

CHAPTER 11
EARTH LIGHT, EARTH ANGEL

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In *Sustainability Frontiers*, David Selby and Fumiyo Kagawa call for transformation of attitudes to nature through a holistic epistemology which is:

enriched through emotional, imaginative and creative entanglement with the world, by spiritual and sensorial engagement with the close-at-hand world, by embodied and somatic learning, by deep listening and intimate observation ... (2015, p. 278).

This chapter argues that just such multidimensional transformation is evoked and enacted in Paul Devereux's writings on what he calls Earth Lights. Drawing on the work of other researchers Devereux developed a hypothesis which was intended to account primarily for UFOs, but also illuminated the origins of many other anomalous phenomena, such as ghosts, fairies, Marian apparitions, etc. (depending on the cultural milieu of the witness).

Devereux is a well-known and well-respected figure in what used to be called 'Earth Mysteries,' 'a modern attempt to uncover the wisdom of the ancient mind and apply some of the truths it contained' as he himself described the field (1999, p. 1). I will mainly be looking at his 1982 work *Earth Lights: Towards an Explanation of the UFO Enigma*,

arguably the most visionary of all his writings, certainly the strangest. In it, Devereux starts with the idea that UFO experiences are triggered by geophysical forces, but moves well beyond this arguably rather materialist and mechanistic view to outline a complex interplay of what may loosely be called cosmic soul and individual person, taking place on imaginal, emotional, psychic, spiritual and somatic levels. These effects were, he argues, known by the builders of the Neolithic stone circles, who used them to produce theophanies which had the effect of intricately weaving together individual, society, the planet and the cosmos as a whole. By implication, Devereux's work may help bring about similar reconciliations in its readers.

UFOs and Eco-Consciousness

In arguing that UFO encounters have the potential to inspire a new and more positive relationship with our natural environment and, indeed, the entire cosmos, Devereux was not breaking entirely new ground. Since the early 1950s, so-called contactees (who, in Jerome Clark's careful phrase, 'believe, or claim to believe, they are in regular communication with benevolent extraterrestrial intelligences' [1998, p. 104]) have passed on messages from alien beings calling on earthlings to change their behaviour, or face global catastrophe. George Adamski was probably the most famous contactee to have been given this message. The story of Adamski's 1952 encounter with a Venusian, as told in *Flying Saucers Have Landed*, made a huge impression on me as a boy, especially Orthon's warnings that the planet and indeed the entire cosmos was threatened by mankind's nuclear adventures (Leslie and Adamski, 1977, p. 214). Meanwhile, in Britain another Venusian, this time not in the flesh but channelled, was warning George King of the ecological devastation being wrought by humanity, and teaching him the spiritual practices which could save humans and the world: King went on to form the Aetherius Society to pass on these teachings. The Society still exists, and is the world's oldest 'UFO' religion (Clarke and Roberts, 2007, pp. 72-89). Other ecological messages passed on to contactees have also had long-lasting effects, as the example of the Scottish New Age eco-paradise Findhorn shows, which owes much of its existence to similar communications (Clarke and Roberts, 2007, pp. 106-116).

Later, as contactees fell out of favour, abductees found themselves in fashion. Whatever was behind their often dark and even traumatic

experiences had, in the words of Kenneth Ring, a correspondingly ‘more *au courant* ecological concern’ than the contactees’ Space Brothers, such as ‘ozone depletion and deforestation’ (1992, p. 180). Ring gathered evidence which suggested to him that UFO encounters and abductions frequently lead to ‘heightened sensitivity to ecological matters and to the condition of our earth generally’ (1992, p. 181) (see also the chapter by Luke and Hunter’s introduction in this volume).

Neither was the link between UFOs and such charismatic vestiges of the past as stone circles especially novel. I had learnt of this too as a boy, listening to my Uncle George talk about Stonehenge and flying saucers as I lay entranced on the floor of his living-room in Salisbury. Indeed the connection had been made since at least the beginning of the 1960s. Sometimes it was explained, for example, that the extraterrestrial spacecraft followed mysterious lines of energy called leys, and that stone circles, being storehouses as it were for this energy, were particularly attractive to them (see Clarke and Roberts, 2007, pp. 182-191). Thus to many enlightened sons and daughters of the 60s it seemed, as John Michell wrote, that ‘flying saucers are connected in several ways with Druid magic’ (1975, p. 170). In those heady times to succumb to the mystical and apparently eternal presence of the English countryside was equally to succumb to the mystery and magic of UFOs. These strange aerial phenomena effectively re-enchanted the land, and so transformed the nature of our relationship to it. Those who saw with saucer eyes fell in love with the countryside.

