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Aliens and Archetypes with Terence McKenna

The Intuition Network -- A Thinking Allowed Television Underwriter -- presents the following transcript from the series "Thinking Allowed, Conversations On the Leading Edge of Knowledge and Discovery with Dr. Jeffrey Mishlove"



Terence McKenna

[Jeffrey Mishlove, Ph.D.]: Hello and welcome. I'm Jeffrey Mishlove. Throughout recorded history, human society has been haunted by reports of Unidentified Flying Objects in our skies, many of which have defied all attempts at scientific explanation or understanding. What are these phenomena and how can they be explained?

With me today is Terence McKenna, a philosopher and thinker of note in the area of altered states of consciousness and alternative realities. Terence is the coauthor with his brother Dennis of [The Invisible Landscape](#) and also [Psilocybin: The Magic Mushroom Grower's Guide](#). He is a founding member of Botanical Dimensions, a nonprofit organization devoted to preserving and studying *psychoactive* plants used by native cultures throughout the World. He is also the developer of a computer software package called "Timewave Zero" designed to augment interpretation of the ancient Chinese book of prophecy [I Ching](#).

Welcome, Terence.

[Terence McKenna]: It's a pleasure to be here with you.

[Mishlove]: It's a pleasure to have you here with me also. You know, the UFO phenomenon is striking because it's so bizarre. It seems as if the reports that come in about UFOs defy any attempt whatsoever to categorize them. I guess from my point-of-view, I can only assume that there are probably many different interpretations of this event. I think -- given your background as a student of shamanism and altered states of consciousness and alternative realities -- that you have some unique perspectives on the UFO phenomenon. I wonder if we could get into that material.

[McKenna]: Yes. Well, the ordinary approach to the UFOs has been to view them as visitors or intruders from a nearby star system that have come in metal ships for reasons of trade, scientific investigation, military conquest ...

[Mishlove]: Or missionary activity.

[McKenna]: ... or missionary activity to the vicinity of our Planet. This was a myth that sprang up concomitant with the modern wave of sightings that began shortly after World War II. As time has passed and the number of sightings has gone from hundreds to thousands to hundreds -of-thousands of instances, as the myth has fleshed itself out with subthemes -- the theme of abduction, the theme of telepathic contact -- it's become much more difficult to fit all the known facts into the simple model of space-faring visitors from another world.

So what we are left with, then, are a number of more exotic competing theories in the so-called postmodern phase of thinking about the UFO. Probably the best known of these alternative explanations was the one pioneered by the Swiss psychologist **Carl Jung**, who in 1953 wrote a book called Flying Saucers: A Modern Myth of Things Seen in the Skies. Jung was at great pains -- without passing judgment on the reality of the saucers, of the things seen -- to interpret them psychologically, to interpret them as one would interpret a dream. He saw in their circular form -- in their scintillating, shining, alchemical brilliance -- a symbol of human wholeness and felt that they were a symbol of our collective yearning for a kind of totality and individuation.

Now in a way, this kind of explanation is very satisfying. However, it is not satisfying to the person who has immediately undergone a very strange and a very real seeming experience.

[Mishlove]: Unless such a person were told great messages of hope for the Planet.

[McKenna]: Well ... and this is a persistent part of the flying saucer phenomenon that people who have close contact with the saucers return with messages of universal brotherhood and benevolence, with stories of a beneficent hegemony of organized intelligence where wiser, older worlds and civilizations help younger and less mature worlds toward a kind of galactic citizenship. However ...

[Mishlove]: That's just one thread of the evidence.

[McKenna]: It's one thread of the evidence. And it isn't really well supported by the evidence. **Jacques Vallee** -- who is one of the foremost commentators on the phenomenon -- has been at great pains to point out that with the flying saucer phenomenon we're dealing with thousands-and-thousands of incidents per year throughout the World. Even at our own primitive level of scientific sophistication, we can learn a great deal about a planet by sending a single probe to that planet.

What kind of scientific program of investigation requires thousands-and-thousands of appearances? And if we make the assumption that not all appearances are observed, but that in fact only a small number are observed, then the number of appearances that must actually be going on soars toward an astronomical number. It suggests we're dealing with an interpenetration by an *alien* dimension on an almost industrial scale.

[Mishlove]: Of course, a single probe could cause thousands of appearances.

