

Avatar... and the 'Sustainabullies' of Higher Education

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Abstract

This paper uses the film Avatar as the basis for transdisciplinary insights, based on media studies, critical futures and academic staff development perspectives. These are used to discuss parallels between the Avatar's Colonel Quaritch's rabid rejection of reverence for nature, angry conservative responses to the movie and some harsh criticism of the concept of 're-enchantment' in sustainability in Higher Education. Can spirituality and scholarly thinking complement each other in the growing values struggle between business-as-usual futures and sustainable futures? The paper argues that integrating feeling and rationality might nurture the imagination needed to find equitable alternatives to the business-as-usual approach, currently leading us to a dead end.

Keywords: re-enchantment, *Avatar*, sustainability, higher education, Causal Layered Analysis

Introduction

This is not a movie review. There are many good ones available online. Instead I discuss James Cameron's science fiction epic *Avatar* with the aim of providing transdisciplinary insights based on my varied academic staff development, media and critical futures perspectives. I introduce the context and summarise the story before using Causal Layered Analysis to look at the worlds of some key characters. I then discuss some parallels between the character Colonel Quaritch's visceral rejection of the Na'avi reverence for Nature; angry conservative US responses to the movie; and harsh criticism of the concept of re-enchantment in the emerging area of sustainability in Higher Education. Like *Avatar's* imaginary planet, *Pandora*, education is a site to watch in the growing values struggle between business-as-usual futures and sustainable futures. They are all expressions of what McGrail calls "competing ethics of the future" (2010, p.38).

In Greek mythology, Pandora is infamous for giving in to the temptation to open a forbidden box. By doing so she released all the ills of the world, but she heard a last small voice asking to be

let out. It was Hope. I feel like that about *Avatar*. Despite its shortcomings, I see it as a timid cinematic transition point, in which we see an actor representing the 'death' culture; opt for 'life' instead. This refers to Posch's warning about the growing "death potential" of economic/technological development confronting its "life potential" to the point where human activity was threatening our survival (1993, p.448). Pandora's *Na'avi* offer an artistic vision of one different way of being.

I wanted to see *Avatar* because I am looking for healthy alternatives to our "self-reinforcing engine of growth based on insatiable desires" (Senge, 2010). I was disappointed in the movie. The animation is clever, but the script is predictable; baddies versus goodies, boy meets girl, battles on flying beasts replace car chases and most of the characters are cardboard cutouts. As reviewer Byrnes comments, "the story takes us every place we've ever been" (2009, np). But *Avatar* created polarised responses. Some were surprised that despite its alternative 'eco' vision, it has been incredibly popular, rating as the "fourth-highest-grossing film of all time" (Goldstein, 2010). In the USA it set "the right's hair on fire" (Ibid.) on political and religious grounds. For example, Nolte (2010) saw it as "critical of America from our founding straight through to the Iraq war". The Christian right rejected what it saw as its "abhorrent New Age, pagan, anti-capitalist worldview that promotes Goddess worship and the destruction of the human race" (in Shone, 2010).

Goldstein offers several reasons for the Right's fury: 1) the conservatives are a focus for global warming scepticism and anything else they associate with "liberal planet savers", using ridicule as a favoured strategy; 2) they see it as an attack on religion (Christianity); and 3) they see it as a continuation of Hollywood's "anti-military sloganeering". Goldstein suggests that the public are more interested in the spectacle than the politics and because it is set in the future, may not even make the political connections.

I saw echoes of Colonel Quaritch's actions in *Avatar* and the Right's responses to *Avatar* in rejections of the deep values change involved in embedding sustainability in Higher Education. My preferred definition of sustainability centres on responsibility and equity and includes all other species, on which our survival depends.

Sustainability is a possible way of living or being in which individuals, firms, governments, and other institutions act responsibly in taking care of the future as if it belonged to them today, in equitably sharing the ecological resources on which the survival of human and other species depends, and in assuring that all who live today and in the future will be able to satisfy their needs and human aspirations (Ehrenfeld, Conceico, Heitor, & Viera, 1999, p.12).

