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## UFO UpDates Mailing List

### Re: Was ETH [Extra Terrestrial Hypothesis] &c

From: [clark@mn.frontiercomm.net](mailto:clark@mn.frontiercomm.net) [Jerome Clark]  
Date: Wed, 03 Dec 1997 23:51:23 PST  
Fwd Date: Thu, 04 Dec 1997 10:03:35 -0500  
Subject: Re: Was ETH [Extra Terrestrial Hypothesis] &c

> Date: Wed, 03 Dec 1997 18:35:04 -0800  
> From: John Koopmans <[john.koopmans@sympatico.ca](mailto:john.koopmans@sympatico.ca)>  
> To: UFO UpDates - Toronto <[updates@globalserve.net](mailto:updates@globalserve.net)>  
> Subject: Re: UFO UpDate: ETH [Extra Terrestrial Hypothesis] &c  
  
> > From: [clark@mn.frontiercomm.net](mailto:clark@mn.frontiercomm.net) [Jerome Clark]  
> > Date: Tue, 02 Dec 1997 11:18:24 PST  
> > To: [updates@globalserve.net](mailto:updates@globalserve.net)  
> > Subject: RE: UFO UpDate: Re: ETH [Extra Terrestrial Hypothesis] &c  
  
> > > Date: Tue, 02 Dec 1997 05:46:29 -0600  
> > > To: UFO UpDates - Toronto <[updates@globalserve.net](mailto:updates@globalserve.net)>  
> > > From: Michael Christol <[mchristo@mindspring.com](mailto:mchristo@mindspring.com)>  
> > > Subject: Re: UFO UpDate: Re: ETH [Extra Terrestrial Hypothesis] &c

> <snip>

> > Hi, everybody,

> > Either I did not make myself clear, or the whole  
> > ground of the discussion has shifted inexplicably.

> > Let me restate my point:

> > The issue is not whether there are unexplained, anomalous, or  
> > arguably paranormal events and experiences in the world. Few on  
> > this list would dispute that. (Probably just about everybody has  
> > had at least one weird incident in his or her life. I have had  
> > one or two myself.) The issue is whether Keel's "theories" -- one  
> > hesitates to use such a respectable noun to characterize what are  
> > in reality wild, even paranoid, guesses -- address them in any  
> > useful or coherent way. In my view, they do not.

> > In mild exasperation,  
> > Jerry Clark

> Hello Jerry (also Dennis, Mike and Everybody):

> I support your discussions with Dennis Stacey regarding some of  
> the more theoretical aspects of ETH versus non-ETH theories from  
> a scholarly point of view, and am grateful for any resultant  
> knowledge gained as an observer. What I do object to are some of  
> the insinuations that I feel are being made, either directly, or  
> more subtly in the tone of the words being used, that only help  
> to undermine what little progress (if any) has already been made  
> in the non-ETH theoretical area.

> I appreciate that you do acknowledge the acceptance of those who  
> have had "unusual experiences" that currently cannot be  
> explained. However, you then seem to deny the value of some of  
> the pioneering theories that try to explain this phenomena, by  
> pointing out the ineptitude of efforts being made in this area by  
> the few individuals courageous enough to investigate this  
> difficult area.

John,

Since occult theories have practically overrun ufology since the mid-1960s, I disagree that the individuals who propose them are either "few" or "courageous."

> I don't think that there is anyone on this List who would deny  
> that both Keel and Vallee are not employing the most scientific  
> practices in their investigations. In fact, it would be difficult  
> to find a good example of any UFO investigator who employs  
> perfect or even near-perfect practices.

I disagree. Not everybody is operating at the lowest level. Intellectually substantial work on aspects of the UFO phenomenon is not hard to find if one looks for it. Off the top of my head, I think of the research and writing of Swords, Bullard, Maccabee, both Webbs, Appelle, Sparks, Rodeghier, Chalker, Basterfield, McDonald, Hynek (at least the Hynek of The UFO Experience), Zeidman, Cashman, Rutkowski, and many others. For some quick examples, read any issue of Journal of UFO Studies, or consult the cumulative bibliography at the end of my UFO Encyclopedia.

> However, in their support, it cannot be denied that  
> theoretically, scientific practice is far easier and "safer"  
> (from a peer perspective) when it concerns itself with the more  
> physical aspects of the UFO phenomena (ETH) as opposed to the  
> more non-physical aspects (non-ETH). There are tools readily  
> available to measure both physical objects and traces of physical  
> objects, and there is the comfort of a long precedence of  
> established techniques and well-argued theoretical perspectives.

The importance of none of which is to be minimized.

> When it comes to the more non-physical aspects of the UFO  
> phenomena, there seems to be great resistance from the UFO  
> community to acknowledge its possibility and research it further,  
> especially from those who have never personally experienced any  
> unusual events. This is quite understandable, and I would think  
> that many of those who have had experiences have been on that  
> side of the fence at some point in their life, especially before  
> they were aware of the number of other such occurrences happening  
> to others. However, I think that today, the volume of such  
> reports should be an indication that such occurrences can no  
> longer be denied.

Far from "great resistance" to occult interpretations, there has been an appalling rush to embrace them. Keel and Vallee remain two of the most influential figures in the history of ufology. Nearly everybody on this list has read them. How many, on the other hand, have read Swords on the ETH or Rodeghier on E-M cases, followed the debate about the Trans-en-Provence CE2, or even know what the RB-47 case is about?

