
CHAPTER 7

BECOMING MORE HUMAN AS WE WORK

The Reflexive Role of Exceptional Human Experience

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The recesses of feeling . . . are the only places in the world in which we can catch real fact in the making, and directly perceive how even events happen, and how work is actually done.

—William James (1902, p. 492)

Since 1952, when I had a near-death experience, I have been interested in unusual, nonordinary experiences with qualities similar to my experience, which led me into parapsychology at the Duke University Parapsychology Laboratory in 1954. From then until 1989, I was identified with parapsychology, and I still am closely connected with it. Nevertheless, my interest in all forms of exceptional experience, not just psychic ones, has taken me beyond it, aided in part by the *exceptional human experience (EHE)* autobiography technique (to be described). Since 1989, I have been formally studying EHEs (White, 1990).

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The ideas of many others have gone into the development of the concept of EHE. (For a history of the term, see White, 1990.) This concept has since evolved, and I have expressed its most recent explication (White, 1996c, 1997).

An EHE does not often spring forth full-blown. Rather, an EHE generally starts out as an *exceptional experience (EE)*, that is, an anomalous one—one whose existence is considered questionable or impossible—in Western consensus reality. EEs are psychic, mystical, death-related, and strange encounter experiences that raise eyebrows.

Exceptional experiences are often shrugged off as oddities. Some people find them frightening and dismiss them. Some who have EEs are considered strange or even mentally ill—certainly deluded. Sometimes they are.¹ These experiences, however, can touch the experimenter in personal and significant ways that cannot be dismissed as ideas of reference. Rather, they seem to catalyze a process that eventually can lead to the realization of the person's higher human potential. Lives, worldviews, and even identities can be transformed. When this process of transformation is initiated, the EE becomes an exceptional *human* experience. Thus, all EHEs are exceptional experiences, but not all exceptional experiences are EHEs. EEs, in themselves, point the way to new possibilities of human knowledge. EHEs occur when the experimenter relates to and is connected with that knowledge and its source in a transformative way. EEs spotlight new areas of the unknown to be explored. EHEs are experiences of dynamic interaction and connection with that unknown.

In this chapter, I emphasize EEs and EHEs that can institute scientific innovations. Although hard scientists such as Kekulé (Bernd, 1978) and Poincaré (1913) have publicly recognized the EEs that served as catalysts for their research, they are exceptions. Usually, when scientists receive insights in nonordinary ways, they set out to verify those insights by empirical data and rational inference. If they succeed in their verification, as Kekulé and Poincaré did, they make no mention in their research reports of how they obtained the idea that was the actual impetus for the research. Moreover, in the physical sciences, rarely have these unacknowledged EEs changed the researchers themselves. I suggest that breakthrough insights in the psychological and social sciences are more likely to implicate the researcher, and others involved, than in the physical sciences.

Transpersonal psychology, especially—because it promotes firsthand study of various techniques for altering states of consciousness and the new levels of meaning and knowledge associated with them—is perhaps the

discipline best situated to explore and use EHEs and to help others understand them. Humanistic and existential-phenomenological psychologists, because they sometimes explore what Maslow (1971) called *being cognition*, as well as self-actualization and other means of realizing human potential, may also encounter EEs/EHEs and could help extend the range of Western consensus reality to include them.

I do not think these experiences will be able to aid us in realizing our human potential until we first learn how to cooperate with the process involved. Without the key element of cooperation, these experiences will occur only sporadically, momentarily providing a spark that can only go out if we do not tend it. The first step in cooperating is to honor these experiences by maintaining an open stance toward them, welcoming their occurrence, making an effort to become familiar with the folklore and scientific findings of each type as it occurs, and helping colleagues and research participants to do the same. Finally, existential-phenomenological, humanistic, and transpersonal psychologists sometimes encounter EHEs in the natural course of their work. Such encounters place them in a special position to honor these experiences by writing and speaking, both publicly and professionally, of the experiences' role in their life and work, and by including mention of them in reports of research in which they act as facilitator rather than as subject. Occasionally, this is done, but more often, these experiences (if referred to at all) are described only in memoirs (e.g., Loewi, 1960). Standard research protocol would be enriched if broadened to include reporting the source of insights and ideas,² even when the empirical basis is questionable from the viewpoint of Western consensus reality, and especially when the research reported offers empirical verification of the "exceptional" key insight. Reflexively, if the insight forwards the research, it behooves us as researchers to honor the source of the insight.

