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Heaven's Gate: Gateway to the Soul

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Most analysts of the alleged Heaven's Gate mass suicide cite its oddity, its bizarreness, its deviancy. A few more informed analysts cite its notoriety as a sure sign of its commonality. For couldn't the Introduction to Psychology courses offered by most United States universities and colleges easily be renamed *The Mass Suicide of Everyday Life*? The courses include the quick suicides by gun, gas, or drugs. The slow suicides through overeating and undereating, through the choices of diet which are too healthy or unhealthy, through overindulging in alcoholic beverages and other psychoactive substances, through the poisoning of our planet with toxic wastes and wasteful management of natural resources, through risky sexual practices, through the maintenance of belief systems which perpetuates violent conflict. Certainly the belief demands and demand expectations of popular and respected religious ideologies are no stranger than those of Bo and Peep and have brought death to Believers and Unbelievers alike. Does all of this suggest impending species suicide? The true lesson of Heaven's Gate is that an unwelcome part of ourselves cannot long be left in the dark--whether behind a comet or within our souls.

(See de Mause, L. (1996.) *The staging of fetal traumas in war and social violence*. *Pre- and Peri-Natal Psychology Journal*, 10, 229-260; Engstrom, G., Alsen, M., Gustavsson, P., Schalling, D., et al. (1996.) *Classification of suicide attempters by cluster analysis: A study of the temperamental heterogeneity in suicidal patients*. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 21, 687-695; Lansky, M.R. (1996.) *Shame and suicide in Sophocles's Ajax*. *Psychoanalytic Quarterly*, 65, 761-786.) (Keywords: Cult, Suicide.)