

MAIL BAG

Correspondence is invited from our readers, but they are asked to keep their letters short. Unless letters give the sender's full name and address (not necessarily for publication) they cannot be considered. The Editor would like to remind correspondents that it is not always possible to acknowledge every letter personally, so he takes this opportunity of thanking all who write to him.

Dr. Hynek's article

Dear Sir, — I found Dr. J. Allen Hynek's article 'The UFO Phenomenon: Laugh, Laugh, Study, Study' in *FSR*, Vol. 27 No. 6, most intriguing because it gave a precise overview of his approach to the UFO subject.

However, I was puzzled by one or two points which I hope you can clear up for me.

In the first half of his article Dr. Hynek acknowledges that a majority of UFO misidentifications could be due to our worries about population, resources and technology and as such constitute 'signs of the times'. And he goes on to point out that an extreme orientation towards a belief in UFO visitors leads to the formation of "space people" cults led by people who claim visits to Mars and similar exotic locations.

To justify investigation into Ufology, other than by psychologists and sociologists, he points out that such 'emotional, even neurotic aspects of the UFO scene... impugn the integrity and perhaps the competence, of our scientists, pilots, engineers, and others judged sane and responsible who have related sober albeit incredible accounts of UFO encounters'.

So he makes a distinction between responsible, sane, "UFO observers" and emotional, mentally unstable, "UFO believers." Which goes along with his view that, with enough discriminative research and investigation, some aspects of a new empirical phenomenon will be found, eventually.

He then goes on to note the 'paradoxical dualistic' aspects of the sightings made by the responsible UFO observers e.g. they report seeing apparently physical objects which do not obey the known laws of physics.

This leads him to note that subjective variables are at work, indeed, he wonders if UFOs are 'events in the mind' generated by interlopers from some 'parallel reality'. He boldly states 'The UFO Phenomenon is experienced largely through human consciousness and the human psyche'.

It is at this point in his article I become puzzled. How does Dr. Hynek differentiate between "UFO obser-

vers" and "UFO believers" if there are subjective variables at work? From his text I can only see that the criteria depends on whether you are a scientist, pilot, engineer, or a similarly qualified person. But people who have such occupational roles are still subject to emotional problems, even delusions as in the case of Kelvin which Dr. Hynek mentions, as much as lesser mortals. Thus, why should events in their minds be any more valid than the mental events in the minds of the "UFO believers?" Because if we are being manipulated by external forces why should we attempt to use 'normal' standards of sanity and insanity, when we are not responsible for what we perceive in certain circumstances?

One argument might be that instrumental evidence supports the claims of the "UFO observers", but does not support the "UFO believers'" case. But in my opinion such evidence is poor, whichever cause it supports. In fact, Adamski's photographic evidence is as 'good' as anything anybody else has been able to provide!

If we are able to be ruled by parsimony of explanation, and employ the simplest possible explanation available, then it would seem that the two groups are experiencing the effects of the 'signs of the times' phenomenon to varying degrees depending on their psychological status. Such an explanation is efficient because it does not invoke the intervening variable of some 'external' force or forces involved in our cognitive processes, and can account for the paradoxical dualism inherent in many UFO reports.

I hope you can clarify some of the points made above.

Yours faithfully,
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July 2, 1982

Dr. Hynek's article

Dear Sir, — In his article, *The UFO Phenomenon: Laugh, Laugh, Study, Study* (Vol. 27, No. 6), Dr. Hynek claims that Claude Poher was able to show a statistical correlation between UFO events in France and the vertical component of the geomagnetic field as recorded at the Chambon-La-Forêt Geophysical Station. Poher certainly did claim 'a good statistical correlation between disturbances of the earth's [magnetic] field and UFO observations during one month in... 1954' (see C. Poher: 'Time Correlations Between Geomagnetic Disturbances and Eyewitness Accounts of UFOs' in *FSR*, Vol. 20, No. 1, pp 12-16), but that he demonstrated the correlation is doubtful.

1) Poher made a comparison between UFO reports emanating from an area up to 100km round Chambon-La-Forêt since 1886 (the date from which magnetic measurements were available) and 'abnormal' fluctuations of the field. He stated that the UFO reports came from 'private specialised organisations' but did not name them. We have no idea of the quality or reliability of these reports. He did not explain what was meant by 'abnormal' fluctuations nor did he describe the causes of normal fluctuations. The result of this study was that there was no direct correlation.

2) Despite this negative result, he proceeded to compare UFO reports for 1954 with recordings of the field at Chambon-La-Forêt. These UFO reports (635) came from all over France, none, so far as we know, from anywhere near the magnetic observatory. These reports were taken from Saunders' catalogue, but again we do not know the quality of the reports. His Figure 3 compares (for 1954) the number of disturbances of the magnetic field per month with the number of UFO reports per week. It shows a peak UFO report rate in October coinciding with a peak magnetic disturbance rate. But it also shows that another peak in the disturbance rate (in February and March) is *not* associated with any rise in the UFO report rate. Despite this Poher claimed 'a

good correlation for the two phenomena for the month of October'; such a correlation is meaningless if it is not consistent throughout the year!