> Therefore, there has been very little progress in what I would  
> call the "non-ETH" side of the phenomena. There are few, if any  
> scientific tools available to measure such things as apparent  
> "non-physical" manifestations and "out-of-body" type of  
> experiences. Psychiatrists have attempted to investigate these in  
> terms of various states of mind or emotions. Others have  
> attempted to explain them in terms of various understandable  
> events such as electrical, mechanical or chemical stimulation of  
> the brain. However, these excursions have not been able to  
> explain away all of the reported phenomena.

Persons interested in these sorts of phenomena, whose relationship to the UFO phenomenon has yet to be demonstrated, ought to go to the serious literature of parapsychology and psychical research. Incidentally, I don't see parapsychologists and psychical researchers rushing to claim the UFO phenomenon as their own. All the claiming is being done by advocates of the Keel/Vallee approach in ufology.

> So what avenues of investigation remain? Many researchers don't  
> want to even come close, fearing not only ridicule from their  
> peers, but also frustration in their inability to "measure" the  
> phenomena in any scientifically acceptable way. It is therefore  
> easier to deny the phenomena by casting ridicule on it, and  
> calling those who attempt to deal with it "paranoid", or  
> "nutters", or to call their theories "half-baked". This leaves  
> the field with little possibility for further scholarly  
> evolution.

> So why you need to continue to debate their lack of competence is  
> beyond me.

I'm glad that you understand that these men are not champions of a scientific approach to UFO study. Unfortunately, many of our fellows think of them as perfectly reasonable. Thus it is necessary to reiterate the point and to expose the problems with such beliefs.

> But calling Keel "paranoid" and "half-baked" is not  
> only scientifically unjustifiable but does little to help advance  
> the cause.

Actually, "paranoid" and "half-baked" are the mildest possible adjectives next to what Keel habitually calls those of us who presume to question his approach. For but one example, see his stunningly vituperative piece on "The Flying Saucer Subculture," published in the Journal of Popular Culture in the 1970s. There is no ad hominem to which Keel will not stoop when it comes to assassination of the character of those who fail to recognize his genius as the man who knows everything about everything.

I have known Keel since the mid-1960s and for some years was quite close to him. Then I grew up. Meantime, since you criticize me for calling his ideas "paranoid" and "half-baked," you might be interested to know that several years ago he circulated a malicious tall tale which I heard about from my friend Peter Brookesmith, who was kind enough to tip me off. Keel, it seems, told a number of British ufologists that I am seriously mentally ill and have spent my adult life in and out of psychiatric hospitals.

On hearing this, I wrote Keel and demanded that he retract this bizarre allegation. No retraction was forthcoming -- those who know John know he will not back down even from the biggest whoppers. While making no attempt to defend the hospitalization slander (as indeed how could he?), he went on to assert that he "knows" of my deep schizophrenia just from reading what I write. Not coincidentally, of course, some of what I write is critical of his approach. Which is all the proof of lunacy John needs, apparently. Typical Keel: if you don't agree with him, you're not just mistaken; there's something terribly wrong with you as a human being. In conducting himself in this fashion, Keel demonstrates his contempt for the standards of civilized discourse.

I don't hate Keel, or even dislike him much. I do feel sorry for him. I also feel that he has been a truly unfortunate influence on this field, for reasons I discuss in detail in my just-published The UFO Book (pages 429-44) and at greater length in the forthcoming second edition of my UFO Encyclopedia.

> Instead, I feel that more value would be gained if  
> investigators could help build on what has already been started,  
> and progress the theories into something that has a little more  
> credibility, rather than leaving this field perpetually  
> associated with "paranoids", "nutters" and "half-baked"  
> theorists, thereby continuing to scare off those who wish to  
> explore these theories further as possible starting points.

I think that to the extent that ufology continues to tie its thinking and fortune to the likes of Keel and Vallee, it will be "perpetually associated with 'paranoids,' 'nutters' and 'half-baked' theorists." Recently, reading a book by an outsider, science historian Steven J. Dick (author of The Biological Universe), I was interested to see the same point being made in a discussion of Vallee's theories.

> Undeniably, from many perspectives, the non-ETH area will continue  
> to be a challenging area to address, and will require the  
> attention of investigators/theorists with the strength and

> courage to withstand all of the initial rebukes and "jeers from  
> peers". But since it is an area that has hardly been touched, it  
> has great potential and will likely draw greater readership than  
> may be realized.

Again, John, this area has been "touched on" again and again. It can be more compellingly argued that too much UFO literature has been taken up with the most extreme claims, and far too little attention paid to those cases from which solid data can be extracted. Ufology, if it is ever to grow up, has to be something other than the pursuit of scary stories. If we are to persuade open-minded scientists that UFOs exist as a class of extraordinary phenomena, we had better focus far more than we have been on CE2s, radar/visuals, and the like. There's no shortage of soft evidence which, however intriguing, in the end gets us nowhere. Give me one well-investigated RB-47 case over a thousand MIB anecdotes. And while we're at it, demonstrate to me that RB-47 and like cases are part of the same "phenomenon" as MIB tales. Occult theorists implicitly assume that (typically while deriding the former) without ever telling us why we should believe them.

Cordially,

Jerry Clark

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