



Limina — The Journal of UAP Studies

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Editorial

Michael C. Cifone, Ph.D. *

Editor-In-Chief

*Author contact: editor@limina.uapstudies.org

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2547-5988>

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Boundary Conditions: Evidence, Experience, and Method in UAP Studies

In any emerging field there is a temptation to suppose that its first and most urgent task is to secure its object, and the temptation is understandable. Without an object, a field appears unstable, perhaps not yet even a ‘field’ at all, lacking the very thing around which its concepts, methods, controversies, and institutions might be expected to cohere. In UAP Studies the temptation is especially strong, for the topic appears to announce its object in advance: unidentified anomalous phenomena (UAP) — and before that, unidentified aerial phenomena, before that unidentified flying objects (UFOs), and before that flying saucers. The object seems to hover before us, elusive (even in its conceptual designations) yet already named, awaiting only better evidence, better instruments, more courageous witnesses, more transparent institutions, or more adequate theories.

This apparent clarity is deceptive, however, and may be among the principal obstacles to the field’s development. As one trained in the philosophy of science, and then later, through wider research, in the phenomenological tradition, political thought, psychoanalysis, history and political economy, I have a sense of disciplinary maturity and the requirements of academic research fields. I also have a sensitivity to the question of conceptual foundations — which became a focus of my philosophy of science work early on. But rarely does a field or discipline as such emerge through deliberate acts of definition: reflexively, self-consciously. It is usually that a field or discipline is an inherited thing, given to us in the present from the scholars and practitioners of the past. With this we might reflect, and then, in this philosophical act of self-awareness, begin to debate and dispute. This is what discipline work and field development really is: a reflection on what occurred in the past with an eye towards what’s needed in the future.

We are, therefore, in a unique position with regard to something we are calling, provisionally, “UAP Studies”. Volume 3 Issue 1 of *Limina* — the first for 2026 — involves precisely (if perhaps only implicitly, save for one paper that thematizes this) the work on the *boundaries* of this field, insofar as it is now safe to say that it is very clearly emerging and gaining traction among a growing number of serious, well-trained and gifted scholars operating at the advanced level of scholarly research. But it is still caught in-between fields and disciplines; we are all still very much grounded in existing intellectual and research traditions of the past. “UAP Studies” as such does not yet have its own voice. It is still, then, inter-

and radically multidisciplinary in nature. *Limina* was founded for precisely this situation, where the ‘field’ or the ‘discipline’ (another distinction yet to be settled) has not yet individuated from its originary ground of scholarship and intellectual work. We are still “liminal”. We are traversing and exploring and testing boundaries. And this mirrors the phenomena which we aim to study in this mixed way: UAP, or UFOs, have always hovered, ambiguous and elusive, at the border of the known and the unknown (or not-yet-known), testing convention while typically falling into it upon closer analysis. Most UAP cases can indeed be so resolved — except for that recalcitrant residuum. UAP, and the work being configured around their inner characteristics, are therefore productively elusive, a meaningful cipher that gives and receives wonder.

The difficulty here — if one does turn to the question of boundaries in an effort to clarify or to resolve the UAP or a subdomain of research aimed at an aspect of the scientific or interpretive problems it presents — runs deeper than the mere recalcitrance of UAP to explanation (scientific or otherwise — and let us keep that space open). For the term “UAP” gathers a heterogeneous range of events, reports, traces, experiences, images, institutional records, and speculative hypotheses whose relations to one another remain obscure, as author Danny Ammon, of the German research organization GEP (also with the *Society for UAP Studies*) rightly indicates early in his essay. Some cases present as problems of aerospace identification, others as failures of data provenance or sensor interpretation; some belong to the psychology, phenomenology, or anthropology of extraordinary experience, while still others surface in legal, political, historical, religious, literary, or philosophical registers. To assume too quickly that these all name different aspects of one and same thing is to risk mistaking the field’s unresolved problem for its settled foundation.

