



PRIFYSGOL CYMRU
Y Drindod Dewi Sant
UNIVERSITY OF WALES
Trinity Saint David

Postgraduate/Distance Learning Assignment coversheet & feedback form

THIS SHEET MUST BE THE FIRST PAGE OF THE ASSIGNMENT YOU ARE SUBMITTING (DO NOT SEND AS A SEPARATE FILE)

For completion by the student:			
Student Name: <u>SIMON JOSEPH NEVIN</u>			
Module code: <u>HPCA 7023</u>	Student ID number: <u>2013891</u>	Educational support needs: Yes/No ☒ No	
Module title: <u>ECOLOGY AND SPIRITUALITY</u>			
Module tutor: <u>DR JACK HUNTER</u>			
Assignment due date: <u>JANUARY 8TH 2021</u>			
If your module has multiple submissions please indicate which piece of work this is.			
1 st ☒ 2 nd 3 rd 4 th 5 th 6 th			
I confirm that this is my original work and that I have adhered to the University policy on plagiarism.			
Signed (type your name in)..... <u>Simon</u>			
Email submission: if you are submitting this form via email, please tick this box ☐ (as a substitute for your signature) to confirm that you agree to the above declaration.			

Assignment Mark**Final Mark**

WILL BE GIVEN ON TURNITIN

NB. All marks are provisional until confirmed by the Final Examination Board.

PLEASE NOTE: ALL COMMENTS WILL BE POSTED ON TURNITIN

For completion by Marker 1 :

Comments:

Marker's signature:

Date:

For completion by Marker 2/Moderator:

Comments:

Marker's Signature:

Date:

AGREED INTERNAL MARK (where necessary):

Comment on process of arriving at agreed mark:

External Examiner's comments (if relevant)

External Examiner's Signature:

Date:

INTRODUCTION

This essay considers what role extraordinary experience plays in establishing a relationship with nature. It draws on the work of researchers who use a broad definition of the paranormal, from fringe experiences such as alien abduction and interspecies communication with plants, to those experiencing epiphanies, either spontaneous or induced. These experiences are considered using a holistic frame, one that looks for similarities and overlaps across this wide spectrum. In addition, the research considered here is drawn from studies that focus on the consequences of the experience, in order to illustrate the impacts of anomalous experience on changing people's worldview, scientific methodology, philosophical thinking and their behaviours toward the natural world. A recurring theme discussed is the prevalence of extraordinary experience taking place in nature. Another observation contained in the research cited is that extraordinary experiences are the result of non-human sentience communicating with receptive people. Evidence is presented to show that the messages communicated are ones of love, loss, and trauma but at the same time providing the experiencer with a deep connection with the environment. The studies discussed also refer to types of experiences of the anomalous from a Western perspective and an indigenous view of the paranormal, showing how insights from that latter can help with an understanding of extraordinary experience. In conclusion, this essay gives examples of how transformative events have shape a renewed, healthier relationship with nature and how these experiences might be encouraged by practical activities and experiential methods in everyday life in order to foster an awareness of the ecosystem and our embeddedness in and dependence on the natural world.

TYPES OF EXTRAORDINARY EXPERIENCES.

Holt, Simmonds-Moore, Luke and French wrote 'accounts of visions, miraculous healings, encounters with spirits, and extraordinary human powers' are widespread throughout written history.¹ They gave further examples of anomalous experiences which included: hallucinations, synaesthesia, clairvoyance, mystical experiences 'which may involve a connection with a divine being', out of body experiences, alien abduction, dreams of prophecy, extrasensory perception, belief in Loch Ness monster. Further Holt, Simmonds-Moore, Luke and French also referenced non-Western anomalous experience passed down orally, citing 'shamanistic trances' in which shamans attempt to communicate with the spirit world.² Despite noting that these anomalous experiences are rare or exceptional, they provided evidence that the paranormal is widely experienced: "A telephone poll by IPSOS mori (2007) of 1005 randomly selected British adults found high levels of belief in life after death (47%), telepathy (41%), guardian angels (38%), ghosts (38%), reincarnation (23%), premonitions (58%), precognitive dreams (35%), and communication with the dead (32%)."³

¹ Holt, Nicola *et al.* *Anomalistic Psychology*, (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2012). pp.2.

