

GARY P. POSNER, M.D.
6219 PALMA DEL MAR BLVD. #210
ST. PETERSBURG, FLORIDA 33715

November 13, 1982

Dear Marcello,

I am in receipt of a copy of your Nov. 6 letter to Allen Hynek.

On page 2, I find part (5) unacceptable, and I feel that Phil is probably in agreement with me.

As I discussed in my letter of Oct. 31, the extraordinary question in dispute is: Are UFOs genuinely perplexing, unexplainable in terms of 20th century science, and scientifically important? The burden of proof is on the claimant, and not on the skeptic (or NAS) to solve beyond any doubt each and every UFO case presented for review.

For example, should Hynek choose the Gill case for study, the burden must be upon Hynek to prove beyond a reasonable doubt that the case is beyond prosaic explanation. If Hynek offers no credible proof that a "quantum jump" phenomenon occurred (beyond the word of Gill and his friends), and if, as a result, NAS concludes that the case lacks proof of reality, the burden is not upon NAS to kidnap Gill and subject him, against his will, to a polygraph examination (which is what they would have to do in order to prove the negative).

To state in yet another way, using your own phraseology from part (5), we cannot expect NAS to be able to "consider a case 'explained'..." if the case involves a jealous phenomenon. One can never hope to "explain" what Gill "saw" (if in reality he didn't see anything); if someone reports a sighting of a shiny humanoid from another world, one cannot expect NAS or anyone else to "explain" what was seen (if in reality nothing was seen). It is not the duty of NAS to "consider a case 'explained'..." under circumstances in which a hoax is a likely solution. One cannot prove a hoax 100% of the time, without a confession. NAS need not "explain" a single case---Hynek must prove, beyond a reasonable doubt, that no prosaic explanation is possible. All NAS must establish is a "reasonable doubt", not an "explanation".

I submit the following rephrasing of part (5):

(5)"The NAS panel...For each case that they judge, they must consider a case "unexplained" only if it is, in their view, "unexplainable in prosaic terms beyond a reasonable doubt". On the one hand...on the other hand, although they cannot classify a case as "explained with certainty" if some reported facts are clearly incongruent with such an explanation, they bear no burden to "explain", or to "identify", the source of the UFO report (since some of the UFOs may have been imaginary, or the result of a hoax). They must only raise a reasonable doubt about a case's legitimacy in order to

conclude that there is "insufficient proof to establish, beyond a reasonable doubt, the existence of UFO 'X' as a genuinely puzzling, unexplainable (given more data), and scientifically important phenomenon." At bottom, we are..."

And I submit the following rephrasing of the first sentence in part (6): "If the panel finds none of these cases unexplainable in prosaic terms (given more complete data); i.e. if they conclude that there is "insufficient proof..." in each and every case, you and CUFOS....."

As you can see, your original wording failed to acknowledge the essence of the scientific method of determining unsubstantiated speculation from established fact---namely that the claimant bears the burden of proof, while the scientific community bears no burden to prove anything. My corrections (or suggested changes) reestablish the proper scientific perspective for examining the question of UFO reality.

Please read (or reread) Bob Sheaffer's chapter on "UFOs, A Jealous Phenomenon" in The UFO Verdict. To require the NAS to "explain" the nature of a jealous phenomenon is to turn the scientific method on its head.

Sincerely,



cc: Phil Klass

P.S. Part (7) would also have to be amended to read: "If the panel finds even one...to be "unexplainable in prosaic terms, beyond a reasonable doubt"..."



Eastern Michigan University

Ypsilanti, Michigan 48197

Nov. 15, 1982

Dear Gary,

I got your letter of October 31st which included an enclosed version of the last draft of your committee proposal. Somehow, your enclosure plus another letter I got that morning seems to have evaporated. I have looked high and low for both but simply can not find them. That's one reason for my delay in writing you. I will therefore limit this letter to commenting on your letter itself and ask your patient indulgence regarding the joint statement which I hope you might send me again. Since we worked out what little differences we had on that statement anyway, I don't think there are likely to be any problems with it at all. (It really is bizarre how the damned thing got lost. I sometimes do think I have a poltergeist in my office who specializes in abducting papers of mine. The odds are that I somehow misfiled it with someone else's letter, but so far no luck in locating it. It will probably pop up shortly after I post this letter to you...)

