

The Thing from Inner Space

The Everywhere Psyche, the Nowhere Alien, and the UFO In-between

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“Now whether you believe in a demon of the air or in a factor in the unconscious that plays diabolical tricks on you is all one to me. The fact that man’s imagined unity is menaced by alien powers remains the same in either case.”

—C. G. Jung, *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*

What Does a UFO Look Like Once We Stop Believing In it?

“When an inner process can not be integrated it is often projected outward. [T]he notion of a materialized psychism opens a bottomless void beneath our feet.”

—C. G. Jung, *Flying Saucers*

I don’t even remember when I first heard about UFOs. Who does? Even in the 1970s (when I was growing up), they were so much a part of our culture that most of us were probably exposed to the imagery, and the ideas, before we could even talk, much less have an opinion about them. One of my earliest memories is of watching *The Day of the Triffids* with my mother, at around six years old (the film is based on John Wyndham’s novel about an invasion of alien plants). One of my first memories of the cinema is watching *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*, when I was ten. I remember at about fifteen being told by an uncle (not blood-related) that UFOS had started appearing in the skies after the first atom bomb was exploded, drawn by an interest in our newly destructive technology. I grew up accepting these things as part of reality before I could think about what they might be or whether or not to believe in them.

Belief is a funny thing. It can end lives and bring down empires, but it doesn’t have any real existence outside of the human mind (and “the human mind” is itself a questionable reality). Animals do not have any use for belief. Plants sure don’t (except maybe Triffids). I am just guessing, but highly advanced extraterrestrials probably would have evolved beyond it too. Philip K. Dick famously quipped that reality is whatever’s still there once you stop believing in it.

There’s no doubt that, when it comes to UFOs, alien abductions, and the paranormal, something is happening. But there’s also no way to avoid the fact that, after over sixty years of sightings, investigations, testimonies, and all the rest, we do not appear to be any closer to understanding what it is. In fact, an argument could be made that we are *further* away from it, since we not only have a lot more evidence to study, we have an enormous amount of totally unnecessary and largely unfounded beliefs to get past. In my opinion, attempts to solve the UFO riddle are not being prevented by a lack of data—or by so-called “official denial”—but by an *excess* of data and a covert, but undeniable, form of

official endorsement—albeit through fringe outlets and popular fiction, combined with a serious failure to understand and apply the rudiments of psychology.*

Beliefs about the UFO have formed around the evidence and sprouted from it, like creeping ivy around a mansion, making it all but impossible to see the shape or features of the thing we are studying. As soon as we are dealing with the unknown, there's an almost irresistible urge to interpret the data in order to relieve the tension of *not knowing*, to drag whatever "it" "is" into the parameters of the known. This results in superficially "new" models, such as "the ET hypothesis," which are really just shiny repackaging of old beliefs. Isn't that the UFO model in a nutshell: just the same old vinegar in a new bottle?

Outside of the fictionalized accounts (even if inseparable from them), UFO-sightings have been reported throughout history. Most of these reports can't be verified, and nor should they be taken at face value. Once again, something is happening, being perceived and described, but we have no way of determining how accurate the perceptions are, how close the descriptions match them, and how much the reports passed down to us are faithful to either. This is true of history in general, but it's much more so when no one can even agree as to the precise *nature* of the phenomena being reported.

I would question all UFO accounts for several reasons. First, because we have no idea of the degree to which the phenomenon is being invented, or at least framed, by so-called "trained observers" working for hidden government or other agendas. That might seem like a leap, and I'm not stating that such agendas exist, merely that they *may* exist, that there is evidence they do, and that to assume they don't is therefore foolish. Nor is the popular idea of a "government cover-up" of UFOs at odds with such agendas, since *one way to strengthen belief is to appear to be suppressing facts which support it* (perhaps another essay into itself).

Secondly, an overall view of the paranormal material available suggests that, alongside UFOs, ghosts, and other seeming anomalies "out there," there are such things as "psychic manifestations," namely projections of the human psyche into a quasi or semi-physical apparition, even to the point of unmistakable physical effects (poltergeist phenomena is a well-known example). As Jung wrote in 1959, this idea opens up a bottomless void beneath the UFO investigator's feet. Right away, he or she has to consider that there is no easy way to distinguish between an observation of a seemingly "objective" phenomena (the UFO) and something that's being created, or at least co-created, by the observers themselves. Nor can we cite physical evidence such as radar traces as final "proof" of an objective reality. How many of our observers, both trained and untrained, would be able to recognize the elements of their own psyches projected outward? I would say this is something very few people are ever trained to do—or even consider as a possible interpretation of what they are seeing.

So the mere fact that there are mysterious objects being seen in the sky need not lead us—in fact must not lead us—to any particular conclusion about them. There's no need to attribute *any sort* of nature to such phenomena, unless we assume that they are part of the known. And if we do, it is an entirely unnecessary leap to say they must be nonhuman (much less extraterrestrial), a leap dependent on the

* At this point, my advice to anyone wishing to study UFOs would be to start with Jung's *Flying Saucers: A Modern Myth of Things Seen in the Sky*, after which, instead of moving on to the rest of the UFO literature, to stick with Jung and other leading psychologists such as Freud, Norman O. Brown, Donald Kalsched, and whoever else the trail leads to. The reason I'd suggest this is that all of us have already been exposed to the primary elements of the UFO experience via the popular media, and these elements have, by a form of psychic osmosis, become familiar to the point of contempt.

assumption that we already understand everything there is to understand about human beings—which, quite palpably, *we don't*.

The Riddle of the UFO

“We continue to dream in waking life beneath the threshold of consciousness, especially when this activity is conditioned by a repressed or otherwise unconscious complex. It should be said in passing that unconscious contents are by no means exclusively such as were once conscious and, by being repressed, have later grown into unconscious complexes. Quite otherwise, the unconscious has contents peculiar to itself which, slowly growing upward from the depths, at last come into consciousness. We should therefore in no wise picture the unconscious psyche to ourselves as a mere receptacle for the contents discarded by the conscious mind.”

—C. G. Jung, *Modern Man in Search of a Soul*

It has often been noted how specific elements of UFO experiences often appear first in fiction, and only later emerge as (alleged) fact. I think this relates to the UFO as a *crucial* fiction, that is, a way for the collective psyche to deal with the unknown, by turning it into something familiar, using familiar images, words, concepts, and beliefs. These fictions then become “real,” in a partial sense, because *they generate their own evidence*.