² Holt, Nicola *et al.* *Anomalistic Psychology*. pp. 3.

³ Holt, Nicola *et al.* *Anomalistic Psychology*. pp. 3.

ECOLOGY & THE PARANORMAL

Anthropologist, Hunter also pointed out that these experiences are ‘remarkably common in the Western world’.⁴ Key elements of Hunter’s methodological for examining these anomalous, paranormal or extraordinary experience were as follows:

1. The effects of extraordinary experience.

Hunter’s approach concentrated on the effects of these experiences and how people’s behaviors changed rather than on trying to identify the source, psychological reasons or question the validity of the experience.⁵ Hunter’s research drew on the observation of psychologist, William James who wrote in his classic study of religious experiences ‘Varieties of Religious Experience’ an analysis of mystical experience that focused on the outcomes of extraordinary, their ‘fruits’ not their ‘roots.’ Hunter commented on this: ‘James considered the religious experience to be a distinct class of experience defined by its fruits, that is an experience could be considered genuinely religious if its effects on the experience were seen to be both positive and morally transformative.’⁶

2. A broad definition of the paranormal.

Hunter focused on broad definitions of extraordinary experience across a wide spectrum from fringe experiences, to experiences that are pedagogic, experiential or practical – ‘as open as open and as broad as possible.’⁷ These experiences included the ‘(relatively) scientifically acceptable phenomena associated with psi –a scientific term used in the in parapsychology to refer to telepathy –and the much less respectable phenomena associated with UFO’s, cryptids, faeries, mediumship, religious miracles’.⁸ He described this pluralistic approach as ‘ontological flooding.’ Hunter explained this concept as follows: ‘instead of ruling out the question of what ‘really exists’ so that we can get on with studying social, psychological and cultural facts, an ontologically flooded perspective faces up to the issue of ontology and entertains multiple possible hypotheses simultaneously (including models that challenge established scientific theories)’.⁹ Hunter also proposed looking for extraordinary experience in practical activities, pedagogic or experiential, that is the

⁴ Jack Hunter, (ed.), *Greening of the Paranormal*, (London: August Night Press, 2019). pp. 7.

⁵ Jack Hunter, <http://paranthropology.weebly.com/religious-experience.html> [accessed December 2020].

⁶ Jack Hunter, <http://paranthropology.weebly.com/religious-experience.html> [accessed December 2020].

⁷ Jack Hunter, *Greening of the Paranormal* (ed.), pp. 7.

⁸ Jack Hunter, (ed.), *Greening of the Paranormal* pp. 13.

⁹ Jack Hunter, ‘Making Connections’, <https://jack-hunter.webstarts.com/blog/post/making-connections-between-consciousness-studies-anthropology-history-parapsychology-religious-studies-ecology-and-permaculture>, [accessed December 2020).

experiencing of the extraordinary, and consequent establishment of a positive relationship with nature, in everyday activities such as gardening, hiking, and other outdoor activities that may be encourage psi experience.¹⁰

2. Viewing the anomalous through a holistic and ecological lens.

Using a holistic frame, Hunter argued there may be correlations and similarities between laboratory investigations, fieldwork, clinical work, indigenous experiences and individual accounts. This approach also drew from the insights, language, and observations of holistic science, permaculture, indigenous worldviews, and an understanding of ecological systems.¹¹ As Capra explained, holism can be defined as a way of 'seeing the world as an integrated whole rather than a dissociated collection of parts.'¹² Hunter gave an example which reflected this definition: 'spirit possession is a particularly good example - all of the divergent theories and approaches give insight into aspects of the phenomenon, but none taken individually provides a completely satisfying account of it.'¹³

