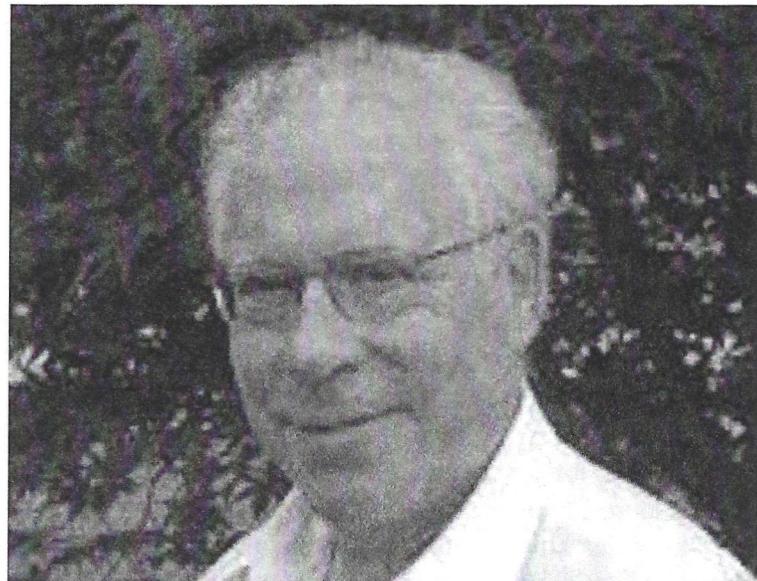


Richard Thieme

Richard Thieme is an author and professional speaker focused on the deeper implications of technology, religion, and science for twenty-first century life. He speaks professionally about the challenges posed by new technologies and the future, how to redesign ourselves to meet these challenges, and creativity in response to radical change. Thieme's early and creative use of the Internet to reach global markets earned accolades around the world. He is a member of the "cyber avant-garde," according to CNN ... "a prominent American techno-philosopher" according to LAN Magazine (Australia) ... "a father figure for online culture," according to the (London) Sunday Telegraph ... "a keen observer of hacker attitudes and behaviors" according to Le Monde (Paris) ... "one of the most creative minds of the digital generation" according to the editors of CTHEORY and Digital Delirium ... "an online pundit of hacker culture" according to the L A Times ... and "extremely subtle and deep" according to the Linux Journal.



Thieme has published widely. Translated into German, Chinese, Japanese, Slovene, Dutch, Hebrew, Danish and Indonesian, his articles are taught at universities in Europe, Australia, Canada, and the United States. His work has been frequently anthologized. His column, "Islands in the Clickstream," was published in Hong Kong, Bangkok, Singapore, Toronto, Djakarta, Dublin and Capetown and distributed to thousands of subscribers in 60 countries. Syngress, a division of Elsevier, published a collection in 2004.

Thieme's passion for integrating technology and spirituality began in the eighties when he wrote "Computer Applications for Spirituality: The Transformation of Religious Experience," an essay published by the Anglican Theological Review. He joined Bill Moyers and noted religious scholars in New York to explore religion and technology in the twenty-first century; a book based on that conference includes his 10,000-word essay "Entering Sacred Digital Space." He spoke for the ARIL conference at MIT on spirituality and technology and has guest lectured at churches, synagogues, and interfaith gatherings.

Against the Wind: Why People Can't Think Seriously About UFOs

By Richard Thieme

Abstract: Something happens when we try to discuss UFOs seriously, whether with physicists, astronomers, journalists, or just plain people. We encounter a seemingly impenetrable closed "mind of society" contrary to the open spirit of inquiry and deliberation that so many profess. There are sociological and psychological reasons for this, as well as deliberate schemes of disinformation and deception. They combine to create a tangled skein in which we sometimes feel trapped. "Wandering in a wilderness of mirrors" is an apt description of how it feels to make a case for what we know is well-documented UFO data, and we get headaches from banging our heads against that unyielding group mind.

It helps to know why this is so and how to remain balanced in an inquiry into anomalous phenomena. Richard Thieme has explored this terrain for 35 years. He is an author and professional speaker who has keynoted conferences around the world for 22 years after serving parishes as an Episcopal clergyman for 16 years. His speaking and consulting clients include large corporations - Microsoft, Medtronic, General Electric, UOP - as well as governments - Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, the Netherlands, and in the U.S. the NSA, the FBI, the Secret Service, the U. S. Department of the Treasury, and Los Alamos National Laboratory. He is well known at security and "hacker" conferences and spoke at Def Con last year for the twentieth straight year. He is the author of "Islands in the Clickstream," Mind Games," the novel FOAM, and a contributing author to "UFOs and Government: A Historical Inquiry," and he brings a rich diversity of experience to this attempt to unravel some of the tangle that contributes to our frustrations after years of sober, deliberate study.