Let me now run down the contents of your letter where comment is called for.

By now you should have received a copy of my letters to Hynek and Klass re Klass's proposal re the NAS. No word back from Hynek yet, but I presume he may be travelling around the country somewhere or another so may not even have yet seen my letter.

I will not comment on a possible negative response from Hynek until I am given his reasons for such a reply. But I certainly do agree with you that a negative reply would be most disappointing and would suggest an unscientific spirit if no reasonable reasons were given for such a negative response. Let's wait and see.

Re Dave Jacobs and the material on Klass, I really can not speak directly for Dave (whom I like but with whom I certainly do not agree on all matters). I presume you have seen the article he did in FATE which deals with Klass. I also presume you saw Jerry Clark's article on Klass along with the letters following. I don't know what additional materials David planned to send you. Have you read Paul McCarthy's dissertation which is certainly a primary document re this matter? (Klass seems to simply dismiss all the specific charges by saying these are all UFO proponents while ignoring the charges which stand quite separate.) But quite frankly, I think Klass's tactics are clearly revealed in his many "white papers" and letters which come off more like a Torquemada than a reasonable critic. (Perhaps I should mention that I consider quite a few disbelievers in UFOs --e.g., Dan Cohen and even Menzel, though I know him only from his writings-- to be reasonable. Unlike Phil, who seems to consider all "believers" to be "proponents" and therefore presumed to be unreasonable, I do not brand all disbelievers as prima facie unreasonable.

You referred to Hynek: "when he pretends that a film of Venus is in reality a UFO" on Good Morning America. I have never seen him do anything of that kind. Please provide me with evidence of this if you would.

Department of Sociology
(313) 487-0012

Re the constitution of the committee, perhaps you are right about Maccabee. I had forgotten that he is on the board of CUFOS. In any case, I think we agree that Hynek and Hendry could best pick their third member. That option for them might even encourage them to join up more.

You and I obviously have very different pictures of Hynek and his motives. I do think personally that Allen is rather naive about some matters, especially the status of psychical research. Thus, he is more receptive to the psychic theory of UFOs than I think is warranted. But I definitely do believe he is committed to making a scientific case for UFOs. I can not help but wonder how carefully you have read his writings on that particular point.

You seem to think that if Allen refuses to sign the committee proposal or the NAS proposal that it will be due to his lack of a scientific perspective on UFOs. My own fear is that he simply will not want to cooperate with Klass because he just does not trust Klass to act honorably. Though I disagree on this, given some of the personal things that have allegedly happened between them, I can at least understand Hynek's possible reluctance.

I very much agree with you that the burden of proof is on the claimants, but again we seem to perhaps forget what is meant by "skeptics." If we mean that term as I mean it, as doubter rather than denier, then we have no problems between us on this matter. But if we mean that a skeptic is one who takes an allegedly normal explanation for the UFO event, then to a degree we may disagree. Obviously, if, let us say, the planet Venus would account for the report made, I don't think that there is much burden of proof on the claimant of the Venus conjecture except to show that Venus was indeed visible where it should have been at the time. But if Venus is being claimed, that object should match the description given. Unfortunately, that is not always the case. Thus, Sheaffer uses Venus to explain Jimmy Carter's sighting eventhough it leaves a number of loose ends unaccounted for. To that degree, that Venus explanation may be a pseudo-explanation. And if someone like Klass uses an extraordinary plasma explanation for a report, the burden is surely on Klass to prove his extraordinary plasma. In the case of someone putting forward a plasma theory or even a Venus theory, that conjectured explanation is not an example of skepticism but an example of a positive claim of some sort. It may stem from skepticism towards an ETH or similar extraordinary claim, but once a new explanation is put forward, that is no longer skepticism. Now, obviously, too, once a report of a UFO is made, we can simply (as good skeptics) say that the evidence for it being a true UFO (in the way you have defined it in your statement) is unconvincing. In the way you have defined UFO's in your statement, I do not find the evidence for UFOs convincing. I merely think that something quite unidentified is going on, a literal meaning for UFO that is not the same as the definition you have put forward. In terms of your definition of a UFO, I remain a nonbeliever, a true skeptic. And, of course, I think many alleged UFOs have been nicely explained as being merely Venus and many other things. As always, the problem is how we want to deal with the residue. In terms of your definition of a UFO, I do not think the evidence convincing. But I also do not find convincing the alternative explanations that Klass and others have put forward to explain as mundane all the residue reports. In this sense, I am skeptical towards both sides, both kinds of proponents of identification

