

This book is handsomely produced. It contains a useful bibliography and index. Some of the footnotes are long, but many of them are fully as interesting as the text itself. A large number of photographs add to the value and enjoyment of the book. They include portraits of all the important contributors to the development of pre-Darwinian ideas on embryology and evolution. A photograph of Darwin taken, I think, in 1881 (he died in 1882) is wrongly dated to 1884. The caption beneath a portrait of the elder Johann Friedrich Meckel (1724-1774) seems appropriate not for him but for the younger Meckel of the same name, his grandson, who lived from 1781 to 1833. These, however, are the only errors I found.

*Ian Stevenson, M.D.*

*Division of Personality Studies  
Box 152 Health Sciences Center  
University of Virginia  
Charlottesville, VA 22908*

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**Revelations: Alien Contact and Human Deception**, by Jacques Vallee, New York: Ballantine Books, 1991, 273 pp., ISBN 0-345-37172-0, \$20.00, (available from The Sourcebook Project, P. O. Box 107, Glen Arm MD 21057).

Vallee, a French-born astronomer and computer scientist, has spent three decades investigating UFO events as well as the social nature of the UFO phenomenon. He was a long-time associate of the late astronomer J. Allen Hynek of Northwestern, serving with him as an investigator for the Condon Committee's examination of UFO sightings during the 1960s (USAF, 1969). The committee concluded that UFO sightings were largely misperceptions of natural events, but both Hynek and Vallee soon became convinced of the reality of the UFO phenomenon, although not necessarily of its extraterrestrial origin. This conviction appears throughout *Revelations* (e.g., pp. 7, 97, 165, 226 and 228). "[UFOs] are," Vallee tells us, "astounding physical anomalies that have the ability to affect the perception of time and space and the consciousness of those who come close to them" (p. 226-27) and are "associated with a form of nonhuman consciousness that manipulates space and time in ways we do not understand" (p. 236). However, as a scientist, he remains quite skeptical about reports of humans being abducted by spaceships, captive humanoids being held at secret locations and similar claims that fascinate and inspire some ufologists. Indeed, Vallee presented a paper at the 1989 SSE meeting cogently ar-

guing against the extraterrestrial origin hypothesis. He approves this *Journal* as "the only refereed publication in the field" (p. 238).

This book's "revelation" is that "some of the most remarkable sightings are actually complex hoaxes that have been carefully engineered for our benefit" (pp. 7-8). Who is the engineer? The U. S. government is his prime suspect; who else has the resources to carry out something like this? Government agencies, he theorizes, have been making "a massive effort" to "study the UFO phenomena," not "to solve it" but to "use it, to manipulate it as a cover for something else" (p. 229; emphasis in original). Vallee occasionally suggests that particular groups such as the Lyndon LaRouche movement (p. 110), "the American extreme right" (p. 234), and even "an Eastern bloc intelligence agency" (p. 115) are co-conspirators in this deception, but these suspicions are not elaborated.

While the author discusses a number of UFO sightings, he gives close attention to three: a reported landing and abduction in Pontoise, France, in 1979, an alleged UFO crash near Woodbridge (joint USAF and RAF) Air Base in England in 1980, and the photographs of glowing lights over Gulf Breeze, Florida, in 1987-88 along with the convergence of six AWOL U.S. soldiers stationed in Europe in that town in 1990. All these, he suggests, were staged events, designed to attract the attention of ufologists. The government acts even more insidiously, Vallee claims, by having its agents or hirelings act as provocateurs in spreading "proof stories" that permeate the ranks of ufologists. The most common stories are (1) that the bodies of dead aliens recovered from the Roswell, New Mexico, crash in 1947 are frozen at Wright-Patterson AFB in Ohio; (2) that a secret group of a dozen top military officers and scientists (known as MJ-12) has been briefing the president about UFOs since 1947; (3) that there is a large underground facility beneath the New Mexico desert where government scientists and extraterrestrials collaborate on experiments; and (4) that the government possesses documentary evidence showing that UFOs come from the planet UMMO which circles the star IUMMA about 15 light-years distant.

These and other stories tantalize ufologists into believing that irrefutable proof of their long-held beliefs is just around the corner and encourage them to further investigatory pursuit of the non-existent proof. Such pursuit, the author argues, distracts them from "the real nature of the UFO phenomenon" (p. 7) and causes them to set "aside research into genuine UFO cases" (p. 97). In fact, Vallee asserts (without elaboration) that when a USAF officer promised a ufologist secret film of disks and bodies of human-like aliens for a TV documentary she was producing and then withdrew it at the last minute, it precipitated a "disintegration of American UFO research" (p. 45). The reader is left to wonder whether such a single-minded and fragile group could conduct fruitful investigation in the absence of government deception.

