

TWENTY-ONE YEARS OF UFO REPORTS - 2

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Concluding the address which Dr. Hynek gave at the AAAS Symposium at Boston, Mass., on December 26, 1969.

WHAT about patterns of UFO reports? How can we classify UFO reports as an aid to their study? Clearly, if each UFO report represents a unique happening, the UFO is not amenable to scientific study. Such a classification, however, must be free of any pre-conceived ideas as to the nature and cause of UFOs. Thus the classification must be observational; it should be akin to the state of the classification of stellar spectra in the days before we had a theory of stellar spectra, or somewhat like the classification of galaxies is today.

I have adopted a very simple classification system based solely on the manner of observation. Such a system tells us nothing, of course, about the nature of the UFO, but it can suggest a means of gathering further data.

An Observational Classification

There seem to be four basic ways in which the UFO presents itself, so to speak, for human observation: (1) As "Nocturnal Lights," the objects to which the lights are presumably attached being generally barely, if at all, discernible; (2) As "Daytime Discs," when the UFO generally, though not necessarily, appears as a disc or long oval; (3) As "Close Encounters" during day or night; these are sightings made at ranges of less than 1000 feet, and often accompanied by physical effects on the land, on plants and animals, and occasionally on humans; and (4) radar UFOs, a special subset of which is the radar-visual observation, an example of which I gave earlier. (See Part 1).

There is no attempt in this observational classification to be mutually exclusive. Clearly a nocturnal light might be a daylight disc in the daytime, or both might become close encounter, or radar cases.

Nocturnal Lights

Let us examine each category. The nocturnal light report offers the least potential for scientific study, as it has the least information elements and thus a low strangeness index. The nocturnal light UFO can be defined as a light or combination of lights whose kinematic behaviour passes through the filter; i.e. it cannot be logically ascribed to balloons, aircraft, meteors, planets, satellites, satellite re-entries, or

missiles. The experienced investigator generally has no difficulty with the screening process here. Years of checking enable him to filter these out almost at first glance. Of course, should a UFO choose to masquerade as a hot air balloon or a photographic night air exercise, there is no easy way of differentiation, at least as long as we are limited to observing from the ground. If we had immediate reaction capabilities, and could send an interceptor, then we could clear the matter up quickly or, perhaps, we would experience what has often been reported in the past twenty years: as the intercepting plane approaches the light in question, it either suddenly goes out or seems to take off and soon outdistances the investigator. In that event the originally reported NL earns its place among other members of the Nocturnal Light category.

As an example of this category we have a case I investigated personally, involving five witnesses, the senior witness being the long-time associate director of a prominent laboratory at MIT. The nocturnal light was first sighted by his son, who had been out airing the dogs. He came bounding into the house crying, "There's a flying saucer outside!" The senior observer picked up a pair of binoculars on his way out. He told me that he didn't expect to see anything unusual but was going out to see what the commotion was all about. For the following ten minutes he was engrossed by what he saw—the nature of the light, its motions, its hovering, and its take-off. He described the light as having a high colour-temperature although essentially a point source, subtending less than a minute of arc in the binoculars. The five observers were fortunately able to compare it to an airliner and a helicopter, both of which passed by during the observation interval and neither the motions nor lights of these craft bore any resemblance to those of the UFO, sub-class NL. The trajectory of the object was plotted against the framework of the branches of a denuded tree. This observer was a good one, and in his report included the condition of his eyes and that of members of his family. The adult observers were both far sighted and the senior observer wore glasses only for reading.

Incidentally, all my attempts as scientific consultant to the Air Force at that time, to mount a serious investigation of this case, came to naught. The Blue Book

evaluation is, however, Unidentified, but somehow the word *unidentified* is not a challenge to inquiry. It has been classified as *unidentified*, and therefore the case is solved—it has been identified as Unidentified!

So certain is the Air Force, at least publicly, that all UFO reports must represent normal things that they see no point to serious investigation. In most of the time I acted as consultant to the Air Force I repeatedly urged immediate reaction capability and proper scientific investigation, but to no avail.

Daylight Discs

The next classification category is the Daylight Disc. These are reported daylight sightings of objects seen at moderate distances. The prototype report runs something like this: I was driving along and there crossed over in front of me, a shiny metallic disc. It seemed about 500-1000 feet above the road. It came down fairly close to the ground, stopped and hovered with a wobbling motion and then took off with incredible speed, straight up, and was gone in a few seconds. There was no noise.

