

Our Wild Kosmos!

An Exo Studies Exploration of the
Ontological Status of Non-Human Intelligences



Sean Esbjörn-Hargens Ph.D.

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In the future, an adventurous sociologist might consider writing a paper that examines the “caste” system in anomalies research. The “nuts and bolts” UFO research people regard the “psychosocial” UFO researchers with disdain. UFO researchers in general regard the cryptozoologists with contempt. Cryptozoologists who embrace the possibility of a paranormal connection to Bigfoot sightings are generally viewed with derision because of the prevailing view that Sasquatch is an undiscovered primate species, not an interdimensional playmate of alien beings. Likewise, the paranormal researchers view the UFO researchers with disdain, while the ghost hunters keep their distance from everybody else. And all of this hostility and contempt is a vain and so far unsuccessful attempt to earn a small measure of respect and acceptance (and maybe funding) from mainstream science, a lofty but unlikely goal.

So how does one go about modeling the range of more than one hundred phenomena that occurred on the ranch between 1994 to 2004?

– *Colm Kelleher & George Knapp Hunt* (2005, pp. 207-8)¹

The idea that we live in a multidimensional universe populated by beings or life-forms that are less densely embodied than we are, or perhaps not embodied at all, is not new to Eastern religious traditions or to most of the indigenous peoples of the world. But it is not a cosmos that is familiar or accepted as existing by the scientific culture of Western society, which has, perhaps once necessarily, constructed a universe in which the material or psychological, the seen and unseen realms, have been kept largely separate so that the physical world might be understood and mastered in its own right.

– *John Mack* (1999/2008, p. 289)

We live in a big weird multiverse—a Wild Kosmos!² One that is *ontologically weird* and not just epistemologically weird.³ There are all kinds of experiences and realities that do not easily fit into the story of science we have collectively held so dear for more than 300 years. Contemporary scientists are all too often like medieval astronomers adding more and more epicycles (circular planetary orbits) to their celestial maps in order to preserve the Ptolemaic model of a geocentric solar system. And they continue to do this in the face of a growing body of contradictory and anomalist data: what William James (1897/1960) called *wild facts* and Charles Fort (1941/1974) called *damned facts*. Both James and Fort were using their respective terms to refer to those pesky paranormal data points that threaten to undermine present models of reality and destabilize our current systems of science. Facts that are easy and necessary to ignore to maintain the illusion that we understand reality. We need a whole new “heliocentric” cosmology that can more eloquently and accurately account for the wide range of *exo phenomena* (i.e., anomalous, Fortean, extradimensional, and paranormal realities) documented in the academic, UFOlogical, and esoteric literature. We need a new post-material/post-positivist scientific vision and method that has room for wild facts and damned facts alike and can help us investigate in a rigorous philosophical, psychologically, and empirical way the many realities that lie beyond the register of our five senses or their technological extensions.

As such, I believe we need to take an *integrative metaview* to begin to enable sincere progress in making sense of this Wild Kosmos. *Integrative* because we need to draw on as many disciplines of valid knowledge as we can to get as complete a picture as possible—a *metaview*. We cannot afford to leave any stone (or exoplanet) unturned or any valid data point no matter how esoteric, inconvenient, or controversial out of consideration. Charles Fort’s damned facts are the royal road to a more complete picture of reality. In short, we need a robust metaview of weirdness that weaves together UFO sightings, encounters with *non-human intelligences* (NHIs), paranormal and poltergeist phenomena, anomalous experiences, time and space slips, cryptids, and all legitimate forms of high strangeness into a new compelling story of us living in a multidimensional multiverse populated with a wide range of intelligent inhabitants.

This has led me to begin to develop what I am calling *Exo Studies*. Exo is Greek for “outside” and “external.” Thus, in its broadest conception, Exo Studies is the *metadisciplinary* study of all anomalous phenomena that lie outside our current models of explanation and views of reality. The existence of unidentified flying objects (UFOs) (also known as unidentified aerial phenomena [UAPs]) and their extraterrestrial (ET) or extradimensional (ED) occupants is arguably one of, if not the most, heavily researched and well documented of all anomalous phenomena. Thus, UFOs serve as a focal point within Exo Studies to develop an *integrative metascience* that can be used to investigate and make sense of a wide range of other anomalous and paranormal (i.e., “exo”) realities.⁴ The study of UFOs has a particular relevance to the effort to usher in a new story because they so directly challenge the national security state, our sense of anthropocentric sovereignty, and demand that our scientific and spiritual beliefs evolve and become more integrated and sophisticated. Also, UFOs are associated with every form of anomalous phenomenon imaginable. Jeffery Kripal (2016a) calls this the “waste bucket problem.”⁵ As a result, UFOs provide a necessary albeit unwieldy meta-context. UFOs also have a wide range of qualitative and quantitative data associated with them. And they occupy and enjoy a unique position within public awareness and cultural discourse in spite of (and likely because of) the social taboo surrounding them. For these reasons, I believe the study of UFOs more than other fields of anomalous research stands the best chance of piercing the modernist stronghold and postmodernist paralysis, thus opening the floodgates for other types of anomalous realities that deserve a place at the table of ontological consideration.

Metadisciplinarity

Exo Studies is a metaphilosophy that draws on multiple integrative metatheories (e.g., Ken Wilber’s Integral Theory, Roy Bhaskar’s Critical Realism, and Edgar Morin’s Complex Thought) to develop a *Complex Integral Realism*.⁶ This integral approach to “What is real?” weaves together—using integrative metatheories—the primary insights from over 50 distinct academic fields of discourse from the arts, humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences (see Appendix 1 for a complete list of 150 fields, domains, and topics included in Exo Studies). This is what makes Exo Studies *metadisciplinary* as opposed to merely *inter-*, *cross-*, *multi-*, or *trans-*disciplinary: it draws on the valid knowledge from dozens of domains of research and analysis, connecting the dots using an effective set of integrative principles.⁷ As a result, Exo Studies sheds new light on UFOs and the paranormal by drawing on multiple academic, scientific, and esoteric disciplines that are typically not included in UFOlogy today.

In particular, there are three main camps of disciplines I draw on for Exo Studies (see Appendix 1 for a more detailed overview of specific fields associated with each “camp”):

1. **Mainstream academic and philosophical literature** (e.g., genetics, sociology, religious studies, media studies, anthropology, and psychology)
2. **UFO and space studies literature** (e.g., abduction studies, astrotheology, exopolitics, astrobiology, the experiencer literature, exosociology, and whistleblower testimony)
3. **Esoteric and paranormal literature** (e.g., subtle energy sciences, Fortean studies, cryptozoolo-

gy, parapsychology, occult cosmologies, and out-of-body [OBE] and near-death experience [NDE] studies)

Thus, at the heart of Exo Studies is a metadisciplinary approach to making sense of the Wild Kosmos and our place in it. We need to draw on many disciplines—mainstream academics, UFOlogy, emerging exosciences, esoteric traditions, and fringe studies. We cannot in good scientific conscious ignore or leave out any domain of knowledge that might help shine a light on the mysteries of our multiverse reality and its various denizens.

So, while Exo Studies includes what has historically fallen within an UFO/NHI context, it goes beyond this by taking a metaview of the dynamic interplay between *mind–meaning–matter*, often drawing on source materials that traditionally have not been connected to the study of UFOs/NHIs. As a result, Exo Studies is able to make unique contributions to UFOlogy and the emerging mainstream scientific and academic efforts aimed at understanding UFOs and NHIs.

Below I provide a high-level overview of more than a dozen unique ways this metadisciplinary approach can pioneer new understandings of UFOs/NHIs. Some of these examples are expanded on in more detail throughout the article. Within each example, I use parentheses to list various schools of thought and key disciplines involved in each exploration.

- **Posthuman models of subjectivity:** The new field of posthumanism and the study of sentience across the evolutionary spectrum—plants, cephalopods, birds, cetaceans, and primates (plant intelligence, cognitive and affective ethnology, panpsychism, animal studies) can help us understand exobiology from a nonanthropocentric perspective and help us better imagine alien and extraterrestrial subjectivities.
- **New ontological approaches:** The recent ontological turn in philosophy (speculative realism, object-oriented ontology, and new realisms), anthropology (Amerindian perspectivism, new animism, paranthropology) and science and technology studies (actor-network theory, material semiotics, ontological pluralism, assemblage theory) can help us reintegrate ontology into the discussion in a sophisticated way that overcomes the epistemological bias that has dominated Western discourse since Kant.
- **Feminist materialisms:** The various feminist process ontologies, metaphysics and new materialisms (agential realism, feminist science studies, gender and queer studies) that can enable new cosmological visions of enactment and entanglement that are more capable of including aspects of reality that masculine and modernist dominated forms of discourse have systematically prevented.
- **Faery seers:** The study of individuals who are faery seers or have second sight and who can see clairvoyantly and with other psychic senses the nature spirits, elementals, and other various faery beings (magical arts, occult practices, esoteric development, theosophy, shamanism, folklore studies) can help us to better evaluate the ways folklore (second-person cultural data) does and does not account for first-person UFO and abduction experiences.⁸
- **Cognitive distortion:** The inclusion of cognitive biases, false memory dynamics, and manipulation dynamics (anomalist psychology, philosophy of mind, conspiratorial psychology, dark psychology, heuristics) that contribute to skeptical and true believer mind sets so we can better account for the various ways individuals distort, confuse, or misinterpret anomalous experiences.
- **Quantum models that include consciousness:** The engagement with cutting edge theories of physics that include consciousness and subtle energies in a multiverse context (e.g., Claude Swanson’s [2003, 2009, 2018] Synchronized Universe Model, Alex Wendt’s [2015] quantum mind and social ontology, Lex Neale’s [2018, 2019] Integral Relativity, Jack Sarfatti’s [2017, 2018, 2019] post-quantum physics, Paul LaViolettes [2010] Subquantum Kinetics, Vernon Neppe & Edward Close’s [2014] Triadic

Dimensional-Distinction Vortical Paradigm) so that we can really have a theory of everything (TOE) that includes mind and matter (and meaning).

- **Paranormal hotspots:** The systematic study of paranormal hotspots and UFO flap areas (e.g., Yakima, WA; Sedona, AZ; Hudson River Valley, NY; Uintah Basin, UT; San Luis Valley, CO; Rendlesham Forest in the UK) to develop a metaview of the shared ontology of these anomalist phenomena and the role certain geographic features play in their manifestation.
- **New types of investigative methods:** The engagement and development of new paradoxical and integrative methods (e.g., Jack Hunter’s [2015, 2016] ontological flooding, Jeff Kripal’s [2016d] comparative practices, Jacque Vallée’s [1975/2014] recursive unsolvability, Karen Barad’s [2007] agential cuts: cutting together/apart, Jenny Rice’s [2020] gorgoylian methods: making something new via strange juxtapositions) to invite ambiguity, synchronicity and the trickster as core components of the research and data.
- **Contact modalities:** The study of DMT and psychedelic entities to see how they compare to the NHIs in the UFO experienter literature and shine a light on the role that different contact modalities (out-of-body experiences [OBEs], near death experiences [NDEs], meditation, psychedelics, remote viewing, channeling) have in the variety of documented entity encounters throughout history.
- **Postmaterial science:** The development of a nonreductive science of mixed methods (first-, second-, and third-person data and methods) to inform new types of metadisciplinary research: an *integrative metascience*. In conjunction with this is the development of new metamaps of what counts as evidence (philosophy of science, legal studies, systematic reviews) in what circumstances so that we can do a better job of thinking through and debating what is “real” and how do we know what is real and what kinds and amounts of evidence are needed to take a claim seriously.
- **Cultural shadow:** The study of cultural taboos and social secrecy around UFOs and the paranormal and how this plays out in terms of alterity and xenophobia (psychoanalytic, cultural studies, anthropology, intersubjective theory, media and film studies) to better deal with our experience of the “alien” other.⁹
- **Living on Mars:** The exploration of what it will mean for us to be a multiplanet species living on Mars and beyond (transhumanism, space psychology, exosociology, genetics, physics) in preparation of becoming a galactic (post-Earth) species.
- **Exophilosophy:** Develop an exophilosophy by mining the history of philosophy for commentary by philosophers (e.g., G.W. F. Hegel, Immanuel Kant, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Alfred North Whitehead, Charles Sanders Peirce, William James, and Henri Bergson) on extraterrestrial and paranormal topics as well as applying philosophical thinking and principles to paranormal and extraterrestrial issues (e.g., Jeff Kripal [2010], Jason Reza Jorjani [2016]).
- **Post-formal adult psychology:** The application of the fields of adult developmental and post-formal psychology (e.g., Robert Kegan’s [1994] Subject-Object Theory, Michael Commons [2008] Model of Hierarchical Complexity, Susanne Cook-Greuter’s [1999/2010] Ego Development Theory, and Terri O’Fallon and colleagues’ [2020] STAGES Model) to understand how worldviews and levels of consciousness shape our perceptions and values. This exploration would include the study of how different worldviews enact and interpret exophenomena and the emergence of a new galactic worldview that follows worldcentric and planetcentric orientations.
- **Indigenous and esoteric cosmologies:** Draw on the many American Indian, First Nations, and aboriginal cultures (anthropology, post-colonial studies) the world over for inspiration and guidance on how to reenchant the cosmos and articulate a post-mythic cosmology that makes room for a wide range of non-human and ancestral intelligences. The esoteric traditions (magic, occult, hermetic) also can provide insight into this process. Together these alternative cosmologies can help us reintegrate

NHIs into our cosmic narrative and scientific view, allowing us to embrace all of our multidimensional neighbors in this Wild Kosmos.

In summary, Exo Studies is an emerging integrative metafield committed to *exploring the psychological, sociological, and scientific implications of living in a highly populated, multidimensional multiverse*. This includes three major areas of focus with various subdomains of exploration:

1. **The cultivation of multidimensional awareness** to facilitate the conscious perception of the larger “invisible” multiverse realities we are embedded in.¹⁰
2. **The development of a galactic-centric humanity** through the exploration of the cultural dynamics that make this topic so taboo and by cultivating compassion and connection to a wide range of non-human intelligences.
3. **The establishment of an integrative metascience** capable of making non-reductive sense of the wide range of exo phenomena that we have solid evidence for.

At the heart of Exo Studies is the question of non-human intelligences (NHIs) and our interactions with them. Exo Studies also makes room for what can be called multiverse intelligences, multiverse humans, or galactic human intelligences all of which refer to the various human, human-like, and human-looking intelligences that can be encountered in galactic contexts, alternative timelines, parallel realities, and other dimensions. Thus, in this article NHIs will be used in its broadest sense to include human-looking NHIs and multiverse humans that are other than those humans living on Earth in our current “3D” consensus reality.¹¹

This article will focus on NHIs since this area serves as a powerful entry point into Exo Studies. In Part 1, I will present a new taxonomy of NHIs based on an in-depth review of the literature, including 12 key sources. This new taxonomy is built around answering four foundational questions. After presenting this taxonomy, I will provide an overview of the 10 most common hypotheses used to explain NHIs and then I will present a new eleventh hypothesis—the *Mutual Enactment Hypothesis* (MEH)—that draws on core features of all the others. Then in Part 2, having presented a new taxonomy, I will discuss the ontological status of NHIs in the context of the MEH. To do this I will introduce the Exo Studies notion of *doubleness* (e.g., how UFOs are simultaneously physical and psychical). This will then set the context for us to explore the question, “What is real?” Then I introduce the Who x How x What of *Integral Pluralism* through exploring eight provocative examples of NHIs and their mutual enactment.

Part 1: Non-Human Intelligences

One of the most fascinating and controversial aspects of UFOs is the topic of the non-human intelligences (NHIs) associated with them. The main questions being ones such as, “Who are piloting these craft?” “Where did they come from?” “What do they want?” “What are they?” and “Are they real?”

There is a culturally predominate view that all “aliens” are either a grotesque monster (e.g., the xenomorph) to be battled by the likes of Sigourney Weaver or some version of Whitley Strieber’s (1987) visitors—the Greys with their thin arms/legs, big head, and wraparound black eyes.¹² In stark contrast, the contactee and experiencer literature indicates that there are at least three dozen major types of NHIs with hundreds of varieties occurring across these categories.

Humans Have Always Encountered NHIs

Since the 1990s, Albert S. Rosales (e.g., 2016, 2017) has made it his life mission to compile all the reports of human encounters with humanoid entities ever documented. Over the last 30 years he has amassed a database

of over 18,000 cases many of which have been published in his 15-book series *Humanoid Encounters*. Each volume presents the cases he has collected from a specific historical time period (e.g., 1 AD–1899, 2010–2015). On average, each is 300 pages so this results in approximately 4,500 pages of humanoid encounter reports. Keep in mind that these humanoid encounters compiled by Rosales do not include the wide range of non-humanoid encounters that have also occurred since time immemorial. These types of encounters often get categorized as cryptids (i.e., undocumented, mythic, or unusual animals) or are so strange that UFO researchers routinely do not know how to make sense of them, so they are often ignored entirely.

To make all this more confusing, Jacque Vallée, one of the most important figures in UFO research, pointed out in his classic and at the time quite controversial *Passport to Magonia* (1969) that there is much overlap between European faery lore and contemporary UFO encounters. This has led to a long list of people equating fairies and aliens as being the same beings just viewed through different cultural lenses.¹³ This same orientation has been used to support the “ancient alien” theory that we have been visited by NHIs from the stars for thousands of years but have viewed those encounters through the cultural frames of the times.¹⁴ Likewise, many descriptions of NHIs that appear to be made out of light or have indistinct energy bodies sound more like angels than aliens.

