

EYES IN THE SKY

THE INVISIBLE COLLEGE

By Jacques Vallee

E. P. Dutton, 216 pp., \$9.95

Reviewed By Robert Anton Wilson

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Being a Contactee myself, I am always curious about new Flying Saucer books, although most of them relate to serious science about as closely as a Ronald Reagan speech relates to an essay by Bertrand Russell, which is to say not at all. The whole subject is kitsch: Unintentional Low Camp. One can barely discuss the matter with a straight face, and if serious debate is somehow engaged, one expects it will be interrupted by the Three Stooges, if not by the egregious Reagan himself and his old co-star, Bozo the Chimpanzee.

Nonetheless, the Contactee experience is one of those dreadful human perennials, like political brawling and head colds in winter. No matter how many skeptics try to brush it under the rug or bury it in ridicule, the experience continues. It must be at least as common as flashes of ESP, clairvoyance, 'hauntings,' Oneness with God, memories of past 'incarnations,' incest, homosexuality or any of the other taboo things that have always happened in every human society and continued in ours even during the years when everybody was trained to pretend they weren't there.

The standard UFO book will probably sound as naive in twenty years (or in five...) as Freud's writings on sexuality already sound. Like Freud breathlessly announcing to the smug Victorians, "My God, infants do have sex drives" and "Holy Gosh, almost everybody has masturbated, maybe even the Pope," the UFO journalist bursts out, often in italics and reinforced by exclamation marks, "Gee Whillikers, sightings-confirmed-on-radar keep happening" and "Holy Cow, fellers, Close Contacts are still going on." One is tempted to ask, "So, what else is new?"

UFOs, today, are like domestic espionage by the C.I.A. was in the '60s: everybody knows about it except the Government and the Establishment press. Ask the first three people you meet on the street, and two at least will tell you, with great assurance, "Oh, they're alien space-ships, but the Government and the media are trying to cover it up."

All this is rather pathetic, because actually nobody knows any-

thing about "it" at all, not even the Contactees, who are scientifically as much in the dark as those who've only seen one of Them at such a great distance that it might have been a weather balloon, after all.

Jacques Vallee, with a Master's in astrophysics and a Ph.D in cybernetics, comes on to this scene with a refreshing mixture of scientific skepticism, bold imagination and Gallic irony. THE INVISIBLE COLLEGE is unlike any other UFO book ever written. Dr. Vallee questions what everybody else takes for granted, doubts what everybody believes, drenches us with data that doesn't "fit" any of the theories of either the True Believers or the die-hard non-believers, and then offers a hypothesis of his own -- a hypothesis that is both plausible and maddeningly inconclusive.

The UFOs, Vallee proposes, are a control system. They monitor human behavior by reinforcing belief systems in a strategic and tactical way. To be even more blunt about it, they "shape" our behavior in precisely the same way that B.F. Skinner "shapes" the behavior of experimental animals in his laboratory.

Vallee is quite literal about this. He even has a graph demonstrating that UFO/human contacts follow a cycle similar to that of a "schedule of reinforcement" in Skinnerian Behavior Mod.

More inclusively, Dr. Vallee relates UFOs to other forms of human contact with the Unknown -- the appearances of the "Blessed Virgin Mary" at Guadalupe, Lourdes and Fatima (which contained 43 parallels with modern UFO sightings, carefully enumerated for the reader in chart form); the encounter between Joseph Smith and the "angel", Moroni, which resulted in the Mormon Church; the dialogues between Dr. John Dee and several different "angels"; the Gnostic and Dionysian mystery-cults of ancient times; the "fairies" or "little people" of various cultures from Ireland to Tibet; and, by implication, all the territory of what used to be called "occultism" or, in religion, "miracles."

The entities which have interacted with humanity in all these cases, and in modern UFOlogy, are using a technology which allows them to manipulate the perceptions of the human subject any way they wish. Their strategy remains constant, Vallee insists: the "revelation" given the Contactee is always one step beyond the current belief-system in the Contactee's society and



always includes an element of "deliberate absurdity" to guarantee that it will be rejected by the more skeptical and "educated" classes. And, almost always, the Contactee has some "evidence" to prove that the experience was not "totally subjective." The evidence may vary from place to place and time to time (a gift for prophesy, a power of healing, a confirming radar sighting, etc.), but it only confirms that something has happened, not that the highly apocalyptic and deliberately absurd events described by the bedazzled and mind-blown Contactee happened.

In many cases, Vallee demonstrates, the Contactee was given assurance -- sometimes repeatedly, especially in mediumistic contacts -- that more evidence, of an irrefutable character, will soon be forthcoming, to convince the most bigoted non-believers. It never happens. Sometimes, as in the Uri Geller extravaganza, evidence is shown to one scientist (Dr. Pujarich, in that case) and then destroyed before another scientist can confirm it.

