

<http://digitalseance.wordpress.com/all-posts/streiber-gurdjieff-aliens-consciousness-evolution/>

by Whitley Strieber

Friday, December 14, 2001

Christmas is coming, and with it the 17th anniversary of my close encounter experience of December 26, 1985. To this day, it haunts my sleep. My wife tells me that, if she should get up during the night, I will call out to her immediately, and grab her hand when she returns to the bed. I still remember those few minutes as if it had all happened last night. But, nowadays, I am beginning to be able to sleep more normally. More often than not, I sleep right through the hour between three and four, when the incident took place. For the first fifteen years after it happened, this was not true.

It has been like a black hole in the center of my life, which I have struggled for years to fill with genuine knowledge and good questions. Looking back, I see that what began as an absolute terror had changed within a few years into a sublime journey of the spirit that I remain on to this day.

In 1970, I joined the Gurdjieff Foundation in New York. This involved weekly group meetings under the guidance of Joseph Stein, who conducted careful, hour-long sessions that involved guided meditation and dialogue while remaining in the meditative state. He taught us to meditate daily, and I have continued this practice now for 32 years.

I remained with the foundation until 1983, when it became clear to me that friction that was developing between me and some of the leadership was being generated by me, because of a deep need to leave and challenge my own ability to sustain my inner work on my own. Between 1983 and 1985, I continued occasional meetings with Jean Sultzberger (sic) and William C. Segal, who were dear friends in the foundation, much my senior, and whose mastery, so assured and yet so humble, seemed very authentic to me.

Then came the close encounter. In January, I went to William Segal and described the experience to him. He said, "fifteen minutes with them, fifteen years of meditation." I could not have agreed with him more. Even while I was with the visitors on that night, so lost in fear that my first title for Communion was to be Body Terror, I knew from the way they moved and acted that they were, in the context of Gurdjieff's theories, 'awake.'

If you meditate in the manner prescribed by him, (Gurdjieff didn't this as meditation. ed) dividing your attention between inner and outer life—forming what he called the 'double arrow' of attention—you become able to see when others are doing this as well. (This is Strieber's assertion and distortion and not part of the Gurdjieff teaching – ed) The woman whose portrait is on the cover of Communion, which I am looking up at now as I write, was without a doubt the greatest master I have ever known. (So? What would you know? – ed.) Her being projected devastatingly powerful knowledge. A great part of

the terror that I knew when I was with her came not from the situation, but from how it felt to be seen by her. In fact, she and those around her were trying to calm me down in some ways, even as they engaged in very quick but also very intrusive medical actions.

One of these involved inserting a probe into my body through my rectum, an action that had extraordinary consequences, not in my life, but in popular culture. Looking back over these years, two things have entered the culture from my experience: her face and the rectal probe. I have watched as one immature male after another made shrill and uneasy fun of this aspect of what happened to me. It has been fascinating and grotesque to find the rectal probe appear in newspaper cartoons, be lampooned on television, and become a focus of derision of me. I been both amused and disgusted by the eagerness with which elements of our human community seek debasement, by concentrating on whatever they can find that offers them the potential to lower themselves further.

The powerful, sublime and important parts of my experience, which I feel are adequately described in Communion, have gone unremarked and are of no public interest. However, I met somebody very great on that night, somebody whose life is vastly larger than a human life, and what I learned from my time with her is of enormous value not only to me, but to anybody who wishes to open their mind to the possibilities that it implies.

After that experience, there were many meetings with the visitors, some of which I have described in my books. As I began to understand, from them, the reasons that their presence is so secret, I began also to act both on our behalf and on theirs. However, I discovered that theirs is a very complicated presence among us, and not all of our visitors are to be trusted or accepted. Some of them are not like the woman I met and her staff. Some of them qualify as what we would call monsters, in every sense of that word.

As I learned about the physical and cultural issues that surround contact, I also came to agree that it would interrupt man's chance to make his way into the cosmic community on his own, and would thus forever diminish us and compromise our ability to reach our full potential as a species of free and conscious beings.

In the late eighties, I dreamed daily of final, open contact. I longed for the moment that I would be able to stand up to my oppressors and detractors and silence them with the truth. I was a baby then. In the years since, I have learned a lot.