Developing a New Taxonomy of NHIs

So how do we know if a NHI is associated with a UFO or if they are extraterrestrial, a faery, a cryptid, an angel or some other kind of physical or incorporeal being? At what point do all sizes and shapes of non-human intelligences just blend into one big category of weirdness? There does seem to be a lot of overlap between these various kinds of NHIs, and it is not always easy to draw clear and distinct lines between them. This is one of the perplexing aspects of dealing with UFOs and why many “nuts and bolts” researchers stay way clear of the amorphous realm of consciousness and the high strangeness it lets in the door. In view of such complexities, I have developed a new approach to categorizing NHIs associated with UFOs that can also be used with NHIs associated with other contexts (e.g., cryptids, paranormal encounters, poltergeists). My approach is organized around answering four sets of key questions:

1. Where do they come from?
2. What do they look like?
3. What do they want? Why are they here?
4. What are they? Are they real?

	Example 1	Example 2	Example 3	Example 4
1. Domain	Galactic	Celestial	Galactic	Faerie
2a. Class	Humanoid	Humanoid	Non-Humanoid	Humanoid
2b. Type	Short Grey	Feline	Exotic	Sasquatch
2c. Variant	3 Fingers	9D Sirian	Brain-like Being	PNW Bigfoot
3. Perspective	Intruder	Observer	Neutral	Helper

TABLE 1. A Non-Human Intelligences Taxonomy

To answer the first three questions, I have created the following three-layered/five-part taxonomy:

1. **Domain:** Where do they come from?
2. **Appearance:** What do they look like?
 - **Class:** body type (humanoid or non-humanoid)
 - **Type:** morphology (general body features)
 - **Variant:** phenotype (additional features and behaviors)
3. **Perspective:** What do they want? Why are they here?

One may or may not agree with my illustrative identifications for each level of Table 1. I do hope you agree, however, that it is useful to develop a taxonomy that can allow researchers and experiencers a better way of comparing and discussing NHIs. People are encouraged to use this taxonomy in ways that best suit their own needs.

Below I walk you briefly through the five-part taxonomy as presented in Table 1. Each section below is organized by the key questions associated with each of the three layers of the taxonomy: Domain, Appearance (Class, Type, and Variant), and Perspective. The goal here is to inspire new ways of thinking about and discussing NHIs. Once I have touched on each of these three layers of the taxonomy we can then turn our attention to the fourth set of questions: “What are they? Are they real?” At this point I will present the major hypothesis used to explain what NHIs are. This will set the stage for me to introduce the Mutual Enactment Hypothesis, which strives to integrate the best of all the other NHI hypotheses. So, let us start by taking a look at the three main domains or realms that NHIs come from.

WHERE DO THEY COME FROM?

Three Domains: Faerie, Galactic, and Celestial

A common approach to categorizing NHIs is to divide them based on their relationship to planets: are they connected to a single planet, multiple planets, or are they in some sense beyond planets. Another layer within this context that I consider is: are their bodies primarily physical, subtle, or causal in essence? For example, there are nature spirits, genii loci, and elementals that are endowed with bodies of subtle energy and are typically connected to the land or to natural processes of a particular planet. These beings live primarily in the etheric or subtle realms of *Faerie* and are referred to collectively as the *Fae*.

Next, some NHIs are from physical planets, or connected to multiple planets and have the time-space technologies to visit other planets and dimensions. These NHIs are associated with the gross or physical realm even if they can “dematerialize” in a blink of an eye (i.e., extraterrestrials), though in some cases they have a para-physical or subtle body and might be associated with other time-space dimensions (i.e., extradimensionals). These beings are referred to as *Galactics* to indicate that they come from other planets, use technology to explore or interact with multiple types of planets, or are associated with galactic time-space dimensions.

Finally, there are NHIs associated with higher frequencies of vibration (e.g., high subtle or causal energies) that often appear as light beings. They are referred to as *Celestials* to highlight that they live in realms beyond planets and dimensional realities. These Celestials include what are often considered angels and archangels as well as beings such as Gaia-Sophia. In short, the Fae are subtle beings connected to a single planet; the Galactics are a mix of physical, subtle, and sometimes causal beings connected to multiple planets or galactic realities; and the Celestials are causal or light beings who are not necessarily connected to any planets. Each of these is connected to a different ontological realm or domain: Faerie, Galactic, or Celestial.

As indicated in Table 2, four NHI researchers independently arrived at more or less the same three categories outlined above. An expanded cartography that includes at least these three domains is necessary

	Fae This planet (Subtle Realm)	Galactics Other planets (Physical+ Realm)	Celestials Beyond planets (Causal Realm)
Graham Hancock (2006)	Fairies	Aliens	Spirits
Philip Imbrogno (2008)	Jinn	Extraterrestrials	Angels
Alex Rachel (2013)	Terrestrials	Extraterrestrials	Celestials
Vanessa Lamorte (2015)	Elementals	Galactics	Angelics

TABLE 2. Non-Human Intelligences Associated with Each Domain

when dealing with UFO phenomena, as it is not uncommon for more than just Galactics to be part of an encounter. As is the case with the rest of the taxonomy, these categories are not meant to be rigid or exclusive. For example, there are reports of various types of Fae living on other planets (e.g., Sirian elves) who can connect with us here on Earth. Likewise, Celestials might be strongly associated with a single planet (e.g., Gaia). As a result, some types of NHIs might accurately represent or be connected to two or even all three domains.

Even though we might be inclined to associate only the Galactics with UFOs, the encounter literature shows us that even within a UFO context beings from all three domains (Fae, Galactics, and Celestials) can and do show up. This raises the question of the interconnections among NHIs associated with these three different domains. Within each domain, one can find humanoid and non-humanoid NHIs. This distinction is addressed in the second part of the taxonomy, which focuses on appearance (“What do they look like?”) through the three sublayers of Class, Type, and Variant.

WHAT DO THEY LOOK LIKE?

Two Classes: Humanoid and Non-humanoid

After determining to which domain an NHI primarily belongs, the next step in the classification process is to identify if the NHI is *humanoid* or *non-humanoid* in terms of bodily shape. For the sake of clarity, let us differentiate both of these terms from *hominid*. *Hominid* is a scientific term referring to all the members of the Great Ape family, including chimpanzees, orangutans, mountain gorillas, extinct human species (e.g., *Homo floresiensis*, *Homo neanderthalensis*), and modern-day humans. It is worth noting that Sasquatches could be considered a hominid. *Humanoid* on the other hand is a more general term meaning shaped like a human, but not necessarily related to Great Apes or humans. The taxonomic term *non-humanoid* simply means any body shape that does not look like a human. In this section I present Table 3, which details 33 types of NHIs organized by class (e.g., humanoid) and type (e.g., Insectoids). Focusing on these two elements (i.e., class and type) in the taxonomy, I believe, provides the most useful metaview of the variety of NHIs found in the experienter (as well as occult and paranormal) literature.

Interestingly, most reported NHIs are humanoid. In other words, they look like us. If so, some have asked, does this mean that such humanoids are just projections of our own (sub)consciousness? After all, why would a vast and creative universe give rise primarily to intelligent beings having two legs, a torso, two arms with hands (with 3-6 digits) and a head? Is this not just another example of our anthropocentric narcissism?

EXO STUDIES

#	NHI Type	Totals	FREE Survey	M. Salla	S. Nidle	P. Huyghe	A.L. Webre	N. Redfern	L.M. Howe	M.Mendonça	A.S. Clarke	V. Narada	R. Boylan	D.E. McDaniel
HUMANOID			1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1	Human-looking	12												
2	Reptilians	12												
3	Short Greys	11												
4	Insectoids	11												
5	Tall Greys/Whites	9												
6	Hybrids/Clones	9												
7	Dwarfs/Short Non-Greys	9												
8	Giants (8'-12'+)	9												
9	Sasquatches/Bigfoot	6												
10	Avians	6												
11	Cetaceans	6												
12	Amphibians	6												
13	Felines	5												
14	Spirits/Ghosts	5												
15	Energy/Light Beings	6												
16	Mini-humans	5												
17	Sidhe/Elves/Fae	5												
18	Robotic/AI (metallic)	5												
19	Robotic/AI (fleshy)	5												
20	Men in Black (MIBs)	4												
21	Shadow Beings	3												
22	Mammalians	3												
23	Mer-peoples	2												
24	Canines	1												
25	Equians	1												
NON-HUMANOID			1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
26	Orbs/Mists/Fogs	5												
27	Plasma/Blob Beings	4												
28	Large Animals/Cryptids	3												
29	Small Animals/Cryptids	3												
30	Exotic/Geometries	3												
31	Social Complexes	3												
32	Living/Organic UFOs	3												
33	Plant-like	1												
		Totals	12	7	7	16	21	19	13	23	18	17	12	16

TABLE 3. Types of Non-Human Intelligences

There are good reasons, then, for being a bit suspicious that a vast majority of NHIs are described as humanoid. However, some NHI researchers point out that this body-structure might confer evolutionary advantages, including the ability to develop the spacefaring or time-traveling technology needed to visit distant worlds. Others highlight that this five-point body structure (two arms, two legs, and a head) is a sacred geometric template for intelligence, as represented by Da Vinci's Vitruvian Man. Also, various accounts of galactic history indicate that Earth humans derive from various races of what could be considered galactic humans (e.g., Royal and Priest 2011). Hence, we might have various genetic connections with multiple types of humanoid NHIs.

The encounter literature does provide quite a few examples of non-humanoid types of NHIs. However, these often receive less attention, possibly because they are so foreign and "alien" to us that we unconsciously are drawn to those types of NHIs that look and act more like us. On the flip side, we might be more often visited by humanoid NHIs because they are drawn to interact with us because we are ourselves humanoid.

Multiple Types

NHI authors and researchers tend to use the words *species*, *race*, and *types* interchangeably. In biology, *species* refers to animals that can reproduce with each other. *Race* is sometimes used to refer to a sub-group within a species (i.e., *breeds*). Thus, *race* generally points to differences in biology, whereas *ethnicity* points to differences in culture. Since any technical use of *species*, *race*, or *ethnicity* really requires an exobiological and exosociological understanding of NHIs that we currently lack, I will opt to use the more general term *types* to refer to differences in NHI morphology (i.e., the general shape and relationship between structures of the body).

For example, there are many descriptions in the encounter literature that indicate some Reptilians are bipedal cold-blooded lizards whereas others are described as bipedal warm-blooded mammals that have reptilian-like features. Thus, as you can see we really are not yet in a good position to say much about the biological (or energetic) differences between types of NHIs and the best we can do for now is refer to their morphology (e.g., are they tall or short, hairy or smooth skinned, human looking or resemble an animal).

In order to get an accurate sense of how many types of NHIs are encountered by humans in an UFO context I identified 12 sources that provide an overview of NHIs or that contained numerous examples of various types of NHI encounters. Appendix 2 provides an annotated bibliography of all 12 sources used for Table 3. Sources arrived at their lists either through research and analysis of the UFO literature, channeling NHIs, or talking directly with experiencers. Some sources were systematic while others were more idiosyncratic. A few sources dated back to the mid-1990s and the rest have occurred since 2012 and as such are quite recent.

The authors and artists used to create Table 3 often devised their own systems of categorizing or organizing non-human intelligences (NHIs). Thus, they almost all use different labels or distinctions from each other, though there was a lot of overlap among the more commonly reported NHIs (i.e., the top five to eight types listed in Table 3) with more divergence in labels occurring among the less reported types.

I have done my best to create a general framework that can accommodate both the sources I have used here as well as additional sources not represented in the table. Some categories from the 12 sources used here overlapped with mine whereas others required that I translate their system into a more general set of distinctions. However, even these overlap a bit and sometimes a description of a NHI could be placed into more than one category. Thus, the goal of this table is to help illustrate the variety and distribution of NHIs found in the UFO literature from various sources (channeled, direct encounters and first-person testimony, and research). Though I can imagine that this table or a revised version could be useful for researching and understanding encounters with NHIs in other non-UFO contexts (e.g., folklore, psychedelics, cryptozoology, OBEs). There are several meta-patterns that emerge in Table 3 that are worth highlighting:

- **Humanoid vs non-humanoid:** There are 25 humanoid types and 8 non-humanoid types. Clearly, humanoid types are better represented in the literature and reports. Also, the totals of non-humanoid types are quite low compared to the humanoid category. This underscores the interesting questions raised in the section above around whether humans are actually encountering more humanoids or do we tend to project our likeness onto the unknown.
- **The top five NHIs:** For years there has been an informal consensus in UFO circles that the most common NHIs are Human-looking, Short and Tall Greys, Reptilians, and Insectoids. This analysis confirms that these likely are the most common NHIs encountered.
- **The top five sources:** The sources with the most types of NHIs represented included between 17 and 23 types of NHIs (out of 33). So even the sources with the most types of NHIs represented still only included ~50-70%. Thus, no single source provides a comprehensive overview of NHIs. However, these five sources do include 32 of the 33 types listed. This highlights the importance of working with multiple sources of NHI encounters to get a complete picture.
- **The FREE research:** The FREE research only had 12 NHI types represented, but as noted in the annotated bibliography (Appendix 2) they had a category of “other” which contained hundreds of types that did not fit in their other nine categories. This highlights that people are likely encountering a wider range of NHIs than is commonly recognized or even depicted in Table 3. Thus, expanded taxonomies of NHIs, such as the one provided here, are useful in providing a more accurate overview of encounters with NHIs. Though over time we may find that even this taxonomy needs to be expanded to fully represent the diversity of NHIs.

Now that I have identified 33 different types of NHIs, let us take a look at the kinds of variations that have been reported in the experiencer literature.

Hundreds of Variants

For the 33 types of NHIs presented in Table 3, there are many variations within each type. These variations can be understood as what each NHI looks like in terms of its phenotype (i.e., all measurable characteristics, including physical/energetic appearance and behavior) or where they came from. For example, there are lots of different types of Reptilians described based on what planets or star systems they come from or specific physical/energetic characteristics they have. So, while Reptilians is one of the 33 main types of NHIs within this category, there are likely dozens of variations and subgroups of this type.

Some of the more common planets and star systems mentioned in the experiencer literature include:

- | | | |
|------------------|-----------------|------------------|
| • Alpha Centauri | • Tau Ceti | • Orion |
| • Lyra | • Andromeda | • Alpha Draconis |
| • Vega | • Sirius A & B | • Nibiru |
| • Pleiades | • Arcturus | • Camelopardis |
| • Procyon | • Zeta reticuli | • Ummo |

The planets or star systems associated with galactic NHIs is only one source of variation. Other notable NHI variations include:

- Emanuel Swedenborg’s *Life on Other Planets* (1758/2006) presents around a dozen non-physical ETs associated with planets in our solar system.
- Sergeant Clifford Stone (2011, p. 91) talks about how his job as an empath for the military involved working out of a military issued book with 57 different NHI types described.

- Mary Rodwell in her *The New Human* (2016, p. 135) talks about there being over 165 types of Greys.
- David Wilcock in his *Ascension Mysteries* (2016, p. 344) talks about his insider “Jacob” claiming that there are over 5,000 intelligent civilizations within a 1000-light-year radius from our solar system. Jacob claimed to have personally seen more than 400 different types of ETs at a total of about 200 different off-planet sites. He said some of these ETs were human or human-like, whereas others were humanoid.
- Jefferson Viscardi and Rob Gauthier in their *Extraterrestrial Life, Galactic Humans* (2013) describe in detail 12 galactic human races with heights ranging from 2.5 to 9.1 feet (with most around 6 feet) and lifespans ranging from 220 to 1,500 years of age (with most living around 1,000 years).
- Monica Szu-Whitney and Gary Whitney in *Portals & Corridors* (1999) present 24 denizens of hyperspace that look quite different than most depictions of NHIs.
- Falco Tarassaco’s *Alien Races and Different Worlds* (2019) presents 22 very unique ETs and EDs.
- Barbara Lamb (2019) reports that through her work with experiencers, she is aware of 89 different types of NHIs.¹⁵

The above examples are just a sampling of some of the sources that paint a bigger picture around the variety of NHIs. Clearly there exists a much wider diversity of NHIs within the UFO and experiencer literature than is often acknowledged. Given this variety of NHIs, what if anything can be said about what do they want in coming here to Earth or interacting with humans? Does the range of NHI interiors (motives and intentions) match the diversity of their exteriors (behaviors and phenotypes)?

WHAT DO THEY WANT?

Four Perspectives: Intruder, Manipulator, Helper, Observer

So, what do all these NHIs, who are interacting with humans, want? Various researchers have categorized NHIs based on their moral orientation or perspectives towards human beings. For example, Michael Salla (2004) has developed an exopolitical schema based on four main perspectives, which I use here (Intruders, Manipulators, Helpers, Observers). Similarly, Richard Dolan and Bryce Zabel (2010) identify six answers to the question “What do they want?” Below I combine Salla’s and Dolan/Zabel’s approaches and build on it. This list is not meant to be exhaustive but to provide a general overview of some of the more common reasons noted in the literature.

- **Intruder**
 - They want our natural resources (e.g., water, minerals, gold)
 - They want our biodiversity (e.g., plant and animal specimens)
 - They want human beings (e.g., abductions) to learn more about humans
 - They have motivations that we cannot conceptualize
- **Manipulator**
 - They want our DNA to augment their own genetic stock
 - They want to produce hybrids to take over Earth
 - They want to produce fear as a source of energetic food
 - They have controlled human society for a very long time and want to continue to do so
 - They have and continue to use humans for slave labor
 - They have motivations that we cannot conceptualize

- **Helper**
 - They want to support environmental protection
 - They want to prevent nuclear war
 - They want to catalyze human transformation and expand consciousness
 - They want to help humans become a galactic civilization
 - They want to help humans resist and overcome the negative NHIs
 - They are creating hybrids to build a bridge between humans and other galactic races
 - They have motivations that we cannot conceptualize

- **Observer**
 - They are patiently waiting and observing humanity as it matures
 - They are learning how polarities and evolution occur on Earth
 - They are not allowed to interfere due to some version of the Prime Directive¹⁶
 - They find us to be one of the best shows in the galaxy (i.e., the zoo hypothesis)
 - They have motivations that we cannot conceptualize

Notice that in each category I include the possibility that “they have motivations that we cannot conceptualize.” This is to serve as a reminder that the perspectives of NHIs, even within each of the four basic orientations presented above, are likely to be quite foreign and “alien” to our own ways of thinking.