[McKenna]: If it were of a sophisticated enough nature, that's right. The approach that I have taken that has characterized my work with this phenomenon was first of all to say we have not carried out a sufficiently in-depth survey of the life already on this Planet to be able to say that at some time in the past life did not arrive here and thrive here that is not part of the general heritage of life on this Planet, but that has somehow come in from the outside. My candidate for that kind of an intrusive *extraterrestrial* would probably be a mushroom of some sort or a spore-bearing lifeform, because spores are very impervious to low temperatures and high radiation -- the kind of environment met with in outer space.

[Mishlove]: In other words, a mushroom spore could conceivably even waft itself up through the atmosphere of our Planet and enter into empty space.

[McKenna]: Oh, there's no question but what this is happening. That through what's called "Brownian motion" (which is sort of random percolation), spores do reach the outer edge of our atmosphere and there -- in the presence of cosmic rays and meteors and rare, highly energetic events -- occasionally a very small percentage of these biological objects are wafted into space.

We even possess meteorites that are believed to be pieces of the Martian surface, thrown out by impacts on the Martian surface of asteroidal material. In fact, I think part of the grappling with the UFO mystery is going to lead to the conclusion that space is not an impermeable and insurmountable barrier to biology. That in fact, planets are islands and Life does occasionally wash in from distant places. And if conditions are correct, Life can take hold.

However, let me say in the UFO phenomenon we are dealing (or we presuppose that we are dealing), not simply with the phenomenon of *extraterrestrial* biology but with the phenomenon of *extraterrestrial intelligence*. And this is a hackle-raising notion!

[Mishlove]: We're dealing with more than mushroom spores.

[McKenna]: We're dealing with more than mushroom spores. At least as ordinarily conceived. I think the thing that has been overlooked in almost all discussions of *extraterrestrial* contact is how strange the extraterrestrial is likely to be. It isn't going to be a friendly, elfin little feller with a beating heart of gold. It isn't even going to be some of the more extravagantly grotesque creations out of Hollywood.

Conditions and time spans in the Universe are long enough and varied enough that I would bet that the real task with *extraterrestrial* intelligence will be to recognize it, you see. We have no conception of how species-bound our images of life and biology are. This is a place where we have never been asked to confront to what degree the monkey within us has channeled our expectations and perceptions.

[Mishlove]: Well, it is the case that on this Planet virtually all known life forms are based on the same DNA molecule.

[McKenna]: Well -- except that have all lifeforms been examined -- to see to what degree they deviate percentage-wise from, let's say, a standard DNA molecule? The answer is no. The

sequencing of DNA is a very expensive process and only carried out on laboratory organisms with an extensive history of involvement in medical research like *E. coli* or the ordinary laboratory rat. No, there's a great deal that we don't know about life on Earth.

We don't know when the fungi entered into the evolutionary chain. We don't know what kind of intelligence is really possessed by the cephalopods, the shell-less molluscs that include the octopi. The intelligence of dolphins has been studied by Lilly and others; the intelligence of the large primates other than man. One way of looking at Nature is that it is entirely linguistic intent -- that DNA is in fact a way of uttering protein syntactical structures into matter.

[Mishlove]: In other words, that all of Nature is like a poem.

[McKenna]: Yes. Nature is a communicating system of some sort. And the problem that we have is to transcend cultural languages -- historically created languages with very limited applications -- and instead fall into phase with the communication systems that Nature has placed all around us.

One possible view of the flying saucer is that it is a kind of projection from the **consciousness** of the Planet -- that it is Gaia, that it is in fact a kind of alchemical object, haunting human historical time with a symbol of totality, the kind of totality that our religions and our mystical yearnings are so at pains to concretize for us. But unless we as egocentric beings clarify our relationship to the unconscious, then I think the flying saucer is going to remain quintessentially mysterious. This was Jung's view.

[Mishlove]: One of the things that Jung pointed out in his book is that we must pay attention to the research that Dr. J.B. Rhine was doing at that time at Duke University in ESP and *psychokinesis*. **Even if UFOs had a physical reality, could be photographed, or could be weighed and measured, they still might in some manner be projections of the human mind.**

[McKenna]: Oh yes, this is an important point to make which the flying saucer people are forever misunderstanding. And that is that saying the flying saucer is a *psychic* object does not mean it is not a physical object.

Jung in Mysterium Coniunctionis is at great pains to say that the realm of the *psychic* and the realm of the physical meet in a strange kind of never-never land that we have yet to create the intellectual tools to explore. This is where the mystery of synchronicity is going to come to rest, the mystery of all kinds of *paranormal* activity on the part of human beings, and the mystery of the flying saucer.