This issue of *Limina* begins from that difficulty, and its title — “Boundary Conditions: Evidence, Experience, and Method in UAP Studies” — is intended in several senses at once. Boundary conditions are the *constraints* under which a problem becomes solvable, or at least properly posed; they are also the *edges* at which inherited categories cease to function with their accustomed confidence; and they are, in the end, the *conditions* under which a field draws and continually redraws the lines between what it can study, what it must set aside, what it may responsibly speculate about, and what it cannot yet know.

If UAP Studies is to become something more than a repository for unresolved claims and heterogeneous theories,

it requires precisely this kind of boundary-work (self-conscious, reflexive, philosophically oriented without being *a priori*), learning how to distinguish without prematurely separating and how to connect without prematurely unifying. It must be able to hold that an object-tracking problem, an experiencer narrative, a medieval account of uncanny encounter, a legal theory of non-human intelligence, and a political theory of the alien — all themes in our current issue — may all bear upon the field without thereby belonging to a single evidentiary order. Such work aims not at policing into narrowness but at keeping this field breadth from collapsing into confusion.

Danny Ammon’s opening article, just mentioned — “The Demarcation Problem of UAP Studies” — furnishes the issue with its first and most necessary problem. Ammon declines to treat UAP Studies as a discipline that waits only for recognition, asking instead what must be accomplished, conceptually and methodologically, for such a discipline to become possible at all. His answer is not another grand unifying theory of the phenomenon but a call for demarcation in the interests of the field as such: object research, observation research, encounter research, and other candidate subdomains must be differentiated according to their subjects, their methods, and their epistemic commitments. A new field matures by discovering which distinctions it cannot do without, rather than by declaring everything anomalous to be its object.

That task is complicated by the history of the terminology itself, for “flying saucers,” “UFOs,” and “UAP” are not neutral labels succeeding one another in a tidy march toward precision but historically saturated terms, each freighted with assumptions about technology, military perception, public imagination, institutional secrecy, scientific legitimacy, and cultural myth. Ammon’s contribution is therefore methodological rather than merely semantic: if the field cannot clarify what it is studying, and under what conditions different things are permitted to count as evidence, no quantity of accumulated cases will render it scientific, and case accumulation undisciplined by concepts will only multiply ambiguity.

James Houran’s “Forging a Procedural Roadmap for Scientific Studies of Government-Sourced UAP Data” takes the next step. Where Ammon asks how the field should be demarcated, Houran asks what procedural conditions must be met before UAP evidence can become scientifically usable, and his central observation is a plain one: public fascination with government-sourced material has far outpaced the

evidentiary infrastructure required to evaluate it. Short clips, official summaries, anonymized reports, and congressional references (witness the tranches of material being released under the U.S. Department of War's Presidential Unsealing and Reporting System for UAP Encounters, or PURSUE, initiative) may carry considerable political or cultural weight while remaining, for research purposes, irreproducible; absent metadata, calibration information, access to raw data, chain-of-custody documentation, time synchronization, and archival standards, even the most arresting material stays analytically compromised — locked inside what one might hazard to call, especially in relation to the U.S. national security state (a longstanding obsession since at least the Truman presidency), an epistemological black hole: as the UAP crosses into it via the event horizon of classification, very little useful information is able to come back out regarding the phenomena without the corruption of secrecy undermining its epistemic worth.

The significance of this lies in the way the UAP problem has too often been forced into a false choice between belief and dismissal, a stalemate that Houran's procedural emphasis is designed precisely to dissolve. What matters according to Houran is not whether one is credulous enough to accept official hints or skeptical enough to reject them, but whether the materials on offer can be independently analyzed, reanalyzed, and situated within a defensible evidentiary framework. Understood this way, data governance functions as a condition of possibility for any future science of UAP rather than as a bureaucratic afterthought, and the demand for evidence must itself become a demand for the conditions under which something is able to function as evidence at all. Independence is key.

