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Alfred Russel Wallace Notes 29.
Extraterrestrial Entertainment:
Are We Being Monitored by Alien Beings?

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Summary: Alfred Russel Wallace (1823–1913) was an early advocate for the rational assessment of likelihood of extraterrestrial life. Current efforts to evaluate the situation have ranged from the heavily self-indulgent to the more objective, and it is still often difficult to decide just how much of the information we are receiving on the subject is dependable. An attempt is made here to cut through the haze and reduce the matter to elementals. *Key words:* Alfred Russel Wallace, UFOs, UAPs, human evolution, spiritualism, alien beings, extraterrestrial life, interviews

Much of what we see and hear these days on the possibility there have been visits to our planet by advanced aliens is difficult to process; most of this information is being fed to us by persons of uncertain authority, and/or seems, all too frequently, to be concealing a variety of agendas. Even worse, is the information based on assessments of fact that make any sense to begin with? In this short write-up, organized into the form of an interview (now you understand, there never actually was such an interview: it's just 'artistic license'...!), I respond to a number of the central issues involved.

Interviewer: Why should we listen to you on this, any more than to all those other talking heads out there?

CHS: A good initial question. As one part of my answer, while I'm not an insider on any of these matters, I have been giving a lot of thought to them for many years (as of this writing, I am seventy-three years old). Further, I am a professional scientist (Ph.D.) by primary training, in a field (geography) that is attuned to investigations of the 'what and why' of terrestrial surface events. More important than either of these facts, however, is that I am largely agenda-less. Yes, of course, I like being right as much as anyone, but I am not personally engaged in extraterrestrial life investigations that support my livelihood in one way or another. How much can you trust someone who is making money off attempts to further belief in the existence of alien visitors or, conversely in the case of governments, may be trying to conceal as much as they can about actual contacts? I am only interested in this subject because I sense there are some problems with the way we are dealing with the matter. My observations may turn out to be meritless, but at least they are relatively baggage-free.

Alright then. Let's start out with the most basic question. Do you believe our planet has been, and/or is now being, visited by advanced alien species?

Yes, I think the chances of that are quite high. Remember, most astronomers now agree it is very likely that other populations of advanced beings exist in the Universe. How many, who can say, but even our own Galaxy alone is a very, very big place, and at some point you have to concede that the raw numbers favor this conclusion. If this is the case, it is just about as likely that some of these populations have reached an evolutionary state considerably in advance of our own and, if they have any sense of curiosity or greater purpose, been carrying out their own voyages of discovery. You can't have it both ways: if they're out there, and as advanced or more advanced than we are, there is some real chance they know about us.

This would be true even were we without other kinds of evidence to consider. But we are not without such. These fall into two categories: individual sightings of alleged advanced technologies and beings that are difficult to reconcile with anything approaching familiarity, and the existence of architectural and artifactual curiosities that appear contrary to the teachings of traditional history.

Please comment on these conclusions in some greater detail.

Sure, 'glad to. There really isn't much more to say about the earlier matter, though (unless at some future point it becomes apparent we were jumping the gun with our assessments – and this is not entirely impossible), so let me make some remarks on the “other kinds” grouping.

With respect to the personal sightings subject... There are now tens of thousands of submitted reports of unidentified phenomena (including one by myself: see MUFON case #70084, concerning a very strange ‘unidentified flying sound’ a friend and I encountered while hiking in the White Mountains, New Hampshire, in the late 1960s – not very far from where the famous Barney and Betty Hill alleged abduction incident took place in 1961, actually). Further, one can reasonably assume that at least ten times this many events again have occurred but have *not* been reported, for fear of ridicule, or simple laziness. Admittedly, most of these can be explained on the basis of conventional causalities, and many of the rest are likely to have been hoaxes of one kind or another. But this still leaves many thousands – of often multiple – witnessings to at least hundreds of individual events, some including such startling phenomena that it is apparent something out of the ordinary was going on. I won't bother to itemize examples, as there are so many at this point that one would have to be a mentally immobile skeptic to dismiss outright such a large body of evidence.

The real question, therefore, is not ‘whether,’ but ‘what’? And here's where things get sketchy fast. Concerning UFOs (now more commonly referred to as ‘UAPs’), there seem to be relatively few possible explanations: (1) that these are indeed the products of alien civilizations that have decided we are worthy of their interest, for whatever reason, or (2) that the craft and other phenomena, advanced as they may seem, have been created by Earth-originated private groups or governments – or even by members of our own species visiting us ‘from the future.’

As to which of these explanations is the more likely, I wouldn't care to guess. One thing I would suggest, however, is that we should take a dim view of any explanation that

relies on ideas that so far haven't yielded real product: although things like time travel, wormholes, and additional 'dimensions' are fun notions to toy with, I for one am not going to take them very seriously until they've been shown to actually operate within 'real' nature – that is, beyond the realm of theory.

