

PREFACE

Why Would a Cosmologist Care about UFOs?

By Dr. John G. Hartnett

Dr. Hartnett received his Ph.D. in physics, with distinction, from the University of Western Australia, where he currently teaches and is a research fellow. At the time of writing, he is a collaborator in developing ultra-precise technology for atomic clocks that will be used on board the International Space Station. His other research includes ultra-low-noise radar; tests of fundamental theories of physics, such as general relativity; and measurement of drift in fundamental constants and their cosmological implications. He has published more than 40 papers in scientific journals and holds two patents.

First of all, I love a good mystery.

Second, science does not have all the answers.

Even though I am a cosmologist at a leading university in Australia, and I do extensive research on fundamental theories of physics and measurement of the time dependence of so-called “constants,” I know that there are many mysteries which cannot be solved with simple experiments.

UFOs are one of the biggest mysteries of our time — indeed, of all time — attracting literally millions of believers (and quite a few

skeptics). “What are UFOs?” is a question virtually everyone has asked at one time or another. Many have already made up their minds on the subject. However, rather than dismiss the whole debate out of hand, any open-minded person should at least weigh *all* the evidence before reaching a conclusion. Why reject the possibility of UFOs, unless you have some preconceived notion that you’re afraid to see threatened?

The study of UFOs offers a wealth of valuable lessons — far beyond telling us whether aliens really crashed at Roswell. The study of this one wildly popular topic unveils many broader truths about human nature, life, and the supernatural. Besides, Gary’s book is fun to read, and it touches on all sorts of related popular topics — science fiction, famous films, government cover-ups, hoaxes, serious research, and even the most ancient and increasingly popular “source” about alien invaders, the Hebrew Scriptures, popularized by Erich von Däniken’s *Chariots of the Gods*, among others.

The study of extraterrestrial life also raises the question, “How did our universe come to be?” That’s the question that I’m spending my life studying. (Scientists who study the origin, history, and structure of the universe [*cosmos*] are called cosmologists.) Nearly all modern cosmologists believe that everything was kick-started by a big bang about 15 billion years ago, and all the life in the universe evolved through natural processes. But I’ve discovered that such known “facts” — just like the study of UFOs — are not always as clear-cut as we’ve been led to believe, and “where we came from” directly relates to the subject of aliens and UFOs investigated in this captivating book.

Nearly 100 years since Einstein’s theories were published, the origin and structure of the universe still eludes cosmologists. New cosmological theories are rife today, more than ever before. In fact, they are getting more “exotic” all the time, creating some bizarre paradoxes, opening the door to all sorts of different beliefs.

You may have heard a host of different explanations for UFOs, but Gary’s book provides some eye-opening research that forces the reader to rethink his assumptions about what is true. The book was extremely interesting and profitable for me, and I trust that you’ll find the book just as intriguing (and entertaining). Whether or not you agree with Gary’s conclusions, you’ll never see the topic in the same light again.

Be prepared to have your own assumptions about this world — and the cosmos — challenged. What we “see” is not always as it seems!

INTRODUCTION

Why Write Yet Another Book on UFOs?

So much has already been written and claimed about the “UFO phenomenon.” Where do they come from; what is their purpose; can they tell us where *we* came from? With so many claimed visitations and experiences, one would think that all the questions would have been answered by now. However, the questions show no sign of abating. Quite the opposite.

The growing popularity of UFOs may surprise you, if you have never bothered to take a deeper look. Is it possible that UFOs don’t gain as much publicity as they used to, because the idea that “aliens are with us” has become more mainstream? Just ask a few teenagers, and several of them will tell you that they believe aliens exist and may have been humankind’s original creators.

As a young person, my own love of science fiction and alien worlds shaped my view of my place in the universe. Looking back, I can now see that the things I believed to be true were so because I *desired* them to be true. However, even then, I wrestled with the true nature of aliens and the apparent contradictions of the UFO phenomenon. Today, I have become aware that this “wrestling with the contradictions” is common among other serious researchers and ordinary people alike.

