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## The Mystery of Elusiveness<sup>1</sup>

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### ABSTRACT

Elusiveness is the most striking feature of UAP manifestations. I define it in my text as the permanent coupling and adjustment, case by case, of two contradictory dimensions, ostentation and evasion. And it is this that I take as the object of my reflection.

For the sceptics, this characteristic is enough to close the debate: the case is empty, we are dealing only with a gigantic collective illusion. For those ufologists who wish to keep the solution to the enigma open, elusiveness remains the major obstacle, because it prevents the collection of tangible data that would enable them to carry out their research.

In this article, I propose to open up another avenue of reflection, by making elusiveness the signature of a new and original phenomenon. Elusiveness has two conceivable levels, a weak level and a strong level. The weak level inevitably leads to the sceptics' solution. The strong level, on the other hand, leads to the discovery of a new and original phenomenon, with disturbing implications. This is the concept that I seek to define and construct in this article. At the end of my reflection, I come up with a strange paradox: certainly, the process of elusive monstration prevents us from gathering reliable and conclusive data on UAPs. And yet at the same time it is the most reliable and meaningful thing we know about this perplexing issue. In fact, the elusive monstration—the fact that the UAP only shows itself to better evade detection—exhibits the perfect structure of an oxymoron. The oxymoron is one of the most sophisticated tools of human thought, in that it allows the simultaneous expression of two contradictory thoughts. It follows from this observation that we are not dealing with natural phenomena but with the intentional manifestation of a psyche. But if we accept my conclusions, the nature of this psyche, as things stand, remains undetermined.

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“If there were beings somewhere who knew the laws of matter and force well enough to act millions of leagues away in space, we would realize this in relation to certain facts that escape ordinary explanations and are intentional in character.”

Ernest Renan, *Dialogues et Fragments philosophiques* (1885)

## 1. A few preliminary remarks

### 1.1 Conflicting paradigms

This research project requires me to distance myself, as far as possible, from the available models of thought. What I am looking for is an overhanging posture capable of assuming and retaining the positive aspects of the various paradigms on offer, and it is with the examination of this difficulty that I am going to begin my presentation. Two main models dominate the marketplace of ideas on this issue: the engineer’s paradigm and the skeptic’s paradigm. These two models presuppose totally different, even radically opposed, orientations of the mind. The first, the most powerful, is exploratory; it is what has guided the first scientific research on this question to date. To develop my reasoning, I am going to look for a balance between the two, based on what seems to me to be the best evidence.

When examined within the framework of the “engineer’s paradigm”, UAPs are apprehended as material objects tracing trajectories in space, and the only boldness permitted when examining their behavior is to identify their anomalies in relation to the laws of physics: lightning accelerations, sharp turns, instantaneous translations, etc.

Similarly, the analysis of eyewitness accounts and the psychology of witnesses often remains dependent on an “engineer’s psychology”, and on a conception of perception centered on the study of its distortions, which tries to stick as closely as possible to this physicalist approach, and which remains basically, as a result, under the domination of physics. This is, one might say, a simplified psychology, “cleansed” of all the dimensions of the psyche revealed by depth psychologies, and by the psychic sciences, which emerge above all in close-encounters cases and abductions.

Finally, extending its trajectory, the “engineer’s

paradigm” leads to that of the astronomer, to the question of life in space, to the possibility of interstellar travel. In short, for mainstream science—whether to reject or accept them, it must be stressed—there is *for the moment no other way of thinking about UAPS*.

Clearly this paradigm fails to accommodate the strangest forms of the phenomenon, such as those observed in close encounters and abductions, which the engineer’s paradigm mutilates or (more often than not) simply ignores. At first sight, at least. I shall come back to this point later, in connection with Arthur Clarke’s famous paradox.

However, I do not think that the engineer’s paradigm should be (totally) rejected, and it is this point of balance that I need to clarify before I begin my presentation.

As its name suggests, this approach of UAPs is inhabited by the technician’s vision of the world, and seeks to think their intrusion through it: experience shows that it is often among engineers, pilots, technicians, military personnel and, more generally, minds trained in advanced technology, that we will find the strongest supporters of the factual, first-degree reality of UAPs.<sup>2</sup> This paradigm imposes itself on minds through the invasive power of its realizations. Those who think through it will naturally focus on the aberrant physics of UAPs, and draw the conclusion that they are the manifestation of a transcendent technology. But in return, they will often disdain or ignore the parapsychic aspects I am going to examine in this article.

Yet the engineer’s model is justified, at least in part, by the fact that, thanks to contemporary military technology, the aberrant physics of UAPs is certainly now their best (or least poorly) attested manifestation. But in my opinion, the paradigm in question goes beyond what can be said with certainty and does not allow us to rule on the profound nature of the alleged phenomena. It doesn’t allow us to decide *what lies behind the curtain of appearances*. Above all, it ignores the possible parapsychic aspects of the UAPs cases. And yet, if it remains reductive in my eyes, it is much less so than its skeptical competitor.

The skeptical project is subject to the same analysis. If we take the term in the sense it had in antiquity, it invites us to search for the truth. But in today’s sense, pushed to its limits, it often becomes a defensive posture and tends to reduce UAPs to a planetary illusion, that is, to our dominant world

2 In France, Claude Poher, an aerospace engineer who headed GEPAN, the CNES group responsible for studying UAPs, after investigating several French close encounter cases in 1977 and 1978, came to the conclusion that these phenomena were machine-like objects of unknown origin. This study was never published, probably because the CNES headquarters considered its conclusion premature. (J.-P. Rospars, personal communication).

view. But, when they play their role with discernment and moderation, skeptics can become a counter-power to control the illusions of belief, and therefore also plays an essential part in the psychic ecosystem that is developing today around the question of UAPs.

These two paradigms have in common their internal contradiction. Pushed to the limit, the skeptical paradigm, when applied to UAPs, ends up destroying its object. Similarly, the engineer's paradigm leads to Arthur Clarke's famous paradox (for us, highly advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic), a paradox that allows minds shaped by technology to reintroduce magical phenomena by making them compatible with their worldview.

I can therefore embrace the skeptic's trajectory when he intends to control the illusions of belief, but I reject it when it leads to the total negation of the problem. A measured alliance is therefore possible for me with the engineer and the good-natured skeptic, but difficult or impossible with the dogmatist.

What is at stake in this debate is nothing less than the question of knowing whether, and to what extent, it is possible to pronounce on the profound nature of UAPs. When the pilots of the Nimitz in 2004 observed the famous "tictac" and its aberrant zigzags, no technological power on the planet was capable at the time (and still is, in my opinion, today) of performing such prodigies.

This simple fact opens an abyss. But in my opinion, this abyss is not yet fathomable. In fact, even if the data we have are reliable, we cannot know whether the technological prodigies I have just mentioned are the result of an internal necessity of the phenomena we are witnessing, or whether they are the forms that an unknown X takes to give itself to us, to penetrate our mental universe. What may lie behind the curtain of appearances may well be completely out of our reach. This point will be explored in greater depth in the following paragraph, when we examine the link with science fiction.

Nevertheless, I am not trying here to refute these paradigms. Strictly speaking, neither an exploratory model such as the engineer's paradigm nor a defensive dogma such as the skeptic's paradigm can be refuted.

But above all, my primary aim in this text is not to refute these paradigms, but to probe the mystery of elusiveness

and attempt to construct this concept for thinking about UAPs, and that, as a result, the deconstruction of the aforementioned paradigms, should it prove to be well-founded—which I cannot prejudge—can only be a secondary effect. In fact, in this article, my aim is not so much to criticize the aforementioned paradigms, as to draw from them the logical figures with which I will construct my reasoning. Obviously, as we shall see, if the concept of elusiveness proved to hold water, the skeptics would have something to worry about. But we're not there yet.

## 1.2 A "phenomenological like" approach

When I embarked on this quest in 1975, I was still a student and, I must confess, had no clear idea of what phenomenology is, of its methodological requirements, or of the abysses it could lead to. Like Molière's Monsieur Jourdain, who unknowingly wrote prose, I was unwittingly and instinctively developing a "phenomenological like" approach, instructed too by Aimé Michel, the great instructor of French ufologists<sup>3</sup>, who had managed to convince me, through endless discussions, that the quest we were embarking on was a dangerous undertaking, and even, to use his exact words, "the most dangerous of all." To avoid losing our way, we had to, in his words, "consider everything and believe nothing."

Phenomenology, as I saw it at the time, was Descartes' quest to avoid falling into the traps of the Evil Genius, and I imagined, with the ardor of youth, the mystery of UAPs (but we were still talking about flying saucers or UAPs at the time) as a kind of Evil Genius, taken out of philosophy books and given to us in our collective experience, with whom we had to measure ourselves.

Today, after a long detour into the history and challenges of the psychic sciences, I am trying to return to the intuitions of my youth. To make progress in my examination of the subject and to continue developing my intuition, I propose to undertake a "phenomenological like" approach of the UAPs.

There are at least four reasons for this cautious formulation and low profile.

The first is the embryonic nature of my thinking on this subject.

The second is the extreme difficulty and indeterminacy of our subject: are we working on a new chapter in collective

<sup>3</sup> Aimé Michel, who died in 1992, is considered by those who have meditated on his thinking to be one of the most original and fertile thinkers of the 20th century. In a period marked in France by Freudo-Marxist confinement, he opened people's minds, half a century ahead of his time, to cosmic thought. His great inspiration was Blaise Pascal. If UAPs and their scientific and philosophical implications were one of his major preoccupations, he also meditated on animal thought, quantum physics, the ecological crisis, the return of religion ... in short, on the major themes that preoccupy us today. An old-fashioned thinker, he corresponded epistolary with scholars and scientists, all over the world. Those who knew him were deeply influenced by him.

illusion, or on the contrary, opening up a new path for science and philosophy? We all have our ideas on this question, but no one has the answer.

The third difficulty is due to the limits of the phenomenological approach itself, which, as the history of philosophy shows, always ends up reintroducing, at one point or another, the presuppositions it set out to bracket.

