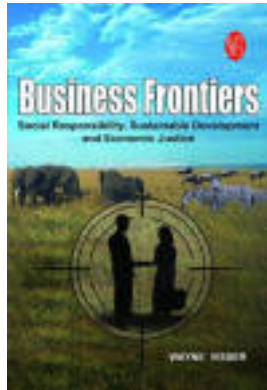


Business Frontiers:

Social Responsibility, Sustainable Development and Economic Justice

By Wayne Visser (ICFAI Books, 2005)



~ 28 PARA-ECOLOGY AND ECOKINESIS ~

Frontiers of Environmental Science?

Like a gift of wings, science has allowed us to soar to breathtaking new heights of knowledge in the past few centuries. Today's understanding of how the universe works shines like a radiant sun, compared with the shadowy superstitious beliefs of bygone eras. But we should take care not to be blinded by our own seeming brilliance.

History shows us that science is always incomplete and very seldom synonymous with wisdom. Some say that science is always playing catch-up with our spiritual understanding. Yet, it is forever pregnant with new discoveries, insights and theories, each with the potential to completely transform our picture of the world we thought we knew and understood.

Seen in this context, modern brain-mind research has progressed only as far as naive adolescence, still embarrassingly unsure of what makes people tick. Parapsychology, by comparison, is still a clumsy, babbling toddler, only vaguely aware of the amazing possibilities within its power.

In keeping with this metaphor, what I have called "para-ecology" and "ecokinesis" are disciplines that have scarcely been born. But they promise new knowledge that could, in time, completely revolutionise everything we have come to know and accept about both psychology and ecology.

Defining Para-ecology and Ecokinesis

Para-ecology refers to the study of ecological phenomena currently outside the sphere of ordinary ecological scientific knowledge or understanding. *Ecokinesis*, derived from the concept of psychokinesis, refers to phenomena in which ecological processes are influenced by non-physical human effort, such as focused mental intention.

Conceptually, research into para-ecology can be grouped into three categories, namely:

- (1) Unexplained effects in Nature allegedly linked to known and accepted physical substances, natural forces or scientific phenomenon (e.g. chemicals or music);
- (2) Unexplained effects in Nature allegedly linked to metaphysical or paranormal human experiences (e.g. telepathy or meditation), including ecokinesis; and
- (3) Unexplained effects in Nature allegedly linked to metaphysical or paranormal non-human influences (e.g. communication with devic or other non-physical intelligences).

To illustrate these categories more clearly, examples of each are discussed briefly below.

Para-ecology Research into Physical Effects

You will no doubt remember the periodic table of elements and the law of conservation of matter from your high school physics lessons. Basically, these scientific principles dictate that chemical elements can be shuffled around in different combinations, but never destroyed or created "from nothing", nor changed from one unique element into another.

And yet, we find, this is precisely what plants do. A long string of scientists have demonstrated that plants can not only create greater volumes of the elements than that which they absorb from the soil and air, but can also transmute some elements into completely unrelated elements (e.g. magnesium into calcium, nitrogen into potassium). So, somehow, Nature defies our known understanding of chemistry, and villifies the ancient claims of the alchemists.

The influence of music on plants is another area of study and speculation. Indian botanist professor T.C. Singh performed experiments in the 1950s that showed an increase in the growth of plants exposed to Hindu devotional music. In the 1960s, American agricultural researcher George E. Smith achieved similar results with classical music played in the proximity of wheat, maize and soybean crops.

Professional American musician Dorothy Retallack added to the controversy when her experiments, beginning in 1968, showed that plants leaned towards certain kinds of music, such as classical and jazz, and away from other types, such as heavy rock. Of course, the

media had a field day, producing headlines like “Bach or rock: Ask your flowers” and “Mother is knitting earmuffs for our petunias”.

