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1 October 1957

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You have picked an interesting subject for research, and I wish you every success in carrying it out in a scholarly and objective manner. I spent a summer on the Air Force study of UFO's back at the height of the scare, and learned a good deal about the subject at that time.

In answer to the questions in your letter of 25 September:

1. I have no reason to doubt all of the reports of UFO's (although an appreciable fraction of them were proved to be fraudulent), but this is only to say that I accept the fact that people see objects in the sky and cannot identify them. A very large percentage of such reports (90% or more, as I remember) were definitely identified by astronomers and meteorologists as well known objects such as the planet Venus, or meteorological balloons, or high flying aircraft. The group I worked with identified several "inexplicable" reports with less common phenomena--sunlight flashing on sea gulls in one photographed case--and I saw no evidence of "intelligently controlled" objects or, in fact, of anything but phenomena that could be explained were adequate information available.
2. The whole history of science supports my stand that observable phenomena can be logically fitted into scientific theories that "explain" them in the common sense of that word. I recognize that many claims of miracles have been made throughout history, but miracles, by definition, are unusual, and the vast number of natural, orderly phenomena outweighs the minor incidence of miracles in increasing degree. The former "miracles" of lightening, magnetism, and electricity, are now explained in garde schools. By this admittedly inductive logic, common to most of physical and biological science, I conclude that the likelihood of truly inexplicable phenomena is vanishingly small.
3. My personal investigation of UFO reports, together with what I have read in the press accounts that you properly class as sensational, and in books like D. H. Menzel's, leads me to conclude that the explanation lies in the logical defect. It is this: UFO's form a class of all celestial observations that cannot immediately be explained. There is no other truly common feature: some manifestations are optical, others are detected by radar; some are points, others circular, others patterned; some are seen by night, others by day; etc. The implication that they are somehow related is a false one, as we know from the large proportion positively identified after the fact (what relation is there between Venus and a

meteorological balloon?). Calling all unidentified objects in the sky "flying saucers" or, even, UFO's (Venus doesn't "fly" in any proper sense of that word) is like calling any word I cannot understand "Greek." The class of all words I cannot understand would scarcely form a single language. Therefore, the explanation of UFO's as a class is simply that they are not a uniform class but a hodge-podge of widely disparate, partly described phenomena that were seen in the sky.

4. Covered in 3, above.

5. Further research in the conventional sciences of astronomy, meteorology, and physics will learn more about many of the separate phenomena that are reported as UFO's. The sociological phenomenon of "flying saucer scares" might be studied by psychologists and sociologists, but I suspect that it is already understood.

6. I know that my statements above do not constitute a "proof," and feel that the subject, by its nature, precludes any rigorous proof or dis-proof. But I am confident that most men of reason who have studied science, and who examine the data objectively, will come to the same conclusion.

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Very truly yours,

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