The fourth reason is that, even if UAPs are indeed a consistent object and not a collective illusion, as I am going to propose in this article, we are still only in the early groping stages of this approach. But, in my opinion, we should not regret this situation, but rather rejoice in it. In the sciences, and in discovery in general, what is fascinating are the early stages, the moment when the mind begins to bite into reality, naked, without tools, just through observation, the five senses, reasoning and intuition. I am thinking, for example, of the reasoning that enabled Buffon to tear himself away from biblical chronology and be the first to glimpse cosmic duration.<sup>4</sup> Then, once a science has been established, once a language, methods and tools have been created, it becomes a matter for technicians. UAPs are one of the few areas where we can still enjoy the exceptional situation of the early days. But, at the same time, they remain a hopelessly confused and elusive object. And this is why it seems to me that UAP reflection must necessarily pass through a phase of phenomenological allure to clarify its object and its approach

So, to summarize, with this reference to phenomenology, I was at the beginning simply referring to an approach that intends on sticking to what is shown in order to describe it, bracketing all conceivable presuppositions. But—and I come back to this point at the end of this article—the development of my reflection led me to consider the idea that the question of elusiveness could open onto a “phenomenology of the inapparent”, to use the formula proposed by Heidegger at the end of his life. This is why I have taken the risk of using this term to maintain the fragile link with the phenomenological approach that I outlined at the start of my enquiry.

### 1.3 The beginnings of an (improvised) phenomenologist

I don't want to waste the time allotted to me telling you about my background, but I must tell you enough so that you understand how and in what context the ideas I am about to present came to me. Between the ages of 18 and 28, while studying literature and philosophy, I was carried away by two passions: science fiction and flying saucers. I was active in both areas, building relationships with researchers and authors, some of whom became friends.

After the events of May 68, which had a profound impact on French society,<sup>5</sup> new ideas and practices flourished. It was the beginning of sexual liberation and of ecological protest. In the wake of this movement, new interests emerged in society. Science fiction literature enjoyed a new lease of life, as did the question of paranormal phenomena. But these movements attracted new conflicts, as a powerful Freudo-Marxist movement developed, intent on combating this return of the irrational.

In the middle of the seventies, the status of science fiction had changed, it was now considered avant-garde literature. The American writer Philip K. Dick, the Polish Stanisław Lem or the French Michel Jeury were celebrated, and the old science fiction—that which had blossomed on the covers of American pulps in the thirties and the forties which I was going to summon up in my first book on UAPs—was relegated to the infancy of the genre. And the beliefs in flying saucers and paranormal phenomena were stigmatized as “alienated” beliefs, attracting sarcasm and disdain. On its side, the ufologist milieu, dominated by the stature of Aimé Michel, perceived mainstream Freudo-Marxist thinking as cut off from cosmic reality and thus incapable of addressing the issues raised by UAPs. As a result, the two circles ignored and despised each other.

As far as I was concerned, having had the intuition since my final year of high school, after reading Aimé Michel, that there might be something very important behind the UAP dossier, I did not share this disdain at all. Having a foot

<sup>4</sup> Buffon's hypothesis was that the Earth was a piece of molten sun that had been ejected and cooled, and he sought to estimate how long this cooling would have taken. As he had forges in Burgundy, he had a series of 10 iron spheres of varying diameters made and fired until they were almost molten, then waited until their surface was barely warm. He was thus able to show that the cooling time was proportional to the diameter of the sphere. All that remained was to make a rule of three, starting from the Earth's diameter. The calculation gave the Earth an age of 100,000 years. Almost everything in his thought experiment was wrong, because he was missing a lot of data, and the reality was much more fantastic. But biblical chronology was shattered...

Georges-Louis Leclerc, Comte de Buffon, better known simply as Buffon, born in Montbard on September 7, 1707 and died in Paris on April 15, 1788, was a French naturalist, mathematician, biologist, cosmologist, philosopher and writer. Both a science academician and a French academician, he participated in the spirit of the Enlightenment. His theories influenced two generations of naturalists, in particular Jean-Baptiste de Lamarck and Charles Darwin.

<sup>5</sup> Under the rule of General de Gaulle, the great political and cultural protest movement of 1968, which originated in the USA, took in France on an unprecedented dimension in May and June. The country was paralyzed by a general strike for a month, and an immense collective debate took place in which the old patriarchal power was called into question.

in both circles, I was a kind of “double agent” at the time, which put me in the position of establishing new connections between two files separated by prejudice. My first book, *Science Fiction and Flying Saucers*, published in 1978, was a double transgression from this point of view, which partly explains its unexpected success, but also the misunderstandings it sometimes provoked.

These points are important for understanding the context in which the ideas I try to develop in this text came to me. I am not recalling the overheated and polemical intellectual climate in which these ideas came to me, to prolong a polemic that is tending now to weaken, but to recall an undeniable *sociological fact*: it is a fact that in France, interest in UAPs and related issues has long been suppressed by mainstream thinking as alienated thought.<sup>6</sup>

#### 1.4 The science fiction connection

My investigation into UAPs was born of the more or less successful fusion of two intuitions that came to me in the spring of 1975: the precession of SF on flying saucers, and the elusiveness that commands their manifestation. It is this idea of the precession that came to me first, and I start with it. It is a strange and counter-intuitive fact, since it implies that fiction seems to have preceded reality. Quite simply, it is the fact that spaceships and their occupants were abundantly described by science fiction writers and illustrators in the first decades of the century before appearing in reality in 1947.

I am not here just referring to the general themes, in this case the irruption of extraterrestrial crafts into the skies above our planet. I am also referring, above all, to the *visual forms* that this irruption would take from 1947 onwards for human witnesses, whether they be spaceships or their occupants. And that’s why illustrators, artists like Frank R. Paul, have played a decisive role in creating this imaginary world.

It is as if the UAPs, in order to manifest themselves to us, had slipped into the technological dream spread across the planet by pre-Arnoldian science fiction. As if the imaginary materials that would be arranged after 1947 in the future UAPs story had been put in place since the end of the 19th century by science fiction writers and illustrators, mostly English, French and American.<sup>7</sup>

But there is more to it than that. The imaginary world of science fiction did not only prefigure the visual appearance of future UAPs, and the subsequent representation of their supposed manifestations in UAPs magazines. Above all, it cleared and sometimes anticipated the phantasmagoria of close-up cases and abductions, which in my view constitutes the richest, most mysterious and most interesting form of UAP manifestation. The theme of abductions, whether perpetrated by mad scientists or extraterrestrials, runs obsessively through this popular literature. This coincidence goes a long way, since in American science fiction stories of the thirties and forties, extraterrestrials go so far as to insert implants into the bodies of their human guinea pigs in order to control them.<sup>8</sup> The importance of this theme in today’s abduction narrative is well known. That is why it is so important to know that in the decades before UAPs came on the scene, this imagery was already featured on the covers of American pulps.

This precession of fiction from observation has an essential consequence for our purpose: the forms and events that emerge from 1947 onwards in the grand UAP narrative are *too culturally typified and dated to be taken at face value*. Two hypotheses then emerge: either we are “simply” dealing with a phantasmagoria fed by contemporary culture; or, if observations stand up to scrutiny—which is still the case—we have to turn to the second-degree hypothesis. This is the hypothesis that will underlie my examination of elusiveness in this text. It is to this hypothesis that I will refer when I insist

6 The 1200-page sociology thesis I defended at the Sorbonne in 1997 and published in 1999 on the history of mesmerism focused on this conflictual dimension (Méheust 1999).

7 All Western cultures have contributed to the development of this imaginary world, but initially it was mainly English, French and American writers who forged it, with nuances that I can’t go into in detail. Let me give you just one example. Initially, in French stories, it was more often the mad scientist’s phantom plane that abducted the hero. In the United States, in the twenties and thirties, this somewhat old-fashioned theme was soon supplanted by extraterrestrial vessels, ovoid, cubic, lenticular, etc., emitting powerful beams of light.

8 On this subject, see the fine investigation by ethno-folklorist Michel Meurger (Meurger 1995). This book is written in French and for a French readership. With this English title, the author wanted to emphasize that the focus of the abduction epidemic, though foreshadowed by French and English writers, is indeed American. Meurger criticized me at the time for not having sufficiently probed the American source. He was right, but I plead partly not guilty, because at the time I was writing my first book, available sources were scarce and difficult to consult due to the poor quality of pulp covers, which often turned to dust. This was the case with the Pierre Versins collection, with which I worked in 1976: I had the collections more or less complete, but very often I couldn’t open them. It may come as a surprise that it was French people who discovered the solution [the author here writes: “découvrir le pot aux roses” – Ed.], but it’s a natural and universal mechanism: we are often blind to our own culture. In another far more serious field, it was an American historian, Robert Paxton, who opened the eyes of the French to the extent of the Vichy regime’s collaboration with the Nazi occupiers.

Since I alluded to Pierre Versins, I can’t fail to mention the figure of this extraordinary man. A young man with a passion for science fiction and utopias, and an early entry into the Resistance, he found himself in Auschwitz-Birkenau, in his own words “the victim of a utopian”. Having survived the ordeal, he subsequently devoted himself to his monumental Encyclopedia (Versins 1977), which made him one of Europe’s leading experts in the field. This book, and the author’s advice, helped me a great deal in the writing of my first book.



on the theatricality of close-up cases, on their ostentatious dimension, especially in close encounters and abductions. Here we have the link between the two intuitions. It is this old pre-Arnoldian science fiction that has provided the cultural material with which an unknown “director” seems to have built his show.

### 1.5 The elusiveness mystery

In the spring of 1975 this idea of the precession of science fiction was already clear in my mind, but another intuition was beginning to nag at me, which I was trying to combine with the first, and it is this idea that intend now to describe to you.

One side of me wanted to believe in the material reality of the stories that circulated in the magazines, but another was already beginning to be wary of this slippery slope, as the discovery of the science fiction connection encouraged me not to take these stories at face value. Already aware of the evanescent nature of UAP manifestations, I decided to suspend my judgement of their nature and origin, retaining only what I could legitimately hold to be certain. I did not know whether they were fantasies or material realities, whether their origin was human (taken in the broadest sense, implying, if need be, the Jungian idea of a collective unconscious) or extra-human, whether or not they were collections of misunderstandings or hoaxes, whether they belonged to the social sciences, meteorology, folklore or atmospheric physics, and so on. On the other hand, I was totally certain of the reality of the reports, and I set about analyzing them, looking both for regularities and singularities.

It is above all in this restricted sense that my first approach rubs shoulders with the phenomenological approach.

As I was constantly immersed in case stories, I already had hundreds of accounts in my head, and the elusive nature of the alleged phenomena did not escape me. But I had not yet meditated on all the consequences of this

strange property. Then the idea suddenly occurred to me to consider it as the central phenomenon. For several months, I tried to find cases in which it could be avoided, but this task soon seemed futile: I might as well spend my time dropping objects to see if, by chance, one of them could escape gravity! It seemed to me, moreover, that elusiveness affected every aspect of the manifestation: the places where UAPs appear, their size, the duration of sightings, the number of witnesses, the alleged adventures, the behavior of humanoids in close encounters and abductions, and so on. All in all, it’s as if a “restraint” prevents the manifestations from exceeding a certain threshold. So I decided to look at UAPs in reverse, and ask myself what would happen if this “restraint” ceased and the manifestations were allowed to go to extremes. In this way, I tried to specify and imagine the forms that UAPs never take, *and above all, cannot take*. In a way, *I was trying to sketch their hollow mold*.

