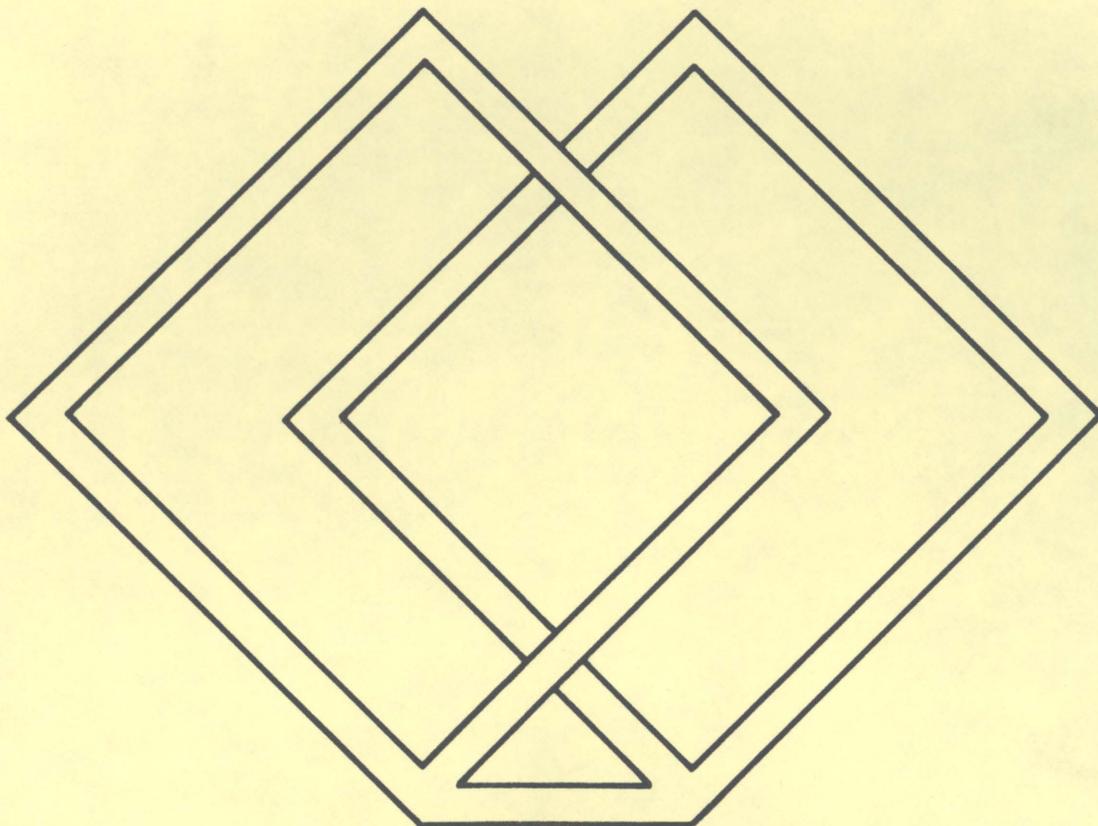


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Editorial

by John Prytz

UFOLOGY: THE PERSONAL ELEMENT

Most people, including professional scientists, do things because they find those particular somethings interesting, not because what they do has potential significance out of all proportion to the time, cost and effort spent. Two scientists can be equally absorbed into, and satisfied by, research into a cure for cancer, and research into trilobite evolution. Yet clearly in today's society, the former is considered significant (even Nobel Prize stuff), the latter trivial, perhaps quaint, and of no relevance.

Ufologists too, for the most part, no doubt approach their subject without much real regard to the concept of significance. That is not the driving factor; something uppermost in a typical ufologist's mind. Ask that ufologist why he/she studies UFOs, and you would probably get a response akin to "because it is.....interesting". Interesting though UFO research is, what is the significance of that research?

To the minds of many scientists, politicians, and the public, UFO research probably doesn't rate very highly on society's significance chart. UFO research is just busy work for UFO buffs (keeps them

off the streets and out of trouble); an employment spinner for various publishing firms; fillers for bored journalists and interviewers; a topic for student term papers; a conversation piece at parties, etc.. So what? Who really cares when all is said and done? Surely it can't rate with real science; important science; future-destiny-at-stake sort of science or issues. UFO research has no real significance to today's world! Or does it?

What do ufologists feel like (after having a stop and think about it)? Like someone doing something akin to stamp collecting, only more off-beat, or something as romantic as chasing after the elusive perfect trilobite specimen, or something as potentially significant as cancer research? Upon reflection, it will probably be the latter. Why? Because the UFO subject is highly significant - perhaps one of the most significant problems facing society today!

"If the objects the witnesses have reported are actually maneuverable air or spacecraft, they would seem to represent something that is foreign to every nation on Earth. If they are natural phenomena, they are strangers to our sciences. If they are in the minds of the beholder, they represent depths of the human spirit that have so far been largely unexplored. They are worthy of serious attention. For when we have finally learned the truth about the myriad UFO sightings, we may well have learned important new truths about ourselves, our world, or even, despite all the arguments against it, about worlds that lie among the stars." §

So ufology is not just a hobby (though hobby it is), nor just a romantic pastime (though the romantic element is there), but an intellectual pursuit of great personal interest, great "job" satisfaction, and great potential significance to society.

So when the going gets a bit tough; "friends" give you that all-knowing funny look, just remember you are a part of not only one of the greatest adventures in an academic sense, but part and parcel of what could prove very well to be one of the most significant research projects in the history of mankind. And the personal potential exists that you could yet be to ufology, what so many amateurs have proven to be to hundreds of other highly significant fields of human inquiry.

