to a relational sickness in ourselves, society, and nature.

Incidentally, Early origins of the term eco-anxiety link to another concept: Solastalgia, coined by the Australian philosopher Glenn Albrecht and defined as the set of psychological disorders that occur in a population following destructive changes in their territory, whether through human activities or the climate.[[22]](#footnote-22) The Medical journal Lancet included solastalgia in 2015 as a term related to the impact of climate change on human well-being. Therefore, solastalgia affects people who have already suffered the consequences of a natural disaster, differentiating it from eco-anxiety, which can only be present in the anticipation of impending climate doom. However, the similarities lie in the similar affects they produce such as fear and worry and a general anxiety of further damage and whether a population can recover from these life-changing effects.

The most widely cited definitions of eco-neurosis traces its origins to Glenn Albrecht and climate psychologists; these definitions highlight a general character of eco-neurosis: “it is seen as a wide-scale reaction to the state of the planetary ecosystems”[[23]](#footnote-23) I have mentioned one of the main definitions already, but here are several more: “a generalized sense that the ecological foundations of existence are in the process of collapse”;[[24]](#footnote-24) another version of this is “non-specific worry about our relationship to support environments”[[25]](#footnote-25) Clayton et al. describe it “as a chronic, in other words constant and strong, form of fear.”[[26]](#footnote-26) These psychologists also discuss more exact symptoms as results of the impacts of climate change in their research.

Beginning with fear, experienced eco-psychologists Buzzell and Chalquist recently argued that when researchers discuss eco-neurosis, it would be essential to notice that “eco-fear” primarily describes this better. Buzzell and Chalquist explain that “The first step in a successful treatment of eco-anxiety is realizing that a fearful response to a real condition isn’t pathological at all. Eco-fear is completely normal and useful, even if profoundly disturbing.”[[27]](#footnote-27) Psychologists like Buzzell and Chalquist have pointed out that concerning environmental threats and media representation, the lines between fear and anxiety quickly become blurred. Pihkala mentions that there are differing opinions about what terminology approximates clarity and whether fear or anxiety are the appropriate terms for the phenomena throughout the literature.

At the same time, In the 2000s and early 2010s, scholarly writing on "eco-anxiety" and "climate anxiety" was dominated by the language of "defenses," guided by assumptions coming from psychologists in the psychodynamic traditions.[[28]](#footnote-28) The psychology of the psychodynamic tradition derives its assumptions from Sigmund Freud and associates many ideas to the psychoanalytic traditions based on libidinal development. The psychodynamic tradition over determines their theories on biology and sexual developments in human behavior. Pihkala notes that the psychodynamic movement is a cautionary example in the history of "eco-anxiety," when the subject's autonomy was not a common point of focus.[[29]](#footnote-29)

However, certain psychoanalysts like Sally Weintrobe took up the cause of "eco-anxiety" as a serious topic; Weintrobe focused on "denial" and "disavowal" as a response to the overwhelming contradiction of climate change. They explained that "different forms of disavowal are much more common. People find ways to both know and not know at the same time. This results in a vicious circle. Because of denial and disavowal, the problems get worse. This in turn breeds more anxiety."[[30]](#footnote-30) Denial and disavowal are commonly used defenses to protect us from anxiety and the pain of impending loss and change that would follow if segments of humanity, specifically post-industrialized societies, truly accepted reality.

In the same vein, “uncertainty” and “helplessness” are two terms used to define the effects of climate anxiety. General anxiety theories emphasize the crucial role of uncertainty. That is, there is a felt threat, but there is also uncertainty about its exact nature and time.[[31]](#footnote-31) Generalized anxiety psychologists who focus on individualized psychology and were not sensitive to ecological anxieties provided a blueprint for more contemporary scholars to discuss the affective feelings to climate change. Other important concepts included to uncertainty and helplessness include unpredictability and uncontrollability. Unpredictability has close connections with uncertainty and helplessness: “uncontrollability generates helplessness and feelings of powerlessness; in other words, a diminished sense of efficacy and a diminished control belief (or changes in a felt ‘locus of control’).”[[32]](#footnote-32)The field of individualized psychology determines that the mind under duress develops anxieties, and its functions are maladaptive, which develop unhealthy coping mechanisms such as the feeling of uncertainty and helplessness.

Other scholars, such as Hoggett, explicitly integrate social and psychological perspectives with what they call psychosocial studies related to the ecological crisis.[[33]](#footnote-33) Others like Lertzman coined the term “environmental melancholia” to describe a condition which is related to eco-anxiety: “unresolved and often unconscious mourning because of environmental change.”[[34]](#footnote-34) Similarly, the are also various other studies that explore the relations between death, anxiety, and mortality as a result of climate change. Still, at the end of the decade of the 2000s, there were calls for psychoanalysts to consider ecological issues;[[35]](#footnote-35) Scholars such as Weintrobe, Orange, and Kassouf began expanding the connection of Freud’s theory to that of the environment.[[36]](#footnote-36)

The crucial roles of uncertainty, unpredictability, uncontrollability, helplessness, fear, and worry in general discuss the fundamental characteristics and history of eco-anxiety/neurosis. The ongoing Covid-19 pandemic (still ongoing with the new variant omicron) provides a helpful comparison. Worry, fear, paranoia are all affective elements of pandemic anxiety; however, the significant difference between covid and climate change is that it will eventually subside; on the other hand, climate change will be a problem now and for the coming generations. Valimaki and Lehtonen demonstrate the severity of this change by stating:

The psychological factors involved in our adaptation to the consequences of climate change are numerous. Together they form a complex that has many different roots in the sphere of our minds, such as our affects, basic sense of security of life, social orientation, economic adaptation, individual wishes, and fears, and, last but not least, our psychological make-up – the structure of the mind that has developed from infancy and adolescence to its adult form together, these factors have created a psychological condition that merits being called an environmental neurosis of modern man.[[37]](#footnote-37)

True enough, to their word, the complex of climate change has many layers. Nevertheless, further research still needs to unpack how and why climate change's complexity affects our individual and collective psychological factors. Pihkala points out that one crucial research focus that lacks clarity is social contexts and cultural factors, stating further that "Manifestations of eco-anxiety are in numerous ways shaped by socio-cultural factors, power dynamics, and justice issues."[[38]](#footnote-38) The crux of this dissertation is in this spirit. It will illuminate and provide clarity toward not just cultural issues but also the dynamic that foregrounds eco-neurosis as a dialectical process through culture, individuals, and nature. In other words, we must understand the phenomenon of eco-neurosis as an historical, socio-political effect. In particular, we have to differentiate the phenomenon because it does not affect all populations or generations equally. To get at the full political and cultural impact and etiology of EN, we must carefully assess how and where it is showing up.

*The Politics of EN: Generational, Racial, and Geographical Differences in the Expression of Eco-Neurosis*

For the sake of conceptual clarity, I will be promoting the term “eco-neurosis” for the rest of this dissertation. I am doing this for three reasons: one, there is a blatant contradiction towards climate change; citizens, in the West know the environment is changing causing catastrophic effects, and yet, consciously continue with business as usual.[[39]](#footnote-39) According to an October 2020 poll by the APA “More than two-thirds of Americans (67%) are somewhat or extremely anxious about the impact of climate change on the planet, and more than half (55%\*) are somewhat or extremely anxious about the impact of climate change on their own mental health.”[[40]](#footnote-40) Even more telling is their figures that cut across generations, younger adults are more likely to be concerned about climate change on mental health than older adults: “67% of Gen Zers (18-23 years) and 63% of millennials (24-39 years) are somewhat or very concerned about the impact of climate change on their mental health compared to 42% of baby boomers (56-74 years) and 58% of Gen Xers (40-55 years).”[[41]](#footnote-41) The same is the case when looked at races/ethnicities and gender “The majority of adults of all races/ethnicities (Hispanic/Latino, white, Black, Native American, Asian, and other) are somewhat or extremely anxious about the impact of climate change on the planet and on mental health.”[[42]](#footnote-42) Somehow, citizens are encouraged and influenced by a culture of material consumerism that bifurcates living as usual and their anxious concerns to understand the climate issues while maintaining their individualistic way of life intact.

On the other hand, Citizens in the global South and indigenous peoples are experiencing the brunt of a changing planet at a faster and more traumatic pace: pacific islands are beginning to disappear, typhoons are more frequent, and an overall lack of resources such as drinkable water, lack of immediate food, and housing is a recipe for extreme levels of eco-neurosis.[[43]](#footnote-43) For example, certain countries such as Tuvalu, Kiribati and the Marshal Islands are already experiencing sea level rise where ocean flooding has washed saltwater onto agricultural lands and inundated sources of drinking water.[[44]](#footnote-44) Other countries from the Global South like Bangladesh may be completely under water by 2071. “Nowshin 33, a Berlin-based economist. Originally from Bangladesh fears for her native country as global warming swells the oceans. ‘I was very upset, I was crying - I couldn’t deal with it – for me it was very emotional’”.[[45]](#footnote-45) Indeed, eco-neurosis is exacerbated in this case not by impending doom, but damage already experienced and that will keep happening in the foreseeable future.

Indigenous populations around the world fare no better in this matter, in an open access journal of environmental research letters; researchers recognized that mental health impacts of climate change are amplified among indigenous and aboriginal populations; these are populations living in ecologically sensitive areas; those who rely closely on their environment for subsistence and livelihoods; and those experiencing ongoing systems of inequity, marginalization, and colonization.[[46]](#footnote-46) Climate change and resulting environmental changes not only risk amplifying existing health challenges, but also potentially create new challenges, such as coping with ecological grief, and anxiety, solastalgia and the loss of beloved places.[[47]](#footnote-47) As such climatic and resultant environmental changes were strongly linked to an altered sense of place or loss of place, resulting in negative consequences for livelihoods, cultural practices, and social networks. These place-sensitive outcomes were also linked to alterations in personal and collective identities intimately tied to the health of the environment, leading to negative mental health outcomes according to the collected data.[[48]](#footnote-48)

The gap between awareness and action, as well as proximity and distance from environmental dangers are imperative examples of why all of humanity is eco-neurotic although we don’t experience it equally. Two forces reinforce this collective eco-neurosis; on the one hand, we have an ontological narrative, and the other a structural one. The ontological narrative states that civilization is a defense against nature reinforced by the architecture and commemoration of large concrete cities and the basic safeties of modern life. Structural encouragement is expressed in our political organizations, civil society, and political possibilities of what actions governments can take and how fast they can do it.