Soon after reading *Revelations*, I described it a friend. "Why on earth would the government go to all that trouble?" she asked. This is the central and obvi-

ous question implicit in the book and Vallee's few short attempts to answer it are unconvincing. He offers three speculations. Perhaps the government wants to conduct its own investigation of UFOs without interference from often careless and sometimes fanatical amateurs. As noted above, the best way to accomplish this is to turn their attention to false sightings or to plant large chunks of disinformation in their ranks. Or, perhaps the CIA or the Air Force is manufacturing "flying disks as a platform for reconnaissance operations, for intelligence gathering, for counterterrorism" (p. 229). "Making people believe they are observing flying saucers might be a clever ploy" (p. 229) to keep their real uses secret. Last, perhaps the military has developed sophisticated saucer-like devices for psychological warfare. Their appearance over enemy bases or cities will create great confusion thus allowing our troops to capture them more easily. As these devices must be tested occasionally (this is why so many sightings appear near our own military bases), it is in the military's interest to have them passed off as extraterrestrial spacecraft.

Then my friend asked the obvious follow-up question: "Wouldn't you think that, if so many people in the government had been involved in deceiving the public on such a massive scale for nearly half a century, someone would have spilled the beans by now?" This question does not seem to have occurred to Vallee. He discusses only one situation that can even remotely be placed in the "spilled beans" category. In 1984 a ufologist received an anonymous mailing of microfilm of (almost certainly falsified) files in the National Archives showing that MJ-12 had personally briefed President Eisenhower at least twice. This "evidence" has confused and divided ufologists. According to Vallee, the individual he believes generated the false MJ-12 file "confessed that he had willingly allowed himself to be used" by alleged USAF intelligence agents and had "knowingly disseminated disinformation" (p. 47). Perhaps so, but this is a far cry from the Pentagon Papers or Watergate's "Deep Throat".

The author's other evidence of government deception hardly rises above speculative logic. Indeed, Vallee's own secondary investigations rely on unnamed and uncited sources too often to elicit much reader confidence in their reliability. He writes about his "contacts" (p. 229), "my correspondent" (p. 108), what "witnesses" said (p. 229), what his "friends" have told him (p. 150), or his conversation with the "inventor" of small flying disks (p. 161).

Except for UFO junkies, *Revelations* is a tough read. Vallee immediately plunges the reader into the byzantine world of ufology, providing neither an initial overview nor a map of the territory. One mystery quickly follows another with little attempt at linkage. Each has a new (or nearly so) cast of characters. In some cases, knowledge of the personalities of the major players is more crucial to understanding what is going on than is any hard evidence. The narrative frequently alludes to long-running controversies among ufologists, with which the casual reader will be unfamiliar. Also disconcerting is the frequent, apparently pointless discussion of UFO events seemingly unrelated to his the-

sis of government deception (e.g., sightings in Texas in 1897, the disappearance of a U. S. destroyer in 1944, a shadowy English will purporting to make an inheritance available to organizations that attempt to contact extraterrestrials).

Occasionally Vallee gets quite careless. For instance, after giving the declination and right ascension of IUMMA (star of the planet UMMO, noted above) about 15 light years away, he writes, "this would place it squarely in a region of great transparency, near the Galactic North Pole, which is free from hydrogen clouds. *Therefore*, IUMMA should be visible to us as a fifth magnitude star, easily seen with the naked eye" (p. 99; emphasis added). Vallee gives no optical luminosity for the star, however, and it is impossible to conclude that it would be of the fifth magnitude without that information.

This is called the third book (see Vallee, 1988, 1990) of his Alien Contact trilogy (an odd title for books written by one so doubtful of UFO's extraterrestrial origin), but there is little continuity between the three books. In fact, they did not all have the same publisher and it was not until after the second book's appearance that it was even labelled a trilogy. By training and familiarity, Vallee has much to offer in the formidable task of making some sense of the UFO phenomenon, but *Revelations* is in that respect a disappointment.

*Bradley C. Canon*  
*University of Kentucky*  
*Lexington, KY 40506-0027*

### References

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## RESPONSE

### Vallee's Response to Canon

The need to carefully separate spurious data from valuable observation is crucial in any science. This is especially true in the development of fragile frontier areas where no consensus yet exists on the corpus of evidence to be analyzed. In writing *Revelations*, my purpose was to call the attention of my