of the residue. Now, despite all this being unconvinced on my part, that does not mean that I think the case is equal on both sides. Science makes a presumption of the negative since the burden is on the claimant. But that presumption of the negative is not the same thing as grounds for active dismissal. It allows us to place a very low priority on the claim which has not been able to put forward adequate evidence and argument. We have a right to choose to ignore the claim as a serious one. But we don't have a right to dismiss the claim as disproven, to close the door for future investigation by those who (for whatever reason) think the puzzle is worth looking into. The real problem between us, I think, concerns the question of when we close the door on a claim.

Perhaps I should add something else. The problem for me with many of the critics' "explanations" is that they often are not really what you call "reasonable, rational, logical, feasible alternative explanations." They often leave loose ends or pieces of the puzzle that don't fit their explanations. Yet, even so, I recognize that we will probably never completely tie up all the loose ends for all the cases. I don't really insist on an air-tight case being made. I do think Carter probably saw merely the planet Venus eventhough I find problems with Sheaffer's scenario. But I think it is terribly important that we openly recognize the limits of our case on the small chance that we might be wrong. That is what troubles me with Klass and some others. It turns into a debate between advocates instead of a dialogue between peers. The name of the game is winning rather than the acquisition of knowledge. And this too often means accusations about people's motives when that is simply unnecessary.

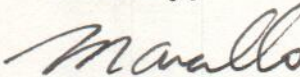
Contrary to your picture of my use of the term skeptic, I use that term in its precise and contemporary meaning. You and Klass, I think, simply insist on recasting it to suit your preferred view of me. The fact is that my training is in science. So is Hynek's. I am regularly involved with philosophers of science and historians of science on a professional basis. My use of the term "skeptic" conforms to what that term means in those areas. I do not take a position of "Maybe... why not? We must be fair to everyone." That is a gross distortion of my position. I do not believe in multiple realities. I am not a relativist. Let me take a parallel case, the question of psi. If I am asked if psi exists, I reply that the scientific case for psi is unconvincing. I further say that I do not believe in psi's existence. Similarly, if we define UFOs by your definition given earlier, I would say that the case for UFOs is scientifically unconvincing and that I do not believe (those kinds) of UFOs exist. But in both cases (psi and UFOs), I do think that there are anomalous things (a residue of yet unexplained adequately things) going on. If psi meant merely a residue of anomalous results (which it does to a very few researchers), I might be able to say I believe in psi; but psi to most parapsychologists means some sort of information transfer and does not include unknown sources of error (incompetence, fraud, subtle experimenter effects, statistical misassumptions, etc.). Similarly, if we mean by a UFO simply an "unidentified" thing (which your definition does not), I can honestly say I believe in UFOs. What you (and Klass) overlook is that my seeming ambiguity is really the result of how the term is being defined. My actual position should be quite clear to all if we look at the matter of term definition. My desire to be "fair" to all sides concerns fairness in a procedural, due process sense. I don't think all ideas are somehow equal. Klass keeps acting as though that is my position. It is not.

Gary, I urge you to look (if you have not) at my various editorials in ZETETIC SCHOLAR and THE ZETETIC. My positions should be clearly stated there. The last guy in the world I want acting as my interpreter is Phil Klass. I do not confer equal scientific status on beliefs in everything from fairies to bigfoot to normal science. But I do believe that science is fundamentally its method. Therefore I do confer equal scientific status to the employment of that method in investigating anything empirical. In this sense, a truly scientific approach to bigfoot or even fairies (and I know of no such truly scientific approach being tried on fairies by anyone favoring them) is on an equal footing with a scientific approach to anything else. What this scientific approach results in in the way of evidence and argument varies tremendously from field to field. The point is, one can do legitimate scientific investigation into the existence of even a unicorn. If unicorns do not exist (and I think they do not), that does not mean that a scientific research program investigating unicorns is pseudoscience; it should mean only that it should turn up negative results about the unicorn claim. Similarly, for me, Ufology can be a scientific research program even if never turns up a legitimate UFO. What makes a science a science is its method, not its conclusions about the state of reality. I think Klass considers Ufology a pseudoscience because it is studying a spurious phenomenon. I am willing to say that much ufology is pseudoscience because it misapplies the scientific method, that is, does not really use the method properly. But that is a matter of how the method is used and not a matter of the conclusions reached about UFOs. There are crackpots and cranks in the world. I don't treat all claimants equally. And there are cranks and even crackpots among the critics, and I don't treat them equally either.