After 35 years of serious investigation, exploration, and reflection, engaged with the best researchers in the field, it was time to make as succinct and clear a statement as I could, within the constraints of 1200 words for the Crossroads section in the Sunday Milwaukee Journal Sentinel.

It was also a way for a mainstream newspaper, the winner of many awards, to implicitly suggest that the subject is more than tabloid fodder. <http://www.jsonline.com/news/opinion/out-of-the-closet-on-ufos-b99203753z1-245623181.html>

A Confession: Out of the Closet on UFOs - February 16 2014

Let me put it to you straight. For 35 years I have been exploring and investigating UFOs and UFOlogy (both the serious endeavor and the silly speculative fare that fills popular culture) and ... well, UFOs are real: They fly, they evince technologies we don't understand, and they have been around for years.

Above all, despite voluminous and overwhelming evidence to support those assertions, to raise this subject as worthy of historical and scientific investigation is to invite ridicule, the shaking of pitying heads, derision and hostility, and embarrassed silence.

Still, I persist in believing, as Francis Bacon said in 1620, that if something deserves to exist, it deserves to be known, not rejected out of hand with prejudice. The scientific method, principles of historical analysis, and an open mind ask that much.

No subject has been more marginalized and maligned than this topic. By “unidentified flying objects” I mean not the many things commonly mistaken for them – balloons, Venus, sprites, ball lightning, secret craft, etc.– I mean anomalous vehicles which for decades have been well documented by credible observers (“Credible people have seen incredible things,” said General John Samford, US Air Force Chief of Intelligence, in 1953), to which our government responded with the formulation and execution of policies in light of genuine national security concerns.

I was recently privileged to be included as contributing editor and writer on a team that produced the book, “UFOs and Government: A Historical Inquiry” over five years. The research/writing team was led by Dr. Michael Swords, a professor of Natural Science (ret.) at Western Michigan University and Robert Powell, a nanotechnologist formerly with AMD. The book is regarded as an “exception” to the dreary field by CHOICE, the journal that recommends works for inclusion in university collections. CHOICE suggested that all university libraries should have it (to date, 45 have it in their collections, including 4 in the U-Wisconsin system, as well as many Wisconsin public libraries). The almost-600 page book is well grounded with nearly 1000 citations from government documents and other primary sources so it is “bullet proof.” There is virtually nothing speculative in it. We document the response of governments from the 1940s forward to events they took quite seriously—and which readers, judging on the evidence and data, will take seriously as well.

A short column can not do justice to the complex narrative, but I can state a few facts.

- (1) Any other domain of inquiry with hundreds of well-documented events would be considered worthy of scientific and historical investigation.
- (2) Well-executed policies carried out with secrecy do not constitute “a conspiracy,” and we are not “conspiracy theorists,” a term used to denigrate investigators of unpopular subjects. Members of the military and intelligence community, from the early 1950s on, decided to learn as much as they could about UFOs – which they decided did not constitute a direct threat to national security – while at the same time playing down and dismissing reports from the public. The reports themselves were considered to be the primary threat by the CIA.
- (3) The data illuminates phenomena that is global, persistent, and sufficiently similar in small details to invite taxonomic classification as to vehicle types, the physics of force fields which power the objects and ionize the air around it, producing characteristic colors in relationship to speed and power, and diverse kinds of robotic or sentient beings associated with the objects.
- (4) It is an astonishing sociological and psychological event that throughout the twentieth century, reports by credible observers, corroborated on multiple radar sets on the ground

and in jets, resulted not in public investigation but in an inability to get our minds around the mere possibility. Instead the subject is literally “unthinkable.”

