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Location: [Mothership](#) -> [UFO](#) -> [Updates](#) -> [1998](#) -> [Jan](#) -> UFO Studies [was: 'The Threat'...]

UFO UpDates Mailing List

UFO Studies [was: 'The Threat'...]

From: **Mark Cashman** <mcashman@ix.netcom.com>
Date: Sun, 25 Jan 1998 22:33:21 -0800
Fwd Date: Mon, 26 Jan 1998 08:39:49 -0500
Subject: UFO Studies [was: 'The Threat'...]

> From: William White <bwhite@frognet.net>
> Subject: Re: UFO UpDate: Re: 'The Threat'...
> To: updates@globalserve.net (UFO UpDates - Toronto)
> Date: Sat, 24 Jan 1998 01:37:53 -0500 (EST)

> > Basically, I think that has to be an important
> > part of our "baseline": we have reports from the present day and
> > the last fifty years which have been relatively well
> > investigated, and the credibility of whose witnesses is generally
> > known.

> But is it though? So much of what I have heard (and again, I'll
> admit much of it being more recent may very well be a poor
> sample) has involved little physical evidence and has relied
> mostly on the credibility of the eyewitness. And especially in
> cases where hypnotic regression has been used, I have some
> difficulty accepting witness credibility.

There's no question that much UFO data lies in the realm of "testimony". For that reason, I would argue that one does a disservice both to science in general and to the study of UFOs in particular by any insistence that the methods of physics or chemistry are appropriate for anything other than supporting roles (i.e. in the analysis of physical trace evidence). UFOs are not chemicals or forces which can be isolated and reproduced in a laboratory setting. But, unlike some, I do not believe this is something isolated to the problem of UFOs. Sociology, forensics, the various parts of the natural sciences which rely on the observation of organisms acting naturally in their habitat (such as ornithology) have many of the same problems.

It also needs to be kept in mind that there is, essentially, NO funding for UFO studies. The Ubatuba magnesium was studied with very limited resources, and, yes, there remain a number of questions about the process of their analysis, and, of course the tragedy of the loss of fragment 1, but nonetheless, even that limited analysis provided some very interesting results. The Trans-en-Provence case was studied by an arm of the French government, and their results, with regard to the temperatures and forces which were needed to cause the traces, seem to point to heavy weight and high heat - but followup is limited by time and money.

EM effects and what could cause them are certainly under investigation in the sense that very little experimental science has been done on them. The Condon Committee worked with Ford and did some experiments with magnetism to try to stop car engines, but the experiments only managed to indicate that magnetism was not the cause of UFO related vehicle stoppages. But

electrostatics, EMP, non-electron charged particles, strongly alternating magnetic fields (as used in demagnetization equipment) have not yet been examined, both due to the lack of researcher interest, the lack of funds to support such research (except, perhaps, in classified weapons development projects).

So, given the amateur nature of the data gathering and the theories being generated, I think we must be prepared to live with the preponderance of verbal and photographic data for a fairly long time. But that is not to say that conclusions of a limited sort cannot be drawn from that information, or that that information need be unreliable. Haines, in his 1980 work "Observing UFOs" covered many of the perceptual factors important in understanding what happens to the UFO witness during the perception of an inexplicable event. With that sort of information as a guide, and the careful sifting of information from the witnesses, we can derive limited conclusions or at least generate partial hypotheses (i.e. hypotheses about specific events, the appearance of certain objects and effects, etc. - not global ones about the meaning and the cause).

To give an example, the Moreland case in 1959 gives an excellent example of a clear relationship between UFO luminosity and maneuvering:

<http://www.geocities.com/~mcashman/ufo/report/590713.htm>

A case from Selma in 1957 shows a clear pattern in luminosity and maneuvers of another sort:

<http://www.geocities.com/~mcashman/ufo/report/571029.htm>

From these kinds of observations, we can surely derive some useful hypotheses, as long as we have field investigators skeptically and reliably approaching UFO cases and giving us clean testimony to base our thoughts on.

> > So the patterns we derive from that data are probably
> > representative of the "real" phenomenon (whatever that may be).
> > Thus, when I go back and look at old data, I give much greater
> > credibility to cases that support current patterns than to those
> > which break them.

> I can understand your motivation for doing this, but at the same
> time I worry that doing so may be dangerous. I'd prefer to have
> some sort of objective criterion to select or reject data.
> Without it, you risk massaging the data to support an existing
> conclusion.

Look, accepting or rejecting data according to objective criteria is an issue. But, unfortunately, in a number of cases, we're only going to be able to approach this ideal. It was this problem which led Hynek to try to formulate a system of strangeness and probability. Unfortunately, his system is very difficult to apply, and we are always, to some extent, left to rely on the reputation of the field investigator and the researcher.

However, I don't think that rejecting old data which strays wildly from well-documented modern case profiles represents anything like "massaging the data". Certainly, rejected data should still be maintained in files and catalogs, along with the reasons for its rejection. For that matter, the pattern of IFOs vs. UFOs is one which has caused some controversy, so, obviously, even IFOs should not be merely thrown away. But we have to make a decision on credibility at some point - and perhaps each researcher must make that decision separately and differently (as we do). But I believe it will be the competition between hypotheses and cases which will help decide what is credible and what is not.

> Actually parallel worlds aren't as hoaky as you think (c.f.,
> Everett and Wheeler) but that's a matter of semantics. Like I
> said, I look forward to evaluating the evidence myself.
> Ultimately, though, since we can't really do any experiments, it
> all comes down to which theory describes it "best". And "best"
> is of course a matter of one's personal belief systems; the
> metrics we each use to evaluate the elegance and "ordinariness"
> of a theory are entirely subjective.

I don't really think I'd agree here. What makes a theory "best" will be its predictions and how well they agree with reality as

represented by observations.

For instance, Keyhoe and Vallee both made predictions about the sequence of UFO luminosity colors in various performance regimes. One of these describes the reality better - or neither does. Keel claimed that UFO cases on a particular night seemed to respect state boundaries - that can be tested. Vallee claimed that "there are too many landings" and that this indicates that UFOs are non-physical in the normal sense. My analysis of Vallee's Magonia catalog

<http://www.geocities.com/~mcashman/magland.htm>

indicates that this may not be so.

As long as a theory provides a testable discriminator, we can determine which does a better job, and thus, we objectively decide on which theory is better.

> Case in point, I've met people who believe that the entire
> phenomenon is essentially being produced, in physical form, by
> mass human belief (the "Tulpa" theory). To them, this was a much
> more elegant explanation. Until we can figure out how to test a
> theory on the UFO phenomenon, it's going to come down to "who
> sounds less like a crackpot". And while there are some people
> I'd definitely consider crackpots, I'm sure others would say the
> same of me. Or you, for that matter.

Well, actually, the Tulpa conjecture isn't even a hypothesis. It needs a testable component. How would one, for instance, distinguish between a Tulpa and a holographic projection, or a trans-dimensional intrusion (whatever that is)...

> Well, I think most, if not all, of these theories put a strain on
> physics, if for no other reason than UFOs appear to have some
> form of reactionless propulsion (if this has been addressed
> before please tell me in email and I'll look it up). But I rely
> heavily upon Clarke's Law in issues of technology, because I
> don't think our own level of science is anywhere close to
> perfection.

Paul Hill shows that this is not really the problem. Technological hypotheses of UFOs don't strain physics, they strain engineering, which is another matter entirely.

Keep looking, there's plenty of information, just a paucity of careful thought as to how to make it useful.

Mark Cashman, creator of The Temporal Doorway at

<http://www.geocities.com/~mcashman>

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