The bottom line, Gary, is that I fundamentally believe in science. I believe that science really will lead us to the truth in a self-correcting way. I am not a skeptic towards scientific method. But I believe that skepticism is part of the scientific method (skepticism in the sense I mean it, doubting rather than denying). It is because of my wholehearted faith in science as a method that I do not fear dialogue with proponents of crazy-appearing ideas so long as their proponents are willing to play by the rules of science in seeking to make their case. If Hynek ends up showing that he will not play by those rules, I will certainly not hesitate in saying so and moving to exclude him from the dialogue. But so far, I have seen more infringements and more of what I would call violations of proper science by Klass than I have by Hynek. Nonetheless, I would still include Klass as well as Hynek in the dialogue, for I think both are sincerely trying to play within the scientific rules. I don't like some things both have done, but neither of them has yet, to my knowledge, done anything like fudge data or intentionally lie about evidence.

Again, I am sorry about mislaying your statement, and look forward to seeing another copy which I will take far better care of.

Sincerely,


Marcello Truzzi



Eastern Michigan University

Ypsilanti, Michigan 48197

Nov. 20, 1982

Dear Gary,

Re your letter of Nov. 13, I presume that my last letter to you which apparently must have crossed with your letter, deals with some of the points in your Nov. 13 letter re my exchange with Klass and Hynek. Also, you should have by now received a copy of my last letter to Phil.

But in any case, there is little point in pursuing any discussion of my wording re my offered NAS deal for Phil and Allen if in fact --as it now appears-- Phil is fundamentally (in terms of my perception of what I thought he was earlier offering) changing matters. Also, I have yet to hear from Hynek on all this. So, I will not go into the details of your letter unless it seems practical towards getting a negotiation between Phil and Allen at some future point.

Since whatever deal emerges, it must be between Phil and Allen, and since Phil did not raise quite the same point you do, the main thing must be whatever they agree to with each other. However, to hit your central point for our own perhaps better communication, let me say a short reaction. If by UFO we mean what you prefer that it means, that is something really extraordinary, your reasonable doubt criterion being placed on Hynek is not unreasonable (though there are some problems with it). But the deal between Hynek and Klass does not revolve around the UFO definition that you have been putting together. Klass's original offer concerned a literally "unknown" phenomenon. That is, Hynek was not required in that deal to convince the NAS that a UFO was anything more than a puzzle phenomenon. So, Hynek was not asked to establish a positive claim (that a UFO was anything in particular, only that it represented something unknown). In that case, the positive claim would really be on Klass's side (that it was something prosaic and not unknown). For that, the burden would have to be on Klass, and that would have to be beyond a reasonable doubt. You have, I think, inadvertently jumped to your own definition of a UFO which is not the same thing as what Klass and I had been speaking of in our earlier letters.

At heart, our problem is that the one ^{claiming} claiming a UFO is literally that, an unexplained phenomenon without any connotations (e.g., importance, etc.) attached to it; such a UFO claim is in fact not a positive claim at all. Saying a question exists is not providing any sort of answer. The burden falls on the UFO claimant only when that claimant makes a positive claim (e.g., that the thing was extraterrestrial or a batch of bugs or a plasma, etc.). To even say it is a "jealous phenomenon" is making more of a positive claim than I would make since it says more than that a puzzle exists. He who says a puzzle exists does this by showing the inadequacies of the proposed solutions which are the possible claims. The reasons for thinking UFOs might be important is largely an extra-scientific matter (e.g., the military might conceive that they could be threatening). Since they are "unidentified," they might be quite unimportant. Hynek thinks they are real and important; I think they are probably real but possibly unimportant (with no reason at present for me to think they are especially important).

Department of Sociology
(313) 487-0012

Sincerely,

Marcello Truzzi

P.S. I wonder if you have read Michael Martin's "Defining UFO" in ZETETIC SCHOLAR #9?