Now that we have examined the three layers of my proposed NHI taxonomy (Domain, Appearance, and Perspectives), let us take a look at the hypotheses researchers have developed over the years to explain what these NHIs are. This will help us begin to answer the questions “What are they?” and “Are they real?”

WHAT ARE THEY?

The 10 Most Common Hypotheses

There are at least 10 major camps of explanation for who or what these NHIs are that people keep encountering. Each of these hypotheses contain variations that often do not agree with each other. I am not trying to minimize the diversity of explanations but rather to provide a high-level overview of the major positions. Besides, I suspect this list presents more diversity than what many UFO/NHI researchers are used to seeing in one place. Typically, I only see two or three of the following hypotheses acknowledged at any one time. These hypotheses are ordered loosely from the most well-known and/or popular to ones that are newer or less often cited in the literature. The 10 most common hypotheses include:

- **The Extraterrestrial Hypothesis (ETH):** NHIs are biological and/or artificial beings from other planets or star systems who have some form of interstellar travel that can manipulate time-space to cover vast distances. This includes the human-alien hybrids that have consistently been reported by abductees. This was the preferred explanation within UFOlogy from the 1940s through the 1970s and still remains the most popular view in public consciousness.
- **The Extradimensional Hypothesis (EDH):** NHIs are biological and/or energetic beings living in other dimensions or parallel worlds that are able to enter into our world through their own technology, their powers of consciousness, or through natural portals that open up between our worlds. A variation of this hypothesis is the *Ultraterrestrial Hypothesis* (UTH) advanced by John Keel (1975/2013), which sees NHIs as indigenous to Earth who are manipulating us from a different dimension. Mac Tonnies’ (2013) notion of *cryptoterrestrials* is a recent version of Keel’s position. A less nefarious version of this hypothesis is the *Interterrestrial Hypothesis* (ITH), which claims that there are NHIs living

“inside” the Earth in other dimensions such as in the city of Telos under Mt. Shasta in California. The EDH has gained much favor since the 1970s as the ETH has for many failed to account for the more bizarre aspects of UFO phenomena.

- **The Time Traveling Hypothesis (TTH):** NHIs are actually humans from the future. Though they might not look exactly like us due to future evolutionary dynamics, genetic modification, and/or the destruction of our/their environment. Michael Masters’ (2019) recent work on *extraterrestrials* is a good example of this approach. Greys are often viewed as being future versions of ourselves.
- **The Dark Military Hypothesis (DMH):** NHIs are actually the result of black ops and covert military programs using advanced technology to produce psychological manipulation and in some cases *programmed life forms* (PLFs) to stage abductions and generate certain types of experiences of UFOs. This hypothesis assumes that these military operations have been successful in acquiring or reverse engineering their own UFOs. Steven Greer (2006) often advances versions of this hypothesis to account for negative encounters with NHIs. His view is that all “real” ETs and EDs are benevolent.
- **The Psychosocial Hypothesis (PSH):** NHIs are the result of psychosocial dynamics such as mass hysteria, archetypal manifestations, and collective psi phenomena. This view also tends to emphasize the cultural frames used to interpret NHIs in different time periods (e.g., European faery encounters or Medieval angels and demons as aliens of yesteryear). This approach is most often associated with Carl Jung’s classic *Flying Saucers: A Modern Myth of Things Seen in the Sky* (1959). David Clarke’s *How UFOs Conquered the World* (2015) is a good contemporary example of this perspective.
- **The Earth Lights Hypothesis (ELH):** NHIs are the result of tectonic strain, ley lines, water interacting with sandy soils, and other electromagnetic dynamics, which can produce various light-based phenomena (e.g., orbs, earth lights, spook lights, ghost lights) that can appear to be sentient or intelligent. This hypothesis emerged in the late 70s and early 1980s with Michael Persinger and Gyslaine Lafreniere’s (1977) research into *space-time transients* and Paul Devereux’s (1982, 1990) work around earth lights. Persinger’s Tectonic Strain Theory has been used account for luminous lights and their apparent intelligent movements.
- **The Intrapsychic Hypothesis (IPH):** NHIs are the result of different psychological processes (e.g., false memory, projection, trauma, hypnagogic sleep, altered states of consciousness, EMF-triggered hallucinations). This hypothesis is generally evoked to dismiss the notion of NHIs or reduce them to fantasy. Susan Clancy (2005) from Harvard University advocates this view.¹⁷ However, I believe that there are non-skeptical aspects of this hypothesis than can be used to better understand NHIs as “real” psychological, cultural, and even multidimensional ontological beings.¹⁸
- **The Co-creative Hypothesis (CCH):** NHIs are independent beings (either physical ETs or energetic EDs) but our experience of them and perception of how they appear is the result of a co-creative process informed by, 1) the NHIs ability to morph their appearance as they see fit to facilitate the encounter, 2) our own expectations and cultural frames, and 3) our unconscious cognitive biases of perception that kick in to help us make sense of paranormal stimuli that does not fit into our normal range of perception and meaning making. This hypothesis is associated with Greg Bishop (2016, 2017).
- **The Artificial Intelligence Hypothesis (AIH):** Some NHIs are actually programmed life forms (PLFs) or androids. For example, often the Short Greys are reported as being robot-like worker bees. Throughout the encounter literature there are reports of encounters with what appear to be robots or various forms of humanoid artificial intelligence. Likewise, UFOs have in some cases been described as unmanned drones or “living machines.”
- **The Breakaway Civilization Hypothesis (BCH):** Many NHIs, especially “human-looking” ones, are actually Earth humans or off-planet humans that have been part of an emerging breakaway civilization beginning potentially with the airship mystery of the late 1800s associated with Charles Dellschau and

the Sonora Aero Club.¹⁹ This breakaway group is believed to have become spacefaring in the 1930s as the Nazi “Die Glocke” (the Bell) program paved the way for the emergence of *secret space programs* (SSPs). Others such as Michael Schratt (2020) point to October 1954 when the U.S. military allegedly made a breakthrough in anti-gravity technology, which then led to a bifurcation point resulting in a breakaway group building their own UFOs. As a result, many legitimate UFOs sighted are potentially interstellar craft belonging to this group and their SSPs. Richard Dolan (2016), the noted UFO and national security state historian, has recently provided an overview of how a breakaway civilization could have emerged.

I believe that these various hypotheses are not incommensurable or nonexclusive with each other. They can all be accurate or helpful in describing different aspects of UFO phenomena. In some cases, more than one hypothesis might apply to any given occurrence or situation. If anything has become obvious over the last 80 years it is that UFOs and NHIs are *not* easily explained in their totality with a single theory or approach. Thus, over the last few years I have been developing what I call the *Mutual Enactment Hypothesis* (MEH).²⁰

A New Integrative Hypothesis of NHIs

From an Exo Studies perspective, each of the 10 hypotheses outlined above are recognized as being “true but partial.” They each shine a unique light on the complexity and multivalent nature of UFOs and the NHIs associated with them. For years I have been grappling with the mercurial manifestations of UFO phenomena in all of its anomalous and paranormal expressions. Different reports in the literature or experiences from people I talk with often seem best explained by one or two (sometimes three) of the 10 hypotheses. But none of the 10 (nor any combination of several of them) seem adequate for the majority of the expressions of the phenomena. This has consistently led me to the sense that all of the hypotheses are correct or partially correct depending on what is being examined or discussed. As a result, I have been exploring how to present a new hypothesis that is informed by the best aspects of the other 10 hypotheses. Here is a short summary of the Mutual Enactment Hypothesis (MEH) followed by a more expanded presentation:

The Mutual Enactment Hypothesis (MEH): NHIs are one of five major kinds of beings that contribute in mutually enacting ways to each other and the manifestation of the phenomena (i.e., UFO, anomalous, and paranormal occurrences). All five kinds of beings (i.e., humans, NHIs, earth lights, thought forms and archetypes) are influenced in numerous ways by electromagnetic energies. These five kinds of beings exist within an ontological matrix that includes at least three distinct axes/spectrums: *stations* (where did they originate and where are they currently located), *sovereignty* (how much free-will do they have), and *substance* (what types of matter/energy are their bodies made out of). A being’s location on all three spectrums determines its ontological status. This hypothesis is the result of a sustained meta-analysis of the other 10 hypotheses and provides a potential integration of the major insights and distinctions of each of them.

Within the context of the MEH, a *being* is any entity perceived and experienced by other beings as ontologically distinct from themselves regardless of which four ontological domains the being is originally or primarily associated. The four ontological domains include: the subjective domain with beings such as occult thought forms, the intersubjective domain with beings such as archetypal deities, the interobjective domain with beings such as naturally occurring earth lights, and the objective domain with beings such as humans, whales, and chimpanzees. These four domains can be presented either as Wilber’s (2006) four quadrants or along a spectrum from most interior to most exterior. As an ontological spectrum this forms the first axes of

the ontological matrix: the *ontological stations spectrum*. The other two axes will be discussed in Part 2 below. While each being can be associated with one specific ontological domain it often has expressions and/or causal effects in all four domains. As will be discussed in Part 2 some beings can, under certain circumstances, shift their *ontological station* from one domain to another. In short, there are four major ontological stations from which a being can originate or inhabit. Within the objective domain (It-Beings) there are both humans and non-human intelligences (NHIs). Thus, the Mutual Enactment Hypothesis highlights the mutually enactive dynamics between:

- **Humans (It-Beings):** objective beings that live on Earth (and potentially off-planet).
- **Non-human intelligences (It-Beings):** objective beings that can be either physical (i.e., ETs) or para-physical or energetic (i.e., EDs) and associated with either the Faerie, Galactic, or Celestial domains.
- **Thought forms (I-Beings):** *intrapsychic* beings that emerge in or from the minds of objective beings. However, these beings can, under certain circumstances, gain semi-independence or complete independent existence. For example, the creation of *tulpas* through the powers of concentration such as associated with occult practices.
- **Archetypes (We-Beings):** *interpsychic* beings that emerge from the collective minds of multiple objective beings but who like thought forms can under certain circumstances gain semi-independence or complete independent existence. For example, the creation of *egregories* through the power of focused or repeated cultural awareness.²¹
- **Earth lights (Its-Beings):** interobjective beings that are produced by natural earth-based processes that involve electromagnetics such as tectonic plates grinding together or landscape features that contain or produce gravitational or magnetic anomalies. These beings are often called ghost lights, earth lights, spook lights, and will-o'-wisps. Many experiences of these luminous balls describe them as intelligent or sentient. Thus, similar to thought forms and archetypes these beings appear to be able to under certain circumstances to gain and display a level of semi-independence or potentially complete independence of observers. Also, many NHIs have been observed transforming into orbs or vice versa.

In short, all five kinds of beings outlined above contribute to and are informed by exo phenomena in various ways. The MEH is radically non-anthropocentric in that it takes seriously the perspectives of all five kinds of beings and developing reliable ways to account for or represent such perspectives. Figure 1 provides a graphic representation of lines of enactment associated with various other hypotheses. As you can see, each of the other hypotheses holds a piece of the ontological puzzle and often emphasize a particular “line” of enactment.

Figure 1 also highlights how electromagnetic energies (EME) have the potential and often do contribute directly to the enactment of all five kinds of beings both in terms of what they perceive and how they are perceived by other beings. For example, research into the effects of EMEs on human beings indicates that they can increase human psychic capacities to perceive NHIs, earth lights, and various other paranormal realities. NHIs seem to use EMEs to help them manipulate time and space (e.g., to time travel or open up portals to enter our world from other dimensions or parallel realities). Thought forms and archetypes can draw on and be substantiated by EMEs, and earth lights can be the direct result of EMEs.

Each of the above 11 NHI hypotheses can also be placed along the ontological stations spectrum (see Table 4). This highlights how different hypotheses tend to interpret NHIs as having different degrees of ontological status depending on which station they are associated with, or even reducing them to different types of beings altogether. Thus, Table 4 illustrates how the major NHI hypotheses fall along the ontological stations spectrum from NHIs being merely psychological phenomena on the far left to them being existent (i.e., having independent existence) on the far right.²² Keep

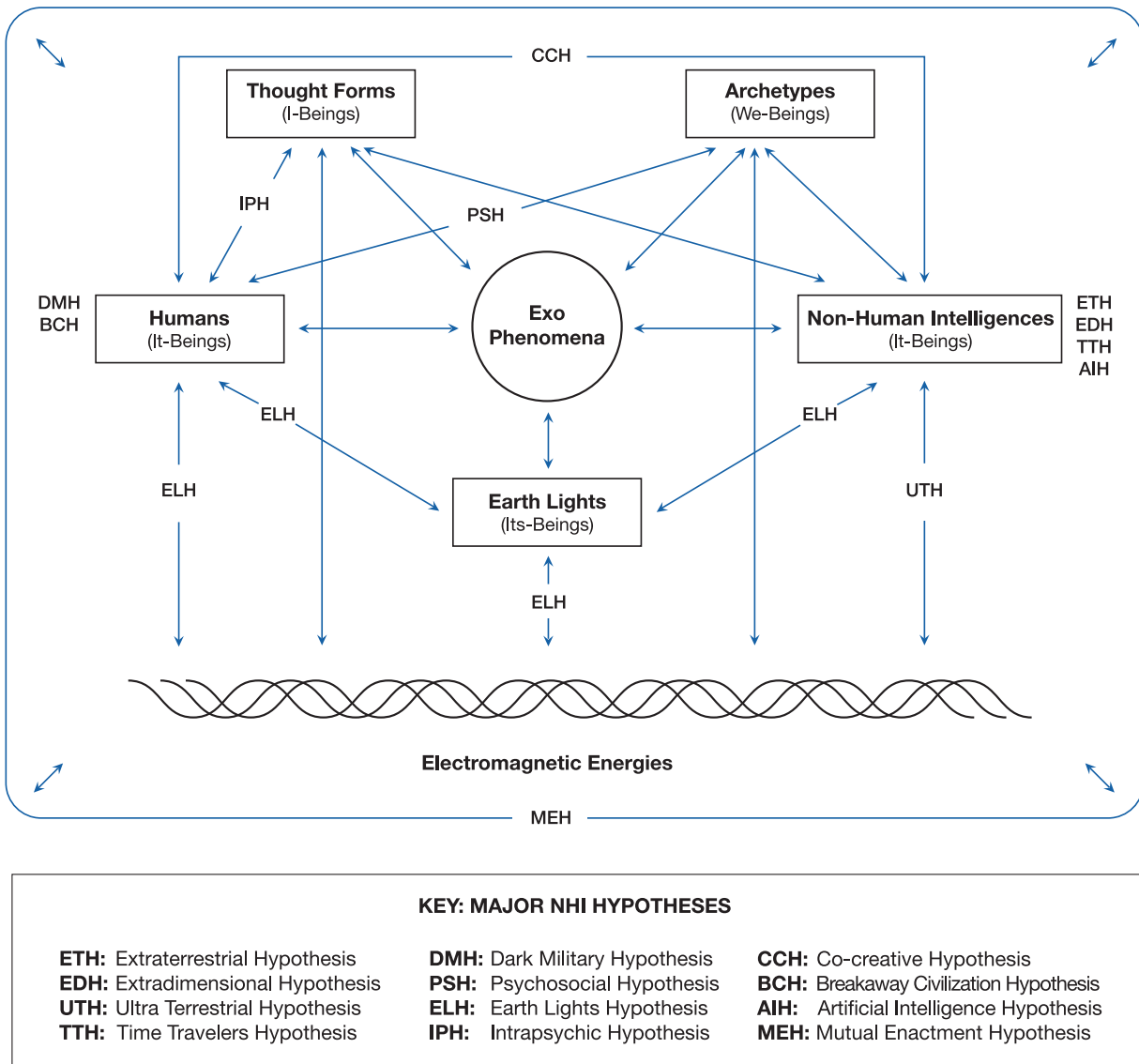


FIGURE 1. The Mutual Enactment Hypothesis

in mind that each of these 11 hypotheses have variations that might occupy additional or different spots on this spectrum. Their current placement reflects my assessment of their primary emphasis. Note the Dark Military Hypothesis (DMH) is likely best represented as straddling three categories on the ontological spectrum due to its mixture of psychological manipulation, cultural disinformation campaigns, and use of technology (including their own “UFOs” and potential PLFs). The MEH is the only one that explicitly includes all four ontological positions along the ontological spectrum and acknowledges that NHIs and the other kinds of beings can move along this ontological spectrum.

Much philosophical and scientific work remains to further explore and clarify these issues of ontology as related to NHIs and the other beings in our Wild Kosmos. This metaview of NHIs has aimed to develop a new taxonomical framework and provides us with a set of useful distinctions for understanding the wide range of diversity in human encounters with non-human intelligences. So far, we have explored in brief all four questions posed at the beginning of this article: “Where do NHIs come from?” “What do they look like?” “What do they want? Why are they here?” and “What are they? Are they real?”