To really examine the issues surrounding contact, it is necessary first to understand what the process actually entails. To do that, it must be understood that the central issue is not a cultural or spiritual one, it is physical. It has to do with the way in which we perceive the world around us. When visitors possessing different means of perception enter our world, our way of seeing will also change. In many people—most, as matters now stand—there will be an outbreak of perceptual chaos. There will be no way to end this. I refer not so much to the educated people of the first world, who will probably develop efficient coping mechanisms fairly quickly, but to the vast majority of human beings, who are impoverished, superstitious and poorly educated, if at all. They will not be able to cope, and until they are able to, contact will be withheld.

This means that mankind will not achieve any measure of contact until the least of us is capable of mastering his measure of contact. So I think that we can safely assume that open contact is not going to happen here anytime soon.

However, that does not mean that individuals cannot get into profound contact situations, or that this is not already happening. It is happening. I know of people who started out years ago in contact situation that they were able to make work, who have gone on some truly magnificent journeys in their lives. To some extent, this is what happened to me.

I cannot agree with those who would reject the contact experience, or those who go so far as to lie in order to make it seem entirely terrible. It is not entirely terrible, any more than contact with us would be entirely terrible, were we to go to another world.

Let me construct an example of what I mean. Say we were in the position of the visitors, where movement between worlds was about as difficult, and as economically available, as travel on the Concorde is for us today. In other words, so costly that the great majority cannot enjoy it, but not so costly that thousands cannot still afford to go.

We learn to detect planets with living atmospheres, and discover that they are relatively common. Most of them, we discover at great expense, are not alive in any meaningful sense. But some are, and some few actually harbor intelligent species.

Most of these are entirely capable of interstellar travel themselves, and visiting them is a matter of seeking challenges of a kind that are hardly known to us now, and which there is no reason for me to discuss directly unless, by some miracle, we develop a useful means of interstellar travel during my lifetime.

Say, however, we find a world where there is an intelligent species clinging to life, totally ignorant, its numbers sparse, its chances low. There would be many different schools of thought about how we should handle the situation. Some would say that we should leave them entirely alone. Others would preach limited intervention—just enough to prevent them from self-destruction. Others might see the possibility of altering them genetically in order to enhance their intelligence and speed up their evolution. Others yet might address them with all kinds of ideological constructs, ranging from the sublime to the murderous.

In other words, our one, single planet would visit them with literally dozens of different approaches to contact. Consider, for example, if the Catholic Church, Communist China, the US National Security Agency, Buddhists, Hindus, the Ford Motor Company, the Boy Scouts, the Red Cross, the Moonies, the Presbyterian Church, the British Royal Family and Mossad all went.

And they would go. We would go racing to impose all of our ideas, expectations and hopes on them. Indeed, if we went armed with technologies that will be in human hands within just a few years, we might also be able to intervene in their existence in ways so profound that we would, in later, wiser

times, come to feel deeply responsible for them, for what we have done to change them, and how profoundly we have affected them.

Some of us would react with compassion, others with contempt. Some would be striving to bring us to the point that we could be free and on our own in the cosmos. Others would be seeking various degrees of control. Others might react to the guilt in a sociopathic manner.

If you multiply the amazing chaos suggested by the above contact scenario by dozens of worlds, and add to them species and beings who do not even address reality in terms of living on planets or indeed in space-time as we perceive it, then you have some idea of what the situation is here on earth. We are being visited not just by one world, but by many, and each 'planet' does not present us with a single personality or ideology. They are even more complex than we are, for the most part, and they address us across a range of ideologies, approaches and expectations that is completely unimaginable.

In all of this, there is only one thing that we do, and that is that we deny contact. It is not the visitors who hold back, it is us who make the process impossible. In fact, many of our visitors are entirely open about their comings and goings. They don't care whether we see them or not. Others live among us, and some can do so quite openly.

This is because some of them look quite like us, and this is why: Life in the universe evolves according to a set of matrices that exist along a continuum of possibilities. The chemical composition of a given planet, and the type of star that gives it its energy, determine the type of animal forms that will evolve on its surface. Over eons, the forms that survive will increasingly appear like surviving forms on other, similar planets, because these are the most efficient forms in the particular survival situation that a given planet presents.