Earth Lights

What Devereux did, was to take these existing connexions, and to rework and refract them through the research of scientists such as Michael Persinger. The result intertwined humans, UFOs and ancient sacred sites in a remarkable neurological, geophysical, imaginal, spiritual, planetary and indeed cosmic drama. A drama which could transfigure creation and everything in it, returning it to a pristine, edenic state.

This drama is described in its wildest, most uninhibited form in *Earth Lights*, while his later *Earth Lights Revelation* (1989) is a much more sober and arguably less transformative work. One way of describing Devereux’s Earth Light theories is to say that they essentially identify UFOs with shifts in the earth’s crust. Another way is to say that they take the reader, step by step, through the mechanics – or

psycho-mechanics – of Jung’s breath-taking speculation that flying saucers may be ‘something psychic, possessing material qualities and with a high charge of energy.’ Jung added: ‘[h]ere our knowledge leaves us completely in the lurch, and it is therefore pointless to speculate any further in this direction’ (1987, p. 151). What Devereux does, it can be argued, is to try to supply this missing knowledge by showing us how Jung’s hunch might actually work.

Long before publishing *Earth Lights*, Devereux had become convinced that the so-called Extraterrestrial Hypothesis was an inadequate explanation for flying saucers. Reading widely in the field, he found that the work of such Ufologists as John Keel and Jacques Vallee confirmed his suspicions. The turning point in his thinking, however, come when he encountered *Space-Time Transients and Unusual Events* (1977) by Gyslaine Lafrenière and Michael Persinger (Devereux, 1982, pp. 62-66, 70-74). Lafrenière and Persinger’s influential work put forward what became known as the tectonic strain theory to account for sightings of a whole range of anomalous phenomena, including UFOs, ghosts, Bigfoot, and Marian apparitions. Seismic events – even tiny shifts in the Earth’s tectonic plates – produce, they argued, a build-up of huge amounts of energy. Powerful fields of natural forces are created at and near fault lines when the plates move, producing two main effects. Bright lights appear in the sky, often as luminous orbs; while at the same time the energy field so stimulates parts of the brain that witnesses experience a dream-like state in which vivid imagery is ‘seen’ even while they remain awake. These visions may derive their content from popular culture: monsters are seen to stalk the earth, spacecraft to haunt the skies. Witnesses may be seized by powerful emotions as they stand transfixed by angels, bogbarts or UFOs. Such effects in turn may alter and influence perception of the lights in the sky (Devereux, 1982, pp. 71-72). Thus the complex interaction between brain structure, natural energies, memory, emotions, and cultural milieu may produce anomalous and even deeply religious experiences.

While apparently holding on to Lafrenière and Persinger’s theories, however, Devereux actually moves well beyond them. He places tectonic strain and the visions it triggers in the context of a cosmic drama. Tectonic strain, it appears, is not just a consequence of geological changes: rather, a complex interplay of countless forces is at work in the universe. As Devereux puts it:

The Earth is one *whole*, living system: aspects of its cosmic environment impinge upon it, and effects in the terrestrial geology create further effects in its meteorology. Changes in its magnetic envelope can funnel further influences back to its geology. The whole system, as it were, *resonates*. All those forces and reactions play back and forth, creating responses, changes and echoes in all terrestrial structures and processes, from the most dense to the most subtle (1982, p. 95).

Earth Lights, that is, and the whole transformation in perception associated with them, are not just products of the interaction between earth energies and the human witness: they are created by the interaction of countless cosmic forces, on the one hand, with the tangled workings of consciousness on the other. When that happens, consciousness resonates with the whole cosmos. This is a new version of the music of the spheres, in which the whole cosmos resonates in endless, intricate sympathetic concatenation (see, for example, Godwin, 1995). It reveals consciousness itself to be an element or artefact of universal melody.

This is still potentially a rather mechanistic vision, but now so expanded and so complex that the number of forces involved is practically infinite, as is the number of possible interactions and variations (especially if one assumes that the universe is infinite). On the face of it scientific, it is however not measurable or describable by science.