On this broad, holistic view, one area of research which he cited as 'on the very fringes of academic thinking' was that of Harvard psychologist John Mack's clinical research into alien abduction experiences.¹⁴

ALIEN ABDUCTION EXPERIENCE

An analysis of the research into the phenomenon of alien abduction by Harvard psychologist, John Mack, as Hunter explained 'highlighted the frequent centrality of the eco-crisis.'¹⁵ Mack studied the testimonies of seventy-six individuals who reported encounters with aliens, conducted through interviews combined with breathing techniques and hypnosis,¹⁶ Mack was interested in the effect on the experiencers rather than the source or any underlying psychological reasons. "Something, everyone who goes through these sessions agrees, has happened to these people, whether or not it is possible to identify the source.'¹⁷ Mack's

¹⁰ Jack Hunter, *Parapsychology and the Ecological Self*, https://www.academia.edu/42942280/Parapsychology_and_the_Ecological_Self pp.18, [accessed December 2020].

¹¹ Jack Hunter, (ed.), *Greening of the Paranormal* pp. 25-37

¹² Fritjof Capra, *The Web of Life*, (London, Harper Collins, 1997). pp.6.

¹³ Jack Hunter, 'Making Connections.'

¹⁴ Jack Hunter, (ed.), *Greening of the Paranormal* pp. 13.

¹⁵ Jack Hunter, (ed.), *Greening of the Paranormal* pp. 21.

¹⁶ John E Mack, *Abduction*, (New York: Macmillan, 1994). pp. 387.

¹⁷ John E Mack, *Abduction*. pp. 402.

clinical work revealed a direct correlation between abductees accounts and an awakening of an ecological awareness, 'virtually every abductee receives information about the destruction of the earth's ecosystem and feels compelled to do something about it,' Mack wrote.¹⁸ For example, he observed that the outcomes of these experiences included, 'receiving of spiritual messages which are concerned with world ecology, the future of mankind and social justice.'¹⁹ Furthermore, he described how many of the abductees had become teachers dedicated to promoting a new, more nature focused way of living.²⁰

Not only did Mack describe other people's experience but also his own transformation, 'I did not foresee how fundamentally challenged the view of the world in which I was raised would be.'²¹ Integral to Mack's transformation was a critique of mainstream scientific enquiry that resulted from his research. He described Western science and philosophy as underpinned by the limitations of a Western dualistic scientific worldview, one that was responsible for the ecological crisis, and the destruction of earth eco-system.²² This limited Western worldview characterized intelligence as a product of the human mind, whereas Mack concluded that we exist in a universe filled with multiple intelligences that we have lost the ability to access.²³ For Mack, if we were to avoid ecological catastrophe a new scientific paradigm was required. Mack argued that mainstream science, underpinned by the separation of the material and the spiritual, does not know how to account for anomalous phenomena that 'crosses our sacred boundary.'²⁴ He suggested that mystical, shamanic, and indigenous anomalous encounters allowed for access to alternative dimensions.²⁵ Mack suggested that there were similarities between alien abduction experiences and indigenous belief systems and further research into these similarities would be beneficial.²⁶ Mack's observation that Western scientific methods are inadequate, or not sufficient, to gain an understanding of the paranormal echoed that of an holistic/ Gaian approach to understanding the effects of extraordinary experience found in the research of holistic/Gaian scientist, Stephan Harding.²⁷

BEING GAIA'ED

Ecologist, Harding, described a number of extraordinary experiences that led experiencers to a new, positive and often radical relationship with the natural world. He referred to this peak moment as having 'been Gaia'ed.'²⁸ Harding referenced the idea of the Earth as Gaia, 'the earthly presence of anima mundi', the vast and mysterious primordial intelligence that steadily gives birth to all that exists.'²⁹ He suggested that some people are receptive to Gaia and can intuit or feel an awareness of the planet and its needs. As an example, Harding described an epiphany experienced by Aldo Leopold. Harding explained that Leopold was

¹⁸ John E Mack, *Abduction*. pp. 413.

