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The UFO Verdict: Examining the Evidence by Robert Sheaffer

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**Robert Sheaffer.** *The UFO Verdict: Examining the Evidence.* xi + 242 pp., illus., figs., index. Buffalo, N.Y.: Prometheus Books, 1986. \$13.95 (paper).

This book is an attempt to provide a skeptical overview of the UFO phenomenon. For this purpose it is helpful, but it cannot stand alone. It lacks the historical perspective of David Jacobs's *UFO Controversy in America* (Indiana Univ. Press, 1975), the thoroughness of Allen Hendry's *UFO Handbook* (Doubleday, 1979), and the scientific attitude of J. Allen Hynek's *UFO Experience* (Ballantine, 1978). It makes interesting reading, and Robert Sheaffer is more fair to his opponents than are many debunkers. But readers are advised that much relevant detail is missing—especially, I would contend, detail that would place Sheaffer's argument in jeopardy.

Sheaffer chronicles the more notorious fallings-out of the UFO research community, which is composed largely of scientific amateurs. As history, this is very deficient compared with Jacobs's book. What Sheaffer fails to convey is the incredible dedication and persistence involved in investigating these fugitive phenomena. Strangely, he also fails to mention the "tectonic strain" theory of Michael Persinger, now considered a principal alternative to the extraterrestrial hypothesis for explaining waves of UFO reports.

The future history of science may well find the factors Sheaffer discusses important in explaining why many intelligent people think that genuine UFOs exist when the scientific community generally feels otherwise. Or it may concentrate on the extreme reluctance scientists have shown to investigate this strange phenomenon. It is certainly astonishing, when we have scientific conventions on the Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence (SETI), that physicists who investigate UFOs, such as Bruce Maccabee and Hynek, are purposely excluded.

There are few neutrals in the UFO field; Sheaffer is a debunker, while I am a proponent. Sheaffer argues that the UFO phenomenon is not real, its witnesses mistaken or fraudulent, and its investigators too credulous. On the evidence he presents it would be difficult not to agree. On the basis of many years of involvement with UFO research, however, I do disagree. While I

have no quarrel with Sheaffer's analysis of the 90 percent of cases that turn out to be ordinary things, what is left is really odd, and will not be as simply explained as Sheaffer would have one believe.

RON WESTRUM

#### ■ Classical Antiquity

**Allan Gotthelf** (Editor). *Aristotle on Nature and Living Things: Philosophical and Historical Studies Presented to David M. Balme on His Seventieth Birthday.* xxv + 410 pp., bibl., indexes. Pittsburgh: Mathesis Publications, 1985; Bristol: Bristol Classical Press, 1985. £27 (cloth); £12 (paper).

This is a collection of twenty-four essays written by friends, pupils, and admirers of David M. Balme, the Aristotelian scholar who was from 1965 to 1978 professor of classics at Queen Mary College, London. The book is a seventieth-birthday present. Most of the essays are about ancient biology, teleology, and biological taxonomy, areas in which Balme has established a formidable reputation among classicists and ancient philosophers.

The volume is subtitled "Philosophical and Historical Studies," but it is the philosophy of Aristotle's biology that is the central concern. Some contributions touch on Aristotle tangentially. One paper (by James Longrigg) examines the Presocratic background to Aristotle's doctrine on the nature of blood and semen, another (by Paul Moraux) considers Galen's reception of the methodology of Aristotle's *De partibus animalium*. Drossaart Lulofs examines some Syriac and Arabic compilers (or conflators, as he argues) of the *Historia animalium*. There are also essays on subjects as disparate as Plato's *Theaetetus* and Quintilian's physiognomy. One of the best papers in the volume concerns biology only indirectly; it is a discussion of Aristotle's general use of abstract and mathematical models in his natural science, by the late G. E. L. Owen.

There are four sections, four very loose headings. The first, "Biology and Natural Philosophy," contains just two papers. One (by H. D. P. Lee) reopens the debate over where Aristotle performed most of his biological research and, indirectly, over the authenticity of several books of the *Historia animalium*. Lee's conclusions run counter to the current orthodoxy that