Subjective (Psychological) Intrapsychic Beings Thought Forms	Intersubjective (Social & Cultural) Interpsychic Beings Archetypes	Interobjective (Natural & Artificial Systems) Interobjective Beings Earth Lights & AI	Objective (Independent Existence) Objective Beings Biological & Subtle Beings
The Intrapsychic Hypothesis (IPH)	The Psychosocial Hypothesis (PSH)	The Earth Lights Hypothesis (ELH) The Artificial Intelligence Hypothesis (AIH)	The Extraterrestrial Hypothesis (ETH) The Extradimensional Hypothesis (EDH) The Time Traveling Hypothesis (TTH) The Co-Creation Hypothesis (CCH) The Breakaway Civilization Hypothesis (BCH)
The Dark Military Hypothesis (DMH)			
The Mutual Enactment Hypothesis (MEH)			

TABLE 4. The Ontological Stations Spectrum and NHI Hypotheses

While each of these questions deserves more engagement, I want to focus on the latter one for the rest of this article. After all, the meaningful answers to the other questions are largely dependent on NHIs being existent. However, as I will argue in Part 2, they might not be existent in the ways we are accustomed. I have outlined above an ontological stations spectrum that includes four major ontological spheres, realms, or domains and their associated kinds of beings. This is a good set of initial distinctions. But as we will see, in Part 2, boundaries quickly get ontologically messy.

Part 2: The Ontological Status of NHIs

In Part 1, I presented a new three-layered taxonomy of NHIs and the current popular hypotheses about NHIs. This helped raise some key issues about how we can create a more useful dialogue around the variety of NHIs encountered in UFO and other paranormal contexts. Now, in Part 2, with this taxonomy and its associated distinctions in place, I want to go deeper into the ontological issues at the core of this topic: are these NHIs “real” and if so in what sense? As has been noted, this is arguably the most complex and challenging issue around UFOs and NHIs.

Fuzzy Boundaries and Doubleness

As I have pointed out, each of the four kinds of beings discussed above (i.e., thought forms, archetypes, earth lights, and NHIs) can move along the ontological stations spectrum to different ontological domains (i.e., sub-

jective, intersubjective, interobjective, and objective). This ontological fluidity generally is not associated with humans and is a big reason we find all of these types of beings so ontologically confusing and lean toward denying ontological status to most if not all of them. We prefer stable and predictable physical objects, processes, and beings. Fluidity for us generally means not real or less real.

For Exo Studies, ontological status is not confined, limited, or reduced to objectivity. Objectivity is a particular expression of “realness” but not the only one. Beings associated with any of the four positions or realms along the ontological stations spectrum have the potential to be as real—independently existent—as beings at any other station. A being’s station is just one of at least three ontological spectrums that must be taken into account when assessing the ontology of a being. This concept will be presented in more detail below, when I discuss ontological indeterminacy. For now, I will just mention that in addition to a being’s *ontological stations* (i.e., what domain it is associated with), there is also its *ontological sovereignty* (i.e., how much free will it has), and its *ontological substance* (i.e., the nature of its physical-energetic embodiment). Together these three dimensions of ontology give us a much more multidimensional matrix/integral framework from which to consider the ontology of both non-human beings (e.g., the four kinds presented in Table 4) and non-human intelligences (e.g., the 33 types presented in Table 3). As I will discuss, many beings and aspects of exo phenomena move in and out of an objective mode of being.

In other words, these beings have an ontological origin (an initial position on the ontological stations spectrum as represented by the top row in Table 4), but some of them can move along this spectrum, in either direction, and end up occupying a different ontological station. They can start out as strictly interior psychic realities and become exterior physical or energetic realities with causal efficacy. They can move from our individual or collective minds to “walking around in the streets” alongside us. This quickly muddies the ontological waters as to what is real and is not real as it would seem that which is unreal (completely subjective in nature) can become real (objective in some meaningful sense).

All of this highlights that the boundaries between these kinds of beings and what is inside or outside, real or unreal is more fluid than what we tend to realize. In fact, this is one of the hallmarks of exo phenomena: it is inherently paradoxical, mysterious, participatory, responsive, recursive, enactive, transgressive, möbius, mercurial, mutable, multivalent, frustrating, chimerical, ambiguous, obscure, synchronistic, comical, intelligent, elusive, contradictory, theatrical, absurd, weird, trickster-driven, and boundary crossing. In short, exo phenomena in general and these beings in particular transcend established categories of consensus reality: past/future, self/other, mind/matter, real/unreal, gross/subtle, inside/outside, subjective/objective, etc. Patrick Harpur, in his classic *Daimonic Reality* (1994/2003), echoes this when he observes:

Never quite divine nor quite human, the daimons [i.e., NHIs] erupted out of the Soul of the World. They were neither spiritual nor physical but both. Neither were they, as Jung discovered, wholly inner nor wholly outer, but both. They were paradoxical beings, both good and bad, benign and frightening, guiding and warning, protecting and maddening. (p. 35)

Suffice it to say that when dealing with exo phenomena, especially NHIs, “the truth is stranger than *science fiction*.”²³

Within Exo Studies I refer to this dynamic as *doubleness* to highlight that the phenomena and various beings associated with them are all too often both simultaneously and/or sequentially physical and psychological, subjective and objective, real and unreal, and so on. Note doubleness is not confined to only two positions (i.e., a binary) being enfolded together. It can refer to multiple qualities or aspects of a phenomenon woven together seamlessly. This doubleness is what confounds so many researchers and is what has made it easy for so many to ignore these realities for so long. It is only quite recently that UFO/NHI researchers have begun to embrace the high strangeness and ultra-weird aspects of exo phenomena. However, it should be noted that several well-

known UFO/NHI researchers since the 1970s such as Jacque Vallée (1969) and John Keel (1970/2013), and more recently John Mack (1999/2008), have pointed out the double nature of exo phenomena.²⁴

One can even trace this concept of doubleness all the way back to Charles Fort's (1941/1974) notion, from the 1920s, of *ontological indeterminacy*, which takes the position "that nothing is real, but that nothing is unreal: that all phenomena are approximations one way or the other between realness and unrealness" (p. 14). For Fort, this intermediateness "is quasi-existence, neither real nor unreal, but expression of attempt to become real, or to generate for or recruit a real existence" (p. 15).

Fort's ontological agnosticism is also reflected in Jacques Derrida's notions of *undecidability* and *ghosts*. M.J. Baniass (2019) dedicates a whole chapter to "Derrida and the UFO," where he links these two key concepts of Derrida to UFO phenomena and its associated subculture. Before introducing Derrida's two philosophical constructs, Baniass points out that:

The UFO phenomenon has been identified as something which crosses, if not breaks down, boundaries...It is something that is both amazingly and terrifyingly real, yet so unbelievable that it defies common sense...They are objective and subjective. UFOs both exist and do not exist. (p. 99)

He goes on to further explain that:

UFOs, simply put, are both fact and fiction simultaneously. Their objectivity and authenticity are in a constant state of duality, shifting in and out of cultural and social frames of reference. They do not attach themselves completely to a reality, which we currently understand; therefore, to make claims of 'Truth' about them is impossible. (p. 101)

This undecidable doubleness of UFOs (and I would add NHIs), for Baniass, makes them a perfect illustration of what Derrida has in mind: "An *undecidable* is that which cannot conform to a side of a dualism—something that can be both fact and fiction, or subjective and objective, or present and absent simultaneously" (p. 101). The power of the undecidable is that it challenges tired binaries and can carry us—if we can learn to tolerate their ambiguity—into new understandings of the world around us. Baniass points out that one of the common undecidables that Derrida pointed to was the ghost because "...it is impossible ontologically to know the ghost; it is both real and not real, present and absent" (p. 102). Baniass concludes the chapter pointing out how UFOs are ghosts haunting both their witnesses and the culture at large and the UFO community is a ghost haunting "the social world we take for granted" (p. 105).

Jeff Kripal (2016a), in his introduction to *The Super Natural*, a book co-authored with Whitley Strieber, comments that the "alien spectral figures" in Strieber's NHI encounters seem "at once physical and not physical, at once a thing and a thought, at once sexual and spiritual, at once traumatic and ecstatic" (p. 2). Later in the book, Kripal (2016c) observes "these spectral encounters participate in both the material and the mental. They are objective *and* subjective at the same time" (p. 304). In fact, it has been this doubleness that has led so many to move away from the ETH toward the EDH. However, I believe we are only beginning to realize how extensive this doubleness is throughout UFO and NHI encounters.²⁵ It might even be the most prominent and foundational feature of all exo phenomena. So how do we talk and think about "What is real?" and "What is an object?" and "What counts as evidence?" within the context of such paradoxical doubleness?

What Is Real?

A useful framework for exploring what is real within an Exo Studies context is Bryan Sentes' (2019a, 2019b) fourfold distinction of:

- **The real:** our everyday taken-for-granted consensus reality
- **The Real:** that which intrudes on the real and “recasts, redefines, and reconfigures what we had taken for normal or possible...” such as a UFO or NHI encounter that radically alters the worldview of the experiencer.²⁶
- **The hyperreal:** when the relationship between an original and its copy (e.g., in the context of photos and videos of UFOs) becomes reversed such that the “copy ensures the truth of the original” and the line becomes so blurred that it becomes meaningless to talk about originals and copies such as when a UFO or NHI encounter matches media and cultural representation of such phenomena.²⁷
- **The hyporeal:** when an original object or phenomenon (e.g., an experience of a UFO or NHI) is not amenable to current representations and does not conform to individual reference points or cultural frames (e.g., when a UFO or NHI encounter is of such high strangeness that it “reinscribes the alien otherness to the phenomenon”).

Sentes’ set of distinctions is valuable as a guide for how we might creatively recast the notion of what is real by developing a set of overlapping distinctions and definitions that make room for “real” objects and “objective” beings that are multiple, paradoxical, multifaceted and transcend simple location and elude and tease empirical instrumentation. It no longer suffices to think in terms of our categories of real/unreal, true/false—something more is being asked by us through the phenomena.

What Is an Object?

Given the above distinctions of the real it becomes evident that even the notion of an object is in need of strategic complexification. Elsewhere, I (Esbjörn-Hargens 2010) developed the notion of a *multiple object* using climate change as an illustration. Climate change is objectively real but has an ontological span and depth that surpasses any methodological enactment of it such that different natural and social scientists enact, via their distinct methodologies, different aspects of the object with various degrees of ontological overlap. The end result is that natural and social climate scientists are often not talking about the same object of “climate change” in spite of the fact they are using the same signifier “climate change” and are genuinely focused on the same set of natural process related to climate. I believe this notion of multiple objects can successfully be used in an Exo Studies context as well. For example, Mike Clelland (2015) makes a convincing case that owls in an abductee/encounter context are often more than just “plain ol’” owls. They can be two or more of the following kinds of objects at the same time: UFOs, ETs/EDs, drones, screen memories, messengers, totems, biological owls, or biological owls used as an alien surveillance camera. For me, this is a perfect illustration of a multiple object—owls as exo phenomena embody multiplicity. More recently, I have also been exploring the notion of a *metaobject* to describe UFOs and NHIs. A metaobject is an object that can show up in all four of Integral Theory’s quadrants (subjective, objective, intersubjective, interobjective) either concurrently or sequentially. As such, it is an object that is not bound exclusively or primarily to a single quadrant (e.g., a brain being an object in the objective quadrant and the mind being an object in the subjective quadrant).

Three other noteworthy types of objects include Timothy Morton’s (2010, 2013) *hyperobjects* and Jeff Kripal’s *magical objects* (2016b) and *mythical objects* (2016c). For Morton, a hyperobject is an object that is so large it is distributed across time and space in such a way that only parts of it can be cognized by individuals or groups at any given point. Morton has identified five characteristics of hyperobjects (i.e., vicious, molten, nonlocal, phased, and interobjective). While a full explication of these characteristics falls outside the focus of this article it is worth mentioning in passing that UFOs do display all five. Viewing UFOs as hyperobjects is an example of moving out of simplistic notions of objectivity, which are inadequate for making meaning of UFOs. Whether conceiving of UFOs as hyperobjects is fruitful remains to be seen but the mere exercise of doing so can be a step in the right direction of discovering new ways of understanding their mystery.

For Kripal (2016b), a magical object is an out-of-place object (e.g., alien implants, apports) that calls into question materialism exposing that it is only “half right.” These magical objects are connected to the practice of *saying away*. This practice involves living with the paradox that exo phenomena often “fuse or transcend the subjective and objective dimensions of the human experience.” It also involves recognizing that the splitting of the phenomena “into a subject ‘in here’ perceiving objects ‘out there’ is a function of the human organism and its cognitive and sensory hardware and probably not of the psychophysical world itself” (p. 341). This practice allows us to experience magical objects that challenge our notions of there being a distinct and stable “mental world” and “material world.” Kripal is adamant that:

...there is almost certainly only *one world*, of which our mental and material experiences are two dimensions or modes. This deeper ‘one world’ is why material events can behave like mental events and why mental events look like material events. *Because they are*. Both have ‘split off’ from a deeper super-reality that is both mental and material, or neither mental nor material, at the same time. (p. 204)

In short, these magical objects *say away* our habitual modes of perception that would have us divorce “mind” and “matter” from a deeper “super natural world where no such distinctions exist” (p. 205). Note the occurrence of another UFO/NHI researcher discussing the doubleness of exo phenomena.

Kripal (2016c) also introduces the intentionally paradoxical idea of a mythical object, which is “something seen or physically encountered that is actually a materialized story or meaning. I mean a thing that is also a thought. I mean a friggin’ story that shows up on radar” (p. 304).²⁸ Thus, UFOs are mythical objects: mythic stories that can show up on radar as physical craft. The notion of a mythical object (something that is simultaneously a constructed story and a real physical object) is another great example of doubleness. Kripal points out that if you really want to understand UFOs as mythical objects you cannot just rely on engineers and scientists, you also need to consult anthropologists and scholars of comparative religion. This sets the stage for the practice of *say again*, which is a complement to the practice of *say away* discussed above. This additional practice is one of telling new stories. Kripal observes “that it is time to tell a better story about the whole pantheon of the unknown, from gods, miracles, angels, and demons to fairy folk, aliens, and the mysterious objects in the sky” (p. 307). He suggests that this wide range of weird manifestations is erupting now “...precisely so that a new story *will* be told. We are suggesting that all the bizzarerie is ‘aimed’ at one real object—a mythical object. Which is to say: a new and better story” (pp. 307-8).

As you can see what counts as an object is up for renewal and revision. Numerous scholars and philosophers are advancing new ways to define what an object is.²⁹ Above I presented five different types of objects: *multiple*, *meta-*, *hyper-*, *magical*, and *mythical*. These examples serve as inspiration to Exo Studies on how we might conceive anew the notion of an object to better serve and represent the doubleness of so many different types of exo phenomena. UFOs and NHIs are anything but simple objects—they break the current rules of what is real and as a result they deserve a new “playing field” where their ontological status can be taken seriously.

Over the last two sections I have presented in brief expanded frameworks of what is real and what is as an object. Now, I want to draw your attention to the outlines of an expanded framework for what counts as evidence. After all, for something to be real there needs to be evidence for it.

What Counts as Evidence?³⁰

If you ask someone who has researched UFOs/NHIs for many years, they are likely to say there is a lot of evidence for the existence of both. If you ask someone who is well-educated but has not ever given the topic

of UFOs/NHIs much thought, they are likely to say there is no evidence for either. What gives? How can this be? While it is true there are no crashed UFOs or alien bodies/skeletons on public display at the Smithsonian for all to come and see, there are tens of thousands of credible UFO/NHI witnesses/experiencers and a wide range of related physical evidence collected over the last 80+ years.

This is another example of doubleness: there is no smoking (ray) gun, but there is a lot of smoke.³¹ On the one hand there is a lot of certain kinds of evidence and on the other hand none of this evidence seems to move the evidential needle and thus there is a public perception that there is in fact no evidence. After all, if there was, would we not know about it? Yes and no! There are a number of factors involved here.

First, there are many different types of legal and scientific evidence (see Table 5).³² Also, within a legal context there are three common standards of burden of proof: the preponderance of the evidence (the claims are more probable than not), clear and convincing evidence (the claims are highly probable), and beyond a reasonable doubt (the claims are the only logical choice). If evidence fails to meet even the first standard of burden of proof it is considered insufficient evidence. However, evidence can meet this first standard but still be inadmissible to the court for some reason. Table 5 presents 19 types of admissible evidence in a U.S. court of law. Similarly, within a scientific context there is a hierarchy of proof (this is presented from weakest [top: #1] to strongest [bottom: #7] in Table 5).

Second, even when technically there is solid evidence there are various cultural values, developmental worldviews, and professional dynamics at play that can affirm or discount that evidence regardless of its strength or value. Thomas Kuhn’s (1962) notion of *paradigm shifts* is relevant here. Kuhn pointed out that often good evidence is excluded from scientific thinking when it challenges *normal science* (i.e., the established model of reality). Eventually, enough of this good evidence accumulates and as the gatekeepers “pass away” or retire (i.e., Plank’s [1950] principle of scientific progress), a scientific revolution occurs that fundamentally changes the view of the world. Wilber (2000) has also extensively mapped how individuals and collectives

Legal Evidence	Scientific Evidence
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Anecdotal evidence 2. Hearsay evidence 3. Testimonial evidence 4. Direct evidence 5. Circumstantial evidence 6. Character evidence 7. Habit or propensity evidence 8. Expert witness evidence 9. Forensic evidence 10. Trace evidence 11. Physical evidence 12. Digital evidence 13. Documentary evidence 14. Statistical evidence 15. Analogical evidence 16. Demonstrative evidence 17. Prima Facie evidence 18. Exculpatory evidence 19. Corroborating evidence 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Anecdotal, expert opinions, case reports, opinion papers, letters 2. Animal & cell studies (experimental) 3. Case reports & case series (observational) 4. Case-control studies (observational) 5. Cohort studies (observational) 6. Randomized controlled trials (experimental) 7. Systemic review & meta-analysis

TABLE 5. Types of Evidence

with different developmental worldviews perceive reality and by extension evidence (or the lack thereof) differently. For example, quantitative data is valorized within modern empirical scientific worldviews and qualitative data is held in high esteem within postmodern social scientific worldviews. Each of these worldviews tends to minimize or ignore the preferred evidence of the other worldview. Exo Studies' approach to integrative metascience values both quantitative and qualitative data and uses a synthetic mixed-methods orientation known as *integral methodological pluralism* (more on this below).

