

TOMMY RAMSTEDT

## **Making sense of personal and global problems**

### **An analysis of the writings and lectures of Rauni-Leena Luukanen-Kilde**

#### **Introduction**

Rauni-Leena Luukanen-Kilde (b. 1939) is a well-known figure in the Finnish alternative spiritual milieu. She is an author and lecturer on parapsychology and ufology and has been a guest on several talk shows in the Nordic countries (e.g. *Arto Nyberg* 2007, *Eldsjäl* 1995). The topics discussed by Luukanen-Kilde range from the psychic abilities of mankind to visitations from extraterrestrial beings. Since the mid-1980s Luukanen-Kilde has developed conspiracy theories about an elite group governing the world in secret. Luukanen-Kilde is a bestselling author and draws audiences of several hundreds to her talks. Her conspiracy theory view of the world offers explanations for all kinds of personal, national, as well as global problems and disasters. Personal health problems, tragic incidents such as school shootings, economic crises and unemployment, earthquakes and floods can, according to her belief system, all be attributed to a single cause; namely to the actions of a clandestine, malevolent group. The popularity of Luukanen-Kilde's books and lectures can be seen as an example of how people in late modernity are seeking alternative interpretations of themselves and of world events.

#### **Early life and career as a medical doctor**

Many personas in the alternative spiritual milieu ascribe to themselves one or several academic degrees in various areas such as history, anthropology or physics. In some instances these degrees are acquired from unaccredited private institutions or from so-called 'diploma mills' rather than from distinguished universities. Rauni-Leena Luukanen-Kilde, however, holds a real degree in medicine, which she studied at the Universities of Turku and Oulu, graduating in 1967. She worked as a medical doctor in the region of Lapland, where she became chief medical officer in 1975. (Kuningas 1999: 4–5.)

According to Luukanen-Kilde, her interest in alternative spirituality and parapsychology started in her childhood when a relative named Solveig explained reincarnation to her. In 1975, when Luukanen-Kilde moved to the town of Rovaniemi, she was invited to participate in a local meditation group. In these settings she learned the art of automatic writing and in 1980 a medium from Great Britain, who was visiting the group, told her that she would become a famous author. (Kuningas 1999: 4–6.)

### **Excursions in alternative spirituality and parapsychology**

Luukanen-Kilde reports having started to produce automatic writing in the spring of 1979. The entity that she channelled identified itself as Solveig, the dead relative that had explained reincarnation to Luukanen-Kilde in her teens. Through automatic writing, Luukanen-Kilde produced texts about the meaning of life and spiritual evolution. When asked about the purpose of the messages Solveig explained that Luukanen-Kilde would come to write a book with the title *Kuolemaa ei ole* (There is no death). (Luukanen 1982: 129.)

The book *Kuolemaa ei ole* was published in 1982. It became a bestseller both in Finland and several other Nordic countries. The first part of the book is a study of parapsychology, with chapters on topics such as telepathy, mediumism, clairvoyance, poltergeist activity and reincarnation. This part of the book differs little from other works aimed at introducing parapsychology to the general public which have been published in Nordic countries between the 1930s and the 1960s (e.g. Björkhem 1939, 1951). The second part of the book comprises a text that Luukanen-Kilde claims to be the result of automatic writing, by means of which she had channelled her dead grandmother, Aino Sofia Halmetoja. This text consists of many themata that are also common in other channelled books within the New Age or alternative spiritual field.

The dead grandmother talks about reincarnation, spiritual evolution, and about people having spirit guides who help and guide them in their lives. One theme that the grandmother also talks about is that when people attain a higher consciousness the world will become a harmonious place. Luukanen-Kilde gained a national and international reputation when her first book became a bestseller in Finland and in other Nordic countries. She also appeared on several Finnish talk shows and at alternative spiritual fairs. Luukanen-Kilde has been the most popular lecturer at the fair *Ultrapäivät* on several occasions, attracting audiences of over 700 people (Kuningas 2010: 6–7). In 1983, Rauni-Leena Luukanen-Kilde acted as one of the founders of Lapin Parapsykologinen Seura ry (The Parapsychological Society of Lapland).

## Interest in ufology and conspiracy theories

In 1985 Luukanen-Kilde was injured in a car accident. She retired and later claimed that extraterrestrials had saved her from dying in the accident. In the autumn of 1987 Luukanen-Kilde married the Norwegian diplomat Sverre Kilde. In the same year she attended a conference on parapsychology in Basel, Switzerland, where the participants had the opportunity to experience their previous lives by means of hypnosis. Luukanen-Kilde did not, however, look into a previous life but instead had experiences of UFOs and extraterrestrials (Kuningas 1999: 7–8). In her books *Tähtien lähettiläs* (Envoy of the stars, 1991, published in Swedish in 1992) and in *Kuka hän on?* (Who is s/he?, 1993) Luukanen-Kilde delves more deeply into the world of UFOs, extraterrestrials and government conspiracies. Luukanen-Kilde appeared in the documentary *Vieraita taivaalta* (Visitors from space, 1992) made by the Finnish UFO-enthusiast Juhan af Grann. In the documentary Luukanen-Kilde talks about out-of-body-experiences during which she has travelled to other planets and also offers descriptions of extraterrestrials. Luukanen-Kilde claims that extraterrestrials come in all sorts of different forms, some resembling humans, some only having bodies of pure energy. In 1996, Luukanen-Kilde organised the first Finnish international UFO-conference in Hanasaari, Finland (Kuningas 1999: 8).