As far as the “architectural and artifactual curiosities” that have been discovered around the world go, I admit that many of these are more than a bit puzzling. Most related stories, however, have doubtlessly been spun by enthusiasts into packages more compelling than they really are, and for reasons ultimately linked to profit-making motives. Often they ignore the obvious, or feature lawyerly forms of argument more suited to ignite our sense of wonder than rational assessment. Still, we should also keep in mind one of my guy Alfred Russel Wallace's famous quotes, from his 1898 book *The Wonderful Century*: “...These, combined with numerous other cases of the denial of facts on *à priori* grounds, have led me to the conclusion that, whenever the scientific men of any age disbelieve other men's careful observations without inquiry, the scientific men are *always* wrong.” And understand that ‘factual’ evidence is not always so clear-cut: while it is one thing to try to remain objective, it is another to simply ignore what doesn't quite fit into preconceived pigeonholes (see my *Alfred Russel Wallace Notes* nos. 19, 21, and 23).

What of the evidence attached to alleged crashed UFOs?

What evidence? A nontrivial number of people have claimed to have seen or otherwise been involved with these alleged crashes, but what can we actually point to in the way of physical proof of them? Just about nada. Further, I would dispute the meaning we've attached to these supposed events, even if they are not just ‘supposed.’

How's that?

Well, the main problem with the notion of ‘UFO crashes’ is that we think it likely there should be any to begin with. If we are in fact dealing with advanced civilizations from other parts of our Galaxy, or even beyond it, the mere fact that they have found their way here suggests they are at least many hundreds – or even tens of thousands – of years in advance of us technologically. Now I ask you, what are the chances that vehicles of such advanced design would ever be prone to crashing into our planet? ‘Not hardly likely, as they say. I don't deny that there may have been ‘crashes’ of ‘UFOs’, but two other explanatory scenarios seem much more likely: first, that such accidents involved crafts built here (by the government, or some private party), or, that if these vehicles actually are alien nations-originated, that they were wrecked, or their wrecks simulated, *deliberately*.

Why would this have happened?

Ostensibly, because they might want to provide every opportunity for the public to become aware of them – short of direct confrontation. One might call it – a learning curve...

But what's their objective? Are we in danger?

In danger? – no, I don't think so. The better surmise is that they are monitoring us, waiting for some point at which they feel there is reason to make deliberate contact. It is

often opined that, perhaps, our neighbors are worried about us – in particular, worried that our nuclear devices and other weapons represent a threat to them. What a grandly arrogant conclusion! Why, any alien civilization worthy of its faster-than-light or magnetic field-powered vehicles would be able to crush us in an instant if they really wanted to, almost certainly before we even knew what was happening! If they have been sharing any of their technology with us (and if so, most likely through secret government contacts), we can be sure that these are relatively minor favors. They seemingly would have no reason to fear us, so the real crux, it seems to me, is that they realize our social structure is so flawed that deliberate introductions of new kinds of knowledge would just result in our destroying ourselves faster than if we were simply left alone.

Sadly, the truth of the matter is that on a person-to-person basis, our motives in this world are dominated by greed, envy, suspicions, etc. Any sane examination of the way our news and entertainment media operate reveals a festering mass of citizen- and consumer-enticing lies and bigotries that we willingly tolerate on an everyday basis. Yes, of course we have admirable qualities as well, but these don't manage to do much more than help us tread water on the morality and ethics balance sheet. Our alien neighbors, if they are actually here, couldn't possibly have overlooked this, or have any desire to contribute to the problem by wantonly giving us fancier toys to play with.

Wallace was all too aware of his own period's version of this, too, on more than one occasion complaining that "our present phase of social development is not only extremely imperfect but vicious and rotten at the core." He was at least vaguely conscious right from the beginning of his studies that evolution had been forcing an escalating collision between the forces of self-preservation and socially-mediated altruism, and soon recognized that his and Darwin's model of natural selection alone was incapable of bringing social behavior to a final level of ascendancy. Something else had to provide the final sparks of influence.

Is that it, then: do we just need to 'get nicer' before they speak directly to us?

Perhaps. But it may be more than just that. Do you want me to go on? What I've been considering might be viewed as a bit disturbing...

Sure, proceed. Sometimes the truth is not so pretty, right?

Yes, I suppose that's so. But I am by no means entirely confident I'm on the right track. Anyway, here goes...

Let's suppose for a moment that the *Ancient Aliens* people are to some degree correct, at least to the extent that our recent biological development as a species has been influenced – or even to a degree engineered – by alien entities. How so? you ask. Was a bit of gene splicing the entire plan: that is, that some population of creatures on Earth just on the brink of self-awareness was identified, and then pushed forward into dominance by a biological intervention? Would this have been enough?