¹⁹ John E Mack, *Abduction*. pp. 13.

²⁰ John E Mack, *Abduction*. pp. 413.

²¹ John E Mack, *Abduction*. pp. 387.

²² John E Mack, *Abduction*. pp. 3.

²³ John E Mack, *Abduction*. pp. 3.

²⁴ John E Mack, *Abduction*. pp. 402

²⁵ John E Mack, *Abduction*. pp. 8.

²⁶ John E Mack, *Abduction*. pp. 32.

²⁷ John E Mack, *Abduction*. pp. 421.

²⁸ Stephan Harding, *Animate Earth*, (Totnes, Devon: Green Books 2006). pp 49.

²⁹ Stephan Harding, *Animate Earth*, pp.46.

employed by the US government to hunt and shoot the entire wolf population of the United States.³⁰ However, after he shoots a female wolf, Leopold described how he sees a 'fierce green fire' dying in the eyes of the wolf.³¹ Leopold, Harding explained, 'felt completely at one with this wide ecological reality. Harding described how Leopold had encountered Gaia as a 'living entity.'³² For Harding, Leopold had, in his extraordinary experience, been 'triggered' by Gaia and subsequently there was a complete reversal in Leopold's thinking and behaviour.³³ As a consequence, Leopold developed a profound understanding of the ecological system, one that was an interconnected system of deer, wolf, soil, mountains and rivers. In this complex system, the wolf as a predator played a crucial role. After his epiphany became a conservationist and a founder of the environmental movement.³⁴

Harding drew on the animistic thinking of James Hillman that 'the things of the world project upon *us* their own 'ideas and demands.'³⁵ He developed this idea that Gaia being in conversation with receptive individuals in a further example of being Gaia'ed. He described how the eco-philosopher, David Abram as young man, sheltering from a storm in a cave in Indonesia experienced an epiphany whilst watching spiders constructing a series of webs. Continuing this theme of being called by Gaia, Harding explained that, 'Abram began to describe the event of perception as deeply interactive, participatory encounter---as a kind of non-verbal conversation between the perceiver and ...perceived'³⁶ Taylor explained that this and other extraordinary experiences led to Abrams embarking on a lifetime's work as an ecologist and environmental philosopher.³⁷ Similarly, Taylor provides examples of epiphanies from people notable for their contribution to the environmental movement including that of John Muir, whose 'nature mysticism apparently crystallized in an epiphany he experienced when looking at a rare white orchid. Muir noted that he felt that 'he was in the presence superior beings who loved me and beckoned me to come.'³⁸ Muir's reference to a loving presence in nature can be seen across studies into the field of the paranormal.

³⁰ Stephan Harding, *Animate Earth*, pp.48.

³¹ Stephan Harding, *Animate Earth*, pp.48.

³² Stephan Harding, *Animate Earth*, pp.49.

³³ Stephan Harding, *Animate Earth*, pp.50.

³⁴ Stephan Harding, *Animate Earth*, pp.50.

³⁵ Stephan Harding, *Animate Earth*, pp.27.

³⁶ Stephan Harding, *Animate Earth*, pp.52.

³⁷ Bron Taylor, *Dark Green Religion*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010). pp.87.

³⁸ Bron Taylor, *Dark Green Religion*, pp. 64.

LOVE & LOSS

The above examples illustrated a number of positive experiences but there are examples of experiences of trauma leading to a greater awareness of the natural world. Kripal referred to these experiences of 'traumatic transcendence.'³⁹ Kripal described a number of instances of telepathic communication noticing that these experiences were characterised by trauma and loss (the potential loss of a family member, for example) but as we see in Muir's experience, also by love.⁴⁰ For abductees this loss is that of the sustaining environment but as Mack concluded from his study of abductees: 'the connecting principle, the force that expands our consciousness beyond ourselves appears to be love'.⁴¹ In the case of the abductees he studied, this love is manifest as a love of nature. Harding in describing indigenous people's view of rocks and birds as person makes an observation that reflects the observations of Kripal and Mack, again quoting Hillman, that there is an intimate connection between personification of the natural world and loving.⁴²