It's interesting, you see, that if you take the broad world of the so-called mysteries -- *parapsychological*, shamanic, *extraterrestrial*, and so forth -- **and hypothesize another spatial dimension** -- one more spatial dimension -- then suddenly all these mysteries become trivial. They are easily done. Locked boxes are opened; future events are discerned; lost objects are found. This sort of thing becomes quite the ordinary run of things if we hypothesize dimensions hidden from ordinary experience.

[Mishlove]: And of course, there's serious work at this point in the field of Unified Field Theory in physics -- to postulate other dimensions of space than we normally think of.

[McKenna]: That's right. The current physical models of the Universe require 11 dimensions -- 11 integrated variables to describe. And that's physical models of the Universe. If we then turn our attention to mind and realize that we have no definition of what mind is, why then is there any mystery in the fact that we have no definition of what the UFO is?

The mind is present at hand in every conscious moment. It has been our constant companion for 50,000 years, and we haven't a clue as to what it is. So therefore, a manifestation of the other -- the superego or the *extraterrestrial* other like the UFO -- it is not surprising that it is a mystery. I always hark back to the words of J.B.S. Haldane, the great British enzymologist, who said "reality is not only stranger than we suppose, it may be stranger than we can suppose". **[StealthSkater note: superstring theory requires 10 dimensions to unite General Relativity with Quantum Mechanics. M-brane theory needs another dimension to reconcile the 5 different superstring models. Other "theories of everything" do not require so many (if at any at all) extra dimensions (e.g., Loop Quantum Gravity). Some consciousness models (e.g., Penrose-Hameroff) don't require more dimension while others (e.g., Pitkanen's 8-D many-sheeted DNA) do. The jury is still out.]**

[Mishlove]: Well, that suggests to me that if we look at some of the most bizarre, most anomalous cases that we have such as UFOs, we begin to ask ourselves not so much what are they -- because that's a mystery -- but what is their function? How are they affecting us? That's like holding up a mirror to ourselves. It tells us a great deal about the basic mystery of our mind and our reality.

[McKenna]: Yes. This is the so-called post-modern approach. To ask the question not what is the UFO, but what is it doing to us? Jacques Vallee pioneered this approach. And the answer is fascinating. What the UFOs are doing to us, to global society, is they are eroding faith in Science by casting directly in the path of Science a kind of gauntlet, a challenge: "Crack this!" Almost as if the cosmic giggle had shown up at the bachelor party of Science to spoil the bash, in the same way that the resurrection of Christ posed a tremendous problem for the intellectuals of late Roman antiquity because they had no place in their world view for someone rising from the dead. They were Greek materialists -- atomists essentially.

In that same way, the UFO challenges the assumptions of Science. And I think in that sense Jung was really onto something when he saw it as coming from the unconscious. It is like an object coming from the unconscious with a compensatory function: to turn us away from the rational and toward the intuitive; to turn us away from the paternalistic, Apollonian, solar, masculine view of things and toward a kind of watery, lunar, mysterious, intuitively felt feminine force. Almost as though the UFO is a manifestation of Gaia as mother goddess.

Science, as the proudest erection (pardon the word) of the rational mind -- then is challenged by something from an entirely other dimension. An entirely other realm that concretizes for us the culture crisis. And that's why I've gotten into UFOs. I think they are important for a resolution of the culture crisis. They concretize the struggle between the paternalistic-masculine and the lunar-feminine, between a dominator society and the kind of partnership society that we require to survive.

[Mishlove]: And yet it seems as if that challenge is not a direct confrontation. As Vallee points out, the UFOs are operating almost at the mythological level of our culture. They're not landing in the White House. They're not really challenging the military or NASA.

[McKenna]: No. They're very mercurial, very watery. When you reach out toward them, there is nothing there. What they chiefly have become is an intellectual force in human thinking about the future. But when you reach out to grasp the hardware, to read the message, to meet the *alien* -- there is nothing there.

I've come to the conclusion -- both from talking to contactees and having had a contactee experience -- that whatever lies behind the UFO mystery, *it* is a force which can literally do anything. So it is fruitless to talk about the size of the objects or their composition or color. Or the size of the *entities*, their dress and weapons and accoutrements. Because *it* can appear literally any way it wants to. *It* can appear as the Virgin Mary. *It* can appear as galactarian overlords. *It* can appear as gnomes, elves, sprites -- this sort of thing. *It* is not to be caught in the rational net.

[Mishlove]: Your description is strikingly actually parallel -- with one exception -- to the view of many Fundamentalist Christians who say this UFO stuff is all the work of the *Devil*.

