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UFO UpDates Mailing List

ETH &c [was: Questions for Abductees]

From: **Peregrine Mendoza** <101653.2205@compuserve.com> [Peter Brookesmith]
Date: Thu, 30 Oct 1997 21:29:27 -0500
Fwd Date: Fri, 31 Oct 1997 06:05:45 -0500
Subject: ETH &c [was: Questions for Abductees]

The Duke of Mendoza presents his compliments.

>From: Penrose Christopher <penrose@sfc.keio.ac.jp>
>Date: Wed, 29 Oct 97 16:01:13 +0900
>To: updates@globalserve.net
>Subject: Re: UFO UpDate: Re: Questions for Abductees

>Ockham's Razor is a bogus tool virally perpetuated by
>self-deceived sophists.

Nicely put :-). But it is a veritable mysterious coincidence then that all the bona-fide paid-up scientists of my acquaintance, among whom only chemists are under-represented these days, are self-deceived sophists, for they do wag it under my nose along with their fingers whenever we discuss the more outr=E9 aspects of my interests.

>If a hypothesis violates what science claims to understand, and
>it is said that this so-called understanding within science
>applies a negating pressure to this hypothesis, it can be said
>that an equal and opposite negating pressure is applied upon what
>science claims to understand. :)

Common sense & everyday observation tells us the Sun revolves around the Earth. That is an hypothesis that "violates what science claims to understand". Are you seriously suggesting that it exerts any "negating" pressure on science? (I am not suggesting the ETH is an hypothesis of this order, btw - I'm just suggesting that Penrose's Law will make for hard cases and may be in danger of rubbing shoulders with Williams's Four Insupportable Axioms of Ufology.)

>Prohibitive for us, but not necessarily prohibitive for some
>other hypothetical alien intelligence. You seem to be blind
>yourself to the "blindingly obvious" -- being that we don't truly
>know what is possible or not. Our science has been principally
>developed from Terran observations. Many of us share the belief
>that the universe is a just a little bit bigger, and hence less
>understood, than our own playground.

I *said* "(for now) prohibitively expensive", which is hardly dogmatic concerning either us or some conjectural them.

One thing that gives scientists some hope that their "laws", albeit provisional, are grounded in reality is their observation that they hold true everywhere in the Universe. Terran observation seems not to be compromised by locality.

Meanwhile, the essential point made by Paul Davies seems to me to be unexceptional and unexceptionable. You use the tools you can rely on, not ones you don't even know exist yet, until something better comes along. The conservatism of science may be very cautious, but it is not closed. Of course we don't know what is possible or not. That's exactly what drives and excites real scientists. I never saw anyone more delighted than the chemistry teacher whose fifth form girls made a genuinely new discovery about the reaction between sodium and water and boggled the establishment of the day.

>Most of us agree that the ETH is not truth. It is hypothesis.
>But it is the act of a closed-minded tunnel-reality fetishist to
>slam the door on the theory when there isn't incontrovertible
>evidence against it, given the infancy of our science, and a
>floodgate of folklore suggesting it.

It is hypothesis indeed - *not* theory. My position is that it's employed prematurely to account for UFO encounters (of any kind) both by the ill-educated and some who ought to know better, and that the evidence *for* it doesn't amount to much. The general rule, irritatingly conservative as it is, remains in place: if you want to argue that UFOs are ET, it's up to you to prove it, not for the doubters to disprove it. The door is wide open here.

>What may be interesting is to actually explore some of these
>alternatives (earth lights for UFOs, lucid dreaming for abduction
>et al) extensively [...]

I agree. Part of my grump is that so many of Les Grands Fromages du Champ so often leap over even the attempt to do any such thing - i.e. they don't perform a necessary process of elimination before pronouncing on the unearthly origins of this or that. In that respect the abduction literalists are one of the shining intellectual disgraces of the age. Which in turn makes them one of the moral disgraces of the age (ref: 4 Oct 1997 et seq.).

>The lack of a cogent presence of such alternate hypotheses
>helps resonate (for better or worse) ETH even more.

Even according to your logic, it shouldn't. How do you know there isn't some as yet undreamt-of terrestrial cause? Both simple caution and the Occam's razor you despise (tho' I do have to admire a man who sets his sword & buckler against six centuries of philosophical history) would suggest one cleans out one's own back yard first. The most grandiose ETHers haven't even tried.

>From: clark@canby.mn.frontiercomm.net [Jerome Clark]
>Date: Thu, 30 Oct 1997 11:35:04 PST
>To: updates@globalserve.net
>Subject: RE: UFO Update: Re: Questions for Abductees

>>"In fact". This enquiring mind would appreciate knowing of what
>>such facts may consist. "Reasonable" in what form of logic?
>>"Natural" in what sense?

>C'mon, Duke, stop the complacent smirking. It's a tired act by
>now.

Here we go again. Before you judge the expression on my face that you cannot even see, please answer the question. And (hard tho' it is to break the habit of a lifetime) with specific answers and attendant arguments, not a bibliography or a list of authorities, unsubstantiated appeals to which do not impress. In unkind moments I think of it as a form of the higher hand-waving.

>The ETH may be right, or it may be wrong, but to pretend that it
>is outrageous and absurd is simply to engage in the stalest of
>rhetorical tricks.

Is this a rhetorical trick, or just stale? Is it a rhetorical trick to describe the ETH as "reasonable" (etc) without giving reasons and then declining to do so when asked? Is it what Ed Stewart would call "ufological wisdom"? Is this a put on? Is it one of the boys in the office again? Or is it just bluster and pomposity and finger-wagging? In other words:

Please cite where I say or even pretend to say that the ETH is outrageous or absurd. (And you needn't get oversophisticated about the guffaws, btw.)

>That sort of posturing doesn't get any of us
>anywhere, and it certainly makes me disinclined to listen to
>whatever genuine insights Duke and his cohorts may have to offer.

If they *are* genuine insights, you'd be pretty stupid to ignore them, wouldn't you? At very least, it would be an odd posture to adopt, and could end in discomfort and tears.

>>And perhaps Jerome could demonstrate just which parts of
>>the scientific method have been applied - scientifically - to
>>which cases? Or even one? I am especially looking forward to
>>reading about all those repeated and independently verified
>>experiments that burden the pages of the scientific or even
>>the ufological literature.

>Read the literature, Duke.

You please answer the question, Jerry. The reasons I asked it were twofold: to see if you *could* answer it, and because this is a public forum. Strange whisperings that I cannot explain give me a powerful impression that I'm not the only one in the world or even on this List who'd like to know the answer.

Which is not to say I won't read your book when it hits these shores (an ISBN would help with our enquiries, BTW) and will very likely enjoy it.

best wishes to all & sundry
Pratincole D. Mockingbird
Air Drummer

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