

MYOPIA

Dr. J. Allen Hynek

When he was lunching with us in London last September, Dr. Hynek gave us a copy of this excellent piece, which he has already used as an Editorial in his own Journal, *The International UFO Reporter*. — EDITOR.

SOME time ago a long-time Associate of the Center for UFO Studies, Mr. Herbert S. Taylor, of Ocean-side, N.Y., wrote to me about a letter he had written to Dr. Carl Sagan. He asked me to comment on it and on the reply he had received from Mr. Louis Friedman, Executive Director of the Planetary Society, which Dr. Sagan founded and heads.

Perhaps this editorial can serve as a belated reply to Mr. Taylor's letter, which I'm sure he would not mind sharing with our readers. "The letter," Taylor wrote, "pointedly challenged Dr. Sagan to defend his acute negative position in regard to the UFO problem. I asked *specific* questions concerning especially electromagnetic and physiological effects. I also referred to the Cash-Landrum case (a noted case of spectacular physiological effects). The reply was a distinct disappointment. He (Friedman) failed to respond to any of the specific questions I had posed. His response is a very peculiar justification for the absolute refusal of the bulk of the scientific community to actually study the FACTS of the UFO phenomenon. The strange insistence of these great purveyors of Truth to exclude that which does not fit their conception of reality still continues to dominate. How very sad! Would you care to comment on this pitiful situation?"

Here, first, is the gist of the reply Mr. Taylor received from the Planetary Society director:

"As to your wondering why the Planetary Society does not take the stories about UFO contacts more seriously, let me say that in all of the anecdotes about UFOs there has never been any credible physical evidence offered of extraterrestrial contact. It is ironic and indeed absurd to suppose that of all these extraterrestrial contacts they are made in such a way that people only have stories to tell and no evidence to show. The Planetary Society and the scientific community would be indeed excited to investigate serious physical evidence from a hypothesized extraterrestrial encounter."

What a myopic view! Unfortunately even the Planetary Society has not profited from the lessons of the History of Science. That is replete with sad stories of the failure of the scientific community of that day to take seriously proffered evidence because it did not fit the prescribed format. The roll call of those who have tried to call the attention of their peers to signs that portended breakthroughs in the scientific outlook is impressive: *Galileo, Pasteur, Semmelweis, Wegener, Fessenden* . . . and a host of others.

The History of Science has shown that it was not so much that evidence of something new on the horizon was not there, as it was of a *refusal to look* at the evidence because it wasn't in a form acceptable to the scientific critics of the day, or because it violated preconceived concepts. A notable example of the latter was the refusal of Galileo's peers to look through his telescope at sunspots because: "The Sun is the visible symbol of God; God is perfect, therefore the Sun is perfect and cannot have blemishes, and therefore there is no point in looking!"

We are all familiar with the "stones in the sky" story. Since it was obvious to all straight-thinking scientists of the 18th century that there couldn't be meteorites. But there *are* meteorites! The viewing angle on the phenomenon was wrong, that's all. There certainly weren't stones in the sky waiting to fall down on the Earth, but there were bits of matter, pursuing respectable orbits around the Sun, which occasionally collided with the Earth. But even though celestial mechanics was well developed by that time, no one thought of using that as an avenue of approach. Instead of saying: "Here we have a phenomenon: people of good repute have told us seemingly ridiculous stories of stones coming down from the sky. Indeed they have shown us samples of such stones (note; this evidence was not looked at but was dismissed as undoubtedly stones that had been struck by lightning! Similarly, evidence in UFO Physical Trace Cases has been dismissed either as the product of hoaxers or as the result of natural or man-made causes). What sort of theory might account for the *observed* phenomenon?" The scientific world of the day *refused to look* at the stories and the evidence, because such things just couldn't be, so why bother? Refusal to look has been a frequent roadblock in Science.

The great mistake in this case was the substitution of one particular theory of the meteorite phenomenon for the phenomenon itself. Is that not exactly what is being done by the scientific community of our day with respect to the UFO phenomenon? Refusal to study the ample evidence that is available simply because it does not seem to fit *one particular theory*, that of visitors from very far off places. Maybe that's the wrong "viewing angle". Shouldn't we rather say, "*Look, for the past three decades and more we have been confronted with a phenomenon which is intriguing: it is world-wide, involving different cultures, and the constant flow of reports contains those made by people of*

recognized skills and training and who are certainly sane and responsible as judged by their peers. Furthermore, these reports are not helter-skelter, but fall into well defined patterns. Let's try to find out what lies behind these stories and reports; there could be a scientific breakthrough somewhere in the wings."

Because we find ourselves in the dawn of the Space Age and have grown up in the Buck Rogers era of science fiction, we have jumped to the conclusion that UFOs must be space craft piloted by E.T.s. But may not this be just another "stone in the sky" situation? Maybe the viewing angle is wrong here too.

Shouldn't our proper approach here be to say, in effect, "Those who have studied the UFO phenomenon over the years and who themselves are scientifically competent (as are those scientists, currently working in many different disciplines, who are associated with recognized serious UFO investigative groups like CUFOS, MUFON, and APRO in this country and with the many similar groups in other countries) have told us that the UFO phenomenon is real and definitely worthy of scientific study. Various "viewing angles" should be explored, one of which should continue to be the possibility that UFOs may in some way not yet be understandable to present day science, represent extraterrestrial intelligences. But we should

not be provincial (!) in our outlook; we should also admit the possibility that the UFO phenomenon may be indicative of an aspect of reality which so far has eluded us. Perhaps we should go even further and admit the possibility that 20th century science is not adequate to conceive of the final solution of what lies behind the UFO phenomenon, any more than the science of the 19th century could have even remotely conceived of nuclear energy. But there will be, we hope, a 21st and a 25th century science which may be able to do so. But this should not be an excuse not to study the phenomenon itself. We should not be bound by the myopic view of the Planetary Society.

Indeed, the Planetary Society should be made aware of the growing number of scientists who are already taking a broader view of the UFO phenomenon. Perhaps the most noteworthy of these is the group initiated by Dr. Peter Sturrock, of Stanford University, the *Society for Scientific Exploration*, which is composed solely of scientists recognized in their own field of specialization, and which seeks to explore those borderland areas of science (UFOs among them) which as yet have not been admitted onto the playing field of orthodox science. In that direction lie the breakthroughs which will become a part of the science of the next century.

SOME REFLECTIONS ON CHARLES FORT: THE WORCESTER FISHMONGER & THE NORFOLK GAMEKEEPER

Jean Sider

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"Science concerns itself with adaptations, and science itself is adaptation." CHARLES FORT: *The Complete Works of Charles Fort*. Dover Publication, New York, 1974, (p. 625).

THROUGHOUT our whole world there is a plethora of fishmongers and gamekeepers — tossed out as fodder for the naive and ignorant masses of mankind. The folk responsible for dishing up this phoney pabulum are those whose function it is to be the servile zealots of our obstructionistic and occlusionistic Science. This Science, since the dawn of time, has always aimed to keep the masses in a permanent state of mental sterility. And more and more frequently these

people are called upon to cover up certain facts for which Dame Nature herself cannot conceivably be held responsible, and they do it with a degree of cynicism and a degree of impudence that are downright breathtaking.

Hitherto we had habitually been inclined merely to view with contempt this technique of theirs for explaining away the unexplainable, but today our con-