Third, there are different types of validity for different kinds of truth claims: subjective truthfulness, objective truth, intersubjective justness, and interobjective functional-fit.³³ Each of these truth claims is connected to the evaluation of phenomena associated with each of Integral Theory's four quadrants. Thus, it is considered inappropriate to evaluate a claim from one domain (quadrant) using the validity claims associated with another.

Fourth, each of these four kinds of truth claims can be evaluated by three strands of valid knowledge: *injunction, data, confirmation*.³⁴ In other words, a practice or method is used to generate data, which is then reviewed by "a community of the adequate" (i.e., experts or professionals who have the credentials and/or experience to evaluate the data). The three strands of valid knowledge represent the basic elements of the scientific method (experiment, get data, verify the data). The four kinds of truth and the three strands of valid knowledge, just presented form the basis of what Wilber (1997, 2006) calls *broad empiricism* and are applied to all eight methods involved in his integral methodological pluralism. It is important to note that Exo Studies is built upon a Complex Integral Realism, which embraces the broad empiricism of Integral Theory while situating this within a critical realist depth ontology.

One striking realization that emerges from reviewing the types of evidence in both columns in Table 5 is that the case for UFOs/NHIs, I believe, is currently quite strong legally and comparatively weaker scientifically. This point deserves more engagement than what I can offer here. Nevertheless, I feel it is reasonable to claim that the range of UFO/NHI evidence collected over the years falls into most of these categories of legal evidence, much of which is quite convincing and persuasive. In contrast, it appears that only a few of the categories of scientific evidence can claim the same.³⁵ This may be one reason why UFOlogists are inclined to say there is a lot of (legal) evidence, but the average person is prone to point out there is little or no (scientific) evidence. Now of course, the legal evidence for UFOs/NHIs would have to be of substantial quality to be admissible. And even when admitted it may be viewed as "clear and convincing evidence" but still fall short of being "beyond a reasonable doubt." But even then it depends on who is on the jury and what is their worldview.

Anomalous Realities and Traditional Science: The Skinwalker Ranch

This potential lack of scientific evidence raises another issue. Exo phenomena might not be amendable to current models of scientific scrutiny. Take the longstanding research that was conducted at Skinwalker Ranch in Utah by Robert Bigelow and associates over a decade (between 1994–2004).³⁶ This paranormal hotspot was also part of the Pentagon's "secret UFO" program: AATIP.³⁷ One of the ongoing challenges of trying to document the various forms of high strangeness on the ranch is that the phenomena never repeated its various expressions. This in many ways is a nonstarter for scientific investigation. Colm Kelleher and George Knapp (2005) acknowledged that, "The events were random and unpredictable, and never happened more than once in the same place or in the same way" (p. 270). The exo phenomena on the ranch continually morphed or presented a different side of itself. It seemed to always be one step ahead of the researchers giving them the impression that the ranch was permeated with some kind of "precognitive sentient intelligence" (p. 238).

There are at least four things that makes the research efforts at Skinwalker Ranch so noteworthy. First, it is arguably the longest sustained research into a paranormal hotspot. Second, it had in effect unlimited financial resources to use the best equipment and methodologies available. Third, it had highly credentialed scientists involved. Fourth, at the end of the day/decade they did not have much data to show for it. In spite

of the many bizarre phenomena experienced and documented on the ranch during these years, the research teams were not able to capture usable scientific data (at least none that has been made publicly available). The phenomena expressed itself in defiance of the many instruments, cameras, and protocols used during the investigation. This is very telling: if they could not capture data under arguably the best of circumstances, how can we expect researchers with smaller budgets, less sophisticated equipment, and fewer assistants to do better?

Maybe this traditional scientific approach to anomalous “sentient” phenomena is misguided. After all, as Kelleher and Knapp (2005) observe:

The scientific method is built on precedence, repeatability of experiments, and having enough data to make testable predictions. When a phenomenon under study refuses to obey these rather narrow strictures, what happens? What happens when a possibly intelligent phenomenon refuses to be predictable? Does a scientist walk away? (p. 261)

No! But that scientist does need a different approach. One that adheres to established principles of knowledge acquisition and verification. But is capable of transcending-and-including a materialist orientation. What is needed in my opinion is an integrative metascience designed to investigate anomalous realities. The discussion of such an approach exceeds the focus of this article, but it is a domain that I am currently working on and one that I feel is foundational to Exo Studies.³⁸

OK, we have just covered a lot of ground. Let me recap a bit before continuing. After introducing the Mutual Enactment Hypothesis I discussed how the various kinds of beings (humans, thought forms, archetypes, earth lights, and NHIs) all can participate in mutually enacting each other in the context of exo phenomena. Each of the four non-human kinds of beings can under certain conditions move from one position on the ontological stations spectrum to inhabit a different one. This highlights that their ontology in this context is not fixed and static but dynamic and mutable. They can move along a spectrum between interior and exterior ontological expressions. Thus, some beings we do not consider real can become real and take on an ontological status that we are often hesitant to afford them. And as I will discuss in the section below, beings associated with any of the four ontological stations (subjective, intersubjective, objective, and interobjective) can be fully independent of an observer, they can phase in and out of “reality,” and they can have autonomy and be self-directed. This dynamic ontological landscape challenges typical notions of what is real, as it suggests the boundaries between real/unreal are fuzzier and more fluid than we are used to or scientifically comfortable with. Charles Fort (1941/1974) makes an important observation in this context:

The *real*, as it is called, or the objective, the external, the material, cannot be absolutely set apart from the subjective, or the imaginary; but there are quasi-attributes of the imaginary. There have been occurrences that I think were *transmediumizations*, because I think that they were marked by indications of having carried over, from an imaginative origin into physical being, or into what is called “real life,” the quasi-attributes of their origin. (p. 1049)

This ontological indeterminacy (what Fort refers to as *transmediumizations*: the ability for a psychical or interior reality to become an exterior one), where the imaginal can become the physical creates “fuzzy boundaries” between what is real/unreal.

Ontological Indeterminacy

The notion of ontological indeterminacy is an important concept in Exo Studies. It highlights that exo phenomena and the four kinds of non-human beings discussed above can exist on and move along multiple ontological

spectrums of “real/unreal.” There are three distinct ontological spectrums that together comprise the *ontological matrix* and thus determine the ontological status of a being. The three spectrums are:

1. **An ontological stations spectrum (realms):** subjective to intersubjective to interobjective station to objective
2. **An ontological sovereignty spectrum (free will):** non-autonomous to semi-autonomous to autonomous
3. **An ontological substance spectrum (density):** gross-physical to subtle-energetic to causal-light

In each of the three spectrums above I have underlined the end of each spectrum generally taken to be the most real (i.e., a being is considered to be real if it inhabits an objective environment, they are autonomous and self-determining, and has a gross-physical body). Beings who possess all of these qualities would generally be considered to be real, exist independently, and thus have ontological status. In contrast, the qualities associated with the opposite end of each spectrum are typically thought to be unreal (e.g., a being found in a subjective domain, who is non-autonomous, and whose body is made of causal-light). Vivid dream figures or beings encountered in a powerful visualization exercise are good examples of beings possessing these qualities. We tend to think of them as unreal. And this makes sense to a point. Especially, given our fellow Earth humans and the many plants and animals on the planet seem to hold stable ontological positions on the “real end” of all three spectrums. Consequently, their ontological status seems self-evident. The combination of these three positions has become the default criterion from which to determine the realness of someone or something.

But here is the thing. While it is understandable, we would have come to associate the real with one end of each spectrum and the unreal with the opposite end of those spectrums; the exo phenomena and associated beings/NHIs I have been discussing are not so easily characterized. Their doubleness makes it hard for us to confine them to just one spot along each spectrum. If anything, they exemplify ontological indeterminacy. They appear to occupy multiple positions on each spectrum either concurrently or sequentially. Ontologically speaking, they are moving targets. Does this ontological fluidity make them less real or just a different kind of real or even more real than beings who have a more stable/fixed ontological status?

What I am arguing for here is that the ontological status of non-human beings and NHIs is not dependent on them possessing only the qualities at the far “real” end of each spectrum (i.e., objective/physical/autonomous). In fact, it is a misnomer to characterize any of the three ontological spectrums presented above as being a spectrum of unreal–real. Rather, each of the three spectrums is a “real–real” spectrum (i.e., different ontological spectrums—spectrums of ontology) with one kind of real at one end and another kind of real at the other end. This shift immediately gets us out of the unreal/real binary, which is a limiting frame when dealing with exo phenomena in general and non-human beings/intelligences in particular. Thus, to determine the ontological status of a being or NHI we must identify where they fall on each of the three ontological spectrums. So, they are real regardless of which combination of ontological qualities they have, but different combinations indicate different ontological statuses. But they are all real. So, the question is not “Are they real or unreal?” Rather, it is “What kind of real are they?” or “What is their ontological status?” meaning where do they fall on each of the spectrums that make up the ontological matrix.

For example, a vivid dream figure (subjective/non-autonomous/causal-light) and a biological Tall Grey extraterrestrial from Zeta Reticuli (objective/semi-autonomous/gross-physical) can both be real (e.g., having causal efficacy and existing independent of an observer), but they have different types of ontological status. They both are ontologically real, but their ontological status is different. Furthermore, the ontological status for either the dream figure or the Grey potentially can shift and change under certain conditions and is

mutually enacted through entangled encounters with other beings. Thus, we need an approach to the ontological status of beings (such as a thought form and an NHI in the recent examples above) that can account for their movement along all three spectrums.

In Figure 2, the top half presents the ontological matrix and its three spectrums while the bottom half presents five examples of ontological indeterminacy among the four kinds of non-human beings. I have chosen in this figure to represent the ontological matrix by having the *ontological stations spectrum* serve as the x-axis with its four stations indicated by a box (i.e., subjective, intersubjective, interobjective, and objective). Out of each of these stations emerges the *ontological sovereignty spectrum* serving as the y-axis (x4) with its three positions of free will (i.e., non-autonomous [NA], semi-autonomous [SA], and autonomous [A]). At each of these three positions along the sovereignty spectrum is the *ontological substance spectrum* serving as the z-axis, with its three types of body densities (i.e., gross, subtle, and causal). Thus, the ontological status of a

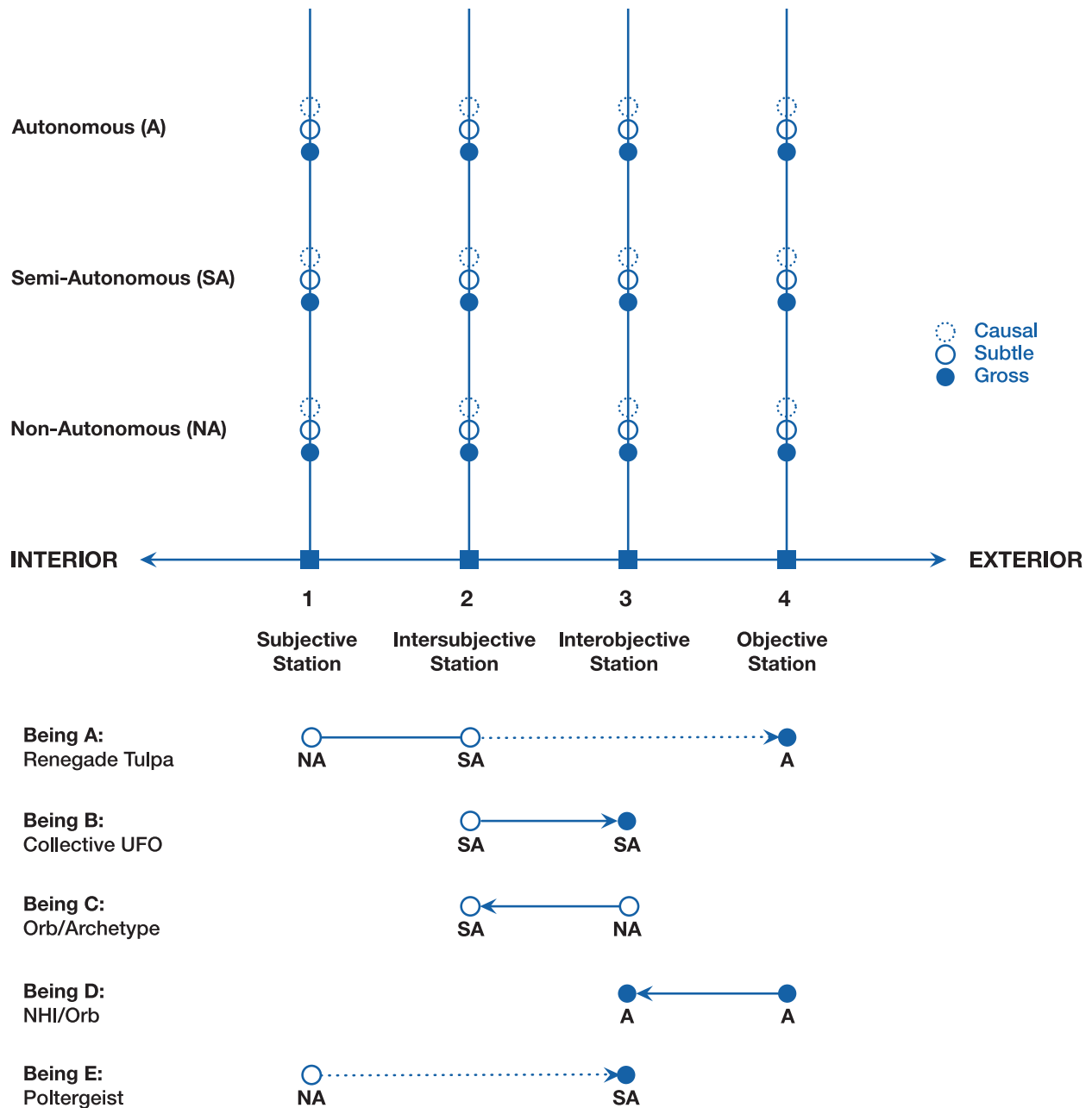


FIGURE 2. The Ontological Matrix with Five Examples

being/NHI is always identified by their ontological “location” on all three spectrums.

For shorthand, I will often refer to these three dimensions of ontology (as represented by each spectrum) as: *stations*, *sovereignty*, and *substance*, respectively. All of them in one way or another highlight the ontological indeterminacy of non-human beings and non-human intelligences alike. These beings and intelligences exist along multiple spectrums with various degrees and kinds of ontological expression. Their ontological status can change. Their ontological sovereignty can change. Their ontological substance can change. They are often in flux moving from one position on a spectrum to another.

To further illustrate these points, I will now present the five examples depicted in lower half of Figure 2. Being A (e.g., a tulpa) starts out as an intrapsychic occult thought form (subjective station/NA/subtle) and through group rituals takes on more autonomy to the point that others can sense and see it (intersubjective station/SA/subtle); over time it obtains even more agency, becoming entirely autonomous—a renegade tulpa (objective station/A/gross). Being B (e.g., a collectively manifested UFO) begins as a powerful collective psychical energy (intersubjective station/SA/subtle) but then takes on enough physicality to generate a radar return (interobjective station/SA/gross). In reverse we can have Being C (e.g., a ghost light) begin as a naturally occurring electromagnetic orb (interobjective station/NA/subtle), but as it is traveling along a ridge line it comes into contact with a strong field of collective consciousness and morphs into an archetypal image of a wild man (intersubjective station/SA/subtle). Similarly, we could have Being D (e.g., an extraterrestrial) begin in a physical embodied state (objective station/A/gross) and uses local EMEs to transform herself into an orb (interobjective station/A/gross). Lastly, there is Being E. A young girl has an imaginary friend (subjective station/NA/subtle). This girl infuses this friend with enough telekinetic energy that it becomes a full-blown poltergeist event (interobjective station/SA/gross). These five examples of different beings moving along the ontological spectrums to various positions serve to illustrate the ontological fluidity we find with various types of beings, and which must be taken into account in any comprehensive understanding of the ontological status of non-human beings.

Different beings are often associated with different ontological stations of origin (e.g., a thought form usually begins at the subjective station). Also, the movement between positions is not necessarily linear. This is illustrated, for example, in Figure 2 by some of the paths having dotted lines instead of only solid lines (e.g., Being A and Being E). This diagram and its five examples are far from being exhaustive in presenting all the ontological permutations of various beings/intelligences within the matrix. Thus, Figure 2 is primarily meant to be illustrative and thought-provoking of different ways to understand and represent the fluid nature of the ontological status of NHIs. My hope is that the set of distinctions outlined above (and throughout this article) can begin to enable us to have more sophisticated conversations about NHIs and their ontological status.

The need for an ontology to better account for these possibilities has led me in part to introduce the notion of doubleness, which appears to lie at the heart of so many exo phenomena and could be considered its defining ontological feature. This doubleness requires that we complexify what is real, what is an object, and what is evidence. This in turn requires the ontological matrix with its three interrelated ontological spectrums. The path of traditional mainstream positivist empirical science no longer provides purchase on reality in an anomalous context. We need to forge a new path—a *revolutionary science* (à la Thomas Kuhn), a *forbidden science* (à la Jacques Vallée) that can actually shed light on this multidimensional multiverse we find ourselves in. We need an integrative metascience of NHIs and the paranormal. To better understand some of the features of this integrative metascience I want to now turn your attention to *Integral Pluralism* and the role it plays in Exo Studies and how it can help us better understand the mutual enactment of NHIs.