An example. In the 1970s, a new and particularly revealing scenario emerged: a UAP breaks down, and people witness the repair of the craft, which eventually manages to take off.

One of the most spectacular “breakdowns”, a true textbook case, occurred near New Berlin, New York State, on the night of November 25, 1964, and lasted over four hours. Two women—a young wife and her mother in law, according to Ted Bloecher’s investigation—were able to observe through a pair of binoculars the crew’s efforts to save their craft. The stricken saucer finally took off after four hours.<sup>9</sup>

In everyday reality, such an extraordinary event could not take place for long without attracting a crowd of curious onlookers, who would soon phone the authorities, with all the cascading consequences that would follow. We would then cross the fatal threshold I call the “threshold of passage to science-fiction” and enter another world. But in the reality of the case, this threshold is never crossed. In the stories of breakdowns, the repair process, if we are to believe the testimonies, may sometimes have lasted long enough, but never long enough for the foreseeable human reaction to

9 Ted Bloecher’s investigation appeared in French in *Phénomènes spatiaux* (Bloecher 1977). This issue contains a number of accounts of UAP failures. The case is also commented on by Professor Berthold Schwartz in the *Flying Saucer Review* (Schwartz 1973).

So, this is no confused rumor from the depths of Brazil, but a remarkably well-documented American case. The investigation was carried out by Ted Bloecher, the veteran investigator responsible for the most thorough report on the 1947 summer wave in the USA. The sighting was made by two women, Mary Merryweather, then aged twenty and recently married, and her mother-in-law, and their testimony was taken by Bloecher nine years later, in 1973. At around midnight on November 25, 1964, these two women saw two very bright objects land on a hill opposite their home, at a distance of 1,200 meters. Both objects emitted a continuous buzzing sound that terrified the family’s Brittany spaniel. The two women had a pair of binoculars at their disposal, which they fetched to observe the scene. The phenomenon seen from a distance thus became a close-up case, a unique occurrence to my knowledge. As the landing site was illuminated by the bright light of the objects, the two witnesses could see a group of human-like figures taking out a sort of “toolbox”, then busying themselves with an activity they interpreted as repair work. The show went on until 4:55. After a while, Mary Merryweather considered calling the police, but decided not to, as she didn’t want to miss anything of the sighting. Suddenly, the two objects rose silently into the sky and vanished at fantastic speed. The paradox of this testimony is that it relates one of the best-documented close encounters, and at the same time confronts us with an absurd fact before which reason recoils.

such an extraordinary event to give it an irreversible factual significance.

Of course, one might object that these accounts of breakdowns are suspect, and that, if not fiction, they “simply” relate over-interpreted encounters of the third kind. But since, for the determined skeptic, a close encounter is more often than not already an over-interpretation of a banal event, we run the risk of getting lost in the sands. So, it seems more prudent to take this kind of stories as an extreme figure of elusive *monstration*.

In any case, even if we are dealing with over-interpreted landings, the lesson of these stories does not call into question the thesis of elusiveness. Indeed, there is not a single case that could have lasted long enough (if we take into account only the duration of the observation) or that would have presented itself in such a way (if we take into account the multiple contingencies that inevitably surround any observation), for a witness to go and find other observers and, above all, for someone to come back with a camera. There is no escaping the fact that, despite thousands of alleged close encounters all over the world, there is not a single credible photo of a close encounter. And so, again, either, as skeptics claim, there have never been any UAP landings; or some unknown factor prevents photos from being taken; or finally, the UAP show has an “absolute overflight” that infallibly points to “holes of impunity.”

Generalizing these thoughts, I examined the file from every angle, only to discover the same logic everywhere: if the alleged events are what they seem to be, there was no, there could be no exception. This assertion could not tolerate the slightest exception. *Because if this exception had arisen, we would no longer be in the same world and it would not be possible to ignore it.*

I thus had, if not a “law”, at least an absolute regularity, which made it possible to predict not what the phenomenon would do, *but what it would not do, the forms it would never take, the adventures into which it would never venture.*

At the end of this text, in the section entitled “The threshold to science fiction”, I’ll come back to this assertion, which I consider essential, to support it further.

In June 75, I condensed these ideas into a twenty-five-page text which I sent to a few ufologist friends of mine, without much response. Then I mislaid the text (of which, of course, I had not kept a copy). But the idea of elusiveness was to remain with me, since in *Science Fiction and Flying Saucers* I tried (though I think to day I did not succeed completely) to combine it with the theme of the Science fiction factor.

Recently a friend of mine, the ufologist Pierre Lagrange,

found this text through a combination of circumstances that could only be described as synchronicity. So, caught up in my past, I decided to go back to my original intuition and try to explore it further.

## 2. A brief journey to the heart of elusiveness

To make things clearer, before developing my reasoning on the mystery of elusiveness, I want to specify again what motivates it, its aims, but also its possible (and probable) limits. The reasons for this stem firstly from the elusive behavior of UAPs. Their elusiveness, which is their main characteristic, seems to limit or render impossible any more precise knowledge of their manifestations. The fact is so obvious that, on this point, the most hardened skeptics will inevitably agree with me, unless they saw off the branch on which they are sitting. But, of course, they will not understand elusiveness in the same way; they will conclude that there are simply no UAPs, whereas I am going to try to show that by meditating on this theme we can perhaps come up with a deep anomaly.

The limits of my argument are precisely that, because of the very fact of elusiveness, but also because of the cultural ban that has paralyzed and delayed any serious approach to the phenomenon for decades, the empirical material available to us—the material I would need to support my argument—is fragile, scattered all over the planet, and often of poor quality.

It is obviously the potential richness of what is at stake that makes me take the risk, without excessive illusions, of the reasonings that follows. I am going to try to unfold them to the end to see where they might lead us, in the expectation of the reactions, negative and/or positive, that they might raise, no longer to make elusiveness the obstacle that hides the nature of UAPs from us, but what, at the deepest level, could, if not reveal it to us, at least bring us closer to a solution. One of the reasons that motivate and support this examination is the reality of poltergeists, which is now established beyond any reasonable doubt by most investigators and historians of the psychic sciences; I will return to this important point at the end of the presentation.

Before unfolding my argument, I still have to answer a predictable objection. In the pages that follow, I am going to apply the concept of elusiveness to all facets of the UAP dossier, from “things seen in the sky”, to use Jung’s expression, to close encounters and abductions. But the idea that we are dealing with facets of a single phenomenon is not self-evident. Nothing proves that when we speak of the

“UAP phenomenon”, we are not amalgamating different realities into a fictitious entity. This is obviously an important objection. But, strictly speaking, there is no evidence to the contrary. And since close encounters and well-documented abductions have the central characteristic, in my eyes, of recapitulating all the facets of the phenomena observed since 1947, *while exhibiting the same elusiveness as celestial objects*, I have decided to include them in my meditation on elusiveness. Elusive objects are so rare in observable nature that it does not seem outrageous to include them provisionally in the same category, even if it means broadening and relaxing it later. Following this line of reasoning, at the end of my presentation I’m going to bring in another category of elusive objects, poltergeists.

## 2.1 The theatrical coupling of ostentation and dodge

Let us get straight to the point. What the UAP dossier shows is *a seamless, case-by-case coupling of ostentation and dodge*. What I have called elusiveness—inventing (without knowing it) a word that did not exist in French<sup>10</sup> (*élusivité*)—is not just the final evasion, but this strange coupling, which involves all manifestations of the phenomenon, and which concerns as much (and without possible exception, for the reasons I have just given) the close cases of high strangeness as well as the objects seen at a distance in the sky (and sometimes filmed, if recent U.S. Navy revelations are to be believed). For almost 80 years, a mass of data has been collected on UAP sightings, and all of it converges on this diagnosis. Always, everywhere, the phenomenon shows itself only to better evade itself, and it evades, or erases itself, at the critical moment when it will have to assume the fatal consequences of its display, leaving the indisputable proof, which would suddenly tip humanity into another age. The spontaneous theatricality characteristic of close encounters—particularly striking in abductions reports, with the powerful and spectacular luminous manifestations with which they inaugurate and underline their intrusion—will inexorably abolish itself in their absolute opposite, in the night of dodge. In the early eighties, I exchanged views on this subject with an American researcher, Martin Kottmeyer, who had reacted to my first book, and who was fascinated by this elusive theatricality. I am going

to try and show that we are dealing here with a fundamental psychic knot, which provides the signature of UAPs.

This theatricality can also be approached through two metaphors: Dress and Restraint. (More explicit in French: *la Tenue et la Retenue*.) The *Tenue* is already a *carefully crafted form of appearance*, displayed to demonstrate status and function. And among Freemasons, it goes even further: a ‘Tenue’ is a kind of private ritual through which Masonry manifests to itself. As for *Retenue* (Retention), it is the opposite force that pushes towards erasure and disappearance.

This “intention of display” is clearly revealed when old close encounter cases are brought together and compared in order to study them in detail. For example, French researcher Éric Zurcher’s<sup>11</sup> book on close encounters, the fine result of forty years of investigation, clearly shows that this display, this *spontaneous theatricality*, which draws its material from the imagery of pre-Arnoldian science fiction, and more particularly from the covers of pre-war American *pulps*, is a constant feature of most reports, right from the beginnings of the phenomenon in the early 1950s. What occurs most frequently is what I called in 1978 in *Science Fiction and Flying Saucers* “l’effet vitrine”, in English the “shop windows effect”, or the “showcase effect”: a kind of *private show*, given to a witness, or to a group of witnesses—because, contrary to what is often imagined, Zurcher also shows that a percentage of these “private shows”, of the order of 30% I believe, have 2 or 3 witnesses. This is repeated in dozens of unrelated cases, at least in the early years. It must be stressed that before the French wave of 1954, the investigation of close encounters was still in limbo, and publications were very rare. These cases have sometimes been unearthed by an “archaeological” investigation: they were totally confidential at the time, and remained so for a long time, as there was no Internet to connect everyone permanently, as there is today. This argument would be unusable for recent cases, but it still works for the early fifties, with the caveat, of course, that only a near-miracle could bring us to the pure case where this “monstration”<sup>12</sup> would give itself to us without having passed through the prior filter of retroactive interpretation. How could all these witnesses, without having been able to consult each other, have fantasized (or invented, if we want them to be deliberate lies) these scenes based on the specific imaginary

10 It is no doubt a revealing fact that this term didn’t exist in Descartes’ language when I coined it. And today, apparently, ‘*élusivité*’ is still not recognized as a French word by my computer.