The type of research referred to in this chapter is *creative research*—leading-edge investigations aimed at consolidating the researcher's *personal* creative insight, not investigations into the creative insights of others, unless the researcher has genuinely identified with them. EHEs are most likely to occur when the researcher is on the growing edge of the "known and accepted" and is attempting, through research, to discover what previously has not been captured or realized in the discipline. As the alchemists knew, scientists working at the boundary between the known and unknown (especially in the human sciences) are likely to—or may need to—advance their own process of self-realization for their work to proceed because they must go by a way that is unique and individual. Briggs (1990)

uses the metaphor of the creator as alchemist who creates him- or herself as he or she discovers and becomes involved in the research. It is unlikely that we as researchers will get a foothold in the unknown merely by building a plank bridge by means of logical inference, based on data already gathered, although we need to make all the educated guesses possible. But when we have done all we possibly can, it is likely we still will fall short, unless some form of EE/EHE comes to the rescue. If it does, we must realize, beforehand, that it will not necessarily "make sense." It is our job as scientists to take this odd-looking puzzle piece and move it around, and perhaps even reshape it, until it fits the hole we are trying to fill or until it provides the plank we require to move forward.

As Kremer (1988) points out in regard to experiences associated with finding one's "tale of power" (a means of recognizing one's calling or, in his felicitous phrase, one's "personal trajectory"), such experiences will deviate from the "collective expectations of daily reality" simply because "they have the power of uniqueness stemming from a movement into the individual's creative center" (p. 35). Kremer's tales of power are mediated by or consist of various EEs as is the case with breakthrough science insights. Kremer notes that they have "a crazy edge to them . . . the price to be paid for stepping out of the collective consensual reality. We do not expect to find the crazy edge in cultures that provide a supportive framework" (p. 35). This is *not* the case, however, in Western, industrialized societies.

OVERVIEW OF EXCEPTIONAL HUMAN EXPERIENCES

EHEs form a large group of many types of experiences that heretofore have primarily been studied individually or in association with only a few other types. I am considering all of them as members of a single class to see (a) if any generalizations can be drawn that apply across the whole class and (b) if looking at them as one class can shed light on specific types of EHEs. I have identified 150 EEs (White, 1996b) that are potential EHEs and have provisionally classed them in the following five broad categories.

Mystical Experiences

Mystical experiences were once considered a type of religious experience, but increasingly they are reported and studied within a nonreligious

context, in which they are referred to as peak experiences (Maslow, 1971), as flow experiences (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990), as a form of epiphany in literature (Holman, 1972), and in sports as being "in the zone" (Murphy & White, 1995). Grof and Grof (1989) class them as a type of spiritual emergence, and many are transpersonal experiences.

The secularization of mystical experiences may have been promoted by transpersonal psychology, which, although it often retains the religious context, also views the experiences as an aspect of human psychology, whereas in the Middle Ages many were regarded as supernatural. Sir Alister Hardy (1979) set out to collect religious experiences but ended up with many that were profound but not especially religious.

Leonard George (1995) points out that since the 1600s, a mystical experience has been "characterized by the feeling that, despite the apparent diversity in the world, everything forms a unity" (p. 186). He refers to Stace's observation that the unity is not simply perceived, but "it is sensed as certain knowledge, compared to which the apparent separation of objects in the world seems illusory" (p. 186). I am suggesting that both mystics and nonmystics perceive the same worlds, and neither is viewing an illusory one. As Steven Rosen (1994) has noted, it is not a case of either/or but of both/and. He therefore uses the image of the Möbius strip, which faces first one way and then the opposite, but either way, it is the *same* strip. He has also introduced the term *nondual duality* to characterize this paradoxical reality.