The Contactee is eventually isolated from mainstream society, but in most cases acquires a group of believers who quickly take on cult-like characteristics. (Some today are whispering that Geller is the Messiah...) These cults can grow to considerable sizes; indeed, if some of Dr. Vallee's deadpan understatement are taken to their logical conclusion, this may well be the origin, not just of Mormonism, but of all the major religions. Although modern Contacts blend in a lot of science-fiction with the standard ethical messages (peace, sharing, the unity of all living beings, etc.), the style of the Message is always apocalyptic.

By means of such Contact exper-

iences -- more in one century, less in another, but always escalating when vast social change is needed -- human behavior, human belief, human hopes have been manipulated, conditioned, shaped, all through history. "They" are our control system, the cybernetic feedback that keeps us within the lines of the grand DNA strategy for our planet.

This will seem extravagant to everybody, except those who have already had the shattering, ego-blasting, apocalyptic Contact with Higher Intelligence. It is to be expected that those who have had the experience will immediately divide into two groups: those who believed what they were told in these epistemological psycho-dramas, and who will therefore indignantly reject Dr. Vallee's cool and somewhat sinister analysis; and those who have retained some normal human rationality even after the experience, who will probably agree with Dr. John Lilly's enthusiastic verdict on the dust-jacket, "the first reasonable hypothesis about these phenomena that I have read."

To accept, at least provisionally, that "They" are a control system need not imply any infallibility on their part. The foxes are a control system, regulating goose population in an ecological sense, but the foxes remain primitive mammalian life-forms. Humanity has undoubtedly functioned as a control system on the rest of Earthian life-forms -- a domesticated ape bright enough to invent tools and redesign the environment more relentlessly than any beaver pack or ant colony -- but ecology is little but a horrified record of how often the human interventions in nature have menaced humanity itself. The UFOs, if they are part of the seamless web of an intelligent ocosphere, may still be, on their own, no more omniscient than the average fox or average human.

It would be premature, however, to accept any particular UFO absurdity as evidence that the control system has necessarily goofed. As Vallee shows with brilliant detail, the most nonsensical aspects of UFO/human communication are best described as meta-logic rather than illogic. Vallee's paradigm is the following dialogue (from a real Close Contact case):

UFO "humanoid": "What time is it?"
Human Contactee: "Two-thirty."
UFO: "You lie. It is four o'clock."

It was actually two-thirty. Why should the UFO ask the time if they knew it? Why should they lie about

it? Why accuse the human of lying? Why engage in such horse-play at all, when the human subject was capable of discovering the real time and discovering the pointlessness of the whole dialogue?

This is not illogic, Vallee argues, but a deliberate mind-fuck, entirely similar to the koans of the Zen Masters, the inexplicable jokes of the Sufis, the time-warps and time-scrambles of fairy-lore in the Celtic magick tradition. Another Contactee was given a version of this basic epistemological hotfoot by being taken "aboard" a "ship" where he was manipulated into "accidentally" seeing a clock with no hands on it.

Many Contactees suffer partial amnesia. Others stop their story at one point and say, "They made me promise not to tell the next part," and won't tell it. Another group mention something that they themselves, without orders from the UFO, decided not to tell to other humans.

Vallee recognizes meta-logic in all such blank-outs: what is "concealed" is that which the current reality-map will not find tolerable. Vallee neglects to note the parallel with persons who have survived prolonged isolation, all of whom have experiences similar to traditional mystic illumination and to UFO "Contact" phenomena. Many isolate refuse to talk at all, or talk very little, during the week or two weeks after rescue. Often, they explain later that they sensed that everything they had to say would sound "insane" to normal socially-conditioned humans.

The plain fact is that social consensus-reality (as Dr. Lilly calls it) is maintained for each of us entirely by continuous reinforcement through association with other conditioned subjects molded by the same social imprints. A micro-dot of LSD, ten days in a closet, or a few shamanic or yogic exercises, and the whole charade collapses, at least temporarily: a dozen, a thousand, alternate "realities" appear, each as "real" as the others and some of them indisputably more "real" than the social "reality." Nobody but a totally conditioned robot, for instance, would respond lustfully to green pieces of paper, blessed by the Federal Reserve and called "money", as the "sane, normal" citizen does.

If the Reality Game is imposed by social conditioning, and if the UFOs are part of an ecological control system monitoring slow-to-abrupt changes in that Reality, we still want to know, Who or What are

They?

Vallee is singularly unhelpful with this, the ultimate, question. He approaches his climax with further questions, rather than with answers: "I would like to step outside the conditioning maze and see what makes it tick. I wonder what I would find. Perhaps a terrible superhuman monstrosity the very contemplation of which would make a man insane? Perhaps a solemn gathering of wise men? Or the maddening simplicity of unattended clockwork?"

Perhaps we can do a little better than that.

