

(as represented by members of the American Association for the Advancement of Science) or among members of the National Academy of Science.

His final chapter discusses the implications for our world view once we take on board the paranormal. In a section titled “Where Does Psi Fit In?” he writes: “Parapsychology explicitly studies the interaction between consciousness and the physical world. It assumes a downward causation exists in some form and it assumes that scientific methods can be used to study this middle realm in a rigorous way”. This expresses precisely my own long-standing conviction that mind and matter interact and that psi phenomena arise when mind acts on the external world instead of remaining confined to an individual brain.

The paper wrapper shows a picture of a spoon, but the reader will search in vain for any reference to spoon-bending, and Uri Geller does not even figure in the index. This is, as one would expect, seeing that the author is concerned only with the experimental evidence from ordinary volunteer participants. All the same, I would have liked to know what Radin makes of Geller, who is, after all, the best known psychic in the world.

Finally, a few minor errors have been allowed to creep in. Michael Polanyi was a physicist turned philosopher of science, but he was never a “psychologist”. Myers spelt his first name Frederic with no “k”. The late A .J. Ayer was a well-known philosopher, never a “mathematician”. Finally, I note that I am listed under References, but my name does not appear in the text or index, not that that bothers me.

All in all, I would not hesitate in recommending this book to all who still have an open mind about parapsychology.

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The Lure of the Edge: Scientific Passions, Religious Beliefs, and the Pursuit of UFOs by Brenda Denzler. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001. 259 pp., \$35 (c). ISBN 0-520-22432-9.

Readers who appreciate scholarly research and dispassionate analysis of complex and controversial subjects will find here a remarkably even-handed depiction of the “UFO movement.” For the author, who holds a PhD in Religious Studies from Duke University, specifies in the Introduction: “There is a UFO phenomenon and there is a UFO movement. It is the latter with which I am concerned.”

Denzler has been inaccurately identified at times as being a sociologist. Although this book fits a dictionary definition of “sociology,” analyzing as it does human institutions and groups, its main thrust is philosophical: What

does the UFO movement tell us about the relationship between science and religion, and the pursuit of truth? Are there religious dimensions to the UFO phenomenon? To the UFO community, UFOs are ontologically real and indicative of physical and highly significant encounters with beings who appear to be “alien” (i.e., not of Earth as we know it). Yet, the reports are rejected by science and government, written off as some sort of fantasy or myth. In addition, quasi-religious groups have sprung up in response to the mystery.

A brief but well-researched history of the UFO phenomenon is presented in the first two chapters to lay the groundwork for the analysis that follows. Included is some good reporting on the seemingly abrupt emergence of the abduction phenomenon in the 1960s and 1970s. The analysis focuses on belief systems, attitudes, science, religion, and the search for truth.

The abduction phenomenon came to prominence at a time that mainline ufologists were striving to legitimize the study of UFOs in the eyes of science. The UFO movement suddenly was faced with something it did not need or want: reports even more bizarre and “indigestible” than mere sightings of craftlike objects in the skies and on the ground. The impact of this development on the UFO movement and on society in general is examined.

Chapter 3 delves into the reactions of science to UFO reports, and attempts of scientifically oriented members of the UFO community to garner the attention of skeptical scientists and to engage them in serious studies. Also, the development of a counter-skepticism about science among members of the movement who had begun to doubt that science could provide any meaningful answers. These “rebels” tended to display anti-science tendencies and turned increasingly to (alleged) alternative explanatory systems.

Chapters 4 and 5, arguably the core of the book, examine long-standing tensions between science and religion, and how they apply (or don’t apply) to the UFO movement. How is religion implicated in the subject? The reactions of religious organizations and individuals to UFOs are reviewed, including the full spectrum of interpretations by some that UFO encounters are demonic in nature, an extension of Biblical writings, or modern-day versions of “angelic” encounters. Here, too, the author takes no particular position.

The brief Afterword, titled “Final Thoughts on Science, Religion, and UFOs,” provides a concise summary of the author’s thesis. Here she concludes that ufology is not a new religious movement in any traditional sense, nor does it appear to be consistent with or an extension of Christianity. “And yet,” she says, “there are fundamentally religious valences to the experiences, interpretations, and beliefs of many of those who participate in the UFO community.” Only in that sense can the UFO movement be characterized as “religious.”

Between the worlds of science and religion, she concludes, “No part of society finds itself more thoroughly situated at the intersection of those [two outlooks] than the UFO and alien abduction movements.” The UFO movement predominantly features a scientific outlook, but as with members

of religious movements its members tend to seek knowledge and meaning for wider horizons than science presently is able (or willing) to provide.

Although not geared to a popular audience, this book will appeal to intelligent laymen who are comfortable with some scientific and philosophical concepts and terminology. They will find it to be a very rewarding, insightful, persuasive, and thoroughly documented book. This reviewer can think of no other book on the UFO subject that is at all similar to this one. It is in many respects a unique contribution to understanding of the UFO phenomenon, its proponents and detractors.

A final note: the actual text is only 178 pages, supplemented by 63 pages of chapter notes and a 43-page bibliography, both testimonials to the author's scholarship. Additionally, there is a thorough and useful 9-page index.

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Aliens, Ghosts, and Cults: Legends We Live by Bill Ellis. Jackson, Mississippi: University Press of Mississippi, 2001. 291 pp., \$38.00. ISBN 1-57806-325-6.

The production quality could have been better (my copy annoyingly had uneven and rough-edged pages), but I loved and highly recommend this book, which was authored by a respected authority on the subject of folklore and legends. Bill Ellis is an associate professor of English and American Studies at Pennsylvania State University, Hazleton campus. Throughout this work Ellis examines our cultural history through narrative, and his insights suggest how to continue to examine the role of legend in society. His research suggests that legends—old and new—are not static and independent from everyday life. Rather, Ellis points out that “traditional narratives exist not simply as verbal texts . . . they are also maps for action, often drastic action” (p. 235). Accordingly, legends motivate *ostention*, i.e., in essence the premise that narratives become action. The outcomes can be benign (playful visits to “haunted houses”) or malevolent (horrifying threats of violence“), but Ellis argues that the tendency of people to literally enact legends is widespread in our society. Ostention is also argued to explain the proliferation of many reports of anomalous and Fortean phenomena; an idea not unlike that discussed recently by Showalter (1996). Ellis’ ideas might also have value for understanding other types of behaviors that are motivated by rumor (not just strictly narratives), such as contagious psychogenic illnesses and socially-oriented delusions (see e.g., Bartholomew, 2001).

My interest and appreciation of the subject of ostention dates from my early examinations of the influence of contextual variables on the experience and