The Role of Integral Pluralism in Exo Studies

As we have been exploring throughout this article, one of the first things one is confronted with when discussing, researching, or exploring anomalous phenomena such as UFOs, poltergeists, cryptids, or psi capacities is

the issue of “Is it real?” In other words, do any of these paranormal or super natural phenomena have an ontological basis in reality independent of the hearts and minds of those people who report or document encounters with them?³⁹ Throughout the pages above I have been arguing that they do in fact have more ontological status than is often acknowledged. But as you know, this is not a popular or widely embraced position.

For centuries, the modern scientific rational worldview has held sway on matters of what is real. Generally speaking, only those realities that can be repeatably observed with our five senses (especially our eyes) and their technological extensions and measured in some quantifiable way are granted status as being “real.” While this is a very respectable position on many counts, it has the disadvantage of not being able to accommodate the full range of interesting phenomena that occur in our world and the larger multiverse we inhabit—our Wild Kosmos. Not everything that is worth serious scientific study, philosophical exploration, or cultural analysis is amendable to the traditional logical-positivist approach.

Over the past 50 years, postmodernism and more recently fields such as Science and Technology Studies have been quite successful in exposing the cracks and contradictions in the Enlightenment’s materialist foundation. And the last decade has seen a growing dissatisfaction in many disciplines with our Kantian heritage resulting in what is often dubbed an *ontological turn*.⁴⁰ At its core, this ontological turn is a return to questions of ontology and what we can and what we cannot say about reality.⁴¹ This is one signal that we are entering into a *post*-postmodernism or a *metamodernism*.⁴² In short, what this trend indicates is that professional researchers are increasingly challenging the postmodern view that we cannot say anything meaningful about the ontological status of things, processes, and phenomena that have traditionally fallen outside of what is viewed as real in contemporary Western secular society. This is an exciting time for studies of the anomalous variety because there are new methods, conceptual distinctions, and models of reality from which to reconsider and investigate anew the ontological status of a wide range of paranormal and transpersonal phenomena.

Based on my own multidimensional and exo experiences, a deep and long-term engagement with the literature of contact modalities (CMs) and non-human intelligences (NHIs), as well as conversations with experiencers (i.e., people who have regular contact with anomalous phenomena and NHIs) I have been developing a conceptual framework I refer to as *Integral Pluralism*.⁴³ I believe this framework gives us new and much needed ways to discuss and consider the ontological status of NHIs such as extraterrestrials (ETs) and extradimensionals (EDs). It also goes a long way towards making sense of the larger multiverse (i.e., the many overlapping physical, quasi-physical, and subtle realms/worlds that make up our Wild Kosmos). At the heart of this Integral Pluralism is the recognition of three important irreducible types of pluralism:

1. **Integral Epistemological Pluralism (the Who):** there are multiple ways of knowing and dozens of subtle senses and potential psi capacities by which to perceive physical and non-physical realities (Charles Fort’s *wild talents*)
2. **Integral Methodological Pluralism (the How):** there are multiple practices, injunctions, and contact modalities by which to engage or “make contact” with physical, quasi-physical/paraphysical, and non-physical beings and realities
3. **Integral Ontological Pluralism (the What):** there are multiple dimensions and layers to objects, processes, and beings encountered in physical and non-physical realities. The ontology of an object or being always exceeds any given enactment of it. This in turn can generate contradictory, overlapping, and paradoxical ontological expressions of the same phenomena.

These three pluralisms work together (the Who x the How x the What) to enact phenomena—both within our day-to-day consensual reality and the wide range of paranormal anomalous realities reported by credible individuals and well documented by researchers. You cannot have one pluralism without the other two—all three as it were co-arise together and are equally primordial. These enactments are and must be an-

chored in what I call an *integral depth ontology*. Space prevents me from expounding on this, so I will simply issue an IOU and direct you to Esbjörn-Hargens (in press-b). This approach also has much resonance with Karen Barad’s (2007) notion of *ethico-onto-epistem-ology* or what I would reorder as *epistemo-ethico-ontology* to mirror the entangled enactment of Who x How x What of Integral Pluralism.

To begin to fully understand anomalous encounters such as an interaction with a mantis being in your bedroom at night we are well served to study the enactive process of: the experiencer (the Who) and what modes of consciousness, types of subtle senses, cognitive and cultural biases and distortions were involved in the encounter; the contact modalities (the How) used by the experiencer and the enactive range and potential of that modality (i.e., what can that modality reveal and what does it tend to conceal) to have the encounter; and the NHI and their physical and/or energetic body as well as the environs (i.e., the realms and dimensions) they inhabit (the What).

Building on this last point, let us take a closer look at the bodies of NHIs since this is a crucial consideration in determining their ontological status. There are at least three body types—along the ontological substance spectrum—that must be included:

1. **NHIs with physical bodies:** these beings have a physical body. However, they might not appear fully physical to us as many reports suggest that physical bodies in another dimension can appear transparent or “ghost-like” to us in our dimension. This translucent appearance could erroneously lead us to conclude their bodies are unsubstantial and therefore lack ontological status (because they appear more like what we imagine a hallucination to be opposed to a concrete other with a solid body).
2. **NHIs with physical-energetic bodies:** these are beings who have the ability to manifest into a physical form (materialization) for a period of time in our dimension and whom can likewise move from a physical expression to an energetic or invisible state (dematerialization). This capacity suggests the ability to manipulate or adjust one’s density or energetic vibration. It can also result from them moving in and out of our visible light spectrum or impacting our own visual perception to perceive into the infrared aspects of that spectrum.
3. **NHIs with subtle bodies:** these beings do not have a physical body as we think of it but are comprised exclusively of more subtle-energetic bodies (e.g., etheric, astral, causal). Though they might experience their subtle body in similar ways as we experience our physical body. Often the density of the subtle bodies is consistent with the “matter” of which their (inhabited) realm is made. Some NHIs (like humans) have multiple subtle bodies, which allow them to “astral travel” and some just have the higher/less dense bodies. As a result, when humans encounter NHIs in subtle realms via their subtle bodies the NHIs they encounter might have other denser (even physical) bodies in other realities too. Thus, the ontological status of the NHI should not be restricted to the conditions through which you and they are mutually enacted.

One of the key takeaways of the above analysis of NHI bodies is that their ontological status is not dependent on them having a physical body like us. Now I want to draw your attention to eight examples that both problematize and illustrate the ontological status of NHIs. This will serve to highlight key questions pertaining to their (and our) ontological status: questions that Exo Studies is committed to keep exploring. These eight illustrative inquiries build on the examples provided above and serve to elucidate the important role the Mutual Enactment Hypothesis can play in helping us to better understand NHIs and our connections to them.

- **DMT beings vs. Ayahuasca beings:** Different NHIs are associated with different psychedelics or sacred medicines. For example, on DMT it is not uncommon for experiencers to encounter “machine elves” or sentient geometric forms while users of Ayahuasca tend to encounter “Mother Ayahuasca,”

serpents, and jaguars. Why do certain “sacred medicines” disclose specific kinds of NHIs while other NHIs tend to show up regardless of the contact modality? For example, Jon Hanna (2012) conducted three surveys on Erowid.org (an online database dedicated to documenting psychedelic experiences). His findings showed that UFOs and aliens (i.e., Greys, Reptilians, and Insectoids) show up across more types of psychedelic experiences than any other type of NHIs. Might the fact that these alien NHIs are showing up so often in psychonaut journeys be an indication of their independent existence and ability to pop into various physical and psychical realities and interact with us. Why are some NHIs linked exclusively to some contact modalities and others tend to show up across multiple CMs? Is it simply a matter of the morphic field associated with different CMs? Does this make the CM-exclusive NHIs less real—I do not think so—but it does raise very interesting ontological questions. This is why I am proposing an enactive ontology that includes the Who and How alongside the What.

- **One class of beings vs. many:** some experiencers tend to encounter one type of NHIs such as clairvoyants who just see members of the Fae such as nature spirits, elementals, genii loci, and devas, or abductees who just encounter Short and Tall Grey aliens with an occasional Insectoid. Then you have individuals who have a history of encounters that includes multiple NHIs—faeries, aliens, angels, Bigfoot, and so on. Why is this the case? Why can some people perceive some types of NHIs and not others? Again, this seems to point to the enactive nature of the Who, the How, and the What.
- **A spectrum of autonomy:** Some beings such as tulpas are created by human intention and magical rituals. They can under certain circumstances become more and more autonomous taking on a life of their own. So, while these thought forms were initially human created they can become NHIs in their own right with an objective existence. Are these beings to be considered “unreal” simply because their origin is anchored in the power of human concentration? Is this not an example of a mind becoming matter (at least subtle matter)? Now contrast a tulpa (a semi-autonomous energetic being) with a physical extraterrestrial from another planet who has traveled to Earth via some form of anti-gravity technology that enables space-time travel. This latter scenario is the one that most easily satisfies our idea of being “real.” However, we need an approach to the ontology of NHIs that is not exclusively fixated on physical beings from other planets, as those seem to be a minority of the NHIs humans interact with. Afterall, even the semi-autonomous tulpa seems to demand some degree of ontological acknowledgement.
- **Wearing your thoughts:** Many NHIs such as faeries and extradimensionals are alleged to shape shift into a form that in their opinion better serves the encounter with experiencers. It is as if they can telepathically tap into our memories and thinking patterns and use them to inform how they appear to us. On the one hand we can honestly say what we are seeing is a projection of our own mind. At the same time there is a real NHI on the other side of that projection. We might be projecting, but the NHI is the screen upon which the projection takes place. So how do we account for this dynamic ontologically? It makes it harder for sure as many NHIs occupy more subtle (less dense) dimensions and who as a result can adjust how they appear to us. We have to be able to account equally for their ontological existence, our projection, and their façade.
- **A mixture of us and them:** Many poltergeists begin with a single individual creating telekinetic phenomena. Traditionally, this has been associated with a young person (often female) who is frustrated and the build-up of emotional-psychic energy results in paranormal activity. However, this type of activity appears to often attract negative and parasitic NHIs who show up on the scene and begin to add to the paranormal display and in so doing create intense negative emotions in the residents, which in turn provides these entities with an energetic food source: fear. So, while the beginning of the poltergeist might fairly be attributed to the power of the human mind—it appears that in some cases this simply opens a portal for NHIs to become part of the situation. Can we say it was all just human gen-

erated? No. Many poltergeists appear to be a combination of innate/latent human psychic capacities, which serve to create a bridge between parallel realities that allows various “not so nice” NHIs to enter into our dimension (or us into theirs!).

- **Channeling our alien selves:** Many channelers, especially those who have been doing it for a long time, often come to the realization that the main (or one of the main) NHIs that they are channeling is in fact their future self or their higher self or some other aspect of themselves. But these NHIs while being a part of the channeler also appears in many respects to be an ontologically separate NHI even while also being an aspect of themselves. How are we to make sense of this? Is it just that they are channeling an unconscious part of themselves? Maybe. Or might they be connecting with a semi-autonomous (or even fully autonomous) NHI that is in some sense also them? And given the karmic or soul connection between these two “separate” beings it makes it easier for the human here on Earth to channel the NHI from elsewhere. How do we ontologically make sense of these two beings being both the same and at the same time different? Just as you and I are separate existent beings (we have separate jobs, families, life histories) we are also, as many of the wisdom traditions point out one and the same. Are we not the divine differentiated in order to know itself? So, at some point all of our separate ontological selves converge into a single One. But that transcendental Unity does not diminish the very real ways we can talk about the ontological distinctness between a channeler and her channeled self (who exists in a different dimension and/or on a different timeline). Just as you and I are separate beings we are also one and the same. We need an enactive ontology that can account for that fact.
- **We are ghosts haunting humans:** Paul Eno (2006, 2019) gives numerous examples of “ghosts” he is called to investigate who communicate to him that they are afraid of the humans in this dimension as they experience these humans as ghosts haunting them in their dimension.⁴⁴ He also provides examples of people encountering ghosts of themselves (e.g., a woman coming home to find herself sitting at the counter eating a meal). These are fascinating and provocative multiverse encounters, which raise many issues of parallel worlds and how the ontology of beings in one world assess and experience the ontology of beings in another. Eno even explains that the ghosts describe us as the ones being transparent, suggesting that, as noted above, our physical status can come across ghostlike when viewed from a parallel world. If we are the “ghosts” and they are the “humans,” then what is the ontological status of us and them? Are they more real than we are? Is it fair to say we are more real than they are? We are haunting ghosts and humans are haunting us. And in some cases we are haunting ourselves.
- **Good or Bad ETs/EDs?:** Steven Greer (2006) is known for his position that there are only benevolent ETs/EDs and that any negative encounters experiencers have are due to staged abductions performed by covert private or paramilitary groups. In contrast, David Jacobs (2015) is known for his position that on the whole the ETs have been clandestinely involved in a hybridization program and consequently we are facing an impending hostile takeover scenario. How can two prominent UFO/NHI researchers have such diametrically opposed views on the nature and agendas of NHIs? While there are likely a number of factors to consider, two are especially important: the consciousness (the Who) and methodology (the How) of both researchers. My sense, is that they are enacting different NHIs (the What) as a result of the unique combinations of their awareness and their preferred method of contact. Greer is an accomplished meditator who also is a direct experiencer (his Who) and has pioneered the CE-5 protocols (his How). Jacobs in contrast is not a direct experiencer (his Who) and has been a pioneer of hypnotic regression and works with abductees (his How). This combination of Who + How for Greer has led to direct experiences of benevolent NHIs while for Jacobs this combination has led to direct experiences of the impact of negative NHIs on experiencers. So, is one of them right and the other wrong? Are there really just good or bad ETs? Might there be both and might each of these important pioneers have just part of the full picture? Each feels fully justified in their positions

because the enacted encounters they have had with NHIs or experiencers carries its own persuasive weight. Another way to think about what is happening here is that there are both “good and bad” ETs/EDs. The former are more likely to show up under the conditions provided by Greer’s Who and How and the latter are more likely to show up under those conditions created by Jacob’s Who and How.

These eight examples and the questions they raise are just a few of what could be presented to drive the point home that we need to develop a more robust way of exploring and discussing the ontological status of NHIs. In summary, an Exo Studies approach to the ontological status of NHIs at the very least needs to:

- Account for the enactive dynamics of the experiencers (the Who) x various contact modalities (the How) x the rich diversity of NHIs (the What)
- Account for the ways we are simultaneously enacting NHIs and they are enacting us
- Account for ontological indeterminacy along three distinct axes:
 - Stations: four ontological spheres of manifestation between interiority and exteriority: subjective—intesubjective—interobjective—objective
 - Sovereignty: degrees of free-will between non-autonomous—semi-autonomous—autonomous
 - Substance: a range of embodied density between gross-physical bodies—subtle-energetic bodies—causal-light bodies
- Account for the many provocative examples of NHIs of which eight are presented here

NHIs are existent beings regardless of whether we can “see” them. At the same time, we need to expand what we mean by real since a simple notion of being physical or autonomous will not suffice. There are many varieties of NHIs, which are encountered under a wide range of circumstances. The multiverse is a big weird place filled with numerous kinds of beings—a Wild Kosmos. We need an integral approach to ontology and enactment to help us make more sense of it.

Conclusion: Enacting a New Galactic Story

In each and every paranormal or anomalous experience there is always *a Who* (an experiencer), *a How* (a way of making contact, i.e., an informal or formal method or practice), and *a What* (an external set of objects, entities, or environments). Generally speaking, contemporary researchers are more or less comfortable with the first two elements and their associated types of pluralism: epistemological and methodological pluralism. This is in large part due to our Kantian heritage and the postmodern sensibilities that have been cultivated in us for decades.

It is not controversial to highlight the role that multiple perspectives, worldviews, and modes of consciousness have in our anomalous experience of the world. Nor is it that controversial to point out that much is determined by the particular methods we take up to study or encounter various anomalous phenomena. Each method, we understand, has its own disclosive power, which simultaneously reveals and conceals the phenomenon it is “pointed” at. It is however, quite controversial to posit that the anomalous things, processes, beings, and realms encountered by some *Whos* using some *Hows* have an ontological reality to them. In short, culturally and scientifically, we have a lot of room for epistemological and methodological weirdness but very little tolerance for *ontological weirdness*.⁴⁵

As a result, we are more comfortable with NHIs encountered in anomalous experiences to be understood as just being part of the experiencer’s own consciousness (e.g., false memory syndrome, hallucination, sleep paralysis, misinterpretation, or an overactive imagination). And no doubt each of those are valid explanations in some cases. We are also generally open to NHIs encountered in the context of certain methods (e.g., psychedelics, shamanic voyaging, lucid dreams, intense trance meditations). Though we often are inclined to

reduce the NHI encountered via such methods to an unreal status (i.e., intra- or interpsychic). After all, we argue the experiencer was in an altered state of consciousness and we tend to consider such states as being ontologically suspect. They are viewed as occurring in an altered state of mind (i.e., “unreal”) as opposed to an alternate reality that is real. It only counts as real if you encounter it in normal waking consciousness. Or so the assumption goes...

When we are pushed, we might concede that an anomalous phenomenon is some kind of psychosocial manifestation of the collective unconsciousness that can even in some cases manifest physical or quasi-physical characteristics. This can be a type of group psi or the power of group mind to manifest what appears to be an autonomous being or UFO but is actually just an archetype made manifest by the collective. And no doubt this too accounts for some NHI encounters.

