

# The Domains of Eco-Arts Therapies: Mediating Positive Psychology and Its Psychoanalytical Implications

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## Abstract

**Background and Aims:** The present paper introduces and thematizes cutting-edge topics in bridging humanistic and medical sciences by analyzing different facets of art-making, conceptualized most comprehensively as regards various types of artistic language in their overlapping moments with therapeutic potentialities and ecological awareness. It entails in utmostly impactful way psyche and soma interactions from a neurobiological perspective within a framework of positive psychology with the scope of bringing to light psychoanalytically and cross-culturally concomitant artistic and ecological mindfulness regarding clinical toolkits and practical strategies.

**Methods:** This paper showcases through clear and precise descriptions a wide-ranging set of artistically motivated examples showing the modalities of how they can be applied and integrated into the work of clinicians through the lens of art therapy imbued with ecological mindedness. The attention will be given to affect-regulating cognitive-experiential aspects mediated through psychoanalytic theory and arts-based eco-therapeutic exercises by observing pre-symbolic and sensory information as well as mental representations and imaginative elements stemming therefrom.

**Findings:** The paper underlines how involvement in the practice of creative arts can lead to reparative experiences so as to produce further emotional attunement with investment of unconscious material and symbolic apparatus. Structurally, the content of this paper covers the entire formal artistic kaleidoscope by indicating and commenting a variety of typological distinctions such as imagistic, musical, literary, architectonic expressions together with their verbal reflections, including gathering observations from journaling of inner experiences, placed in constant relation to the natural element with the objective of realization of mental health.

**Conclusion:** This paper, belonging to the interdisciplinary spheres of environmental and medical humanities is aimed at explaining the productive entanglements between these fields with a particular focus on recent developments together with their clinical implications bringing breakthrough cognitions.

**Keywords:** Arts • Ecotherapeutism • Neurology • Psychology • Positivity • Psychoanalytical aspects

## Introduction

The present paper promotes a multimodal approach and novel thinking within medical humanities, while also being multiculturally informed. It is cutting-edge in analyzing various forms of art and providing a cultural interpretation of scientific facts from the field of ecocritical studies through the lens of positive psychology and its psychoanalytical echoes [1,2].

The paper emphasizes positive psychology as a science of wellbeing, benefiting individuals in a psychosocial sense through the transformative power of art, enabling the actualization of creative and ecological self. Placing itself at the forefront of innovation in an integrative way, this paper is aimed at showing how being positively psychologically minded contributes to optimal functioning, and is commendable for human physiology, focusing on the categories of positivity and sustainable wellbeing through self-reflective narratives and otherwise artistic creations [3].

Concomitantly, it is through neuroscience that can be particularly instilled ecological perspective on human formation. Neuroscience can uncover how brain functions are influenced by various factors such as climates and microorganisms, ultimately leading to the development of ecological protocols (Figure 1).



**Figure 1.** Model of a human brain, France, 1801-1850; unknown maker, London Science Museum fund.

As for the emotional brain, since thoughts are always tinged with emotions, the semantic contours of the mind are shaped by the encounters between neurological plasticity and ecological setting [4].

## METHODS

Utterly innovative solution-based and arts-related scientific methodology of the present paper is aimed at taking herein emotions in their positive valence and considering the overall spectrum of perceptiveness layers. Positively emotion-attuned vision has the purpose of channeling vital resources, fostering connection and developing relational empathy in terms of moral agency as well as bettering emotional and interpersonal experiences [5,6].

Therapeutic opportunities arising from this can also help increase attentional energy, which aids in self-regulation. Furthermore, it will be shown how practicing attunement in being goal-focused and task-oriented can help soothe the mental processes and certain behavioral traits impacted by trauma to bring about healthfulness and also post-traumatic growth within healing work. Since we create our own psychological world, as psychic creatures, we emanate our psychologies into the outer world and vice versa. Respect for the environment is, therefore, also respect of oneself, as Nature, in its oftentimes reliability, may ease our reactivity to pain, which greatly depends on the instinctual part of our being.

Building on one's memories as for cognitive and emotional functions of the brain may also involve growing and cultivating our unconscious mind through art creation and reflection [7]. Tapping into our natural, primal selves can positively influence interpretative associations and

representational narratives. It also refers to implicit or perceptual memory that does not require conscious awareness, or bodily impulses, that can be directed to improve the sense of self through eco-art-therapy tasks applied synergistically with principles of positive psychology [8]. The instinctual traces and bodily impulses may be reflected in language through reflexive writing, such as journaling, and other linguistic manifestations inscribed within works of art. These expressions are also of particular interest in the current paper. From a bio-medical perspective and sciences of the brain, as observed in the volume edited by Noah Hass-Cohen and Richard Carr titled "Art Therapy and Clinical Neuroscience", the act of art-making links the conscious brain and unconscious mind and helps in affect and overall self-regulation by inhibiting neurochemical imbalances. That is to say that arts can integrate internal processes and be useful in developing cognitive skills, enhancing social interactions, and strengthening existing coping mechanisms [9].

## Results

This paper is theoretically grounded in psychoanalysis and examines the way of delving into the unconscious through art creation and the selection of appropriate artistic mediums as, put in Freudian terms explained in the book "A General Introduction to Psychoanalysis", participatory daydreaming on the unconscious side, herein combining these elements with the insights on Planet Earth [10].

