

A critical analysis of a sceptical report on the UFO phenomenon.

by Dirk Biddle (BBSc).

Note to the reader. My methodology here is to present the author's original statement in full before attempting a rebuttal of it. The only statement of the author's I have edited for brevity occurs in Statement 9. Otherwise the author's original article is presented herein complete and unedited. To view the author's original article in context visit http://www.world-mysteries.com/sci_6.htm.

Statement 1: *A UFO is an Unidentified Flying Object which has been identified as a possible or actual alien spacecraft.*

Rebuttal 1: This is abject nonsense right off the bat. A UFO is exactly what it purports to be: an *Unidentified Flying Object*. Being unidentified, the object then, *by definition*, cannot possibly be "*identified as a possible or actual alien spacecraft*", or for that matter any other known, unknown, speculative, natural, or supernatural phenomenon whatsoever.

With the author committing such a basic logical error in his very first sentence, the reader can immediately sense this is probably not going to be an intellectual discussion on the author's behalf.

Statement 2: *Such objects include meteors, disintegrating satellites, flocks of birds, aircraft, lights, weather balloons, and just about anything moving within the visible band of electromagnetism.*

Rebuttal 2: Incredibly, just as the author falsely defines UFOs as "*possible or actual alien spacecraft*", he now intends to re-define them, as "*meteors, disintegrating satellites, flocks of birds...*" But notice something else, it is actually "*possible or actual alien spacecraft*" that he re-defines as "*meteors, disintegrating satellites, flocks of birds...*" Obviously the author is very poorly educated in the English language. Quite possibly English is not his first language and this article has been translated from an original by someone with an equally poor grasp of the language, but when writing articles that consist of definitions and logical argument, this poor grasp of English is critical to meaning. One would suggest the author find a person better qualified to translate from his mother tongue (whatever that is) to English, the current translation obviously not making even high school grade.

In the interests of brevity and so as not to bore the reader unduly, from this point I will concentrate on the substance of the author's meaning and merely take for granted his probable illiteracy in the English language. Thus grammatical errors and errors of logical structure, such as those already encountered will be ignored.

Notwithstanding, to reiterate, a UFO is *unidentified* and therefore cannot be defined as "*meteors, disintegrating satellites, flocks of birds, aircraft, lights, weather balloons, and just about anything moving within the visible band of electromagnetism*". As a whole, this statement by the author is of course a wildly overstated generalisation, for which the author subsequently provides no substantiation whatsoever. This is also a well known pseudoscientific trick, designed to set up a bogus negative association in

the reader's mind in the hope that the reader will simply take for granted the author's false and misleading statements without examining the evidence for him or herself. I therefore strongly encourage the reader to explore the evidence for him or herself. There are many good websites out there and <http://www.ufoskeptic.org/> is as good a place to begin as any.

Statement 3: *There are as many photographs of UFOs and they are of equal quality: blurs and forgeries.*

Rebuttal 3: This statement is patently false. There exist many databases containing hundreds of very clear, high resolution UFO photographs and videos, many of which have been examined by qualified image specialists and have been determined to be real images of *unidentified* flying objects.

It becomes very clear that the author has not conducted even the smallest amount of research into this topic, otherwise the falsehood of this statement would be obvious to him (see <http://www.ufoevidence.org/photographs/section/recent/photo411.htm> for just *one* example of the many information databases the author might have investigated that would falsify his statement).

Even as early on in the article as this, it is already apparent that either the author has conducted no research into the topic, and therefore his statements on the matters at hand must naturally be dismissed as mere ill-informed opinion, or the author *has* done his research and is then perpetrating a direct fraud on the unsuspecting reader, in which case he naturally cannot be believed in anything further he has to say on the topic. I will let the reader decide for themselves into which category the author actually falls – wilfully ignorant or just plain fraudster.

Statement 4: *Other physical evidence, such as alleged debris from alien crashes, or burn marks on the ground from alien landings, or implants in bodies of alien abductees, have turned out to be quite terrestrial, including forgeries.*

Rebuttal 4: Again, the author has either not conducted his research or is an out-and-out liar. There exists in fact a substantial category of documented physical artefacts and physical trace evidence allegedly left by UFOs (a good place to begin perhaps would be at: <http://www.ufoevidence.org/topics/physicaltracecases.htm>). Some of this evidence may indeed turn out to be forgery, but it does not logically follow that all of the evidence is then an example of forgery. This logical fallacy, committed by the author, is a well known pseudoscientific method of argument, designed to gull the slow witted. The reason why it is illogical can be demonstrated by the following anecdote.