UFO lore as we know it began at least as far back as the 1940s. So there are almost no researchers today who didn't grow up in a cultural milieu suffused with such lore, via movies, comic books, TV shows, coffee mugs, stuffed toys, pop songs, etc., etc. We belong to those generations which have been conditioned to believe (or at the very least, to *want* to believe) in the UFO; even those who disbelieve in it disbelieve in something they once believed in, as kids—i.e., the idea that UFOs are physical craft from elsewhere, etc., etc.

Insofar as it acts as a surrogate for real knowledge and understanding, belief in anything at all is an obstacle to truth.

I was first drawn all the way into UFO-land by Whitley Strieber's 1987 book *Communion*. That led me to John Keel and Jacques Vallee and eventually to my own apparent quasi-memories of alien contact. There was even a period in which I may have believed, or at least suspected, that the “beings” in question were of extraterrestrial origin. It's hard to say what I believed because, as I say, belief doesn't take hold of us consciously, by choice, but through conditioning and as a response to deep (unconscious) psychological needs. We might even venture that the only reason we believe anything is out of a need to do so. If so, then the degree to which we are unconscious of that need determines the degree to which we are enslaved to that belief, and the degree to which we take it as certainty, as “fact.”

At one time in my life I needed to believe in UFOs and aliens as having some sort of “out there” existence that would someday transform my own existence from the mundane into something more magical—and which, to that extent, was already doing so (by promising to do so). In later life, probably around the time I turned forty (which Jung marks as the time in which our attention should naturally move from the outer world to the inner), I became less and less interested in UFOs and aliens as an “out there” thing, yet without losing interest in the psychological implications of my belief in them, and even the (I think

irrefutable) reality of people's experiences. That was the time, not coincidentally, that I wrote my first study of Whitley Strieber, in 2008.

You might say that, ever since I first let the UFO into my life (into my imagination), I have been struggling to come to terms with it, to find common ground on which we—the alien and I—could meet and make peace. I believe I have finally found this ground, and, perhaps no surprise, it's the ground that was always there: the ground of the psyche and of my own body.

My position is now both complicated (many-faceted) and very simple: the UFO, in all its manifestations, emerges from the human psyche itself, and, in secondary but no less significant ways, in and through the body. This is not to dismiss the UFO or alien abductions as mere fantasy, however (or even phantasy), because my understanding more and more is that the psyche and the body are all that there *is* to existence, and that, to a certain extent, *everything* emerges through them. C. G. Jung makes this point emphatically in *Modern Man in Search of the Soul*:

Does there exist for the psyche anything which we may call "illusion"? What we are pleased to call such may be for the psyche a most important factor of life—something as indispensable as oxygen for the organism—a psychic actuality of prime importance. Presumably the psyche does not trouble itself about our categories of reality, and it would therefore be the better part of wisdom for us to say: everything that acts is actual.¹

The UFO, by its nature, is a riddle that, like the existence of God, has driven men and women to the edges of sanity to find an answer. This is why I think it's worth giving our special attention—not as scientific question so much as *a psychological and philosophic one*.

Elsewhere in the same work, Jung makes the point that it's impossible to understand dream content without being familiar with the daily circumstances of the dreamer. While the symbols that emerge from the unconscious have some degree of universal meaning, they also adapt themselves to fit the conscious awareness of the dreamer. In other words, *consciousness is the context—the only one we have—for interpreting the unconscious*. I'd suggest that the same can be said of the UFO: that it can't be approached separately from the circumstances and personality of the experiencer whose life it has entered into and/or emerged from. Yet generally, UFO researchers assume that the UFO represents a cosmic, universal phenomenon that is wholly external, rather than allowing it to (also) be an individual and internal event, one that can't be separated from the inner and outer life of the experiencer—any more than an animal can be studied outside of *its* natural environment.

This idea, though it might seem radical, doesn't actually go against even a more conventional view of the "alien" as an actual other, "out there," because many abduction reports (and the nature of the phenomenon itself) are highly personal and individual. There are no "White House lawn landings" in UFO lore, only a series of intimate, often one-to-one, encounters.

Consciousness, Autism, & Meeting "the Alien"

"Consciousness is a much smaller part of our mental life than we are conscious of, because we cannot be conscious of what we are not conscious of. How simple that is to say; how difficult to appreciate! It is like asking a flashlight in a dark room to search around for something that does not have any light shining upon it. The flashlight, since there

is light in whatever direction it turns, would have to conclude that there is light everywhere. And so consciousness can seem to pervade all mentality when actually it does not.”

—Julian Jaynes, *The Origin Of Consciousness In The Breakdown Of The Bicameral Mind*

In Jaynes’ influential work, he presents evidence for the idea that, in terms of conditioned learning, not only is consciousness unnecessary but it actually *prevents* learning from occurring. The more conscious we are of being conditioned, Jaynes points out, the less susceptible we are to it. This brings us back to the question of belief, and how the idea that we have consciously chosen to believe something is, nine times out of ten, an error. We believe, or disbelieve, because, at one time or another, it was *necessary* to believe.

In Jaynes’ book, he describes how, when a person is asked to say words at random, if the listener responds to certain words (say nouns) with a nod, a smile, or some other approving gesture, the subject *will unconsciously begin to favor that particular class of words*. Another example Jaynes gives: members of a psychology class were told to compliment anyone they saw wearing red and, within a week, the place was ablaze with red. In a similar experiment, students paid rapt attention to their professor and laughed at all his jokes whenever he was on the right side of the room. He was unaware of anything unusual, but the students reported that they were “almost able to train him right out of the door.” Such incidents indicate how susceptible we are to suggestion and how powerful the unconscious is, not only to shape our perceptions but to *influence and even determine our actions*. The proof Jaynes offers is that these kinds of experiments *cease to work the moment the subject is made aware of how he or she is being conditioned*.

A final example from Jaynes is one the reader can try for him- or herself. Take two identical glasses or mugs and fill them with unequal amounts of water. Move them around with your eyes closed until you are unsure which is which. Keeping your eyes closed, pick them up and judge which is heavier. You will probably find it easy to do so. Now look for what is making the judgment. The assumption we make is that our mind is making the judgment. In fact, our mind is not “doing” anything besides reporting what our nervous system has already done. Jaynes uses this example to point out how the entire basis for believing our judgments are based on mental processes is inaccurate. On closer examination, the mind may not really be doing much of anything besides skewering the evidence—and keeping us sufficiently unconscious to be conditioned?