Psychic Experiences

Psychic experiences are forms of extrasensory perception (ESP; clairvoyance, telepathy, and precognition) and psychokinesis, that is, being able to influence organisms or objects at a distance without sensory contact. If taken at face value as *human* experiences, they provide an inside view that humans literally may not be separated from others, especially from those with whom we are intimate, by distance or time. When confronted by psychic experiences, the Cartesian-based impulse is to explain them away, but it may be more constructive and life potentiating to realize we live in a world in which they can occur. With general acceptance of, or at least an openness to, the *possibility* of psychic experiences, more people might be aware of them and be more likely to report them.

Death-Related Experiences

This category consists of several types of experience ranging from a mystical sense of immortality to what is commonly referred to as near-death experiences and deathbed experiences: experiences in which people "see" and "meet" with deceased loved ones and, in some cases, with people about whose death the experiencer is unaware ("Peak in Darien" cases). Also included are accounts provided by mediums; telephoned, videotaped, and tape-recorded communications from the dead; and older forms of post-mortem communication such as raps, Ouija board, and other automatisms, the most recent being the mirror-visions induced by Moody (1993). All these experiences, in one way or another, erase the awareness of death. (It can be countered that death remains a physical reality, but even if it does, this form of knowing can be beneficial in that death loses its sting while one is alive.)

Encounter Experiences

This category includes experiences of observing and sometimes interacting with seemingly substantial or partially substantial apparitions; alien beings; and cultural-specific beings, such as the "Old Hag" phenomenon of Nova Scotia, the "phantom hitchhiker," and even Elvis Presley. (The latter may seem laughable, but Moody, 1987, has reported some interesting experiences associated with the deceased Elvis.) Also classed here are encounters with UFOs, angels, religious figures, apparitions, weeping or bleeding stuary, crop circles, and other anomalous phenomena/experiences that can become EHEs. This category of exceptional experience is valuable because it expands our grasp of what may be possible and the range of our potential for interaction.

Exceptional Normal Experiences

These experiences of knowing, being, and doing are at the outer limit of experiences viewed as "normal" in Western societies. They are not considered anomalous, but they generally go beyond the limits of what the individual experiencer or perhaps even any member of the human species has known. Some people therefore find it hard to accept them. Many of

the concomitants associated with the more unusual EHEs are present in these experiences, such as tears, goose bumps, a crisis of identity, and feeling "wonderstruck." For example, former distance runner Mike Spino (1977) describes a 6-mile training run he made on a muddy, slippery road. He ran the first mile in 4½ minutes and was amazed at how effortless it had been. He reports,

During that run I experienced my own encounter with death—for somewhere down that road I had felt the wind blowing flesh from my body until there was nothing left to resist the sweep through space. Something else had taken me, something grand and inexorable and powerful beyond anything else I had known. Then, when the run was over, I seemed to shrink back into my own body, and I . . . wept as I tried to decide "who I was"—the one who had run the race or the usual Mike Spino? (p. 127)

Spino (1971) writes that his running mate, who accompanied him on foot and by car, later said "he could feel the power I was radiating. He said I was frightening" (p. 224).

When individuals are living at the limits of their capacity, let alone that of human capability, EEs tend to occur. Examples are the ghostly presences and the sense of immortality that accompanied Lindbergh on his flight to Paris or Bob Beamon's paradigm-shattering long jump in the 1968 Olympics—not bested until 1991 (see Murphy & White, 1995, for this and many examples). Included in this group are extraordinary dreams; inspiration of all types; aesthetic and literary experiences; witnessing or encountering art, architectural, religious, historical, and other cultural relics, music, and literature; and the performance of noble acts—or other exceptional human performances. All these experiences can engender a sense of our own larger being in bodily and emotional forms of knowing that enrich our lives, and they may also enrich our research.