But Devereux does not stop there. The Earth Lights – those strange discharges of cosmic forces – may consist of some peculiar, unknown and highly sensitive form of energy which actually responds to the mental images triggered in witnesses. We do not project hallucinations on to them, rather they adapt, and actually become the image for which people are primed by cultural, religious and social expectation (Devereux, 1982, pp. 215-216). Once that may have been gods or angels; now it is more likely to be spacecraft.

Although not sentient themselves, Earth Lights thus become a fragment of externalised mind, which the witness may not recognise as originating in his or her own psyche. ‘The mental signals affecting some UFOs [i.e. Earth Lights] will, presumably, come from different levels of consciousness’ writes Devereux (1982, p. 217), which could include the collective unconscious, the individual unconscious, or simply forgotten memories.

Devereux even hints at the possibility of an autonomous earth psyche which interacts with the individual and collective psyche, writing

I rather suspect – though I hardly dare put the concept into words as it is so strange to our way of thinking – that there may be another source of input into the UFO form: the Earth itself... or herself... [I]s it not possible to consider that the planet may dream? (1982, p. 218)

So who, one may ask, is dreaming – or perhaps imagining - whom? Is the form of the Earth Light a product of the mind or minds of those who see it, or is the form of the mind of those who see it a product of the Earth Light? Do witnesses experience a waking dream of a UFO, angel, ghost, etc, or does the Earth dream – imagine – the witnesses into existence? Perhaps the closest one can get to the truth would be that all those possibilities are true at the same time, in endlessly labyrinthine entanglement.

Given what Devereux writes concerning the cosmic context of this infinitely plaited relationship, it is only reasonable to conclude that not only Earth consciousness but the consciousness of the entire cosmos, too, participates in it. The UFO vision, that is, seems to be vouchsafed by something like the Neoplatonic idea of the *anima mundi*, that soul of the cosmos, shimmering with images, and beings, gods, demons and djinn (see, for example, Harpur, 2010, pp. 19-33).

The next step Devereux takes is to argue that ancient humans knew of these effects, and built structures to produce and enhance the experience. Stone circles, that is, are portals to the World Soul. Devereux presents survey evidence to suggest that not ley lines but fault lines were the defining element in the placing of Neolithic monuments in the landscape (1982, pp. 158-167). Stone circles, that is, were erected in the vicinity of geological faulting or similar features, and served somehow to accumulate and strengthen the energy produced by tectonic strain (Devereux, 1982, pp. 234-235). The builders were able to predict or coordinate the moments when the god energy would be released. 'In this way, the gods *did* appear on Earth,' writes Devereux, and goes on, '[T]hey would have communicated things not known to the conscious minds of the awe-filled congregations' (1982, p. 235). The gods appeared, to fill the individual soul with cosmic wisdom, or with the *anima mundi*, as it were, so that each soul may achieve its own proper plenitude, and each witness's consciousness may be filled by cosmic consciousness.

At the same time a whole society was harmonised and held together by cosmic wisdom. For Devereux, [t]his supreme act of the ancient natural science would allow the societies of the day to have direct, social, conscious contact with what the *Tibetan Book of the Dead* calls

“knowledge holding deities” (1982, p. 235). The gods were ‘knowledge holding’ because they vouchsafe the experience of apparently vastly superior knowledge, otherwise unavailable to the conscious mind of the individual. The entirety of society was illuminated by this light from the soul of the cosmos, so that everyone became a seer, and was transfigured. All this was brought about by what we now see as UFOs.

The Earth becomes an Angel

These odd energies, both physical and psychic, are reminiscent not just of Jung’s speculations, but of Henry Corbin’s too. Corbin, that great scholar of Iranian mysticism, and friend of Jung’s, once asked

whether the invisible action of forces that have their purely physical expression in natural processes may not bring into play psychic energies that have been neglected or paralyzed by our habits, and directly touch an Imagination which [is] far from being arbitrary invention ... (1977, p. 11)

Corbin was talking about two levels of ‘energy’: subtle, psychic energy on the one hand, and material, physical energy on the other, with the latter being an expression of the former. The physical energy affects us measurably, but also brings about changes in our psyche and, for Corbin, our subtle or ‘spiritual’ body.