Another example of a traumatic experience was that of Val Plumwood the philosopher, ecologist and activist. As described by Bird Rose, Plumwood was attacked by a crocodile and barely survived.⁴³ As an eco-feminist, Plumwood was already deeply engaged in ecological and philosophical enquiry. She had identified the pernicious effects on the environment of a Western philosophy which divided our worldview into binary oppositions or dualisms, human/animal, male/ female, mind/body, relations in which the former was subordinate to the latter.⁴⁴ After her near death experience, Plumwood's philosophical thinking was radically refocused; she realised that humans were not privileged but could be food like any other animal and she saw the human as ecologically embedded beings like any other and not superior to the non-human. Plumwood showed how this awareness that was part of the lived experience of indigenous people as she explained in her account of the extraordinary event.⁴⁵ One of the common outcomes of the diverse group of experiencers discussed here is a realisation of the insights provided by studying indigenous cultures, their relationship with the natural world and their recognition of the connectedness of the eco-system.

INDIGENOUS EXPERIENCE

³⁹ Jeffrey J Kripal, *The Flip*, (London: Penguin, 2020). pp 35.

⁴⁰ Jeffrey J Kripal, *The Flip*, pp. 36.

⁴¹ John E Mack, *Abduction*. pp. 422.

⁴² Stephan Harding, *Animate Earth*, pp.44.

⁴³ Deborah Bird Rose, 'Val Plumwood's Philosophical Animism', *Environmental Humanities*, vol 3, (2013). pp. 99.

⁴⁴ Val Plumwood, *The Eye of the crocodile*, ANU E Press, (2012). pp. 20.

⁴⁵ Val Plumwood, *The Eye of the crocodile*, ANU E Press, (2012). pp. 19.

Mack compared abductee experiences as different from, but sharing commonalities with, paranormal and transforming encounters common to shaman and religious mystics.⁴⁶ Taylor showed how Abrams experience with shaman and their understanding of the eco-systems from an animist perspective informed his eco-philosophical worldview.⁴⁷ The scientific research into plant sentience and communication of Gagliano drew from the extraordinary experience of indigenous societies. However, Gagliano's research combined her experience of indigenous knowledge with quantitative experiments in a Western laboratory setting.⁴⁸ Gagliano described a number of extraordinary experiences via the ingestion of psychedelic plants, ritualistic practice, rhythmic drumming and vision quests of indigenous people, specifically the Shipibo people of the Amazonian lowlands of Peru.⁴⁹ Her experiences included encountering spirits of place, trees and animals. In one meeting, she encountered the spirit of the Socoba tree.⁵⁰ The spirit communicates with her co-devising her laboratory experiments. The tree spirit, Ayahuma, gave her 'complete instructions for testing Pavlovian learning in plants' which she 'followed to a T'.⁵¹ 'The idea was to test whether plants were capable of learning that the occurrence of one event was not only somehow linked to another but also, more importantly anticipated it.'⁵² Initially she viewed her experiments as a failure until she realised she was seeing the experiment through a conventional, Western science perspective. However when she realised in an epiphany what plants did by their nature, she realised that her experiment showed that plants can learn and anticipate events, giving her a radical insight into plant sentience.⁵³ The implications for Gagliano were that extraordinary experience, and our relationship with nature showed the inadequacy of a mainstream science framework. Gagliano suggested that 'the knowledge attained by conventional science is, for the most part, an intellectual enterprise abstracted from the subjective experience of the body, the mind, and the spirit'.⁵⁴ Instead, and outside of a Western worldview, Gagliano stated that 'the seed of truth are anomalous occurrences.'⁵⁵ Seen through the language of holistic ecology, Gagliano's combining of indigenous knowledge and experiments conducted in a Western laboratory, might be seen in the language of Permaculture. As Holmgren observed, the edges of ecosystems, the place where two or more eco-systems overlap, are 'dynamic and productive parts of all natural systems where the exchange of materials and energy take place.'⁵⁶

Gagliano undertook her induced anomalous experiences encounters with spirits as a Western person, an outsider, however she encountered what she called the 'invisible visible.'⁵⁷ Lance

⁴⁶ John E Mack, *Abduction*, pp. 8.