- (5) One reason it is “unthinkable” is the effective use of ridicule, the mocking of people who made reports or took the subject seriously, and a long silence from official authoritative voices in the face of credible testimony. When I delivered a speech and served on a panel recently at the NSA, I was reminded by a veteran analyst that “the three legs of cover and deception are illusion, misdirection, and ridicule. But the greatest of these is ridicule”—which discredits the person, not the testimony, and the testimony I have heard has come from military and civilian pilots, astronauts, even the intelligence head of a foreign military force. “This is what I saw, and I know what I saw” is what I am told, corroborating the statement in 1947 by Lt. Gen. Nathan Twining that “The phenomena is something real and not visionary or fictitious.”
- (6) My personal exploration began in 1978 when, as a recently ordained Episcopal clergyman in a parish on the edge of an Air Force base, a parishioner, a decorated fighter pilot with all the “right stuff” who retired as a Colonel, told me, “We chase them and we can’t catch them.”
- (7) “UFOs and Government” includes quotations from generals, senior intelligence personnel, and professionals like Hermann Oberth, the father of German rocketry, that affirm the exotic characteristics of the technology that no earthly power could then achieve. As Apollo 14 astronaut Edgar Mitchell told me, “Richard, if we could do what they can do, they wouldn’t have sent me to the moon in a tin lizzie.”
- (8) We increasingly accept through our own scientific explorations that many earth-like planets likely to harbor life fill our galaxy and galaxies beyond. When we hear that from authoritative voices, we accept it as a probability, but when we examine the evidence of decades of visitation by real explorers, we find it difficult to think in a concrete way that we are not alone, not the top of the food chain, and that others may have been voyaging for thousands of years—as if we are the gold standard of scientific knowledge and our current understanding of physics is the end of all physics.

So I’m out of the closet on a subject. As an older man with a solid track record of delivering insights into likely futures that have pretty much worked out over the years, a man who has spoken for security conferences all over the world (including NSA, the FBI, the Secret Service, the US Department of the Treasury, the Pentagon, etc.), discussing the impact of new technologies, I can say without embarrassment that documented data supports the contention that many historical reports show exactly what they seem to show –anomalous vehicular traffic demonstrating aerodynamic capabilities and propulsion systems beyond the range of our own technology.

So ... why do well-intentioned people who know more than I do persist in the pretense that nothing unusual has been going on? That’s a more speculative exploration, one for another time.

“Both what we half create and half perceive”

That was Wordsworth's poetic way of saying what Kant said in his difficult German, that concepts without percepts are empty and percepts without concepts are blind. What Kant may not have mentioned was that the interface between concept and percept in the domain of what we politely call “UFOlogy” is a realm of blurred images and imprecise concepts that plug into one another very imperfectly.

(Kant may not have known about UFOs, but he did concede the reality of clairvoyance, demonstrated in his presence by Swedenborg when in a somewhat altered state, the latter announced that a fire in Sweden had stopped at a particular place, where in fact it was subsequently learned it had in fact stopped).

An expert profiler, then with the CIA, reminded me how to approach seemingly anomalous behavior reflected in the captured data of computer intrusions, in order to link it to a real human being.

Her insights into her work, both on the ground in dangerous situations and tracking hackers through messes of data, strike me as applicable to our task, to frame a way to understand the multifaceted domain of UFOs and all that goes with them, at least in a metaphorical way - and I will note later than scientific pursuits are more steeped in metaphorical language (and its consequences) than we like to pretend - we are closer to writing poetry like Wordsworth, that is, than striving for perfection and precision like Kant.

The insecurity created by the work itself - whether tracking miscreants or exploring UFOs - the anxiety caused by walking a dangerous edge, turns solid ground into quicksand, she said, so one needs to create safety from within oneself and only then extend one's senses into the environment. One must build a conceptual frame, however tentative, in one's own psyche, and then reach out from that to the seeming sense data.

First, she said, collect as much information as possible. Do the necessary homework. Prepare for thinking seriously in a difficult and demanding environment. And always have a game plan in your head - which translates to, have a multiplicity of scenarios for each explanatory mode you explore from each node in a complicated network of information. Have good benchmarks for including and excluding data and reports stick with them rigorously.

As Marvin Minsky said years ago, by thinking we mean, the ability to hold in our minds simultaneously a multiplicity of representations of reality while we parse incoming data and resolve for the moment which scenario is a “good enough” approximation of what the data suggests to use as a hypothesis. (He was making the point that such thinking was taking place and would henceforth take place in computers, not only in human brains, and in the symbiotic cyborg formed by the entwining of computer systems and human brains, with the representations of reality that resulted, in which people lost themselves so quickly, they came to “believe” their own beliefs.)

