

THE UFO PHENOMENON AND ITS
RELATIONSHIP TO PARAPSYCHOLOGICAL RESEARCH.

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We ourselves are parapsychologists and for quite a time we did not consider that Ufology belonged in our area of research at all. Consequently, for some time we paid little or no attention to the reports of UFO sightings, mentally dismissing the more lurid accounts as hoaxes, or the fantasies of disordered minds, and labelling the reports of mysterious lights, etc. as natural phenomena, mistakenly reported as unidentified - clearly if one knew the situation and the heavens most of these would become identifiable. Then, in the early 1970's we met up with Allen Hynek, and had opportunity for conversation with him about these mysterious objects. It became clear to us that a good deal of time and effort had been spent on research of these objects, and that while it was certainly true that a large percentage of reported sightings fell into the category of natural phenomena, seen in unusual conditions, or under unusual circumstances, there was indeed a 'rump' so to speak, which would not go away. Completely reputable people - people whom Allen Hynek was fond of saying would be completely believed if giving evidence in a court of law - were reporting sightings, and encounters, which were very hard to explain away. It was this small percentage that was beginning to fascinate an increasing number of investigators and scientists like ourselves, and following conversations with Allen Hynek we decided to 'test the water' so to speak, and set up a centre to receive UFO reports, and endeavour to help solve some of the mysteries. We were prompted to do this by the fact that we were becoming increasingly aware that there was indeed an overlap in the areas of our parapsychological

research and that of certain types of UFO reports. We had noticed that many of the people reporting, for instance, poltergeist experiences, would also report, quite nonchalantly, that they had also seen a UFO, or had an encounter with people from a UFO, sometimes frequently, sometimes only once. We felt that it would be a worthwhile project to investigate in depth the circumstances surrounding some of these sightings - tackling the report as one would a report of a parapsychological nature.

Having decided to set up a Centre to receive UFO reports, and indulged in a fair amount of local publicity, we got the expected result. For the first two weeks the phone hardly stopped ringing, day or night. We had reports sent in going back for twenty years or more, and, we also received a lot of current reports. We found, as everyone else who has worked in this research has found, I expect, that people frequently waited until the 'trail' was cold before phoning. How can one investigate a light in the sky that a person saw two nights ago, with only a vague idea of direction, height, etc. but about which the person asserts, quite positively, that 'it had to be a UFO, it could not have been a plane, and it certainly was not a star or planet! We had mistaken sightings of natural phenomena, hoaxes, and all the other known explanations for UFOs. But we also got ^{expected} the percentage of reported sightings from people who fell into our category of people who experience parapsychological phenomena.

We think it is important here to emphasize a few points. Over the years we have discovered that many people who experience parapsychological phenomena, and especially

those who experience poltergeist phenomena, do so at times when they are undergoing some form of extreme emotional upheaval. They are not mentally sick, they are certainly not crazy, they are completely normal people - certainly people whose word would be believed in a court of law. But emotional trauma can happen to any one of us - bereavement, separation from loved ones, loss of a job, serious illness in a loved one, most of us have experienced such emotional trauma at some time or other, and most of us will certainly do so again. We have discovered in our research into poltergeist phenomena that in some people this emotional trauma produces strange effects - objects in their vicinity can move without anyone touching them, strange noises are heard, raps, footfalls, and so on, and if the trauma persists, apparitions are frequently seen. The rationale of the apparitions is as follows - the person concerned finds it difficult to accept or believe that his own subconscious mind is able to produce the phenomena of its own accord, there has to be 'someone' responsible, and the usual explanation put forward, especially by spiritualists, is that it is the spirit of a dead person. So the 'victim' of the outbreak finds a 'scapegoat' to hold responsible for the happenings - Great Aunt Fanny has come back to haunt him, because he did not carry out her wishes properly after her death - and so, Lo and Behold in due course Aunt Fanny appears, as a fully fledged ghost, to haunt him. But suppose you don't really believe in ghosts and the spirits of the dead, how do you resolve the problem of the responsibility for the poltergeist phenomena? Some people appear to have resolved this by ascribing the effects to UFO's and the people whom they carry. They 'see' a landing

craft, they meet the people within it, sometimes they are taken aboard, sometimes the people come out of the craft - they communicate telepathically - in spite of language difficulties they always know what the people in the UFO are telling them. It has to be emphasized at this point that these experiences are very real to the people *to whom they happen.* They are not deliberately or consciously telling lies, or cheating - the experience of seeing a ghost is a very real one to the person concerned, and sometimes, on account of telepathic ability in a group situation, more than one person may see the same apparition. It is then very difficult for the people concerned to believe other than that it is a real object. This is a situation with which we are very familiar in psychic research. Given the right circumstances anyone may experience an hallucination, and probably most people have had such an experience at some time or other during their lives. Hallucinations due to drugs are known and accepted as fact by most people who have read about the subject; hallucinations during a febrile illness are well recognised and generally referred to as delirium. But one can also experience hallucinations at times of emotional upset or stress, if one is elated, depressed, worried, overjoyed, etc. In a state of disturbed emotions one frequently sees what one expects to see, for instance, seriously ill people and those in danger of death, frequently 'see' those loved ones who have already died. It seems to us that some reported UFO sightings are a form of modern ghost.