THE EPISTEMOLOGICAL FUNCTION OF EHEs

Human intelligence functions best when it is actively open to many possibilities not considered to exist according to Western consensus reality. Any type of EHE can be seen as a way of extending human knowledge beyond the bounds of our bodies, our conscious minds, and any instru-

ments researchers have devised. The creative "aha" experience itself is exceptional, and it obviously functions in the service of extending knowledge. But each type of EHE, in its own way, connects the experienter to aspects of self or environment that cannot be made, given the person's situation, in any other way. Realizing and consolidating new insights and connections constitute a process that underlies all research. EHEs promote viewing the world in new, more connected ways at the levels of both the individual life view and the worldview.

EHEs can aid in extending research parameters. They can present new insights to investigate and ways of interpreting research results. They can enable researchers to become aware of data and connections of possible relevance they might not notice otherwise and to conceive of ways to extend research into new areas by conceptual and methodological innovations.

EEs can serve an epistemological function either first- or secondhand. In the former, experienters take their experiences seriously, take them to heart, and sooner or later are transformed or at least greatly changed by them. An aspect of this transformation is that they see reality in a new way. They have gained a form of double vision (White, 1994c). They can still see the world from the viewpoint of consensus reality, but they also are constantly aware of another seemingly more life-affirming and self-potentiating way (see White, 1994a, 1997, for details). In the special case of scientists, this places them in an optimal position to extend consensus reality, at least in their own field, in the direction of the new views they have glimpsed.

This process may be observed secondhand by reading autobiographical accounts by those who have had EHEs, or EHE autobiographies (White, 1994a, 1994c, 1995b), or by studying individual experiences from their triggering circumstances through the phenomenology of the experience itself and its aftereffects. In this way, observers can see how others fared who entered the process initiated by an EE. Reading cases and autobiographies enables readers to glimpse general patterns, regardless of the type of experience, that may indicate that something is happening here. Even if readers are not convinced, they may come away more open to such experiences.

Because there seems to be no end to the human potential that can be explored, once the process initiated by an EHE is under way, it is helpful to find ways of consolidating and integrating the fund of new insights that have been tapped. Two possible ways of doing this follow.

WRITING AN EHE AUTOBIOGRAPHY

To catalog, expand on, integrate, and even recall EHEs, it is useful to write an *EHE autobiography*. This exercise is the opposite of writing a curriculum vitae, which records all the objective life data such as birth date, schooling, degrees, honors, positions held, writings, and other accomplishments, each item of which can be verified by other people. The curriculum vitae may even be written by someone else.

An EHE autobiography, however, can only be written by *you*.³ It is a record of the highlights of your subjective life—of your exceptional experiences: of places, people, events, visions, dreams, and encounters that profoundly affected you, often in unaccountable ways. An EHE autobiography is about the *wonder side* of your life—the experiences associated with wonder and awe—and those that made you question the adequacy of the Western worldview to account for EEs.

You need to chronologically record all the altered states you have experienced and the EEs you have had in or out of those altered states. Such states also will be anchored to certain persons, places, or activities, and these should be described; the aim, however, is not to describe events, as such, but rather how the events affected you subjectively, how they may have influenced you since they first occurred, and how they could affect you in the future.

You may have experienced certain types of EHEs several times so that no single one stands out—such as déjà vu and being uplifted by music, surfing, hiking, art, or nature. Give a generalized description, placing it chronologically according to when you think the first such experience occurred. Also indicate the number of times and the frequency with which you have had that type of experience.

Once you have your time line in place, and your EHEs situated along it, try to connect as many of the experiences as you can. Note those that had the same feeling tone or seemed to suggest the same meaning, raised similar questions, or concerned the same quandaries or revealed similar ways of opening. Add your current associations to these experiences, although many occurred long ago. Note especially any ways in which the experiences changed your view of yourself, your view of others, your life view, or your worldview.