The Ontological and Structural forces explanation for our collective EN is a shift I am making arguing for a Frommian/Brown orientation. The differences of EN (as crucial as they are in their respect) should not detract from an overall diagnosis or critique that sees EN as a general phenomenon affecting all of humanity (albeit in different ways). In recognition of this, realizing that EN is not just an individual case by case phenomenon but as Fromm explains, “Man’s nature, his passions, and anxieties are a cultural product; as a matter of fact, man himself is the most important creation and achievement of the continuous human effort, the record of which we call history.”[[49]](#footnote-49) Brown similarly claims, “The repressed unconscious which produces neurosis is not an individual unconscious but a collective one… From this it follows that the theory of neurosis must embrace a theory of history; and conversely a theory of history must embrace a theory of neurosis.”[[50]](#footnote-50) In agreement the collective history of neurosis is not one already predetermined each individual neurosis such as EN is not a static but dynamic process. This means that tension between the repressed and repressing factors persists and produces a constant series of new symptom-formations (I will, of course, develop this claim in Chapter 2).

Now that I have provided specific information on generational, racial, and geographical differences in the expression of EN to the claim that all of humanity is eco-neurotic although not expressed evenly or in the same way. I turn the attention now in further illuminating the historical dynamics of EN. That is, an analysis of its sources, in particular humanity’s felt sense of separation from the so called natural environment.

## The Roots of Eco-neurosis: The Illusory Separation from Nature

The apparent causes of eco-neurosis are various; on the one hand, the irrevocable environmental impact of climate change causes increased psychological distress for many people worldwide. On the other, as the literature review has hinted, the dominant storylines that society reinforces matter regarding how we treat nature and our human mental conditions. I am claiming that eco-neurosis cannot be treated as an isolated issue; rather, eco-neurosis is simultaneously a psychological and political issue. I will demonstrate this connection through (a) much of the literature and media provide a preliminary diagnosis, fashioned by solutions that risk individualizing eco-neurosis that truncate our understanding. (b) the illusory separation from nature is being discussed but it is not taken as a vital source of eco-neurosis.

Secondly, I theorize that including larger cultural, political, and historical explanations in diagnosing eco-neurosis is crucial for understanding the problem. that is, a related explanation that climate change due to modern human development and Western individualized, materialistic, and consumption ethos provide a deeper source to EN. Relatedly, the dominant story within Western culture is a story of an established understanding that nature is “out there” separated from human civilization. The result of reinforcing this separation of nature (i.e., anything that does not relate to social development) demonstrated that nature was the backdrop and reserve in much of the intellectual history of Western human political concerns. The dominant story is culpable of our environmental impacts and the symptom of eco-neurosis. I am claiming that the dominant story of Western culture (i.e., Modernity, Enlightenment, etc.) is illusory and obsolete to deal with the complexity and interconnected forces of humanity and nature. I am arguing for an immanent critique of the dominant Western narrative from marginalized Western narratives (e.g., EPT, Western Marxism, Neo-Freudian psychoanalysis).

Contemporary humanity suffers from maladies and discomfort rooted in our actual dependence on nature. Humans also experience cognitive dissonance based on the compelling story of human autonomy and separateness from nature.[[51]](#footnote-51) In other words, the dominant view of Western culture is obsessed with the idea of dominance over nature[[52]](#footnote-52); however, it is also true that nature is powerful and unpredictable, which means humanity depends on the fragile ecosystem of nature more than humans care to admit. Case in point, eco-neurosis is a wake-up call from an incongruency between the narrative of controlling nature and its fragile interconnected web of life.[[53]](#footnote-53) For example, Anna Lehtonen notes that the dominant Western approach toward nature and the climate remains an unquestioned and given assumption. As she explains, “since the 1600’s, people started to understand the Earth as a giant reservoir, which secured energy and raw materials for human consumption. It was the beginning of a misunderstanding: people thought resources were limitless and inexhaustible, and thus began an alienation from the web of life.”[[54]](#footnote-54) Western intellectual and cultural history forms the foundation for this human-centered approach toward nature.

Western history forms the foundation for both the predominant view of nature in the Western world and the science of psychology (and science in general).[[55]](#footnote-55) According to Koger and Winter, “In this new modern culture, belief that people are individuals, separate from each other and separate from nature, quickly spread and set the stage for both psychology and a quickly accelerated pace of ecological destruction from industrialization.”[[56]](#footnote-56) True enough, the fact that both psychology and industrialization rest on the assumptions of individual agents explains the slow effort of psychologists to confront environmental issues such as eco-neurosis. This is due to the traditionally specialized and disconnected approaches in psychology. Instead, psychological approaches should start to consider the historical, political, and critical elements as an addition to their methods.

Additionally, there are two thinkers of the enlightenment who helped cultivate the individualistic culture of the West. Donna Orange identifies them as Rene Descartes (1596-1650), and Galileo Galilei (1564-1642). Descartes, with his mind-body split of the human as a solitary substance, according to Orange, “epitomized our problem, originating the radical split between mind and nature, the human and the material world.”[[57]](#footnote-57) This set-in motion our Western devotion to efficiency, technology, and statistics. Descartes taught the Western world to think in a manner that divorces reason from emotion and sensibility to the human and earthly environment. Similarly, Galileo, the father of modern science, developed the methods to isolate phenomena from their natural contexts, to control them, and then to regard as their true nature what he would then measure; his legacy provided all the resources to control and dominate nature.[[58]](#footnote-58)

Moreover, the dominant Western worldview assumes four axioms to its understanding of nature: 1. Nature is composed of inert, physical elements; 2. Which can and should be controlled; 3. By individual human beings seeking private economic gain; 4. Whose work results in progress (primarily economic development).[[59]](#footnote-59) Examining these four assumptions of the Western worldview toward nature uncovers a constructed idea taught as common sense, which delivers unreflected narratives in thinking and awareness of environmental issues that are deeply philosophical, psychological, and determine economic relations, but also holds the vital explanation to the source of maladaptive symptoms towards nature.

In fact, the current strain of Western culture established as neoliberal capitalism claims to offer solutions to the symptom of eco-neurosis. Some examples of these remedies are provided by an individualistic ethos through buzzwords such as “responsible consumption”, “recycling”, “sustainable mobility”, and “sustainable foods” and while these acts are helpful, they turn into distractions, rather than meaningful solutions. Sally Weintrobe considers these acts “quick fixes.” Weintrobe explains that “Western culture actively seduces and threatens us into using irrational ways of reducing anxiety in many ways that are not so blatant and visible.”[[60]](#footnote-60)Further stating, “but, irrational ‘quick fixes’ for anxiety only increase underlying anxiety and lead to loss of underlying self-growth.”[[61]](#footnote-61) The alternative may appear logically counterproductive, but accepting and dealing with the anxiety itself can help us recognize that the solution isn’t quick.[[62]](#footnote-62) Since a quick solution absolves humanity from the necessity of taking risks, having responsibilities, and experiencing growth. This “quick fix” mentality shows up in our relatedness to nature which is emerging as maladies and discomfort (eco-neurosis) rooted in a specific strain of Western culture that constructed a separation from nature, which I am claiming is illusory as a concept.

Further, while some scholars of EN have attended to nature/human relations, this relationship has not been consistently valued.[[63]](#footnote-63) Indeed, much of this unreflected story motivated the focus of various scholars in the field of environmental political theory (EPT) from the 1980s to the present to move nature to the center of its investigation. The question that I situate myself possesses organic affinities within the literature of EPT. Many voices of this field, both inside and outside the academy, critiqued the dominant worldview (i.e., humans are outside of nature) and provided alternative approaches from a normative dimension (e.g., Arne Naess, Robyn Eckersley, and Murray Bookchin) that included schools of thought such as environmental ethics, eco-feminism deep ecology, and social ecology, to name a few. More contemporary EPT scholars have now updated the thinking and imagery from the earlier ideas of the 70s and 80s such as Anna Lehtonen, Susan Koger, Deborah Du Nann, Donna Orange, Jason Moore, and others. Below I will discuss some of this eclectic EPT literature to situate my argument based on my theory of eco-neurosis.

The deep ecology movement of the 1970s began a conversation on the important philosophical and psychological relationship between people and nature. Deep ecology as an idea arose as an alternative answer to the shallow and reformist environmentalism of the late 1960s. Reformist environmentalism deeply entrenched itself in the Western view of a binary separation between humanity and nature. As a result, deep ecology planted a flag against that separation, instead promoting an ecological and environmental philosophy that promoted the inherent worth of all existence regardless of the instrumental relationship to human needs. Devall and Sessions emphasize that “Deep ecology is a process of ever-deeper questioning of ourselves, the assumptions of the dominant worldview in our culture, and the meaning and truth of our reality.”[[64]](#footnote-64) Moreover, the mission of deep ecology is to reorient our sense of agency from the Western individualist perspective to one of interdependence with nature. Deep ecology aspires for a reorientation of consciousness that appreciates nature for its own sake not for individualistic/industrial means.[[65]](#footnote-65) It is this interdependence with nature that deep ecology wishes to cultivate. In this sense, ecological consciousness and deep ecology are in sharp contrast with the dominant worldview of a technocratic-industrial worldview that regards humans as isolated and fundamentally separate from the rest of nature.

Along with this, the ontological reorientation of consciousness that deep ecology promotes establishes a cosmic order or unity in the universe. Deep ecology, in this sense, rejects the western Cartesian ontology of binary oppositions. Instead claiming that “there can be no firm ontological divide in the field of existence: that there is no bifurcation in reality between the human and the non-human realms… to the extent that we perceive boundaries, we fall short of deep ecological consciousness.”[[66]](#footnote-66) Similarly, Arne Naess gives us a more proper insight into the “ecosophy,”[[67]](#footnote-67) the philosophy inspired by deep ecology. Naess determines that the unity in the universe can be discovered if we learn to recognize the Self with a capital S. Naess states that “Self-realization as the realization of the comprehensive Self, not the cultivation of the ego… the process of identification as the basic tool of widening the self and as a natural consequence of increased maturity.”[[68]](#footnote-68) His concept of identification is important because it is the source of belief in the intrinsic value of things. In other words, the roots of identification stem from Eastern spiritual sources of an ego not limited by the body but an ego that includes humans as a part of the organic whole.

