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and a parallel reality.•

ANTI MATTER

Close Encounters of the Third Kind and *E.T.* suggest that UFOs are space vehicles piloted by extraterrestrials. This simplistic solution to the UFO problem is summarily rejected by most physical scientists—and with good reason. Even the most sophisticated propulsion devices could not cover the astronomical distances involved in any reasonable length of time. In addition, our sophisticated surveillance systems have yet to detect any UFOs approaching or departing from the earth.

And having come from vast distances, UFOs make such poor use of their short visits. So unlike us! We would land prominently, bearing gifts and papers to establish our credibility. They favor lonely roads, late night hours, and few witnesses.

Though these factors argue against an extraterrestrial explanation, they do not demolish the reality of the UFO phenomenon. UFO sightings continue to be reported from all over the world by military and commercial pilots, engineers, technicians, and other people judged sane and responsible. UFOs just won't go away.

The inconsistency of the situation, of course, begs some questions: Why are there UFO reports in the first place? Why not reports of pink elephants, for instance, or fiery dragons? What sorts of people make UFO reports? Under what conditions were the UFO sightings made? And how can we explain UFO photographs, inexplicable radar blips, and other bits of physical evidence?

The questions are so diverse that research could be



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conducted by any number of professionals: physicists, astronomers, sociologists, psychiatrists, or theologians.

The best person to investigate these questions, however, might be the ufologist—someone who applies his particular expertise to the study not of UFOs (we have none in captivity) but to the myriad reports of UFO encounters.

As far as I'm concerned, studying such reports may open a whole new arena of which we are only dimly aware. The key to this alternate reality might lie in the ephemeral nature of UFOs. Much like the

Cheshire Cat in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, UFOs appear spontaneously within a limited area, remain visible for a short time, and then disappear without a trace.

This peculiar behavior reminds us of the duality of light, which acts either as a wave or a particle, depending on the particular situation.

Can the UFO likewise have two aspects? Can it be an interface between our reality and a parallel reality, the door to another dimension? Surely we haven't had our last revolution in scientific thought, twenty-first-, twenty-fifth-, or thirtieth-century science may well hold concepts as unintelligible to us as nuclear energy would have been to the caveman.—J. ALLEN HYNEK

Editors' note: J. Allen Hynek is director of the Center for UFO Studies, in Evanston, Illinois. This is the first of a two-part debate on the meaning of UFOs. Next month, Omni will print a response from UFO skeptic James Oberg.