3) A comparison was also made for the (peak) month of October (Figure 4), although Poher here refers to the 'distribution' of UFO observations. Since there are no data on the geographical distribution of the reports it is not clear what Poher means. Instead of comparing the number of UFOs per day with the number of disturbances of the magnetic field, Figure 4 compares the reports with the *intensity* of the disturbance on a particular day! It is not clear how this relates to the number of disturbances. Poher claimed that during the first half of October there was a 'fairly good correlation of reciprocal variations'! (I assume he means inverse correlation). His graphs shows both direct correlations (Oct 4) and inverse correlations (Oct 21); there is no overall correlation. What is clear is that while the number of UFO reports steadily declines during the month, the intensity of the field fluctuations remains fairly constant. What can be deduced from that? The whole graph is meaningless!

4) Interpreting his Figure 4, Poher claimed that with 40 visual observations (Oct 4?) the peak to peak disturbance of the field attains about 30 gammas ($1 \text{ gamma} = 7.957 \times 10^{-4} \text{ Am}^{-1}$). But Figure 4 shows that the disturbance of the field on October 4 was about 5 gammas! (It is not easy to read Poher's graphs.) From this conclusion Poher somehow constructed a log/log graph of the size of the field disturbance versus the distance of a UFO (*sic*) from the observatory at Chambon, this despite the fact that he had previously told us that the UFO reports around the observatory did not correlate with any disturbance of the field (item 1 above). If there was no correlation then Figure 5 could not be constructed. The source of the UFO data in Figure 5 is not given. While Poher infers that Figure 5 is constructed from the data in Figure 4 (based on the 635 French reports), his caption to Figure 5 indicates that it is based on the UFO reports he obtained from private UFO organisations! Furthermore, the limit lines, which Poher drew on Figure 5, do not appear to be justified by the data points plotted, and his conclusion that a UFO at 10km should produce a disturbance greater than 400 gammas is absolutely unjustified.

5) Poher offers no evidence that the variation in the strength of the magnetic field (as measured at Chambon) is at all related to any particular UFO event. He admits that since the observatory is surrounded by forest 50km across, no reports were received nearer than 30km. Since the field continually varies, for very many reasons, there is no reason to suppose that the fluctuations are related to the UFO phenomenon. There must be grave doubt that Poher's conclusions are valid, and a suspicion that the results are contrived to accord with a preconceived hypothesis.

Yours sincerely,
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July 4, 1982

The UFO Phenomenon: Just a tip of the Paraphysical Iceberg

Dear Sir, — I read with interest Dr. J. Allen Hynek's article entitled "The UFO Phenomenon: Laugh, Laugh, Study, Study" in FSR Vol. 27, No. 6.

Dr. Hynek is quite right in taking a dim view of the extraterrestrial hypothesis. In fact, this "nuts-and-bolts" theory has done enormous disservice to Ufology.

However, Dr. Hynek focuses on the UFO Phenomenon to the exclusion of other paranormal/religious phenomena. His attitude is understandable in view of his background, but his approach allows him to see only one tip of the Paraphysical Iceberg. There are many other tips that seem disparate but are in reality linked together in an invisible way: ghost hitchhikers (always female and solitary, appearing around midnight and to 2-door cars only), ghost airplanes/helicopters (always noiseless and without identification marks), lake monsters (appearing even in recently created artificial lakes), yetis (always leaving gigantic footprints that begin and end abruptly), men-in-black (always vanishing into thin air), Marian apparitions, miracle-healing, animal mutilations, spontaneous human combustion, poltergeists, mediumism, pseudo-coincidences, etc., to name just a few.

These individual tips are, however, of secondary importance. Of prime importance is the Invisible Iceberg it-

self. We must always bear in mind that the UFO Phenomenon is not an isolated, independent entity and that it is by no means celestially oriented. *The UFO Phenomenon may well turn up in our bedroom or bathroom!*

The UFO Phenomenon's physical/physiological effects vary widely from percipient to percipient and from case to case. This wide variation is deliberate and designed to *put us off the scent*.

Yours sincerely,
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July 11, 1982

Those Dinosaurs

Dear Sir, — In response to Mr. M. H. Martin's letter (FSR Vol. 27, No. 6) concerning the dinosaurs, I am inclined to ask timidly why we cannot propose — as one possible working hypothesis (I do not necessarily *believe* it) — that the Ufonauts are indeed descended from a reptile or other species that did evolve to a high level and long ago left this planet (or at least left its land-bound environment), only to return to visit it, off and on, over the 65 million years since the disappearance of the great reptiles?

Such a hypothesis would explain the physical structure of the foetus-like humanoids in abduction reports and alleged retrievals, would not require travel across vast stretches of interstellar Space, and would not have to appeal to time-travel and/or parallel universes.

Such a theory would presuppose that such a parallel evolutionary process would have produced a creature with a sophisticated technology, including seeming materialization/dematerialization capabilities, and an extensive knowledge of and use of *psi*. They would have appeared on the fringes of human history, would perhaps have influenced our genetic stock, and might have interfaced with us, as in the airship appearance of 1896-97.

This theory would only ask us to admit that we do not yet know the entire story of evolution on our planet.

Sincerely yours,
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September 18, 1982