Despite all of this, the idea that we are what we are conscious of being seems to have gained precedence in the Western mindset over the past few decades (not counting the preponderance of New Age ideas, which often seem more like compensatory “make believe” than deeper understanding). Transhumanists such as Ray Kurzweil are busy promoting technologies which they promise will extend human existence into the infinite, by way of replacing biology with hardware and consciousness with software. Kurzweil believes he can resurrect his dead father by gathering enough information, samples of DNA from his disinterred corpse, memorabilia, photographs, and his own memories about him, and converting it all into digitalized form. He believes (or pretends to believe) that all there is to his father is a set of specific characteristics making up his visible personality, his social identity, which can then be reassembled in this strange fashion—by adding all the parts together like Baron von Frankenstein with his creature (or the Kabbalists and their golem) and zapping it with a bolt of lightning. Bizarre as this

scenario may sound, the thinking behind it appears to be becoming more and more prevalent, not only in transhumanist circles but *everywhere*.

Such beliefs can only arise from a denial of the existence of the unconscious and a raising up of the conscious ego mind to the throne of being. But if the ego mind is all the things we know and believe about ourselves, our memories, opinions, preferences, character traits (real or imagined), etc., needless to say this changes over time and varies from person to person, sometimes extremely. Not to mention that, at different times during the day (most obviously when we sleep), our conscious (or semi-conscious) minds are filled with different elements, all of which we identify as “ourselves.” Everyone knows that, to some degree at least, we respond to far more than we are consciously aware of. We all know what it’s like to experience irrational anger, to fall into despair for no apparent reason, or to find ourselves doing things with no idea of why we are doing them (and sometimes no memory of having done them). We are all, to one degree or another, aware of the existence of the unconscious, that there is far more to us than we are ever able to observe, much less categorize or explain, with our conscious minds. Yet we are also able to conveniently—and somewhat miraculously—ignore this fact throughout most of our lives.

Around the time I was becoming less and less interested in UFOs, I developed an interest in autism. This was not entirely coincidental, because there are some very obvious correlations between the two fields. Autistic people are often seen (and even describe themselves) as like alien beings; some of the more New Agey literature even suggests that autistics are literally extraterrestrials, walking unrecognized among us. Old faery lore, on the other hand, which has well-known correspondences with modern UFO lore, is filled with accounts of “changelings” being left in the place and likeness of a human child. Similarly, autistic children often seem perfectly normal until their second or third year, at which point the “symptoms” begin to show and parents may feel as if their child has been replaced by an alien imposter.

Autism relates to specific behaviors that are the result of a radically different way of perceiving the world. Autistic children, for reasons still unknown (it has to do with their brains having larger neural networks), seem to be hardwired in such a way that their senses function in totally different ways to ordinary children. One result of this is that they may fail to develop the kind of social identity which children are expected to develop. Autistic children are unable to imitate the behaviors of other children (or adults) and so to assume, or adopt, a socially acceptable “ego-self.” They are not able to learn, or rather, they can’t be conditioned. Our western bias (“neurotypical” is the word autistics have for it) assumes that this incapacity to “learn” (i.e., be conditioned) is due to a lack of consciousness. As Jaynes and others have shown, however, the reverse may more likely be the case. To the extent that autistic children are *more conscious* than ordinary children, they do not “learn” in the normal sense of the word, because, as Jaynes demonstrates, *consciousness prevents conditioning*.

Another way of saying that autistics are more conscious is that they don’t suppress or shut down their perceptual awareness to the same degree as other children. This would mean there is less of a clear dividing line between their conscious minds and their unconscious psyche (or what quickly becomes unconscious in “normal” children). Hence, they are often seen as “aliens,” psychics (Indigo kids), and, more commonly, as retarded, brain-damaged, dysfunctional, or handicapped. This is an inevitable presumption if all there really is to us is our conscious minds—what else are we to make of autistics who haven’t developed such a mind except to presume that they are “non-beings”? In fact, in many cases that’s exactly how they are seen and treated.

Very often low-functioning, non-verbal autistics who have been diagnosed as severely retarded are discovered to be above average intelligence once someone finds a way to communicate with them. If we find it so difficult to understand an autistic human or communicate with them, what does that say about the chances we would understand something truly alien if we encountered it? If we aren't able to recognize or communicate with the psyche (or "the alien") when it wears our own biological form, what chance do we have when it's zipping around the sky or materializing as an uninvited goblin in the dead of the night?

All of this points to our own lack of awareness as to the nature of the unconscious, i.e., that it is incomprehensible to the conscious mind *except through letting IT tell us what it is*. To do that we have to first learn its language.

Ditto the UFO. The psyche is the greater reality we are none of us aware of save in a superficial way, and the UFO experience *cannot be approached as a superficial question*. To try and interpret the UFO material without applying psychology is, to paraphrase Charles Fort, like trying to ride an imaginary camel through the eye of a hypothetical needle, in a haystack that never was.

The UFO As Trauma

"When trauma strikes the developing psyche of the child, a fragmentation of consciousness occurs in which the different 'pieces' (Jung called them splinter-psyches or complexes) organize themselves according to certain archaic and typical (archetypal) patterns, most commonly dyads or syzygies made up of personified 'beings.'"

—Donald Kalsched, *The Inner World of Trauma: Archetypal Defense Systems of the Personal Spirit*

I have written about the connection between early trauma and alien abduction experiences in great depth elsewhere (for an on-going web-site project, "The Prisoner of Infinity," at www.crucialfictions.com), so I will merely sum up briefly my position here before going on to qualify it. All that we know of the UFO and the alien—outside of any direct experiences we might have—come from stories, i.e., from accounts of eye witnesses and experiencers, some of whom have, I think beyond all doubt, experienced something. What they have experienced is unknown, but what we can be sure of is that they have perceived something and that they have then done their best (or at least made a cursory effort) to describe their perceptions accurately. These partial descriptions of unclear perceptions have then been collected, organized, and interpreted by researchers and, over time, been turned into hypotheses and, in most cases, articles of belief.

My own investigations lead me to the following hypothesis: it is not possible to separate the faculty of perception from the element of belief, because we not only develop beliefs based on our perceptions, but our perceptions are, likewise and to an unknown degree, limited, directed, and shaped by our beliefs. Both perception and belief develop in human beings at an early age, at a pre-rational stage of development. During this early stage of development, there is a primary experience of powerlessness and of the corresponding potential for trauma. There is also the inevitability of at least *some* degree of trauma informing our psychological development, limiting our abilities to perceive and giving rise to a

certain set of beliefs. To an unknown degree, both our perceptions and our beliefs are shaped, then, to protect us from the full brunt of early trauma, and from being overwhelmed by a feeling of powerlessness.