Ufology is that important, which makes you that important too!

THE CHANGING SHAPE OF UFOLOGY

by Cassandra Sowiak-Rudej.

The 'proper', 'scientific' study of UFOs requires a classification system. In order to be studied, a problem has to be defined, the range of acceptable data specified, and spurious information rigorously excluded. The resulting coherent and limited body of information can only then be analysed, manipulated, moulded to various trial theories and finally explained.

As with many disciplines, this 'shape' of ufology has changed over time, with significant differences in the classifications adopted, differences not only of wording, but of content. At first, this may seem a normal, and minor, evolution. Similar changes have, after all, occurred in physics, biology and other fields of study; as greater understanding was attained, the concepts had to be modified, the definitions expanded and reviewed, the new knowledge incorporated.

But why, then, should UFO classifications change? Do we have greater understanding of the phenomenon, new knowledge of the system under study?

Apparently not, and yet a comparison of three well-recognised classification systems, those of Jacques Vallee, J Allen Hynek and ACUFOS, will demonstrate the changes I refer to. The main categories of each system are defined below.

A. Vallee, (1966) recognised five UFO categories:

Type 1: the observation of an unusual object, spherical, discoidal or more complex in form, on or close to the ground (maximum: tree height). This image may or may not be associated with 'traces' - physical effects of a thermal, luminous, or purely mechanical order.

Type 2: the observation of an unusual object, with vertical cylindrical formation, in the sky, associated with a diffuse cloud. This phenomenon has been given various names, such as 'cloud-cigar' and 'cloud-sphere'.

Type 3: the observation of an unusual object of spherical, discoidal or elliptical shape stationary in the sky, or objects seen in flight whose trajectories show at least one point of discontinuity.

Type 4: the observation of an unusual object moving continuously through the air, regardless of its accelerations, variations in colour, or rotations.

Type 5: the observation of less definite objects that do not, either because of unfavourable observing conditions or by the very nature of the phenomenon, appear as material or solid in structure. (Vallee 1967)

B. Hynek, (1972) recognised six UFO categories:

1. NOCTURNAL LIGHTS, those seen at night at a distance.

2. DAYLIGHT DISCS, so called because the prevalent shape reported is oval or disc-like.

3. RADAR-VISUAL, those reported through the medium of radar, when visual observations accompany the radar observation.

4. CLOSE ENCOUNTERS of the FIRST KIND. This category is the simple close encounter in which the reported UFO is seen at close range, but there is no interaction with the environment (other than trauma on the part of the observer).

5. CLOSE ENCOUNTERS of the SECOND KIND: these are similar to the first kind, except that physical effects on both animate and inanimate material are noted.

6. CLOSE ENCOUNTERS of the THIRD KIND: in these cases the presence of occupants in or about the UFO is reported. The so-called contactee cases are 'stopped at the gate' by the screening process. (Hynek 1972)

C. ACUFOS (1976) recognised eleven UFO categories:

1. NOCTURNAL, refers to sightings, other than CEs, that occur at night.
2. DAYLIGHT, refers to sightings, other than CEs, that occur in daylight.
3. INSTRUMENT READINGS or TRACE only, refers to cases such as trace cases without a directly associated UFO. Cases of anomalous photographic images also fall into this category.
4. CLOSE ENCOUNTERS, Type 1, as defined by Hynek.
5. CLOSE ENCOUNTERS, Type 2, as defined by Hynek.
6. ENTITY REPORT, Class A: this covers a report in which an entity is seen inside, leaving or entering or in close proximity, implying 'occupancy'. This entity can be human, humanoid, anthropoid or monster-like in appearance. The distance between the observer and the UFO-related entity is of no effect.
7. ENTITY REPORT, Class B: this covers a report where an entity is observed without an associated UFO, but where the entity is similar to a type which has been reported in association with a UFO previously.
8. ENTITY REPORT, Class C: this covers a report where an entity is observed, but no association between the entity and the UFO phenomenon can be established at the moment.
9. ENTITY REPORT, Class D: this covers reports of purely (seemingly) telepathic, audio or 'invisible' beings' communications, which have some bearing on the UFO phenomenon. (This includes some contactees, and Bedroom Invaders).
10. RADAR and VISUAL, refers to any sighting where the UFO is detected by both methods together.
11. MISCELLANEOUS, refers to any sighting related to the UFO phenomenon that does not fit any other category. (ACUFOS 1979)

To facilitate comparison, Table 1. juxtaposes the corresponding categories of each system.

The major change, immediately apparent to the eye, is the addition of the categories relating specifically to occupants or entities. In Vallee's system, entity cases are included in Type 1 events, with the description "craftlike objects whose occupants displayed interest in the witness by gestures or luminous signals" (1967: 218). That is the only mention of such events, and it forms one sub-category of the class. In Hynek's system, entity reports are elevated to a class of their own, Close Encounters of the Third Kind. This category accepts cases of entities either in or near the UFO; contactee cases, however, are not accepted because, according to Hynek, they violate the basic requirement of reporter credibility.

In ACUFOS's system, the entity reports are divided into four distinct classes of their own, encompassing not only entities seen with UFOs, but those with no apparent connection to the topic. Most contactee cases, however, are still beyond the pale.