Devereux does not refer to Corbin in *Earth Lights*, but later drew on him extensively, referring particularly to the work from which the quotation above is taken, *Spiritual Body and Celestial Earth* (1977), in which Corbin describes the transfiguration of the Earth into paradise or an angel (see Devereux, 1992, pp. 94-99, 104-105; 1996, pp. 242-244). *Earth Lights*, however, seems not only to anticipate this interest in Corbin, but also to provide a detailed and lengthy account of how the ancient peoples of Britain released the subtle, spiritual senses to perceive both the environment and themselves as transformed and god-filled. What they then saw, in Corbin’s terms, was an angel – the Earth Angel.

Corbin describes how his Iranian visionaries believed we have various bodies, with the physical body only the lowest form. The physical senses of the physical body see only the physical environment; the spiritual body however sees a spiritual cosmos, which is its home. This spiritual cosmos is, essentially, paradise.

This is a difficult matter, and I do not find Corbin the most comprehensible of writers, but it is clear that 'seeing' is not really the right word for what is a complex, active, and above all participative process, in which the physical body, for example, makes or engenders its environment. The physical environment thus produced then serves to confirm to the physical senses that it is the only reality. If we are aware, however, of the spiritual body and its paradise, we may break out of the merely material hall of mirrors (Corbin, 1977, pp. 3-105).

Mystics at times are able to see with the eyes of the spiritual body. The paradisiacal world they see then is Earth as an Angel: the Earth Angel. This Angel, I would argue, is what enraptured Neolithic man, as for a time at least he became a spiritual body and saw with other eyes. By implication, something similar may happen for modern man: a UFO experience may mark the moment when the senses are transfigured, the Earth becomes an Angel, and we are in paradise. Strange as it may seem, the UFO vision is thus a sacrament, in which the witness and the world is transfigured, and all is shot through with the presence of the divine.

This, as I said, is essentially a participative vision, in which the physical and spiritual health of the individual is inextricably interwoven with the physical and spiritual health of the Earth and the cosmos. The one is dependent upon the other. The Earth 'becomes' merely material, seemingly cut off from spirit, when the individual sees it as such: individuals are reduced to matter alone when the Earth shows itself bereft of spirit. Under such circumstances there is no possibility of a living, reciprocal relationship with the Earth, and it fragments into seemingly discrete and essentially dead objects, wholly unconnected to humans; while human society and consciousness too break up and lose coherence. Seen in this light, the ecological catastrophe is essentially spiritual in nature, and can only be redressed by the subtle spiritual interweaving which restores Eden and human divinity. One way to bring that about is, as we have seen, to perceive UFOs correctly. Devereux's essentially mythopoetic vision thus shows how the 'paranormal' may achieve more than moral or political exhortation in transforming humanity, nature, and the relationship between the two.

Earth Lights, Earth Angels: Some Implications

Devereux's ideas, if I interpret them correctly, have several implications for the nature of humankind's relationship to the world. For instance, while the percipient and the UFO/angel/theophany, or the human person and the Earth, are profoundly and intimately entangled in a complex embrace of co-creation, they nevertheless are not identical or fused into oneness. To enjoy the kind of dynamic reciprocal responsiveness Devereux describes, a relationship between two (or more) living beings is required. If one being in the rapturous embrace is simply merged into the other (or others), relationship and mutual responsiveness cease, and life is snuffed out.

Yet there is a clear danger of instability to Devereux's conception. These Earth Angels - this transfigured nature - may overwhelm us, blot us out by their urgent, wholly other power. Their literally cosmic power may erase us, so we lose all independence and become their puppets somatically, neurologically, imaginatively, emotionally and spiritually. There can be no participation, no interweaving or co-creation if humans are reduced to a mere reflex of the Earth and the cosmos; if, that is, we surrender freedom and agency to the world around us. We then cease to live and become, in effect a dead letter, a zombie. This would merely be a variation on the life-denying lack of relationship which currently exists. It would also mean a reversion to the grim message of John Keel's and Jacques Vallee's Ufological writings, to which Devereux refers in *Earth Lights* (1982, pp. 62-66). Keel claims, for instance, that we 'are biochemical robots helplessly controlled by forces that can scramble our brains, destroy our memories and use us in any way they see fit' (1994, p. 174). Similarly, Vallee has argued that 'what takes place through close encounters with UFOs is control of human beliefs, control of the relationship between our consciousness and physical reality...' (1976, p. 3).