I have written this book out of a genuine desire to understand the truth about this phenomenon, and I have tried to assess the evidence as objectively as possible. Although at times I may disagree with other researchers, I have a great respect and compassion for the people who have been caught up in alien phenomena, sometimes with very distressing consequences, as you will see. After all, how would you deal with someone who genuinely believes that they are regularly visited by aliens, and who now claims to be on a mission of peace for them? Or the person whose self-esteem and character has been forever altered as a result of the belief that they underwent brutal medical examinations aboard a spaceship? Then there are the reports of millions of ordinary people who have allegedly seen UFOs in the sky, performing aerial acrobatics that defy logic.

I trust that, after you examine the best evidence available on the major incidents and key issues related to UFOs, you will reach a confident and satisfying conclusion.



The Invasion Gets Underway

A modern phenomenon

The Martians are coming! On a nationally syndicated radio show, a reporter from Intercontinental Radio News interrupts the scheduled broadcast to report that astronomers have detected enormous blue flames shooting up from the surface of Mars.

Once again, the reporter interjects to advise that a small meteor has impacted on a farm near Grover's Mill, New Jersey. The radio show then cuts to live, on-site reporter Carl Phillips, who comments that this is a very strange meteor indeed. The top is screwing off! What is happening — could this be a spaceship? The shock and horror of this unbelievable situation is conveyed in Phillips's almost hysterical tone:

A humped shape is rising out of the pit. I can make out a small beam of light against a mirror. What's that? There's a jet of flame springing from the mirror, and it leaps right at the advancing men. It strikes them head on! Good Lord, they're turning into flame! Now the whole field's caught fire. The woods . . . the barns . . . the gas tanks of automobiles . . . it's spreading everywhere. It's coming this way. About 20 yards to my right. . . .

A short silence. Then an announcer resumes:

Ladies and gentlemen, I have just been handed a message that came in from Grover's Mill by telephone. Just one moment please. At least 40 people, including six state troopers, lie dead in a field east of the village of Grover's Mill, their bodies burned and distorted beyond all possible recognition.

The creature — a Martian — simply slips back into his machine, and reappears controlling a huge three-legged vehicle armed with a death ray, which effortlessly disposes of 7,000 armed soldiers.

The Secretary of the Interior then addresses the nation:

Citizens of the nation. I shall not try to conceal the gravity of the situation that confronts the country, nor the concern of your government in protecting the lives and property of its people. . . . We must continue the performance of our duties, each and every one of us, so that we may confront this destructive adversary with a nation united, courageous, and consecrated to the preservation of human supremacy on this earth.¹

The government was powerless. Or at least that's what millions of Americans believed — but it was a hoax. The date was October 30, 1938.

Panic

This event is now bookmarked in the pages of modern history, and is still talked about today. At the time, mass hysteria ensued all over the country. People fled their homes and took up arms to defend themselves. Thousands called the police, and even the National Guard was mobilized. The switchboard of the *New York Times* was jammed. One caller asked, "What time will it be the end of the world?"²

Yet all of this was triggered by a fictional radio show. Note — *radio*. Listeners did not have the modern-day



Orson Welles

Photo courtesy of Library of Congress

visual "benefits" of Hollywood special effects. Their imaginations sufficed. It was simply a play being broadcast by the world-renowned actor Orson Welles. His troupe aired a weekly show known as "The Mercury Theater," but on this particular week, and in honor of Halloween, they decided to reproduce a real-time version of science fiction novelist H.G. Wells's *War of the Worlds* — about a Martian invasion of the earth. The play was meant to resemble an authentic news broadcast, and although an announcement explained this at the beginning of the show, the next disclaimer was not made for another 40 minutes.

What prompted such a reaction? After all, it's not as if the country was awash with UFO sightings, like today. There were no rocket ships, and jet aircraft had not been invented yet. What could inspire people to so easily believe in an invasion from Mars? Many years before, amateur astronomer Percival Lowell claimed, in his book *Mars and Its Canals*, that ancient civilizations had created canals on Mars. Since the publication of that book, many people had begun to ponder the question of life on Mars.

In spite of the complete absence of hard evidence to support the notion that beings might exist on other planets, people readily believed. They also presumed that this alien race had advanced technologies. In effect, the modern phenomenon of UFOs (unidentified flying objects) had landed! The alien invasion had begun — at least in the minds of the masses.