Conversely, Vallee's categories have been condensed, most of them now lumped together as Daylight sightings. His original distinctions between those that hovered or moved continuously, and those that displayed a falling leaf motion or zigzagged are no longer seen as essential to classification. But what about the cloud cigars? In the 1950's and 60's they were common, frequent; they warranted a category of their own; and they had a profound impact on the popular UFO legend. These cloud cigars were no ordinary disc-shaped object, they were massive, vertical "clouds", that moved against the wind, executed right angle turns, and most amazing, disgorged smaller disc UFOs, and occasionally reintegrated them before departing. They were the stimulus for the notion of scout craft and mother ships, a notion that overcomes much of the "too far to travel" and "embarrassment of riches" objection of non-believers.

TABLE 1 A Comparison of UFO Classification Systems.

Vallee	Hynek	ACUFOS	Major Changes
Type 1	CE1, 2	CE1, 2	
Type 2	DD	D	*
Type 3	DD	D	
Type 4	DD	D	
Type 5	DD, NL	D, N	
	RV	RV	
	CE3	ERA	
		ERB	*
		ERC	*
		ERD	*
		I	*
		M	

However, they seem to be a thing of the past. To my knowledge, only three or four have ever been reported in Australia. Our system does not lead to their recognition either: of the 475 cases on the ACUFOS computer file at November 1980, 46 were recorded as sightings of cigar shaped objects, but no distinction is made between those that were vertical and those that were horizontal, those that were associated with clouds and those that were not.

The point to be considered is "Why?". Why the loss of interest in cloud cigars? Why the increase in the emphasis on entity cases? And it seems to me that there are four possible answers, reflecting differing views as to the nature of ufology.

First, we are including into the subject material that was previously 'taboo'. That is, the scope of the definitions of ufology has increased; cases that were once immediately and scornfully consigned to the waste paper basket are now given serious consideration. They may even be regarded as the core of the subject, so that earlier priorities, e.g. cloud cigars, are no longer worthy of special attention.

Second, more entities are seen now than before. That is, the actual, real nature of the subject has changed; this change has been perceived and accepted, and, consequently, the shape of the subject has altered. This view endorses an objective existence to UFOs, or EIT.

Third, the UFO fantasy has evolved. That is, the mind generates images in response to a yet poorly understood stimulus, and these images change over time. In the past, the sight of an unusual object was sufficient for the purpose; now, the mind wants, expects, and gets, aliens themselves. This view endorses a subjective existence to UFOs, or IIT.

Fourth, the classification systems reflect only the individual bias of the creator. That is, ufology is arbitrarily defined out of the welter of the unexplained, and different classifiers will almost necessarily select and reject different parts of the overall data available. This view suggests that the systems have no relation to any actual UFO phenomenon, and that any changes in the system cannot, therefore, be used to deduce anything about the phenomenon.

On the objective level, we thus have a choice between acceptance of entity activity all along, or a recent upsurge in such activity. On the subjective level, we have a choice between fantasy changes in the population at large, or in individual researchers. Each of these, if proven, could have a great impact on our studies.

A look at the data available shows that there was a slight increase in the number of entities reported in the years 1969 to 1972, and then a decrease again (Basterfield 1980). Since 1978, only one entity report has been entered on to the computer file, which is current to 1980. This would seem to support the idea that entity cases have been a recent addition to the UFO phenomenon, but it is not conclusive.

Popular belief, on the other hand, strongly endorses the opinion that previous studies such as the Condon Report refused to look at such reports, and that it is our acceptance levels and not the activity levels that have changed.

Personally, I incline to the first proposition, that we are admitting material that was previously taboo. And I feel that it is a step in the right direction.

But only a step. We are still defining the limits of the subject to exclude that which we cannot accept: the contactee element. These cases seem so ridiculous, so implausible; they make a mockery of many of our theories, and so we shape our ufology around them.

But supposing that unwanted fragment of the picture does belong to our jigsaw puzzle after all? Perhaps it's time to experiment with another change of shape.

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THE CHANGING SHAPE OF UFOLOGY

comment by Frank Gillespie.

The outstanding feature of all the contactee cases which have come to my attention, is their mutual exclusiveness. Accept any one case as genuine, and you have to discard all the rest because of the large number of significant points of incompatibility.

Of course there is the alternate view, that some, if not all of the contactees are genuine, but that they have been fed a pack of lies by the contacting entity. In fact, the disparities between contactee accounts are so great, it seems likely that the situation is deliberately contrived. This, by itself, is sufficient reason to agree with Cassandra, that contactee cases should be brought within the ambit of ufology.

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In a recent article (ACUFOS Journal, July/Aug. 1982 - p.3-6) I set forth the basics of the (Sir Fred) Hoyle and (N. Chandra) Wickramasinghe theory on the origin of life. They have revised the long out-of-date Panspermia hypothesis - the seeding of life from space - but this time through close encounters of cometary bodies and materials with the Earth billions of years ago. Comets are known to be rich in many of the appropriate organic chemical compounds suggestive of such an origin.

So what? Of what interest is this to a ufologist?

The potential significance to ufology, should their theory (or variations on it) be correct, is that the prevalence of life in the universe increases by orders of magnitude. Many potentially suitable planetary environments may never have developed biospheres without such seedings - and cometary objects are not just (our) interplanetary travellers but interstellar travellers (some of which are captured by stellar objects and systems). Any increase in the number of extraterrestrial biospheres increases the odds that extraterrestrial intelligence (ETI) exists. The relative abundance of ETI is used (frequently) in debating the pros and cons of the UFO extraterrestrial hypothesis (ETH).