When you hit the ground, she said, there is always information overload, just as there is when listening to a breathless report of an encounter. Identify what is good, bad, normal. Establish a bench mark.

We must do the same as we venture forth from our comfortable psychic homes into, as Rilke said, eternity, a space without boundaries or markers, a frightening space at times, the “space” of UFOlogy.

(This is how I said something about that space in a column I wrote years ago and how we recoil from it:

“I guess we need to live within safe boundaries.

I was diving once in an isolated bay on Maui, far beyond Kapalua, where tourists seldom venture. I was swimming out over the dark corrugated texture of the reef. Toward the mouth of the bay and the open ocean, curtains of blue and deeper blue shimmered in the distance. Suddenly the reef ended and the drop below me was hundreds of feet to a sand bottom. I felt the loss of safety represented by the reef but kept swimming. Then, beyond the curtains of deep blue something moved, something large and dark, so large I didn't know what it was, and the next moment it was gone.

I turned and swam back toward the reef. Once I was over the coral again, fear of that unknown dark form disappeared. The reef represented the safe harbor we are always seeking, while the open water with its unknown possibilities was the invitation of life itself.

It is time to leave our comfortable rooms, the poet Rilke wrote, every corner of which we know, and venture forth into eternity.”)

Back to my profiler friend: Most people are not good monitors of self-evaluation, she said; to monitor yourself is a task in itself. Criminals are not always good at monitoring themselves or their behaviors in relationship to the field or ground at which others are looking. Therefore constant monitoring will catch that person because their self-assessment will be lacking. They are avoiding detection less than 100% of the time but “we” are looking for them 100% of the time. Hence (in one critical case we were discussing) she was able to identify and track the killer.

How best to approach this task?

“We’re not very good at it.” Small groups are best at it, not agencies or bureaus. How can we then transfer our knowledge from a small group to a culture? How can we capture it and make it available in a way that will be integrated (into the current consensus realities held by fellow humans)?

Greater self-knowledge and self-awareness is needed when we explore domains of greater complexity and ambiguity – like UFOlogy. The relevance of intelligence and counter-intelligence work is not accidental. An intelligent entity is presenting itself via puzzling confusing sense data (filtered through our cognitive lenses in turn) as phenomena that does not

fit current conceptual categories easily, like the stepsister trying on Cinderella's slipper. That the intelligent entity or entities seem to be intentionally deceptive as well raises questions of intent, motivation, objective that can only be answered by analogy to our own practices - defining "our own" within societal, cultural, or planetary frames.

So on top of what seems like intentional deception, there is also intentional deception by the human agencies that filter or create "data" for us to consider. Entire wild scenarios, however implausible to a thinking land mammal, are embraced, amplified, and disseminated into the mind of society. In addition, "inference attacks," the selective dissemination of false documents or reports which inflect or recontextualize other (genuine) data, is a tried and true method of deception.

Because we don't know what we don't know, therefore, and because we think we know things we may not know at all or in the inflected form in which we have received them, we take refuge from inevitable cognitive dissonance by smoothing out the rough bits, making ourselves feel better by homogenizing our narratives, and - when they have been shared and affirmed sufficiently - calling them "the obvious truth." Then they become paradigmatic or normative or constitutive of world-views which are flawed seriously from the get-go.

Or - like a guard watching a monitor for hours for signs of significant activity - we go into trances and miss the obvious, as well as forgetting elementary lessons about thinking and thinking about thinking. Those trances can be dissociated states for individuals, but for groups, they become the stuff of belief, allegiance, and even war.

Stay with the data, then, first and foremost: No matter what or who I was looking at – regarding network intrusion – my friend said, she tried to look with a beginner's mind, without preconceived notions. THE DATA WILL TELL ME WHAT I NEED TO KNOW, she said, whether it derives from hackers or serial killers. There is seldom a useful template in particular cases. It is a mistake to bring preconceptions, templates, or prior conclusions to cases. They will almost always be wrong.

Only the data will tell you what they are doing, what they left behind. Focus on the evidence they leave. What were they after? => who is it? => relate tentative answers to other data. Be meticulous. An intruder - whether terrestrial, extra-terrestrial, ultra-terrestrial, whatever - always has a m.o. whether unconscious or conscious. Patterns and therefore identity will reveal themselves.