The hallucination takes the form that is expected by the person seeing it. Throughout history people have seen the ghosts of the culture in which they live - primitive man 'saw' the spirits of the trees and rivers; the ancient Greeks and Romans walked and talked with their 'gods'; when Christianity made its appearance believers saw the spirits of the prophets, apostles, the Virgin Mary. At historical shrines the ghosts of the people who created the history appear - Anne Bolyn naturally appears with 'her head tucked underneath her arm' as the song goes - because everyone expects to see her that way when they visit the Tower of London.

When spiritualism became the vogue, we became accustomed to the idea of seeing the ghosts or spirits of our departed loved ones; but with the wane of belief in conventional religion, and the coming of the space age, the time is ripe for a new type of cultural ghost to become manifest, and what better than a being from outer space! A ghost experience is often the culminating event in a poltergeist situation. Traditionally, in such a situation the first disturbance consists of noises, sounds of footsteps, doors banging, and so forth. Then objects may move of their own accord, these are often quite large objects of considerable weight. Lights may switch themselves on and off, electrical and mechanical equipment may malfunction. At this stage the people concerned may believe they are being 'haunted', and will search for a possible scapegoat or scapeghost! When it is decided who is responsible for causing these effects it is not uncommon for one, or more, of the people concerned to see an actual apparition of their 'ghost'. This is a very common pattern of haunting, and one with which we have become very familiar over a period of more than twenty years of research. Generally speaking the phenomena centre around someone who is in the midst of an emotional disturbance, as we have said previously.

Now, if you transpose this to the UFO phenomenon the parallels become obvious. If the person undergoing stress is in a situation where unexplained happenings are taking place around him, and he is then out in his car, and suddenly the lights go off, or the engine stops for no apparent reason, and if he is familiar with and believes in the possibility that UFOs are real craft from outer space, and contain strange beings - humanoids - then this is what he may very well see! They will appear as completely real to him, as does any other type of ghost appear real to the beholder. Incidentally, one has only to recollect the reality of a figure conjured up by a stage hypnotist for fun, to realise how very real these figures are to the person reporting the experience. *And* of course their reality is confirmed in the witness' view by the actual reality of the car malfunction, or perhaps by the broken branches of trees, or even, possibly, by landing rings. (When one is aware of the wide variety of physical phenomena that occur in a poltergeist outbreak, the possibility of landing rings falling into this category is not as fanciful as it may seem).

The above is not just a hypothesis. We have found that in many cases this is just exactly what happens. In those 'close encounter' type cases which we have been able to follow up thoroughly, we have found that this has been the case. A typical example was a story told me by a man I happen to know reasonably well. He is a completely honest person, and firmly believes in what he told me. He started a conversation by asking if we had had any reports of UFO sightings the previous night, and I said "No - Why?". He then said that on the previous evening at around 10 p.m. he and a friend had seen a very bright light, low down in the sky, which remained stationary for about half an hour while they watched it, and then it suddenly went very fast, straight up into the sky, and vanished. This is a very typical type of story, and one difficult to evaluate after the event. No known natural objects behave in this manner. His companion was an elderly man who lives in his home, and is dependent on him. We chatted about the experience, and of

his life in general. I was a little puzzled as to why he and the old man were out taking a walk at night; he is a close-knit family, and I wondered if there could have been a family upset. During the conversation he mentioned that he often sees 'crosses' in the sky, and they mean something good for him. He is a religious man. We continued to talk in a conversational way and he told me of his childhood, and of how his father used to beat him, and he would be afraid, and run out of the house and wander the countryside until his father had cooled down. He told me about one such occasion when he was standing at the edge of a field of uncut hay, and he saw a path appearing in the tall grass, as if someone were walking there, but nobody was visible, the grass just bent, and stayed down. The unseen walker came towards him, and then the path turned towards the bush, where it stopped on the edge of the trees. The path remained quite visible! This reminded me of the UFO 'landing rings'. My witness continued by saying that he felt very good, and felt that he had been given a 'guardian angel', and that whenever he needed help this angel would appear and give him a sign. So whenever he feels in need of help he goes outside, and he usually gets a 'sign' - often he sees 'crosses' but on this night he saw the light, which he took to be a UFO. The good feeling, nevertheless, was there just as if it had been a cross. Of course the old man, his companion, supported the story, as so many dependent witnesses do, and again it is interesting that in most cases we have investigated of multiple witness sightings, the back-up witness is in some way 'dependent' on the original observer. We have been studying the answers to a questionnaire which we sent out, and to which we received some 20,000 answers, detailing various types of psychic experience. We deliberately did not include a specific question about UFO sightings, but put a general question asking for details of any other unusual experience the writer might have had. A very large number of people who reported poltergeist or ghost experiences answered this question with detailed reports of UFO sightings, many of these being multiple experiences. We also found that a few people on certain medications, some people taking drugs, and some