Tarah Wright (2010) still regards Sustainability in Higher Education as an 'emerging area' even though its links go back over thirty years. Wright (2002) analysed a series of international university agreements, beginning with the Stockholm Declaration of 1972. All have urged Higher Education to play a leadership role in preparing graduates who understand the huge social and economic changes facing us and can work effectively to build sustainable futures. We are well into the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (2005-2015). Sustainability in education is often expressed through environmental education programs, integrating sustainability issues into curricula, sustainable operations and green buildings (McNamara, 2010).

The reasons embedding sustainability is difficult are made clear by Stephen Sterling's three level analysis of educational responses to sustainability and their implications. Level one, "Education about sustainability" (2001, p.15), is First Order change or learning using sustainability as a controllable "add-on" in which you transmit knowable, uncontested sustainability as a separate content area. The Second Order /level, "Education for sustainability" is more progressive. It involves "learning for change" and examining values and the assumptions of first order thinking (Ibid., p.60). The underlying myth is that with policy reform, humans can manage the world's complex eco-systems in the same way as a business. Third Order /level change is "education as sustainability" or "learning as change which engages the whole person and institutions" (Ibid., p.61). McNamara (2010, p.49) rightly identifies this as transformative change, a "challenging and evolutionary process" that needs skilled leadership, supportive internal and external conditions, involved stakeholders, resources of time and money and effective communication processes. This kind of education and these educators would help to develop graduates who will live and work with a futures awareness and an openness to evolving alternative ideas - *Globo sapiens* or wise global citizens (Kelly, 2008).

Sterling's levels also span the sustainability spectrum described by Pearce & Turner (1990, in McGrail, 2010, p.37). The spectrum ranges from extreme Technocentric or weak sustainability expressed as unlimited growth, faith in the market, which level one education could serve; to 'accommodating' sustainability based on 'managing' resources and economies to preserve human society, (Level 2 education). This spectrum moves to Strong Sustainability, including Communalist approaches such as steady state economies with ethical responsibility for other species and then to the other extreme, Deep Ecology, centred on preserving the environment by regulations and reverence for nature. This requires transformative education.

The next sections outline the story and offer a layered analysis. This may help to understand the polarised responses to *Avatar*, as well as how they relate to resistance to embedding sustainability in Higher Education and the radical changes involved in surviving on a damaged planet.

The Context

James Cameron's film *Avatar* is set on Pandora, 100 years from now. This is a fertile planet whose indigenous inhabitants, the Na'vi, are tall, blue, slender creatures with humanoid features, but also long tails and moveable ears. They are a wasp-waisted combination of Barbie dolls, Minoan athletes and Meerkats. They live in harmony with their spectacular, technicoloured and glowing landscape, unlike the Sky People, as they call the earthlings who have come to exploit their mineral resources. The miners want Unobtainium, which is worth \$35 million per ounce on Earth. As the name suggests, it really stands for the latest human greed. The film depicts the usual struggle between indigenous people trying to protect their environment and outsiders whose job is destroying it to make money. The clash is of course, deeper than money, it is about values. Unlike previous films about culture clashes, such as *Dances with Wolves*, it is the imperialists/Sky-people who trudge off defeated, watched by the vic-

torious Na'avi and their hybrid Earth allies, who did battle on their behalf and have used Na'avi science to transfer permanently to their Na'avi avatars, rejecting their Earthly life forever.

Humans seem to have learnt nothing 100 years into this future. Similar to so many screen (and real life) war veterans, the hero, Jake Sully, has been damaged in body and soul by his soldiering life. He is a paraplegic. Even his name "Sully" suggests someone morally polluted and/or with the capacity to damage others. He is only on Pandora because he offers an exact DNA match for his scientist twin brother, who died, leaving an expensive gap in a scientific project. This involved creating Na'avi/human clones. The scientists have tried the colonial approach of 'teaching' the Na'avi their ways with little success, and are now trying hybrids as a kind of cultural Trojan horse. These clones/*Avatars* have a Na'avi body which is 'driven' by a human in a state of suspended animation.