Deep ecology aspires to deepen the process of identification for the joy of the flourishing of all life. For humans, this manifests itself as an introspective journey to look beyond ourselves. Similarly, Carolyn Merchant, an ecofeminist philosopher, picks up where Naess left off by recognizing that for ecocentric ethics to work, it must ground itself by the interrelatedness of the cosmos. Merchant states that “maintenance of the balance of nature and retention of the unity, stability, diversity, and harmony of the ecosystem are its overarching goals.”[[69]](#footnote-69) In this sense, identification crystalizes and transforms into an ethical system for the land and all its creatures. An ecocentric ethics is rooted in a holistic instead of an atomistic orientation of an illusory separation of nature.

Moreover, Murray Bookchin hits the nail on the head on the limitations of deep ecology. Deep ecology “reduces people from social beings to a simple species – to zoological entities that are interchangeable with bears, bison, deer, or for that matter fruit flies and microbes. The fact that people can consciously change themselves and society, indeed enhances that natural world in a free ecological society, is dismissed as ‘humanism.’”[[70]](#footnote-70) That’s exactly the problem, deep ecology as conceived by Naess, Duvall and Sessions completely misses the point of the social nature of humanity, and as a result, the social origins of the ecological problem. Thus, deep ecology naively leaps towards a new consciousness, in this sense, an “ecological consciousness” without changing the social mechanisms we stand on. That is, pun intended, deeply problematic.

Similarly, Ramachandra Guha critiques deep ecology from a historical and sociological perspective. Guha notes that deep ecology is uniquely American and, in that sense, Western and privileged. Secondly, the universalistic goals of deep ecology applied to a world-wide basis is a detrimental idea. Guha explains to the naïve deep ecologist:

 The emphasis on wilderness is positively harmful when applied to the Third World… Thus, Project Tiger [in India], a network of parks hailed by the international conservation community as an outstanding success, sharply posits the interests of the tiger against those of poor peasants living in and around the reserve. The designation of tiger reserves was made possible only by the physical displacement of existing villages and their inhabitants.[[71]](#footnote-71)

Logically, deep ecology provides a justification for a continuation of these practices under a radical appearance. What we see in practice then, is the international conservation elite using the philosophical, ethical, and scientific arguments of deep ecology to advance a wilderness crusade at the detriment of human livelihood. It is no surprise, that one can categorize deep ecology as anti-humanist philosophy if this can be deduced from its principles.

Unfortunately, deep ecology holds assumptions that blind and limit its worldview, no matter how good its intentions. However, deep ecology contains salvageable elements that explain the problem of eco-neurosis. Specifically, Arne Naess developed two ultimate norms: self-realization and biocentric equality. First, Self-realization goes beyond the dominant Western view of isolated egos, seeing beyond our narrow assumptions and values; instead, deep ecology nurtures a nondominant idea of the Self, which includes the nonhuman world. While repression and neurosis are not explicitly stated; implicitly, self-realization holds intuitive importance for neurosis. that is, inferring that eco-neurosis is not something that happens to some of us. It happens to all of us; although the degree and proximity may vary, the reaction exists because humans see themselves as isolated agents separate from nature.[[72]](#footnote-72) Second, biocentric equality follows this same vein of thinking as Naess puts it “Biocentric equality is intimately related to the all-inclusive Self-realization in the sense that if we harm the rest of Nature then we are harming ourselves.”[[73]](#footnote-73) The human reaction of an eco-neurosis is a psychological warning that we are not only organizing human society at a detriment for humans, but we are also harming the element that maintains human life to be able even to have society, nature.

Not all EPT scholarship is created equal. I agree with social ecology and postcolonial perspectives demonstrating the social, historical, political, and ethical dimensions of relating to nature is as vital as taking nature on its terms. Likewise, as Bookchin and Guha explain the social and political elements are elements unexamined in deep ecology. By making all species, plants and animals and humans, precisely equivalent in value. Results in the idea that if the same intrinsic value belongs to all species, we are blind to prioritize our impoverished fellow humans' survival or even mental health in its social complexity. Specifically, how the deeply embedded forces of capitalism limit not just our consciousness but also the individual actions we can make in a politically repressed society.

### The Road Ahead: Repression in Relation to Eco-Neurosis

In response to the preliminary clinical diagnosis and EPT literature, I include a tradition of psychoanalysis that focuses on the dialectical and political elements that read the universal neurosis of humanity as a historical reading and an understanding of humanity's future. Since this dissertation stresses the role of psychological factors of EN and since this analysis is based on some of the fundamental discoveries of Freud (whom I have many disagreements with[[74]](#footnote-74)), I believe it will be helpful to the reader to know from the outset some of the general principles of my approach, and the main differences between this approach and the classical Freudian concepts.

The Freudian discovery of the unconscious also implies that some ideas are rejected and resisted by the conscious mind. This gap as conflict between conscious and unconscious forces is identified in psychoanalysis as repression. Simply stated, repression is understood simultaneously as a defense mechanism and a symptom that ensures that what is unacceptable to the conscious mind, is prevented from entering it. To put it in another sense, the notion of the unconscious would remain a mystery without the concept of repression. Repression is a reaction bridge that demonstrates the differentiations between the conscious and the unconscious.

Naturally, psychological conflict is painful. Freud (via Koger and Winter) postulated that humans defend themselves from conflict and anxiety by fragmenting their awareness, so they remain unconscious[[75]](#footnote-75); therefore, everyday life is a psychopathological phenomenon. In other words, we are all neurotic. Norman Brown puts it as “Neurosis is not an occasional aberration; it is not just in other people; it is in us, and in us all the time.”[[76]](#footnote-76)Hence, eco-neurosis should be theoretically understood as another instance of psychic conflict that presents itself as a form of repression to the reactions of climate change depicted by the logic of psychoanalysis. The reason for this is integral for a more dialectical account of eco-neurosis; that is, neurosis is a phenomenon that appears as a dynamic adaptation. By which I mean, a similar meaning to Fromm’s idea of dynamic adaptation in which he states, “Every neurosis is an example of this dynamic adaptation; it is essentially an adaptation to such external conditions as are in themselves irrational and, generally speaking, unfavorable to the growth and development of the child.”[[77]](#footnote-77) In other words, this form of repression is a dynamic factor that may change a person’s character in “healthy” or “unhealthy” behaviors depending on the social and environmental factors around them.

What EPT lacks is a critical and historical language of the unconscious, psychoanalysis makes up for that by offering a method to understand neurotic forces of the mind. More contemporary psychoanalysis such as the works of Norman O. Brown, Herbert Marcuse, and Erich Fromm demonstrate a political and critical element in their analysis of Western society as well as, the historical use of the unconscious. Repression and Neurosis are important concepts in their work that help illuminate a picture of how society organizes itself by channeling the use of repression and neurosis. Freud discovered that neurotic symptoms have profound meaning that allow for self-awareness. Thus, Freud is driven to embrace the paradox that there are in human beings purposes of which they are not aware, or in more Freudian language, “unconscious ideas.”[[78]](#footnote-78)

On the other hand, classical psychoanalysis is not immune to an felt separation from nature either, as it reinforces the certain tropes sentiments of dominant Western logic. Sigmund Freud, the father of both psychoanalysis and modern psychology, pinned his psychoanalytic flag on a hostile separation from nature. For example, Freud notes that

The principal task of civilization, its actual raison d'etre, is to defend us

against nature. We all know that in many ways civilization does this

fairly well already, and clearly as time goes on it will do it much better.

But no one is under the illusion that nature has already been vanquished; and few dare hope that she will ever be entirely subdued to man.[[79]](#footnote-79)

Clearly, Freud was following the philosophical individualistic tropes identified by Donna Orange, as he depicts the troublesome binary oppositions of his time (i.e., human vs. nature, order vs. chaos, etc). Freud’s words suggests that Western culture views civilization as a defense against nature. However, it also suggests an interesting ambivalence and an opening to ecological language; Dodd explains, “In these words of Freud we have already a deep understanding, albeit largely implicit, of our own current crisis: a relationship to nature based on a master-slave system of absolute binaries, and an attempt to maintain an illusory autonomy and control in the face of chaos.”[[80]](#footnote-80)

Contrary to Freud’s viewpoint, classical psychanalysis is limited by its pessimism and static observations of humanity. The analysis of Psychoanalysis offered in this dissertation is based on a cerebral lens for viewing the effects of environmental vicissitudes: i.e., environmental problems are deeply rooted in unconscious motives. Taking the psychoanalytic conclusion that human experience is neurotic, focusing on the evolutionary development of coping defenses in the human psyche is crucial. Since I have already introduced repression, understanding how repression is embedded within Western culture at a societal level is key to understand neurosis, and specifically eco-neurosis. Norman O. Brown explains, “In the new Freudian perspective, the essence of society is repression of the individual, and the essence of the individual is repression of himself.”[[81]](#footnote-81) Indeed, psychoanalysis presents a profound contradiction of human organization: people and their societies do not behave as rationally and consciously as they think they do.[[82]](#footnote-82)

My Neo-Freudian Psychoanalytic orientation identifies a dynamic relationship between the conscious and unconscious elements of humanity, and that the key problem of psychology is that of the specific kind of relatedness of the individual, culture, and nature. Psychoanalysis delivers an explanation and awareness of mental conflict in relation to external and internal circumstances. A pivotal recognition in this psychoanalytic vein demonstrates that “…the existence of a repressed unconscious, necessarily implies the second and even more significant paradox, the universal neurosis of Mankind.”[[83]](#footnote-83) This is a revealing claim since the currency of psychic life via psychoanalysis is the interpretation of desires. Neurosis is an essential result of civilization or culture and seeing that the environment and nature are connected to civilization and culture, eco-neurosis is a repressed defense mechanism, a filter to interpret our ecological reactions.