people suffering from certain medical conditions, report hallucinatory experineces, and these include seeing UFOs. When these people report UFO sightings we have found that unless specifically questioned, they may not mention the other hallucinations. This is probably why many UFO investigators without parapsychological experience have not discovered this fact. We have found it is more important to investigate the witness' general background in relation to other experiences than to spend time going *into* a lot of specific detail about the UFO itself.

A further example of this type was a man who telephoned and said he was returning home in the early hours of the morning, and stopped at a coffee shop; while drinking his coffee he looked out of the window and saw a very large bright light stationary in the sky outside. When he got into his car the light came down low, over the top of his car, and followed him for the 30 miles or so home, and then when he drove into his garage, the light shot straight up into the sky and vanished. This was all he told us in the initial report, and one was tempted to leave it as another example of an unexplained light. But he was invited to call, and offered coffee, and a long conversation ensued. The interviewer did not refer to the sighting, or ask any questions about it, but merely made general conversation. During this conversation the young man volunteered the information that he has a medical condition which necessitated him taking maintenance doses of a certain medication daily. However he lived with his mother, (a widow), and they had a lot of 'rows'. When they were quarrelling he would deliberately omit to take his medication to annoy her. This, in turn, would lead to him becoming restless, and he would get in his car, and drive for hours, sometimes all night. When asked if this was the case 'the other night when you saw the UFO' he replied that it was so; he further volunteered the information that in this emotional state and without his medication, he habitually saw hallucinations of people he had known - he said he saw the face of a former girl-friend in every fire hydrant he passed. When the suggestion was made that the light he saw could have been a form of hallucination,

his initial response was that it could not have been 'it was definitely a UFO'. However, on thinking it over, he realised that this was the probable explanation and clearly accepted it as such. Perhaps one should mention that a ball of bright light is often seen during a poltergeist experience, and although these are ^{often} usually seen indoors, there is no reason why they should not appear outside as well. In recent months such lights have been photographed in poltergeist situations, so it is possible, that the ball of light was in fact a real physical phenomenon, and not hallucinatory. But again it is a parapsychological phenomenon, not a phenomenon from outer space.

Because UFO sightings are reported in a situation where under other circumstances the person might report seeing a ghost of a departed spirit, a spiritualist-type 'cult' has grown up around the phenomenon. The basic beliefs of members of the cult are much the same as those of some spiritualist groups, but with a 'twist'. Essentially the belief is that UFOS are craft from some other galaxy, operated by beings superior to ourselves. They are watching the progress of life here (some of them say the UFO people actually 'planted' mankind on earth). The space people are finding and training certain chosen humans who will be rescued from an impending holocaust, due at the end of the current millenium. Certain spiritualists have broken away, also, from conventional spiritualism, and are now proclaiming that the souls of those who have passed over from this life have been taken up into the UFOs and are 'stored' in the space computers. They say that certain 'chosen' souls are still able to communicate through the chosen ones on earth, and they are sending us information about life on the far away stars, and in the space ships themselves. Some of these ideas have been around for many years, and were even put forward in the literature of the '30s. They have become a mishmash of science fiction, spiritualism, and psychic readings, with a flavouring of pyramid lore, stories of the Bermuda Triangle, and lost Atlantis. However this kind of literature is reaching a wide public, and the ideas attract many people. When investigating a reported sighting of a close encounter type it is necessary to ascertain

if the person reporting has been exposed to any of these ideas. We have found that a number of people reporting this type of experience very firmly believe in these theories. They may believe they themselves are among the chosen ones, that they have been given a message for mankind, and they often believe that their own dead loved ones are awaiting them aboard the UFOs. Their reported sighting becomes more in the nature of a religious vision or apparition, and the 'shining people' of the space craft bear a striking resemblance to the 'angels' of Christianity.