⁴⁷ Bron Taylor, *Dark Green Religion*, pp. 88.

⁴⁸ Monica Gagliano, *Thus Spoke the Plant*, (Berkeley, California: North Atlantic Books, 2018). pp.20.

⁴⁹ Monica Gagliano, *Thus Spoke the Plant*, pp.10.

⁵⁰ Monica Gagliano, *Thus Spoke the Plant*, pp.19.

⁵¹ Monica Gagliano, *Thus Spoke the Plant*, pp.78.

⁵² Monica Gagliano, *Thus Spoke the Plant*, pp.75.

⁵³ Monica Gagliano, *Thus Spoke the Plant*, pp.75.

⁵⁴ Monica Gagliano, *Thus Spoke the Plant*, pp.21.

⁵⁵ Monica Gagliano, *Thus Spoke the Plant*, pp.23.

⁵⁶ Holmgren, David, *Permaculture*, (Victoria, Australia: Holmgren Design Services, 2002). pp.226.

⁵⁷ Monica Gagliano, *Thus Spoke the Plant*, pp.82.

Foster, a member of the Native American, Ioway tribe provided an insider, indigenous perspective to extra-ordinary experience which he described similarly as ‘the invisible ecosystem.’⁵⁸ ‘I have personally experienced the paranormal at various times in my life, but I don’t really believe in the idea of the paranormal anymore. There is no such thing as the paranormal.’ He clarified that these events may be infrequent or rare but nonetheless they are part of nature, referring to these experiences as the making visible the ‘invisible eco-system’ –things not often seen or that are not accepted in conventional scientific terms.⁵⁹ Foster lists entities including, ‘giants, little people, animals from ancient times.... sentient plants and places, things without name.’⁶⁰ From an indigenous perspective, Foster described a holistic view and suggested a link with the study of ecology. ‘If one accepts that the invisible ecosystem exists in reality, it should be an extension of the eco-system we know. Consequently, principles for living should also be extensions of ecology. Principles like trophic cascades, niches, habitat, biodiversity ...and so on. Everything exists in a web of relationships.’⁶¹ For Foster, every day experience and extraordinary experience as part of the same continuum, rare but at the same time accessible via induced or spontaneous extraordinary experience.

OUTDOORS

Like Gagliano, other researchers in the field have studied the effect of psychedelic experience and it’s link to a renewed awareness of the natural world and the accessing of the invisible ecosystem described above by Foster. Luke and Harrild studied the use of psychedelics and the effect they had on the experiencers view of the natural world in a Western context. Luke and Harrild described that a study of the non-clinical use of hallucinogens showed that the subjects nature-relatedness increased, significantly if taken in natural surroundings.⁶² They identified some behavioural changes in many habitual users of psychedelics becoming eco-activists and take up gardening.⁶³ There is evidence here of an overlap with the epiphanies described by Harding, Taylor, Muir, Abram as all occurred in a natural setting. The research of Storie and Vining also concluded that environmental epiphanies were both common, and change worldview of the experiencer and occurred in nature. For example, as one of their interviewees described; ‘I just felt very free...my experience was a union with everything

⁵⁸ Hunter, Jack (ed.), *Greening of the Paranormal*. 91.

⁵⁹ Hunter, Jack (ed.), *Greening of the Paranormal*. 91.

⁶⁰ Hunter, Jack (ed.), *Greening of the Paranormal*. 92.

⁶¹ Jack Hunter, (ed.), *Greening of the Paranormal*, pp. 92.