Massimo Teodorani's "Magnetoplasmadynamic Unidentified Aerial Phenomena: Basic Physics, Diagnostics and Research Methodology" then moves the discussion into the domain of physical modeling and instrumented inquiry. Its importance resides in the way it binds speculative physical modeling to diagnostic procedure, rather than in any premature claim to have solved the UAP problem. Teodorani's magnetoplasmadynamic framework treats certain luminous or field-modulated reports as potentially investigable through spectroscopy, radar response, magnetometry, thermal imaging, and related observational protocols, so that the emphasis falls less on explanation than on discrimination: what signatures would distinguish a pure plasma phenomenon from a solid object enveloped in a plasma sheath, what would count as a relevant spectral, magnetic, radar, or

thermal indicator, and what would be required to draw such distinctions under field conditions?

Here again the discussion returns to boundary conditions, since a physical hypothesis earns its scientific interest through the constraints it generates and not through any dramatic content it may possess: it specifies what to look for, what to rule out, which instruments would be required, which signatures would matter, and which observations would tell against the model. In a field long dominated by images, testimony, and retrospective controversy, such a movement toward diagnostic specificity is indispensable, for it supplies uncertainty with a structure within which uncertainty can be more precisely interrogated.

Andrew D. Morgan's "Structured Patterns in Anomalous Experience" turns from instrumented observation to the harder question of experiencer data, an area in which UAP Studies is especially liable to lose either its nerve or its rigor. A field concerned only with sensor capture and aerospace identification cannot hope to account for the sheer breadth of reported UAP-related experience; yet a field that receives every extraordinary narrative as a straightforward disclosure of ontological fact forfeits its scientific credibility almost at once — a distinct problem for a field in formation that is also a field contested, historically (at least in terms of its supposed object of study: UAP). Morgan's article occupies the more difficult ground between these, asking whether a longitudinal corpus of anomalous experience can be structured, coded, and analyzed without being reduced either to mere anecdote or to unexamined metaphysics.

The methodological problem here is quite a serious one. Experiences do not become data simply by being reported — and yet they are not rendered epistemically null by their subjectivity either. They demand procedures of reconstruction, categorization, temporal mapping, confidentiality, interpretive caution, and comparison. What makes Morgan's contribution valuable is the effort to show how experiencer material might be made analytically tractable, its object being less the bare "what happened" of forensic reconstruction, which in many such cases remains underdetermined, and more the manner in which anomalous experiences organize themselves across a life, developing, recurring, differentiating, and acquiring symbolic or structural complexity over time. Far from peripheral, this belongs to the field's larger reckoning with the fact that the anomalous frequently presents itself not only as an object set before an observer but also as an event in which observation, meaning, affect, memory, and interpretation prove inseparable from the

case itself. It is an important contribution to the study of the experiential “blind spot” that persists not only in the attempt to engage the UAP experience scientifically, but also more generally in science itself (a point to which I have referred in my previous editorials in this journal; it is a not insignificant problem for the research foundations of our emerging field).

Michaela Heidi Robson’s “Beyond Nuts and Bolts” carries the problem further, returning to Jacques Vallée’s control-system hypothesis and to the methodological significance of high-strangeness, and its force lies in a refusal to treat absurdity as mere evidential contamination. In conventional investigative contexts, absurd details tend to be filtered out because they embarrass the case, weaken its credibility, or resist ordinary explanation; yet in certain high-strangeness encounters those very features may be what most demands study, since absurdity of this kind functions less as simple irrationality than as a sign that an event has overrun the interpretive frame available to it.

