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UFO UpDates Mailing List

Re: IFOs

From: John Rimmer <jrimmer@magonia.demon.co.uk>
Date: Mon, 9 Aug 1999 00:43:57 +0100
Fwd Date: Mon, 09 Aug 1999 15:08:31 -0400
Subject: Re: IFOs

>To: UFO UpDates - Toronto <updates@globalserve.net>
>From: Jerome Clark <jkclark@frontiernet.net>
>Subject: Re: IFOs
>Date: Tue, 03 Aug 99 18:26:41 PDT

>>Date: Mon, 2 Aug 1999 23:27:55 +0100
>>To: UFO UpDates - Toronto <updates@globalserve.net>
>>From: John Rimmer <jrimmer@magonia.demon.co.uk>
>>Subject: Re: IFOs

>>>To: UFO UpDates - Toronto <updates@globalserve.net>
>>>From: Jerome Clark <jkclark@frontiernet.net>
>>>Subject: Re: IFOs
>>>Date: Sat, 31 Jul 99 10:27:32 PDT

>>>>Date: Thu, 29 Jul 1999 22:43:35 +0100
>>>>To: UFO UpDates - Toronto <updates@globalserve.net>
>>>>From: John Rimmer <jrimmer@magonia.demon.co.uk>
>>>>Subject: Re: IFOs

>Hi, John,

>Are you sure you want to go through all this again? Haven't
>we been through this before? It seems to me that we even
>ended up the subject of a Fortean Times column awhile ago.
>Why this compulsion to revisit the scene of the crime?

>Oh, well....

>>What's all this about "ridicule avoidance"? Do you seriously
>>think that I and other sceptical ufologists (not just in
>>Britain, by the way) have adopted our views just to placate some
>>mysterious group of people who apparently have nothing better to
>>do that go around jeering at a random collection of UFOs?

>I think you've shown your hand when you resort to the sort
>of transparent rhetorical device which leads you to conjure
>up a "mysterious group of people who apparently have nothing
>better to do that [sic]

Glad to see the old sub-editors [sic] back in action, though it
must get a bit overworked with rapidly typed internet postings.

>go around jeering at a random collection
>of UFOs"? First, the second part of that sentence makes even
>less sense than the first does, and second, the first part
>transparently begs the question of the large role ridicule has
>played in the UFO controversy over the decades. As, of course,

>you well know. Disingenuity doesn't suit you, John.

Look, I'm not talking about establishment scientists and tenured academics here - or indeed witnesses who have had no prior connection with the subject, as well you very well know. I'm talking about a group of people who write about, research and investigate UFO reports in their spare time - they earn their living as newspaper journalists, social workers, copywriters, civil servants and, gulp!, librarians. Why should such low level nobodies be concerned about the alleged ridicule of some sort of scientific elite or hostile media. Curiously the ones who get the most ridicule seem to be the ones who make the most money!

>I stand by my point, and I am amused to see a psychosocial
>theorist -- of all people -- disputing the effect of the
>psychological and social fact of ridicule of ufologists and UFO
>witnesses (not

>"a random collection of UFOs," whatever that's supposed to
>mean).

(correction already posted, I meant "ufologists")

>>Then you don't read [Magonia] very well. We have never denied that
>>there are anomalous UFOs. We just don't automatically jump to
>>the conclusion that they are physical spacecraft.

>
>Stop being disingenuous, John. Among other things, it's
>boring. If you are against conclusion-jumping, then we are
>in full agreement. Where we disagree, I suspect, that you're
>only against jumping to those conclusions that you haven't
>jumped to yourself. Lively, entertaining, and literate though
>it be, Magonia is no stranger to conclusion-jumping. To the
>contrary, it's as full of such movement as a poolful of frogs.
>My word, last time around you were even defending, or sort of
>defending, Peter Rogerson's hilarious conclusion-jumping
>about the relationship of America's Hispanic population to
>its alien-abduction experiences.

Oh, for God's sake, not this again. I really don't want to bore everyone stiff. The debate is archived. Surely there must be some more barmy old nonsense in Magonia that you could quote for a change?

>>>The rest of you are referred to the UFO literature. For some
>>>convincingly documented cases which have stubbornly withstood
>>>the assaults of pelicanists, see The UFO Encyclopedia, 2nd Ed.,
>>>on the Coyne CE2 (254-57), Portland County Sightings (719-27),
>>>RB-47 case (761-90), or the Socorro CE2/CE3 (856-67). To cite
>>>just a very small number.

>>Ah, ha! So finally you've listed your "best cases"! After about
>>a year of asking.

>I have repeatedly referred you to my UFO Encyclopedia and also
>to the larger UFO literature. Given your position, I can understand
>why you wouldn't want to read it.

