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# The Ufology in the Version of C.G. Jung's Psychoanalytical Thinking

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**Abstract:** Reports about the appearance of unidentified flying objects became in the 20th century not only a constant of press texts, but also the basis for interpretations and speculations that swing between the alarmist scepticism and the ecstatic optimism. We do not know with certainty whether it is a physical or psychological phenomenon. From the perspective of Jungian analytics, people have been insisting on the thesis that implies that we are witnessing a process of projection of unconscious archetypal structures.

This idea is not opposed to the possibility of existence of a physical, real basis, but it insists on the connection between such a basis and the unconscious projective collective dynamics. You can start, therefore, from a perception of a real physical phenomenon so as archetypal structures to be triggered and later designed as the image of a complex global phenomenon, a phenomenon whose image is distorted by the modern mobility of the rumour. Thus, in the present work, we will expose how Jung chose to respond to this issue arousing interest in post-modernity, even more so as the dilemma is not solved, the query is still lacking a clear answer and Jung, although he provides his own interpretative opinion, urges to a caution specific to analytical wisdom in thought and action.

**Keywords:** *Archetype, archetypal projection, UFO, ufology, observation, collective emotion, press rumour, myth;*

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## 1. Introductory benchmarks

The issue of an objective approach of the phenomena that can affect the dynamics and the perspectives of an era remains an open and intractable theme. In general, an important appearance in the era, an appearance that may generate changes or resurrections at the level of the overall mentality is perceived and interpreted in relation to the cultural and perspective environment of that particular receiver. Thus, the subjective assumption manifests itself intensely, with the efforts of lucid and equidistant analysis being relegated to second place. For Carl Gustav Jung's psychoanalytic thinking, the phenomenon known as *Unidentified Flying Objects*, phenomenon that reveals the presence, in different geographic areas of the world, of some spherical objects that cannot be identified through the modern technical means, it can fall in the area of the processes labelled, with too much ease, as being retrieved and interpreted subjectively. It provides definitions and explanations of this phenomenon which are not essentially other than expressions of individual and most of all, collective mental states. Basically, on a phenomenon extremely abstract and enigmatic are projected dynamics and drives of the collective and individual unconscious. From these interpretations and perspectives on the phenomenon of unidentifiable flying objects, UFOs, the psychoanalyst can crystallize some conclusions relating to the mobility and the direction towards which is moving the entire complex of the collective unconscious (Jung, 2011: 336-337). Referring to this topic, Jung recalled that on the eve of the great world wars that have ravaged the first half of the twentieth century there were enough clues of psychoanalytic nature that announced or foreshadowed those particular global catastrophes. The dreams, the premonitions, the ecstatic revelations referred to accumulations of destructive drives at the level of the collective unconscious designed to unleash in an apocalyptic way, erupting through the layers of consciousness (Jung, 1996: 213). From this perspective, argued Jung, these phenomena of UFO-type occurrences could be openings for certain events, such as the collective unconscious processes that are symbolic, transferred to the area of symbolic operability. Calling for the astrological and mythological tradition of mankind, Jung warned that the passage from a given zodiac area under another one does not represent anything other than the transit through the whole block of the collective unconscious from another psychological dimension with some parameters of the psychic energetic dynamics in another sphere of unconscious influence and rhythmicity. For Jung, the twentieth century was under the impact of the switch from the sign of the psychic symbolism of *Pisces*,

specific to the era of emergence of the Christianity, to the one of *Aquarius*, a new dimension of collective archetypal symbolism, that was to bring major transformations throughout the whole behaviour of mankind, behaviour that does not involve fully surrendering to the spiritual tradition but perhaps its sublimation and ennoblement. It is possible, stated Jung, that mankind receives, through the emergence of phenomena such as UFOs, the signs of such renewals. Any such passage, any end of eon and start of another eon, cannot be consumed without the emission of strong appearances and phenomena of archetypal and symbolic type, that slide against the backdrop of uncertain phenomena but that are often related.

## 2. Dilemmas related to the veracity of the existence of UFOs

Jung argued that he cannot give his opinion about the veracity of the UFOs but that he can offer his expertise and his interpretation with regard to *the psychic appearance* comprised by these enigmatic emergences. What is projected towards the frameworks opened by such appearances and how the collective psyche perceives the indecipherable novelty of this phenomena, located on the border between fantasy, science and psychology, if and how the collective psyche acknowledges the scale of such processes, within their own impulses and syncopations – here are some of the themes that can preoccupy the psychoanalytic research that focuses on the UFO phenomenon. The records resulting from the investigations conducted on this phenomenon are not capable of providing certainty and parameters. The actual data indicates a mobility of physical manifestations, a relativity of the emergence, that rejects any form of statistics. This phenomenon occurs and manifests itself in defiance of scientific laws and frameworks, and the evidence or testimonies in relation to its occurrence and exposure are debatable as well. Assuming these realities that characterize the UFO phenomenon, Jung is to alert to the fact that the most credible reports indicate only a suspect phenomenon in terms of physical classification but which cannot be circumscribed to a certain area of familiar physical reactions. Uncertainty and contradiction, but also the speculative interpretation seem to constantly accompany any story referring to this phenomenon. Through the specificity of his analytical concerns, Jung has tried to capture psychological aspects and meanings that are comprised in the outbreak of UFO phenomenon, taking into account constantly its physical features. Thus, from Jung's perspective, the dilemma is whether the centre of ontic gravity of this phenomenon lies outside the human psyche or derives from its deep structures. Therefore, the question that appears in such