Would it...?

Perhaps not. Perhaps instead they realized that a mere improvement in biology could not guarantee a development of beings implicitly capable of superseding mere goals of self-preservation. That is to say, of defeating innate tendencies toward greed and violence before we either blew ourselves up, or destroyed the surface environment through mindless Malthusian over-consumption. So, maybe, an additional synergy was arranged.

Namely?

A bit of background first. Just for the sake of argument, let us suppose there actually exists something like a non-spatial reality referred to by spiritualists as the Spirit Realm. Spiritualists believe that the denizens of this projected realm are in regular contact with us biological entities through subliminal messages such as dreams and premonitions, and that the messages relayed have implicit moral lessons and feelings that lead to pangs of conscience and other emotional responses that ultimately help us adjust our behavior, including slowly overcoming our less admirable tendencies. Wallace was a confirmed believer and, I surmise, perceived that this flow of feedback could operate in a fashion analogous to his view of natural selection, whose effects he interpreted as a kind of governor control on the adaptation process similar to the one operating on steam engines that slows or speeds things up.

Wallace's feedback-based view of the way populations interact with their environment leads to what is known as a 'push-pull' kind of causality, one in which an ecological balance of nature is maintained as biological entities change, and operate in a manner ultimately creating feedback inertias which resonate through the natural world as ameliorations (these in turn make possible the selection of more and more complex biological forms). In directly analogous fashion, a Spirit Realm might provide enough messages to us that over time our more selfish tendencies could be moderated, leading to more indulgent appreciations of – and reactions to – our world. It's a nice thought, at least.

Alright, but what does any of this have to do with aliens?

Well, suppose the spiritualists – and Wallace – are mistaken about the existence of this hypothetical 'Spirit Realm,' but not, generally, about the kind of evolutionary causation imagined. Perhaps most dreams and emotional reactions are no more than the ordinary byproducts of physiological function that conventional science says they are – but only 'most.'

I'm almost afraid to ask what's coming next...

Ha! Here it is, then... Maybe some significant portion of our dreams are actually 'interventions' by advanced aliens, designed to help us come to better appreciations and decisions. Many people, of course, would be troubled over this, believing it to be some form of mind control, whereas in reality it would more closely resemble an ongoing – and largely non-confrontational – flow of advice. We would be free, on an individual to individual basis, to either act upon the advice, or not to. This kind of causality actually has some resemblance to what takes place during natural selection, as most selection is very probabilistic, both in the short term (in the development of particular arrays of adaptations)

and the long term (in the evolution of species that either end up being evolutionary dead ends, or lead to further developmental inertias).

By the way, have you ever asked yourself what happens when you die?

Well, of course. Everyone does. Why do you ask?

I think about it quite a bit. There seem to be three main possibilities. First, like spiritualists and theosophists think, perhaps there really is some kind of 'Spirit Realm' that organizes nonphysical reality into an aspatial kind of environment: if so, I would go with the theosophy model, which espouses a cyclical reincarnation process (but that's another story!). Second, perhaps the conventional rational view that we just die and that's the end of it (at least for that individual) is true. Lastly, the 'alien intervention' model, which might or might not mean a termination of entity at biological death. Personally, I remain divided on the relative likelihoods of these three scenarios. All things considered, I would put the chances of each of the three at about 33 1/3 percent, which means that the chances of an absolute death are maybe about fifty-fifty. Oh – and in this assessment I discount thoughts of 'heaven' and the like, which, unlike Wallacean-posed spiritualism or theosophy, are not based on any thoughts of a natural, law-based existence, and fall into the category of undemonstrated wishful thinking.

This is fascinating, but what kind of conclusive proof do you have of any of this?

None of course – but the evolutionary models at least seem plausible, and no one knows for sure that there is 'nothing' when we die. Besides, that sounds rather inefficient to me. In the physical world, just about everything that dies or falls apart is in one sense or another recycled in a manner ultimately contributing to further system evolution. And I would point out that dreams and other paranormal phenomena do have the effect of attracting our attention – and, ostensibly, in ways that might really be helping to refine our evaluative skills. Along these lines, one of the very most important human activities turns out to be story-telling – in the form of personal conversations, literature, theater, movies, etc. Is there anything that more obviously guides our subsequent behavior than taking in a good story? And dreams are really good stories...

Why would alien beings want to interact with us in such a fashion?

Well, that is a central question, I admit. As I stated earlier, I don't feel they (at least whichever ones who are most influential) are here – assuming that they *are* here – for reasons of domination or ruination; if they were, we would have suffered the consequences already. So, that leaves three possibilities, I think.