Apart from that, ufologists are also human beings - biological organisms - who should have an interest in their own health, the health of others, and the overall health of Earth's biosphere. You see...

Hoyle and Wickramasinghe have gone on, as my earlier paper details, to suggest the obvious logical extrapolation; that is, that if then - 3 to 4 billion years ago - then now. Specifically, the seeding continues even today and that this is largely responsible for the origin, geographical distribution, and re-appearances of various disease epidemics/pandemics such as influenza. Their ideas on, and evidence for, "germs from the skies" can be had by reading their book titled Diseases From Space (J.M. Dent, London - 1979).

Meantime, I shall return to their basic theme in this article in search of further evidence.

Most of you would probably think that medical doctors and medical science, given the amount and level of medical research conducted into this and that, and which has resulted in the production of multi-millions of academic papers, would have a pretty fair grip on the basic factors central to the origin and spread of diseases. In the main, you'd be quasi-correct - but only just. The medical profession is light years away from explaining, far less curing, all that needs to be explained and cured - even when dealing with long established and familiar illnesses such as the cruel and relentless muscle-wasting disorder known as amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS), better known as Lou Gehrig's disease, or the sudden infant (cot) death syndrome.

Were all illnesses established ones, medical science would no doubt sooner or later explain and cure all - and in so doing, do themselves out of a job! But new and mysterious illnesses often crop up out of seemingly nowhere. Consider the puzzling disease AIDS or genital herpes or toxic shock syndrome or the ever new and deadly strains of flu as recent examples if you're a "doubting Thomas". But here I hint a bit and jump the gun.

Now if Hoyle and Wickramasinghe are correct, one should find, without a superhuman effort, a reasonable number of references to weird and wonderful new diseases of unexplained origin and/or distribution.

This is the exercise I set myself - the results included in this paper. Now I'm no medical doctor, and I have little access to the technical medical literature (which I wouldn't understand anyway). Thus, I turned to the mass media (which I do understand and do have access to) to see if such technical references (if any) were reflected via the press.

What I did was a 5 1/2 year (1978 through mid-1983) newspaper survey (from mostly established Australian (major) newspapers) looking for suggestive evidence in support of the Hoyle and Wickramasinghe theory. In connection with the terms "disease" or "illness" etc., I looked for keywords or phrases such as "never before reported", "mysterious", "unknown", "unusual", "unexplained", "strange", "baffling", "new", "puzzling", "aerial", etc.

Now finding such references would not, could not, in itself prove the Hoyle/Wickramasinghe hypothesis. It would be quite foolish to claim otherwise. However, not finding any would be suggestive that they were on the wrong wavelength, with all that would imply for biochemists interested in the origin of life, exobiologists concerned with life in the universe, and ufologists investigating potential alien spaceships.

And what did I find (or not find)? Read on! Note that in the following quotes, any emphasis given is my own doing and not that of the reporter or newspaper.

"Doctors are concerned about the growing incidence of a fatal and crippling disease which newborn babies can catch from their mothers. The disease, called group B strep, was unknown five or six years ago." (Wiles, J. - "Threat to newborn" - (Melbourne) Age, 17 March 1978.)

"Brisbane's pigeons seem to have been struck with a deadly disease. Queens Park gardener for 21 years, Mr. Ossie Copley, said... 'Some of them have warts all over them and crippled feet. I have never known pigeons (to) die like this before'." ("Pigeons hit by deadly disease" - (Brisbane) Courier-Mail, 7 June 1978.)

"The first worldwide survey of a rare virus disease that causes mental deterioration and death shows that the infection has been found in at least 41 countries and that there have been unexplained clusters of cases in some geographical areas, population groups and families. The malady is called Creutzfeld-Jakob disease. The first such transmission was reported four years ago... Unusual clusters of cases have been found... ...but no explanation of any of these aggregations of cases has been established. Scientists classify Creutzfeld-Jakob disease as one of a group of four related maladies caused by unconventional viruses." (Schmeck, H.M. - "First worldwide study of fatal virus disease shows it occurs in mysterious clusters" - New York Times, 31 July 1978.)

"It could be a science-fiction plot: Usually harmless organisms living in fresh water produce a strain that attacks and kills swimmers by feasting on their brain cells. But it is not fiction. Scientists have discovered just

such a creature, an amoeba that almost always kills its victims.

Scientists studying the organism are puzzled by its potency, its erratic occurrences and its resistance to drugs." ("Amoeba that kills swimmers puzzles medical world" - New York Times, 30 July 1978.)

"A minor outbreak of stomach infection in Southern Tasmania is baffling the medical profession... ..spokesman said the infection was something akin to influenza, but local tests had not been able to define it." ("Stomach sickness baffles doctors" - (Hobart) Mercury, 5 Sept. 1978.)

"Doctors fear the mysterious and fatal legionnaires' disease may be causing unexplained cases of pneumonia and flu-like illnesses throughout Australia. Dr J. Harkness, pathologist at St Vincent's (Hospital in Sydney)... ..said 'We often get patients with pneumonia for which we can find no explanation. My feeling now is that some of these cases may be caused by the legionnaire bacteria. 'I think it would be wise for doctors to consider this possibility in future cases of pneumonia of unexplained cause.'" (Hicks, R. - "Mystery killer fear" - Australian, 20 Sept. 1978.)

"A mystery virus which has killed 12 people in Britain and has no known antidote may have come from outer space, according to eminent astronomer Sir Fred Hoyle. Meanwhile, a medical team has flown to a remote island in the southern Philippines to contain the spread of a mysterious disease that has killed 40 people in 24 hours." ("Space flu theory according to Hoyle" - Australian, 13 October 1978.)