The depth psychological view sees early trauma, and the resulting psychic fragmentation and dissociation, as at base of all our subsequent experiences, perceptions, and beliefs. This is most unmistakably evident in the way we encounter divine or transcendental realities, for the simple(?) reason that the way we deal with early trauma is via *dissociation*, by calling upon and/or withdrawing into the realm of phantasy. Through phantasy, the greater, more transcendental part of the psyche intervenes and rescues us from intolerable reality by “abducting” us into its realm. This is not an unreal realm (the psyche is real), but it *is* a dissociated one. An experience of the psyche that isn’t grounded in the body cannot become fully real, because it will always be diluted, or polluted, by the defensive fictions that have arisen to keep the trauma out of our awareness. This is what I have termed “crucial fiction,” and while I extend such fictions to every aspect of our existence (starting and ending with the ego itself), once again, I think the UFO is a perfect opportunity to map the ways in which such fictions are created and made “crucial,” i.e., become articles of faith, fanaticism, irrational conviction, and out-and-out obsession.

What I discovered in the writing and dialogues for “The Prisoner of infinity,” and which I hope is being communicated to at least some of its reader and listeners, is how the experiences of Strieber (and by extension other abductees), whether phantasy, reality or some little understood combination of the two (the model I lean towards), are filled with very clear “symbolic” elements. These symbolic elements point towards early childhood trauma (which may be universal) which the psyche is attempting to address and integrate through *psychic re-enactments*. This requires re-experiencing trauma in an unconscious attempt to *make conscious* the original experience. If psychology is sufficiently accurate about this, then early trauma is the basis, the driving factor, not merely behind UFO encounters but *all* human history and experience, at least until that early trauma is made conscious and can be integrated.

The purpose of the UFO experience, then, like all other traumatic/transcendental encounters, is a re-experiencing of trauma to bring about healing in a conscious, contained fashion. This can be compared to the many types of initiation through trauma found in shamanic traditions, and even in Masonic and other western forms. However, it’s essential to point out that it is not the trauma *per se* that allows for integration, but the erasing or dissolving of previous “traumata” trapped in the body, by way of the “traumatic reenactment.” If this subtle distinction is missed, new trauma is caused, and what occurs is merely a new layer of conditioning to override the old, which is likely only to bury it still deeper in the unconscious. This can *appear* to be effective, however, because experiencing a new trauma will sometimes re-activate the dissociative mechanism developed in childhood to escape the original trauma. The person may then have a “transcendental experience,” but if so, the danger is that it will take them further from embodiment and not closer to it.

I have come to see Strieber as a clear example of this in the way that his later trauma at the hands of human agencies and/or “the visitors” can be mapped onto (and feeds into) his earlier Catholic conditioning. (And many of Strieber’s experiences, both early and later, entail out of body journeys, which seems to mirror the early experience of dissociation.) In the case of many other abductees also, I would suggest there’s more evidence for the experience being unbalancing and deranging than “initiatory.” It may activate “psychic potential,” as many experiencers report, but activating psychic

potential, also from what I've seen, is as often as not deranging, rather than conducive to a person's psychic wholeness or embodiment.

It's here that the alien abduction lore overlaps with that of the infamous intelligence programs such as MK-ULTRA, which often entail, or at least hint at, the conditioning-via-abuse of children (which Strieber also believes he was subjected to). The evidence would suggest that such programs are aimed at tapping into the psychological survival mechanism of dissociation, by which the psyche summons "demonic complexes" from "the Beyond" (the deeper unconscious) to bring about some kind of healing intervention for the child. If so, it may be that Strieber, along with thousands of others similarly interfered with (and not necessarily by government), has unwittingly summoned his own "visitor" phenomena, one which is both highly personal and, paradoxically, universal—since the human psyche reacts to trauma in more or less the same way every time.

The danger in this is obvious. People who have suffered such early fragmentation, by whatever outside agencies (I include myself in this camp), who are then exposed to the alien abduction literature are likely to reframe their trauma within this new context, as a way to re-experience it "safely." As a result, the phenomena will then, over the generations, become "viral" and, as already suggested, generate its own proofs.*

This may all be part of the larger plan, and it's certainly worth looking into for anyone who wants to get to the bottom of the UFO bottle. But what's more interesting to me, at this stage in my life, is how all of this can be seen to demonstrate the way the psyche works.

Because if the UFO is evidence not of outer but inner space, then the psyche, not quite literally perhaps but very nearly, becomes the creator and destroyer of worlds.

Alien Abduction, Child Abuse, & the "E.T. Hypothesis" as Crucial Fiction

"The unconscious mind is like the universe out beyond the quasars. It's a place we want to go to find out what's there."

—Whitley Strieber (allegedly quoting his nine-year old son), *Transformation*

I should make it very clear at this point that I am in no way suggesting that abduction experiences are merely mental fantasies created as a screen through which to revisit past experiences. There is abundant evidence that something "objectively real" (so far as we can even talk about such a thing) is happening, something that, by the nature of the evidence, clearly involves some sort of agenda that is both hidden and "advanced" – i.e., entails either technological or natural means beyond our common understanding of what is possible.

What I am saying is that these anomalous or otherworldly experiences are echoing – feeding into and potentially exploiting and exasperating – original traumas that may be independent of these hidden forces, and therefore much closer to home and easier to identify.

* If abductees on the whole seem closer to what we've seen or heard about victims of mind control than shamanic initiates, the "aliens" must be deduced to be closer to CIA agents than to shamans or "spiritually evolved" beings.

So while I don't intend to suggest that the abductee experience is less real than, say, an ordinary human kidnapping, it is clearly less "provable," because the UFO and the "alien" do not adhere to the rules of reality as we have come to accept them. The usual explanation for this maddening lack of proof is that "ETs" belong to some higher level of reality. I would argue that it has less to do with any magical qualities we assign to hypothetical outside agencies, and more to do with the fact that we have, to a great extent, denied the reality of the psyche. As a result, we are unable to grasp, or even fully recognize, its manifestations.

The desire to prove that these experiences are *real*, while perfectly natural and to some degree unavoidable on the part of the experiencer, is a dead-end that leads only to undirected obsession. As the man says, "What is real?" If the psyche is real, then whatever it experiences is real too. Seeking validation from outside is not part of the solution, but part of the problem. And not a small part, either.

Suppose we juxtapose reports of alien abductions, and the widespread belief in them, with the question of institutionalized child abuse (ritual or otherwise). There is evidence all around us for the latter; it is a largely overlooked part of human history (see Lloyd de Mause's *The Emotional Life of Nations* for a starting point). In contrast, there is relatively little evidence for alien abduction as an actual, physical occurrence (as compared to an insufficiently understood psychic one). Yet belief in alien abduction—while not yet embraced by the so-called "intelligentsia"—is far more widespread than belief in (or rather awareness of) systematized child abuse. (To the extent that some readers may find I'm presuming too much; those inclined can do their own digging.) There may be different reasons for this, but the one that interests me relates directly to the psyche, and that is that stories about alien abduction, though no less preposterous than stories about institutionalized abuse of children, are considerably more *palatable* to us.