A doctor discovers one day that some of the patients presenting to his surgery are feigning an illness to get out of work. These people come in to his office, apparently exhibiting all the signs of the flu, but in fact they are not ill at all. On discovering this, the doctor *must*, (according to the author's logic), conclude that there is no such thing as the flu.

This is patently absurd and is of course based on a logical fallacy. That is, if there exists one example of a forgery, then the whole phenomenon must be considered a

forgery. Of course this is the argument most effectively employed in the crop circle debate. A patent absurdity.

Statement 5: *The main reasons for believing in UFOs are the testimony of many people, the inability to distinguish science fiction from science, the willingness to trust men telling fantastic stories, the ability to distrust all contrary sources as being part of a conspiracy to withhold the truth, and a desire for contact with the world above. Belief in aliens in UFOs is akin to belief in supernatural beings.*

Rebuttal 5: Here the author concatenates a variety of alleged reasons as to why people might believe in UFOs. Not only that, he contends these are the *main* reasons for such a belief. Leaving aside the fact that the main reason for a belief in UFOs is actually the sheer weight of documented, reliable evidence - and taking the author's purported "reasons" one by one:

i) *the testimony of people.* Surely the author can have no real argument with this. The testimony of qualified, reliable witnesses is one of the cornerstones of our modern justice systems. Further, qualified, reliable eyewitness testimony often forms the very foundation of scientific investigation into a phenomenon.

ii) *the inability to distinguish science fiction from science.* Let us take a moment to explore what the author is actually implying here. Is the author seriously contending that qualified, highly experienced UFO researchers believe that science fiction movies (eg; Star Trek, Star Wars, I Robot, Dr. Who, etc.) are actually documentaries? Or is the author contending that qualified, highly experienced UFO researchers believe that science fiction novels (eg; I Robot, Red Dwarf, Life, the Universe and Everything, etc.) are non-fiction, scholarly treatises? Obviously, on close examination, this assertion by the author carries no weight, but the author's intention is quite clear: to baselessly equate the UFO phenomenon in the reader's mind with fiction.

iii) *the willingness to trust men telling fantastic stories.* This argument hinges on two un-stated hypotheses. First, that qualified, highly experienced UFO researchers do no investigation into the veracity of their sources (unlike the author of course!) and second, that all those who relate UFO experiences are telling "*fantastic*" tales. This latter is of course simply a re-statement of the unreliability of eyewitness testimony argument, and the former is so obviously a false, even ridiculous, assertion that one perhaps begins to feel pity for an author, so narrow minded in world view, that he cannot think logically about what he is actually contending.

iv) *the ability to distrust all contrary sources as being part of a conspiracy to withhold the truth.* This contention hinges first on the un-stated hypothesis that there is in fact contrary evidence to the UFO phenomenon. This conjecture is patently false and here is why. While it *is* true that many so called UFOs have subsequently been explained as misidentified natural or man-made phenomena, there remains a large body of sightings for which no such explanation can be found. Such UFOs of course remain *unidentified* and therefore, by definition, there can be no contrary evidence against them. *Any* evidence can only be toward identification. It is then the sheer number, type and veracity of the unexplained sightings that then contributes toward the development of an "alien visitation" hypothesis.

Second, we have the *stated* contention that UFO researchers believe in a conspiracy to withhold the truth. One wonders if this actually might not be a *justified* conclusion, for if the author himself, a contrary source, with his obvious logical fallacies, his lack of consistent argument for the negative, and his sheer determination, despite the evidence against him, to continue his nay-saying course, is not part of such a conspiracy, then what alternative conclusion are we to draw? Unless of course he is completely without rational thought on the matter and continues on from sheer madness or idiocy. One other hypothesis of course remains, and that is that he is himself an alien. This contention is perhaps not as crazy as it may seem at first when we explore the following argument.

v) *a desire for contact with the world above*. In direct falsification of this statement, it may be stated that in truth there are a number of technically qualified, highly experienced researchers that actually remain justifiably fearful of what the UFO phenomenon portends; in that the phenomenon seems to be able to exert a certain demonstrated control over humankind, in the face of which we are seemingly helpless to react. Thus, far from a desire for contact, these researchers actively fear the possible consequences of such contact. Indeed, given the evidence, should not we all?