None of this is to claim that absurdity “proves” anything exotic; the claim is rather that our methods must be capable of registering the structure of cases that decline to present themselves as clean objects of identification. Cases that really at first require that self-conscious boundary work to rise to a specific concern in itself. Vallée’s hypothesis (well-known by now) remains controversial, and rightly so, though its enduring significance lies in the demand it places on UAP research to attend to feedback, meaning, cultural circulation, and the instability of interpretation itself — what might be called, following the deeper implications of Vallée’s work, the “meta-logical” dimension of these phenomena. A field attentive only to the object may well miss the phenomenon in its dimensional (that is to say meta-logical) complexity, where experience and the UAP as an apparent object may well be mutually implicated in ways conventional thought is not yet equipped to handle. And so may a field attentive only to the story, for in high-strangeness cases the phenomenon may appear precisely within the unstable relation among object, witness, world, and meaning. The “object” side might miss the meaning, in favor of the matter; but the “story” side might mistake the meaning for the matter itself. It is a complex intellectual challenge, insofar as we *do* really take seriously the general challenge in science to treat human experience — and consciousness more generally — as ontologically co-constitutive features of Nature. Can we do this without sliding into a too-easy “Idealism” — or reverting back to the safety (incomplete and misleading) of “Materialism”? Both are a danger. And Morgan (reading

him with Robson) is right to want to avoid the traps of polar metaphysical doctrines (perhaps not unexamined so much as overused).

Yoav Tirosh’s essay on trauma, UAP, and the *Vinland* sagas renders the interpretive problem at once historical and literary. Rather than claiming that medieval saga material offers direct historical evidence of UAP events (a claim it is careful never to make), the essay asks how uncanny or paranormal motifs in the *Vinland* sagas operate as means of narrating frontier encounter, trauma, failed settlement, communicative breakdown, and radical otherness, and in doing so it enlarges the archive of UAP Studies without dissolving medieval literature into modern ufology.

This is the kind of expansion the field requires, for UAP Studies can be neither a science confined to contemporary sightings nor a careless hunt for ancient astronauts and premodern saucers; the task instead is to study how anomalous encounter is mediated historically: how different cultures narrate the impossible, how trauma disturbs representation, how contact with the unfamiliar comes to be encoded as the monstrous, the paranormal, the divine, or the uncanny. Tirosh’s essay reminds us that the anomalous is at once a modern technological problem and a problem of representation, arising wherever the familiar world fails to absorb what has appeared within it.

Klaus Stähle’s “NHI in the Legal Context” then moves toward law, governance, and speculative institutional imagination, proposing a legal model in which Earth’s relation to non-human intelligence might be conceived as a kind of condominium under international law, a relation of distant contact unaccompanied by any substantive exchange of information. The argument is frankly speculative, and should be read as such, though speculative legal theory has a genuine place in UAP Studies so long as its status is kept clear. For once the possibility of non-human intelligence (NHI) is admitted as a matter for disciplined thought, the law can hardly afford to remain silent until after contact has already occurred (and this ‘after’ is yet another curious boundary problem, involving our ability to know — how and under what conditions — that or when NHI is found). Law is habitually late to reality, and in this domain its lateness could prove structurally disastrous.

What Stähle offers, then, is not a settled account of NHI, or of contact, but a thought experiment in juridical readiness. What would it mean for humanity to find itself legally, institutionally, and economically unprepared for a contact event involving radically asymmetrical knowledge,

and how might liability, harm, sovereignty, and responsibility have to be reconceived under such conditions? Even a reader who rejects the specific “condominium” model offered here is nevertheless left with the underlying difficulty: that our institutions are constructed to manage relations among human actors, states, corporations, and the occasional non-human terrestrial entity, and were never built to think contact at all; the possible emergence of an intelligence outside that order exposes the limits of the legal imagination as such.

This prepares our readers for our final work in this first Issue of 2026: a *Letter to the Editor* that in many ways picks up where Stähle leaves off — or leaves unaddressed, insofar as the law cannot address the more philosophical and theoretical underpinnings of the terms and issue with which it is specifically (and practically) concerned. And that is the ‘alien’ itself, as a concept in (critical and production) relation to that of the human.

Finally, Michael Uhall’s “Political Theory Needs the Alien (and Vice Versa)” closes the Issue by shifting from legal speculation to political theory, its extended précis of *Theory of the Alien* (his forthcoming book with Routledge) arguing that the Space Age obliges political thought to pass through the alien in order to rediscover the human. The formulation is as unsettling as it is elegant. The alien, in this sense, is reducible neither to an extraterrestrial being nor to a mere figure for ordinary otherness, but names a figure of exteriority: that through which the human, the planetary, and the political are made newly available to thought.