One argument given by believers for the paucity of evidence for alien abductions is that the aliens in question are good at hiding their traces. Very well, and so we will counter that those involved in child trafficking and other forms of exploitation—being merely human—must surely be considerably *less* efficient than such alleged "aliens." So why do we hear so much about aliens and so little about exploiters of children? I think there's an equally "magical" explanation, but one which we can all identify to one degree or another in our own lives. The conscious mind has *extremely* strong defenses, and equally ingenious subterfuges, to prevent it from seeing what it does not want to see, in this case, the reality of trauma and its impact, both directly and indirectly, on our own lives.

Alien abduction may be a way for some of us to allow such traumatic material into our awareness in a more "magical" (transcendental) guise. This would account for the inescapable overlap between abduction narratives and systemized child abuse, for which Whitley Strieber, once again, is exhibit A. Strieber's accounts of "the visitors" are undeniably horrific, or at least they would be if he didn't constantly frame them in the language of shamanic initiation, evolutionary engineering, spiritual midwifery, and cosmic intervention. Such ambiguity is essential for the psychological survival of the child who suffers abuse (it *has* to believe in the goodness of those who have power over it); and logically, it's easier to feel ambiguous about beings who are outside our ordinary frame of understanding than ones who are not. Hence Strieber and others frame the visitors in Nietzschean terms, as "beyond good and evil."

There is a thin line between validating someone's experience and feeding their delusion, and many researchers (and a researcher-experiencer such as Strieber) may jump to too many conclusions too fast.

One of the reasons they are able, or even forced, to make such leaps is from underestimating the power of the psyche to generate experience. The other reason, perhaps connected, is that the mind experiences profound discomfort when forced to leave an unknown *as* unknown. It relentlessly seeks answers and, when it doesn't find any, has no qualms about inventing them and then forgetting it has done so.*

I have dealt with people who believe they are abductees (I even have my own abduction-like experiences), and from what I've seen, interpreting the experience as an external, "objective" reality tends to exacerbate the tendency of the mind towards rigidity, projection, delusion, and obsession. The person will often become comfortably immersed in a fantastic narrative about space brothers, hybrid aliens, government conspiracies, and the like, which removes them further and further, not merely from consensus reality (which is not always a bad thing), but from their own *inner* reality (as any obsessive external focus does). The reason for this tendency to take refuge in convincing fictions or partial truths may be straightforward: to connect fully to one's inner reality—to become fully embodied as a psyche—means returning to and fully re-integrating whatever early traumas prevented that embodiment from occurring at an early age. All of our fictions are designed to protect ourselves from that mind-shattering—though soul-rescuing—event.

So while I can admit to the possibility of actual, nuts-and-bolts aliens, I'm not really interested in exploring this possibility, at this time, especially because, as every Ufologist knows (though only if he or she admits it), there's almost nothing to go on. As Sherlock Holmes says, we need to first rule out all of the improbables before accepting the impossible. And yeah, I'm aware that, for many people, the idea of extraterrestrials visiting Earth and using super-advanced technology to hide their presence is less improbable than that of a "materialized psychism." But I still argue there's more evidence for the latter, and the primary criteria for accepting a given hypothesis is that *it fits the data better than the others*.

If it can be shown that childhood trauma informs at least *some* of these experiences, beyond reasonable doubt, then we now have a new element to bring to the table when considering all other cases. It may be that "the ET hypothesis" is *entirely unnecessary* based on the evidence (that's my position, I believe it was Jacques Vallee's too). Of course that doesn't rule out some other, nonhuman unknown, but again, the sensible way to proceed would be first of all to see if we can account for all the evidence *without* resorting to "magical" hypotheses. The fact that, to some people, the psyche is a magical hypothesis itself makes it doubly ironic that it's not being allowed into the debate, because it may be that all the magic and mystery which we are projecting onto the UFO is already there, at the very center of our lives, in the form of the psyche.

Accepting the reality of the psyche and learning more about how it works is, I think, indispensable for making meaningful headway in this field and for helping experiencers to deal with their experiences. In

* While abduction researchers may very well be sincere in their attempts to get to the bottom of what's happening to experiencers and to help them to make sense of it, this doesn't mean they aren't susceptible to delusion, or to external manipulation, or capable of unconsciously manipulating or deluding their witnesses. The recent disclosures around Budd Hopkins' and David M. Jacobs' work with abductees have provided extremely damning evidence of this. What makes me suspicious of the work of many researchers is that they frequently choose to frame the abduction experiences in terms in line with (what I see as) an overarching agenda: that of sowing the seed of a new scientific religion. John Mack, for example, recognized that the abductees he interviewed were reporting something real, and that it was a real unknown. But he then got busy interpreting it to make it into a "known," and of course, he couldn't help but refer to previous interpretations, both fictional and non, to do so.

contrast, I have seen very little evidence that anyone was helped by fully embracing a belief in nonhuman entities having control over their bodies and minds in a totally random way, or at best as part of some non-human design. In most cases (Strieber being an example), all this really does is allow the person to get swept away by a grandiose personal narrative partially formed by lurid sci-fi magazines and movies, and largely in-formed by religious indoctrination and a (trauma-based) need to feel powerful or special.

To give an example: one way in which experiencers get swept up by a sense of being on a world-saving mission is by trying to get the government (and other people) to see what the aliens are doing to us! Scratch the surface of this phantastic narrative and underneath it we may find something more mundane and tragic. At the very least, it's a close match for the frustration and torment of a child, unable to get its parents (or other adults, if the abuse or neglect is by the parents) to see what's happening to it. The experiencer's experience then becomes part of a larger, unconscious re-enactment, meant to bring about whatever resolution failed to occur when it was most needed.

This doesn't make the experience unreal; on the contrary, it makes it *more* real—but only if it's seen in the proper psychological context. We can even allow that the hypothetical aliens are real without invalidating this reading, since it re-contextualizes the ETs as outside agencies assisting the experiencer towards healing by re-staging a psychodrama *for* them. Without this extra layer of meaning to flesh it out and give it body, however, the alien abduction narrative is two-dimensional and bloodless, little better than a B-movie rendering of profound psychic truth.

What's a McGuffin? The Objective Reality of the Subject (Psyche)

“Subjective conscious mind is an analog of what is called the real world. It is built up with a vocabulary or lexical field whose terms are all metaphors or analogs of behavior in the physical world. Its reality is of the same order as mathematics. . . . Like mathematics, it is an operator rather than a thing or repository. . . . If consciousness is this invention of an analog world even as the world of mathematics parallels the world of quantities of things, what then can we say about its origin? Consciousness comes after language! The implications of such a position are extremely serious. . . . In reality, consciousness has no location whatever except as we imagine it has.”

