A Basic Typology of UFO Movements

Finnish ufologists, like their international counterparts, can be roughly divided into two main camps. Sociologist Joseph A. Blake, for example, makes a distinction between scientific ufology and paraufology (Blake 1979). One could also call the latter religious or spiritual ufology. Scientific ufologists hold that UFO phenomena should be studied in a strictly scientific manner and without any *a priori* claims that UFO sightings are evidence of aliens or of paranormal phenomena, or that they have any spiritual significance. Religious or spiritual ufologists can be subdivided, according to the main source of inspiration, as, e.g., esoteric or Christian. The former, who are part of the UFO contactee movement, favour explanations of the UFO phenomena which assume that benevolent beings from space or from other dimensions have come to assist us in our quest for spiritual evolution. On the other hand they may also espouse more sinister theories, e.g., that humanity has been manipulated by alien intelligences in the course of history. The latter interpret UFO phenomena through a Christian worldview, either as positive signs of divine intervention or in negative or even demonic terms. In Finland all of these forms are represented, as well. Several ufological organisations present themselves as scientific groups, while others promote religious understandings. Given the topic of this volume as a whole, the emphasis of this chapter lies squarely on the religious interpretations. Most of these are inspired by Theosophical ideas or by eschatological scenarios of a New Age kind. There are far fewer Christian interpretations in the Finnish milieu, although some of these will also be briefly presented below.

An Overview of the Finnish UFO Milieu

No organised UFO religions in the strict sense had appeared in Finland at the time of writing (2014), although some unofficial discussion and meditation groups for UFO contactees and abductees had been formed. Despite the lack of organisational structures, a set of shared beliefs have spread widely...
within the Finnish ufological milieu. These typically resemble those of the international UFO contactee movement, and include various Theosophical, spiritualistic, and New Age currents, and Western interpretations of Indian religions. The UFO contactee movement was first established in the United States in the 1950s. At that time individuals with an essentially Theosophical background, such as George Adamski in the United States and George King in England, took an interest in the then recent concept of the flying saucer. They started to claim, often in Theosophically-coloured terms, that they were in contact with highly evolved extraterrestrials who travelled on board flying saucers. According to them, these extraterrestrials, who were back then usually referred to as Masters (and were seen as enlightened beings from space) had come to help the human race to achieve its next stage of spiritual evolution, or to evacuate the chosen ones onto spaceships or to other planets in case catastrophes should destroy Earth. Space beings, it was suggested, were especially concerned about the dangers of nuclear technology and nuclear war. Later, during the 1980s, a part of the UFO contactee movement began to adopt more sinister narratives of abduction by aliens, and conspiracy theories linked to these abductions were formed.

In these UFO-based cosmologies god and the universe are understood as basically the same. God is understood as a kind of eternal and abstract electromagnetic wholeness, oneness or universal law, which is composed of light and can be described as having such personal characteristics as wisdom and a loving nature. It has created everything and all things are its manifestations. God, as the universe, includes a vast number of “vibrational” dimensions and worlds. God/universe manifests itself in the course of its spiritual evolution, which takes place over extremely long cosmic time spans. Furthermore, according to many Finnish UFO enthusiasts, the human race was at some point in the past created by extraterrestrials, beings who are also assumed to have had a great impact in the history of humanity by, e.g., having influenced religious teachings and practices. It is commonly held in the Finnish UFO community that humans are essentially spiritual beings, with a normally hidden physiology comprising “energies” that are particularly focused in the chakras. Humans are thought to evolve spiritually through a process of reincarnation guided by the law of karma and, as in many post-Theosophical movements as well as New Age thought, humanity is expected to move to a higher spiritual level in the relatively near future. It is emphasised in the Finnish UFO community that extraterrestrials are benevolent and guide us towards a new spiritual age, but it is also pointed out that there are all kinds of beings in the universe, not all of whom are good or spiritually highly developed.

Since much of this cosmology differs markedly from Christian as well as standard scientific perspectives, the Finnish UFO community (like its