

Group Will Probe UFOs And Such

A new national scientific society is being formed to create a serious forum for discussion of such controversial phenomena as unidentified flying objects, extra-sensory perception and other forms of parapsychology, a Stanford University physicist announced yesterday.

Peter A. Sturrock, professor of space science and astrophysics at Stanford and president of the new organization, called the Society for Scientific Exploration, described its aims yesterday in the journal of the American Association for the Advancement of Science.

The group includes strong disbelievers in UFOs and other "anomalous" phenomena. Two of them are philosopher Paul Kurtz of the State University of New York in Buffalo, who heads a "Committee for the Scientific Investigation of Claims of the Paranormal," and University of Washington psychologist Ray Hyman.

But the organization also includes some staunch advocates of the "paranormal" like J. Allen Hynek, a Northwestern University astronomer and an outspoken supporter of UFO research, and Charles Tart of the University of California at Davis, a psychology professor who conducts parapsychological research.

In his announcement of the group's founding Sturrock said: "The society has no intention of endorsing the reality or significance of any particular topic. On the other hand, no subject will be prohibited from discussion or publication simply because it is not now an accepted part of scientific or scholarly knowledge.

"We anticipate that most members will take the point of view that any purported anomalous phenomenon is unlikely to be real, but honest evidence concerning any of them deserves open investigation without prejudice."

The new society will publish a journal, hold annual meetings and subject all claims of "paranormal" phenomena to "the normal processes of open publication, debate and criticism," Sturrock said.

The group's members include physicists, astronomers, anthropologists, physicians, philosophers, psychologists and sociologists, and most of them are "completely uncommitted," Sturrock said.