—Julian Jaynes, *The Origin Of Consciousness In The Breakdown Of The Bicameral Mind*

If I present the idea that the only way to be objective about the UFO (or anything else) is to approach it subjectively, then this idea also must be taken as a “belief” of the author, one that can only ever have subjective meaning or reality. So then, what's my point? Only this: when approaching any subject at all, we need to be consciously creative, in order to avoid unconsciously fabricating. The first idea that must be sacrificed to this approach is the idea of “pure objectivity.” Trying to figure out if there's a sound in an empty forest when a tree falls is the great McGuffin of philosophy, quantum mechanics, and the UFO. It keeps the plot moving forward—until you realize that anything else would do the same job. At which point, the mechanics fall down completely.*

* McGuffin is the term which the film director Alfred Hitchcock used for whatever element drove the action of his thrillers, the object all the characters were chasing after and fighting over. The word is taken from a story about two men in a train. One man

My present approach is case specific, and the idea of case-specificity is central to my argument: there *is* no such phenomenon as “alien abduction,” any more than there is such a thing as “schizophrenia,” “autism,” murder, rape, birth or death, in any general or universally agreed on sense, because *every case is unique*—as unique as the human psyche. The goal of objectivity then is at odds with and adverse to the nature of the phenomena itself.

My “Crucial Fictions” thesis is not that understanding the psychology of trauma can explain away the UFO and other paranormal phenomena, but that it can, and indeed does, make a great deal of sense of them. Firstly, it allows us to see them as experiences that arise out of an unconscious “dialogue” between the psyche and the body; and secondly, it opens up the question of a more far-reaching interaction between the psyche and external reality, including the hidden, so-called “psychic” aspects of reality.*

Rightly understood, psychology (observation of the psyche) must encompass all human experience, at least up to total enlightenment or the discovery of absolute reality, free from psychic projections. If psychology has any value at all, it can’t be separated from any of the other, lesser disciplines, because the one thing we always bring to the table is our psyche. It’s the instrument of study which we are always studying, whether we like it, or know it, or not.

Returning to Jung:

He who would fathom the psyche must not confuse it with consciousness, else he veils from his own sight the object he wishes to explore. On the contrary, to recognize the psyche, even, he must learn to see how it differs from consciousness. It is highly probable that what we call illusion is actual for the psyche: for which reason we cannot take psychic actuality to be commensurable with conscious actuality.²

Experiencers often complain, quite rightly, that their experience is being marginalized out of existence by skeptics. But that’s nothing compared to what’s being done to the psyche. It might be argued that the psyche is every bit as ephemeral or elusive as the UFO; to some extent that’s true—but only to the extent that we are not directing our attention *to* it. In recent times the institution of psychiatry and the prevalence of medications to treat psychological problems has gone hand in hand with a steady reduction of interest or awareness as to the question of the psyche. Ironically enough, the psyche is now in a similar position to the UFO, that of being roundly “debunked,” not only by science but by almost every other field as well. Even psychology has largely turned its back on it!

I think this has to do with the common mistake of equating psyche with mind, and the view that the mind is merely a by-product of the body and therefore can be treated as a chemical imbalance. This may be true of the mind but it is not true of the psyche, because the psyche corresponds not with the conscious mind but the unconscious or total self, which is equivalent to the idea of the soul—an idea

says “What’s that package up there in the baggage rack?”, and the other answers, “Oh, that’s a McGuffin.” The first one asks “What’s a McGuffin?” “Well,” the other man says, “It’s an apparatus for trapping lions in the Scottish Highlands.” The first man says, “But there *are* no lions in the Scottish Highlands,” and the other one answers, “Well, then that’s no McGuffin!”

* One obvious question about the UFO material is, if trauma is somehow informing and even generating the abduction experience, and if trauma is a universal occurrence, why aren’t more people reporting abductions? According to Strieber and others, the phenomena *does* touch on all of our lives, but only some of us recall it. I would put some credence to the idea that the abduction experience is, like trauma, in some sense universal; but if so, there are obviously different degrees and different ways of dealing with it—both trauma and abduction—or of not dealing with it and pushing it all the way into unconsciousness.

which science has even less time for. Yet even those who believe in the soul have a tendency to overlook the unconscious—the nature of which, after all, is that it is overlooked.

My impression (especially since I began trying to communicate these ideas) is that ufology (among other fields) fears and resents psychology because it thinks it will be used to “explain away” the data. Of course it can be used this way, or rather misused, just as psychology can be misused to plunder someone’s nervous system with drugs and other technology. But it can also be used, more wisely, to deepen our understanding of what is happening, and maybe even to crack the code of the UFO. Properly applied, psychology won’t bring about the end of Ufology but a new departure point. This is the departure point put forward, as far back as 1959, by Jung in *Flying Saucers*: that, as a living archetype, the UFO speaks the language not of the mind but of the soul. If the UFO is trying to communicate with us, then its message is not coming from outer space but from inner space, from the realm of the psyche. The only way to understand the UFO, then, is to learn the language of the unconscious, a language not of words, or even concepts, but of symbols. More baffling still, this language is one that is particular to each individual psyche, and which can only be learned by entering into a fully *subjective* relationship with what we are studying—the psyche first, and only secondly the UFO.

Ufologists and experiencers can assign all the objective reality they like to UFOs and aliens, but our experience of them is still going to be subjective and it’s naïve to suggest otherwise. (Or rather, it’s only possible by ignoring the reality of the unconscious.) We don’t even experience our spouses or children as they actually are, how much less so an entity that belongs to a separate order of existence and that may not even have fixed physical form?! In *General Aspects of Dream Psychology*, C. G. Jung clearly describes the mechanism of projection:

Just as we tend to assume that the world is as we see it, we naïvely suppose that people are as we imagine them to be. . . . All the contents of our unconscious are constantly being projected into our surroundings, and it is only by recognizing certain properties of the objects as projections or imagos that we are able to distinguish them from the real properties of the objects. . . . Unless we are possessed of an unusual degree of self-awareness we shall never see through our projections but must always succumb to them, because the mind in its natural state presupposes the existence of such projections. It is the natural and given thing for unconscious contents to be projected.³

While a Ufologist might assume my approach to be reducing his or her field to something less real, I would argue the reverse. By giving the psyche its due as the primary, maybe even the sole, creative force in our experience—not counting God, of course—we are granting to the UFO a far more vital role than that of a mere nuts-and-bolts “miracle.”