"A new smallpox virus, possibly created by unauthorised experiments, might have killed a medical photographer ...according to the general secretary of the Association of Scientific, Technical and Managerial Staffs, Mr Clive Jenkins. Mr Jenkins said...that the smallpox laboratory might have been carrying out research that created a 'new' type of virus. The head of the laboratory, (the late) Professor Henry Bedson, 49, was a world authority on smallpox. ...tissues...are being investigated at St Mary's Hospital, London, by Professor Keith Dumbell. Professor Dumbell says that 'to the best of his belief' no one in Professor Bedson's laboratory was creating hybrids, either by new techniques of 'genetic engineering' or by more classical methods." ("Possibility' of new type of virus" - Canberra Times, 20 Oct. 1978.)

"Beating the bug which causes the common cold may be an impossible dream according to public health expert, Dr John Forbes. Dr Forbes, 58, is the medical superintendent of Fairfield Infectious Diseases Hospital in Melbourne... ..he said many of the traditional infectious diseases, such as measles and mumps were now fully understood. But the increasing number of new flu strains had scientists worried. 'It's not known with certainty how these new

strains have come into being...'" ("The bug battle!" - (Northern Territory) News, 29 Dec. 1978.)

"Waste from the bathroom sinks of planes may be spreading cholera and other diseases around the world... Dr Charles Rundle and colleagues at the London School of... Medicine have been investigating why cholera occasionally turns up in peculiar places." ("Disease link 'in the air'" - (Melbourne) Sun-Pictorial, 22 Dec. 1978.)

And on the same topic:

"The mysterious spread of cholera to unlikely parts of Europe and the Middle East could be explained by infectious germs being 'rained down' from the air, according to... The London School of Tropical Medicine's Dr Charles Rundle..." ("Jets may be dropping diseases" - (Sydney) Sun, 15 Jan. 1979.)

Notice the aerial connection! (See also: "Cholera from the sky fear" - (Brisbane) Courier-Mail, 27 March 1980.)

Not only man, but man's best friend can catch strange germs.

"Two mysterious diseases have hit Australia's dog population, killing dozens of puppies." ("Mysterious diseases kill dogs" - (Melbourne) AGE, 22 March 1979.)

"Two new dog diseases...have established themselves throughout Australia. The diseases are unusual in that they both come from the one group of parvovirus. Dr John Finnie, 27, a veterinary pathologist at the Victorian Government's Veterinary Research Institute in Melbourne said... 'You cannot predict how widespread the diseases might become. They are new and at the moment there is no prevention and no cure...'" (Hewat, T. - "Two new diseases kill young puppies" - Australian, 22 March 1979.)

"Australian veterinary researchers believe they have isolated a mutant virus with the potential to cause a catastrophic plague among humans. The researchers believe the virus to be the cause of a mystery new disease which has killed thousands of dogs... since it first struck in mid-1978. The head of veterinary microbiology at James Cook University in Townsville, Professor Bob Johnson, said...it was the first time in his experience that a virulent virus had apparently mutated to attack a completely different species. (But) Professor Margaret Sabine, an associate professor in veterinary virology at Sydney University's Department of Veterinary Pathology, said: 'I am not prepared to say at this stage they were caused by a mutant virus. 'It is certainly a totally new disease, and one which - presumably because it hasn't been experienced before - certainly knocked the dogs for six. 'But more interesting to me is why it struck in 22 States of America, in Canada, South Africa, Australia and Holland almost simultaneously, from about May, 1978.'" (Simper, E. - "Mystery plague virus isolated" - Australian, 6 Dec. 1979.)

"Is Fred Hoyle right - do viruses drop in from outer space? Currently there is a virus disease which strikes fear in the hearts of dog lovers and dog breeders all over the world. And in the veterinary laboratories of the world it is

puzzling researchers.

It is a disease that doesn't follow established biological rules and patterns for its spread.

It is called canine parvovirus, a condition which causes sudden and unexplained death in puppies and young dogs. This new disease of dogs was first reported almost two years ago...in all Australian States, the US, Canada, South Africa, Britain and Europe.

Just where the disease comes from and its pattern of spread has been the subject of interesting speculation. Dog blood stored around the world before May, 1978, has shown no evidence of the virus's being in existence before that time and it is assumed that canine parvovirus is a new disease.

How did it come to occur in so many places in such a short time?

It is most unlikely that the same mutation of a virus could occur in several places.

So where this fatal disease of dogs comes from is still inexplicable." (Hailstone, B. - "Vexed question for vets" - (Adelaide) Advertiser, 23 Aug. 1980.)

One theory was that:

"A laboratory accident with a common cat virus may have created the deadly dog disease canine parvovirus.

The theory is that somehow some cat virus got into a culture of dog cells and grew up by accident, and then got into a dog vaccine.

...the theory required more research... But it was supported by the fact that the disease could not have been brought here (into Australia) by an animal because of the quarantine laws.

A puzzling aspect of the disease - which supports the laboratory accident theory - is that it even affects dogs which have been kept isolated from other dogs." (Turnbull, G. - "Killer dog disease: cat virus gone mad theory" - Sydney Morning Herald, 29 Oct. 1980.)

Of course it doesn't take too much imagination to see how the Hoyle and Wickramasinghe theory could explain the killer dog disease mystery as well if not better.

Meanwhile, moving right along...