In general, the last place we want to go is making room for the ontological existence of NHIs either as flesh and blood extraterrestrials or quasi-physical or subtle extradimensionals. No, that is just too much! Or is it? There is a lot of first-person testimony (whistleblowers and experiencers); second-person cultural, religious, sociological, and anthropological data; and even third-person physical and legal evidence as well as some scientific data—all of which point in this direction. There might not be conclusive, publicly verified evidence or a scientific consensus on the topic. But it is not hard to support the claim that there is enough first-, second-, and third-person evidence that we need to take *very seriously* the possibility of the ontological reality of UFOs and NHIs. Paradoxically, from an Exo Studies perspective we also want to hold all this lightly, too. The practice is to simultaneously take this evidence seriously and hold it lightly. Doubleness! Given the range and variety of evidence for UFOs and NHIs being “real” (keep in mind Sentés’ [2019] fourfold distinction discussed above), should we not develop a model that can account for the ontological status of NHIs even if psychological and psycho-social explanations of such beings (and their realms) are sometimes or often valid explanations of said phenomena? It only takes one white crow...⁴⁶

I feel strongly that we can no longer shy away from discussing, modeling, and researching the ontological status of NHIs, including ETs, EDs, as well as humans living in parallel worlds or alternate timelines. A worthwhile step in this direction involves what I outlined above as Integral Pluralism (the Who x the How x the What). This is important because it creates the context for an integral depth ontology (i.e., an ontology that is both dynamic and responsive to the consciousness of perceiving subjects and the various methods used to disclose/enact such ontological realities, and is grounded in a form of realism that prevents us from the slippery slope of solipsism in an enacted hall of mirrors). As noted above, my preferred form of realism for such a task is Complex Integral Realism.⁴⁷

Many NHIs exist independently of our observations and enactments of them. And yet our encounters with them always involve both a Who and a How and the ontological status of them lies in part on how they are enacted by both the observer and the method of observation. Now it is important to keep in mind that any given enactment of an NHI does not exhaust its being/ontology. In fact, most enactments are just one of many ontological layers or dimensions of the NHI (similar to how we show up differently with certain friends or while doing different activities). In other words, the NHIs are always more complex and multidimensional than any given (enacted) encounter reveals. This underscores the integral depth ontology at play: the *consciousness of the experiencer* both reveals and conceals aspects of the NHI, the *contact modality* (spontaneously or intentionally used) reveals and conceals aspects of the NHI, and the *NHI itself* reveals and conceals aspects of itself based on its own intentions, habits of being, and blind spots. Together the experiencer, the modality, and the NHI enact the encounter—not to mention that from the NHI’s perspective they are the Who, using a How to interact with us as the What. Thus, we are enacting them and at the same time they are enacting us. Along these lines, Patrick Harpur recounts how Carl Jung had a salient UFO dream in October 1958, which caused him to turn the whole notion of psychological projection “on its head.” After the dream, Jung observed “we always think that the U.F.O.s are projections of ours. Now it turns out that we are their projections” (as quoted

in Harpur, 1994/2003, p. 88). This is a participatory ontology—we live in a multiverse where we humans and NHIs (and other types of beings as discussed above) are mutually creating each other in a cascading series of enacting encounters.

Making the case for the ontological status of NHIs is one of the most controversial issue/topics one can take on. It goes against basically every tenet of the scientific establishment and contemporary global worldview and as a result calls into question almost everything we take for granted as constituting reality. Nevertheless, I feel a strong post-positivist/post-materialist scientific case can and must be made—an integral mixed methods approach that combines qualitative and quantitative data using first-, second-, and third-person data. This is the foundation of an integrative metascience.

It is time we develop a much more sophisticated discourse around the existence of NHIs and our encounters with them. My hope is that the metafield of Exo Studies will support us in this task. Humanity has been interacting with a wide range of NHIs from time immemorial. Most cultures and cosmologies across the planet and throughout the ages have or currently do make room for them. The fact that our secular modern scientific story does not is in fact the anomaly. Of course, we will need a post-mythic version of these NHI friendly cosmologies, one that re-enchants and re-wilds the Kosmos without the mythological baggage of yesterday. We live in a Kosmos that is inhabited by denizens of many densities, worlds, dimensions, and realms. We would do well to acknowledge their ontological status and make a more coordinated effort to understand and engage with them. These beings are interacting with humanity on a regular basis, so the more we can do to come to terms with and understand this, the better off we will be collectively. This is especially important as we increasingly move toward becoming galactic citizens living on multiple planets.

I hope this article has piqued your curiosity about what that story might involve, and I invite you to join me as a co-author of it. Humanity is entering an exciting galactic age—it will not be long before we have a base on the Moon and are terraforming Mars. We need a bigger story—a *metaverse*—that can inspire and guide us as we continue to explore and understand this mysterious and awe-inspiring, diversely populated multidimensional multiverse—*our Wild Kosmos!*

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Appendix 1
Exo Studies' 150+ Disciplinary Fields, Domains, and Topics

Academic and Philosophical Literature	UFO and Space Studies Literature	Esoteric and Paranormal Literature
Actor-Network Theory (ANT) Agential Realism Alterity & Xenophobia Animal Consciousness Amerindian Perspectivism Artificial Intelligence Anthropology Assemblage Theory Animal Studies Cultural Studies Cognitive & Affective Ethnology Cognitive Science & Theories of Memory Ecophilosophy Feminist Theory Feminist Process Metaphysics Genetics Gender & Queer Studies Heuristics Imagination Studies Intersubjective Theory Legal Studies Media & Film Studies Material Semiotics Mixed Methods Research New Animism New Realisms & Materialisms Ontological Pluralism Object-Oriented Ontology (OOO) Plant Intelligence Panpsychism Political Science Posthumanism Philosophy (Continental & Analytic) Philosophy of Mind Philosophy of Science Psychology – Transpersonal, Developmental, Depth, Psychoanalytic, Archetypal Post-Formal Adult Development Quantum Theory (Physics, Biology, Psychology, Sociology) Religious Studies Romantic Poets Sociology Speculative Realism Science & Technology Studies (STS) Somatics & Trauma Healing Transhumanism	Abduction Studies Astrotheology Astroethics Astrobiology Astrophysics Alternative History Ancient Aliens Black Budgets Breakaway Civilizations Crop Circles Cattle Mutilations Contactee/Experiencer Literature Dark Psychology Exobiology Exolinguistics Exophilosophy Exopsychology Exotheology Exopolitics Exoconsciousness Exosociology Exoarcheology Exoplanets Exobiology Exophysics Exoarcheology Folklore Studies Forbidden Archeology Flap Areas Free-Energy, Anti-Gravity & Tesla Studies Galactic History Government Disclosures Historical Extraterrestrial Life Debate Implants Light Language Materials Science MILABS National Security State Non-Human Intelligences Space Studies/Space Psychology Skepticism & Conspiratorial Psychology Science Fiction Starseeds & Lightworkers SETI/CETI/METI & Fermi's Paradox UFO Sightings UFO Cults & Religions UFO Crash Retrievals Whistleblower Testimony	411 Missing Cases Anomalous Research Anomalist Psychology Astral Travel Bigfoot Studies Cryptozoology Channeling Consciousness Studies Comics & Graphic Novels Indigenous Cosmologies Earth Energies Esoteric Anatomy Esoteric History Faery Tradition Fortean Studies Folklore Gnostic Studies Goethean Science Hermeticism Imaginal Realm Illuminate & Secret Societies Life Between Life Studies Magical Arts Mythological Studies Near Death Experience (NDE) Research Occult Science & Practices Out of Body (OBE) Research Paranormal Studies Paranormal Hotspots Poltergeists & Ghosts Parapsychology Psi Research Pyramid & Portal Science Psychedelics Remote Viewing New Age Culture Nephilim/Giants Shamanism Sacred Geometry Spooklights & Orbs Soul Studies Subtle Energy Science Synchronicity Theosophy Yogic Traditions & Siddhas (Psi Capacities) Weird/Edge Science Wicca & Witchcraft

Appendix 2

Annotated Bibliography for Table Sources

1. Hernandez, R., Klimo, J., & Schild, R. (2018). *Beyond UFOs: The Science of Consciousness and Contact with Non Human Intelligence*. FREE Inc.

A five-year (2012–2017) quantitative and qualitative study with over 3,256 individuals from more than 100 countries who had single or multiple encounters with NHIs. The descriptions of NHIs fall into 10 distinct types. One of these types is the catch-all category of “Other.” In the context of NHI encounters that took place within a UFO/UAP, 30% of all NHIs fell into the category of “other,” which was the fourth largest category of the 10. Similarly, in the context of NHI encounters that took place not in a “craft” but in a “matrix-like reality,” 39.4% of all NHIs fell into the category of “other.” This was the second largest category of the 10. Within this category of “other,” there were around 1,350 responses representing “hundreds of types” of NHI that did not easily fit into the other nine categories (Rey Hernandez, personal communication, March 2, 2020). This underscores the wide variety of NHIs encountered and highlights that while there are around 8 to 10 common types of NHIs encountered by people, there is still a lot of diversity in what these NHIs look like (i.e., their phenotype).

2. Salla, M. (2013). *Galactic Diplomacy: Getting to Yes with ET*. Kealakekua, HI: Exopolitics Institute.

Michael Salla presents 19 “extraterrestrial races” (12 positive and 7 negative types) from various planets and star systems presented in two tables summarizing their main activities and the positive or negative global impact they have. This overview appears to be based on Salla’s analysis of first-person testimony and the UFO literature in general. He focuses more on where these NHIs are from and their benevolent or malevolent orientation toward Earth humans than their phenotype.

3. Nidle, S. (2005). *Your Galactic Neighbors*. Pukalani, HI: Blue Lodge Press.

A lifelong experiencer, Sheldan Nidle was approached during a meditation in the early 2000s by a council of 22 beings representing their respective civilizations from “across the galaxy.” Their goal was to work with him “to help the peoples of Earth overcome their strong aversion to the appearance of many of this galaxy’s highly intelligent inhabitants” (p. xxi). Apparently, these 22 “star-nations” allegedly represent only “a very narrow segment of the extraordinary array of cultures and species found throughout [the Milky Way Galaxy]” (p. xxi). Nidle explains that “Many species, however, are not represented in this initial sample. They were omitted for a reason: their physical appearance is less than pleasing to limited conscious humans...” (p. xxii). Thus, these 22 types of beings are predominately “galactic humans” or humanoid in appearance. Nidle’s chapters present an overview of each star-nation, its location and ecology, social organization and cultural dynamics, their physical appearance and language use, and a description of their ships.

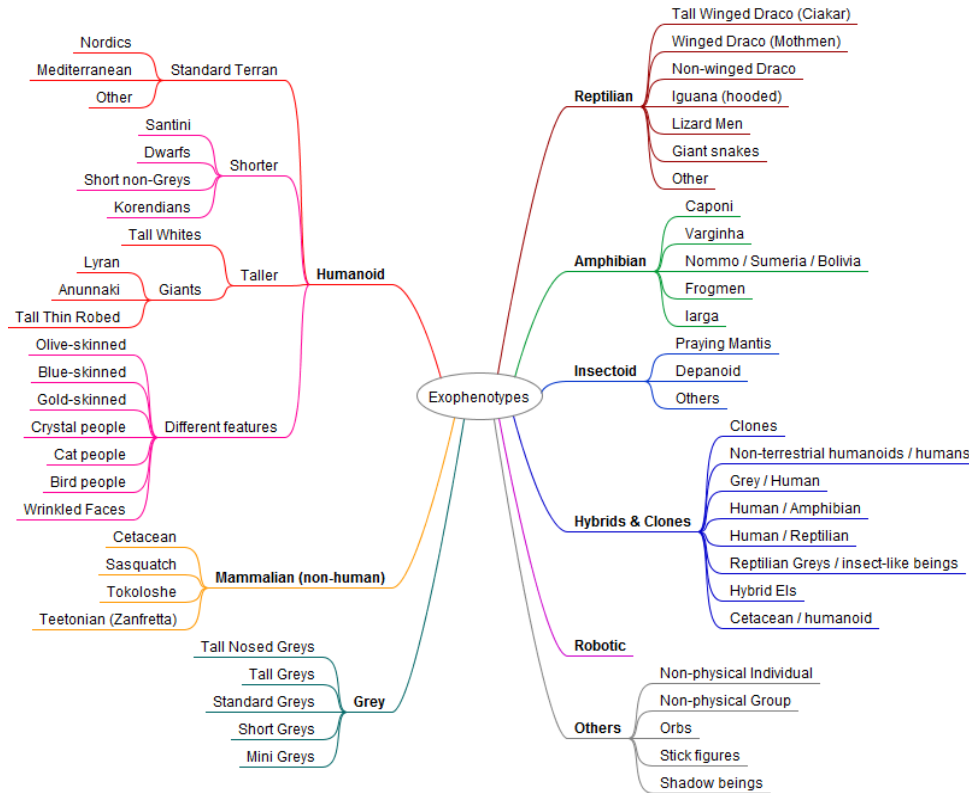
4. Huyghe, P. (1996). *The Field Guide to Extraterrestrials: A Complete Overview of Alien Lifeforms—Based on Actual Accounts and Sightings*. New York, NY: Avon Books.

This was the first book of its kind providing a typological system based on the phenotype of NHIs encountered by people. Thus, each entry is based on an actual close encounter that was documented with enough detail about the phenotype of the being(s) to support the creation of an accurate drawing. Huyghe is deliberate in his selection of cases so as to provide readers with a representative overview of the kinds of NHIs encountered. His classification system identifies 4 classes (humanoid, animalian, robotic, and exotic) with 14 types spread across the 4 classes. In total, he showcases 49 different NHIs.

5. Webre, A. L. (2014). *The Dimensional Ecology of the Omniverse*. Universe Books.

Alfred Lambremont Webre’s presentation of NHIs draws heavily on the research of Manuel Lamiroy, who has more than anyone mapped out the “exophenotypology” of NHIs (see <https://www.exopaedia.org/Exophenotypology> and <http://www.exopoliticssouthafrica.org/phenotypes.htm>). Below is a schematic of the

9-class exophenotypology that Lamiroy has developed to date. He is still in the process of incorporating dozens of new phenotypes into his system as the result of gaining access to Albert Rosales’ database of over 17,000 contact cases. Webre also includes and discusses at length three Martian humanoid exophenotypes.



6. Redfern, N. (2019). *The Alien Book: A Guide to Extraterrestrial Beings on Earth*. Canton, MI: Visible Ink Press.

Nick Redfern provides an encyclopedic overview of 44 different NHIs, many of which are more commonly associated with being cryptids or creatures of legends than with “aliens.” Nevertheless, he points out that “Aliens come in all sizes, shapes, and colors. Some are friendly. Others are anything but friendly. They all have one thing in common: the human race has encountered them” (p. xix). Redfern’s compendium serves to expand the categories beyond the stereotypical humanoid types of NHIs most commonly associated with “extraterrestrials.”

7. Howe, L. M. (1994). *Glimpses of Other Realities: Volume 1: Facts and Eyewitnesses*. Albuquerque, NM: LMH Productions.

In Chapters 3 and 4, Linda Moulton Howe provides a variety of eyewitness reports and drawings by experiencers. She provides “different alien descriptions” of 10 types of beings each with numerous illustrations. Howe is an Emmy award winning investigative journalist who graduated from Stanford University with a MA in Communications. She is considered by many to be one of the most established and well-respected UFO investigators in the field of UFO studies.

8. Mendonça, M. & Lamb, B. (2015). *Meet the Hybrids: The Lives and Missions of ET Ambassadors on Earth*. Scotts Valley, CA: Amazon CreateSpace; Mendonça, M. (2017). *Being with the Beings: The How and the Why of ET Contact*. Scotts Valley, CA: Amazon CreateSpace.

These two books are quite unique in that they feature 13 human individuals who self-identify as an ET hybrid and/or who have had long term ongoing contact with an impressive variety of NHIs. Their descriptions

of various types of beings, their encounters with them, and the nature of their worlds/planets is quite detailed and compelling. All of the hybrids interviewed claim to have multiple types of ET DNA. Descriptions of the NHIs though out these two books often include where they come from, their phenotype, and their specific group names.

9. Clarke, A. S. (2012). *Encounters with Star People: Untold Stories of American Indians*. San Antonio, TX: Anomalist Books; Clarke, A. S. (2015). *Sky People: Untold Stories of Alien Encounters in Meso-america*. Pompton Plains, NJ: The Career Press, Inc; Clarke, A. S. (2016). *More Encounters with Star People: Urban American Indians Tell Their Stories*. San Antonio, TX: Anomalist Books; & Clarke, A. S. (2019). *Space Age Indians: Their Encounters with the Blue Men, Reptilians, and Other Star People*. San Antonio, TX: Anomalist Books.

Since the 1980s, Ardy Sixkiller Clarke, an ethnographic researcher and Professor Emeritus at Montana State University, has collected over 4,000 NHI encounter stories from American Indians and other indigenous people. She has published 157 of those accounts over four books, totaling 1,100 pages of material. Her body of work represents one of the most unique and important collections of experiencer accounts—especially since they all were recalled consciously without the aid of hypnosis. Also, her work helps show that these encounters are occurring within populations often not associated with the abduction phenomena or experiencer literature. Many of the encounters she documents appear to validate the many indigenous traditions globally that speak about “star beings” as their ancestors.

10. Vashta Narada’s Galactic Art (www.vashta.com). Retrieved March 6, 2020, from https://www.vashta.com/my-product_category/commissions/.

Vashta Narada is a long-term experiencer and intuitive artist who uses 3D graphic programs to “paint” pictures of “galactics.” She began doing this work around 2013 and to date she has done over 150 portraits. Most of these are done on commission for people who want her to depict a NHI that they are in contact with. Vashta typically connects with these beings and then does their portrait based on her own encounter. She notes however, that sometimes these beings do give her directions and guidance around how best to depict them. She is clear that her artwork should not be taken as a literal “photograph” of these beings, but rather captures the energetic quality or signature of each NHI. These portraits can be seen on her website or on her Facebook page. Her work is quite notable in that it uniquely provides a much more realistic depiction of what these NHIs look like and as such avoids the sometimes cartoonish style that can be associated with drawings done by experiencers who generally do not have an artistic background. As a result, looking at her gallery can give people a better sense of the kinds of NHIs that are being encountered by people all around the world.