The parties-of-the-second-part in Contactee experiences (i.e. Them) are, at minimum, versatile, inventive and highly deceptive. They talk a high grade of philosophy with Dr. John Lilly, and an equally high grade of ethics with G. I. Gurdjieff. They enable Uri Geller to bend metal, jam geiger counters, and perform similar Grade B science-fiction stunts. They warp time, bestow "wild talents" of a psionic nature on favored Contactees, and remain, at each step of human cultural evolution, one step in technology ahead of us, at least.

The fact that their behavior, when analyzed by Dr. Vallee with the assistance of computers, reveals a pattern of cybernetic control may be interpreted to mean that Dr. Vallee, like Uri Geller, is getting what his mind is prepared to "get." Vallee, a cybernetics expert, finds a control system. Geller, who hates to read, gets exactly the kind of moral preachments and psionic "miracles" featured in Universal Studios kid-oriented sci-fi films widely distributed throughout the world when Geller was a child. Those who are ready for Little Green Men get LGMs in their Contact experiences. Over a hundred Contactees by now have reported sexual intercourse with beautiful space-women. The Catholics get a new appearance of the Virgin, when it is necessary to stir them up.

The highest mystics, if we care to consider them as ESP Contactees, "get" experiences of Cosmic Love, usually, and often of Omniscient Wisdom. It is important to note that other very high mystics have "gotten" Cosmic Indifference. (Something for everybody?)

The Control System, if we accept Dr. Vallee's metaphor, is also programmed with the persona of an Ideal Parent, when that is required. Indeed, the Contactees who come back ranting about an "Almighty Father,"

are, historically, the single largest group -- evidently because the search for an Almighty Father is a deep human compulsion, as Freud noted. Right behind them are the second largest group, raving about the ideal female, sexy or maternal or both, as the case may be.

Dr. Vallee is well enough read in the occult to note that the "angels" of Dr. Dee in the 17th Century and Aleister Crowley in the early 20th had a lot in common with each other and with UFO "humanoids." He even notes that AFFA, the extra-terrestrial from "Uranus" who communicated with two naval intelligence officers in a particularly good mediumistic contact (and kindly provided a "space-ship" sighting afterward, for "objective" verification) bears a name, which in Dr. Dee's "angelic" language means "Nothing." One senses adumbrations of the-God-who-is-Nothing in Cabala and St. Dionysus, the Void of Tibetan and Zen Buddhism.

Vallee should have gone further and dug into HEAVENLY BRIDEGROOM by Ida Craddock, which was published, under the thin pen-name "Ida C." around the turn of this century. Ms. Craddock had a love affair with an "angel" that lasted over twenty years. Her account of this extraordinary erotic experience later fell into the hands of a Dr. Theodore Schroder, who re-published it with a long introduction by himself, explaining her "delusion" as a classic case of sexuality sublimating into religious mania. Aleister Crowley, who knew a lot more about "angels" than Dr. Schroder, reviewed the book and pronounced that Dr. S didn't know anything about angelology. As the foremost expert on angelology and demonology of our time, Crowley declared, in brief, that Ms. Craddock's heavenly lover was real.

A cosmic father to the celebrated Nazarene, a Control System to Dr. Vallee, a clown from the cosmic circus to Discordians, a Little Green Man to a Mississippi farmer or an Irish peasant of the 9th Century, a super-sex-partner to somebody else ... We are obviously dealing with a damned good touring magickal theatre, to say the least.

To paraphrase biologist J.B.S. Haldane, "The universe (including the UFOs) may be, not only stranger than we think, but stranger than we can think." To paraphrase myself, "The universe (including the UFOs) may be, not only more intelligent than we think, but more intelligent than we can think." And to paraphrase Joanna Leary paraphrasing both Dr. Haldane and me, "The uni-

verse (including the UFOs) may be, not only more erotic than we think, but more erotic than we can think." Amen.

But the meat of Dr. Vallee's book is not just in opening this very fruitful line of speculation; it is in the detailed examination of what he calls Contacts of the 7th degree of strangeness. Here, in the raw data of humans confronted by that which transcends their notions of "reality," is the evidence which indicates that theories as bold as Vallee's (and maybe even as bold as my extrapolations from Vallee) are very rough sketches of what the ultimate explanation will be.

I leave you with my own favorite of Dr. Vallee's 7th degree Contacts. Two men were driving in a car. Suddenly, time warped and they were out of the car and it was parked; they were, in fact, standing behind it. One of them "remembered" a classic UFO contact during the time warp, in which he had been taken aboard and experimented upon. He had a cut on his arm, where the UFO "people" had taken a skin sample. The other man "remembered" only a large bus pulling up behind them, and no UFO. Neither of them "remembered" atopping the car and getting out.

The cut on the arm was quite real when examined by police, doctors and UFO investigators later. The rest is the standard blend of science-fiction, absurdity and contradiction that They are currently using in Their latest campaign to modify human belief and behavior. The incident happened in 1971.