In this way, you develop the life line of your inner EEs. Try to sense that line as you write and as you reread what you have written (also an

important part of this technique). As you do so, you may recall related experiences. You cannot write your EHE autobiography in one sitting. You need to come back to it for weeks, rereading it once a day for at least three days each week, and recording any new experiences, associations, connections, or meanings that arise. Write them down before they slip away again.

When you think you have remembered and recorded all that you can, add a final section about their possible import for you today and in your future. You should find yourself aware of possibilities of “being and doing” you have not imagined before. It is important that you then try to act on some of these new possibilities or, failing that, to at least witness to some of your insights by sharing them with others. This will help consolidate them in your memory and awaken new levels of interpretation and meaning. Once you have written your EHE autobiography, it is unlikely that you will ever forget the experiences. Continue to take time out, occasionally, to add to your EHE autobiography and to reread it, so that new connections and possibilities will be given the opportunity to arise.

WRITING A SCIENTIFIC EHE AUTOBIOGRAPHY

A scientific EHE autobiography is a log of EEs related specifically to research and work. Many EHEs tend to be about the experimenter's calling in life. A sense of vocation is itself an EHE. Many people go through life not even aware that they have a calling, perhaps because they have not remembered or worked with their EHEs.

Weber (1958) was one of the first to write about the vocation of a scientist as a response to a call, which he characterizes as the “personal experience’ of science,” adding that “without this strange intoxication . . . without this passion . . . you have no calling for science and you should do something else” (p. 135). Vocation is experienced as if coming from beyond the conscious mind, which could implicate many sources: the personal unconscious, in the interest of self-integration; the deep unconscious—which elsewhere (White, 1997) I have proposed is the self of all things, or the All-Self—in response to the need of the human species to become more conscious and connected; Gaia, the soul of Earth, in response to her need to be saved from the ravages of greed, need, and supertechnology; or even the universe itself, calling out to move the process of evolution forward, just as it may have called the dust of our planet to life. Or, it could be that persons are living out some deep ancestral memory buried until now in

unconsciousness or possibly are responding to a basic desire from even before birth.⁴

EHEs can help us as researchers become aware of one or more of these possibilities and their application to our chosen professions. A powerful motivational source could be a revered teacher who awakens the desire to do research. Such teachers usually seem larger than life—they are charismatic—and the magical charisma they have for us, itself, an EHE. It is fortunate to encounter even two or three such persons in a lifetime. Some EHEs that may be related to specific research projects may have predated those projects by months or even years. In these ways of questioning and exploring and remembering, you need to work out what brought you to your work and why you engage in it. The answers may not be readily apparent, and even when you think you know what the answers are, with the passage of time, you may discover other facets or deeper levels of understanding.

Presumably, everyone who is engaged in research has access to a computer. I recommend that you open a file for your EHE explorations. It can be a tool you will want to add to and use throughout your career. For those who may want to write your biography, it will be an invaluable resource. It will also be useful to future students interested in following up on your research leads, ideas, and insights.

Your computer file should consist of several parts, the first being your EHE autobiography. The second should be your scientific EHE autobiography, which records all the significant experiences related to your work. Every time you engage in a new research project, open a new file to record experiences and insights that occur specifically in connection with it. For each project, give consideration to your motivation for engaging in it, the research methodology, analysis of results, the bearing of this project on future research, and how it affected you. In each part, the important points to note are not the objective ones, which will be described in the formal report. Here you will record your subjective reactions and feelings about each stage of the research and especially any EEs of your own or of anyone else associated with the project. If an EE occurs, it will be useful to have relevant accounts from several persons associated with the research.

The focus of this scientific EHE autobiography should be the senior investigator or doctoral candidate or whoever primarily conceived the research project. It will be useful, however, for all involved to write their personal project autobiographies, as well. Some of those involved may think other approaches or methods of analysis should be used, or they may

interpret the results differently, or they may be conscripted for the research and have little interest in it. All these motivations and responses may influence the research itself, and it is good to have records of them. Even the participants could be asked to write mini-autobiographies on why they opted to participate, what they experienced as participants, and any EEs they may have had before or during the project.