This daylight category quite understandably has more photographs to support it than all the others put together. An example is the McMinnville, Oregon case which the Condon Report lists as unsolved.

A photographic daylight disc case was reported by three prospectors in bush country near Calgary, Alberta. I personally investigated the terrain, the people, the negatives, and the camera. Mr. Fred Beckman of the University of Chicago and I have satisfied ourselves that the images on these colour negatives are real images. The terrain, the interrogations of the witnesses, plus the sworn affidavit of the principal witness all lead me to put this into the class of the McMinnville photos, but as with so many other cases, one is finally impaled by uncertainty.

These photographs do not stand alone, however. The published literature on UFOs is replete with such photographs. Some are patent hoaxes, but most have never been investigated sufficiently to rule out very sophisticated hoaxes. A hoax is all one has to rule out, however. For if the daytime photo shows any detail at all, aircraft and balloons etc., are immediately ruled out. The picture itself is sufficient to establish the strangeness index. It is the other coordinate, credibility, that is difficult. Proper interrogation, tracing of the processing history of the negative, microscopic and microphotometric examination of the negative plus proper psychological testing of the witnesses to the taking of the photograph, should serve to rule out all but the most highly sophisticated, expensive, and laboriously contrived hoaxes. Now in any one case it is clearly impossible ever to state unequivocally that a photo of a daylight disc is genuine, but I would submit that 25 such separate photographic cases, each subjected to exhaustive tests, would allow us to approach certainty asymptotically, so that we could say that the *probability* of a hoax in all 25 cases is vanishingly small.

Even so, this would not prove the existence of truly strange flying objects, but it should provide sufficient justification for the proper attention to the phenomenon by the scientific world. And that is, of course, all that I

advocate: that the subject of UFO reports is worthy of serious scientific attention. Inherent in the sheaves of UFO reports there may well be many doctoral dissertations for physicists, sociologists and psychologists alike. The problem is interdisciplinary, which because of the magic of that word, ought to get some of you grants!

Close Encounters

The third category of UFO reports, the Close Encounter, offers by far the greatest potential for scientific study. Since a close encounter obviously offers a greater chance for observation, we can expect, and we get, many more information elements, and hence a higher strangeness index.

It is in this category that the theory of simple misperception fails utterly in explaining *reports* of craft landing 100 feet away, of visible marks left on the ground, of animals and people visibly affected, and of automobiles temporarily stopped on the road. Here we must either say that the witnesses were mentally unbalanced or something most interesting actually happened. However, I am not taking sides; I am merely reporting to you what is reported, over the world, and by seemingly competent witnesses.

I divide the close encounter cases into three subdivisions: the close encounter, pure and simple; the close encounter with physical effects, and finally, the close encounter in which "Humanoids" or occupants enter the picture. It is the latter subgroup which of course has the highest strangeness index and frightens away all but the most hardy investigators. Since my role here is that of reporter, I would be neither a good reporter nor scientist were I to deliberately reject data. There are now on record some 1200 reports of close encounters, about half of which involve reported craft occupants. Reports of occupants have been with us for years but there are only a few in the Air Force files, for generally Bluebook summarily, and without investigation, consigned such reports to the "psychological" or crackpot category.

A prototype of the close encounter *per se* is that of witnesses driving along a lonely road when the driver spies a strange glare in his rear view mirror. He becomes frightened, increases his speed to over 100 mph, trying to outdistance the UFO, but cannot. He stops the car, and tries to take cover. Shortly the light goes away, rising and vanishing quickly in the distance. One can say that such witnesses were mentally unbalanced, but just try saying that to their faces, especially when you discover that they are respected members of their communities and hold responsible positions.

Now the close encounter with physical effects. This is the category which interests me the most, since the reported effects on animal, vegetable and mineral are potentially measurable. For instance, there are more than a hundred reports on record of UFOs that caused car ignition failures. The all too typical case runs something like this: Suddenly, as if from nowhere, a bright light appears and soon seems to seek out the witnesses' car. As it stops to hover over the car, the car lights dim or fail as the engine dies. Often the occupants of the car report feeling hot and prickly. After a few minutes the apparition leaves, and the car returns to