Thus there could be other earths on which live beings who appear similar enough to us to walk freely here. So the idea that living forms evolving on another planet would be of necessity radically different from us is false and naive.

Given that people from other worlds might be able to move freely here, it could be that they would inject themselves into our society on such a wide scale that they would have very substantial influence.

The question would then become, why would their influence not better our world? After all, the proportion of rich to poor, educated to ignorant has remained relatively stable as the human population has grown. We have just come through the most violent century in our known history, and the present perilous state of the world certainly suggests that there is more to come.

So, if they are not here to save us, then why are they here? They are here to protect us from knowledge that would compromise our freedom to save ourselves. All we are worth to anybody who cares about our welfare, ourselves included, depends on this freedom being maintained. The ones who don't care about it are not our friends. The result of this is a kind of paradox: if contact begins to unfold before we are all capable of coping with it, it will mean that those who cherish us have been somehow pushed aside by those who would exploit us.

How can we tell when we are ready? It's really quite simple. Go to any poverty-stricken slum in the depths of the third world, and ask. If the answer is objective, practical, and not filtered through superstition and ideology, we're making progress. But then you must also ask the same question of people in the first world, and of our leaders at every level of society.

When the response is a consensus of rationality, the whole experience of UFOs and such will begin to change. The same scientific and governmental institutions that were intractably certain that the very idea of an alien presence here was absurd will begin to change their positions. As if by a miracle, institutions like the US National Academy of Science will suddenly start to acknowledge the possibility that UFOs have some sort of meaning. Military organizations, previously secretive, will begin to be more open.

Nobody will have changed policy. It will change on its own, as attitudes change.

Looking back over these seventeen years, all I can say is that I have worked faithfully for a good outcome for mankind. I have sought to do everything in my power to further our cause, which could not be more clear: the introduction of mankind into the cosmos as a free and independent species, able to express itself in every appropriate way imaginable, and, over time, in many ways that are probably far beyond our present imagination.

Many others are working in the same direction, both here and elsewhere. Many are not. Some are so xenophobic that they react to us very negatively. Others bring jealousies and hatreds to the situation that reflect their own traumatic pasts. The situation, in other words, is very complicated, and made the more so that our view of it is as distorted as our view of the world around us. We see of it only what we call its 'physical' manifestations.

In an effort to free ourselves from the superstitions of the past, we have conditioned ourselves to concentrate only on physical-sensual inputs—what our bodies tell us. In so doing, we have actually filtered out and blinded ourselves to most of what our bodies actually tell us. Those of us who still have some sensitivity to these less perceivable energies have divided reality into 'levels' and usually claim that some 'levels' vibrate at a higher frequency than others or some such thing.

This is all for one purpose: to confine ourselves to the level in which we are exposed to the most illusion and the least truth, where, in fact, the only truth that we cannot deny is death itself—and its inevitability we do deny, every day of our lives. Instead of living as if this could be our last moment, we live as if our last moment will never come. Then, when the body itself finally gives up, nature forces us to face the truth.

Until we can see and be and live as we really are, in the fullness of our potential, we will not really see what is happening all around us all the time. We will not see the vast array of being in which we swim like a little, scared school of fish, on a journey to where we know not, across an ocean of space and time that seems without beginning and without end.

I was privileged, on that night of profound shock, to be awakened—in a small way—to the reality of the world as it is. I lost the illusion that the soul and the body are somehow different, and that we cannot see into realms into which we choose not to look.

Now, I have lived in this new reality for a very long time. This came to me because I had been well prepared for it by people like Joseph Stein and William Segal. They had given me the tools I needed to go along this path—they and others who, while less visible, are equally present.

In a few weeks, I am going to begin writing a book that will be the summation of all of these years of inner and outer work, the purpose of which will be to help focus us on the path outward. It is a book that started when my life began, and that I have been writing with the experience of my living journey for thirty-two years of conscious effort, seventeen of them under the care of a truly great and humble master.

So, in a sense, this Christmas marks the very truest of new beginnings for me. I hope that you, also, find in your heart and the world around you, the blessings of this ancient season of faith and affirmation. God bless us all, and especially those suffering, and those who face peril far from home. This is a dark season in the life of man, but not as dark as it was just half a century ago. So, in the shadows that seem eternal, we now see suggestions of a coming dawn. May God give each and all of us the courage to raise our faces to the advent of the sun.