This effort requires: INTENSE CONCENTRATION AND CONSTANT SELF-MONITORING. There are a thousand puzzle pieces and no box with a picture. The degree of CLARITY required is great. If we have a stereotype in mind, we will blow it. SHE LEARNED NOT TO FORM A PATTERN TOO QUICKLY. The popular conception of a profiler as someone who leaps to the right answers is WRONG. We have to UNLEARN first a la the Zen story of the overflowing cup.

Conclusions? Observe yourself => notice yourself jumping to a conclusion in thought or word => once you see that, say: wait! stop! interrupt yourself and back track, down the if-this-then-that

branching nodes you have followed to prior nodes. Back all the way up to jumping-off points for how humans approach problems that stretch their elastic categories to the breaking point.

Ask: is this REALLY true? or does it only seem true?

Ask: how do I feel about thinking that?

Do not complete the loop too quickly.

Look at yourself and ask: who am I to know that, think that, be that, do that – without sufficient data?

If we lose our way, we always project unconscious beliefs onto the black screen before us, and when we catch ourselves doing that, we must step back and examine both monitor and method.

In the absence of truth, we make it up.

Awareness of the language we use is critical because our language always includes preconceptions.

Therefore ... it was obviously an easier task in "UFOs and Government: A Historical Inquiry" to focus on the government instead of the phenomena (that is the subject of our second book, "The UFO Phenomenon.") We could focus on humans and familiar human behaviors in the short term. The time-line was short - sixty or so years - compared to possibly several thousand or more years over which "UFO phenomena" has manifested. The societal and cultural lenses were well within a single cognitive framework, the same one shared by the subject of our historical study. Because we were formed by the same conditions, the people we studied could be assumed to be like ourselves. Deceptive practices were within known parameters, so far as military and intelligence operations post World War 2 are concerned. The manipulation of media and groups as various test beds was ... well, thinkable. And once data was gathered, an incontrovertible historical fact.

Whereas the answers to UFOlogy puzzles may not be thinkable in the terms and frames in which we think.

This in turn begs the question of information and how it is emitted and received, which leads to the physics of information rather the physics of energy, about which others might have more to say.

So one key link between the book - a work of historical documentation and analysis and narrative - and issues that might surface in Petaluma is the methodology we used. All documentation (nearly 1000 citations) points to government documents and other primary sources (which is why it's in 65+ university libraries at the moment) and why it's seamless (what we don't know we omit or say we don't know) and the data is bulletproof, depending on the validity of the documents, another key issue to be discussed by all.

As we speculate, on the other hand, about what can be discerned on the edges of awareness - psi, Vallee's longer time line and "control system" hypothesis, Fortean speculations on human history

and how others might see and use us, about how we might say the unsayable and think the unthinkable, how we manage anomalies without losing either their impact or their truly anomalous essence - the value of that book does remind us to stay grounded in the data - whatever the data is - and go initially wherever the data takes us. To see it as clearly as we can. To create scenarios and match them to possibilities as more data arrives. To try to attain fifty-thousand-foot views as well as the view of a human head five or six feet above the ground.

And delineate clearly between what is data-based and what is speculative.

I am often told about UFOs and UFOlogy that "it (whatever "it" might be - a definition often assumed, seldom explicit) is not science because it's not verifiable and repeatable. Of course, no historical analysis or narrative is. There are different ground rules re: UFOs determined by the behavior and activity of the phenomena itself. Our task is to clearly identify those ground rules and remain within them, even though the intrusion of the so-called "paranormal," instances of healing and harm alike, the liminal domain of the "impossible" as Jeffrey Kripal discussed it in his book, all make those ground rules tentative and open to revision.

The domain we will be exploring colors outside some historical and scientific lines. Data is filtered through intuition and philosophical/religious/spiritual speculation, so one challenge is to keep links to other intellectual domains alive, lest we slip our orbits and find ourselves beyond Pluto. I learned as a one-time religious professional that in that domain, one can say just about anything and draw a crowd and a salary. That seems true in UFOlogy as well (although the salary is debatable). All "authors of the impossible" - including myself - work in that gray space. I try to recall what I was once advised (regarding the truly shamanic nature of religious work) - one must know how to enter the shamanic domain but know too how to return. A parish priest, I learned, has to sometimes "go crazy" on behalf of the community, and the important thing is remembering how to come back before the birds eat all of the bread crumbs.