Therefore, this Neo-Freudian psychoanalytic dimension to tackling climate change recognizes that environmental problems are deeply rooted in unconscious forces co-constituted by the pervading logic of the dominant culture in society.[[84]](#footnote-84) While Valimaki, Lehtonen, Pikhala, and Weintrobe focus on denial, helplessness, and anxiety as effects of climate change as coping defenses, while important, I argue a more radical approach is needed. Many in the EN literature view Freud as an ancestor for their depictions of affect in individualized psychological symptoms. However, not all applications of Freud are created equal it really depends how Freud and psychoanalysis is used. For example, Brown/Fromm/Marcuse use it for social critique, not the depiction of individualized psychological symptoms (although it may include that) but as we see Brown and Fromm use it for a theory of history as well as an indicator for political/ethical norms and actions.

Additionally, the concepts (i.e., repression and Neurosis) I wish to push forward contain a profound political element (related to the ideas of Brown, Marcuse, and Fromm). Therefore, the development of eco-neurosis as an effect of climate change cannot be pinned down to a lack of information or ignorance. Instead, the focus should be on the political artifacts of Western society that produce climate change. Then, an important theme and question that I will attempt to answer in this dissertation is composed as follow: Why do society and those in power relegate matters of the environment, which is the basis of all life on Earth, including human existence, to the fringes?

To begin answering this question, I must shine on a critical theme of my argument: political repression[[85]](#footnote-85) in contemporary society and humanity’s relationship with nature. As I mentioned already, my argument adopts Freudian psychoanalysis with an added political dimension; that dimension derives from the dialectical tradition of neo-Marxian theory. The main interlocutor is Dr. Erich Fromm. So, why Erich Fromm? Fromm’s writings provide a powerful lens through which to situate and understand eco-neurosis. I believe there is an affinity here with Environmental Political Theory’s (EPT) task to move nature at the center of investigation and simultaneously discuss the psychical and socioeconomic forces that mediate the tension of humanity through nature. Fromm’s later works are rooted in understanding humanity’s effort to establish meaningful relations with the natural world. The purpose here is to further the revival of his works and advance it into the 21st century, creating an overarching framework that provides explanatory power and determines a normative goal for better ecological relations of humans through nature. Therefore, revisiting Erich Fromm’s works offers this dissertation a theoretical foundation for a comprehensive and normative theory of human/nature relations that contains psychical, political, economic, and ethical elements, which is lacking in the prominent literature on eco-neurosis.

#### *Interpreting EN: The Political Theory of Erich Fromm*

To understand Fromm’s theoretical approach and its relevance to my questions for EN, certain aspects of his account need to be unpacked: the influence on his work of Marx and Freud, his synthesis of Marx and Freud, and finally his humanistic approach to psychoanalysis. Each of these elements provide a summary of Fromm’s lasting ideas in the various fields of the social sciences. As well as the fundamental building blocks of my larger argument.

Influenced by Karl Marx and Sigmund Freud, Fromm synthesized both humanist Marxism and psychoanalysis. As a result, Fromm incorporated Freud's theory of the unconscious and characterology into Marx's theory of class struggle/ideology/labor as a source of value. Rather than basing the roots of psychoanalysis on Freud's static conception of childhood libidinal developments. Fromm placed it on a dynamic process primarily determined by Marx's socioeconomic demands of any specified society. Thus, in determining a society's character structure, one must look at labor structures in that society. Invoking Marx's Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844, Fromm argued that human beings' labor in a particular mode of production determines the class identification in that society. Thus, a society's economic system influences the formation of character structure that helps determine that society's sociological and ideological factors.

However, there are plenty of inadequacies within Marx, which Fromm points out in correct fashion. Fromm was critical of Marx’s failures in not seeing the true importance of the psychological as a semiautonomous causal realm in the social process in humanity. Fromm briefly explains:

[Marx] did not recognize the irrational forces in man which make him afraid of freedom, and which produce his lust for power and his destructiveness. On the contrary, underlying his concept of man was the implicit assumption of man’s natural goodness, which would assert itself as soon as the crippling economic shackles were released. The famous statement at the end of the Communist Manifesto that the workers “have nothing to lose but their chains,” contains a profound psychological error. With their chains they have also to lose all those irrational needs and satisfactions which were originated while they were wearing the chains. In this respect, Marx and Engels never transcended the naïve optimism of the eighteenth century.[[86]](#footnote-86)

Instead, Fromm was to find from another thinker the adequate appreciation of those “irrational needs and satisfactions” in what Marx lacked in explanation of irrational forces, Sigmund Freud made up for in the individual explanation of the unconscious. Freud discovered that man as a mental entity is a structure of forces, many of them contradictory, charged with energy.

Concurrently, the paradoxical dynamism of Marx’s humanism, and Freud’s theory of the unconscious influenced Fromm’s humanistic psychoanalysis. Fromm’s humanism runs alongside similar fundamental assumptions to dialectical thought. So much so, the ethical foundation of a humanistic ethics is found in the human condition as a dynamic force. In *Man for Himself* Fromm determines that “To be alive is a dynamic, not a static, concept. Existence and the unfolding of the specific powers of an organism are the same… the aim of Man’s life, is to be understood as the unfolding of his powers according to the laws of his nature.”[[87]](#footnote-87)

A couple of questions may arise to the reader: what is humanity’s nature? And how do we know when we see it? Fortunately, Fromm provides an answer in *The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness* based on two fundamental biological conditions in the process of human evolution: (a) the decreasing determination of instincts. (b) the growth of the neocortex.[[88]](#footnote-88) However, there is a double-edged sword account to this understanding while humanity uses it’s intellect to make better choices the intellect is also weak and unreliable, Fromm states, “It is easily influenced by man’s desires and passions and surrenders to their influence. Man’s brain is insufficient not only as a substitute for the weakened instincts, but it complicates the task of living tremendously.”[[89]](#footnote-89) Indeed, the contradictory nature of Fromm’s conceptual understanding of humanities mental ability slightly separates him from the orthodox humanism that champions reason as a staple of human exceptionalism.

However, Fromm, while unique, also teeters into significant issues. At times Fromm reinforces the dominant Western story of a felt separation from nature, and to add further harm, reduces humanity and nature via a duality of genders. He is guilty of this position when he states:

Self-awareness, reason, and imagination have disrupted the ‘harmony’ that characterizes animal existence. Their emergence has made man into an anomaly, the freak of the universe. He is part of nature, subject to her physical laws and unable to change them, yet he transcends nature. He is set apart while being a part; he is homeless, yet chained to the home he shares with all creatures.[[90]](#footnote-90)

He keeps further dichotomizing this relationship into caricatures of a more complex undertaking. And yet, while he falls into fatalistic dichotomies that get him in trouble, Fromm manages to find his way back to a more dialectical explanation. That is, the way Fromm defines the nature of humanity is characterized by contradictions. A contradiction notes a complexity through culture and biology through humanity and nature. The story is like this “Man, in his history, changes his environment, and in this process, he changes himself.”[[91]](#footnote-91) This is not to say that the exact opposite is not true (another limited point of Fromm), meaning environments also make and change humanity without humans being the main cause.

This is where Fromm’s humanistic psychoanalysis is in full display, rejecting Freud’s initial theory that wrongly interpreted the phylogenetic and ontogenetic realities that gave a causal role to sexuality which exaggerated its actual influence on the story of psychoanalysis. Fromm chose to focus on the “creative renewal of psychoanalysis” instead of libidinal instincts, Fromm developed an anthropological existential theory of character. The story goes like this humanity produces existential conflict that, in turn, makes psychic needs that are common throughout the whole species. And while there is a universality here, it is not fatalistic. Fromm identifies a prominent qualifier “But each of these needs can be satisfied in different ways, which vary according to the differences of his social condition.”[[92]](#footnote-92)

Further, these different forms of satisfying existential needs are identified by Fromm as “character-rooted passions”[[93]](#footnote-93) what is even more fascinating is how he situates human character in relationship to nature; determining that character is the human substitute for the lack of animal instincts or as he states man’s second nature.[[94]](#footnote-94) This is why Fromm says, “…one can call character-rooted passions a historical category and instincts a natural category. Yet the former is not a purely historical category either, because they are the result of the impact the various historical constellations have on the biologically given conditions of human existence.”[[95]](#footnote-95) Therefore, the expressed difference in character is primarily due to an interesting dialectical relation: one is social conditions, and the other is genetically given dispositions.

Humanity is particularly good at adapting to all forms of conditions; however, Fromm’s logic demonstrates that while humanity can adapt itself there are limitations in the response to moral psychological reactions. For example,

humanity can adapt itself to slavery, but they react to it by lowering their intellectual and moral qualities; they can adapt themselves to a culture permeated by mutual distrust and hostility, but they react by becoming mentally weak and sterile. Humanity can adapt itself to conditions which demand repression, but in achieving this adaptation they develop, as Freud has shown neurotic symptoms.[[96]](#footnote-96)

It is in the details of how humans adapt where Fromm connects his humanism with a more psychoanalytic element, that is Fromm recognizes that while Freud laid the foundations for a science of character it was never truly developed in the field of psychology. Fromm discovered an avenue where the psychological disposition of neurosis could be better expressed not just in individuals but also in societal culture itself.

Fromm clarifies this by stating “All the virtues and vices with which traditional ethics deals must remain ambiguous because they often signify by the same word different and partly contradictory human attitudes; they lose their ambiguity only if they are understood in connection with the character structure of the person of whom a virtue or vice is predicated.”[[97]](#footnote-97) Following, the dialectical nature of his orientation, Fromm recognizes that both the individual and social context is important if we can see them in relationship through each other. That is the importance of character which Freud neglected to further develop. The subject matter of ethics is character, and only in reference to character structure can value statements be made about single traits or actions.