a context, is if the UFO phenomenon can be essentially physical or psychic, whether it is a fact outside the human psyche and it stimulates the latter, generating the entire mechanism of analysis, interpretation, symbolization and myth-creation or, vice versa, whether we are witnessing an unconscious process, whose origin is in the areas of the collective unconscious, finding its landings towards the surface of the conscious and projecting itself up the level of a fantastic and mythological construction, which presumes the role of a mysterious physical emergence. However, thought Jung, considering the issue of UFOs as a dilemma that could have only one variant of response may be an error. It is possible for both versions to retrieve, in balanced and lowered proportions, into an argumentative solution with respect to the UFO phenomenon. Therefore, it can be both a physical phenomenon, on which, admitted Jung, he cannot rule fully because of the lack of access to the scientific data, and also a psychological projection from the unconscious which overlaps this physical reality (Jung, 2011: 338-339).

### **3. The role of the rumour in amplifying the collective emotion**

From the perspective of the psychoanalytic thinking, one can see that the UFO phenomenon has had, from the very beginning, the appearance of a *rumour*. As information about this phenomenon having reached the level of the media and the general public, the negative judgment was generalized and amplified. According to it, those who have assumed the role of witnesses of the emergence of such phenomena are people who are mentally unstable, people with emotional issues or mental health problems. Therefore, the public collective reaction of the collective public has not done anything other than to react defensively, to adopt a defensive attitude against an unknown phenomenon. The collective psychic reaction of defence aimed specifically at the maintenance in a general comfort zone, of common emotional stability, materialised by blaming not only the phenomenon itself, but also its witnesses, those who reported the presence and its intense manifestation. But it is precisely this negative radical reaction that generated the transformation of the UFO phenomenon, at the level of the collective psyche, in a *widespread* rumour for all mankind. Denying the authenticity of the phenomenon and the credibility of its witnesses, the human society has focused a lot on this topic, amplifying it through the excess of negation focused on it. Jung asked himself if this rumour of the UFO phenomenon is not a *visionary rumour*, that is a collective information taking the form of a symbol that expresses an *archetypal unconscious psychic reality*. Regarding the authenticity of the witnesses and the fact that often

whole crowds testified about emergences of UFOs, Jung recalled that the typology of this kind of collective vision is not new in the human history. Thus, the collective visions of the Crusaders besieging the fortress of Jerusalem, that of the soldiers on the battlefield at Mons, in the First World War or of faithful Christians gathered at Fatima are outstanding examples supporting the reality of such a psychic phenomenon. Jung mentioned in this context examples from his personal experience of psychoanalyst, during which several witnesses reported the perception of a common vision while he, as an observer alongside them, did not notice and did not have any alteration of this kind in that particular environment. But its location outside of such a process does not entitle the denial of the common viewing experience of others and either any suspicion that they might have been under the shadow of a neurotic significant trauma.

What is apparent, from the psychoanalytic perspective, is the appearance of an intense *collective emotion* under the impact of a common vision that plays an unconscious archetypal symbolism whose resources may not be completely known. (Frunzã, 2011: 182-202) In the same way, in the case of the UFO phenomenon, it is possible that these collective visions might not be open to all witnesses present but this fact does not justify the effective denial of that vision as a collective psychic phenomenon. It is assumed that the vision, which may be a mere hallucination or an opening with powerful unconscious meaning took place and a certain part of the witnesses have experienced it. Therefore, the psychological reality of such a vision cannot be denied and it turns, gradually, into a *visionary rumor*, in a symbolically charged information whose contents can be blamed or accepted but whose existence cannot be denied effectively from the perspective of the subject who gives an affective charge to his personal experience.