The scientists hope that the clones will help them to find a way to work with the Na'avi, and so prevent the miners using force, including fire bombs and rockets, to get the ore, a major source of which is under the Na'avi's sacred Home Tree. The scientists are also interested in Na'avi communication with nature, which they gradually realise is not simply nature worship. The Na'avi use electrochemical connections more complex and numerous than those in the human brain to connect with Nature, as well as to heal and to upload and share individual and group memories.

The future: Fortress world

There are only snippets of information from which to glean what kind of Earth Sully left behind. It seems to fit what Raskin et al. (2002) called 'Fortress world'. These authors describe three very different world futures, depending on the choices we make, "Conventional worlds, Barbarisation and Great Transitions". Fortress world is one of two possible Barbarisation scenarios in which resource scarcity has resulted in either 'anarchy or tyranny' (Ibid. p.15). Fortress world uses tyranny, in which a small minority controls the world through force, taking what few resources remain and protect themselves from the majority have-nots with barbed wire and private armies.

This sounds like the Earth of *Avatar's* time, some kind of a business-as-usual, technofix world survives. Having apparently rendered Earth a polluted mess, the military industrial complex has moved to other planets. *Pandora* teems with life, while according to the Na'avi, Earth has "no green, they have killed their mother". Resource wars over the scraps continue, having moved from the Middle East to Africa. We know this because Colonel Quaritch, Head of Security on Pandora, and a reprise of every mad commander from Captain Bligh to General 'Jack' Ripper, has survived three tours of Nigeria "without a scratch". For-profit companies somehow remain the foundation of Earth's economy. Quaritch is only concerned that "killing the indigenous looks bad" to the shareholders. This doesn't prevent it.

The US health care system still hasn't become more egalitarian. There is the medical know-how to restore Jake's mobility but, "not on vet benefits, not in this economy". Jake is persuaded to spy on the Na'avi in return for receiving the surgery he needs when he returns to Earth. This seems to be a good bargain until, through his

Na'avi body, he falls in love with his Na'avi tutor Neytiri and comes to know the Na'avi and their ways. The filmmaker has mined many cultures to create Na'avi culture. For example, they greet each other by pressing noses, exchanging the breath of life, as in a Maori *hongi* greeting and when they communicate with each other and their sacred tree, they sit in tight rows, resembling the famous *Kecak* or Monkey Dance from Bali. I turn now to a deeper analysis.

Causal Layered Analysis (CLA)

There is a large body of CLA-based work in multiple disciplines. Inayatullah's critical, futures-based layered approach uses "four overlapping levels of reality" to examine any issue (2010, p.110). The first is the Litany or most obvious expression of any issue (the headlines or what you hear on the bus), the second is the Systemic, the interrelated aspects and causes behind the issue, the third is the Worldview of the various stakeholders and the way they express it, and the fourth is the deep, often unarticulated Myths or Metaphors that "support and give meaning to the entire framework" (ibid). Table 1 is a summary CLA limited to four key players in the film, the military-industrial Sky people, the scientists, the Na'avi and Jake Sully.

Table 1.
CLA - Avatar through Key Groups/Individuals

Level of Reality	Sky people military/industrial	Scientists	Jake Sully	Na'avi
Litany	Doing a job Make profit Control 'natives'	'Teach' them our ways Study the exotic 'other'	Obey orders Repair damaged legs	Protect sacred tree Resist sky people Maintain Na'avi culture
Systemic	Mine Unobtainium Destroy cultural obstacles Maintain profits	Communicate With Na'avi Learn their science Analyse culture	Learn Na'avi ways Spy and report Choose sides	Throw out invaders Adjust to sky culture Cure sky people's insanity
Discourse/world view	Profit based Sexist, racist, military might Genocide as a solution Reject feelings Tree of soul shit	Listen, record objectify integrate	Struggle: Rebirth Who am I? Rejection Adaptation Transformation	Spiritual connection: Listen, feel Anger Future generations Deep reciprocal connections inter-person, person to animal, person to Nature
Myth/metaphor	Business as usual Might is right Sky father	We know best	What's in this for me? We're in this together	Protect, connect, heal 'earth' mother Tree of souls