Simultaneously, there is another existential element as compelling and necessary, but it is rooted in the activity and moral conditions of human life: the need to avoid moral aloneness.[[98]](#footnote-98) In fact, the expression of moral aloneness is a lack of relatedness to values, symbols, and patterns in the world. This need stems from an existential origin, the need for self-preservation. But this is not a physiological need; This need is not rooted in the body (like Norman Brown claims). Instead, Fromm explains, “but in the very essence of the human mode and practice of life: the need to be related to the world outside oneself, the need to avoid aloneness.”[[99]](#footnote-99) A prime example is the use of solitary confinement in prison systems such as the ones in the United States that leads to lasting mental disintegration on an individual’s mental health just as physical starvation leads to death.

Fromm’s creative reinterpretation of Freud and Marx and the synthesis of the methods themselves ostracized and damaged his reputation among sectarian Marxists and Psychoanalysts alike. However, this allowed relatively unencumbered insight into the material and synthesis of a critical social theory that modernized psychoanalysis. Fromm’s development of concepts such as social character and relatedness and the infusion of politics and ethics provides a comprehensive insight into the analysis of eco-neurosis. In fact, through Fromm’s work, eco-neurosis is interpreted as a reaction of maladapted social forms of character passions. That is, eco-neurosis is a symptom of our social conditions working against our evolutionary history from our instincts to, as he states, our character as second nature. This project aims to show that eco-neurosis is a symptom that needs further integration of its causes. I am providing a theory (i.e., Chapter 2 on an eco-unconscious) that offers a filter to interpret our ecological reaction known as eco-neurosis.

##### Methodology: A Contemporary Renewal of Dialectics

This section serves three purposes: (a) it provides a transparent illustration for the reader of the assumptions and critical points of the theoretical orientation that I espouse in the rest of the chapters of this dissertation and contrasting dialectics to more mainstream approaches. Then, turning to the explicit affinity to the field of ecopsychology. (b) it argues that the dialectical method I have been alluding to in this first chapter provides a different dimension to understand eco-neurosis distinct from the various perspectives represented by mainstream psychology approaches. The dialectical method elaborated here further fortifies why Erich Fromm is such a vital interlocutor for this project; in addition, I tease out Fromm’s dialectical orientation further by fusing it with ecopsychology. at the same time, it also further supports my argument: political repression is a crucial cause of eco-neurosis. (c) Finally, I introduce the concept I will develop in Chapter 2, influenced by dialectics and ecopsychology an “eco-unconscious.”

Dialectics provides a language to discuss the transition of how concepts develop into what they are. It does this in two ways: one, it is flexible in its conceptual logic; two, it is inherently dynamic in examining concepts. What does this mean? First, what is meant by flexibility is clearly captured in a lecture by Theodor Adorno:

The dialectic is indeed a method which refers to the process of thinking, but it also differs from other methods insofar as it constantly strives not to stand still, constantly corrects itself in the presence of the things themselves. We could define dialectic as a kind of thinking which does not content itself merely with the order of concepts but, rather, undertakes to correct the conceptual order by reference to the being of the objects themselves.[[100]](#footnote-100)

Indeed, the key to its flexibility lies in the awareness of its own unfolding as an orientation. The dialectic corrects itself because its core elements consider internal relations of concepts to constant historical changes. Thus, dialectical thinking is sensitive enough to illustrate the dynamic process involved in the continiuity and discontinuity of concepts adapting to reality.

Secondly, the dynamic component in the dialectic is preserved by its own unfolding, that is, dialectical thinking vivifies the use of concepts, or more clearly, Adorno demonstrates the staple characteristic of dialectical thought that concepts are alive to change. "The concepts themselves are filled with such inner life, unfold so intensively and dynamically, that although they seem entirely abstract, they nonetheless reassume all the colour and fullness of life within themselves and thus in this remarkable way also begin in sparkle."[[101]](#footnote-101)  The vital life of the dialectic is precisely to resolve concepts that are presented as lifeless, fixed objects. Thus, as Adorno explains "it only overcomes what has become rigid and ossified by allowing it to move by virtue of its own power, of the life that has been precipitated in the things and concepts which confront us in an alienated form."[[102]](#footnote-102) Dialectic articulated and interpreted in this sense should strive to be open in its understanding.[[103]](#footnote-103) Indeed, this dissertation adopts the value that dialectical thinking is open. That is, dialectics is a method, framework, and a main subject of this dissertation, is supported by flexibility and dynamic elements. So, Dialectics provides a language to discuss the transition of how concepts develop into what they appear. This is the task of this introduction that points toward a reintegration of nature/society relations, as well as how a world-ecology perspective already employs these elements.

The Dialectic intellectual tradition traces its roots of political history to Marx, Hegel, Heraclitus, Plotinus, and lesser-known influences of Eastern/Western mysticism. If there is a goal to dialectics it is not what is understood as “the end of history” (i.e., an end goal based on steady progress) in an orthodox Marxist sense. Rather, the goal of a more comprehensive dialectic is the focus on process and change instead of end results. As Bertell Ollman states “… Dialectics is a way of thinking that brings into focus the full range of changes and interactions that occur in the world.”[[104]](#footnote-104) It is the process of interactions in change that dialectic shines. Within the scope of this strand of thinking dialectical thinking opens into a world of dynamic connections; that is, upon inspection of apparent contradictions relationships exist that systematically develop a larger image of reality. That image, however, is subject to change based on the context in which, one is investigating, and simultaneously, based on the conditions of one’s society.

True to dialectic nature, negation is a staple of dialectical application. That is this dialectical method revives long-dormant parts of the mind, organs of political, historical, and social imagination which have virtually atrophied for lack of use, muscles of praxis we have long since ceased exercising. Dialectical thinking begins in negative contradiction. The dominant Western logic is too comfortable with its traditional notions of enlightenment progress. And underpins this progress with a fatalistic static simplicity of reality. As Andrew Cole identifies, the Western mind has constructed an automatic default setting in thinking; more specifically, the principle of non-contradiction,[[105]](#footnote-105) which states that a thing cannot be itself and something else at the same time. Heraclitus,[[106]](#footnote-106) however, reminds us that identity can contain differences within itself, that an entity changes because it already contains what it is to become.

Indeed, Heraclitus of Ephesus, who posited that identity could contain difference within itself, that an entity changes because it already contains what it is to become. In there lies an important facet of dialectical thinking. Hegel credits Heraclitus to be a teacher of dialectics, precisely because Heraclitus agrees that the nature of reality is in the process of becoming not being itself. Heraclitus understood Becoming (Werderi) as the source of reality and he witnessed this from the occurrence of fire.[[107]](#footnote-107)

Conversely, philosophers such as Melissus, Parmenides, Zeno and even Aristotle contemplated reality as Being (Sein), as opposed to Becoming, which denies the reality of motion and change conceptually and categorically. The Western world has followed this logical principle of Aristotelian philosophy all throughout its civilizational development. As examples, contemporary logic posits and persists that the law of identity that “A is A”, and the law of contradiction “A is not non -A” and the law of the excluded middle “A cannot be A and non -A, neither A nor non -A” are assumed truths in how the West understands reality. The principles of Aristotelian logic are so deeply embedded in our habits and psyche that it is felt to be “natural” and self-evident.

As we know now, dialectical thinking, and Heraclitus more specifically, put into question those self-evident Aristotelian truths. According to Heraclitus the observation of fire begins to collapse the axioms of Aristotle since fire demonstrates the rea-time expression of change in its dance of flames. The universe, for Heraclitus, is a perpetual cyclic flux, nothing remains the same for any period, but everything exists in a state of constant change. As Heraclitus notes “This world is an ever-living fire, with measure of it kindling, and measures going out.”[[108]](#footnote-108) Flux like fire is the rule of the universe. Nothing ever is, but everything is becoming; all things are passing, and nothing abides. Hegel attributed to Heraclitus the view that “being and nothing are one and the same, everything is and yet is not.”[[109]](#footnote-109)

Hegel through Heraclitus suggests that we regard things in a fluid way, alive to the possibility that their properties may alter and become the opposite of what they are at present form. In juxtaposition to Aristotle’s teleological analogy of the acorn and the oak tree, which states inside a small acorn is the potential of a strong and large oak tree. This orientation focuses on a fixed end goal, as opposed to a dialectic fashion, which focuses more on a differentiated interrelatedness mindset; that is what may be “brought forth” is not necessarily developed: an acorn may become food for an animal or wither away on a street somewhere, rather than develop into what is potentially constituted to become an oak tree. And if the tree does end up growing, you don’t try to go back to the original acorn – you grab a brand-new acorn and that becomes the seed for another similar yet distinct tree. In another way and by way of example, Heraclitus’s more famous quote: In the same river, we step, and we do not step, we are, and we are not.” Exemplifies the paradox of Becoming that is the rushing of the river water that is constantly changing its form, therefore each step we make is new to the presence of the river. Understanding the change in constitutions is another strong staple of dialectical thinking.

Dialectics is in a sense, is not just a methodology, but also a frame of orientation. In other words, a worldview in which one can judge not just empirically, but also normatively the organizational make-up of societies. The constitution of Dialectics asserts that change is present in all things, the dialectical orientation itself contains a self-reflective principle defined by the process of change. Hegel describes this internal process of change as “self-sublation.”[[110]](#footnote-110) The English verb “to sublate” translates Hegel’s technical use of the German verb aufheben,[[111]](#footnote-111) which is a crucial concept in his dialectical method. Marx took the sublation of Hegel’s internal phenomeno-logic and applied it to the real practical and material lives of people. Change does not just happen passively and in determinate ways. Marx evolved dialectical thought by stating in his second thesis on Feuerbach “Man must prove the truth, that is, the reality and power, the this-sideness of his thinking in practice.”[[112]](#footnote-112) Indeed, the practice that he speaks of is culminated by his famous statement in the eleventh thesis: “the philosophers have only interpreted the world, the point, however, is to change it.”[[113]](#footnote-113)

Contrastingly to dialectical thinking, positivism, a derivative of logical positivism, posits that one starts with some small part and, through establishing connections, tries to reconstruct the larger whole. Positivist philosophy of science tends to be “atomistic” rather than holistic. “Each foundational claim was thought to have its own truth-value in isolation from other claims.”[[114]](#footnote-114) Typically, positivist assumptions are based on observations and should not appeal to what cannot be observed. Also, their philosophy of science treats sense experience (or sense data) as foundational and thus tends to be bottom-up. Conversely, dialectical research begins with a system (or as much of it as one understands). It then proceeds to examine the part to see where it fits and how it functions, leading eventually to a more comprehensive understanding of the more extensive system from which one begins.

