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UFO UpDates Mailing List

Re: Friedman vs. Krauss Debate

From: Jerome Clark <jkclark@frontiernet.net>
Date: Wed, 07 Apr 99 09:35:11 PDT
Fwd Date: Wed, 07 Apr 1999 15:25:14 -0400
Subject: Re: Friedman vs. Krauss Debate

>Date: Tue, 6 Apr 1999 18:53:07 -0400
>From: Peter Brookesmith Mendoza <DarkSecretPB@compuserve.com>
>Subject: Re: Friedman vs. Krauss Debate
>To: UFO UpDates - Toronto <updates@globalserve.net>

>With the Duke's compliments:

>>From: Brad Sparks <RB47Expert@aol.com>
>>Date: Sun, 4 Apr 1999 13:11:43 EDT
>>Subject: Re: Friedman vs. Krauss Debate
>>To: updates@globalserve.net

Patient and gentle listfolk:

>In part I was also needling Jerome Clark over his own lack of
>commitment to his own arguments. If Brad wants to consider
>Jerome's work as "literary interpretations" and Jerome as a
>closet (and by inference guilt-ridden) literary critic in the
>dappled world of ufology, that is fine by me. It would at least
>explain some of his more spectacular apoplexies at the PSH -
>which, as we've just seen, does not even have to be mentioned to
>release a fine spray of irrelevant blather, but which so often
>deals in narrative details.

Interesting that the ever more apoplectic Peter lets loose with
a fine spray of irrelevant blather all over the hated Jerome
Clark when I am not remotely the issue Brad is discussing here.
Brad's subject, on which he is splendidly eloquent, is the
repeatedly demonstrated inadequacy of "skeptical" arguments
against puzzling and suggestive UFO reports.

>>It is incumbent on skeptics to tackle the unexplained best UFO
>>cases on these lists published by the pre-eminent Jacques
>>Vallee in 1966 and by Ron Story and Richard Greenwell in 1981.

>Not at all. Of course it's gratifying to have an explanation, but
>it's not obligatory. Skeptics are obliged to do no more than
>demonstrate the flaws in the data and their interpretation by
>True Believers. This is particularly true of the ETH, which
>essentially goes from "unexplained" to "alien presence" in one
>leap, often without even considering (let alone demolishing)
>psychosocial factors.

The usual sort of grotesque simplicities with which "skeptics"
mount what pass for arguments. There is a lot of naive and just
plain dumb writing about the ETH, but in science (and, ideally,

even in list exchanges) it is always the best arguments and evidence that are at issue, not the worst. Understandably, given a position sufficiently at risk that it is reduced to grasping at those human straws Klass and Menzel, Peter would prefer for us to concentrate on the former.

For examples of thoughtful writing on the ETH -- writing, in other words, that, right or wrong, in no way validates the crude stereotyping Peter employs above -- see Michael Swords's various papers (the very mention of which typically drive Peter into arm-waving rant and insult) and the bibliographies appended to his "Extraterrestrial Hypothesis and Science" and my "Extraterrestrial Hypothesis and Ufology" in The UFO Encyclopedia, 2nd Ed. In addition, I recommend the informed, carefully reasoned writings, available on line, of the admirable Mark Cashman.

In any event, as several of us by-now nearly deafened recipients of "skeptical" bombast have pointed repeatedly to no avail, at this stage the discussion ought to focus on investigation, documentation, and analysis of the most evidential UFO cases. (Two recent examples: Brad's paper on the RB-47 case and Ted Phillips's forthcoming magnum opus on the Delphos CE2.) Speculation about the Greater Meaning of It All has to be a distinctly secondary concern until we know a lot more than we know now. Actually, I suspect that Peter's and others' fervent desire to make us believe defense of the ETH must be put ahead of all else betrays their own deep-seated suspicion that their own arguments are as wanting as their critics have always held them to be.

Jerry Clark

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