The four main groups in *Avatar* as outlined above offer simple Litanies. The military-industrial complex has exchanged "fighting for freedom" for being "hired guns working for the company", as have so many ex-soldiers now working for private companies in Iraq and Afghanistan. The *Avatar* combat troops are male and female and obviously ethnically diverse, but white males still have the power. This seems an unlikely reality, given changing world demographics (CIA, 2001).

At the Systemic level the mercenaries see their only problem as the indigenous people preventing them from accessing the mineral and their profits. Quaritch's solution is to use more force and with genocidal intent, to "blast a hole in their racial memory". One hundred years from now, they have even more powerful weapons at their disposal. The soldiers represent a techno-future. They are human 'transformers', operating individual machines of destruction against 'savage' nature. Pandora is described as the "most hostile environment known to man" (sic).

In line with the simple litany, the military industrial discourse is based on hatred, fear and distrust. The language of the sky people is ugly, embodying their brutalisation and dislocated feelings. It could come from any movie depicting culture wars. The soldiers and miners depersonalize women and the Na'avi generally through scatological, racist and sexist abuse. The security forces dismiss Na'avi spirituality as "pagan voodoo", "tree hugger crap" and "tree of souls shit". They refer to Na'avi as "savages", "blue monkeys", and even use the old racist favorite "vermin". Quaritch refers to Na'avi as "roaches" that must be scattered. He uses the expression "local tail" to refer to Jake's relationship with Neytiri, who was charged with his re-education by her mother, a holder of wisdom for the Na'avi. "Son of a bitch" is another popular epithet. The Other role, variously held by 'Red Indians', 'Gooks' and now 'Towel heads', the Taliban, is here replaced by the Na'avi, described as "savages threatening our operation", "fly bitten" and "blue monkeys". The military industrial litany emerges from anger and requires constant refuelling. The disconnection and self-loathing of the soldiers is evident in the way they refer to new recruits as 'dumb grunts' and 'fresh meat'.

The soldiers and scientists despise each other. The scientists are dismissed with abuse that combines anti-intellectualism with psycho-sexual fears. Colonel Quaritch refers to scientists as a "bunch of limp dick science majors" and "science pukes". Science (reason) simultaneously threatens his masculinity (certainty) (limp dick) and must be physically rejected (pukes). Quaritch's "hard" masculinity is also threatened by Pandora, which is personified as a man-eater. "You get soft; Pandora will shit you out dead, no warning". In line with his contempt for / fear of anything 'soft', the main scientist is tough, chain-smoking Dr Grace Augustine. She mirrors the patriarchy in her swaggering, rough, 'male' persona, challenging Quaritch, but on his terms, by rejecting her feminine self. Through this lens Augustine sees the soldiers as "idiots with a gun" and dogs that need to be muzzled. Her approach to the Na'avi is not a partnership but colonialist and maternalistic. Her team have learnt Na'avi language and tried to set up schools to teach the Na'avi the Sky people's language (US English of course) and ways. She and her team have acquired 'knowledge' about Pandora and the Na'avi. Augustine tries to explain to Quaritch that the Na'avi are not interested in money, because they have natural wealth all around them. As she argues, "We have nothing they want. They aren't going to give up their homes for light beer". However,

she feels 'for' but not 'with' the Na'avi. The Na'avi understand this, observing that the sky people, "cannot listen, do not hear... a rock sees more". She finally reconnects as she dies, becoming part of the Na'avi collective memory through its neural networks.

At the mythic level, the underlying battle is the ancient one between Sky Father represented by the sky-people and 'Earth' Mother represented by the Na'avi. The Na'avi know that the Earth people have killed their mother, Nature. Having learnt nothing from this, they are now exploiting other planets. I see hope in Jake's transformation, because unlike many screen heroes, he realises that he needs to be humble, to ask for help rather than assume he knows or give orders. Ultimately this leads him to trust a radically different way, based on his revived respect for Nature, a re-enchantment or resacralisation.

