

whether dressed in their coveralls or their space suits or not, or robots, androids, or any artifacts that we may deem appropriate to disembark or represent. Such appearances, if the local authorities note and publicly certify their reality, would undoubtedly have a creative impact capable of modifying the indigenous political and religious conceptions for some time.

13.2.1.1 Impacts on Local Religions

Since terrestrial and celestial orders are closely interlinked in people's minds, the appearances of spaceships or remote-controlled craft, and, moreover, the appearances of astronauts or bionic robots, would be capable of creating a lasting impression in minds, reorienting religions, inspiring new ones, or originating founding myths. The flying machines that Ezekiel described at length (1), the air war of the Ramayana, the Epic of Gilgamesh (2), the Elohim of Genesis (3), and the Watchmen of the Sky, mixing with the daughters of men and begetting giants, whom Enoch also speaks of (4), and more generally, the Immortals, the Sons or the Kings of the Sky of the Orient and China (5), Japan, the "Land of Gods" (6), the Viracochas of South America, the Incas, or the great gods of Ancient Egypt, the Gods, the Titans, the Giants, the Children of the Gods, and the Heros of western and oriental Antiquity (7), etc., come to mind.

Both supernatural and extraordinary phenomena were part of the natural order of things in the past. Would religions founded on the existence of a God or a creative order be shattered by such apparitions? Nothing is less certain. Once the shock, terror, and curiosity have passed, a new appreciation of the cosmic order could replace the old religious conceptions, without necessarily destroying the divine principle itself. To say the least, these religious conceptions could be reoriented or even sublimated. God does not travel around in a spaceship. Besides, the great religions of earth do not condemn the idea of the existence of other inhabited worlds in the universe. Must we recall that certain collective memories experience aberrations, despite the tangible proof subsequently furnished to the catechumen (the cult of the cargo plane in New Hebrides) (8)?

Bonaparte's military and scientific expedition to Egypt left no trace in the local annals, which recorded only an interruption of the pilgrimage to Mecca (9). Closer to home, many people did not believe that men had walked on the moon, believing it to be a publicity stunt or disinformation. It would be appropriate, however, to avoid overestimating this impact, insofar as all ancient civilizations conceived of pantheons, the gods of which were associated with terrifying manifestations of the sea, wind, volcanoes, earthquakes, or lightning. It is therefore difficult to say whether they were the avatars of extraterrestrial influences or, more simply, the product of the invention of mythologies explaining the world.

13.2.1.2 Political Impacts

With respect to the political impacts, these should be much more ephemeral, at least in appearance. In fact, once the moments of astonishment have passed, the political organization of States does not seem to have to be affected in a lasting manner, since contingencies quickly regain the upper hand. However, that monarch or chief of state could proclaim himself the exclusive and privileged interpreter of these extraordinary manifestations. Would he not be tempted to consecrate himself a god-king or a king-god