The power to influence

The broadcast took place at a time when global tensions were escalating. The prospect of another world war was looming, and it was commonplace for radio shows to be interrupted with news of Nazi Germany's latest threats. The modern technological age had also arrived, with its potential for mass destruction, as the world first witnessed during the unparalleled slaughter of the Great War. But more importantly, mass media had arrived. One broadcast could reach a whole nation and



A sighting at San Francisco, California, Oct. 10, 1956

convince the population of something that was not real. Some years later, the *War of the Worlds* was also broadcast in Santiago, Chile, in 1944 and Quito, Ecuador, in 1949, creating similar widespread panic. It seems that the general public, now becoming reliant on mass media, could be fooled time and time again.

Dorothy Thompson, in the *New York Tribune*, writes:

All unwittingly, Mr. Orson Welles and “The Mercury Theater of the Air” have made one of the most fascinating and important demonstrations of all time. They have proved that a few effective voices, accompanied by sound effects, can convince masses of people of a totally unrealistic, completely fantastic proposition as to create a nationwide panic. They have demonstrated more potently than any argument, demonstrated beyond a question of a doubt, the appalling dangers and enormous effectiveness of popular and theatrical demagoguery. . . .³

Orson Welles had gained more publicity than he could have purchased for millions of dollars. Even today, the mere mention of his name evokes memories of one of the most notorious media stunts the world has seen. He had demonstrated how the media could alter public perception with little effort.

Today, many media-savvy UFO cults realize that the quickest way to catch the public’s attention is to make some way-out speculative claim about being whisked away in a flying saucer and meeting Jesus on another planet. Blend science fiction and belief (in the guise of religion) and you will get noticed. Ronald Story, editor of *The Mammoth Encyclopedia of Extraterrestrial Encounters*, observes:

. . . science fiction has become our myth, and science has become our religion. Due mainly to media influences and a hideously complicated world, most people are finding it increasingly difficult to distinguish fantasy from reality.⁴

The Raelians, for example, is a UFO cult that was little known a few years ago but now claims to have over 55,000 devotees. In early 2003, they claimed to have successfully delivered the world’s first human-cloned baby via Clonaid, a company founded by the sect’s leader, Claude Vorilhon — a.k.a. Rael. The Raelians claim that extraterrestrials created human beings through cloning when they arrived on the earth 25,000 years ago in flying saucers. After throwing in human cloning

(a controversial subject in its own right), the Raelians have succeeded in widely promoting their brand of extraterrestrial religion. When discussing the so-called achievements of Clonaid’s head scientist, Brigitte Boisselier, Rael reportedly said:

If it’s not true, she’s also making history with one of the biggest hoaxes in history, so in both ways it’s wonderful. Because thanks to what she is doing now, the whole world knows about the Raelian movement. I am very happy with that.⁵

It was estimated that the Raelian sect received over \$500 million worth of media coverage around the world. Rael adds, “This event saved me 20 years of work.”⁶

And as we shall see, we now live in an age where, more than ever before, UFO/extraterrestrial beliefs are no longer the specialty of science fiction writers. They have become mainstream.

The events of 1938 all occurred before the advent of modern special effects and technology that nowadays blend science fiction imagery into reality. These have given a major impetus to the modern upsurge of belief in UFOs and extraterrestrial life. The most popular entertainment genre in the world today is science fiction. It has become a modern obsession, and as Dorothy Thompson already noted, the media can influence the mindset of the masses and at the same time cater to the hunger for such wizardry.

All this may seem to dismiss the whole “alien phenomenon” as the over-active imagination of science fiction buffs and money-seeking, religious UFO “nut cases.” But although the influence of science fiction is clear, it is not the sole reason for increased belief in alien visitations. There are millions of people who, like me, love science fiction. Many of its devotees have vastly different world views — some believe in UFOs and some don’t.

But the UFO interest does appear to be satisfying more than just idle curiosity for the mysterious, or hunger for intrigue. There are deeper philosophical questions, like the meaning of our existence, for which most people want answers. And although most don’t realize it, their interest is born out of a religious need or desire. In the German magazine *Focus*, sociologist Gerald Eberlein is quoted as saying:

. . . research has shown that people who are not affiliated with any church, but who claim they are religious are