There are several critical points in his transformation. He is reborn into a perfect body, which gives him the opportunity to rediscover the world physically and emotionally. He brings his cultural assumptions with him and uses his new strength to fight off savage *viperwolves*, expecting praise for his heroic exploits. He is shocked when instead, Neytiri abuses him for their unnecessary deaths and for his ignorance in attracting them. "This is sad only!" He learns respect for life in that each creature's death must be humbly acknowledged. "I see you brother and thank you". In another incident, when the might of the sky people seems overwhelming, Jake admits that he doesn't know if *Eywa*, the mother/creator of Pandora exists, but asks for her help anyway. The environment responds, with all living creatures combining forces to defeat the Sky people, despite their superior military hardware. Finally, he trusts Na'avi science, using it to leave behind his human body and in a quasi-Christian death and resurrection, transfers forever to his Na'avi body. This physical transformation is minor, an 'outward and visible sign' of the inner psychological and spiritual healing he has already experienced.

What's this got to do with sustainability in higher education?

Wals and Jickling (2002, p.129) view the complexity and multiple perspectives of sustainability as positive opportunities to grapple with its meanings and impacts on every aspect of universities, values, practices, pedagogies, resources and resource allocation and how they relate to the community, as does McNamara (2010). One exemplar is US anthropologist Peggy Barlett's work, based on an Emory University (USA) staff development program designed to help academics/faculty incorporate sustainability principles into their curricula. She argues for combining re-enchantment with reason to create a 'stereoscopic paradigm that will help us to think, in Rappaport's terms, on "*behalf*" of the world, not just "*about*" it (1994, in Barlett, 2008, p.1079). Dr Augustine in Avatar illustrates this difference. She is intelligent, well meaning and conscientious, but she can only talk *about* the world. By adopting Quaritch's language and framing of the world, she serves it, and thus cannot connect to others, to herself or across different 'knowings'. She thinks that acquiring more knowledge about the Na'avi will provide solutions. Rorty in Princen, (2008, p.1093) argues that fundamental changes are more likely to come when we hear people "*speak differently*", offering a new language to create a different consciousness.

This speaking differently may be why some academics find 'reenchantment' so threatening. Colonel Quaritch's visceral rejection of Na'avi spirituality and reverence for nature came to mind when I read recent papers condemning Barlett's work and identifying concerns about sustainability in Higher Education (Wood, 2010; Williams, 2010; Wimberley, 2010). Wimberley's concerns, based on his university, are that embedding David Orr's "radical" sustainability into the curriculum has led to a loss of pluralism and that those teaching it act like "high priests and prophets rather than dispassionate academics" (Ibid.). I agree with his point that all ideas, even the "most disagreeable and offensive", should be open to debate and analysis and that

"If education is to remain a liberating force within society it is imperative that we disallow any one value or philosophy from taking other competing values and philosophies hostage" (2010, p.110).

However, his criticisms could equally apply to the way corporatisation has driven university thinking and curricula since the 1980s. Sanderson and Watters (2006) view this through a Competing Values Framework based on four quadrants, each representing outcomes and the ways they are achieved. Moving too far in any one quadrant can affect an organisation's effective functioning. They argue that universities have moved from a 'corporate collegial model' towards a 'corporate-managerial model' which at worst operates like a 'sweatshop' where

"resources are taken away from core services such as teaching learning, research and community service into operational areas that support the dominant culture, such as support services, management, administration and bureaucratic functions" (2006, p.321).

Wimberley's significant criticisms about the sustainability program; that it has led to decreased quality of teaching and lack of objective evaluations, were not backed by evidence in this paper. These critics illustrate the tenor of resistings that may be met at any level when working on the edge, in the area of attitude change. While approving of "dispassionate academics", Wimberley uses an emotive mish-mash of religious labels to damn sustainability colleagues as "ecological missionaries", "high priests and prophets" trying to "convert" "captive parishioners" to their "gospel of sustainability" (2010, p.110). McNamara's research notes how resisters with power at high levels in the institution can "limit the success" of any initiative, particularly where it depends on individual change agents (Ibid, pp.53-54).