11 Zurcher, 2023.

12 This is an obsolete word in English which has the meaning the author wishes to convey; a definition would be: “a public performance similar to a demonstration but intended as creative performance art, often parodying a serious demonstration” (see [Wikipedia](#) entry). [Editor:]

“Monstration” is also an old French term used by phenomenologists like Jean-Luc Marion to designate the fundamental fact of donation, the famous “Es gibt” of German. [Comment added by the author.]



of staging, ostentation and “*Noli me tangere*” (“look, but don’t come near, don’t touch”)? How is it that the first abductions stories appeared spontaneously, without any link between their witnesses, since the investigators, frightened by the bizarre nature of these stories, kept them and only published them later?

In view of these facts, it seems reasonable to me to hypothesize that this theatricality is not, as skeptics would have it, the result of a projection by the observers or, more profoundly, a secondary projective elaboration produced by the investigative procedure (in French: *le dispositif de l’enquête*) but that it is *inherent to the phenomenon itself*—in short, that it constitutes its *signature*.

An example from parapsychology will make the point clearer. Skeptics have long tried to reduce the stigmata of saints to projections of belief. But today, we know for certain that they are real, and that they emanate from internal processes that are still incomprehensible, as the late Dr. Chertok proved in his 1999 book.<sup>13</sup>

I’m going to apply a similar line of reasoning to the question of UAPs.

## 2.2 Weak elusiveness and strong elusiveness

When we examine the issue from this angle, we are led to distinguish two levels of elusiveness, corresponding to its two possible interpretations:

### 2.2.1 Weak (or false, or indirect) elusiveness is that conceived by skeptics

The UAP dossier, in their eyes, is nothing more than a collection of phantasmagorias. In other words, there are simply no UAPs, and the UAPs phenomenon is nothing more than an immense collective illusion. In this case, the elusiveness of UAPs would be *projective*: we would be attributing to an imaginary phenomenon an *intention* to evade us, whereas it would simply be born of our constant and inevitable failure to grasp the ghosts we imagine.

Here we come up against the thesis that necessarily springs to mind, namely that the myth of elusiveness is a *spontaneous creation of the fabulist function*: a mirage that mankind cultivates in order to enjoy the mystery while

managing not to deflower it. In many tales of fantastic folklore, we sense this dramatic spring at work, and the question is whether it is only this spring that is at work in UAP cases.

There is inevitably some truth in this thesis, and we could even add to it by arguing that skeptics, through their systematic denial, contribute to elusiveness, and that these two levels can work together.

It is worth noting, since we have taken the dream as an example, that this skeptical stance, however far we push it, *cannot abolish the reality of the dream as an original psychic process*. What we are primarily interested in here is establishing the irrefutable reality of the “UAP dream”, welcoming its singularity and exploring its implications.

The dream analogy can indeed be transposed to UAP manifestations, but with caution, for while the latter are as elusive as the dream *stricto sensu*, they also present a host of differences with the latter that preclude such assimilation. In close encounters, and all the more so in abductions, the “UAP dream”, if we decide to call it that, cannot be assimilated to the *stricto sensu* dream for a number of reasons, the most obvious being that the dream manifests itself during nocturnal sleep. We could, as I suggested in my second book *Soucoupes volantes et folklore*<sup>14</sup>, propose the hypothesis of spontaneous trance states that have not yet been catalogued and that manifest themselves by breaking into the vigilant consciousness, but this hypothesis would run up against the same objection as the dream, i.e. the abnormal restraint of the manifestations.

### 2.2.2 The second level of elusiveness would be strong (or true) elusiveness

This is the concept I am trying to define and construct here, and which I am attempting to hypothesize. True elusiveness would not be projective, but would belong to the phenomenon under consideration, as a revelation of its profound nature. From a negative characteristic, it would become for the analyst a *positive property*, the signature of a real and original phenomenon.

We get closer to this idea when, by dint of scrutinizing the reports, we come to realize that such perfect avoidance can hardly be the product of the fabulist function, whose

13 Chertok (1999). Born in Lida on October 31, 1911, and died in Deauville on July 6, 1991, Dr. Chertok was a psychiatrist of Lithuanian origin. Today, he is considered one of the pioneers of the new psychosomatic medicine. He came to France a few years before the Second World War to study medicine, and then distinguished himself in the Resistance, creating a network to hide and protect Jewish children. His fighting temperament led him to dissent from the psychoanalytical vulgate then dominant in France. His unstopable demonstration of the reality of hypnotic vesications created a breach in this vulgate and opened up a debate that can never be closed again.

14 Méheust (1985).

unrestrained deployment naturally leads to profusion and saturation. Let's take the example of UAP breakdowns. The spontaneous fabulist function is obviously perfectly capable of inventing these kinds of events. We can even postulate deep structures of the mind which maintain over time this dramatic spring. But the fabulist function, as we know it, cannot control itself, it cannot foresee the "holes of impunity" that will enable it to insert itself seamlessly into the fabric of human events—unless we lend it the power of self-surveillance and control. Let me come back to this essential idea.

It will be objected that cases of UAP breakdowns are too rare to draw any general conclusions from them. It is a fact, and so, to answer this objection, we can rely on the repetitive structure of the classic "road incident": a motorist sees a luminous object descend from the sky, into which she or he is about to be abducted. It is a fact, however, that many abductees are astonished that at the moment of their abduction, the road, usually congested at this hour, was deserted. Everything seems to be happening as if the intruder had "taken advantage" of a bubble of tranquility, in short, as if he knew in advance the "holes of impunity".

This is a fantastic theme too that has left its mark on literature. *The Master and Margarita*, Mikhail Bulgakov's masterpiece<sup>15</sup>, begins with an encounter with the devil on a Moscow avenue. Mikhail Alexandrovich Berlioz is drinking a beer with a friend, near a kiosk, when a disquieting spindly figure appears to him, who soon faints, leaving him with an impression of terror and a sharp pain in his heart. *The narrator is astonished by the fact that at the time of the fateful encounter the main avenue was empty, whereas at that time of day it should have been packed with people.* Clearly the devil knew all about "holes of impunity." By blending humor and fantasy, the author touches a deep well of the psyche. Is it not this fantastic theme that structures the saucer equivalent? We'll have to discuss this point further.

### 2.3 Supporting the true elusiveness hypothesis

What supports this paradoxical idea of "true elusiveness", what leads us to doubt that the elusive manifestation of UAPs can be explained simply by the unbridled functioning of the fabulist function, or if we prefer of the natural psyche, is, among other factors, *the fine-tuning of saucer testimonies to time, place and circumstances*, an adjustment that is statistically observable. We are not even talking about UAP cases here,

but about *UAP stories*, the reality of which is indisputable. It is a proven fact that UAP stories do not exhibit certain shapes, sizes or events, except within certain limits and under certain circumstances, and that this fact doesn't fit well with current psychological explanations. If these cases were only hoaxes, fantasies or delusions in the usual sense of the word, we would have to observe a flowering of representations that would exceed the constraints of confidentiality demanded by elusiveness and end up saturating all possibilities, in the manner of science fiction narratives.

For example, we would be hard-pressed to find a well-documented story describing the landing of a gigantic spaceship in a peri-urban area teeming with potential witnesses. From the point of view of elusiveness, however, the gap is perfectly predictable: the close encounter case needs discretion, it needs a suitable setting—a clearing, for example—where a pocket-sized craft can land. If we were dealing with delusions, it is hard to see why we would observe this statistically perceptible restriction on a global scale. Unless we assume that every witness is potentially an unconscious collaborator of elusiveness and works unknowingly to adjust his fantasy and narrative to the required pattern of time and place, as if some kind of internal program were urging him to do so. But could it be that an internalized and implicit constraint achieves this collective result? This is not an insignificant hypothesis, and if we push it, it can go far beyond reductive skepticism.

Skeptics will not fail to object that this saturating flowering of cases exists, but that it is eliminated by the investigative procedure, and that the answer lies in the dustbin of ufologists. I do not think it is there, or not enough of it, because if it were, the skeptics would have exhibited and commented on it long ago.

This perfect—too perfect—fit leads me to consider the research that would be needed to back it up. For example, if we were to build up a bank of UAP dreams (dreams in the *strict sense of the word*), we would find that a good proportion of these dreams *could not be UAP cases*, because they would go beyond the strict bounds of elusiveness. The "threshold of passage to SF"—an essential notion, in my view, on which I shall conclude my paper—would be crossed. The only UAP dream I can remember (and I am still amazed that I have only dreamt about UAPs once!) involved an immense armada of multiform objects slowly descending towards the ground in the rising sun. It was a typical SF scene, like the

15 Bulgakov (2020), pp. 21-23.

majestic arrival of the Aliens in Arthur Clarke's *Childhood's End*.<sup>16</sup> However, to my knowledge, no credible case of this kind has ever been reported. For trained observers, most of the UAP dreams cited by Jung in *A Modern Myth* could not possibly be "real" UAPs.

In the reductionist hypothesis, what could be the psychosocial device that would frame UAP manifestations, imposing such a constraint on representations? And even if it were only a psycho-social mechanism, wouldn't it be interesting to exhibit and investigate?

Here is a well-documented case in which we can observe the precision of this adjustment, which we owe to the patient work of investigators from the Belgian COBEPS, one of Europe's leading research groups:

At the beginning of 2012, a young woman was driving through the shopping district of a small town near Liège; night had fallen, and the area was deserted. Then she spies a brightly lit triangular structure, seemingly motionless, just above a warehouse, illuminated by three powerful spotlights. Her route passes the edge of the warehouse. Seen up close, the object exceeds the dimensions of the building above which it floats. The motorist hurriedly stops just below the triangle, at the edge of the warehouse, and tries to photograph it with her cell phone. But in her haste, she forgets to roll down the window, so that the flash is reflected on the glass. Realizing her mistake, she lowers the car window. At that precise moment, the headlights begin to dim and fade, and the triangular object disappears in a matter of seconds, taking evasive maneuvers to avoid hitting the nearby power line. Frightened, the witness calls her husband on his mobile, which provides the exact time of the incident. The traces left by her car on the soft ground also enabled the investigators, who arrived at the scene as soon as possible, to pinpoint the exact location where she had parked. According to her account, the luminous triangle that she saw leaving was floating just above her. The Belgian investigators then realized that the surveillance camera in the shopping area may have captured the scene on film. They managed to get their hands on the data. Unluckily, the triangular object was parked precisely ... *in the camera's privacy cache*. In this case, if we play the skeptical scenario, we can assume that the motorist first thought she saw the luminous triangle, and that the rest of her story is the unconscious cinema she played to herself in order to persist in her initial illusion. But then, she was very lucky, because if the alleged UAP had not been in the blind

spot of the camera, the film might have shown ... that there was nothing to see.