I believe the hard-wired intensive process of religious "conversion," regardless of story content (that is, the narrative provided afterward by communities) includes fragmentation and - when it works - reorganization of the psyche at a higher level, transcending but including what came before, recontextualized - and when it doesn't work, it might result in mental illness. In the first instance - my experience, I believe - one can never unlearn what one learned. The transformational journey does not rewind itself in time, and - again, in my experience - there is no way to pursue this inquiry into UFO phenomena for many years without going on that journey. The response to UFO events so often includes religious or spiritual dimensions that it almost goes without saying. That may be intentional and/or it may be how humans respond to overwhelming and anomalous events.

By the way, Hal Puthoff suggested I stop using the word "disclosure" and use "confirmation" instead.

And ... I mentioned the metaphorical nature of scientific inquiry in its essence, and there is a fine little book called, "Making Truth: Metaphor in Science," by Theodore L Brown, in which he says: "Scientists understand nature largely in terms of metaphorical concepts" which they map onto experiential domains and create "subconscious forms of understanding manifested in the

metaphorical character of scientific reasoning." The intent of his book, he says, is to "show that metaphor is essential to every aspect of science." We could discuss that for a good bit too.

Or ... we do not speak a language, Goethe reminds us, a language speaks us. And anyone who speaks only one language speaks no language at all.

The common language of UFOlogy, unless subjected to a critique, is often no language at all, and the images that fly into our minds and roost there often give birth to unusual mutations.

So I don't think a catalog of "ET types" touches the strangeness of experiences, the disparate data, and the wavering contents of our own minds when we try to make sense of it all, because our minds have been affected by the experience itself, both intentionally it seems and because that's what our minds do in the face of challenging anomalies. A universe of planets merely instead of multiple dimensions or spacetime distortions and folds or a multiverse, none of which I can define but all of which terms are bandied about casually as "extraterrestrial" has been" -- what even do we mean when we use those words or categories? As to "abduction experiences," for example, I can only infer that something is happening, but I have NO idea what it is. It may be as wonderful as Mack claimed or as catastrophic as Jacob claims.

So I admit that I don't know what's out there or what's "in here" at ALL. The universe is not only more mysterious than we imagine, it is more mysterious than we CAN imagine. It was only in the last century after all that we stumbled on the awareness that the milky way was one galaxy among billions and not the entire universe. When I was younger, I thought I had a clue; now I know that anyone who thinks they have a clue, does not have a clue, and only someone with no clue, might have a clue.

So what we think or remember is distorted and seemingly intentionally distorted, and the subjective field or narrative within which we discuss the subject needs to be "deconstructed," that is, we cannot talk of percepts as if they equate to concepts. Many "UFOlogists" discuss reports as if they equate one to one with "cognitive artifacts" in their minds. We have to explore the interface between experience - what fingertips blindly touch - and conceptualization - as Vallee tries to do. Knowing that we half create and half perceive ... everything.

I am also learning that the neoplasticity of the brain results in changes in the brain in response to experience and intention, as someone learning braille develops more connections to fingertips to increase sensitivity as a function of intentionality, the brain cooperating as it were with an intention to learn a new thing. I think something similar happens - including manifestations of psi - after encounters. But now I am pushing into the mystery and I feel it push back. So I will conclude with what I was told once upon a time by "Remote Viewer 0001" Joe McMoneagle:

"[About UFOs] I have a number of hypotheses. My first is this: no matter how you view it, UFOs are time machines. Let's say it's extraterrestrials visiting from one star to another – that automatically in context makes them time machines of some kind. It would not be reliable or efficient to travel around space and take thousands of years to go from star to star. So the fact that they are able to do that makes them time machines.

I suspect that because they are time machines, the door is automatically opened to when and how they make contact with us. It would not surprise me if they have or will make contact with us at some future date and share the technology and we will be using the same technology. So when you are talking about extraterrestrials, you're talking about us in reality as well. So we don't know where – a better way to put it is, we don't know when we came from. It may be that we came to the earth or appeared here 190,000 years ago but when we came from may be a whole different issue. You have to look at it in a different context. There is some evidence for that.

There is more than sufficient evidence that there has been communication between us and non-human entities or sentient beings for thousands of years. It's written about in our earliest writings – in religious texts, medieval texts, everywhere. Saints battle demons. There is so much evidence for similar occurrences going on for thousands of years. So I think an argument can be made that the phenomena is some form of communication.”

And we can hope that our group discussions will include some forms of communication as well.
:-)