EXCEPTIONAL EXPERIENCES MOST LIKELY TO OCCUR IN THE RESEARCH CONTEXT

Any EE has the potential to shed light on research, but I will consider those that are most likely to do so (beginning with those closest to Western consensus reality, but even common experiences such as hunches can be far out). All the following experiences can be seen as forms of inspiration, although some may not generally be thought of as such because of their anomalous character. Hallman (1963) has noted five necessary conditions for creativity that can be viewed as aspects of the creative process. They are openness, nonrationality, originality, connectedness, and self-actualization. The first four apply also to EEs, whereas all five apply to EHEs.

Dreams

Many dreams have been recorded that assisted innovations in science and technology. But some dreams, especially of those who are engaged in human consciousness research, involve the whole being of the scientist and presage a major change of approach (e.g., see Rosen, 1992). These are EHEs. Berry (1990) has suggested that in our dreams and revelatory visions, we can get in touch with the universe itself and get from it (which we ourselves are) a sense of direction for our lives and work (p. 211).

Lucid Dreams

If dreams are helpful in providing scientific answers, lucid dreaming should be even more helpful because the dreamer is conscious. LaBerge (1985) describes a dream of his that was becoming a nightmare. It concerned a lecture he was to give at an upcoming scientific meeting. The dream became lucid and motivated him to prepare much sooner than he had planned but just in the nick of time for the conference (pp. 172-173).

Hunches

Hunches generally concern specific aspects of research such as selecting one research assistant rather than another, when both are equally qualified; choosing a specific test from many others measuring the same variable and that are equally valid and reliable; or even choosing a subject area as indicated by a strong inner urge or feeling of rightness rather than by rational choice. For example, early in his scientific career, Otto Loewi (1960, in LaBerge & Rheingold, 1990) had a hunch about the nature of the nerve impulse. Because he could not come up with a way of verifying his hunch scientifically, he forgot it. Seventeen years later, he dreamed, two nights running, of an experimental design that enabled him to verify his earlier hypothesis of chemical transmission. Loewi's dream-suggested experiment allowed him to discover what was later identified as acetylcholine, a major neurotransmitter. For this work he shared the 1936 Nobel Prize for physiology and medicine (pp. 170-171).

Hypnagogia

Hypnagogic (during the twilight state of consciousness encountered on going from waking to sleeping), and especially hypnopompic (during the twilight state of consciousness encountered in going from sleep to wakefulness), imagery is often associated with new ideas. (See Mavromatis, 1987, for an overview.) Edison (Bernd, 1978) is said to have capitalized on this when he was at an impasse in his work. He would take a nap in his chair, holding a steel ball in each hand. On the floor, on either side of his chair, he placed flat pans. When he fell asleep, the balls dropped out of his hands and landed on the pans, thus waking him up, often with an idea that would break the impasse (pp. 28-29).

Visions/Hallucinations

Tesla (in Inglis, 1987) depended on visions bordering on hallucinations for his ideas and inventions, saying he experienced as complete "a mental state of happiness" as he had ever known while in those states. He writes: "Ideas came in an uninterrupted stream. . . . The pieces of apparatus I conceived were to me absolutely real and tangible in every detail, even to the minutest marks and signs of wear" (p. 90). In a well-known case, Henri

Poincaré (1913) had tried hard for 2 weeks to prove that what have since become known as Fuschian functions could not exist, but Poincaré did not succeed. Then one night, contrary to his custom, he drank coffee and could not sleep. As he lay in bed, "ideas rose in crowds; I felt them collide until pairs interlocked . . . making a stable combination. By the next morning I had established the existence of a class of Fuschian functions" (p. 387).