<http://wmjas.wikidot.com/whitley-strieber-path>

Front matter

Walker & Collier, Inc.

As Strieber explains in [this interview](#), Walker & Collier is his own company, through which he also published The Key.

It's my own company, yes. "Walker" and "Collier" are two characters from my book Catmagic. Constance Collier, if you ever look into her life, was a very important figure in sort of the hidden world of the United States, and she's portrayed in my book Catmagic. And Amanda Walker is the protagonist in the book. So Walker & Collier. The company is owned by me and Anne. It's nothing fancy.

[Constance Collier](#) (1878-1955) was a film actress who is portrayed in Catmagic as being the secret leader of a Wiccan coven. Amanda Walker is an artist who is going to illustrate a book Collier is writing, but Collier is actually grooming her to be her successor as coven leader. I seem to recall Strieber saying somewhere that Walker was based on a friend of his who appears in one of the "visitor" books, but I don't remember who (Dora Ruffner?).

I should read Catmagic. Strieber seems to consider it one of his more important books.

Louis Steiner

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The webmaster for Strieber's site, [Unknown Country](#). He designed the cover of both The Key and The Path. I can't find any other information on him.

Camoin

[Philippe Camoin](#) considers himself the heir of Nicolas Conver, though it's not clear exactly what the relationship is. In 1998 he collaborated with [Alejandro Jodorowsky](#) on a Tarot of Marseilles deck. Strieber uses Camoin's deck in The Path and seems to have gotten some of his dubious information about tarot history from him.

Joseph Stein and William Segal

People Strieber was involved with in the Gurdjieff Foundation. 63 and Lexington

Anne Strieber

[Strieber's wife](#) and the managing editor of his website.

The Value of the Path

As this is being written, scientists have just achieved teleportation of a laser beam across a room. (p. 2)

Other scientists expect to soon be able to send subatomic particles through quantum wormholes to distant parts of the universe. (p. 2)

Others still are designing quantum supercomputers (p. 2)

unimaginably powerful telescopes called interferometers (p. 2)

It was in the early seventies that the path appeared in my life. (p. 3)

In the next few pages he describes the path appearing in his life in December 1976, hardly the "early" seventies. But in [this journal entry](#) he describes something happening in 1971. Describing his 1998 encounter with the so-called Master of the Key, he writes:

There emerged an incredible promise: that an ancient path would again emerge. And suddenly I knew who this man was. Since I met one of them in 1971, I have known that there was an incredible secret group in this world, who knew the true path of the human soul. He told me then I would one day play a part in inducing this hidden path to resurface. He taught it to me, and I committed it to memory. I asked what I should do with it? He only shook his head.

I met this man on a path in Central Park. I was an innocent young man, just 27 and newly married.

... [The Master of the Key in 1998] gave me to understand all the missing pieces in the magnificent story about the hidden path that I was shown in 1971.

It's not clear whether this is a different version of the story or a separate event. Strieber says on p. 7 that in the past he has sometimes referred to the 1976 event as having happened in 1970 or 1973, and

so mabe 1971 is just another mistaken date. But the circumstances are different, too; there is nothing in The Key or The Path about meeting anyone on a path in Central Park.

In 1976, my wife Anne and I had just moved to ... Manhattan. (p. 4)

We were deeply involved in the Gurdjieff work at the time, attending a group every Thursday night at the New York headquarters of the Gurdjieff Foundation and spending many of our weekends on the Foundation's estate in Armonk, New York. (p. 4)

Thomas Jefferson's version of the New Testament, which eliminates all material referring to a resurrection. (p. 5)

The solar plexus is the body's center of gravity. It's located just below the navel (p. 5)

The deck of Tarot cards ... lay on my desk beside my typewriter then. (p. 6)

I think I remember Strieber saying somewhere that the deck he had at that time was the Grimaud version of the Tarot of Marseilles, but I can't find my source for that information.

G. I. Gurdjieff ... referred to the Tarot as a 'philosophical machine.' (p. 7)

Gurdjieff's disciple P. D. Ouspensky characterized the tarot thus in A New Model of the Universe ([p. 210](#)), who compares the cards to a "philosophical machine" described by Raymond Lully. Before Ouspensky, Eliphas Lévi, had also called the tarot a "philosophical machine" in [The Science of the Prophets](#). I haven't been able to find any such quotes from Gurdjieff himself.