#### **2.4 The "showcase effect" as an archetype of elusiveness**

Let's take this idea a step further: when we immerse ourselves in the phenomenology of UAPs, we come to realize that what UAP display "seeks to stage", in fact, *the process of display itself*. This is what we can deduce from the close-up cases from the early 50s studied by Éric Zurcher: in an isolated location, an entity presumed to be extraterrestrial (I mean: conforming to the representation of the extraterrestrial disseminated by pre-Arnoldian science fiction) exhibits itself in a luminous, transparent object, usually spherical or ovoid, for one (or more) fascinated witnesses. Coming from another world and embedded in our own, so close to the witness that he or she could touch it, and yet inaccessible, it condenses all the motifs of future flying saucers, starting with their appearance, which is hard to distinguish from the illustrations of close encounters that flourished on the covers of ufology magazines in the 1970s. All in all, it's as if this "effet vitrine" had been designed as the optimum encapsulation of elusiveness. To support this idea, I would like to suggest a thought experiment. Parapsychologists use judges to assess the accuracy of clairvoyants' descriptions of masked targets presented to them. I think that if judges were presented with a collection of drawings from pulps published between 1920 and May 1947 and asked to choose the best visual summary of elusiveness, they would unhesitatingly elect the icon of the "effet vitrine."

#### **2.5 Showing off while hiding: the oxymoron as a signature of UAPs**

If my intuition is correct, we are faced with a paradox without equal, since the reasons why we can know almost nothing about the manifestation of UAPs *are precisely the most certain and important things we can know about them*. At first sight, then, this is a negative certainty. But a negative certainty that can turn into a positive one when we consider the abnormal perfection demonstrated by saucer elusiveness, a perfection that tears it away from known natural phenomena and elevates it to the rank of a fertile anomaly.

Until now, elusiveness has been thought of as the obstacle

16 French translation entitled *Children of Icarus*. [Editor.]

that prevents us from making progress in our knowledge of UAPs, whereas its inflexible rigor is the short-circuit that reveals to us the essential part of what we can know about them, namely the process of elusive display.

To clarify my thought, I am going to use now a term full of meaning: the saucer manifestation exhibits the perfect structure of an *oxymoron*. As we know, the oxymoron, a tool of poets, allows the simultaneous expression of opposing or contradictory thoughts. As such, it is one of the most sophisticated “tools” of human thought. Today, faced with the increasing mechanization of mental functions, philosophers like Castoriadis have no hesitation in seeing poetry as the highest and most intractable manifestation of the human spirit.<sup>17</sup> It is therefore astonishing to discover the perfect structure of the oxymoron in the manifestations of a phenomenon which, for almost 80 years, has been relegated. At first sight, the enigma becomes even thicker, but at the same time the outline of a reading of the problem is perhaps emerging.

Indeed, everything becomes clearer when we take this idea and use it to shed light on our problem. The coupling of display and evasion presupposes an initial opening and the permanent adjustment of two contradictory processes: without display, it could not bring its evasion into play, and without evasion, we would no longer be talking about the “mystery” of UAPs, the question would have entered the register of “normal” natural science. As in the meditation of Heraclitus, the grandfather of philosophers, we are faced with a war of opposites that simultaneously call to and repel each other, mask each other and bring each other to light.

We are therefore facing a manifestation of great complexity, dealing either with a projective phenomenon of purely human origin whose mechanisms we have not managed to unravel, or with the manifestation of a psyche of unknown nature and origin.

## 2.6 Intentionality and elusiveness

With this strange question, we are approaching a debate that has been going on in philosophy for over a century, and which concerns the central characteristic of mental states, *intentionality*. For philosophers, intentionality is often presented as what makes it possible to distinguish a thinking presence

from the blind phenomena of nature.<sup>18</sup>

But how can we think about the relationship between elusiveness and this difficult question of intentionality? All I can do here is summarize the state of an embryonic line of thought. If my intuition is correct, elusiveness must be understood as a *higher form of intentionality*. To account for the regulated coupling of elusive display, we have to postulate internal operations of dizzying complexity. Intentional phenomena are not necessarily elusive, whereas such elusive phenomena are necessarily intentional, since they display in their manifestation a dual intention: to show and to evade.

So, to stay with our question, if the actions of exposing oneself and at the same time hiding oneself are already, taken separately, intentional operations characteristic of thinking beings, and even, more generally, of living and psychic beings<sup>19</sup>, in the broadest sense of the term, then all the more so when they are combined in such a regulated way!

If these views were to be accepted, there would be an important consequence. The interminable empirical quest undertaken since Kenneth Arnold’s observation runs the risk of getting lost in the sands if it is not conducted by a guiding idea. If my intuition is right, then elusiveness provides us with the one thing we lack, the “signature” that distinguishes it from all phenomena given in the observation of nature— with the significant exception, as we will see, of so-called paranormal manifestations.

Through the infallible and regulated interplay of ostentation and dodge, the UAP tears itself away from the blind processes of nature, demonstrating that it belongs to the realm of the *psyche*, taken here in an indeterminate, all-encompassing sense. *It does not say much more about its nature, but it does at least say that*. This “admission” is veiled, condensed and implicit, because it has to be made to speak, like an oracle. But in my view, it is of immense importance for our research.

People will object that this notion of the psyche is vague. I must therefore try again to clarify my thinking on this point, if possible. To begin with, it is not so much a question of specifying what UAPs are *as what they are not*. The oxymoron argument seems to me to meet this first requirement, since it allows us to posit that we are not dealing with natural-physical phenomena, but with manifestations of “a psyche” whose nature and origin we do not know. Assuming, then, that

17 This is a central thesis of Cornelius Castoriadis (Castoriadis 1975).

18 This is what Valérie Aucouturier (2011) writes: “When intentionality is made a specificity of thought, it is often to indicate a characteristic that distinguishes thought from the natural phenomena that science studies” (p. 23).

19 The science of animal behavior can provide instructive comparisons. The partridge that “pretends” to be wounded and hops away to keep the fox away from its brood—the fact is proven—isn’t it already playing out, at the humble level of animal thought, the elusive monstration scenario we see unfolding in UAP stories?

my conclusion is accepted, or at least considered worthy of discussion, we still have to specify the nature and origin of this psychic manifestation, that seems to emerge from nothingness, or from the void in space, and this is the most difficult step.

When we try to think about this problem, our reasoning unfolds according to the status we give to the idea of elusiveness. If we hold that it is a chimera, the solution is obvious: the psyche in question can only be projective and can therefore only have as its source the human mind, both individual and collective. If, on the other hand, we think that the idea of “true elusiveness” is worth exploring to the end, then, I repeat, given the state of the question, the origin of this psyche cannot be clearly specified and related to a known support. This is obviously a major difficulty. But it is not unique to UAP research; parapsychologists have been grappling with it for a long time, albeit to a lesser degree. I’ll come back to this point in the next section, where I show that this difficulty is already apparent to parapsychologists when they try to study poltergeists *in situ*.

## 2.7 Renan’s great thought

At the end of the nineteenth century, Ernest Renan was probably one of the first to consider intentionality from this angle when pondering the question of thinking life in the cosmos, which led him to make this prophetic statement: “If there were beings somewhere who knew the laws of matter and force well enough to act millions of leagues away in space, *we would realize this in relation to certain facts that escape ordinary explanations and are intentional in character.*”<sup>20</sup>

The historian philosopher—a major figure in French thought at the end of the 19th century—was a convinced rationalist. So, in this text, he immediately closed the window he had just opened to affirm his conviction of the absolute cosmic solitude of *genus homo*: of course, nothing of the kind had ever been observed and never would be. There is, he concluded superbly, “no free being superior to man, to whom we can attribute an appreciable share in the moral conduct, no more than in the material conduct of the universe.”

This is a turning point in contemporary thought, and I feel I must make my argument clearer. Renan was obviously not the first to envisage the hypothesis of extraterrestrial thought overhanging the human condition; science fiction writers did not wait for him to develop this theme in their

own way. But around 1880, he was certainly one of the first historians of religion to consider it in the way he did. Indeed, on this theme, he assumed a strange duality. There were in fact two Renan, a rationalist Renan and a romantic Renan.

The first—the official Renan, the thinker of the Third Republic—rejected, in the name of confirmed science, any possibility of extra-human intervention in human affairs, and made the cosmic solitude of the human being the intangible principle of modern ethics, without which his freedom could not unfold; on the other hand, the second Renan, the Breton and Romantic Renan, liked to suggest in other texts, again in the name of science, but the science of the future, that future thought might have to rethink the question of cosmic hierarchies, hitherto entrusted to theology.<sup>21</sup> Some commentators have noted that Renan’s approach to these borderline problems was to abandon the language of theology with which he was familiar. That is why I was struck by his use of the notion of intentionality as a possible signature of extraterrestrial manifestation. Renan wrote the text quoted above in 1885. A few decades later, this concept was to make a comeback in philosophical thought and become one of the driving forces behind twentieth-century philosophy.

Renan’s question remains a great thought, and nothing prevents us from developing it in another direction. Given the state of the problem, the question we have explored does not allow us to provide an answer, but it does allow us to reopen this question.

## 2.8 Elusiveness, laws of nature and “absolute overview”

If we summarize what has been said about elusiveness, this hypothetical property has two main features. Through its theatrical, historical and cultural dimension, through the imagery of science fiction that it “stages”, it seems to signal that it belongs to the domain of culture, and therefore of thought, or at least of the psyche. But with its ability to dodge in all circumstances, it also seems to possess a flawless regularity and efficiency that makes it similar to the laws of the physical world. Yet it is clear that these two traits seem contradictory. At first sight, if we accept my hypothesis of “true” or “strong” elusiveness, the systematically elusive nature of UAPs suggests that we are dealing with a law of nature like gravity. Gravity, it should be remembered, was

<sup>20</sup> Renan (1885), p. 60 (emphasis added). (In French: *qui présenteraient un caractère intentionnel.*)

<sup>21</sup> Far from fearing this contradiction, he even made it a principle of method: his *Examen de conscience philosophique* (Renan 1889, p. 3) begins with this extraordinary assertion: “The first duty of the sincere man is not to influence his own opinions, but to let reality reflect back at him like the photographer’s darkroom, and to witness as a spectator the inner battles waged by ideas in the depths of his conscience.”



first thought of as an *intention of nature*, a law that never fails. Water, with absolute certainty, always finds its way to the sea, as if moved by an obscure prescience. An analogy then seems to be emerging: the elusiveness of UAPs would be to the collective psyche what gravity is to the material world, and their final evasion would be as predictable as the effects of gravity. But this analogy is deceptive: the law of gravity may be “hard”, as Brassens sings, but it remains sober and silent. It is only revealed through observation, it does not manifest itself in symbolic processes, whereas the manifestation of UAPs, especially in close encounters and abductions, is often ostentatious and theatrical. The laws of physical nature are not emphatic or symbolic, *they simply are*. On the other hand, theatricality is a feature of close-up UAPs manifestations, which in close encounters cases and abductions, before being erased, are exhibited and “staged.”