GARY P. POSNER, M.D.
6219 PALMA DEL MAR BLVD. #210
ST. PETERSBURG, FLORIDA 33715

November 27, 1982

Dear Marcello,

Yes, our letters have been crossing in the mail recently. Again today, I mailed my 11/26 letter in the early P.M. only to find yours of 11/20 in the late P.M. mail. This will therefore be my last letter for a while.

Hopefully this will not be my last letter, period. But unless you, Phil, and Hynek agree on a workable definition of "UFO", this just may be. I cannot justify spending any more time debating the "UFO" issue if, to you, "UFO" simply means "an unexplained phenomenon without any connotations (e.g. importance, etc.) attached to it".

Every time I move my eyes, several very tiny vitreous floaters cause me to see small black dots moving across my field of vision. But, I must confess, I have not had an ophthalmologist confirm that I have floaters, so, technically, the source of these black spots remains "unexplained". And, even if I were found to definitely have floaters, this does not prove that every time I see such a black dot, it is because of a floater. Perhaps on rare occasion I am actually seeing a beacon being shined in my eyes by inhabitants of a parallel universe. Accordingly, you may, if you wish, consider this paragraph to be a "UFO" report submitted by me to CSAR for possible study.

Your letter of 11/20 again, as I have charged previously, turns the scientific method on its head. Hynek, the UFO proponent, is portrayed as one who isn't necessarily proposing anything of any scientific importance. He is portrayed as merely representing the view that not every UFO report on file has been disproven with certainty. Although Phil and I believe that all UFO reports are potentially explainable in prosaic terms (given sufficient data), we agree that not all reports have yet been completely explained to the satisfaction of all. Thus we grant this spurious case for "UFO" reality (although I think Hynek has made it clear that he believes the phenomenon to be of major scientific significance), and there is thus no need for NAS or anyone else to waste time discovering the obvious.

Your use of the term "puzzle phenomenon" is puzzling to me (like your use of "skeptical", "agnostic"). But let's not waste time on that. If you really wish to be an honest broker, contributing to a new bipartisan effort to study and possibly solve the UFO question, with or without NAS assistance, you cannot seriously take the position that the UFO skeptics are actually the "proponents" (of "pseudo-explanations") with the burden of proof on their shoulders, while the UFO proponents are merely staters of the obvious (i.e. that not every

single visual image perceived by the inhabitants of this planet has been completely explained), thus bearing no burden to prove anything.

You and I have been attempting to hammer out a bipartisan Statement for several months. This Statement contains a new comprehensive, workable, practical definition of "UFO" which you helped author. Yet you now, in your letter of 11/20, chide me for having "inadvertently jumped to your own definition of a UFO which is not the same thing as what Klass and I had been speaking of..."

If you are employing one definition in our negotiations, and a totally different one in your negotiations with Phil, then I cannot any longer be a party to whatever you are up to. Before either our proposed Committee, or an NAS study, can be seriously considered, we must first have a workable definition of "UFO". The one offered in your letter of 11/20 is not acceptable. As Phil noted in a recent letter to you, even a man on stilts would fit within that definition, unless he were to be found with his stilts.

If you can accept our new joint definition of "UFO" as the basis for our Statement and proposed Committee, why can't you accept it as the basis for the proposed NAS study? To do so would accomplish the following:

- (1) Provide a comprehensive, practical, workable definition (yours of 11/20 is neither practical nor workable, since all are agreed that such "UFOs" exist)
- (2) Place the burden of proof properly on those who propose the extraordinary hypothesis, i.e. Hynek et al. (presently, you place the burden on the skeptics of the extraordinary claim)
- (3) Assure that an affirmative finding by NAS (or our proposed Committee) would have significance, justifying further scientific study of the UFO phenomenon, perhaps by a government-funded body (by your 11/20 definition, Klass and I already grant "UFO" reality, but as per your definition, "without any connotations (e.g. importance, etc.) attached to it"; thus not offering any justification for a government-funded study)

I have not read Michael Martin's "Defining UFO", and would appreciate a copy. But unless it is nearly identical to our joint definition in the Statement, it is probably not a workable one. Why don't you write a "Defining UFO" column in the next Z.S., employing our joint definition?