Most people accept the overwhelming scientific evidence that our current overuse of resources, human caused global warming, combined with growing demands and increasing inequalities is straining the capacity of Earth's natural systems to cope (UNEP, 2007). Wood (2010, p.11), links himself to the conservatives mentioned previously, by welcoming what they call Climategate because it "has made global warming skepticism respectable" (Ibid.). He regards "global warmingism" as "quasi-religious", "cultic" and having produced "close-minded (sic) zealots" (Ibid., p.15) whom he labels "sustainotopians" (Ibid., p.16) and "sustainabullies" (Ibid., p.19). By linking sustainability with scepticism about climate change he reinforces the conservative message (Lakoff, 2008). McKibben (2010c) regards climate deniers as the true radicals,

because their delaying tactics mean that "they will have helped prevent us from taking the steps we need to take while there's still time".

Wood's most damning assertion is that Barlett, "promotes the idea that rational scientific approaches towards nature need to be pushed aside in favor of "re-enchanted" (2010, p.15). This is a dualistic view in which science and spirituality cannot coexist or be reconciled. I read Barlett carefully. I find no evidence that she rejects or suggests 'pushing aside' scientific views. Unlike her critics, she does not use the language of aggression or religion (perhaps in an effort to avoid such criticism). Moreover, her work is evidence-based. Wimberley, by contrast, only asserts that "a significant proportion of those who teach or have taught the course consider it to be of inferior quality" (2010, p.108).

Barlett defines re-enchanted as a way of knowing, that

...involves a sensory, affective engagement that includes dimensions of wonder and delight and embraces an identity that includes connections to other species and the earth's living systems (2008, p.1077).

She suggests reconstructing these "as a legitimate part of our contemporary worldview" (2008, p.1080) and she does use a different language from her critics. Her language is consistently conciliatory and cooperative: "recovery", "reintegrate", "support", "combine", "expand", "augment", "reinforce". She suggests that using reason and re-enchanted could "strengthen both scholarship and the effectiveness of cultural change efforts" (Ibid. p.1090).

Futurist Marc Luyckx (1999, p.972) thinks many people all over the world are already in transition to transmodern thinking, which combines "intuition, spirituality and rational brainwork" and which could mean "keeping the best of modernity but going beyond it". Moreover, he suggests that 21st century conflicts are likely to be between the premodern, modern, and transmodern worldviews *within* cultures and religions. Seen in this light Colonel Quaritch, Dr Augustine and the critics represent aspects of the modern worldview, struggling with what can be seen as both premodern and transmodern. Quaritch is the mindless servant of an hierarchical system. The Na'avi are an obstacle to him fulfilling his job. Dr Augustine is a caricature of a scientist who has rejected feelings for 'hard' objectivity. The critics of sustainability overtly fear a return to premodern oppressive certainties, and yet they use premodern certainty to condemn. The Na'avi have pre-modern aspects in their traditions and values, but females seem to share power and their highly developed neural communication networks indicate horizontal decision making rather than strictly hierarchical. Cameron, as director, did not make the leap to the transmodern to see how relationships based on this highly developed communication network could make warfare impossible, for example, by enabling understanding, empathy and mutual respect at levels humans can barely imagine. Barlett's hope is that her work will contribute to reconciling science and humanistic values, an issue that Rappaport (1994, in Ibid. p.1090) regards as one of humanity's current profound problems. This 'nondualistic' science approach is urged by Peter Senge, who asks "what if the spirit of inquiry, skepticism, and learning that undergirds science were connected to deep personal development?" (2010).