11. Boylan, R. (2012). *The Human–Star Nations Connection: Key to History, Current Secrets, and our Near Future*. Boylan LLC.

Dr. Richard Boylan has been researching human encounters with NHIs since 1989 and during the 1990s was considered a prominent abductee researcher. He claims there are nearly 1,500 “Star Nations Species who are currently operating within Earth’s energy zone...” In this book he focuses on those with whom humans have had the most frequent interactions. In total, he discusses 23 different “races” and notes that there are at least 12 different races of Zetas or Greys.

12. McDaniel, D. E. (2017). *The Illustrated Guide to Reported Alien Species*. Scotts Valley, CA: Amazon CreateSpace.

Inspired by the dearth of good visuals aids that accompany encounter stories, David Erik McDaniel decided to create illustrations of 32 types of extraterrestrials selected from various reports, sightings, and the UFO literature in general. He aims to depict each NHI accurately based on the reports and only uses creative license to fill in details that were missing. His work does a great job of providing an illustration for 16 of the 25 humanoid NHIs listed in Table 3.

NOTES

¹ Upon reading this quote in September 2018, I immediately felt the calling to create an integrative metatheory of anomalous realities—what I am now calling Exo Studies (see www.exostudies.org). Also note this article is a slightly revised version of one that was published in June 2020.

² *Kosmos* is used here in accordance with Wilber (1995), wherein a “k” is used à la the ancient Greeks to refer to not just the exterior dimensions of the cosmos, but both the exterior and interior dimensions, and *Wild* is used to refer to the ontological weirdness of reality. Thus, *Wild Kosmos* refers to all of reality—seen and unseen—in both its epistemologically understandable and forever elusive ontological expressions. I also refer to this as the *metaverse*, which is very similar to Alfred Lambremont Webre’s (2014) notion of the omniverse and its “dimensional ecology.” *Wild* is also inspired by William James’ (1960) *wild facts* and Charles Fort’s (1975) *wild talents*, both of which refer to paranormal realities.

³ I have in mind here J.F. Martel’s (2016) distinction between epistemological strangeness and ontological strangeness:

We say that something is strange when it defies reason, when we cannot find an explanation satisfying enough to stop wondering what it is. There are at least two ways in which this can happen. A thing can be strange in effect or strange in fact. In philosophical terms, the first kind of strangeness might be called epistemological, meaning that it has to do with how we perceive things; the second kind of strangeness might be called ontological, meaning that it has to do with the way things actually are at their inmost.

Epistemological strangeness arises when, though I can conceive of no rational explanation for the thing before me, I nevertheless maintain the belief that some explanation would obtain if I had more information... In contrast, ontological strangeness arises when an event is unexplainable in principle because it defies rational explanation in an absolute sense. This is an inborn strangeness pointing us to the strangeness of reality itself at the fundamental level.

This echoes the *weird realism* associated with H.P. Lovecraft’s writing—that at its core there is something wholly weird about reality that allows it to ongoingly elude even our best ontological probing (see Harman, 2012).

⁴ See Esbjörn-Hargens (in press-b) where I articulate the outlines of an *integral depth ontology* based on the integration of Roy Bhaskar’s (2016) depth ontology with Wilber’s Integral Theory. This is part of my ongoing effort to develop Complex Integral Realism (CIR) (see endnote 6). One of the main tasks of Exo Studies is to use CIR as the metatheoretical basis from which to develop an integrative metascience of UFOs and the paranormal.

⁵ See Kripal (2016a, pp. 8–11).

⁶ See Esbjörn-Hargens (2010, 2016, in press-a, and in press-b). Complex Integral Realism (CIR) situates what I call *Integral Pluralism* (an enactive view of reality) within an integral depth ontology (see endnote 4). This is discussed in more detail later in the article in the context of the Mutual Enactment Hypothesis.

⁷ In addition to Appendix 1 with its list of 150+ disciplinary fields, domains, and topics, I encourage readers to consult the 38-page bibliography “The 650 Essential Book for Exo Studies” found at <https://www.exostudies.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Exo-Studies-Master-Course-Reading-List-650-1.pdf>. This extensive bibliography serves as a supplemental reference list to those resources found at the end of this article and provides readers with a more in depth sense of the core texts informing Exo Studies in general and this article in particular. A shorter list of 150+ essential Exo Studies books can also be found here: <https://www.exostudies.org/resources/books/>

⁸ This comparison of first-person experiential “psychic” data with second-person cultural “folkloric” data is important for doing a more sophisticated evaluation of the parallels and differences between 18th- and 19th-century faery folklore and 20th- and 21st-century UFO/abduction narratives. This could be part of a larger effort to study siddhis and psi abilities (e.g., clairaudience, claircognizance, clairsentience) that enable people to perceive and experience NHIs and other dimensions/realms.

⁹ See Zimmerman (2003) for a philosophical exploration of radical otherness and the “alien gaze” in the context of the abduction phenomenon.

¹⁰ This includes Fort's (1941/1974) notion of *wild talents* (i.e., the paranormal superpowers latent in human beings).

¹¹ The phrase *non-human intelligences* is also used in some contexts to refer to either animal sentience and/or to artificial intelligence (e.g., androids). Within Exo Studies such usage will be obvious by the context.

¹² Note that both spellings, *Greys* and *Grays*, are used to refer to the same NHIs. British spelling uses an "e" and American spelling uses an "a." However, the British spelling seems to be more common in the encounter literature, so I will follow suit here and use *Greys*. These NHIs are also called Zetas, short for Zeta Reticulans, with Zeta Reticula being one of the primary star systems these beings are associated with.

¹³ See endnote 8. Also, while there are striking similarities between faeries and aliens there are a lot of reasons to believe they are actually distinct ontological beings associated with their own domain/realm even if they both have been mistaken for each other by various people at various points in history. I am using the spelling of *faery* to make a clear distinction between Victorian and Disney depictions of cute little-winged creatures and the actual subtle-bodied denizens of Faerie who are described by seers and folklore.

¹⁴ Throughout *The Super Natural* (2016), Kripal cautions against such naïve comparative practices. For example, he encourages researchers to "shoot the arrow both ways" (2016d, p. 340) and be cautious when trying to interpret the past exclusively through the present (e.g., viewing 18th-century faery encounters or "lights in the sky" reports from the Middle Ages via a modern UFOlogical lens) or the present exclusively through the past (e.g., seeing current ET/ED reports as evidence of angels and demons). Thus, shooting the arrow in both directions means to paradoxically consider the insights that both interpretative approaches provide when taken seriously (and simultaneously held lightly).

¹⁵ See video by Barbara Lamb (2019).

¹⁶ In the *Star Trek* series, the Prime Directive is a non-interference policy that guides the Starfleet from interfering with the development of alien civilizations.

¹⁷ Given how controversial Susan Clancy's research and subsequent book was among experiencers, it feels important to point out that David Jacobs (2006), a longtime alien abduction researcher, provided a strong rebuttal to Clancy's claims in his book review that appeared in the *Journal of Scientific Exploration*. Also see Kathleen Marden's (n.d.) well-researched online essay "Psychological Studies on Abduction Experiences," which also delivers a powerful critique of Clancy's method and results. While I agree with Jacobs and Marden's rebuttals to Clancy, I do feel that NHI researchers need to do a better job of incorporating the insights and addressing the critiques associated with the IPH perspective as represented by researchers such as Clancy.

¹⁸ There are many ways our own brains obscure or distort exo phenomena. Thus, we need to better understand these cognitive and neurological dynamics of perception and interpretation. The next hypothesis—the CCH—heads in this direction in a productive way. The CCH is in many ways quite similar to the MEH. The MEH can be viewed as an expanded more developed version of the CCH.

¹⁹ See Dennis Crenshaw's *The Secrets of Dellschau* (2009).

²⁰ As noted previously, this work builds on the previous work I did on Integral Pluralism and Complex Integral Realism (see endnotes 4 and 6).

²¹ See Stavish (2018) for a recent treatment of egregores.

²² The Breakaway Civilization Hypothesis (BCH) is unique among the other hypotheses listed in Table 4 in that it primarily involves Earth humans and not necessarily NHIs. Though some contend that the Earth humans involved with the BCH are collaborating with galactic humans and NHIs.

²³ This is a play on the common expression, originally said by Mark Twain's character Pudd'nhead Wilson in *Following the Equator* (1897), that "Truth is stranger than fiction." Fiction is quite tame compared to science fiction, thus truth or what is real is even more bizarre than what is possible in science fiction which is quite fantastic to begin with. This connects to my earlier point about the Wild Kosmos and reality being ontologically weird (see endnotes 2 and 3).

²⁴ It is worth noting here that Mack (1999/2008) points to my dear friend and Integral Theory colleague Michael Zimmerman as an example of a thinker who posits a "'third zone' of reality that is neither purely internal nor external but lies beyond, including or subsuming the familiar dualism of inner and outer world" (p. 288).

²⁵ To date I have documented nearly 20 examples of how doubleness shows up within exo phenomena. For example, 1)

disinformation includes both truth and lies, 2) good testimony often involves credible people claiming incredible things, 3) abductees often report both trauma and transcendence in relationship to their NHI encounters, 4) UFO disclosure, to paraphrase Richard Dolan, is both impossible and inevitable, 5) a majority of the general public believes we are not alone and that some UFOs are piloted by ETs but it is a taboo to talk about it among polite company, and 6) the U.S. government and military has a public position that UFOs are a “nothing burger” but behind closed doors they have studied them intensively for nearly 80 years. Additional examples of doubleness are noted throughout the article. There appear to be three key liminal boundaries involved with doubleness: the subject-object boundary, the self-other boundary, and the space-time boundary. From an Integral Theory perspective, these three boundaries correlate to the I, We, and It/Its spheres, which represent the three major domains of reality. Hence, exo phenomena transgress every major distinction used to navigate reality and make sense of ourselves, our communities, and our cosmos. This is what makes these liminal boundary crossings so perplexing and threatening to the status quo—they have the potential to destabilize everything we hold dear. I believe a better understanding of this doubleness is crucial for Exo Studies, in part because it can serve as a powerful catalyst for individual and social transformation, propelling us into more integrative forms of post-formal thinking and being. Thus, I am planning on dedicating a whole article to exo doubleness in the near future.

²⁶ The use of the Real here is quite distinct from the notion of the Real in Bhaskar’s (2016) depth ontology within Critical Realism. See Esbjörn-Hargens (in press-b) for presentation of this notion and how it relates to Exo Studies.

²⁷ Sentes’ (2019a, 2019b) fourfold distinction of the real is in part a response to Robbie Graham’s discussion of hyperreality in *Silver Screen Saucers* (2015). Graham’s discussion highlights another example of doubleness. Movies, he explains, that feature UFOs make them paradoxically both more real in public consciousness (because they saw them in a movie) and less real (because they saw them in a movie): “Cinematic simulations of UFological history (UFO movies and TV shows) simultaneously actualize and fictionalize their underlying subject matter—it becomes hyperreal, both real and unreal” (p. 294). In short, UFOs via their media representations become hyperreal (real/unreal, fact/fantasy, true/false, real/imaginary). This is another example of doubleness (see endnote 25). While Sentes (2019b) appreciates the key thrust of Graham’s thesis, he offers some important counterpoints (e.g., that print media has more influence than Graham acknowledges and there were noteworthy cultural representations of UFOs/NHIs prior to Kenneth Arnold’s 1947 sighting, which Graham claims occurred before UFOs were part of media culture). In light of these two critiques, Sentes points out with emphasis, echoing the Mutual Enactment Hypothesis, “The experience and its mass cultural representations are always already mutually implicated.”

²⁸ Patrick Harpur (1994/2003) points out that Carl Jung made a similar observation. For Jung, our hyper materialistic culture is highly split—repressing the daimonic, the subtle, and anything that is not immediately amenable to materialistic analysis. Thus, for Jung UFOs are a collective projection aimed at healing this split between science/matter/exteriors and spirituality/mind/interiors and making us whole again. According to Jung, a UFO can through the collective unconscious manifest enough of a physical dimension to the phenomena to generate a radar return and at the same time a real physical UFO is a canvas for mythological projections. “In other words, [Jung] thought it possible that projections from the collective unconscious might have a physical aspect; or else, although UFOs might be physical, they were not necessarily extraterrestrial space-craft” (p. 17) In this context Harpur points out that one of Jung’s great discoveries was that part of the psyche, the collective unconscious, is objective! “Thus [Jung] dissolves the question as to whether UFOs are subjective (“all in the mind”) or objective (“really out there”), and asserts that they are always objective, but they derive from the inner realm of the psyche.” (p. 17).

²⁹ The Speculative Realists, such as Graham Harman (2011) with his *quadruple object*, have done interesting work on objects having agency, etc. I believe there are some really important contributions they make to both an integral depth ontology and Exo Studies.

³⁰ When evidence is discussed within an exo phenomena context, the aphorism Carl Sagan made famous often is presented: “extraordinary claims require extraordinary evidence.” A full critique and deconstruction of this position will be left for another day. For now, I will just point out, as others have before me, that this is neither good science nor the way science works: any good evidence will suffice in supporting an extraordinary claim. Besides, there are no established criteria as to what counts as either an extraordinary claim or extraordinary evidence. This adage is more an illustration

of sounding scientific while dismissing anomalist evidence that does not fit within a dominant worldview.

³¹ I want to acknowledge my colleague Jon Kohl for first using this funny “smoking (ray) gun” metaphor in our co-authored piece (Kohl & Esbjörn-Hargens, 2020).

³² The items listed in Table 5 are compiled from several online sources: Hutchinson (2020) and Lomer (2016) for legal evidence and Compound Interest (2015) for scientific evidence. These sources provide brief definitions of each type of evidence. For the purposes of this article I have chosen to leave these out as most of them will likely be straight forward and obvious to most readers.

³³ Wilber (1997) develops this approach based on his four quadrants and inspired by Habermas’ (1979, 1984) notion of three types of validity claims (truth, rightness, and truthfulness) in communicative action. Habermas assigns each claim to a different world or domain of reality: objective world, social world, and subjective world, respectively.

³⁴ See Wilber (1997).

³⁵ In addition to the individual pieces of legal or scientific evidence, there is also something to be said for the accumulative meta-evidence that emerges when you include the evidence from multiple disciplines. Individually, much of it does not amount to much, but when taken together a series of suggestive (even convincing) metapatterns emerge, pointing to the reality of UFOs and NHIs. Consequently, the legal case for UFOs/NHIs appears to be much stronger than the scientific case for them. Skeptics routinely ignore the accumulation of evidence and instead focus on discrediting each individual piece of evidence.

³⁶ This research is documented in Kelleher and Knapp (2005). Also see the documentary *Hunt for the Skinwalker* done by Jeremy Corbell in 2018. Currently the new owner is engaged in another round of scientific investigation (as evidenced by the History Channel’s new 8-episode series *The Secret of Skinwalker Ranch* (2020).

³⁷ See McMillan (2020).

³⁸ See Esbjörn-Hargens (in press-b). Also, Alan Bourey and Gary Schwartz’ recent *The Case for Truth* (2019) provides a number of important considerations for such an integrative metascience. Also see Rice (2020) for a provocative exploration of the rhetoric of evidence in a paranormal and conspiratorial context.

³⁹ Here I intentionally use Kripal and Strieber’s (2016) notion of *super natural* (a synthetic view that is both scientific and spiritual/religious) in contrast to *natural* (a modern scientific view) or *supernatural* (a traditional religious view).

⁴⁰ The ontological turn is most apparent in anthropology (e.g., Holbraad & Pedersen, 2017) and philosophy (e.g., DeLanda & Harman, 2017).

⁴¹ Bhaskar’s (2016) Critical Realism (since its inception in the 1970s) has always concerned itself with questions of ontology: “What must the world be like for x to be possible?” Here we might ask, “What must the Wild Kosmos be like for NHIs to have ontological status?”

⁴² Here I am using *metamodernism* in a general sense which includes the work of Hanzi Freinacht (2017, 2019) and its associated movement but is not restricted to this specific expression of metamodernism.

⁴³ See endnotes 4, 6, and 26.

⁴⁴ The movie *The Others* (2001) starring Nicole Kidman does a masterful job of presenting this thesis where (spoiler alert!) the big reveal at the end is the shocking twist where we realize the ghosts are the humans and vice versa.

⁴⁵ See endnote 3 and Martel (2016). Epistemological weirdness is when we reduce any weirdness we or others encounter to us/them being in an altered state of mind, thereby inoculating ourselves from the ontological implications of those encounters. Similarly, in methodological weirdness we reduce the weirdness encountered to the methods that create the altered states or encounters: “Oh, he was on LSD!” We assume that the weirdness is attributable to an alternate reality found in our own mind in contrast to one found external to ourselves. Thus, ontological weirdness is when we practice ontological flooding (Hunter 2015, 2016) and take seriously the ontological implications of the encounter. This often leads us to realize that reality is weirder than we can imagine.

⁴⁶ From James (1896) “...if you wish to upset the law that all crows are black you mustn’t seek to show that all crows are black, it is enough if you prove one single crow to be white.”

⁴⁷ Complex Integral Realism is an integrative metatheory that is the synthetic result of Edgar Morin’s Complex Thought, Ken Wilber’s Integral Theory, Roy Bhaskar’s Critical Realism (see Esbjörn-Hargens, 2016).

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