

ESSENTIAL READING

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ONE of the current internecine squabbles among UFO researchers revolves around the question: Should Fortean and parapsychical phenomena be considered as having some value in our efforts to solve the UFO problem? While the advocates of this approach point out that UFOs are but one of the many enigmas with which we are surrounded, and may in fact be only part of a far greater mystery, the opponents feel, to quote from a recent BUFORA journal, "there are enough 'fringe' phenomena already classified or included under the UFO umbrella . . . which have no proven *direct* connection with UFOs." The author's italics for the word "direct" brought home to me the tenor of his thinking. Here was the traditional scientific approach to the problem, logical and exact, from one solid step to another solid step, which is of course the only recognised way with which to approach any problem, and the method we are all taught to use throughout our early years of training.

But there is another type of thought pattern that can be used, not one opposed to logic, but complementary to it. This mode is used instinctively by those who feel that the Fortean and parapsychical are well worth considering. It is the thought style of

the inventor and the originator, the individual who, to the envy of his fellows, appears to be able to pluck a cohesive coherent idea from what had seemed to be trackless confusion. This approach has been critically examined and defined, and termed "lateral thinking", by Edward de Bono, in his recent book *The Use of Lateral Thinking* (pub. Jonathan Cape). Traditional logical thinking he has termed "vertical thinking," and likens it to using building blocks, each block resting firmly and squarely on the block below it, whereas in lateral thinking, the blocks are scattered around and the ensuing pattern can have a multiplicity of directions of approach, some of greater value than others.

Lateral thinking is more concerned with possibilities than with certainty, and with the generation of new ideas, rather than the refinement of old ones, and so this book should be essential reading for every student of UFO phenomena. Indeed, sentences and paragraphs leap from the page as one reads: it could well have been written with the present state of UFO research in mind. Thus we read of "dominant ideas" which can exert a "powerful organising influence on the way a person thinks and approaches a

problem". Or again I quote, "It is disturbing to think how many situations are incompletely understood because attempts at exploration persist in using well-tryed familiar patterns which ought themselves to be re-examined."

Although this is not a book about UFOs, in another sense it is very much concerned with them. Not only will it help us to question our mental approach to the problem, but it shows us how to develop and use other patterns of thinking, which may pay greater dividends when applied to the UFO enigma.

I end with a quote from the book that might suitably be printed on thick card and sent to every UFO researcher. "It is not possible to dig a hole in a different place by digging the same hole deeper. Logic is the tool that is used to dig holes deeper and bigger, to make them altogether better holes. But if the hole is in the wrong place, then no amount of improvement is going to put it in the right place. No matter how obvious this may seem to every digger, it is still easier to go on digging in the same hole than to start all over again in a new place. Vertical thinking is digging the same hole deeper; lateral thinking is trying again elsewhere."

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