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UFO UpDates Mailing List

Re: Philosophy of Science and UFOs

From: **"Steven J. Powell" <sjpowell@access.digex.net>**
Date: Sun, 05 Jan 1997 14:39:09 -0500
Fwd Date: Mon, 06 Jan 1997 06:03:11 -0500
Subject: Re: Philosophy of Science and UFOs

> From: jan@cyberzone.net (Jan Aldrich)
> Subject: Re: UFO UpDate: Re: Philosophy of Science and UFOs

> > Something like 10,000 a year worldwide.

> Indications are twice that from our press studies!

Whoa! I thought I was rounding _up_ when I said 10,000.

> Aime Michel and Ruppelt (and I) had the same idea. Collect huge
> amounts of data then look for patterns. Michel connected the dots.
> Orthoneny always seemed strange to me, but it was a systemic, if
> wrong, approach. So when connecting the dots didn't work Michel just
> walked away. Sigh. One fellow's night light might be another's CE.
> We only do this type of thing on an ad hoc basis. If there is an
> interesting encounter around, then we look for other reports in the
> area as confirmation.

Sure, on pattern could be time/location. I have no idea what petterns
there could be in the data but I'd expect _something_ to show up.

> Anyway, I feel, like Michel and Ruppelt, we should start with
> everything. DL are generally low strangeness and low creditability
> but should be kept.

I think so too, 'strangeness' is simply an attribute of the data, not a
selection criteria.

> Collecting data has not really been address. We have made large
> statements based on small samples. Predictions are dangerous you
> start finding what you want to be there.

I don't think the data collection has been exactly first-rate but then
there are some reasonably good reasons for that. By predictions I only
meant you think up (predict) a pattern you think might be there (based
on something or nothing) and then see if the pattern is there.

Making beyond-the-data predictions is almost always dangerous.

> > I think the safe way out of this catch-22 is to create selection
> > criteria that _don't_ affect the observation, just the
> > observing/observer.
> > For example, remove from the database _all_ single person
> > observations.
> I violently disagree. Most reported data is from a single observer.

I agree its the bulk of the data but its likely _also_ to be the bulk of
the misidentifications, the bulk of the hoaxes.

I don't mean _throw out_ the single-witness data. I only mean we
specifically select out the non-single witness data and we call that our
'better' data. Two datasets, or maybe just an attribute in a single
dataset.

Or, a different angle, when looking for and finding patterns take the
subset that represents the pattern and split it into single and
non-single witness groups. Does the pattern then exist in _both_ groups
of that subset?

> Also, if you have a group of witnesses at the same spot,
> you start to get social dynamics.

I know that's a problem but I don't know what to do about it.

> > I don't know of an objective way for determinimg a reliable witness.

> > I don't think its safe to cull the data based on observer-related
> > criteria.

> You don't need an objective way; you need a consistantly applied
> criteria.

Sure, no argument there.

> > I think it is safe to separate the data based on
> > observation-related criteria. If we're looking for a pattern, and
> > if there are patterns, then those patterns should be present or at
> > least not removed from the data simple by selecting data based on
> > observation-related criteria. If a patter-type happens to be Silver
> > Discoid then that should be reflected in both the multi-observer
> > sightings _and_ the single-observer sightings -OR- there's a major
> > problem with all the data.

> Weather balloons or pibals also appear disklike in some cases. There
> are problems no matter what is tried.

Sure, a discoid seen at a distance from top or bottom ecomes circular of
a globe. I don't know what can be done about that.

> Thanks for the input, John. More food for thought. In Condon
> committee meetings half the time they spent calling each other names.

Hahahahah!!!! Not that that isn't fun on occasion but it doesn't move
us forward much <grin>.

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Thanks, take care.
John.

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