The essay makes a fitting close because it generalizes the Issue’s central movement: UAP Studies begins with anomalous reports but cannot end there, being drawn ineluctably into questions of planetarity, sovereignty, surveillance, orbital infrastructure, astropolitics, secrecy, and the conceptual fragility of the human itself. For Uhall the UFO is at once an empirical puzzle and the unauthorized counterpart to astronautics: not the sanctioned human departure from Earth but the unsanctioned intrusion of something that arrives from outside, withdraws from stable classification, and leaves behind an uncertainty about what can be known, governed, or named.

Taken together, these contributions in our first issue of this year suggest that UAP Studies is not a single thing, and that it has (fruitfully) not yet settled into a science, an interdisciplinary topic, a cultural controversy, or a problem for states and sensors, but is rather a field still forming around a set of characteristic boundary failures: failures of identification, of evidence, of category, of institution, of

interpretation, and of world-picture. Whether it becomes a serious field will turn on whether it can convert these failures into distinct but related methods — the failures remaining nevertheless productive, all the same.

That is the task before us, and there is no cause for embarrassment in the field’s being unsettled; the only embarrassment would lie in pretending otherwise. The work of an emerging field is not to *manufacture* premature unity (that is easy) but to discipline its plurality — which is the harder meta-theoretical task we may take on together, collectively, as a community of scholars. Some of its questions call for physics and some for data science; others belong to psychology, anthropology, history, law, political theory, religious studies, philosophy, or literary analysis; still others require the design of new instruments or the recovery of old archives, the courage to take witnesses seriously without mistaking seriousness for uncritical acceptance, and, on occasion, the plain admission that a claim cannot yet bear the weight being placed upon it.

This, in the end, is why the journal exists. *Limina* has not been founded to dress mere unchecked or uncritical belief in academic language, nor to furnish dismissal with a more respectable vocabulary. It was founded to help facilitate the intellectual conditions under which UAP Studies might become adequate to its object, or, more precisely, to the task of discovering what its objects are. In practice this means publishing across the sciences, the humanities, the social sciences, legal studies, and the theoretical disciplines, and requiring of each contribution that it disclose its own epistemic status: what is known, what is inferred, what is proposed, what is merely speculative, what is methodological, and what remains, for now, unresolved.

The unknown grows more intelligible only as we learn to ask better questions of it, and that is what this Issue indeed attempts. It puts forward no final image of the field, offering instead a set of *boundary conditions* under which the field may proceed: conceptual demarcation, procedural evidence, diagnostic method, structured experience, interpretive openness, historical depth, legal imagination, and political-theoretical seriousness (and this of a particularly incisive kind with Uhall’s characteristic depth).

If UAP Studies is to mature, it will have to resist two symmetrical failures. The first is *reduction*: the assumption that every anomaly is only a misidentification, a psychological episode, a social construction, a sensor artifact, or a mythic residue (in fact, if we are true to a spirit of theoretical openness, disciplined by a kind of empiricism: it might

be some uncanny mixture of these options). The second is *inflation*: the assumption that every anomaly is already evidence of the most extraordinary conclusion available. The harder work of scholarship lies between them, slower and less gratifying and more demanding than either, and it is the only path by which this subject can become worthy of the attention it increasingly attracts. Without the slowness of the labor to know (an image I take from Hume), and the desire to understand (an image from Aristotle), we make progress only by dressing unexamined belief in the garment of settled knowledge. Refusing to have either yields the fire that provides the scholarly energy propelling us decisively forward, with the labor of negative criticism (Hegel's image for philosophy) transforming in time, with effort, into the joy of positive knowing. But in this instance a *knowing with* the things that are our objects — we *their* subjects, loyal at every stage to the complications of ignorance under which we labor at the outset.

Volume 3, Number 1 of *Limina* is offered in such a spirit. It marks no arrival, only a line, or several lines, drawn at the edges of a field still learning how to think. And how to think *for itself*.