In a more contemporaneous example, Behavioral psychology is also a distinct contrast to dialectics. The behavioral approach has a closer affinity to positivist logic because, from a behaviorist perspective, the total environment cues certain behaviors, which then are followed by consequences (i.e., rewards or punishers).[[115]](#footnote-115) Behavioral psychology follows the Aristotelian principles mentioned earlier (e.g., the law of identity, contradiction, and excluded middle) that motivate Behavioral psychologies assumptions, which focuses on short term results. That is, behavioral psychologists would posit that “trying to change inner events like feelings or attitudes is a waste of precious time; instead let’s cut to the chase and target efforts directly on behavior change.”[[116]](#footnote-116) This implies focusing on operational issues like resource depletion, pollution, and overpopulation.

There are obvious limitations to this approach. The most glaring of them is self-interest in behavior change. Since behaviorisms epistemological position stems from positivist[[117]](#footnote-117) assumptions by Comte claiming:

 As the “father” of sociology, Comte maintained that the social sciences should proceed from observations to general laws, very much as (in his view) physics and chemistry do. He was skeptical of introspection in psychology, being convinced that in attending to one’s own mental states, these states would be irretrievably altered and distorted. In thus insisting on the necessity of objective observation, he was close to the basic principle of the methodology of 20th-century behaviorism.”[[118]](#footnote-118)

Indeed, behaviorism assumes the researcher to be neutral and dispassionate toward psychology. Dialectical theory categorically rejects this not by claiming objectivity but by including human relations into its ontology. There are internal relations between objects themselves and those who observe. In other words, there is always a relationship from the self to the object. There is no need to focus on beliefs and attitudes; only habits and habit formation are the focus. A circular diagram of slow habit changes represents a behavioral approach. In contradistinction, a dialectical diagram would best be represented as a three-dimensional helix, demonstrating the relationality (i.e., the differences within identity) of distinct elements.

On the other hand, within psychology, there is a tradition that has a variant with a solid and overlapping affinity to dialectics; that tradition, as I have mentioned earlier, is ecopsychology. Numerous psychological subfields look at the connection between human beings and the natural environment. However, ecopsychology embraces a more revolutionary paradigm: “Just as Freud believed that neuroses were the consequences of dismissing our deep-rooted sexual and aggressive instincts, ecopsychology believes that grief, despair and anxiety are the consequences of dismissing equally deep-rooted ecological instincts.”[[119]](#footnote-119) Defining ecopsychology can be difficult, however, ecopsychologist Andy Fisher suggests that ecopsychology is best thought of as an open project, in the sense of a large, multifaceted undertaking. As Fisher explains, “an open project makes room for a great number of perspectives and interests and rules out the idea that ecopsychology will ever resemble a traditional discipline.”[[120]](#footnote-120)

Moreover, ecopsychology's evolution has distinguished itself from first- and second-generation thinkers. The First generation traces its ideas back to Theodore Roszak's book Voice of the Earth, which mentions the deep relationship of Jungian psychology and the environment. The first generation held affinities with deep ecology with the idea of nature for nature's sake and specific interpretations valuing nature over the human dimension. Thomas Doherty notes (via NYT magazine) that "A more simplistic, first-generation ecopsychology position simplifies the world," he said. "Either you're green or you're not. Either you're sane or you're not. It conflates mental health and/or lack of mental health with values and choices and the culture." His mission, he said, is to spearhead a "second-generation ecopsychology" that leaves these binaries behind.[[121]](#footnote-121) Doherty's vision of the second generation of ecopsychology is based on individual therapeutic practices as well as providing a more mainstream clinical position that includes in his practice patient's relationship with the natural world.

However, ecopsychologist Andy Fisher provides an entirely different interpretation of the debate for the future of ecopsychology. Fisher explains that the choice is not between first- and second-generation paths but rather, between radical and mainstream ones.[[122]](#footnote-122) By radical, Fisher means something quite specific, referring here to the perception that, as he states, “our collective problems are of a deeply rooter or thoroughgoing nature and to the corresponding conviction that these will not be solved without significantly altering our thought and action.”[[123]](#footnote-123) In other words, Fisher believes the current conflict is between a largely unrealized inherent radical ecopsychology and a denatured, mainstreamed approach. Fisher taps into the latent radical stems of the first-generation to make his claims, thereby refuting second-generation (Doherty, Kahn, and Hasbach) scholars that aligning with mainstream psychology winds up mischaracterizing the field and undermining its more authentic development.

Additionally, Fisher does not suggest going back to refuted assumptions of first-generation ecopsychologists. Instead, Fisher suggests that ecopsychology should be radical in two senses: A therapeutic-recollective sense, which promotes mending the split between psyche and nature by recalling the mind’s deep rootedness in earthly relations. Furthermore, a critical sense, which addresses the social sources of violence done to both human and more-than-human nature, identifying the historical, cultural, political, and economic roots of our ecopsychological sickness.[[124]](#footnote-124) Various second-generation ecopsychologists (Kahn and Hasbach) want to distance ecopsych from the radical perspective and instead would like to depoliticize ecopsych by bringing it closer to the orbit of scientific psychology. They also draw a line according to differences in attitude toward science and technology without talking about the capitalist society embedded in how we use these tools.[[125]](#footnote-125)

Fisher’s response to second-generation ecopsychologists is timely and profound, stating:

By my way of thinking, a fully radical ecopsychology says that all psychology must be both ecologized and politicized because placing ontological barriers between any of the regions of psyche, nature, and society is false. That, ultimately, is what it means to turn the psyche inside out. Doing so gives us a very different image of the psyche and so implies a very different image of psychology.[[126]](#footnote-126)

True enough, this brings me back to the overlapping affinity among ecopsychology with the dialectical orientation. From Fisher’s radical orientation, everything ecopsychology does involve overcoming dualism or mending the dissociation of realities, beginning with the psyche/nature dualism. Fisher and I agree that any theory of the psyche and ecology needs the integration of the social/political realm. Fisher recognizes that while ecopsychology has focused on integrating the psyche and nature, ecosocialism has critically integrated society and nature better than any other tradition.[[127]](#footnote-127) Fisher proposed in his well-known work Radical Ecopsychology integrating ecopsychology and dialectics as two projects working toward the same goal of eliminating dualism.

Further, Fisher distinguishes two elements of dialectical thinking that ecopsychology should integrate: one, is that dialectics implies an ethic, as well as a method as Fisher, quotes Joel Kovel “As a praxis, dialectics is inherently emancipatory; it allows otherness its presence and welcomes difference even as it eschews relativism.”[[128]](#footnote-128) Indeed, the central force of dialectics is no deduction or induction, but the exploration of potentialities for change. Dialectics provides the creation of greater unities with “ethical, moral, and political choices.”[[129]](#footnote-129) Two, the second vital element of dialectics is that of a philosophy of internal relations, which Fisher believes is where the ecological character of dialectics is most evident, as he states, “As this philosophy perceives reality entirely in terms of interrelationships and looks for interconnections where they are usually not seen.”[[130]](#footnote-130)

As mentioned already, the dialectical orientation illustrates a philosophy of internal relations. certain orthodox dialectical thinking distinguishes between the social/natural dimensions. For example, Jason Moore’s groundbreaking claim within the debate of mainstream and radical metabolism arguments, in which, paraphrasing here, Marx’s conception of social metabolism has been re-interpreted[[131]](#footnote-131) as the “metabolism of nature and society.”[[132]](#footnote-132) Additionally, social metabolism has been cleansed of its dialectical nature. The emphasis on metabolic rifts is disruption and separation; rather than reconfiguration and unity, the metabolic rift signifies a disturbance in the exchange between social and natural systems, begging a fatalistic dualism[[133]](#footnote-133) that appears as one system (social) disrupting another system (natural). Moore’s dedicated awareness to dialectical thinking is that Marxist ecology promised to bring nature into the core of seeing and thinking of historical change; he claims it has not delivered on that promise. Mainly because Marxist ecology, while claiming to be dialectical, fall back into cartesian dualisms of separation from nature and society, as Moore states, “an arithmetic rather than dialectical procedure.”[[134]](#footnote-134)

Moore’s answer is a priority to specify the historical forms of humanity-in-nature and thus nature-in humanity. Therefore, Moore demonstrates:

metabolism liberated from dualisms, acts as a solvent. For if metabolism as a whole is a flow of flows in which life and matter enter into specific historical-geographical arrangements, we are called to construct a much more supple and historically sensitive family of concepts, unified by a dialectical method that transcends all manner of dualisms – not least, but not only, Nature/Society.[[135]](#footnote-135)

Similarly, I plan to tear that cartesian dualism asunder. Dialectical thinking already provides the internal tools to take it further than previously established. As Ollman recognized, “Some writers on Marx have argued for a restricted form of internal relations that would apply only to society and not to the natural world. Nevertheless, reality does not allow such absolute distinctions.”[[136]](#footnote-136) This is vital to understand dialectics as an integrated but flexible orientation: what I mean by this is reality, and its parts are intimately connected, but they express themselves in variously distinct and manifold forms. I am arguing that reality is a paradox of dynamic complexity. A striking illustration is alienation, that is, the process of estrangement by an overwhelming force. Dialectics shows us that the individual, society, and nature are imbricated and related by the force of alienation. In their alienated forms, each element is related to each other in the process of adapting to its current condition.

Following the theme of this section that a renewal of a dialectical orientation follows a normative interrogation of nature and societal, political concerns, the project's orientation is wedded to a normative tradition called critical theory[[137]](#footnote-137) that relies on this dialectical framework. As mentioned, not all eco-Marxists and eco-socialists apply dialectics. Equally, the common denominator here is the recognition of dialectics as a methodology. However, more mainstream EPT literature vastly underuses and under-theorized dialectical thinking as a lens to interpret the relationship of society and nature. I believe dialectics should integrate closer in more significant EPT debates than currently existing. The reason being is that EPT interprets dialectics as an orientation opposite of their tradition, taking exceptions as follows: mainstream EPT theory does not take dialectical thinking seriously enough. Dialectics is somehow not mentioned, or it is thrown into the unwanted category of EPT, that of "anthropocentric" approaches. Instead, I believe dialectics develops an explanation that discusses the deeper relationship of nature in society and psychology. The orientation of dialectics provides the key to understanding nature/society/psyche not simply in a better sense but to vivify and colorize an integration and unification of standard dimensions construed as rigid abstractions based on dualism.