We ourselves have had examples of this type of reported sighting - one very cold, snowy, February evening an immigrant lady appeared at our door in great distress. Driving along the freeway she saw a huge UFO, with lights blazing, land in a field beside the freeway. She was certain she had seen it, despite the fact there was a blinding snowstorm, and when we questioned her she admitted that the other traffic on the road was proceeding as if nothing had happened. She was in desperation, and asked us to help her find it again. It turned out that she had lost her husband some 3 months previously, and was convinced that his 'soul' was in the computer banks of the UFO she had seen, and if only she could re-locate it, she would be able to get in touch with him again. She had, of course, received the above mentioned literature, and being a stranger in a strange land here in Canada, had seized whatever comfort she could find. It was impossible to convince her that the UFO she had 'seen' did not exist. As in parapsychological investigation, at the border line between faith and reality, a person sees what they want to see, and believes what they want to believe.

This question of a 'ball of light' bears further discussion. In parapsychological research we encounter these in two situations - as just mentioned they are surprisingly common in poltergeist outbreaks, and in this situation they are 'real' i.e. they are seen by everyone present, and can be photographed - Bill Roll's team of investigators produced a very good photograph of such a light (B). It seems likely that the 'energy' that is operative in a poltergeist situation sometimes appears in this way - often the lights reported are 'flashes' or 'pinpoints' of light, but now and then they seem to form a large ball - 'as big as a football' -- sometimes this ball changes shape and appears to resemble an object or person. The photograph taken by the Durham team is very like the picture (A) of the light appearing on the February cover of CUFOS. This light appeared when the film was developed of a photograph taken out of doors of a lakeshore scene. This light was not visible to the observers and only appeared on the film after it was developed. This brings us to another parapsychological phenomenon; that of psychic photography. Some people, apparently, have an ability to influence photographic film, and imprint an extra image when a photograph is taken. Most of you will have heard of Ted Serios. This is a rare ability, and frequently it is alleged that these phenomena are fraudulently produced. However we have done some extensive research on this subject, and we have photographs taken by someone whom we have been experimenting with for some years, and under conditions which we ourselves are satisfied are not fraudulent, i.e. the subject using our own camera,

and freshly bought film, and only handling the camera to take the picture (in some cases not even holding the camera herself), and we have discovered that this person can produce certain shapes at will, i.e. an 'angel' a 'bigfoot' and a UFO (D). There is the possibility that those people taking pictures such as are on the cover of CUFOS are in fact taking 'psychic' photographs, and are themselves 'putting' the image on the film. This could be quite a spontaneous phenomenon, some people seem to have this ability and are not always aware of it. This may explain photographs produced in situations of religious enthusiasm.

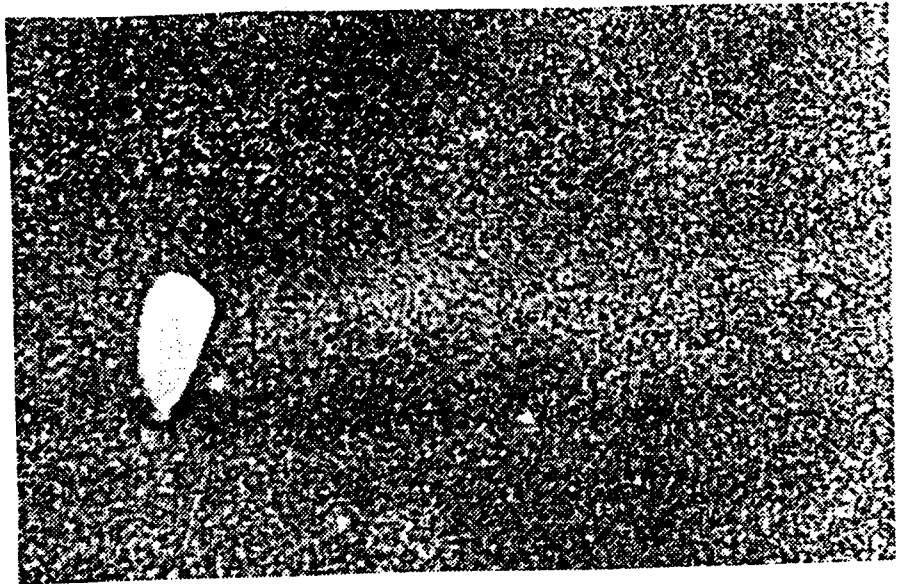
Illustrations.

- A. CUFOS light. (Centre for UFO Studies newsletter).
- B. Luminosity both seen and photographed by investigators in a poltergeist situation.
- C. Photograph taken in a religious apparition situation at Zheitun, Cairo.
- D. A deliberately produced "psychic photography effect" produced by a subject (not in the picture) at the New Horizons Research Foundation.

A



B



C



D