The reports about the UFO phenomenon intensified in particular with the second world conflagration that ravaged mankind in the twentieth century. The mysterious flying objects were, supposedly, according to testimonies, joining the military aircraft, and they executed movements and maneuvers that defy physical laws that were, until then, assumed by the rational understanding. Then, in the decades that followed, the number of such reports has increased significantly, while maintaining some constant characteristics among which: the objects in question were behaving like ships driven more by an analytical curiosity, their emergence was confirmed in all geographical areas of the Earth, but there was an intensification of these appearances in the area of nuclear installations, the supposed occupants of these flight systems being discrete and avoiding contact with people regardless of the geographical environment of emergence of these

subjects. From the psychoanalytic perspective, one may observe, stated Jung, a *mental involution* of the nervous tension related to such information. Thus, if in the early stages of the spread of data about the UFO phenomenon, the mass hysteria seemed to be an eminent danger, concepts such as the invasion or the extermination of the human race being gradually developed, with the amplification of the number of narratives and interpretations of this phenomenon, has developed a balanced perspective on such an event which is freed from the apocalyptic image and reintegrated into a progressive and analytical portrayal. Thus, the UFO phenomenon tends to no longer generate a state of panic and even collective anxiety but rather an excitement, a challenge to research and consistent definitions. Gradually, the UFO phenomenon tends to mutate from a dangerous and destructive event in the entire mankind in a laboratory topic, in a deep research theme. In this context, understanding it as a visionary rumor cannot be abandoned because it is an obsolete psychological approach, but on the contrary, it is precisely under the new conditions that one can prove the importance of the UFO phenomenon and the approach from this point of view. Thus, if originally, such a phenomenon could have been a catalyst of certain *unconscious obsessive anxieties*, maybe later on, these fears have been exceeded or dimmed and their place has been taken over by other neurotic obsessions projected symbolically on the frameworks offered by the UFO event. We are witnessing, according to Jung, the materialization of the psychological process of causality that calls for any manifest a specific cause. These projections of the unconscious levels focused on the emergence of UFOs have, according to the principle of mental causation, a cause at the level of the collective unconscious. One of these reasons could be, according to Jung, the accumulation of the collective anxieties relating to world conflagrations, hidden fears as regards the possibility of radical devastation tougher than those developed in World War Two. The reality of the Cold War, the threat of an apocalyptic nuclear conflict could generate an unconscious collective atmosphere of terror and maximum tension which, in its turn, has been the source of perspectives on the perimeter of emergence of the UFO phenomenon. Thus, it became a visionary rumor, precisely because it wore the insignia of the hidden collective psychic realities. In this rumor, a multitude of people have recognized, symbolically, their own inner mental anxieties and their syncopations that were related to the image of a mass extermination and subjugation by a possible superior species. The lack of confirmation of these fears did not lead directly to the cancellation of the transfer and psychic projection of this kind of negative psychic information, but only to the replacement of such data with other data which, in turn, can

be projected within the frames of the UFO phenomenon. Therefore, other anxieties and unconscious tensions were and are possible information that can be transferred towards the area of the occurrence and development of the UFO phenomenon. The collective and individual unconscious, stated Jung, feel intensely the need for unloading the information through the symbolic projection, especially in the case of those negative that exert a considerable inner pressure, tension capable to generate neuroses, sometimes without healing. For the accomplishment of this approach of mental relaxation through the projection of the negative unconscious surplus, shall be involved agents who should be credible, rational witnesses, whose accounts could be assumed as credible coverage.

#### **4. The symbolic transfer**

Thus, the process of symbolic transfer and unconscious unload may follow and complete the process, regardless of whether we are witnessing the understanding of the UFO phenomenon as a phenomenon that will prepare a global extinction of mankind or as a challenging conundrum for the laboratory research (Jung, 2011: 344-345) The process of transfer of unconscious information joined, according to Jung, the whole evolution of mankind, this information having a strong emotional nature. (Jung, 2014: 144-147) Thus, the religious dimension includes this dynamics of protection of unconscious data on forms which have been recognized and postulated as having a divine nature. Then, the extensive space of mythical reports was founded on the same necessity of psychic transfer. In modern times, with the renouncement to calling to the religious and mythological universe, the phenomenality of the retransfer of unconscious contents was not dimmed, but only became more subtle. Thus, reminded Jung, the two destructive ideologies of the twentieth century, the Nazism and the communism, have speculated intensely the tendency of psychological projection of the collective unconscious, offering different patterns and frameworks through which the energies of the unconscious could be attracted and used negatively. The UFO phenomenon has evolved towards the status of such frameworks within which it was possible to find the suffocating projection of unconscious data generated by the modern man's anxieties, starting from the fear of nuclear disaster and reaching up to the phobia caused by the congestion of global population, by the ontic limits supported by the lack free space amid the massive growth in the number of other people. From a psychological viewpoint, Jung compared the collective phobia related to the UFO phenomenon with the generalized hysteria which appeared at the end

of the first Christian millennium, when the *dynamics of the collective unconscious* was marked by the archetypal image of the proximity of an impending End of the world, a global final that had to be fulfilled, according to erroneous interpretations of the prophetic texts, with the end of the first millennium of the Christian spirituality. This obsession of a general renewal, of a resurrection of cosmic proportion that was about to close an era of humankind by opening another ontic dimension for the human being can be reactivated through the constant reporting to the UFO phenomenon, with its reactivation being released the symbolic transfer or the projection of frameworks of a questionable physical reality.