Cyborgs, assemblages, networks, hybrids, rhizomes, etc., began a conversation that points the way forward. However, they have not directly challenged the cartesian binary. Instead, they have gone around it by focusing on the philosophy of difference and critique. Yes, a rejection of dualisms is by no means a timely or novel thought. What is needed is a transformation and unification of new methodological procedures, narrative strategies, and reintegration of the web of life back in social and inner human life.

As a result, integrating Erich Fromm’s dialectical psychoanalysis with ecopsychology is not only novel but necessary because it provides a further dynamism to the dialectical framework, noting in fusion of the orientations a desired prescription that relates maladaptive adaptation as a source of political repression and as a reaction to our separation from nature. Fromm argues that nature/humans are not discrete/isolated concepts or entities but that they are paradoxical, that is, dialectically mediated. This further explains the reaction of eco-neurosis. Eco-neurosis affects individual humans due to the disconnection between themselves, culture, and nature. Western culture encourages isolation, separation, and objectification of nature as a source that individuals introject and apply as their own formulated idea. This dialectical orientation renders and illustrates the internal connections not between but the continual theme from Dialectics and ecopsychology: through individuals, culture, and nature.

Critically, herein lies the prolegomena of my overarching argument, Marx, who Fromm agrees with, developed a critique of capitalism under the concept of alienation. According to Fromm and Marx, alienation is the phenomenon whereby humans cannot relate authentically and creatively to themselves, their labor, one another, and to nature.[[138]](#footnote-138) Nature in capitalist society and to capitalists' subjects is nothing but something to be exploited. The result of this exploitation of nature has developed the phenomena we now know today as climate change/disaster. Applying Fromm's initial quote that the unconscious dialectic of humanity and nature are deeply interrelated. Then, it makes sense to say that nature's reaction to our societal actions manifests as severe weather changes, loss of habitats, and environmental degradation, while simultaneously affecting human beings' mental health. Therefore, my argument will suggest that the development of capitalism concerning nature is causing the degradation of our environment; simultaneously, we are developing psychological reactions identified as econeurosis. The point then is to interrogate the concept of eco-neurosis with a concept I am naming an "eco-unconscious."[[139]](#footnote-139)

###### The Structure of this Dissertation

This dissertation is divided into six chapters; it begins with the problem: eco-neurosis a summary and definition of the concept and its divided interpretation of the psychological phenomena within the literature, an important theme of the divided literature is the individual framework on eco-neurosis, as well as lack of political and social factors of these psychological reactions. Afterwards, I tackle the literature of EPT to question and reflect on certain anthropocentric approaches, such as psychoanalysis and humanism, should be reconsidered as approaches which help us understand nature in more complex and unique aspects. Next, I engaged the importance of adding Erich Fromm’s theoretical perspective toward this exceptional and bourgeoning literature. Lastly, I lay bare the foundational methodological framework of this project, which I have come to understand as an anti-essentialist dialectic.

The second chapter is motivated by the first. It homes in on the limitations of the initial psychological literature of eco-neurosis. Therefore, the main argument of this dissertation is an answer in clarifying the problem of eco-neurosis. This is done through the development of a theoretical lens which is both sensitive of political and ecological dimension i.e., an eco-unconscious. This is done through a blended reinterpretation of Erich Fromm’s rich foundational texts as well as more contemporary theories in the social sciences and humanities. An eco-unconscious is then dissected by three important concepts: relatedness, social/collective unconscious, and the unique social character rendering of biophilia.

Therefore, chapter three focuses on the concept of relatedness. the purpose of this chapter is an attempt to ecologize this key Frommian concept toward an ecological sensitivity. Reorganizing the foundational assumption of the concept which are based on a fatalistic cartesian dualism that obscures, instead of clarifies the relationship of humanity and nature, into one that simultaneously discusses nature as a part of the dynamic. In effect, to achieve this transformation I will employ various authors such as Jason Moore, Bruno Latour, Timothy Morton, et. al., for conceptual clarity and precision.

Chapter four moves on to the social/collective unconscious. The purpose of this chapter is to bridge the gap and relate the dimension of the individual to larger collective psycho-social experiences. With the development of that bridge, reconstructing the focus from a human dimension toward one as if nature was a part of the process is crucial. As I do in chapter three, the reconceptualization of a collective unconscious sensitive to an ecological element is integral for an eco-unconscious framework.

Next, chapter five takes an EPT approach toward the social character of biophilia. Arguing that biophilia should be another means to understand human relations with nature that should be taken seriously in the body of literature within EPT. I will be including authors such as Murray Bookchin, Whitney Bauman, Stefanie Fishel, et. al. Moreover, biophilia as an ethical social character of how to develop a love of life and the world, contains elements for political action and policy implications for individuals as well as governments.

Lastly, chapter six is the conclusion, but it deals with some important sentiments: ways in which to suspend the stranglehold of our current illusion of a static, unchangeable reality and realizing that reality is fungible, gooey, and manifold. In other words, intentional tactics for a profound shift and elevation in consciousness or what Fromm believes to be the affective experience of seeing, or paraphrasing Fromm, and making the unconscious conscious out of the illusion of a concrete and unchangeable world. That is, demonstrating the possibility of a path that infused a sobering appeal for a renewed sense of hope in the ashes of a dying “reality.” In this chapter, I will include authors such as Michael Pollan, Mark Fisher, Jamie Wheal, et. al.

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5. In fact, one of the pioneering reports on the psychological impact of climate change (Mental Health and Our Changing Climate: Impacts, Implications and Guidance, APA (2017) already warned that public concern was growing. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Usher, Kim, Joanne Durkin, and Navjot Bhullar 2019 1233–1234. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. The implication of this statement provides an interesting debate between pathologizing eco-neurosis and keeping it as a personal self-help development that individuals must deal with their own devices. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Pihkala, Panu 2018. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Goleman, Daniel 2009. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Valimaki J, and Lehtonen, J. 37 (6): 341-344. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Pihkala, Panu 2018. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Goleman, Daniel 2009. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
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14. Pihkala Panu 2020, 7836–. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Pihkala Panu 2020, 7836–. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
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17. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
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38. Pihkala Panu 2020, 7836–. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. Joseph Dodd explains, “The science informing us of the risks and possible technical solutions has run far ahead of our psychological state. We are not yet at the point emotionally of being able to clearly grasp the threat, and act accordingly. We need to ask why this issue, despite its current prominence, fails to ignite people's motivation for the major changes science tells us is necessary. Environmental campaigners have become increasingly frustrated and

pessimistic. Even as their messages spread further and further, and as scientists unite around their core concerns, there is an alarming gap between increasingly firm evidence and public response (*Psychoanalysis and Ecology at the Edge of Chaos Complexity Theory, Deleuze/Guattari and Psychoanalysis for a Climate in Crisis*, Routledge, 2011). [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
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51. Valimaki J, and Lehtonen, J. 341-344. Authors translated the text from Finnish to English. [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
52. Devall And Sessions 1985, 61. [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
53. I am making this assertion based on Frommian understanding. claiming that humans can adapt to many unsatisfactory conditions. However, as Fromm states, “in the process of adaptation he develops mental and emotional reactions which follow from the specific properties of his own nature.” (Man for Himself, 32). Arguing that while humanity is flexible in its adaptations, there are fixed elements of its nature. That is where neurosis develops when external conditions counter human self-development; our neurotic symptoms are the warning messages. [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
54. Lehtonen, Anna & Salonen, Arto & Cantell, Hannele 2019. [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
55. I am not suggesting here that the Western world is the only form of culture that matters; non-industrialized and native cultures believe the natural world is a vital part of cultural and family life. Nature is seen as a living organism, seeing the natural world as alive, where people should live in kinship with it. However, indigenous, and non-industrialized cultures are quickly disappearing as capitalism spreads around the globe. My focus then is on the dominant paradigm (Western Capitalism) that replaces all other modes of relating with nature which does not bode well for our continued existence as human beings on the planet. [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
56. Koger M. Susan and Winter Nann Du Deborah 2004, 34. [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
57. Orange M. Donna 2017, 8. [↑](#footnote-ref-57)
58. Orange M. Donna 2017, 9. [↑](#footnote-ref-58)
59. Koger M. Susan and Winter Nann Du Deborah 2004, 38. [↑](#footnote-ref-59)
60. Sally Weintrobe et al. 2013, 40. [↑](#footnote-ref-60)
61. Sally Weintrobe et al. 2013, 41. [↑](#footnote-ref-61)
62. Erich Fromm determined that to be alive and sensitive is to feel insecurity and anxiety. As he states, “the psychic task which a person can and must set for himself, is not to feel secure, but to be able to tolerate insecurity, without panic and undue fear.” (*The Sane Society*, 196). [↑](#footnote-ref-62)
63. Teena Gabrielson, Cheryl Hall, et al., 2016, 2. [↑](#footnote-ref-63)
64. Bill Devall, George Sessions, 1985, 8. [↑](#footnote-ref-64)
65. Bill Devall, George Sessions 1985, 7. [↑](#footnote-ref-65)
66. Devall and Sessions 1985, 66. [↑](#footnote-ref-66)
67. By an ecosophy I mean a philosophy of ecological harmony or equilibrium. A philosophy as a kind of sofia (or) wisdom, is openly normative, it contains both norms, rules, postulates, value priority announcements and hypotheses concerning the state of affairs in our universe. Wisdom is policy wisdom, prescription, not only scientific description and prediction. The details of an ecosophy will show many variations due to significant differences concerning not only the 'facts' of pollution, resources, population, etc. but also value priorities (This is Arne Naess definition of the word). [↑](#footnote-ref-67)
68. Arne Naess 1993, 26. [↑](#footnote-ref-68)
69. Carolyn Merchant 1992, 75. [↑](#footnote-ref-69)
70. Murray Bookchin 1988, 232. [↑](#footnote-ref-70)
71. Ramachandra, Guha 1989, 75. [↑](#footnote-ref-71)
72. Pacific Islands such as Kiribati and Tuvalu are already experiencing the effects of climate change on their islands. Sea level is rising, causing these island nations to be uninhabitable, endangering food security, water, health, and livelihood. The eco-neurosis experienced on a pacific island nation is much more severe than, say, a whole foods shopper in Chicago, where the issues aren’t existential and are instead lifestyle-based. For example, more sustainable activities include setting up an urban garden or plogging (going on a run and picking up plastic from the ground). [↑](#footnote-ref-72)
73. Devall and Sessions 1985, 68. [↑](#footnote-ref-73)
74. Freud, a polemic figure, helped formulate the Enlightenment's individualistic and materialistic Western worldview. At the same time, Freud’s psychoanalysis also provides a serious challenge to this way of thinking.

