

de Casa Calderón saw it as a bright light falling from the sky, as he was walking in Biarritz.

"Back home in London, Mr. Williams appealed, in a well-known London daily, to any scientific people who could elucidate the mystery. Of course, he got no answer. If Mr. Valentine Williams is now looking back on mundane affairs from the land of shades—he has been dead for some years—his friendly ghost may like to hear that, fifteen years later, one man would like to tell him what he saw that day, on the plain in Guipúzcoa, was a *non-exploding or silent satellite disc* of some mysterious sort probably linked with an invisible mother craft of cosmic origin, far up in the stratosphere."

According to my calculations, the witnesses of this strange phenomenon were near Miranda de Ebro, following exactly the "Bavic" line with their car . . . more than twenty years before Aimé Michel discovered it! The character of the object

seen is quite similar to the foo-fighters encountered by the Allied, German and Japanese pilots during the Second World War or the green fireballs reported in 1948 in the American West. In my book I gave the foo-fighters the name of "telecaptor eyes." They were the first sign of the preface of the methodical reconnaissance of the planet Earth begun in 1946-47 . . . and which has not ended yet. The question is much more serious and important than those people imagine who are not capable of imagining anything.

<sup>1</sup> FLYING SAUCER REVIEW, May-June, 1963, issue, pp. 3-7.

<sup>2</sup> *Planète*, No. 10, May-June, 1963, pp. 87-107. Paris.

<sup>3</sup> FLYING SAUCER REVIEW, article, "UFO Survey of Spain: More Evidence," p. 15, January-February, 1963, issue.

<sup>4</sup> Harold T. Wilkins, *Flying Saucers on the Attack* (Citadel Press, New York, 1954), pp. 15-16. The English edition is entitled *Flying Saucers on the Moon* (Peter Owen, 1954). The page references are the same as in the American edition.

## THE PSYCHOLOGY OF SCEPTICISM

BY WADE WELLMAN

ABOUT eight years ago, in a light passage with a serious purpose, Waveney Girvan described the tactics of the so-called "professional" UFO sceptics in these terms:

"They all adopt the same line of argument and it is consistent. Whenever a flying saucer is reported it is always something else. It may be a weather balloon, a meteor, high-flying geese, reflections, refractions, mirages, the planet Venus — anything except a flying saucer. . . . Whenever an incident is reported in the *Daily Express* one takes it for granted that Mr. Pincher will be along next day with his high-flying geese or low-flying meteors."<sup>1</sup>

That is true, but Donald H. Menzel, the heavyweight champion sceptic of the English-speaking world, has improved the process. The reported objects are flying saucers, but "flying saucers" are not flying saucers after all. That is to say, we have here a generic name for various types of weather phenomena,

and in this sense the UFOs are "as real as rainbows are real."

Certainly they have enough reality to interest Dr. Menzel. They have taken up at least eleven years of his spare time—time which he might have turned to far better advantage. One of the saving graces of the human mind is its pliability, but Menzel, who seems to me to have one of the most powerful intellects in America today, has now given the final proof that where UFOs are concerned his mind is completely inflexible. He is a brilliant and versatile thinker with exactly one blind spot, a major scientist whose fertile brain has uncountable open doors, along with one that is permanently closed and locked.

For now the last word has come out of Harvard; the final sentence has been written. Dr. Menzel's new book, *The World of Flying Saucers* (Doubleday & Co., Inc.)<sup>2</sup> has laid the ghost. As I write this article there must be scores of reviewers, in the United States and Britain, taking up

pens to announce that the UFO has now been disposed of "once and for all." I truly wonder how many times this myth has been blasted "once and for all." Patrick Moore, who hands down all of his opinions *ex cathedra*, wrote in 1954 that Menzel's first book had settled the issue. Dr. Menzel knew better, for his second book on the subject has plainly been written to finish an unfinished job. His protracted campaign against the UFO—a holy war that he launched in *Look Magazine* as early as 1952—has something about it that protests too much.