The Jungian analysis surprised an extremely important aspect as regards the actual manifestation of the UFO phenomenon and the perception thereof. It is about the overall shape of these unidentified flying objects, their spherical shape. Therefore, if the majority of reports indicate that the UFOs appear as shiny circles or discs, then, according to Jung, the likeness with the form of the *mandala* represents an indisputable fact. In Sanskrit, the term of *mandala* translates with the word *circle*, this archetypal figure being present in the visionary, oniric and creationist experiences, at the level of the spiritual growth of all mankind (Drob, 2016: 237). It represents the idea of perfection, of a whole, but also of surrounding structure, of a convenient milestone. From the perspective of the Jungian psychoanalytic thinking, the mandala may represent the bipolar image of the self, reuniting the conscious and unconscious in a balanced and dynamic whole (Jung, 2016: 114-115). The image of the sphere or of the circle had, according to psychoanalytic interpretations, an important role in the religious experience of mankind, being often identified with the symbol of the divine perfection that gathers together into an spherical fullness the all-powerful presence and the all-knowing of the universal creator. Not without basis, considered Jung, one of the best definitions of Divinity was the one in which is evoked the image of a circle whose centre is everywhere and the circumference nowhere. In the mythical-religious environment of the Antiquity, UFOs could easily be identified with the divine presence or manifestations of the gods, with terrifying signs and prophecies or coming to bless mortals. This indicates a correlation between psychological dynamics of mankind and the form of emergence and exposure of the UFO phenomenon.

The image of this phenomenon may also send, due to constant use of circular shapes, to the archetype of that primordial man, of that *anthropos* as integral humanity, which is also self-sufficient. We can also evoke the new testamentary image of Messiah, who is accompanied at the level of his face

by a luminous sky. Jung also claimed that one can conjure the myth in the Old Testament, of *prophet Elijah*, who is raised to heaven in a chariot of fire or of holy personalities from the Islam, who often roam the Earth from heights, floating in a state of weightlessness and denial of the laws of physics (Jung, 2011: 352-356). The modern world is trying to anchor in rational and empirical arguments. The mythology and the mystical experience sometimes seem to be characterized as mere products of the innocence of the human spirit, of the dark ages of ignorance and superstitions, stage that the science and the technological advancement they state they have exceeded. Jung believed that precisely on this background of an apparent mental stability and excessive security, the unconscious contents, gathered through the excessive reject from the surface scope of the conscious, can be sublimated and erupt, on a greater scale, projecting itself on the level of human perception under forms as the UFO phenomenon. The fear of an end of humanity, the appeal to the divine spherical perfection, the need of eruption of the revelations in the daily monotony, the opening to another ontic and gnoseologic dimension – all these psychological drives were not dimmed and switched off, but repressed by the modern man and their eruption in the phenomenon of the magnitude of the UFOs is extremely intense for the individual but also for the collective psyche. Jung drew people's attention towards the fact that the images of the past can no longer be accepted because of the claim to objectivity and scientific character of the modern man. Thus, the collective unconscious finds no longer necessary the expression and eruption of the pulsatile contents through the formulas of the mythical past. He has adapted to new technological developments and manages to project itself to the level of symbolic images which have a technological nature. UFOs can fall under the category of these modern images that can include collective unconscious contents. The fact that a possible unknown physical reality or, more accurately, misunderstood by the human reason, becomes a perimeter for the symbolic manifestation of some unconscious archetypes, does not mean at all that the two phenomena exclude one another. Conversely, maybe that, if placed as such, the two apparitions confirm and reinforce each other. Jung reminded, in support of this thesis, the fact that a multitude of myths and legends were elaborated on the basis of actual physical phenomena and having a major impact on the collective psyche, such as a volcanic eruption or a Meteor.

## 5. A brief conclusion

Jung proposed, therefore, in the case of the UFO phenomenon, a balanced approach, in which both the physical factor and the psychological one are given real attention and credibility. Basically, any pertinent research of the human soul should take into account its interference with the outside environment, with the events and the spatial and temporal framework. And any analysis of the external physical environment should take into account the phenomenality of the mental perception, but also the dynamic of the unconscious contents and their tendency of symbolic projection.

From being aware of these interactions between the human psyche and the physical environment that contains its complex mobility, one can ponder upon the themes raised in the foreground by *ufology*, as constant concern regarding the UFO phenomenon, with the multitude of meanings it implies in assuming it as a rumour that becomes *visionary* to the understanding of its *psycho-physical* manifestation as lying beyond the analytical and scientific capacity of the modern man.

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