There will always be something beyond our control. We are not, and never can be, masters in our own house, and the core of who we are is irrational and often frightening. [↑](#footnote-ref-74)
75. Koger M. Susan and Winter Nann Du Deborah 2004, 70. [↑](#footnote-ref-75)
76. Norman O. Brown 1959, 6. [↑](#footnote-ref-76)
77. Erich Fromm 1941, 14. [↑](#footnote-ref-77)
78. Brown O. Norman 1959, 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-78)
79. Freud Sigmund, 1927, 51. [↑](#footnote-ref-79)
80. Dodds, Joseph 2011. [↑](#footnote-ref-80)
81. Norman O. Brown 1959, 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-81)
82. This claim is directly associated with the findings of Sigmund Freud’s idea of the unconscious in mental life. As Norman Brown, in Life Against Death, demonstrates, “Freud is driven to embrace the paradox that there are in human being purposes of which he knows nothing, involuntary purposes, or, in more technical Freudian language, ‘unconscious ideas.’” Therefore, the dynamic relation between conscious and unconscious life is one of conflict; psychoanalysis is a science of mental conflict. (Fromm Erich, *The Sane Society*, 195). [↑](#footnote-ref-82)
83. Norman O. Brown, *Life Against Death*, p.6 [↑](#footnote-ref-83)
84. Susan M. Koger and Deborah Du Nann Winter, The Psychology of Environmental Problems, 3rd edition, p. 63 [↑](#footnote-ref-84)
85. Political repression is slightly different to basic defense mechanism of repression. The main difference is that political repression is constructed by the cultural norms and rules of the society that enforces it. For example, capitalist societies fixate on the result of profit at the expense and fragility in the web of life. [↑](#footnote-ref-85)
86. Durkin Kieran 2014, 63 [↑](#footnote-ref-86)
87. Fromm Erich 1947, 20. [↑](#footnote-ref-87)
88. Fromm Erich 1973, 223. [↑](#footnote-ref-88)
89. Fromm Erich 1973, 224. [↑](#footnote-ref-89)
90. Fromm Erich 1973, 225. [↑](#footnote-ref-90)
91. Fromm Erich 1973, 226. [↑](#footnote-ref-91)
92. Fromm Erich 1973, Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-92)
93. Fromm defines this term as the relatively permanent system of all noninstinctual strivings through which man relates himself to the human and natural world. [↑](#footnote-ref-93)
94. Fromm Erich 1973, 227. [↑](#footnote-ref-94)
95. Fromm Erich Ibid, 227. [↑](#footnote-ref-95)
96. Fromm Erich 1947, 32. [↑](#footnote-ref-96)
97. Fromm Erich Ibid, 42. [↑](#footnote-ref-97)
98. Synthesized from *Man for Himself*, and *Escape from Freedom*. [↑](#footnote-ref-98)
99. Fromm Erich 1941, 17. [↑](#footnote-ref-99)
100. Adorno, Theodor W. 2017, Lecture 1. [↑](#footnote-ref-100)
101. Adorno, Theodor W. 2017, Lecture 6. [↑](#footnote-ref-101)
102. Adorno, Theodor W. 2017, Lecture 6. [↑](#footnote-ref-102)
103. The Frankfurt School of Critical Theory central voices were Horkheimer and Adorno they argued against Cartesian and Kantian philosophy, they attempted to rejoin all dichotomies e.g., like those between consciousness and being, theory and practice, fact and value, through the use of their own unique dialectical method. Subtly different from Marx mind you, their dialectics amounted to neither metaphysical principles nor a historical praxis; instead, it was not intended as a methodological tool. Even though it became exactly that, dialectics became a function for overcoming categorical fixities and oppositions. This was in direct relation to Horkheimer and Adorno’s criticism of traditional Marxism, which created a separation between the material productive base and the ideological superstructure. [↑](#footnote-ref-103)
104. Ollman Bertell, 1993,10. [↑](#footnote-ref-104)
105. Cole Andrew 2014, 33. [↑](#footnote-ref-105)
106. Heraclitus of Ephesus (500 BCE) is a pre-Socratic philosopher whose philosophical perspective, I would argue, establishes him as the father of Western dialectical thinking. Much of his work is a mystery to scholars mainly because his work survived in fragments. However, of what we can read and understand of Heraclitus, he claimed that the first cause of the nature of reality was fire. Fire a transformative energy demonstrated, as Heraclitus believed, the constant change in life. [↑](#footnote-ref-106)
107. Williams Howard 1985, 383. [↑](#footnote-ref-107)
108. There are various interpretations of Heraclitus, but they are deriving from his only surviving work called “On Nature.” [↑](#footnote-ref-108)
109. As with every other saying attributed to Heraclitus there is some difficulty in establishing the authenticity of this Aphorism. Many interpretations derive from Hegel who interpreted Heraclitus from Aristotle. [↑](#footnote-ref-109)
110. Brinkmann, Klaus., Daniel O. Dahlstrom, Hegel G.W.F. 2010, 81. [↑](#footnote-ref-110)
111. Hegel says that aufheben has a doubled meaning: it means both to cancel (or negate) and to preserve at the same time (PhG §113; SL-M 107; SL-dG 81–2; cf. EL the Addition to §95). The moment of understanding sublates itself because its own character or nature—its one-sidedness or restrictedness—destabilizes its definition and leads it to pass into its opposite. The dialectical moment thus involves a process of self-sublation, or a process in which the determination from the moment of understanding sublates itself, or both cancels and preserves itself, as it pushes on to or passes into its opposite. [↑](#footnote-ref-111)
112. Tucker Robert C. 1978, 144. [↑](#footnote-ref-112)
113. Tucker Robert C. 1978, 145. [↑](#footnote-ref-113)
114. Honderich Ted 1995, 705. [↑](#footnote-ref-114)
115. Koger, et. al. 2010, 132. [↑](#footnote-ref-115)
116. Koger, et. al. 2010, Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-116)
117. The basic affirmations of positivism are (1) that all knowledge regarding matters of fact is based on the “positive” data of experience and (2) that beyond the realm of fact is that of pure logic and pure mathematics. [↑](#footnote-ref-117)
118. Herbert Feigl, “Positivism,” Britannica Accessed February 4th, 2022. https://www.britannica.com/topic/positivism [↑](#footnote-ref-118)
119. Smith Daniel B. 2010. [↑](#footnote-ref-119)
120. Fisher Andy 2002, 6. [↑](#footnote-ref-120)
121. Smith Daniel B. 2010. [↑](#footnote-ref-121)
122. Fisher Andy, 2013, 167. [↑](#footnote-ref-122)
123. Fisher Andy, 2013, Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-123)
124. Fisher Andy, 2013, Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-124)
125. Fisher Andy, 2013, 170-171. [↑](#footnote-ref-125)
126. Fisher Andy, 2013, 170. [↑](#footnote-ref-126)
127. Fisher Andy 2002, 212. [↑](#footnote-ref-127)
128. Fisher Andy 2002, 214. [↑](#footnote-ref-128)
129. Fisher Andy 2002, Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-129)
130. Fisher Andy 2002, 213. [↑](#footnote-ref-130)
131. Those in the “metabolic rift” movement championed by Foster, Richard York, Brett Clark, and others. [↑](#footnote-ref-131)
132. Foster 2000. [↑](#footnote-ref-132)
133. In agreement with Moore’s words, “One of Cartesian dualism’s essential features is the tendency to circumscribe truth claims by drawing hard and fast lines between what is human and what is “natural.” At the core of this epistemic rift is a series of violent abstractions implicated in the creation and reproduction of two separate epistemic domains: “Nature” and “Society.” The abstractions are violent because they remove essential relations from each node in the interests of narrative or theoretical coherence.” (From Dualism to Dialectics section in Jason Moore’s Capitalism in the Web of Life, 76). [↑](#footnote-ref-133)
134. Moore Jason 2015, 79. [↑](#footnote-ref-134)
135. Moore Jason 2015, 84. [↑](#footnote-ref-135)
136. Ollman Bertell 1993, 35. [↑](#footnote-ref-136)
137. This is associated with the emancipatory project of the first generation of the Frankfurt school. However, this also means more generally what Marx notes in For a Ruthless Criticism of Everything Existing that our motto must therefore be: "reform of consciousness not through dogma but through analyzing the mystical consciousness, the consciousness which is unclear to itself, whether it appears in religious or political form… So, we can express the trend of our journal in one word: the work of our time to clarify to itself (critical philosophy) the meaning of its own struggle and its own desires." [↑](#footnote-ref-137)
138. Fromm Erich, 2013,44. [↑](#footnote-ref-138)
139. both humanity and nature are co-constituted even at the psychological level. That is, neurosis expresses both smaller and larger unconscious manifestations; from an individual human dimension, our relationship with nature translates as powerlessness by an alienating force, i.e., capital, this, in turn, develops forms of neurosis such as eco-anxiety, eco-depression, and so on. at the same time, natures relationship with humanity is expressed as catastrophic storm, hurricanes, immense forest fires, viral pandemics, etc. the eco-unconscious demonstrates maladaptive reactions of both human and nature alike of an alienating organizing force, i.e., capitalism. [↑](#footnote-ref-139)