If, then, we are dealing with a system for regulating the psyche, as Jacques Vallée has surmised, with his “control system” formula,<sup>22</sup> it is of a different nature to a law of physics; it displays something more, because it seems to preserve in the immaterial domain of the psyche, and therefore of meaning, a power of unflinching regulation of natural laws implying an “absolute overview”<sup>23</sup> of events.

An idea of this kind, of course, seems to bring us back to magic. But before we get too scandalized by this recourse to dark forces, it might be a good idea to remember that contemporary economic thinking still refers to a magical axiom of this kind when it lends “the divine hand of the Market” the infallible power to regulate human affairs. The difference is that the absolute overview that has been attributed to the hidden intelligence of the Market is very far from infallible, whereas the one that the UAPs seem to be staging has never yet been caught at fault.

## 2.9 The opening is that the phenomenon cannot be totally erased

However, at this stage of the investigation the inevitable objection arises: how can we *prove* the reality of something

that, by its very nature, can erase itself, and always tends to erase itself? Is there not an abysmal logical contradiction in this attempt? Bergson had shown that if we stuck to logic, it should be impossible to learn to swim, because to do so you would have to be able to lie on the water, and therefore already know how to swim. And he concluded that it is only action that “breaks the circle.”<sup>24</sup> To overcome this logical trap, we must follow his advice and submit to the facts. And the facts, on this very point, teach us something very important: in reality, the phenomenon *does not totally erase itself*, otherwise it would also erase the memory traces in the minds of the witnesses, and we would not even be able to evoke its intrusion, or even be aware of the problem. Why this is so rather than otherwise we cannot say, but we must accept it as a fact. A phenomenon that has long been known—telephone calls made by the deceased to their loved ones—may now be taking on a new dimension, thanks to modern technology. According to a recent survey conducted in France by researcher Laurent Kasprovicz,<sup>25</sup> some calls from the deceased have been sometimes abnormally erased from the memory of telephone. In these cases, if the facts are real, the erasure was only partial.

In fact, the UAP phenomenon sometimes leaves material traces, often ambiguous and indirect, which may offer a foothold for investigation. For example, we can (cautiously) assume that the radar echoes and films recently unveiled by the U.S. NAVY are real, and that these facts offer us something to hold on to. A fragile hold, to be sure, as one sometimes gets the impression that the U.S. military itself is participating in the game of ostentation and evasion. But at last, a foothold. The pomp has to be primed, a minimum of monstration is needed. We shall see later that the same conclusion, but a more solid one, can be drawn from the facts studied by the psychic sciences.

I regularly discuss these issues with researcher Jean-Pierre Rospars, who is also an expert with the *Groupe d'études et d'informations sur les phénomènes aérospatiaux non identifiés* (GEIPAN). He insists that, against the skeptics, meta-analyses *should be able to test the hypothesis that something is showing*

22 Vallée (1975), chap. 9.

23 The concept of “absolute overview” is not an invention of mine, but a creation of the philosopher Raymond Ruyer, who dominated the philosophy of life and biology in France in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. An assertive panpsychist, Ruyer distinguished two levels of reality, “first consciousness” and “second consciousness”, and “absolute overview” was for him the fundamental property of first consciousness, the source of consciousness and life. In the introduction to his latest book, written with Félix Guattari, Deleuze, who was stingy with his compliments, wrote that this concept was “the greatest invention of contemporary philosophy” (Deleuze & Guattari 1991). I use it here for its suggestive value, without claiming to connect it directly to our problem. Such an operation would not be impossible, given Ruyer’s philosophical axioms, but it is totally beyond the scope of our present purpose. This idea of the “absolute overview” runs through all Ruyer’s books, but the philosopher examines it particularly in his *Paradoxes de la conscience* (Ruyer 1986.)

24 Bergson (2010).

25 Kasprovicz (2023).

*up*. This is the decisive point, which I shall now attempt to argue and develop, using the poltergeist case as a starting point.

### 3.0 Another connection for situating UAPs: the poltergeist issue

#### 3.1 The poltergeist issue and its implications for UAP research

Continuing my project to detach myself from the engineer's paradigm, I will now relate the UAP dossier to that of paranormal phenomena, and more specifically to the significant phenomenon of poltergeists.

Parapsychologists use this term to describe a series of manifestations generally (but not always) linked to the presence of a person, most often a disturbed teenager. In the home where it occurs, a poltergeist can affect objects, transforming them into projectiles, ransacking them, removing them and sometimes *making them reappear in a hermetically sealed room*. It can bend metals, cause fires, stain walls with insulting inscriptions, make an oracular voice heard without any visible human source, and sometimes even cause an unbearable racket, as the German origin of its name, the verb *poltern*, to make noise, reminds us. In short, it seems to be the incomprehensible physical externalization of psychic tensions. But its ability to evade investigation is as surprising as its physical inscription and tends in part to erase it. Those involved in its manifestations can sometimes see them unfold before their very eyes, especially in the initial phase of surprise. But if an “armed” observer—in other words, a prepared mind—intends on catching them in the act, the phenomena will weaken and stop, only to resume as soon as the observer's back is turned, or his attention slackens. This goes so far that it is almost impossible to film the manifestations of a poltergeist: it is as if an “intelligent force” is ensuring that they don't happen in broad daylight. An automatic device will rarely succeed in trapping them. The seemingly insoluble logical problem mentioned above (how can one provide proof of something which, by its very nature, evades detection?)—this problem has, however, found the beginnings of a solution with poltergeists: their manifestations are known for certain by most researchers,

albeit indirectly, through the damage they leave behind, which in some cases has been documented by the gendarmerie.<sup>26</sup> (In France, as public order disturbances, they may come under the jurisdiction of the gendarmerie.)

Of course, the gendarmes do not use the terminology of the psychic sciences, nor do they intend to prove, disprove or verify the theses of parapsychologists: their approach remains neutral, as it should be, but they observe the effects they see, when they are sometimes called upon.

It must be stressed again that these are well-documented facts, based on a vast dossier, on which most of parapsychologists agree. Ufologists, alas, can show no such thing.

I just wrote: the majority of parapsychologists. On this point, given the importance I attach to the question of poltergeists in my reasoning, a parenthesis is in order. While many parapsychologists today accept these phenomena, the scientific branch of their discipline still rejects them, on the grounds that they cannot be reproduced and studied within the purified framework of the laboratory, and do not at all accord with the image of the world promoted by experimental physics. The main obstacle here is the spontaneous, non-reproducible nature of poltergeists. To study such phenomena, we must first accept the “possibility of their impossibility”—to borrow a famous Heidegger's phrase—suspend all presuppositions about their nature, and attempt to adapt to their mode of manifestation. This is what metapsychologists have been doing, or at least trying to do, for the past century: while keeping the control apparatus under wraps, they strive to approach phenomena in their spontaneous ecology. When a poltergeist manifests itself, it can sometimes last for weeks, leaving plenty of time for observation. Of course, those who insist on persisting in doubt will always be able to postulate an “X trick” that will bring them into line with scientific orthodoxy and save their academic respectability.

The reason for this partial rejection, then, is the epistemological conflict that has plagued the psychic sciences since their foundation, dating back to the Marquis de Puysegur at the time of the French Revolution.

The conclusion to be drawn from these observations is that the material accumulated on poltergeists over the last century and a half by researchers in the psychic sciences, and

<sup>26</sup> In a recent French case in Amnéville (Moselle), well documented by the gendarmerie, an apartment was found completely ransacked, and in the strangest of ways. Poltergeist manifestations were observed by several people, including the gendarmes called to the scene. Compared with these abundant data, the traces left by UAPs are rare and uncertain. See Renaud Evrard's article on this case (Evrard 2019).

since antiquity by chroniclers, philosophers and historians,<sup>27</sup> whatever its weaknesses, is in my opinion superior, in quantity and quality, to what ufologists can show. Added to this is the fact that in the age of the psychic sciences, their penetration of the academic world, which began at the time of the French Revolution, was far superior to that of the recent and incipient ufology. Thus, one will not find in the references of ufologists an effort to base elusiveness on physical laws as far-reaching as that proposed by the German physicist Von Lucadou, whom I shall comment on in the following lines. Jacques Vallée's intuition of the "control system" is the closest he has come to this idea, but he has not yet taken his theorization to its logical conclusion.

What may eventually give the impression of a theoretical effervescence in ufology is above all the noise made by the US Army revelations, and their repercussions in cultural life, multiplied by the Internet and smartphones.

And yet, of course, the materials used to study spontaneous and elusive phenomena will always be of a lower quality than those required by the constraints of the laboratory. That is the way it is, and we have no choice: in all these cases, researchers are confronted with levels of reality to which they must adapt.

To conclude this discussion on the scientificity that should be accorded to parapsychology, suffice it to say that if the criteria of laboratory parapsychology were applied to the materials on which ufologists rely, almost nothing would stand up.

### 3.2 Let's get back to poltergeists

The ability to preempt and evade investigation has struck parapsychologists, who have sought to theorize it. The German physicist Walter von Lucadou did just that, in a text that left a lasting impression.<sup>28</sup> His central thesis, drawn from information theory, is that poltergeist manifestations are part of a self-regulating system of the individual and collective psyche. Where popular consciousness once imagined the external intervention of spirits or demons, the German physicist postulates an immanent property of the human psyche, revealed by the physical effects of psi. The originality of his solution is that, while preserving the materiality of facts, it shifts them from transcendence to immanence. In

so doing, it is part of the movement of modern thought. The title of his book, *Geister sind auch nur Menschen. Was steckt hinter okkulten Erlebnissen* ("Ghosts are also humans: the hidden meaning of occult experiences"), reflects this shift. The intentionality expressed in a poltergeist would be the expression of the actors' repressed desires, and the poltergeist with its special effects would be the observable expression of invisible psychic processes.