The argument rests, not on whether one believes in the objective reality of alien abduction or not, but on whether one is aware of the reality and potency of the psyche. If I am questioning the objective reality of UFOs, I am also questioning the objective reality of *everything*. The UFO is a good place to start, however, because almost everyone agrees that it can’t be pinned down to an “object” (flying or otherwise). That unknowing generates a quasi-religious frenzy of belief and disbelief around it, and so the question of whether what we are perceiving is objectively real or not has progressed from being a merely philosophical one to one of practical urgency and social import. Because belief not only moves mountains—it builds and destroys empires.

The problem we are faced with when we enter into the realms of the paranormal is the literal-mindedness that insists that, for something to be real, it has to have concrete objective existence which *others can agree upon*. This is a problem precisely because, when we think this way, we are unable to recognize the reality of the psyche or to understand the nature of our experience, and instead we are interacting with our own phantasy narratives. Ironically, the insistence on such phenomena having an objective reality is itself a symptom of disconnection from psychic reality, which can only ever be subjective, that, in fact, must become *fully subjective* in order to be objectively real to the experiencer.

Admittedly, this is a difficult concept, one that has to do with embodiment: to be fully present, in our bodies, is to be fully in the position of subject. Yet if the psyche is the true subject or self, it can only experience the *objective reality of the body* by being fully aligned with, or centered within, the body.

Therefore, to see reality as *totally and inescapably subjective* is, paradoxically, the only way to know objective reality.

Invasion from Within

“A man’s errors are his portals of discovery.”

—James Joyce

As a writer, I like to reduce things to as simple terms as I can, and to always seek out the bedrock of my own experience. That’s why I write. This is especially helpful, even essential, when we enter into the liminal realms of the UFO in which true and false, physical and non-physical, don’t seem to be mutually exclusive realities but weirdly overlapping, even interchangeable, depending on which way we’re looking.

So let’s say, for the sake of positing such a bedrock, that the body and the psyche are the twin poles of human reality. This would make the conscious mind something like a satellite fragment that floats around, somewhere on the outside of both, preventing full embodiment. Full embodiment would only occur when the psyche and the soma overlap and what appear to be two become one (two mutually dependent, “concentric” systems). Until this happens, the mind-satellite will continue to “leach off” our life force through that schism between body and soul. Like the Moon stealing the light of the Sun and sending its deranging rays to Earth, the mind generates its own phantasy experience and causes the body and the psyche both to be haunted (and hunted) by ghostly images of the past.

In this model, the ego mind is at best a helpless witness to the wonders of the psyche—the UFO—and the terrors of the body which constitute the abduction scenario. What it witnesses, if and when it ever fully understands it, will undo its crucial fiction forever. Perhaps this is why the experience of powerlessness is the key to understanding these experiences, since powerlessness is the alpha and omega of human experience.

My growing sense, after decades of stumbling, half blind, through the halls and corridors of Chapel Perilous, is that the psyche is not merely a perceptual but a *creative* agency; that it is able not only to perceive but to generate experience, and that the age-old dilemma between determinism and free will is

an illusion, because the dilemma is rather between the conscious ego mind and the unconscious psyche self, or, more simply, between what we perceive of what is happening (and believe about it), and what is *really going on*.

This makes the UFO (as Jung suggested fifty years ago) a living manifestation of the overlap and interface between two states of awareness. It is a liminal reality that is “literally” (but also metaphorically!) “abducting” us, like Persephone, into the underworld of the psyche, so as to introduce us to our “shadow” nature and make us whole.

We may be observing with the UFO the degree to which the collective psyche can create a phenomenon out of itself *and then become subject to it*—and even the victim of it. This makes the UFO a kind of living theater, enacting a collective split between our inner and outer realities. Hence it has taken the form of the *vesica piscis*, the overlap between worlds.

In the afore-cited Julian Jaynes work, *The Origin Of Consciousness In The Breakdown Of The Bicameral Mind*, he puts forward a convincing model of how self-consciousness came about in human beings. Jaynes’ book, while still widely read, has been contested in scientific and anthropological circles, but I’m not going to address that. Instead I’m going to simplify and adapt it to suit my own ends, hopefully without mangling Jayne’s original thesis too badly.

Initially, like the other animals, human beings did not possess consciousness as we experience it today. They were conscious at a bodily level, through the senses, but not at a mind level, i.e., they were not conscious of being conscious or of being a “self” that *was* conscious. They did not possess a self as we think of it today. Jaynes describes this in terms of the two hemispheres of the brain being in total synthesis so that there was neither the rational nor the imaginative faculty which we now associate with the two hemispheres. Instead we might imagine one, seamless perceptual organ, with no need for rational interpretation and allowing for spontaneous, purely instinctive action. Over time, however, and due to the increased sizes of tribal communities and the resulting development of language, humans began to develop a rudimentary sense of self, along with a need to make choices, or at least the awareness of somehow being “moved” to do so. (Pure instinct is not a choice but an unconscious response to the environment.)

Jaynes suggests that this split between the hemispheres of the brain was the beginning of the formation of a separate, rational, sense of I-ness, and that there is evidence for this, or of the period leading up to it, in a work such as Homer’s *The Iliad*. In *The Iliad*, whenever the gods “intervene” in the lives of men, it is in the form of the emotions, impulses, and actions of the men and women themselves. Ancient man, in other words, was moved to action only by the intervention of the gods—or rather, he experienced the aspect of his being responsible *for* action and emotions *as* “the gods”—forces far beyond his own slowly forming sense of self. This, I propose, is the experience of ego in its very early stages, and is somewhat similar to how a child first becomes aware of itself *as* a self, via interaction with parents, caregivers, and older siblings—all of whom seem in some sense “above” the child and who therefore have a degree of control over it.

The next stage Jaynes posits in this development of consciousness (I would say “ego consciousness” but anyway) is when humans no longer experienced the gods in such a visceral, inner way but as a disembodied voice, giving them commands, instruction, and advice. Jaynes’ idea is that this was a result of the left brain becoming the center of self-awareness, separate from the less differentiated, more

“imaginal” right brain, and how it received wisdom, input, in the only way it could understand it, in the form of *language*. This would be prior to the inception of *internal* dialogue and the ego-self as we currently experience it, back when there was still some sort of channel between left and right hemispheres, and between the (self-)conscious mind and the psyche.

Jaynes’ model makes a good case for the idea that, the more a self-conscious mind or ego self develops, the more externalized—“outed”—our experience of the psyche must become. Put another way, as the ego self develops an increasingly impenetrable wall around “it” (I place “it” in quotes because the wall *is* the ego, since the awareness that exists inside “it” is only possible to the degree that such isolating barriers are in place), as this wall of ego becomes less and less porous and more and more impenetrable, the contents of the total psyche are further and further banished to the wilderness of the unconscious. The price of self-consciousness, then, is unconsciousness.