The Harvard astronomer feels, I am sure, no conscious doubts about his case. But the new book, written in collaboration with Mrs. Lyle G. Boyd, shows an occasional insecurity which probably operates just below the conscious level. The book is in places rather less than candid. Dr. Menzel proposes some case solutions that are far more imaginative than the interplanetary theory ever dreamed of being. His book will

not explode the UFO, but it surely makes an end of the platitude that "truth is stranger than fiction."

It seems quite clear that relatively few people have been convinced either by Menzel or by the repeated USAF debunking. On the other hand, there are certainly far more sceptics than believers, and if this is partly due to the recent lack of publicity (except in England, where public interest is apparently on the rise), it is chiefly due to nothing more than human reluctance to accept a new idea. Essentially the sceptics fall into two groups, those who have made some study of the topic in order to refute it, and those who have never bothered to study it because, in Edward J. Ruppelt's words, they "positively know that all UFOs are nonsense." Incidentally, speaking of Ruppelt, it can be shown that one American magazine has deliberately falsified Ruppelt's views in the hope of vitiating his book. Siegfried Mandel of the *Saturday Review* gives a biased picture of the book in the issue for February 25, 1956:

"*The Report on Unidentified Flying Objects*, by Edward J. Ruppelt (Doubleday, \$3.95), rehashes a good deal of old saucer literature. However, the former head of the U.S. Air Force Project Blue Book does include material which other saucer enthusiasts have conveniently overlooked or glossed over in their writing. Mr. Ruppelt shows that in a number of instances when Air Force planes raced after what they supposed to be saucer craft these were later discovered to be weather balloons. He shows that some widely accepted reports of physical contact with saucers, such as the Florida scout-master case, are patent fakes. . . . Mr. Ruppelt describes the painstaking analysis to which Air Force material was subjected by a body of prominent scientists, whose conclusion was that there was nothing in it to support the thesis that outer-space creatures are visiting our Earth. Yet, he is curiously indecisive in his own

conclusions, leaving the door wide open to uninvited galactic guests."

This is a calculated distortion. It isn't a review, in the true sense, at all; it completely suppresses everything which Mandel thinks damaging to the sceptical position. The last sentence, implying that Ruppelt's entire case is against the interplanetary saucer, and that the author should be a "decisive" sceptic on the basis of his own report, is untrue. If anything, Ruppelt's original book (I am not speaking of the 1959 revision) was much more pro than con, as Mandel knew perfectly well. In this case a reviewer has jeopardised his own reputation for honesty in the hope of putting the opposition out of countenance.

Another method sometimes employed is the brief dismissal. Patrick Moore, though not a "professional" disbeliever, has nevertheless dabbled in UFO scepticism and has brought this particular method to perfection. Hence, in his *Story of Man and the Stars*—the British edition is titled *Suns, Myths, and Men*—Moore devotes seven pages to the UFO topic and reaches the conclusion that we cannot accept interplanetary saucers without believing that they come from the lost continent of Atlantis. He then claims that there is no evidence that Atlantis has ever existed, and on these grounds decides that there is no basis for the reality of UFOs. Finally he makes a summary statement: "We are faced with a clear-cut decision. Either we put down the stories of interplanetary saucers, near-magical powers and men from Venus to misunderstandings and mistakes, or else we reject modern science in its entirety . . . and return to the astrological and mystical cults from which the last three centuries have freed us. It is as simple as that." (Pages 182-183.)

I am sorry that I must keep attacking Moore, but his comments on the UFO show an iron-clad ignorance of the subject and the statement quoted above is simply childish; Moore cannot

segregate any viewpoints with which he is not in sympathy. Having ruled out astrology, the interplanetary saucer, and the continent of Atlantis, he now affirms that the three beliefs go together as naturally as the particles of an atom. This is the price one pays for disagreeing with him. I am not pleading for astrology, and really I haven't studied the question of Atlantis, but I know the difference between these theories and the UFO mystery. If, as seems obvious, Moore cannot tell the difference, someone really should explain it to him.