Empathy

Empathy is important in research with humans and is not considered exceptional, but at its limits, it can shade into what is close to, if not identical with, telepathy or ESP. Physician/researcher Alex Comfort (1984) astutely notes that the only way physics can communicate its revolutionary change in worldview, in which that which we have taken to be objective can be seen as a construct, is by making world models that have empathic appeal (which he defines as "those which coincide with feelings"), which helps people to incorporate them (p. xvi). He observes, "By empathy I mean incorporation going beyond intellectual assent. We know the earth is spherical, and many actually have flown around it, but not until astronauts saw it *ab extra* can its roundness be said to have been empathized" (p. xviii). For several of those astronauts, the experience of actually seeing the earth from space was a life-changing EHE (see White, 1987, for examples).

Similarly, the wonders we, as researchers, experience in exceptional experiences help us empathize in ways that can forward our work and aid us in communicating our findings to others. Nobel prize biologist Barbara McClintock spent her life studying maize, and such was her empathy with her participants that she studied each plant from the time it was a seedling so that she could say, "I don't feel I really know the story if I don't watch the plant all the way along." Of each plant in the field she said, "I know them intimately, and I find it a great pleasure to know them" (cited in Keller, 1983, p. 198). She received the Nobel prize for her work on the tiny chromosomes of red bread mold. She told Keller that they got larger and larger as she worked with them under the microscope. Here she combined empathy and visualization to such a pitch that I call it *magnified vision*. Although she examined molecules under an actual microscope, what she saw was far larger than the magnifying capability of her instrument. She said that when she was "really working with them" she experienced herself not as outside but as

part of the system. I was right down there with them, and everything got big. I even was able to see the internal parts of the chromosomes. . . . It surprised me because I actually felt as if . . . these were my friends. (Keller, 1983, p. 117)

ESP

Various automatisms, especially map dowsing, seem to involve ESP and have been used to locate geological deposits (Bird, 1979). Remote viewing and other forms of ESP have been used in geology, archaeology, and anthropology. Jones (1979) reports on research with psychics who were able to find archaeological sites and “reconstruct physical, cultural, and historical environments” (p. 253) by “reading” or “psychometrizing” artifacts. The psychics described some buried artifacts and the cultural context of a site in detail by scanning a photograph of it and provided “accurate identifying information about a cultural situation by handling non-diagnostic rubble from the particular site” (p. 253). Jones published the psychics’ transcripts so readers can draw their own conclusions.

ESP in Interspecies Communication

McClintock communed with plants. Interspecies communication is an important EE that may eventually open doors to understandings unguessed at present. Mishlove (1993, pp. 237-239) reports on some experiments/experiences he and others had in trying to communicate with and heal Dondi, a dolphin, partly from a distance. He also describes the dolphin-human EE of Wade Doak, who believes he communicated with a dolphin by telepathy. Biological research would be transformed if we could develop interspecies communication, which is now itself an EE or EHE.

Out-of-Body Experiences

In an out-of-body experience, veridical information sometimes is obtained of a person, place, or object at a distance while the experiencer feels in the body at the distant site. Out-of-body experiences indicate that humans can have access to places outside our bodies, not simply by clairvoyance but with the sense of “being there.” This may be highly important in the space age. There are reports of attempts of two psychics, Harold Sherman and Ingo Swann, to explore the planet Mercury while out-of-body and/or

using ESP (Mitchell, 1975; Sherman, 1981). Some of their findings were later confirmed by Mariner space probes.⁵