What I want to suggest now is that this banishing of the “gods”—representing the deeper knowledge, wisdom, and passions of the psyche—has made it necessary for that unconscious material to approach us from the outside, *as a separate order of existence*, so as to get around—or break *through*—that impenetrable barrier of ego-mind. Hence we have the increased manifestations of faery lore, demons, and latterly the UFO and the alien abduction narratives, in which the “other” literally snatches us from our sleep and drags us into another, more “psychic” or dreamlike reality. The denser the ego mind becomes, in other words, the denser the manifestations of the psyche must also become, *in order to be recognized and received by us at all*.

This doesn’t mean such manifestations are unreal. What is unreal in this model is not the psyche and its manifestations but the ego that has isolated itself from the greater reality of the soul, which sees everything through the chinks of its cavern, and which, like Plato’s cave-dwellers—or like a child in its room at night—creates living phantasms out of shadows. The ego, being itself unreal, *cannot perceive reality*. The UFO demands that we recognize this fact about ourselves because, as a living, nuts and bolts manifestation of the psyche (the gods, etc., etc.), it is literally powerful to destroy us, and this it will do if we fail to understand it *as emanating from our own inner depths*.

What we do not bring forth from within us will destroy us. I would add to this that, if we are unaware of what is coming forth from within us, we will see it as coming from outside of us, and will either fall down and worship it or do battle with it. At which point, either way, it will destroy us. And for the record, unconscious projection is not “bringing forth,” but the result of disowning and rejecting, i.e. of *not* bringing forth.

It is obviously more than a minor point that, in his book, Jaynes use of the word “consciousness” actually refers to self-awareness, i.e., what we *think* of as consciousness. Yet the implications of all of this are that language, and thought-based consciousness, in fact act as a kind of filter for—or even buffer against—consciousness in its pure sense, and that what we think of as the unconscious—i.e. the total awareness of the body—is rather a different, less differentiated form of consciousness that is unable to make it through that filter. The UFO as an externalized psyche-*imago* may be leading us towards totality or enlightened consciousness; but because we are unable to recognize such a thing even as a possibility (outside of spiritual jargon), it is instead being clothed in the contents of—our closest equivalent experience—*the unconscious* (pre-egoic awareness). The myths that form around “it,” then, while superficially progressive are actually *regressive*. They are leading us not towards “super-consciousness” but back to unconsciousness; hence the powerful, almost irresistible allure of “the UFO.”

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If we resist the desire to interpret, assume, or believe anything about the UFO evidence, there is nothing to suggest the presence of extraterrestrials, nor is there proof of any kind of autonomous *beings* at all. All we know for sure is that something is occurring which we don't understand and which can and often does take on the guise of these things. To approach a complete unknown in terms of the known is a mistake based on the assumption that "there's nothing new under the sun." But the psyche is like love: it's the oldest and the newest thing in the world. And if it's a creative force, then it may be constantly transforming itself, so that, until the day we fully embody it, it will always, always appear to us as "alien."

The moment we identify this presence as "something," we are no longer interacting with it *as it is* but only with our own tired old assumptions about ourselves and reality. Hence we are looking to it—as to a modern form of saving grace—to come into our lives and transform them into something less tired and old. Maybe this is why the ET never lands, because the moment it did land, it would turn out to be us: just another boring old terrestrial.

The only alternative to this grim and shabby scenario (that of a scientific "new" religion based around space travel and the UFO) is if there's an internal "landing"—a moment of transcendental truth in which the body is "invaded" from space, and we are fully and finally *occupied* by the psyche.

If we agree that UFO is real in *some* sense, we can also agree that it issues from somewhere beyond our familiar social realm of experience. Even the most mundane interpretation—that it represents extraterrestrial (or possibly human, off-world, or even inner earth/faery) technology that is beyond what we can collectively understand or even *recognize as* technology—even this model admits that our current understanding is inadequate to explain, represent, or interpret our experience. Because of this, we are obliged—consciously or otherwise—to *turn to the elements of the unconscious* (myth, fantasy, and dream) *to make sense of it*.

In *Modern Man in Search of a Soul*, Jung points out that just because a dream can't be understood at face value doesn't mean that the immediately perceived content is merely a façade obscuring a hidden truth. The dream symbol is closely aligned to its content—it's only that, if we don't understand the language which it represents, we won't be able to make sense out of it. Either it will seem like nonsense, or we will misread it and come up with an overly literal interpretation, one that makes superficial sense but misses the deeper meaning. Ditto with the UFO.

It's not that the UFO experience is merely a façade or false front for some psychic reality behind it. It's that the UFO is a symbolic narrative which can't be understood as a literal enactment—even *if it is*—because we don't presently have the *tools* to understand it. We aren't yet conscious of the kind of "technology" (language) which the UFO employs, so it will always be indistinguishable to us from magic—the stuff of dreams.

What's the objective of an object that flies unidentified through skies and in and out of our sleep—that subjects its subjects to an experience in which they experience themselves as objects, in an entirely subjective fashion? Coherence depends on a willingness to relinquish our efforts to make the pieces fit in accordance with our subjective view of what constitutes objectivity and coherence. Making sense yet? Or is it time to *stop*—all that?

If the UFO is an objective representative or “ambassador” of the psyche, then it only *appears* to be being authored by our perceptions and expectations. In fact, *it* is the author of our experience *of* it, and it’s the author of the experiencer, too. The thing being observed is not only creating the observation, but the necessary illusion (the crucial fiction) of an observer observing *anything*.

To recognize the UFO as us is impossible. The moment we did so, we would also see that there was no “us” to do the recognizing. There is no way to make sense out of a phenomenon that is in actuality the faculty of making sense out of reality. We can only disappear—or be abducted—in the attempt.

We can’t be conscious of consciousness. We can *think* we are, but then we will only prove that we aren’t. Why? Because thought is not a substitute for consciousness, any more than belief is a substitute for knowing. The finger is not the moon, the map is not the territory, the menu is not the meal—because the medium *is* the message.

To pursue the UFO is to pursue our own undoing. It will end either in realization or in ruin. Is there even a difference?

None of these statements are true—including this one.

¹ C. G. Jung, *Modern Man in Search of a Soul*, trans. W.S. Dell and Cary F. Baynes, Harcourt, Brace, and Company, New York, 1933, p. 72-3.

² *Ibid*, p. 73.

³ C. G. Jung, *Dreams* (From Volumes 4, 8, 12, and 16 of *The Collected Works of C. G. Jung*) (New in Paper), trans. R. F. C. Hull, Princeton University Press, 2012, p. Page 507