The answer to this problem of control, power and erasure may lie in the antinomial content of an idea which Devereux elucidates in *The Sacred Place* (2000). Here he turns to the work of Rudolf Otto to describe the encounter between human and 'something else' at sacred sites: seen as a whole, this encounter is characterised by what Otto called the numinous (Devereux, 2000, pp. 22-23). For Otto, the numinous is triggered by an experience of 'the "wholly other"... that which is quite beyond the sphere of the usual, the intelligible, and the familiar' (1958, p. 26). Otto further explains that the numinous consists of an antinomy.

On the one hand there is what he calls the *mysterium tremendum*, a drastic experience of 'awefulness' or 'daemonic dread' (1958, pp. 12-24). On the other hand, there is the *mysterium fascinans*, accompanied by bliss, grace, entranced rapture, longing and "the peace that passes understanding' (1958, pp. 31-39). The numinous experience, that is, is an encounter with a presence which seems utterly – and awesomely – alien to us, but which at the very same time corresponds to some deep inner yearning, and which feeds, fulfils and sustains us.

In *Earth Lights*, the relationship between human and UFO, or human and the Earth, has precisely this antinomial, numinous character. The angelic UFOs are utterly apart from ourselves, something for which all our rationality, or the cocoons of everyday life, cannot prepare us. But they also speak to us deeply, satisfy us, as if they are wholly intimate, beckoning us back to communion with the gods, and the inner and outer peace that seems our true home. They are wholly different and wholly connected to us, separate and entirely inseparable from us. Difference, and our mutual awe in the presence of that difference, grants freedom to us and the Earth and all its angels: otherwise no reciprocal relationship would be possible. While blissful longing leads to endless desire to know and experience ever more of the other, resulting in deeper and deeper mutual recognition and connection.

This is the paradoxical knowledge these strange theophanies hold, which holds the complex chain of relationship in poised but dynamic balance, and prevents the various participants from being simply submerged or controlled. Indeed, this labyrinthine dance of the numinous involves all the elements we have looked at, such as physical bodies, consciousness, imagination, spirit and more, choreographing them all so that none disappear, while at the same time endlessly bringing each into new transforming relationships.

There is a word for this intricate dance: it is love. Behind Devereux's speculations on Earth Lights and their witnesses is a scene in which lovers meet, gaze at each other, know with rapture that they can know each other, feel at the same time and with speechless awe that they will never fully know each other, and that the other person will remain forever fundamentally different and other. This is a dynamic state of endless transformation, transfiguration and enspiritment. The world becomes an embodied angel, an incarnate god, and more and more so without end. As do we.

This is perhaps the 'divine vision' referred to by Tom Cheetham, whose 'wild and living power' may 'let the wilderness back in' (2015, p.

146). That is, it may rewild us and the world. It is also the condition in which endless depth opens up, more profound perhaps than dreamt of in deep ecology, 'the depth within which deep ecology finds its own truest roots' (Foltz, 2014, p. 41). If this is anything, it is paradise.

This, it seems to me, is what UFOs mean and enact in Devereux's writings on Earth Lights. Conversely, his other works seem largely to be based on a model in which matter and consciousness emerge from and return to absolute oneness. How much of that unity we perceive, as it were, depends on how open our cultural filters are: if we are able to remove them altogether we may experience 'the oceanic feeling characteristic of mystical (or 'cosmic') consciousness' (Devereux, 1996, p. 42; see also Devereux, 2001, p. 200). In this conception, all phenomena are just modulations, for example of the quantum field. There is no possibility of relationship between two free subjects, no possibility of love, or real response and true transformation of any kind. Change is indeed in the end an illusion: nothing is different, everything is the same.

There is, it seems to me, no possibility of rewilding here, or of fully enlivening humans and their natural surroundings. Quite the opposite: this is not paradise, it is death, forever. That is why of all Devereux's writings on the relationship of humanity to the natural world or the cosmos, those on Earth Lights seem to me to be the most exciting, fruitful and visionary. They implicitly reject models based either in control and domination, on the one hand, and merging and oneness on the other. His UFOs light up the sky, the Earth and our whole being with the message that all depend on dynamic, reciprocal and loving relationship to fully and truly live. It only remains to be emphasised that UFOs are not the only aspect of the 'paranormal' which may establish relationship and engender love between humans and the world. Gods, fairies, ghosts, mysterious creatures of all kinds, and many more phenomena have a similar capacity to direct our gazes, so that we see the physical world and see it transformed infinitely by spirit. If this occurs, the world may return our loving gaze, to see us as we are, body and spirit, and to see us become ever more what we are. The gazes then interweave without ever fusing.