Strieber uses the phrase in Communion, p. 288

About fifteen years ago [i.e., around 1971] I became interested in the tarot when I was studying the rise of monasticism in Europe for a historical novel I never actually wrote. I came to realize that the tarot is much more than a deck of fortune-telling cards; it is a sort of philosophical machine that presents its ideas in the form of pictures rather than words.

The story it tells is an interesting one: The face cards of the tarot — the Major Arcana — can be arranged in such a manner that they work as signposts toward spiritual evolution.

So Strieber's basic idea of arranging the trumps in meaningful pattern is at least as old as Communion, and it's interesting that he again places his discovery in 1971 or so, not in 1976. As for the bit about studying the rise of monasticism, I suspect that the story in The Path — that he became interested in tarot cards as part of a general study of all things esoteric under the influence of the Gurdjieff Foundation — is closer to the truth.

The next Monday, I began my research into the Tarot by buying a book called The Tarot by Alfred Douglas. The receipt, which I still have, shows that I bought the book on December 13. The experience had thus taken place on Saturday, December 10, 1976. (In the past, I have variously referred to this date as 1970 and 1973, ...) (p. 7)

I haven't been able to find any published references to a tarot-related experience in 1970 or 1973. Instead, the year that keeps popping up is 1971. Coincidentally, December 13 fell on a Monday in both 1971 and 1976 — but, unless December 11 and 12 were both Fridays, the experience must have taken place on the 11th rather than the 10th.

I find the confusion about the dates rather odd. 1970 was a big year for Strieber — the year he married Anne and joined the Gurdjieff Foundation (I'm not sure in which order) — and you'd think he'd be able to remember whether his experience happened one year or five years after those milestones. He also had a different job and was living in a different apartment in 1976 than in 1971; when he remembers sitting at his desk, walking into the living room, sitting down on the couch, which apartment is he in? (Or was he walking in Central Park?) And why on earth would he still have the receipt for a book he bought 26 years before?

The Tarot by Alfred Douglas (not Oscar Wilde's lover, some other guy) was published in 1972.

Why Now?

In 2003 ... I'm hoping my life takes me back to New York and the [Gurdjieff] Foundation. (p. 12)

So far it hasn't, as far as I know.

It ended with a rumbling, glorious and ultimately terrible voice answering my howling protests with four appalling words: "We have a right." (pp. 12-13)

Five words, actually. Whitley narrates the experience while under hypnosis in *Communion*, p. 76

'I'm not going to let you do an operation.'

'We won't hurt you.'

'I'm not gonna let you do an operation on me. You have absolutely no right.'

'We do have a right.'

That was it, bang. There was nothing to it. I thought they were gonna cut my whole head open. There was nothing to it.

the prophecy of the Beatitudes: "and the meek shall inherit the earth." (p. 18)

This is closer to the wording of [Psalm 37](#), "But the meek shall inherit the earth," than to that of the Beatitudes in [Matthew 5](#), "Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth."

The Mystery of the Tarot

Scholars agree that the cards were known in Italy and probably France by the late fourteenth century. (p. 21)

The earliest known decks (from around 1430 to 1450) are from northern Italy. The mainstream view is that tarot cards were not introduced into France until 1499.

This is an 11th century stone sculpture at the St. Cernin Basilica near Toulouse, of the 21st card in the Major Arcana, known as the World... . The sculpture is complete in every detail. This is not an 'early' card, but a fully evolved image (p. 21)

As I explain in detail below, the sculpture in question, while clearly related to the tarot card, is not the same thing. It is a "Christ in Majesty," a representation of Christ on his throne surrounded by the four living creatures as described in Revelation 4. The image makes perfect sense without any reference to tarot cards and is not evidence for their antiquity.