"An outbreak of a virus...is the worst in 20 years. NSW Government virologist Mr Alan Murphy said experts did not know why the virus, Echo II, was now more prevalent than at any other time in the past 20 years. Symptoms of the virus are similar to...flu." ("Virus 'worst in 20 yrs'" - (Sydney) Sun, 13 Dec. 1979.)

Perhaps a comet with a 20 year orbital period? And if you didn't know the orbital parameters of a flu-bearing comet(s) - given that Hoyle and Wickramasinghe are right, then it's obvious that...

"Predicting the occurrence, severity or a new strain of virus which would cause Australia's next influenza epidemic was not yet possible, (according to) NSW general practitioner...

Dr P.W. McGill (of) ..Epping... ("Flu virus defies prediction" - Canberra Times, 12 Oct. 1979.)

Not only pigeons and dogs within the non-human animal community are now and again struck down by unknown illnesses. When it involves animals that are primary sources of human food, extra concern is noted.

"...the Minister for Primary Industry, Mr Nixon...
...said tests on pigs found suffering from an unknown disease on a farm near Launceston had shown no evidence of foot and mouth or any similar disease." ("Pig ban to be lifted" - Canberra Times, 7 Nov. 1979.)

"It is now most unlikely that anyone will ever know just what disease pigs were suffering from at a farm at Bridenorth, near Launceston.
The lifting of quarantine restrictions...is...to be announced...by the Minister for Primary Industry, Mr Nixon, with the mystery still unresolved." ("Pig disease 'may never be known'" - Canberra Times, 8 Nov. 1979.)

"The disease that forced the destruction of hundreds of pigs on a Tasmanian farm last month may never be known." ("Disease a mystery" - Sydney Morning Herald, 13 Nov. 1979.)

And less than a year and a half later a similar case - this time from across the Tasman Sea in New Zealand.

"The presence of foot-and-mouth disease had not been detected...at the Pirbright world virus laboratory in England on pig tissue from New Zealand...
Pirbright's experts say that the disease so far does not appear to fit any disease with which they are familiar..." ("Disease still unidentified" - Canberra Times, 16 Feb. 1981.)

"Agricultural officials in New Zealand are now confident that the mysterious disease which affected pigs on a South Island farm last week is not foot and mouth.
...but tests...have so far failed to identify the disease." (Graham, V. - "Disease in pigs 'not foot and mouth'" - Australian, 19 Feb. 1981.)

"Tests on the mystery pig infection outbreak in New Zealand have proved negative to foot and mouth disease and three other exotic vesicular infections..." ("NZ outbreak 'not foot and mouth'" - Canberra Times, 22 Feb. 1981.)

(See also: Stringleman, H. - "NZ pigs mystery still unsolved" - Australian Financial Review, 19 Feb. 1981.)

To the best of my knowledge, and detective work, the above two pig disease mysteries are still that - mysteries.

Meantime, back in the human camp...

"Health Department microbiologists will work through the weekend trying to find the cause of an illness which has left 87 Palm Islanders - most of them children - seriously ill in hospital." ("Mystery ills put 87 in hospital" - (Brisbane) Courier-Mail, 1 Dec. 1979.)

"The cause of the sickness which struck 83 Palm Islanders...was still a mystery...
Townsville Hospital Deputy Superintendent (Dr. K. Jaumes) said...

"The organism has not yet been isolated...there has been no common factor diagnosed..." ("Island sickness still a mystery" - (Brisbane) Sunday Mail, 2 Dec. 1979.)

"The cause of a mystery illness which put nearly 100 Palm Islanders, mostly children in hospital may never be known.
...Health Department officers had not been able to establish the cause of the illness." ("Island disease stays mystery" - (Brisbane) Courier-Mail, 4 Dec. 1979.)

And yet more mystery diseases...

"A strange phenomenon, Christmas Eye, is baffling eye

specialists in NSW.

Christmas Eye, so called because it seems to occur only between late November and mid-January, strikes sleeping victims at night.

"The cause was unknown." (Chong, F. - "Strange new eye disease" - (Sydney) Sun, 10 Jan. 1980.)

Speaking of eye maladies...

"An unidentified disease has struck schoolchildren and babies in a south-western NSW town, Wanganella, causing temporary blindness and swollen eyes.

A property-worker's wife, Mrs. Jan Hardie, said her son Peter was confined to the house with both eyes 'so swollen he cannot see'.

She had taken him to a doctor.

'He could not pinpoint the disease...

'He just did not know what it was'." ("Unidentified eye disease rife in town's children" - Canberra Times, 19 Feb. 1981.)

Children seem to cop the lot of mysterious ailments...

"The Health Commission is investigating if...Werribee school children hit by a mystery illness were poisoned by insecticide.

But...there was still no positive identification of the frightening for of poisoning which struck about 50... children during a school camp...

...(a) Health Commission spokesman said the illness was still a 'mystery'.

'The strange thing is that there was no vomiting or diarrhoea amongst their symptoms.'

A spokesman for the Warragul Hospital said...the children's symptoms had suggested something 'other than normal food poisoning.

'It is a rather unusual case' he said. ("Mystery illness under scrutiny" - (Melbourne) Age, 11 June 1980.)

"The Health Commission has still not identified the mystery illness which hit about 50 Werribee children during a school camp.

...Commission tests have cleared the food and water at the camp where the children were staying...

A Fairfield Hospital report has described the symptoms shown by the children as 'bizarre'." ("Mystery illness baffles doctors" - (Melbourne) Age, 12 June 1980.)