While the material dimension of UAPs is still under discussion, that of poltergeists, attested by testimonies dating back to antiquity and more than a century and a half of meticulous investigation, for most psychic researchers, is now established, as is their *modus operandi*, their way of manifesting themselves. *We can therefore affirm that their elusiveness is not projective.* This reinforces the idea that the same could be true of UAPs. It is even in this paper one of my more important proposals.

The commonality of register between the two manifestations is essentially due to the fact that they are animated (with nuances and even important differences that we'll comment on later) by that oxymoronic logic of ostentation and evasion that seems to sign their intentionality and allow us to distinguish them from the blind processes of the physical world. We are indeed dealing with the *same mode of donation*.

It therefore seems legitimate to draw on the best-established manifestation to shed light on the most elusive, as long as there are common features inviting us to do so. As we shall see, these common features are sufficiently numerous to justify the parallel and provide food for thought. This is not to say that I equate the former with the latter, but that I am proposing the hypothesis of a *family of phenomena* with common traits, of which UAPs would be a contemporary modulation (or emergence), and which would all be governed, to varying degrees, by the logic of elusive *monstration*. It being understood, moreover, that the degree of kinship between the phenomena in question cannot be specified in our present state of knowledge and reflection.

In supporting this hypothesis, I am leaving behind the absolutely certain. Here we enter the realm of speculation. But the gain in intelligibility it affords seems to me to justify this risk.

27 I must also emphasize the historical dimension of poltergeist attestation. When you read these old chronicles, you are struck by the stability of these phenomena. In my opinion, this is another strong argument in favor of their reality. On this theme, I recommend reading *Paranormale antiquité, la mort et ses démons en Grèce et à Rome*, a compilation of texts from Greco-Roman antiquity, presented by Catherine Schneider (Schneider 2011). The book includes descriptions of poltergeists that might have been recorded recently.

28 von Lucadou (1997).

### 3.3 Levels of psyche, levels of elusiveness

I am going to take this analogy between the manifestation of UAPs and poltergeists a step further, in order to sketch out a differential diagnosis that will lead me to examine it from several angles.

#### 3.3.1 The levels of psyche involved

While the manifestations of poltergeists can be described as “psychic”, in the sense we have just described, they bring into play very different *levels of psyche*, which it is important to distinguish from those involved in UAPs. Poltergeists, in their interference with concrete things, express instinctive dynamisms characteristic of what Freud called “primary processes”: bending, ransacking, derailing, provoking, frightening, setting fire to, defiling, and so on. Very rarely do they go beyond this primitive individual level. There are, however, exceptions: in the famous case of the Macon demon,<sup>29</sup> the poltergeist, which attracted a large number of observers, rose to the level of culture, becoming a kind of sounding board for the heavy collective religious tensions of the time, marked by outbursts from the void, which greatly impressed the English philosopher and mathematician Boyle, who came to witness the phenomenon.

On the other hand, in the case of close encounters or abductions, UAP manifestations regularly rise to the level of culture and feature collective representations, largely drawn from the SF canon, which can, in my reading, be interpreted as “quotations.”

#### 3.3.2 The spontaneity of manifestations

Like poltergeists, UAPs sightings are spontaneous. Exceptions, if there are any, are extremely rare. Some French researchers, such as Pierre Viéroudy,<sup>30</sup> made an effort in the early 1980s to induce their apparitions, but without any convincing results, in my opinion. Adorcism does not work with UAPs or poltergeists. You cannot summon them, you cannot force them to appear.

29 This poltergeist occurred in France during the Wars of Religion. The phenomenon took place in 1612 for three months in the town of Macon, in the home of a Huguenot family. It lasted long enough for many witnesses to come and see the phenomena. One of these witnesses was the English philosopher and mathematician Boyle, who, on his return to England, reported to the learned world what he had seen. On the Macon demon, see the remarkable study by ethno-folklorist Michel Meurger, published in the *Revue métapsychique* (Meurger 1981).

30 Viéroudy (1978).

31 On these mediums (and many others) you can find references and information in my books: *Somnambulisme et médiumnité* (Méheust 1999) and *Jésus Thaumaturge* (Méheust 2016).

#### 3.3.3 Reproducibility, semi-reproducibility and non-reproducibility

From what has just been said, it follows that poltergeists and UAPs cannot be *reproduced* and observed under prepared experimental conditions.

On the other hand, the great physical-effect mediums such as Franek Kluski, Eusapia Palladino, Uri Geller, Daniel D. Home, Ted Serios, etc., have demonstrated their ability to produce telekinetic phenomena under prepared and controlled conditions.<sup>31</sup> But their power, while very real and duly noted, does not always work, which is enough to fuel the refusal of touchy determinists. What is more, when they do produce phenomena, they are not necessarily those they have been asked to produce, and they never reproduce them identically: there remains something erratic, uncontrollable (and often *ironic*) in the manifestations of their power. It should be added that these great mediums are regularly affected by poltergeists that develop spontaneously in their presence, and seem to follow them wherever they may be on the planet. This was the case, for example, with Home, Kluski and Geller. This seems to indicate that they are only able to “tame” part of the force that flows from them (or connects with them).

Moreover, there is a notable difference between the manifestations of material psi and those of intellectual psi. The former can be reproduced, but they are rarer, erratic and difficult to control, whereas the latter (telepathy, precognition and clairvoyance), while equally capricious, can be reproduced on demand more regularly and under better-controlled conditions. With a Stefan Ossowiecki or an Alexis Didier, an experimenter had every chance of seeing something interesting happen at almost every session. He could therefore prepare his tests. It is these differences that largely explain the considerable lead that parapsychology and metapsychology have taken over ufology.

#### 3.3.4 The possible involvement of conscious and unconscious actors

In classic poltergeists, the physical phenomena observed seem most often to be linked to the presence of a person, *who is*

generally unaware of being the source, or of collaborating with this source, at least at the start of the manifestations. But this is not always the case, and when several people are involved, and can therefore be suspected, attribution of the source remains uncertain.

In experiments conducted with mediums, these phenomena are also linked to the presence of a person, *but who, on the contrary, intensely desires to produce them.* In the case of UAPs, on the other hand, this involvement seems more often than not to be absent. At first sight, close encounters and abductions are completely free of this link. It may be suspected in certain rare cases of close encounters and especially in repeated abductions, but it is not observed in cases observed from a distance, and even in most close encounters.

### 3.3.5 Levels of elusiveness

It follows from what has just been said that while the elusiveness of UAPs is (almost) absolute, that of psi phenomena is somewhat less so. Whether it is a matter of imperfection or “intention” on nature’s part, the control device that regulates these processes loosens a little, it “leaks.” In mediumistic experiments, these “leaks” allow the development of a scientific approach based on *semi-repeatability* — a state of affairs rich in consequences, but which determinism is reluctant to confront, and whose full implications have not yet been explored.

### 3.3.6 Places of manifestation

Another major difference between psi phenomena and UAP cases simply concerns the *places where they manifest themselves.* I am going to dwell a little more on this aspect, because it is never or rarely discussed, and it seems essential to me.

One day when I was discussing this issue with Aimé Michel, he asked me to read a letter by the Hellenist Dodds, author of *The Greeks and the Irrational*, which raised this very problem. The essential difference between UAPs and psi phenomena, according to the British historian, is quite simply that the former manifest themselves preferably *outdoors*, and the latter *indoors*. It could not be more concise, and the simplicity of this remark masks its depth. Indeed, UAPs present themselves as coming from the sky and “prefer” to

give their close-up representations in the sparsely populated spaces of nature, while psi manifestations (and particularly poltergeists) are confined almost exclusively to the *private sphere*. Today, with the abduction cases, *the bedroom visitors* are somewhat disrupting this dichotomy, as they sometimes (but to my knowledge, for the moment, only in the USA) operate at night in big cities. But the fact remains that, historically, the two issues have been built on this opposition: the poltergeist trickster *remains a domestic demon*, in the Latin sense of *domus*, while UAPs, which significantly emerged just after the Second World War, are the first (almost) totally delocalized manifestation, that gives itself as coming from the outer space.

### 3.3.7 “Wild psi” and “tamed psi”

The opposition between the private sphere and outer space points to another opposition, which to my knowledge has never yet been explored, yet which could prove very fruitful, and even essential: that which could be established between the “wild psi” and the “tamed psi.”

Paranormal manifestations can indeed be ordered through this intuition. Let’s use a metaphor: UAPs would be a modern extension of the psi that *has remained totally wild*, and the phenomena that parapsychologists deal with would be a *more or less tamed* manifestation *of the psi*, it being understood that, as things stand, there is no such thing as a *perfectly domesticated psi*, obeying the wishes of experimenters to the fingertips. In the first case, elusiveness would be almost total, while in the second it would be attenuated and would open up a limited possibility of experimentation or at least observation that enables parapsychology to progress when ufology stalls.

This metaphor is thought-provoking, for it likens psi to a living force with which human beings can try to establish a relationship, which they can tame to a certain extent and make work for them. When a medium with physical effects tries to act on an object at a distance, to make it move, to bend it, or, in psychometry experiments, to make it talk, to extract its secrets, he picks it up, flatters it, cajoles it, or even gives it orders, *as if it were a living being he were trying to tame.* The famous somnambulist Alexis Didier, for example, never produced physical phenomena, but perhaps that is because he was not asked to. For he had this curious intuition that objects are alive and can be tamed.<sup>32</sup>

If we accept this openness to psi and its consequences,

32 Sleepwalkers who fail the blindfold test, Alexis comments, do not place themselves in the right relationship with opaque bodies. As a result, the latter refuse to collaborate with them; “they lack good will and refuse to help them.” For him, the somnambulist must “take care to preserve his will in order to force them to become transparent and allow themselves to be penetrated.” (Didier 1857, p.23.)



we end up with the hypothesis that UAPs are *manifestations of a psychic nature, but devoid of any assignable “support.”* This is already the case, albeit to a lesser degree, with poltergeists, where the relationship between certain people present and psycho-physical manifestations can be postulated but not clearly specified. In the case of UAPs, delocalization would be (almost) total.

### 3.3.8 The historical depth of the alleged phenomena

This is the last point left for me to examine, and perhaps the most difficult. This historical depth, in fact, is also very different depending on whether we consider paranormal phenomena or UAPs. That of paranormal phenomena is much older, and particularly, as I have shown, that of poltergeists, which goes back to antiquity, and we could also cite Greek divination and many other examples.<sup>33</sup> UAPs, for their part, as we now know, did not wait until June 1947 to manifest themselves. Numerous testimonies suggest that celestial phenomena similar to those we observe today were recorded from the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century onwards; and this observation also applies, to a lesser degree, to abductions. French researcher Claude Maugé, working to reconstruct the history of these phenomena, has discovered accounts dating back to the 1920s and 1930s, which it is tempting to compare with contemporary accounts of abductions, with all the risks of retroactive interpretation that this kind of undertaking obviously entails, but seasoned researchers are now fully aware of this risk.