Synchronicity

Synchronicity is a subjectively significant coincidence between an inner state, usually of need, and an unaccountable outer event that corresponds to and/or answers the need. Because they cannot causally be accounted for, synchronicities are EEs; when they are also personally significant, they can be EHEs. A common role played by synchronicity in the research process is in turning up needed information sources not otherwise available. Vaughan (1979, pp. 95-96) presents an instance reported by parapsychology writer-researcher D. Scott Rogo, who, when writing about obsession, knew he needed to include the work of Titus Bull. Rogo, however, knew nothing about him and had nothing concerning him at hand, despite possessing a well-stocked personal library. Having written Bull’s name and just one sentence, Rogo decided to go to Los Angeles and check bookstores, but it was too early, and they were closed. He then went to a park in a rundown section of Los Angeles that he had been to perhaps five times. When he got out to walk, Rogo recalled a bookstore he had once visited that was not well stocked with books on parapsychology. Going in and finding nothing of interest, he was walking out when he noticed some magazines in disorder on the floor. For some reason, he stopped. Under the magazines, he saw something yellow, which reminded him of the color of the *Journal of the American Society for Psychical Research* in the 1920s and 1930s. He pulled the publications out, and there in the unlikelyst of places were some back issues of that journal for the years 1928 through 1934, including eight lengthy reports about the work of Titus Bull. These reports gave him all that he needed to complete the chapter on Bull in a week.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Many of the examples I have given are often cited. Few, I imagine, were honored at the time of their occurrence or when the research findings they led to were reported in technical journals. Although it is doubtful whether the research would have been conducted had the experiences not occurred, they are considered folklore, unscientific, unreliable, “lucky”—relegated to the underside of the research process. The point of this chapter is to

illustrate that these insights and inspirations *should* be honored as they deserve—that they deserve to be put in the forefront. If this were done, researchers would have many fresh new examples to study, numbers of them recorded soon after they occurred. If, as most do, they require verification, they should be recorded *prior* to that verification. This circumstance points to the need for *insight banks*, possibly under the aegis of the various scientific and professional societies associated with each discipline, to enable scientists to centrally record the exceptional experiences relating to their research, as they arise.⁶

Needed are fresh cases in greater detail than ever before. The value of these dreams, visions, and encounters is not only in the information or ideas they provide but also in how we, as scientists, respond to them. If we were to honor them as they deserve, not only might our knowledge be transformed, but reflexively, so might we, which could lead to even more startling breakthrough insights. Correspondingly, research would not exploit its subject matter but would empathize with it and, as it progresses, make many connections rarely glimpsed before. This enrichment would help promote the growth of peace and of life on earth, which should be the ultimate aim of every vocation and certainly of paramount concern to science.

NOTES

1. Part of learning the lore of a specific EE is to become educated concerning the ways we can delude ourselves about an experience. Experiencers need to be aware of counterexplanations for seemingly psychic events, encounter phenomena, and death-related EEs—especially possibilities such as subliminal perception, suggestion, cryptomnesia, illusion, and even deliberate hoax. Useful books to check or read for this purpose are George (1995), Neher (1980), Reed (1988), Schick and Vaughn (1995), and Zusne and Jones (1982, 1989).

2. To practice what I preach: This is the third version of this chapter. Each time, I began with a formal outline but spontaneously—as if from over my left shoulder and accompanied by a sense of humming and warmth in my left ear—came unbidden ideas, sentences, and phrases I otherwise would not have thought of that I much preferred to my own plodding and boring text. I was in a slightly altered state of being “high” and in a “state of flow” in which I was more amanuensis than deliberate writer. I became more conscious of connections than usual, and I feel this is reflected in what I eventually wrote. To be sure, I went through 14 rewrites to arrive at the present version, during which I added supplementary material and smoothed out some of the writing until I was pleased with the result. But whether or not I should be realistically pleased depends on the reader’s response, whose opportunity to respond one way or the other was made possible, in part, by those two “watchers of the threshold,” William Braud and Rosemarie Anderson!

3. I will purposely use the pronoun *you* in much of the following text to emphasize that the EHE autobiography is an individual and personal process.
4. As I perceive it, the call today is the call for all life to become conscious, and to know that it is conscious, and for it to sing with consciousness with all other life forms.
5. For the first installment of an annotated bibliography on outer space EHEs, see White (1996a).
6. I have an arrangement for people to record their EHEs on-line, via bulletin board and e-mail, so this concept unquestionably is doable. To check it out, contact <http://www.publishingarts.com/ehe.html>.