First, I suppose they might simply be studying us, as a purely scientific activity, having no real intention of ever exposing their presence. I think this unlikely, as as far as they would be concerned, our progress would be water under the bridge. 'Been there, done that, before. Why bother putting in the effort?

Second, influencing our development could actually be *entertaining* for them, and in a rewarding fashion. Wallace, in late 1865 just before adopting spiritualism, once wrote to a friend: "I believe that the *only* way to teach and to civilize, whether children or savages, is

through the influence of love and sympathy; and the great thing to teach them is to have the most absolute respect for the rights of others, and to accustom them to receive pleasure from the happiness of others.” Wallace was throughout his life vehemently anti-inculcation, and it is not impossible to imagine how a highly-evolved lifeform might take high pleasure in constructing just the right kind of low-stress dream or impression scenario that could help us reflect upon the deficiencies of our previous, imperfect, actions in a manner pursuant to a later, more balanced, overall perception of things.

Third, and extending the second point: What if such higher civilizations come to realize that, beyond the simple ‘entertainment’ matter, it is a primary responsibility of their attained existence to help other ‘less evolved’ beings rise to a more fruitful perception of things? Biological evolution is enhanced by an ever-complexifying surface ecosystem that ultimately grooms finer and finer adaptational tunings within its biological sector – but can this process result in the kinds of refinements necessary to overcoming the basically Malthusian constraints on human social evolution? I see no evidence for such. But this doesn’t mean that a little bit of opportune nudging at the subliminal level might not be capable of doing the trick.

Of course one could argue that such supra-physical evolution might be promoted in some other, or even multiple, ways. Perhaps conventional understandings of what dreams are, are on target and enough to explain it all, or even that something like the ‘Spirit Realm’ of spiritualists actually exists, and influences us in the way they suggest. But these explanations still leave us with the question of how to explain the sightings and artifacts mentioned earlier.

Are you alone in thinking such thoughts?

Well, the *Ancient Aliens* television series, now exceeding two hundred individual episodes, attempts to deal with most of these considerations. As often as not, however, their dialogues are preposterous, including one episode that brazenly suggests our octopus species (ostensibly, simply because of their high intelligence and strange morphology) are actually the product of alien genetic interventions in the past few thousands of years. This, despite the fact that these forms have a recognized fossil record extending back at least three hundred million years. Just as bad, the show’s scripts are filled with various kinds of factual error foisted on the viewer by incompetent editors and overly-enthusiastic ‘believer’ announcers. In one I remember, it was claimed that an Indian tribe in Peru that had produced various sculptures of animals, could not have known of the existence of monkeys, because there were none within hundreds of miles of that location – but this is not accurate, the closest populations actually being within a few days’ travel by foot from there. It is true that the program also often interviews quite respectable experts, but these spots almost always concern background issues, rather than specifics. I contacted one of these people once and asked him what he thought of the show: his response was that he thought it was ridiculous, and only allowed himself to be interviewed on some basic science questions that pertained to the subject under discussion.

On the other hand, I don’t personally believe that *everything* they put out there *is* ridiculous. I see no reason why, for example, human evolution couldn’t have been

influenced by genetic manipulations by alien populations in the distant past; of course, this is not the same thing as claiming any proof that it *was* (somewhere along the line most of the people involved with AA have forgotten the distinction between ‘evidence’ and ‘proof’...). And, as I should admit, I find their many attempts to re-interpret creation myths and the function of various ancient buildings interesting – though I am no expert on these subjects, and realize, again, that it is one thing to make such claims, and another to prove them. Still, there is a trend, even among more conservative observers, to look upon the evidence of past civilizations, physical and cultural, as indicative of actual events and contacts – as opposed to pure myth. (Once again I should cite Alfred Russel Wallace here: as an important pioneer in that movement: see my *Alfred Russel Wallace Notes* no. 21.) Is that ancient image actually a rendering of an alien in a spacesuit? Was there really a gigantic flood (or floods) in near prehistorical times? In the latter case, we now have a better sense of how actual catastrophic forces such as glacial epoch-caused sea level changes, comet collisions, tsunamis, and ice dam breaks really may have been at the root of many passed-on deluge stories, and this should give us some pause before we reject outright unconventional explanations for the origins of other early human narratives, and the traditions they subsequently produced.

Acknowledgments

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Note 5. "Just How Well Known Was Wallace in His Own Time?" (April 2014).

Note 4. "Contributions to The Garden, 1875-1912" (October 2011).

Note 3. "Two Early Publications" (October 2011).

Note 2. "The Spelling 'Russel', and Wallace's Date of Birth" (October 2010).

Note 1. "Authorship of Two Early Works" (April 2010).

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