One overall fact seems to have been established: while celestial phenomena have been observed since antiquity, their connection with those we record today under the UAP label remains very difficult to establish, for the obvious reason that we observe them from our own culture, with other presuppositions and above all with new technological requirements and means. Numerous books have been devoted to these precedents, most recently by Jacques Vallée.<sup>34</sup> From these works, a growing certainty is gradually emerging: the starting point of these celestial manifestations does not date back to June 1947; they began haunting the skies at least as early as the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. And above all, the phenomenology of close calls and abductions seems to have begun to take shape in the shadows before flying saucers

appeared in American skies in June ‘47. If UAPs are less recent than previously thought, they remain a modern and contemporary emergence.

### 3.4 The threshold of the transition to SF

This brings me to an essential point. As soon as we admit the reality of so-called paranormal phenomena (in the general sense that I am using here, which includes UAPs), we are obliged to set limits for them (in our minds), to postulate constraints that will prevent them from exceeding a certain level. Thus, if generalized, the now-proven power of fragmentary and veiled knowledge of the future would make human life as we know it impossible.

If there were clairvoyants capable of blowing up the casino bank on a regular basis, this would be it. If clairvoyance regularly produced such effects, human society as we know it could not function. If the U.S. military kept frozen humanoid bodies in a secret base, the truth would have come out, the secrecy would have exploded, and human history would have begun to turn on July 10, 1947. It is this critical point that I called in *Science Fiction and Flying Saucers* the “threshold of passage to SF”, i.e. the threshold at which the untimely irruption of psi would destructure social life: the landing in front of the White House for UAPs, the complete vision of the future for clairvoyance, and for theology a miracle of the resurrected Jesus in front of the Sanhedrin gathered on the Temple square. Renan, the skeptic of skeptics,<sup>35</sup> demanded in his book on Jesus, that the proponents of the resurrection provide him with this ultimate proof, which he clearly felt could not be provided. These are the events that are never attested, because they cannot have happened.

But classic pre-Arnoldian science fiction, the kind that nourished UAP stories, never ceased to cross this threshold: indeed, this was its essential dramatic springboard, for it is this transgression that ensures the temporal compression of events and the dramatic intensity of the stories. This is why, while it produced the imagery that would resurface in UAPs, *it did not anticipate their elusiveness*. It was not until decades later that elusiveness was reintroduced as the backdrop by certain authors. This was explicitly done by two science fiction writers of my acquaintance, Frenchman Michel Jeury in *Les Yeux*

<sup>33</sup> Dodds (1951).

<sup>34</sup> Vallée & Aubeck (2010).

<sup>35</sup> At least the official Renan, since the other Renan, as we have seen, ventured assertions to the contrary.

*géants*<sup>36</sup> and Englishman Ian Watson in *Miracle Visitors*<sup>37</sup>, after reading my first book.

For me, this argument has a predictive value, and I am taking the risk of rejecting *a priori* all the UAP crash mythology that has cluttered ufology since the early 1980s, and which is currently making a comeback in American revelations.

It may be objected that this very assertion seems to be called into question by these revelations. Indeed, they seem to give substance to the rumors that began to circulate at the end of the 1970s, about frozen humanoids being kept in the greatest secrecy by the US army since 1947. Potentially refutable, my elusiveness hypothesis therefore has the status of a scientific hypothesis. I therefore maintain it until proven otherwise. In my opinion (but it is only my opinion), we can wait a long time. But I would be delighted if it were to be disproved, because that would be science's greatest day. While we wait for this historic day, I venture to refine my prediction, specifying what we can expect to discover if we take into account the constraints of elusiveness. At best, in this context, we cannot expect to discover the frozen bodies foretold by the Roswell legend,<sup>38</sup> as they would transgress the fatal threshold, but, at most, organic residues whose difficult interpretation will only provide an ambiguous answer that will not allow us to settle the debate.

The argument of the casino and the White House and all that it implies is compelling. It is the only argument the skeptics have that really holds water. Most of their objections to the protocols, to the possibility of faking, to the non-repeatability, etc., are mere sophistry, even delaying tactics, but this argument is dominant and demands a response. And it's easy to see why certain minds prefer to deny UAPs and psi altogether, rather than have to face up to the consequences that their manifestations logically entail on a sociological, scientific and philosophical level, as soon as they are granted a certain reality. Indeed, as soon as we put our hand into the psi gears, we are led to postulate a "control X" that imprisons human life within a glass ceiling, in order to make it possible. In this case, there can be no other solution.

The history of the psychic sciences validates the X-control axiom. When we look at the data, we see that the emergence of psi adjusts to a society's means of recording and its verification procedures, and we understand that it cannot exceed certain thresholds without threatening its structure. So, in my opinion, elusiveness is less about the non-reproducibility of psi, than about the thresholds of intensity it can reach in a given time and place without threatening society. It allows us to *retro-predict* what did not happen and to predict what will possibly happen. It also makes it possible to analyze the historical variability of psi as a function of this parameter: it may have been more spectacular in the past, when means of control were weak or non-existent, and it will tend to weaken as they become more sophisticated. The archives confirm these predictions. Saint Joseph of Copertino was able to levitate in front of hundreds of people<sup>39</sup> in a world where photography did not yet exist. Today, with smartphones, this is no longer possible. And so, either, as the skeptics claim, there has never been any levitation or UAPs, despite what the archives suggest, or we must join the parapsychologists in postulating X-control. And the logical conclusion is that, with the rise of technological means and the obsession with control that characterizes our society, psi is destined to weaken and gradually die out, leaving mankind locked in its rationalist certainties, without the otherworldliness that it still externalizes through psi, which challenges and stimulates it. This is the prediction of Jule Eisenbud, one of the world's leading specialists in the psychic sciences, the investigator who, with his team, brought to light the powers of Ted Serios, one of the greatest physical-effect medium of the 20<sup>th</sup> century<sup>40</sup>: the excess of protocols and precautions will ultimately kill the signal.<sup>41</sup>

#### 4. To open a window on the unknown

In conclusion, I come back to the allusion I made to Heraclitus, which leads us to Heidegger. You would not expect to connect Heidegger with the UAP question: in the geography of thought, in France at least, these are the

36 Michel Jeury (1980).

37 Watson (1980).

38 Lagrange (1996).

39 On this subject see Herbert Thurston (2020), Aimé Michel (1973), and Michael Grosso (2015).

40 The case of Ted Serios strikes me as remarkable for four reasons: (1) By the quality of the experimenters: the team led by Jule Eisenbud, a great name in American psychiatry and parapsychology, took every precaution to exclude any possibility of fraud; (2) By the nature of the device which delivered the medium's psychographs: a Polaroid which made any attempt at fraud difficult, for reasons which are detailed by the experimenters; (3) By the quantity and quality of the "psychographs"—around 800—that the medium left us; (4) By the nature of the phenomena produced, which combine extrasensory knowledge and the action of the mind on matter in a single phenomenon. On this point, I recommend reading the book by Professor Thomas Rabeyron of the University of Lyon, which devotes a chapter to Ted Serios (Rabeyron 2023). Thomas Rabeyron and I are currently working on a book about Ted Serios.

41 Eisenbud (1968).

two most distant points imaginable. When I was studying philosophy—this was before the *Cahiers noirs*<sup>42</sup>—Heidegger’s thought was considered by the elite of philosophers the deepest and most refined form of philosophical questioning, while saucerism (*le soucoupisme*) was scorned as the most vulgar alienated belief. And yet, when we consider the question of elusiveness, it is hard not to link the thoughts it inspires to a central theme in the German philosopher’s thought: is this manifestation, which addresses us while masking itself, not the best concrete illustration available of Heidegger’s great thought?<sup>43</sup>

It now occurs to me that when I wrote my 1975 text, I was preparing my philosophy degree, and I was taking a course on Heidegger. I don’t remember making a conscious connection at the time between the content of this course and my UAP preoccupations. Today, I realize that this idea must have been working on me unconsciously. This is undoubtedly a striking example of one of the resonance phenomena revealed and analyzed by Hartmut Rosa: a resonance between one of the major philosophers of our time, and a strange phenomenon that has marked the collective consciousness since 1947, and which, it seems, is destined to mark it more and more. This resonance needs to be made to speak for itself.

I won’t undertake this task at the end of this article, preferring to stay on the edge of my intuition. At most, I can risk drawing a few threads, following Pierre Hadot’s teaching.

Pierre Hadot has analyzed the successive interpretations given over the centuries to Heraclitus’ famous aphorism: “nature likes to hide.” Heidegger’s aphorism (“Being reveals itself by veiling itself”) comes at the end of a long series of interpretations. Hadot concludes from his study that history is a “series of creative counter-meanings.”<sup>44</sup> In fact, the philosopher’s thought refers above all to our modernity. Once again, we are returned to the theme of resonance.

Intrigued by this parallel, I did a few surveys to find out if any philosophers had glimpsed it and taken it on board. So far, I have found no such thing. On the other hand, I have discovered that certain authors keep circling around these ideas. This is particularly striking in Jean-Luc Marion’s book *Le visible et le révélé*, which sometimes appears to be an effort to transcribe the central problems of psychical

research into the scholarly language of phenomenology. For example: “Assuming that a phenomenon is without cause or reason, it would nevertheless not rhyme with nothing, since at the very least it would be given to consciousness; and, as given, it would be. By lifting the ban on sufficient reason, phenomenology liberates possibility, and thus opens the field to phenomena that may be marked by impossibility.”<sup>45</sup>

Today, the “phenomenology of the inapparent” is developing in French phenomenology. Instead of focusing on abstractions that are difficult to grasp, certain philosophers prefer to concentrate on concrete phenomena central to human experience, such as *birth*. This new approach should therefore be able to accommodate the phenomena I have presented, and think of them in a higher sense. An enterprise whose very name is an oxymoron should logically be able to flourish in the study of oxymoronic manifestations of elusiveness. As far as I am concerned, that is the kind of research I’m planning from now on.

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42 The author here makes reference to the now infamous “Black Notebooks” of Heidegger, which conclusively attests to the philosopher’s unapologetic antisemitism and Nazi convictions. [Editor.]

43 As Jean-Marie Vaysse (2000) writes: “Being (Seyn) can be considered as a mode of the ‘Ereignis’, which is not a simple event, but the advent of the giving of a presence that shows itself only by concealing itself.”

44 Hadot (2004), p. 316.

45 Marion (2005).

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