Barlett's research is based in professional staff development, my main area of work. I often mentor applicants for teaching awards and one of the most rewarding aspects is helping academics to reconcile their inner and outer worlds to find their 'own voice'. This can be a particular challenge for staff from scientific disciplines, who often find it hard to use the first person and to move from the passive 'voice' they associate with objectivity, to a more active style. Another challenge is to help them use Plain English, rather than the jargon (client-focused, market-ready) most have developed in order to succeed (sorry, *move forward as part of an outcomes-focused pedagogical approach*) in a corporatised university.

Dutch educator Karel Mulder warns that if we neglect norms and values, we are taking the implicit norms of our society for granted (2010, p.82). Wimberley is right. Effective changes do call for a "profound social change tantamount to an ecological cultural revolution" (2010, p.106). The antagonism towards those working for sustainability in higher education reminds me of responses to feminism, encapsulated in Rebecca West's quip that 'people call me a feminist if I do anything that differentiates me from a doormat or a prostitute'. If even the World Economic Forum has called for mindset shifts to create a "moral economy," (2010, p.76) and we know that business as usual isn't a preferable or even a probable future, then the privileged of the world, particularly, have to engage with alternatives. It seems that as with feminism, one can teach *about* sustainability, as long as it doesn't change anything.

Business unusual futures

Higher education, like "every force in our society is trained to want more growth" (McKibben, 2010a, p.49). Emerging alternatives to growth as a guiding principle include "sufficiency" (Princen, 2005 in Barlett, p.1078) and "healing" (Inayatullah, 2004) – if we have the luxury of time. Brendan Gleeson, professor of urban policy at Australia's Griffith University, takes up James Lovelock's (2006) warning that without rapid changes we may be reduced to small 'lifeboat' regions where humanity might survive. Gleeson urges survival values of "restraint, sacrifice and solidarity" as the basis of new national and international politics. Democratic governments would take hard, long term decisions based on "decisiveness and equity" (2010, p.65) as an alternative to short term expediency. Bill McKibben renames the "tough new planet" ahead *Eaarth* and offers a framework for changing our habits in order to live "lightly, gracefully, carefully" (2010b, p.151). Developing Barlett's stereoscopic vision could result in increased awareness and willingness to take appropriate actions (Ibid. p.1078). This should avoid the 'shadow' fundamentalist potential that Taylor warns of in relation to "Dark green religion" (2010). Inayatullah suggests that more than policies, we need to engage with other world views by listening with empathy, not retreating from basic values such as gender equality but "expanding them" (2005, p.56). Re-enchantment involves expanding our capacity to feel beyond ourselves, our family, our nation or religion, or even all humans (Inayatullah, 2009). This includes the kind of *feeling with* that Jake Sully finally understood in relation to the animals he killed on Pandora.

Conclusion

Higher Education will have to contribute to such cultural change across all disciplines, even though academics are regarded as difficult to engage (Barlett, 2008). My work with engineering students shows that with scaffolded support, most students take up opportunities to challenge their assumptions about themselves and their chosen profession.

The problem with Colonel Quaritch's of any world is their certainty that they are right and the power and opportunities they have to push their views because they support the status quo. They not only make it difficult to develop respectful dialogue or mutual learning, they encourage the opposite. Thus there is no 'win-win' solution in *Avatar*. Sully and the other scientists reject Earth in favour of Pandora. Quaritch is killed and the remaining Sky people only leave because they are beaten militarily. The culture shock for some critics may lie in the fact that Sully rejects business-as-usual. He could have saved himself, using the greed is good, What's In It For Me? approach, but he rejects it in favour of We're In This Together. Jake models how we can change our founding myths and 'speak differently'. His *Avatar* mimics the original Sanskrit *Avatar*, in which the god Vishnu descends to Earth in some life-form to rescue or to impart wisdom except that Jake had to leave Earth in order to gain it. This is the Hope I perceived. Jake's *Avatar* represents transformation into his reintegrated, ideal self and models this possibility for all of us.

We can do better. With new attitudes and behaviours, each of us has the potential to save the Earth. Integrating feeling and rationality might also nurture the imagination we need to find equitable alternatives to the business-as-usual approach, which as *Avatar* shows, is leading us to a dead end.

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