Since the adrenaline is now pumping freely, and I don't intend to write for a while, let me get everything off my chest regarding your letter of Nov. 15, which I only touched upon in my letter of yesterday:

(1) I haven't yet read Paul McCarthy's dissertation. I have asked Phil to lend me his only copy, which he will shortly be sending me by registered mail, along with his response to McCarthy's charges. Have you ever read his response? And isn't it true that McCarthy was a hard-core UFO "believer" prior to having chosen his thesis topic?

(2) You refer to "some of the personal things that have allegedly happened between them (Hynek and Klass)". What spe-

his response to these charges?

(3) About the Carter "UFO" you say "But if Venus is being claimed, that object should match the description given. Unfortunately, that is not always the case. Thus, (Sheaffer's explanation)...leaves a number of loose ends unaccounted for...Yet, even so, I recognize that we will probably never completely tie up all the loose ends for all the cases. I don't really insist on an air-tight case being made."

Enclosed is a copy of a Hendry article from IUR, highlighting why you are wrong in your assumption that if Carter merely saw Venus, "that object should match the description given". Taking Hendry's points into account, not to mention the testimony of the man who was standing next to Carter during the sighting (who saw only a bright star-like object, precisely where Venus was shining brilliantly), where are the "loose ends" in the case, even if you don't really insist that they all be tied anyway? Do you disagree with Hendry's analysis, and prefer to believe that what Hendry thinks was an advertising plane was in fact a "puzzle phenomenon"? Is the Carter "UFO" now "explained" to your satisfaction, or is it a "puzzle phenomenon", with Venus being only a "pseudo-explanation"?

(4) You say "But we don't have a right...to close the door for future investigation..." Question: Who is advocating "closing the door..."? Certainly not Klass nor myself.

(5) You say "I do think that there are anomalous things (a residue of yet unexplained adequately things) going on (in Ufology)". Please list for me your (not Hynek's) few best "unexplained" cases. And if you would please, estimate the probability that the case represents something of genuine scientific importance (e.g. Gill case---hoax 10%; secret US or USSR device 70%; ETSpace-ship 20%).

(6) I haven't read your editorials in Z.S. I would appreciate copies.

(7) You say "In this sense, a truly scientific approach to bigfoot or even fairies...is on an equal footing with a scientific approach to anything else."

Given the economic times, would you agree that funding for scientific research for a cure for cancer deserves priority over funding for UFO, bigfoot, or fairy research? On a continuum of 0-100, please rate the relative importance that you ascribe to the scientific study of various topics (e.g. Cancer-100; Herpes-90; UFOs-80; Bigfoot-60; Fairies-3; etc.) I am truly interested to see how you rate UFOs in comparison to the others.(and let's not forget unicorns).

(8) You say "I am willing to say that much of ufology is pseudoscience because it misapplies the scientific method..."

Although I level a similar charge against you, when have you proclaimed publically that the prominent ufologists are much engaging in pseudoscience (specific examples please)?

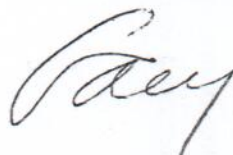
(9) You say "But so far, I have seen more infringements and more of what I would call violations of proper science by Klass than I have by Hynek." Please list 1 or 2 (or 100) of Klass' violations (specifics, please). And as Klass mentioned in a recent letter to you, it would seem that Scientific American, The New York Times, etc. disagree with your assessment. Can you hazard a guess as to why?

Although I believe that you are being as honest and sincere as you can be in dealing with the UFO question, it seems to me that contrary to the ideals of skepticism and science (which dictate a negative bias toward UFO reality), you have a positive bias. In your effort to internally rationalize this bias, you choose to define "UFO" in such a way as to make the skeptics bear the burden of disproving each and every report, while the proponents bear no burden to prove anything, since all they do is state the obvious. But you then unrationalize by admitting that you don't really insist on all loose ends being tied, and you assist me in properly defining "UFO" in a workable way that restores the proper scientific context.

And after devoting many years of your professional life to the study of anomalies like UFOs, while urging that scientific research projects be organized to further study them, you admit that there is really "no reason at present for me to think they are especially important".

I freely admit that I find you to be an enigma. You've got me stumped. Perhaps your response to this letter (and that of yesterday) will help unravel the mysterious phenomenon (perhaps worthy of NAS study) that is Marcello Truzzi.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Paul".