I have known people—such as my high school biology teacher, back in 1957—who would not allow me to utter a sentence on this topic. My old biology teacher is the best case I can bring to mind; his word for the whole subject was "baloney," and with this term he refuted the case of Captain Thomas Mantell. Not that I argued very sharply, for this was at a boys' school in North Carolina, and in a preparatory school you learn not to talk back, even if, as quite often happens, you never learn anything else. What seems unthinkable is that a phenomenon so obvious as this, with such an obvious explanation, should be reported every year by thousands of eyewitnesses all over the globe, and yet be dismissed as sheer nonsense by the vast majority who have not personally witnessed it. Yet this is precisely the situation we are facing.

Returning to Dr. Menzel, one could ask why the astronomer is so eager to crush public belief in flying saucers. I am not a psychologist, but everyone knows that we increase our faith in any position by convincing others that we are right. And Menzel by this time has a great faith in the non-existence of UFOs. He must have, because his reputation now leans heavily on this premise. By persuading others that his view of the matter is the true one, he probably banishes a half-conscious fear that he might, after all, be wrong, and the truth could blow up in his face. He



would certainly be made ridiculous if government secrecy were lifted at this time. Even those who accept his viewpoint have often marvelled at his long campaign against extra-terrestrial visitors.

My own feeling is that Dr. Menzel has done himself a grave injustice in the whole affair. He occupies a major scientific position, but would surely have a larger one if he had not expended so much energy trying to knock down the flying saucers. On the other hand, as Richard Hall tells me, it can safely be urged that Dr. Menzel is the only well-informed sceptic. Willy Ley, the German rocket expert, has

studied the subject more than the sceptical approach customarily warrants, but he doesn't have Menzel's background in the field.

Dr. Menzel's new book fails on a great many points. It contains no reference to the orthotenic claims. It offers a preposterous explanation for "angel's hair" (pp. 220-224), arguing that the weird substance consists of spider web dropped by migrating arachnids. But, of course, there is no point in trying to reason with him. The most I can say is that, after reading this book, I see nothing in it to alter the judgment which the Air Technical Intelligence Center passed on his earlier theories more than

ten years ago:

"These explanations were known to the Project, and carefully considered, long before Menzel published his theories. They explain only a small per cent. of the sightings. . . . At the request of ATIC, prominent scientists analysed Menzel's claims. None of them accepted his answers."<sup>3</sup> And now is the time to forget about Menzel's crusade and remember his genuine contributions to science.

<sup>1</sup> Girvan, *Flying Saucers and Common Sense*, pp. 30-31.

<sup>2</sup> Dr. Menzel's latest book is not yet available in England.

<sup>3</sup> Keyhoe, *Flying Saucers from Outer Space*, p. 5.

## Mysterious Holes

Strange happenings in July. A 15-ft. wide crater was found near Flamborough Head, and an unidentified flying object was reported in the same area. Some schoolboys claimed to have sighted a flying saucer over Roundhay Park woods, Leeds. Further holes were found in Dorset and East Lothian. The Dorset one was only about eight feet wide, and a foot deep. But the potatoes and barley growing where it was found have not been crushed—they have simply disappeared, roots and all. A cow in a nearby field began peeling in scales, as if it had been scorched. Yesterday, yet more holes were reported, this time in Westmorland. A huge channel connects them with a river almost a mile away. One of the farmers who discovered them wonders if they have any connection with his recent loss of 40 sheep. Curiouser and curiouser.

Only one of the holes has been thoroughly examined—the Flamborough Head crater, for

example, was said, rather weakly, to have been caused by lightning exploding a pocket of natural gas. Army experts, however, were called to the Dorset hole. They came to some negative conclusions—that it was caused neither by a meteorite, nor a bomb—but could go no further. Questions have been tabled in Parliament.

The Blame the Bomb movement—what will happen now the bomb is banned?—has always taken care of irregular weather, bad health, the high rate of unmarried pregnancy, and so forth. But holes are obviously the prerogative of flying saucerers. To them, there is no mystery. The holes were made by craft from other planets. Their ideas should not be dismissed too lightly. About 70,000 people have claimed to have seen flying saucers. Of course, they could all be wrong.

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