Since art operates with the unconscious in a non-invasive manner, it can enhance the flow toward higher instances of self, that is the ego and the superego. It is through art-making that may occur more aware and subliminal filtering of the outputs from the unconscious, also referred to as Freudian Id, or put otherwise the natural self, where the goal-directed striving of organisms initially starts from. From a neuroscientific perspective, consciousness is nested in the whole nervous system and the unconscious impulses arise from our bodily systems with their perceptual sensitivity (Figure 2).



**Figure 2.** Detail of an exhibit panel showing the human impact on the environment.

Emotions can be culturally encoded through figures and symbols rooted in certain cultures, with their status varying across societies from an

anthropological standpoint, reflecting itself both in the affective and cognitive realms. We see emotions acted out since childhood and they are played out through literature, paintings, music, and so forth, and are guided initially regarding expressing our emotional realm, also through guided imagery influencing cognitive ideation.

Emotional cues can settle into different layers of consciousness and therefore organizing them artistically may help in keeping a homeostatic balance. This can sometimes involve cultural rewiring, such as juxtaposing the individualism derived from Western humanism with the social communal identity in Eastern cultures, as observed in the book "Positive Art Therapy", by Rebecca Ann Wilkinson and Gioia Chilton [11].

Restoring creativity through eco-art therapy can thus bring a plentitude of positive outcomes to mental and overall health [12]. On the terrain of visual arts, it can bring about positive changes to the mental dictionary and visual system, going back to involving pre-verbal impulses and connecting to an understanding rooted in our bodies.

The representation of the natural ecosystem in modern times is featured in numerous world exhibitions relating to planetary health, showcasing and promoting environmental sustainability through artistic and curatorial practice or such initiatives of collaborative nature, which can also be seen from an eco-therapeutical perspective and as such correlated to the medical field. It is what is being thematized in the volume "Ecocriticism and the Anthropocene in Nineteenth-Century Art and Visual Culture", edited by Maura Coughlin and Emily Gephart, and published by Routledge in 2020 [13].

## Discussion

Furthermore, the exhibition at the Contemporary Arts Center in Cincinnati in 2002, whose title was "Econvention: Current Art to Transform Ecologies", co-curated by Amy Lipton and artist Sue Spaid, staged environmental art, placing ecological awareness at the intersection with the humanities and science engagement. Indicative of environmental ethics and creative activism is this titling term 'econvention', coined by Lipton and Spaid. It promotes the idea to intervene with artistic ingenuity regarding addressing climate change and sustaining terrestrial biodiversity. Methodological art-historical implications are thus applied to current ecological practices in the public sphere [14].

The exhibition catalog resulting thereof as accompanying publicism is detailing such art, comprehending also digital imaging and mass media, as well as architectural aspects, as a recourse to artistic means with the goal of directly improving the environment. From that moment, environmentalism became a distinct art movement, followed by a similar initiative in Europe, in the form of the exhibit "Econvention Europe: Art to Transform Ecologies, 1957-2017", curated by Sue Spaid and Roel Arkesteijn in Sittard in the Netherlands. It is an "ecoartspace" serving as a hub for artists to tackle these questions in synergy with scientists, which can significantly contribute to improving care ethics.

The Symposium at Princeton University "Picture Ecology: Art and Ecocriticism in Planetary Perspective", which took place in 2018, and was organized in connection with the exhibition on this topic "Nature's Nation: American Art and Environment" at the Princeton Art Museum, comprising sophisticated image technologies is also particularly instructive in that regard [15].

These topics are a perennial source of inspiration for numerous prominent visual artists, making them create their artworks such as paintings, but also in today's world sometimes installations which are elaborated accordingly to postmodern image technologies, and in such a sense experimental art. These works focus on the correlation between environmental being and artistic practices, inviting spectators to contemplate nature and evoking eco-critical echoes, both literarily and figuratively.

Furthermore, as for expressive arts modalities such as music, a paradigmatic modern example can be found in Antonio Vivaldi's "The Four Seasons", originally composed in the spirit of Baroque, which inspired a series of contemporary interpretative adaptations addressing the issue of climate change, and the need for action, such as the version promoted by the University of Göttingen "The Four Seasons in Climate Change". Nowadays the know-how regarding implementing behavioral modifications is of paramount concern, as shown in the scholarly

academic collections on the Earth's climate by Routledge and, more generally, by Taylor & Francis [16].

## Conclusion

In conclusion, this scientific paper, imbued with multiple artistic perspectives, sheds light on the domains of eco-arts therapies having as a principle scientific intersectionality, in developing epistemology from nature and cosmology, potentially reflecting on protocols of experimentation.

It involves tracing epistemologically panoramically the remarkable signs of the ecological study of society through various art forms such as paintings, drawings, nature photography, music, and environmental design. These can be correlated with the concept of positive health and of great use in implementing medical knowledge for theories and practices in therapeutic settings.

Focusing on one's wants and needs therapeutically through eco-art may play a pivotal role because it can significantly strengthen one's coping brain pathways to reach and live up to the fullest highest potential.

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## Conflict of Interest

None.

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