<http://wmjas.blogspot.com/2009/05/saint-sernin-basilica-tarot-of.html>

Saint-Sernin Basilica, the Tarot of Marseilles, and Whitley Strieber

In his book about tarot cards, *The Path*, Whitley Strieber says there is only one bit of evidence that tarot predates the late fourteenth century, "but it is an important one":

This is an 11th century stone sculpture at the St. Cernin Basilica near Toulouse, of the 21st card in the Major Arcana, known as the World. . . . The sculpture is complete in every detail. This is not an 'early' card, but a fully evolved image, suggesting that at least this one card—which contains the whole path and all the other cards in its symbolism—was already completely formed, and therefore that the whole of the path that leads to it must have been known (p. 21).

This claim interested me enough that I did what Strieber himself obviously didn't do: I looked up the sculpture in question to see for myself. An image of the Saint-Sernin sculpture can be found here.

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For comparison, the Jodorowsky-Camoin World card (the one used by Strieber) can be seen here.



"Complete in every detail" is, to put it charitably, a bit of an exaggeration. Here are some of the ways the sculpture differs from the card:

The central figure is male (Christ), not female as in the tarot card.

He is fully clothed in an ankle-length robe, not naked as in the tarot card.

He is seated on a throne, not dancing as in the tarot card.

He holds a book reading "Pax vobis" (Peace be with you) and raises his other hand in benediction, rather than holding a wand and a bottle as in the tarot card.

He wears a halo, absent in the tarot card, marked with a cross and the letters alpha, omega, and R. (Why R? I don't know.)

The mandorla (almond-shaped nimbus) is a precise geometric shape, not a wreath of leaves as in the tarot card.

The angel is on the right (our right, Christ's left) and the eagle on the left; vice versa in the tarot card.

The World card and the Saint-Sernin sculpture are certainly similar images, and it's undeniable that must be some connection between them; but it is just as undeniable that, contrary to what Strieber says, the sculpture is an "early card" (or an early version of the image found on the card) and is not "complete in every detail." And even if it were complete, does the World really contain "the whole path and all the other cards in its symbolism"? Where are the Lovers? The Devil? The Lightning-struck Tower? The World might "include" all these in some broad conceptual sense, but in its actual iconography? Can we honestly say that this image only makes sense as part of the 22-image set we call the Major Arcana?

Actually, the Saint-Sernin sculpture belongs to a well-known type of image, called a "Christ in majesty," which can be found in many other churches, in illuminated manuscripts, and so on. A Google [image search](#) will turn up many examples. It is a perfectly ordinary bit of Christian iconography, representing Jesus Christ as described in the fourth chapter of Revelation, and can be fully understood without reference to tarot cards. Like many other images that predate tarot -- depictions of the pope and of the devil, allegories of justice, temperance, and love, etc. -- it sheds some light on the origins of the tarot images but provides no evidence for the antiquity of the tarot tradition itself.

If the Saint-Sernin sculpture is so far from being a tarot card "complete in every detail," why does Strieber so describe it? It doesn't appear that he's being deliberately misleading; he just neglected to check up on the claims made by his source -- which, thanks to the unusual spelling Cernin, was easy for me to find. Philippe Camoin, the cardmaker who created the deck Strieber uses, wrote a short article called "Ancient Tarots" which seems no longer to be available on his [website](#). The following is from Camoin's article; I've bolded the phrases which were lifted word-for-word by Strieber.



Figure 1 Christ in Majesty Title: Replica of Carolingian Ivory Carving

Remarkably, one can find at the St Cernin Basilica near Toulouse a stone sculpture from the 11th century, that looks exactly like Arcanum XXI.

Strieber's bit about it being a complete, "fully evolved image" appears to be a riff on Camoin's ill-advised use of the word "exactly." Camoin, in turn, cites an article in French by Alain-Jacques Bougearel, which I have not been able to find and read.

As a maker of Marseilles-style tarot cards, Camoin has a vested interest in promoting the idea that tarot originated in southern France (rather than, as most tarot historians agree, northern Italy), so his willingness to fudge the evidence a bit is at least understandable. Less understandable is Whitley Strieber's failure to perform even the most basic fact-checking. (It took me about 15 minutes in a public library to track down a high-quality photo of the basilica sculpture; it's not that hard.) His credulous repeating of Camoin's claim strikes me as an uncharacteristic failure of curiosity. Wasn't he intrigued? Didn't he want to see this sculpture? Apparently not.

Posted by Wm Jas Tychonievich at 4:39 PM

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