⁶² Freya Harrild and David Luke, ‘An Evaluation of the Role of Mystical Experiences in Transpersonal Ecopsychology.’
https://gala.gre.ac.uk/id/eprint/28219/7/28219%20LUKE_An_Evaluation_Of_The_Role_Of_Mystical_Experiences_In_Transpersonal_Ecopsychology_%28AAM%29_2020.pdf
 [accessed 20 November 2020]. pp. 9.

⁶³ Freya Harrild and David Luke, ‘An Evaluation of the Role of Mystical Experiences in Transpersonal Ecopsychology’ pp.9

that is, not just the water, not just the surroundings, but everything that is.⁶⁴ Storie and Vining showed that these experiences occurred in protected or natural areas, and participants attachment to these places increased because of the experience.⁶⁵ Storie and Vining, concluded their research by suggesting that land managers, environmental teachers should encourage epiphanies in by keeping natural and conservations areas accessible to the public and ‘incorporate place attachment into land management strategies.’⁶⁶

These outdoors contemplative experiences may not all be positive for the experiencer but often include a sense of loss as we have seen in the experiences of alien abductees. Biologist, Goodwin described an experience when sitting by a stream in a remote area of Dartmoor: ‘As I slipped into deeper awareness of the tree and its surroundings, I had an experience of deepening sorrow. I realised in the past the tree would have many companions, willows and other species that populated the moor with dense forest cover, and it was very lonely.’⁶⁷ Despite this sense of loss, Goodwin establishes a deep awareness of the needs of the natural world. Similarly, Harding suggested that extraordinary experience that can be found in the everyday experience of being in nature, and suggested a series of contemplative exercises designed to connect people with the eco-system, with the natural world in a positive, via a familiarity with Gaian and holistic science. For one exercise, Harding suggested the following: ‘Close your eyes and visualise Gaia as seen from space. Look at her dark areas, her boreal forests and the open ocean, and her light areas...connect with a feeling of how these dark and light areas make an important contribution to Gaia’s temperature. See them changing as ice ages have come and gone, and as human activity increasingly perturbs the surface of our planet.’⁶⁸

Further, Harding to further encourage extraordinary experience, co-devised what he called a Deep Time Walk, this can be experienced as a walk with a guide or as an app for a smartphone. The Deep Time walk is a 4.6 km walk where each metre represents a million years of life on Earth. At each stage, the facilitator or narrator provides the participant with a deep understanding of different stages of the evolution of life on Gaia. For example, a staging post of 1.7km represents 2900 million years ago discusses the evolution of photosynthesis.⁶⁹ The walk also shows the detrimental effect that man has had on the ecosystem in only the last few millimetres of the 4.6 km walk. There may be a number of other routes to encouraging receptivity to extraordinary experience via similar contemplative methods experienced in nature that are transformative, including hiking, walking and running that include also

⁶⁴ Melinda Storie and Joanne Vining, ‘From Oh to Aha: Characteristics and Types of Environmental Epiphany Experiences’, *Human Ecology Review*, 24/1 1(2018), pp. 170.

⁶⁵ Melinda Storie and Joanne Vining, ‘From Oh to Aha: Characteristics and Types of Environmental Epiphany Experiences’ pp 170.

⁶⁶ Melinda Storie and Joanne Vining, ‘From Oh to Aha: Characteristics and Types of Environmental Epiphany Experiences’

⁶⁷ Goodwin, Brian, *Nature’s Due*, (Edinburgh: Floris Books, 2007). pp 148.

⁶⁸ Stephan Harding, *Animate Earth*. 156

⁶⁹ <https://www.deeptimewalk.org> [accessed January 7th 2021]

learning how eco-systems work through the lens of holistic science. Other guided walks might include those that focus on the role of fungi in the ecosystem, for example. Furthermore, practical activities such as gardening or an engagement with woodland or other conservation groups may encourage extraordinary experience.