Other areas of investigation in this category might include, for example, the influence of electromagnetism on plants, the self-regulating ability of ecosystems and the unexplained medicinal properties of certain plants and plant essences. Since these are fairly clear cause-and-effect phenomena involving measurable inputs and outputs, this category is well suited to traditional scientific research and will likely be the source of significant new botanical and ecological knowledge in the coming years.

Para-ecology Research into Mental Effects

The second category, involving non-physical human influences, gets a bit more tricky from a scientific perspective, but cannot be ignored in the face of mounting evidence. Cleve Backster, America’s foremost lie-detector examiner in the 1960s, could probably be called the “father of ecokinesis”. In a series of experiments with plants hooked up to polygraphs, Backster detected electrical reactions which looked very similar to those associated with human emotions, especially when the plants were exposed to threatening intensions from an animal or person.

Over a lifetime dedicated to rigorous scientific experiments, Backster achieved results with plants which even today still defy belief. Plants, it seems, are somehow “tuned” to the emotional state of their keepers, irrespective of the distance between them. They also appear to respond negatively when any destruction of living cells occurs near them, whether it be the death of blood cells or shrimps. The work of Backster and many others since makes a strong case for plants being sensitive, perhaps even sentient, organisms with something akin to emotions and short term memory.

Another area of research, begun in the 1960s by an IBM research chemist, Marcel Vogel, points to our ability to prolong the life of, or heal, plants. For example, in one of his first experiments, Vogel found that a leaf picked from the garden and “willed” daily by someone to continue living, lasted longer than another similar leaf picked at the same time but ignored by that person. In a variety of subsequent tests through into the 1970s, Vogel showed that plants respond positively to various forms of conscious empathetic mental effort, whether through meditation, healing, or simply regular attention. Along a similar vein, in the 1980s, physicist Elizabeth Rauscher and biologist Beverly Rubick, showed that a renowned healer was able to prolong the life expectancy of *E.coli* bacteria which had been poisoned with tetracycline.

Over and above this evidence of our protective influences over living organisms is our seeming ability to actively enhance the growth of plants through non-physical means. For example, American Reverend Frankl Loehr, after 700 experiments involving 150 people and 27 000 seeds, showed that prayer could enhance plant growth rates by up to 20%.

Canadian doctor, Bernard Grad, showed enhanced growth rates among plants fed with distilled water treated with healing energies. And American industrial research scientist, Robert Miller, recorded increased growth among seedlings under the thought influence of a reputable healer 600 miles away.

Another hypothesis being tested in this category of para-ecological research is whether plants might have some form of intelligence. For example, Japanese electronics engineer, Ken Hashimoto, established a communication feedback system for a cactus, through which he claimed to be able to demonstrate the cactus's ability to count and add up to twenty. Also, work by Soviet doctors of psychology, V.N. Pushkin and V.M. Festisov, appears to have lent credence to the notion of telepathy by showing that a plant could detect a number between 1 and 10 mentally chosen by a person, but not revealed to anyone else.

Para-ecology Research into Spiritual Effects

The most difficult research pill for traditional science to swallow are those cases where effects in Nature are claimed to be the result of personal spiritual or mystical experiences and communications. And yet science can no longer turn a blind eye, when the results are plain to see. Once again, the examples illustrate the point.

Take the agricultural chemist George Washington Carver, for instance. Carver, an African American born just before the Civil War, became known as the "Black Leonardo", a tribute to his genius-like abilities to discover new and useful plants and plant-extracts. His achievements included turning the peanut and sweet potato into commercial crops and deriving numerous organic dyes, face powders, petroleum substitutes, shampoos, creosote, vinegar, woodstains, and much, much more.

Over the course of his lifetime, he firmly established himself as a scientist of the highest calibre, with his services sought after by, among others, the US Senate, Thomas Edison and Henry Ford. And yet, Carver claimed that the secret of his success was listening to and learning from nature – not figuratively, literally, usually whilst taking long walks in nature before sunrise, or going to his "garden hospital to take care of hundreds of sick plants". "The secrets are in the plants", he explained to one unbelieving enquirer. "To elicit them, you have to love them enough".