I confess I probably haven't read the whole 1600 pages of the three-volume edition and the 1500 pages of the second edition, but throwing 3100 pages of an encycopaedia at me - however excellent, and I refer to it constantly - is hardly a statement of the dozen or so UFO cases most indicative of a physical phenomenon. Now you've quoted four you find particularly impressive. Thank you.

>>>Amusingly, no less than the eminent
>>>historian of astronomy Steven Dick recently stated (at a private
>>>gathering of UFO historians held

>>- in a telephone booth? -

>Is that a joke? Well, let me tell you the one about how many
>psychosocial theorists it takes to change a lightbulb..... Oh,
>never mind. It might create an international incident.

"How many psychosocial theorists does it take to change a lightbulb?" "What evidence do you have that the bulb isn't working?"

OK, not brilliant, but the best I could come up with at one

o'clock in the morning!

>>>in Chicago late this past May)
>>>that "evidence" in science is always a matter of dispute and
>>>negotiation; he went on to say that ufologists' evidence is
>>>entirely reasonable in that context (the history of scientific
>>>disputation), and he said what we're doing is well worth doing.

>>This strikes me as the sort of nice non-committal statement that
>>a polite guest at a private gathering would say. I wonder just
>>how much negotiation is possible about, say, the second law of
>>thermodynamics? I fact, on re-reading it the statement seems to
>>reflect a sort of post-modernist cultural relativism normally
>>associated with French philosophers and, erm, English majors.

>You weren't there, John, and it shows, I'm afraid. But not knowing
>something has never stopped a psychosocial theorist, in my
>observation.

Perhaps you could post the text of his talk, or a summary, and
we'll have a clearer idea of just what he was saying. Whatever
it was, I'm sure it was not a straightforward endorsement of the
extraterrestrial hypothesis.

>>>Asked why he believed in one controversial phenomenon, which
>>>skeptics have charged is based solely on misidentifications
>>>and hoaxes, a scientist of world-class reputation has stated the
>>>following:

>>>"Though ... I have never seen the phenomenon personally, I feel
>>>that there is no question that [this phenomenon] exists. I have
>>>talked to six eyewitnesses of the phenomena and think there is
>>>no reasonable doubt as to the authenticity of their
>>>observations.

>>>"Furthermore, the reports are all remarkably
>>>similar and have common features with the hundreds of
>>>observations that appear in the literature."

>>Yes, just like the hundreds of ghost stories, encounters with
>>Satan, messages from spirits, memories of past lives, etc.,
>>etc., etc. This is just the old "I can get it for you wholesale"
>>school of research, where we are meant to be impressed by the
>>sheer number reports.

>And ball lightning -- which some psychosocial theorists have
>even suggested explain otherwise unaccounted-for UFO reports.
>I'm afraid you've just made my point for me. Scientists do think
>like ufologists.

Avoiding the subject, Jerry. Are you saying that the "hundreds
of observations" are evidence for encounters with Satan,
messages from spirits, past lives, etc? Ball lightning is a
disputed phenomena, I agree, but it does not appear to operate
outside the overall bounds of science. As far as I know the main
advocate of ball-lightning as an explanation for UFO reports is
(or was until he got onto mirages) Stuart Campbell, who is one
of the last people I would describe as a psychosocial theorist.

>>>What a dope. Obviously, this true believer has never read The
>>>UFO Handbook or Magonia,

>>I'm puzzled. Are you comparing The UFO Handbook to Magonia, as
>>two "pelicanist" publications, and suggesting that the Handbook
>>dismisses UFO reports with "grand rhetorical gestures?"

>Any more of this disingenuous play-acting and I think I am going
>to pass into a deep, deep slumber. For the rest of you: remember,
>it's John and his fellow pelicanists who are always citing The UFO
>Handbook as some sort of definitive validation of their position.
>It isn't, of course, but John can't seem to grasp that he was being
>ribbed here. If I didn't know you better, my friend, I'd wonder if
>you have a sense of humor.

Oh dear, actually my little comment *was* meant as a joke. The
significance of Hendry's Handbook is that it represents a
sceptical viewpoint which developed as a result of actually
investigating cases. Many American ufologists (and quite a few
British ones as well, I hope no nationalistic bias here) seem to
think that "sceptics" are always people who have come to
ufologys from the outside with the purpose of ridiculing it. In

my experience most serious sceptics, certainly in Britain (burst of God Save the Queen, Land of Hope and Glory, Jerusalem and other jingoistic melodies) have reached their conclusions after long and detailed study of the evidence; most probably started as believers" and in some cases have come very reluctantly to their sceptical positions. And I don't think "establishment ridicule" had much to do with it.

--

John Rimmer, establishment lackey
Magonia Magazine
www.magonia.demon.co.uk

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