CONCLUSION

From the examples given, viewed through a holistic lens and across a wide spectrum of extraordinary experience, there is evidence that anomalous experience of very different kinds produce an effect in the experiencer that transforms their relationship with nature in a positive way, whether the experience is traumatic or an epiphany. Scientists, psychologists, philosophers, and individuals in society in general all describe experiences that overturn their world view and their assumptions, generating in them profound changes in the way they work and engage with nature. A common theme that emerges from a holistic study of extraordinary experience and one that challenges a Western worldview is that anomalous encounters allow access to other forms of intelligence that are hidden from view and that the sentient non-human can communicate with those who are receptive--and that this receptivity needs to be nurtured. Indigenous belief systems are instructive here as they view the anomalous as mysterious but also just a hidden part of nature and that this extraordinary part of the nature but can be accessed spontaneously or induced through interaction with plants, trees, landscape and the natural world. Given that in many of the examples described above the extraordinary experience occurs in a natural environment, it follows that extraordinary experiences which connect people more deeply to the nature and result in the experiencer wanting to protect the environment, could be encouraged through practical activities, contemplative exercises, an openness to an indigenous worldview and a familiarity with ecological principles.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

SECONDARY SOURCES:

Holt, Nicola J, Christine Simmonds-Moore, David Luke and Christopher C. French, *Anomalistic Psychology*, (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).

Hunter, Jack (ed.), *Greening of the Paranormal*, (London: August Night Press, 2019).

Hunter, Jack, <http://paranthropology.weebly.com/religious-experience.html> [accessed December 2020].

Hunter, Jack, 'Making Connections', <https://jack-hunter.webstarts.com/blog/post/making-connections-between-consciousness-studies-anthropology-history-parapsychology-religious-studies-ecology-and-permaculture>, [accessed December 2020).

Hunter, Jack, *Parapsychology and the Ecological Self*, https://www.academia.edu/42942280/Parapsychology_and_the_Ecological_Self pp.18, [accessed December 2020].

Capra, Fritjof, *The Web of Life*, (London, Harper Collins, 1997).

Mack, John E, *Abduction*, (New York: Macmillan, 1994).

Harding, Stephan, *Animate Earth*, (Totnes, Devon: Green Books 2006).

Taylor, Bron, *Dark Green Religion*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010).

Kripal, Jeffrey J, *The Flip*, (London: Penguin, 2020).

Bird Rose, Deborah, 'Val Plumwood's Philosophical Animism', *Environmental Humanities*, vol 3, (2013) pp. 93-109.

Plumwood, Val, *The Eye of the crocodile*, ANU E Press, (2012).

Gagliano, Monica, *Thus Spoke the Plant*, (Berkeley, California: North Atlantic Books, 2018).

Holmgren, David, *Permaculture*, (Victoria, Australia: Holmgren Design Services, 2002).

Goodwin, Brian, *Nature's Due*, (Edinburgh: Floris Books, 2007).

Harrild, Freya, and David Luke, 'An Evaluation of the Role of Mystical Experiences in Transpersonal Ecopsychology'

'https://gala.gre.ac.uk/id/eprint/28219/7/28219%20LUKE_An_Evaluation_Of_The_Role_Of_Mystical_Experiences_In_Transpersonal_Ecopsychology_%28AAM%29_2020.pdf [accessed 20 November 2020].

Storie, Melinda, and Joanne Vining, 'From Oh to Aha: Characteristics and Types of Environmental Epiphany Experiences', *Human Ecology Review*, 24/1 1(2018), pp. 155-180

Harrild, Freya, and David Luke, 'An Evaluation of the Role of Mystical Experiences in Transpersonal Ecopsychology'

https://gala.gre.ac.uk/id/eprint/28219/7/28219%20LUKE_An_Evaluation_Of_The_Role_Of_Mystical_Experiences_In_Transpersonal_Ecopsychology_%28AAM%29_2020.pdf
[accessed 20 November 2020].

<https://www.deeptimewalk.org> [accessed January 7th 2021].