The story of the Caddy's, who founded the Findhorn spiritual community in the north of Scotland, has a similar thread. In this case, through Eileen Caddy's ability to hear guiding instructions from God, as well as friend Dorothy Maclean's ability to communicate with so-called nature devas (fairies, elves, angels, etc.), the Caddy's were able to grow vegetables of extraordinary proportions (e.g. 40 pound cabbages) in the infertile, sandy, windswept patch of wasteland of the Findhorn caravan park.

Others who have claimed similar abilities to communicate with various forms of nature intelligence have been theosophists Charles Leadbeater and Annie Besant, anthroposophy founder Rudolph Steiner and, more recently, co-creative scientist Machaëlle Small Wright and ex-farmer now-author/lecturer Michael Roads. Some of their experiences seem remarkable – conversing with the Pan god of nature, merging consciousness with nature's organisms and ecosystems and manifesting physical objects "out of thin air" to mention but a few.

These experiences and their explanations are such a fundamental challenge to the mass perceptions of reality and the dogma of today's science that it is hard for anyone, let alone ecologists, psychologists and physicists, to take them seriously. And yet many of these subjective, almost mystical, experiences are able to produce measurable, physical effects on plants or organisms that defy any current scientific explanations.

Metamorphosis

The obligation is on science, and in this case ecological science, to accept the difficult questions being asked by para-ecology and ecokinesis, and to search untiringly for the answers. For we stand on the threshold of a new understanding of Nature and our relationship with her. If we are visionary enough to accept today's caterpillar knowledge as incomplete, and if we are brave enough to enter into the chrysalis of perception change and inner transformation, we will surely emerge as brilliantly coloured butterflies and soar on magical wings of profound new understanding and wisdom.

Fly with me a little. Is it too far-fetched to imagine specialist consultancies in the future that use ecokinesis techniques to help clean up and rehabilitate polluted ecosystems? Or internet websites that catalogue ecologically degraded sites around the world, serving as the focal point for the healing mental energies of thousands of dedicated para-ecology or meditation groups? Could we see the angry eco-warrior activists of today transforming their fear and frustration into metaphysical ecological restoration campaigns, no less organised or determined?

For if we can imagine these things, then they are possible. A new Garden of Eden is within us and waiting to burst forth from the dark, dank soils of our consciousness. Para-ecology may be the rejuvenating rain and ecokinesis the sustaining sunshine we need to see in this new era of noetic science. So, please join us as we nurture the rainbow promise of rediscovering our innate harmony with Nature and our incredible powers of creation and love.

References and Recommended Reading

Hawken, P. (1975) *The Magic of Findhorn*, Glasgow: William Collins Sons & Co.

Riddell, C. (1991) *The Findhorn Community: Creating a Human Identity for the 21st Century*, Findhorn: Findhorn Press.

Roads, Michael J. (1987), *Talking with Nature*, Tiburon: H J Kramer Inc.

Roads, Michael J. (1990) *Journey into Nature: A Spiritual Adventure*, Tiburon: H J Kramer Inc.

Tompkins, P. and C. Bird (1975) *The Secret Life of Plants: A Fascinating Account of the Physical, Emotional and Spiritual Relations Between Plants and Man*, New York: Harper & Row Publishers.

Tompkins, P. (1997) *The Secret Life of Nature: Living in Harmony with the Hidden World of Nature Spirits, from Fairies to Quarks*, London: Thorsons.

Wright, M.S. (1997) *Co-Creative Science: A Revolution in Science Providing Real Solutions for Today's Health & Environment*, Warrenton: Perelandra.

Source:

First published as an article entitled "New Frontiers in Environmental Science: Towards an Understanding of the Emerging Discipline of Para-Ecology and the Phenomenon of Ecokinesis" in *Namaste*, Volume 12, July / August 2001.