The focus of her latest book, published in 2007 and entitled *Salatut maailmamme* (Our secret worlds) is on how the secret power elite controls the world by means of highly advanced technology. Luukanen-Kilde discusses supercomputers and the implanting of microchips into people, as well as how it is possible to change ordinary people into killers and assassins through mind-control. In the book she offers numerous accounts of how she herself has been a victim of harassment from the secret power elite. She claims that her phone has been tapped several times and that government agents have broken into her home, stealing documents about UFOs.

## Public visibility via the internet

Bevolution / The Human Project is a Danish group that conducts interviews with people active in the alternative spiritual field and spreads them via video-sharing websites (<http://www.bevolution.dk/>). Between 2009–10, the group conducted interviews with Luukanen-Kilde which were posted on the video-sharing site YouTube. In these interviews Luukanen-Kilde explains how the

world is run by a secret power elite that seeks to diminish the population and to control all aspects of human life. She also addresses current world events such as the earthquake in Haiti in 2010 and the swine flu scare, for which she offers her own explanations. She claims that the tragic shootings at Jokela High School in Finland in 2007 and at Kauhajoki in 2008 were the result of mind-control.<sup>1</sup>

She claims that behind the swine flu scare and vaccine there is a plot by the secret power elite that governs the world. The aim of the plot, she says, is to make the power elite rich by selling vaccines and that the vaccine is actually a poisonous compound that will in time be activated in order to eliminate two thirds of the world's population. In a Spanish translation of the video Luukanen-Kilde was wrongly titled the Finnish Minister of Health. This video became a great success on YouTube and was viewed over two million times. This large number of viewings was noted by the Finnish tabloid newspaper *Ilta-Sanomat*, which linked to the video on its homepage, probably leading to the interview getting further publicity.<sup>2</sup>

The interview was also picked up by the Tunisian newspaper *Assabah* which ran a story about it. On the front page of *Assabah* in November 2009 was the headline: 'Disturbing statements made by the Finnish Minister of Health: The United States are trying to kill two thirds of the world population.' This was noted by the Finnish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which sent a letter which was published in *Assabah* correcting the false claim that Luukanen-Kilde was the Finnish Minister of Health (Ulkoministeriö 2010: 78).

In the interviews made by Bevolution / The Human Project, Luukanen-Kilde frequently refers to popular movies such as *The Manchurian Candidate* (1959/2004), *Enemy of the State* (1998) and *Eyes Wide Shut* (1999). She explains that Hollywood movies are telling the actual truth about how the world really is. She especially likes the movie *Control Factor* (2003), recommending it as a movie that everyone should watch. The movie is a fairly low-budget production about an average American man who discovers that he is part of a mind-control experiment. The secret group behind the experiment causes a person to go berserk in his workplace, killing several of his colleagues. To the horror of the protagonist, even his seemingly loving girlfriend, played by Elizabeth Berkley, turns out to be on the payroll of the malevolent secret

1 [http://www.youtube.com/view\\_play\\_list?p=27FC6B6543EB891C](http://www.youtube.com/view_play_list?p=27FC6B6543EB891C) (accessed on 2 September 2011).

2 <http://www.iltasanomat.fi/ulkomaat/suomalainen-ufolaakari-levittaa-netissasalaliittoteorioita-sikainfluenssasta/art-1288339463117.html> (accessed on 2 September 2011).

group. Luukanen-Kilde claims that this movie shows the truth and especially highlights the fact that it is always someone close to you that is used by the secret elite to control you.<sup>3</sup>

Although the world-view Luukanen-Kilde offers might at first glance seem quite complex, with its aliens, parapsychological phenomena, super-technology and secret malevolent groups, its major theme is essentially that the world is a battlefield between the forces of good and the forces of evil. According to her nothing happens by chance and the story that she offers gives explanations to all sorts of issues and problems, both personal and global.

### **Habermas, the post-secular and the public sphere**

According to the philosopher Jürgen Habermas, contemporary Western societies find themselves struggling with how to adjust to the continued visibility of religious communities and religious ideas in the public sphere. Habermas describes this situation in terms of a move towards post-secularity, entailing a 'change in public consciousness' and an increasing awareness with regard to issues related to religion among Western populations. Habermas enumerates three reasons for this change in consciousness. The first is that religion is often presented as a key factor in global conflicts, and as a cause for war and terrorism. Another reason is the immigration of people from so-called traditional backgrounds. A third is that religious leaders and institutions figure more prominently in value-laden public debates, offering interpretations and opinions about contested ethical questions, such as abortion or climate change. (Habermas 2008: 19–20.)

Rauni-Leena Luukanen-Kilde is a prime example of how people in the alternative spiritual field are able to gain visibility for their ideas in the public sphere. Although her ideas might seem outlandish, or even absurd, she is nonetheless publicly offering interpretations of tragic events such as economic recession, earthquakes and school shootings. Through talking about popular mainstream movies such as the *Manchurian Candidate* (1959/2004) she is referring to frameworks and ideas that are already widely familiar to people today. The success of her books, the large numbers of viewings of the videos of her on YouTube and the interest of tabloid newspapers can be taken as an indication that her conspiracy theory view of the world is finding some resonance among people in Finland today.

3 [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dQ\\_sgvttP\\_s](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dQ_sgvttP_s) (accessed on 2 September 2011).

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