[McKenna]: Well, I don't know about the work of the *Devil*. Jung's criticism of Christianity was that it had not made a place for what he called the "shadow". And he said the productions of Christian culture will always be neurotic because the "shadow" has not been included. So there's a lack of psychic balance.

Perhaps the UFO carries compensatory *psychic* energy from the realm of the "shadow". Some people are very frightened of it. Some people see it as an almost millenarian salvational hope -- the savior of mankind. I think that it's very powerful, that it haunts time like a ghost, that the messianic anticipations of Fundamentalist Christianity and Islam are in fact a picking up on the shock wave that the image of the flying saucer casts backward through time. That this image of the New Jerusalem -- the 4-gated city descending from the sky to whisk the elect away to a better place -- is a kind of prophecy yearning toward a fact in the act of becoming. You know, Christianity and Islam are the most history-obsessed of all the World's major religions.

[Mishlove]: Along with Judaism.

[McKenna]: Along with Judaism. And all three of them have this notion of the transcendental object at the end of time. And alchemy in the 16th Century was an outbreak of an expectation of a transcendental object in the nearby here and now, that would cure - ...

[Mishlove]: The Omega point of History, so to speak.

[McKenna]: Yes. It would cure all ills, confer longevity, fertility, virility, immortality. And I think that the flying saucer is an airborne Philosopher's Stone -- the sophic hydrolith of Paracelsus haunting the skies of modern America with a promise of mandalic cohesion for the future that Science has not given us. Science has been a very sadly disappointing religion in the realm of the heart. The flying saucer comes from the heart, but it bears the very strange energy of the other in its manifestation as planetary goddess.

[Mishlove]: I'm often struck by the *psychic* powers that seem to be associated with people who've had intensive encounters with UFOs. I've researched many of these cases myself.

[McKenna]: That's right. The thing is both material and *psychological*. It anticipates the Future. It seems that the memories of the contactees are transparent to this force. It can reach deep into their lives and confront them with information taken from forgotten incidents in their lives. It is an awesome kind of force that transcends space and time for the individual.

Now, it may be that we will never have a general theory of flying saucers. It may be that this is something that addresses the individual in the same way that I don't think we will ever have a general theory of falling in love. That too is something which addresses the individual. We have been mistaken to expect *Time magazine* or the *New York Times* to explain the flying saucers to us. They will not explain the flying saucers to us any more than they will explain ourselves to us. This is something that haunts the membrane of experience very close in to the experiencing ego, and therefore it is threatening.

This is one of the reasons that I think it relates to the *psychedelic* experience, because the **psychedelic** experience is like a UFO encounter on-demand. It's where the will of the person having the experience enters in. They decide to have this curious symmetry-breaking kind of experience. What I have tried to say to the UFO community is that we will not really have a deep understanding of what the contact experience is until we include data from the psychedelic experience as legitimate data to be included when looking at the problem.

[Mishlove]: You have talked earlier about our need to make an extensive survey of all of the biological manifestations on our Planet. It almost seems that in order to really get a handle on the UFO phenomenon, we need to make a comparable survey of all of the *psychological* manifestations of which we are aware. Ad it seems to me that at some level, you would agree with me that the UFO phenomenon is one of our *psychological* manifestations.

[McKenna]: Yes, I agree.

[Mishlove]: We've got about 2 minutes left. So I wonder if we can sort of summarize your view in that regard.

[McKenna]: Yes. I think that the UFO phenomenon is a modern manifestation of a phenomenon which has been with us for thousands of years. That is, the partial penetration of our own cultural space by others -- pixies, elves, fairies, sprites, demons, whatever you wish to call them. **[StealthSkater note: and yet this doesn't seem to explain that why sightings have decreased so rapidly with the moratorium of further nuclear weapons testing.]**

[Mishlove]: Angels.

[McKenna]: Angels. In the past, we had a professional class for dealing with these go-betweens. We called the professional class "shamans". And they mitigated these comings and goings and had a lore and a mythology about them.

As we have lost contact with our shamanic roots, the things which go on at a low frequency -- out in the wilderness and deserts of this Planet -- have come to seem to us either like invasions from another world or virtual impossibilities. I think that the flying

saucer is knocking on our door to remind us of the depth and strangeness and animate intelligence that is resident with us in nature on this Planet.

[Mishlove]: Terence McKenna, it's been a very eloquent presentation, extremely thought-provoking. Thank you very much for being with me.

[McKenna]: It's always a pleasure to talk with you.

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