

## THE CONCRETE DREAM

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It seems reasonable to assume that at least some UFO reports are generated by poorly understood natural phenomena, and reports of featureless luminosities would appear to be prime candidates. However nothing is ever that simple, as this 1978 article argued.

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Anyone who has studied the UFO records carefully cannot but note that we are presented with a paradoxical situation. These records appear to relate to a phenomenon which has both physical and psychological properties; and these seem to form a continuous spectrum, from the hardest to the softest . Faced with such a paradox it is hardly surprising that quite a few researchers have concluded that we are dealing with at least two classes of phenomena; one of them psychological, (1) and the other one physical, perhaps related to ball lightning and forms of plasma. (2, 3)

In such a scheme, we would assume that accounts of craft with detailed structures and occupants would fall into the former category, while stories of formless, luminous balls would fall into the latter. However, when we start to examine some of the cases in the so-called physical phenomena category, we begin to find some puzzling features, which do not readily conform to the characteristics we would expect such a natural phenomenon to possess.

Take for example a case which Klass ascribes to ball lightning. In November 1960, a young man is standing with his girl friend outside his house when they see a beautiful orange-red sphere, hovering at about 15 metres altitude. It appears to have no solid structure, and its edges are blurred. It swells in size as it comes down to about one and a half metres above their heads, then descends to ground level about 10 metres away from them. As the boy runs to the back of the house, the girl hides in the porch. When the object was low over them, the boy said that he felt a sort of dome was enclosing him, and that something in the air was attacking his body .

So far so good; this sounds like a plasma or a physical phenomenon of some sort. Unfortunately, there are complications - the young man turns out to be a repeater percipient. In the September of the following year he is out driving with his father, when they get lost, and he has to get out to direct the car around a difficult turn. Suddenly he sees an identical sphere above the car. It appears to be transparent, and he can see the stars

through it. Diving back into the car, he points it out to his father, and they both watch it for a few minutes, before deciding to drive on under the object. When they had passed it, and turned to look back, it had vanished. Several other points emerged from the interview that Philip Klass had with the young man. He had suffered a psychological trauma, and was afraid to go out at night, in case the sphere returned. He felt that I cannot judge upon science . . . but it was something of a higher intelligence.

Here we now have a classical high-strangeness close-encounter case with associated psychological effects; the sort of circumstances one has begun to associate with psychological states such as metachoric experiences.

Or take the following case from a recent APRO Bulletin. (4) A woman, out walking with her two children sees, in a front garden about 6 metres away from her, an object resembling three concentric rings. It was incredibly beautiful , of indescribable whiteness and brilliance. Again, this suggests some kind of plasma phenomenon. But a man hosing the lawn over which the object is apparently hovering seems totally oblivious to it and the witness. When the witness tries to speak she is unable to open her mouth; the cats and dogs which normally infest the area are absent; and there is not even the sound of insects.

I lost all track of time, the witness said, It seemed as if all life had stopped except for the three of us, as if we were somehow frozen in time. She felt a sense of panic, as if she were being watched, but upon walking away felt a sudden euphoria. When she arrived home, it seemed later than it should have been . She thought of going back to the site of the incident, but she knew that the UFO would have gone , and suddenly felt sad.

Here we are again projected into the area of psychological phenomena.

The time suspension is the classical hallmark of the metachoric experience, which occurs throughout the UFO literature. Even more curious is the sense of everything frozen in time , regarded as symptomatic of schizophrenia. One of the strong indicators of schizophrenia in the Experimental World Invention test (5) is a positive reaction to the statement: Time seems to stop altogether, everything is suspended and dead. Therefore, could it be that the dreamlike character of the metachoric experience is a form of temporary incursion into the world of the schizophrenic?

Returning to the two incidents described above; we are left with the problem of tying up the insight we have been developing into the psychological aspects of such events with the superficial nature of such incidents. The possible methods of doing this include:

The psychological effects are the result of shock or cognitive dissonance, the result of encountering a novel, shocking physical phenomenon. If so, will we encounter similar reactions amongst victims of road accidents, for instance? Have any such studies been performed?

There may be physical phenomena which can induce psychological reactions directly. Again, are there any known phenomena which are known to do this in other contexts?

Or are the incidents largely or wholly subjective in character?

In favour of the last hypothesis we should note how unlikely it is that anyone could ignore such a strange object as that in the second incident and just carry on hosing their lawn. Equally unlikely is the possibility that such a presumed physical phenomenon could be the focus of repeater experiences. However, this is not an impossibility, as witness the example of the forest ranger allegedly struck by lightning five times (always assuming this is not a whale tumour story).

It will be noted that not included in the above analysis is any reference to the ETH or other extra-mundane intelligences. Such hypotheses, in any cautious study of the UFO problem, must be treated as refuges of the last resort, seeing that (saving the most naive nuts-and-bolts spaceships from Mars theory) they are fundamentally incapable of being either proved or disproved, or subjected to any test. The three hypotheses I have outlined above could all be tested, and the first could be subjected to an experimental test.

### **References**

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