Even Australia's favorite sporting animal, the racing horse, has not escaped.

"A mystery virus sweeping Brisbane's stables is seriously disrupting the rich winter racing carnival. Prominent veterinarian Mr Fred Manahan said...the virus was a new type of equine influenza." (O'Connor, S. - "Mystery horse disease hits top stables" - (Brisbane) Sunday Mail, 29 June 1980.)

And later on that year...

"A mystery illness has killed four pacers, including the brilliant youngster Quamby's Pride, since last Friday. Quamby's Pride...was trained by Henry McDermott. Mr McDermott said: 'I've got no idea how they died. It's got me beaten.'

...the local veterinary diagnostic centre had not yet been able to give the cause of the sickness. ("Mystery

illness - pacers die" - (Melbourne) Herald, 28 Oct. 1980.)

Shortly after the Werribee incident, but half way around the world, more illness, more children.

"Seven children were detained in hospital today after being struck down by a mystery ailment at a junior band carnival. A total of 290 people needed hospital treatment when they started collapsing 'like ninepins'... Another 200 received attention at the showgrounds.

...the police admitted they were completely baffled as to what caused the sudden illness which caused giddiness, nausea, headaches and collapse.

Detective Inspector Eric Hogden, who is heading the investigation, said: 'The whole thing seems to be a complete mystery. Food poisoning and mass hysteria have definitely been ruled out.' ("Mystery illness hits (English) carnival" - Sydney Morning Herald, 15 July 1980.)

Recall the earlier aerial/cholera stories?

"Doctors have so far been unable to isolate the source of cholera which struck down an elderly couple in northern NSW last weekend.

The victims...(Mr & Mrs Hill)...were admitted to Lismore Base Hospital.

Cholera has an incubation period of only two days.

Doctors are puzzled by the outbreak. The Hills have not been outside their rural property for weeks, nor have they been in contact with anyone who has been overseas.

The medical superintendent of Lismore Base Hospital, Dr Ray Gordon, said...specialists were no closer to finding the source of the disease than they were five days ago."

(Hancock, D. - "Doctors fail to find source of cholera" - Australian, 14 March 1981.)

(See also: "Cholera source still unknown" - (Melbourne) Age, 16 March 1981.)

It is rare that the press ever provides a long term followup to the mysteries that provide original headlines. Thus, one could assume that solutions often come to hand but prove to be so mundane as to be unnewsworthy. This time we do have a followup to the above case - but no mundane solution, still just a question mark.

"The Health Commission has been unable to trace the source of cholera which broke out on the north coast a year ago. The Minister for Health, Mr Brereton, said...that 'in spite of extensive and prolonged investigations, it has not proved possible to trace positively the source of infection in the two cases of cholera occurring in Lismore in March, 1981.'" ("Cholera source not known, Brereton says" - Sydney Morning Herald, 10 March 1982.)

Several more cases of unknown diseases are worth a mention.

"Portuguese authorities are concerned about an illness which has appeared among workers at a government agricultural testing centre near Lisbon.

Workers...became ill...when some of them developed lumps under their left ribs, accompanied by gastric disorders and general weakness. Since then 12 workers have shown symptoms of the 'Oeiras Syndrome' as it is now known.

The Oeiras plant employs 600 workers, all of whom are disturbed by the inability of doctors to diagnose the illness or its cause." (Jolliffe, J. - "Unknown illness concerns government" - Canberra Times, 26 March 1981.)

"Mankind is likely to face widespread outbreaks of new types of severe flu in the future, a leading scientist warned (the 51st ANZAAS Congress).

...Professor W.I.B. Beveridge, ...formerly professor of animal pathology at Cambridge University and now at the Australian National University, said...

'Influenza is the last of the known great plagues, and we still have no effective way of controlling that potentially devastating disease.'

...Professor Beveridge listed 11 examples of viral diseases that 'arose suddenly as if from nowhere'. The most recent was the much publicised parvo virus disease of dogs, which had mysteriously appeared almost simultaneously in North America, Europe and Australia in 1978." (Eckersley, R. - "Man will face new types of flu, says scientist" - Sydney Morning Herald, 16 May 1981)

"Thirty-eight South-East Asian refugees have died in their sleep from a sudden, mysterious ailment never previously seen in America.

The illness, which killed previously healthy men and women within two hours of the first symptoms, struck 33 Laotians...

The other victims included four Vietnamese and one Kampuchean.

'This represents a distinct syndrome not seen here before' said Dr Roy Baron, a medical epidemiologist...

'There are many instances of sudden deaths in the United States, even within the 25-44 age group, but what makes the Asian syndrome so unique is that virtually all of those deaths are unexplained.

'The other surprising thing is that these deaths are abrupt - with the change from apparent health to death occurring within minutes.'" ("Puzzling illness kills 38 Asian migrants in US" - Sydney Morning Herald, 7 Dec. 1981.)

A seemingly disproportionate number of these mysterious illnesses are noted and logged on islands. Thus far we have had "Tasmania", "a remote island in the southern Philippines", "England", the "South Island" of New Zealand, and "Palm Island". Here's another one.

"RAAF Hercules flew to Norfolk Island...with medical experts and equipment to deal with a suspected outbreak of dengue fever... About 40 people have been affected by the tropical disease." ("Dengue fear on Norfolk" - (Melbourne) Age, 12 Jan. 1982.)

BUT "The virus which recently made about 40 people ill on Norfolk Island was not dengue fever, the acting administrator of Norfolk Island, Mr Tom Paterson, said... ..tests on the island had found no trace of the fever or the mosquitoes which carry the virus. It was not clear what the virus was." ("Norfolk Island virus not dengue: claim" - (Melbourne) Age, 20 Jan. 1982.)

Later on that same year, the first hints about what was to become the biggest medical story since the outbreak of legionnaires' disease.

"US health authorities have detected a new, mysterious killer disease many times more deadly than the other two recent great medical mysteries - legionnaire's

disease and the toxic shock syndrome." (Wilson, B. - "Lethal new disease alarms US" - (Adelaide) Advertiser, 20 July 1982.)

"Federal Health Department officials have alerted State authorities to a disease that is reported to have killed 184 of the 471 people who have contracted it.

Little is known about the disease, all cases of which have been reported in America...It has no medical name, but has been called the 'gay plague' because it has been prevalent among American male homosexuals.

...the centre for disease control in Atlanta, Georgia...

...is reported to have identified four groups of sufferers: male homosexuals...drug users...healthy heterosexual men and women recently returned to the US from Haiti...and haemophilia sufferers.

But, between 10 and 20 cases that do not belong to any of these groups have been reported." (Chadwick, P. - "States warned of mystery killer disease" - (Melbourne) Age, 20 July 1982.)

This disease, of course, is now medically termed AIDS. Now confirmed in Australia too, hundreds of press articles have been written about it amounting to hundreds of thousands of words. That could be the subject of a separate article by itself! Sufficient to say that AIDS is still deadly; still mysterious. But for my purposes, it is still only one example out of many, some more of which are now given.

"Dr Graeme Laver...a senior fellow and organic chemist at the John Curtin School of Medical Research in Canberra, said...

...'Flu is a complete mystery.'

...there remain more mysteries than solutions about... influenza strains that inexplicably suddenly appear, then disappear only to re-emerge later with changed properties ..." (Metherell, M. - "Flu virus costly and a complete mystery" - (Melbourne) Age, 31 July 1982.)

"The mysterious Slapped Cheek Syndrome broke out in the Rydalmere Parramatta area last week.

People began to blush.

They had fallen victim to an unexplained virus, probably airborne, called Roseola Infantum.

While the complaint is not serious...

There is no treatment, the problem has to run its course... Doctors (here) haven't seen it before..." (Mahoney, P. - "Slap-sick mystery no laugh" - (Sydney) Sun-Herald, 5 Dec. 1982.)

As if the above weren't depressing enough, last, but not least, a less than optimistic summary.

"Modern medicine...has proved disturbingly incapable of developing cures for mysterious 'new' diseases..." ("New' ills baffle science" - Australian, 31 May 1983.)

That's quite enough examples! Not a bad hit rate though for just a 5 1/2 year search! No doubt if that search were expanded to cover any press references from the newspapers of all countries, one could produce a reasonable book from just that same time frame.

What does all of the above mean in the Hoyle/Wickramasinghe context? I think I shall leave those conclusions, in the main, to the individual reader. One thing should be obvious however - there is ample food for thought.

Now I'm not going to influence that thought process by saying that in my opinion any or all of the examples are due to modern day Panspermia. But if some of the above should prove to have been so, then despite the somewhat frightening references there is no real reason for you to get even a little bit upset or worried. God's wrath is not upon us!

Sidetracking a minute...

If a totally biochemically unrelated alien germ ever did enter our environment, either...

All life would be wiped out as nothing (plant or animal) would have any before-the-fact natural defence against it. Despite various (less than 100%) "mass" extinctions over geologic time (none of which have been linked to disease epidemics/pandemics), life on Earth has been around for over 3 1/2 billion years. Therefore, in the here and now, terrestrial life in general and humans in particular would seem to be in little imminent danger of immediate extinction - from that cause anyway!

Or...

More as likely as not, nothing would happen! The alien organism could not adapt to, survive in, farless thrive in, our terrestrial biosphere, including within strictly biological habitats - that is, play the role of a parasite like terrestrial germs do. The respective entities, terrestrial organism and alien germ, would be too biochemically dissimilar - chalk and cheese would be biochemically closer!

But then the Hoyle and Wickramasinghe theory excludes interactions between totally alien and totally terrestrial life forms - at least with respect to the origin and distribution of earthly disease epidemics. Even so, should the Hoyle/Wickramasinghe hypothesis be true, we've still nothing to fear (collectively that is - as individuals you pay your money and you take your chances). Why?

If comets should be raining down infectious organisms (ie: viruses, bacteria, single-celled critters, etc.) upon us, then there must exist a close biochemical and common denominator between the extraterrestrial organism and our (terrestrial) makeup. Such commonality is understandable if these same extraterrestrial visitors provided Earth's spark of life a millennia of millennia of millennia ago, and if such visitations continued ever since. Then, life would have evolved over the millennia to achieve a state of co-existence with the random introduction of (only somewhat) foreign (extra) terrestrial organisms. In a very real sense we have met the enemy and they is us - on the biochemical level that is! Thus, we're neither collectively defenceless enough to be wiped out, nor invincible enough to be 100% immune. Individuals will succumb but enough won't to ensure group survival.

Evolution has insured that predator and prey co-exist, whether in regard to a Panspermia context, or, as in every other known exclusively terrestrial sphere. No predator, germ or lion, will itself survive if it kills off the prey that is its host.

And for now, that's quite enough of Hoyle's and Wickramasinghe's comet flu - revisited.

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