Besides, and to lighten the mood a little, in my (admittedly limited) experience, no serious UFO researcher has indicated to me that the author's statement is a primary reason for their "belief" in the UFO phenomenon, that is if it plays any part in their belief system at all.

vi) *Belief in aliens in UFOs is akin to belief in supernatural beings*. Really? Why? Just because the author says so? Where is the peer reviewed, documented theoretical evidence that links UFOs to a belief in the supernatural? Just because the author states it to be so, does not mean it *is* so. Leaving aside the semantic difficulties in the statement, exactly how does a belief in extraterrestrial intelligences in control of technological craft equate to a belief in the supernatural? It does not of course, only in the author's evidentially weak mind.

Statement 6: *UFOlogy is the mythology of the space age.*

Rebuttal 6: The Concise Oxford Dictionary defines *myth* as: "*Purely fictitious narrative, usually involving supernatural persons etc. embodying popular ideas on natural phenomena etc.*" and *mythology* as: "*Body of myths relating to a particular person or subject; study of myths.*"

One can clearly see that the author believes and means to imply UFOlogy to be a study of the purely fictitious. Of course the author has so far offered no evidence for this claim. On the contrary, there is a huge body of well documented, scientifically substantiated evidence that indicates the UFO phenomenon to be a very *real* phenomenon. However, many serious researchers, with some justification, refuse to be drawn to the "alien" hypothesis as an explanation for this phenomenon. Nevertheless, none of these researchers deny that a real phenomenon is actually occurring. Thus, while the phenomenon itself is not fictitious, it remains possible (although evidentially improbable) that the alien hypothesis to explain it is. The original statement by the author shows up, once again, his inability to grasp a true

logical argument. For example he could have used the logical argument I have just postulated to refute the alien visitation hypothesis. But his grasp of logic is apparently so weak that he did not see the real argument within his own fallacious one.

Statement 7: *Rather than angels...we now have...extraterrestrials.*

Rebuttal 7: What rubbish! Of course we have both. The primary fallacy in this statement is that in the real world such beliefs are not an either/or proposition. There currently co-exist in the world believers and non-believers alike in one, or other, in both, or in neither. The author's statement actually has no direct bearing on UFOlogy at all. It is merely a duplicitous attempt by the author, by an implied appeal to the rationalist in us all, to effect a link in the reader's mind between an implied misguided belief in "angels" and a supposedly similarly misguided belief in "extraterrestrials".

The series of dots in the author's statement are of course meant to convey the ridicule of a stand-up comedian, timing out his delivery of a punch-line, "...wait for it..." and the audience is supposed to fall about laughing. This descent into ridicule, in place of well thought out argument, is another well known trick of the pseudoscientist. It is however a childish prank, belonging to the schoolyard bully who pokes his out tongue and derisively cries "Ya, ya ya...". Of course, just like the schoolyard bully, the author hopes for a violent response, by which he can then legitimately criticize his protagonist, but of course we the readers are above that and the author is left only looking all the more foolish.

Statement 8: *It seeks to give man deeper roots and bearings in the universe. It is an expression of our hunger for mystery...our hope for transcendental meaning. The ancient gods have been transformed into space voyagers.*

Rebuttal 8: Here the author pretends a philosophical treatise. But there exists no philosophy to support his statements. Quite the contrary, cultural anthropologists will inform you that the UFO phenomenon actually threatens to have a very opposite effect to that which the author supposes. That is; the UFO phenomenon actually threatens to tear man's place in the universe from his grasp. It threatens to reduce to dust his self-perceived pre-eminence and egocentric world view. It actively removes mystery by replacing it with a rational explanation. It destroys transcendental meaning by reducing the heavens and spiritual being to the mere material; material beings, in manufactured space craft, travelling from other worlds. Further, the ancient gods, far from being "transformed into space voyagers", have simply become irrelevant in a rational modern world. These are not gods, these are not supernatural spirits, here lies not a mystery, this is not transcendental meaning... in fact the alien hypothesis postulates that these are solid, real, down-to-earth, intelligent beings, travelling in technologically developed space craft. The mystery that remains then is only to be found deep within author's mind.

Statement 9: *The author, in this section of the article, proceeds to quote Dr. Allen J. Hynek and his definition of what constitutes a UFO. Then the author launches into an argument, the essence of which is that; all the available evidence has not been explored by UFOlogists. If all the evidence were explored, the alien hypothesis would be found to be untenable. At last, a logically sound argument...or have I created that soundness for him by re-stating in precise terms? Never mind, it matters not. The*

author then goes on to list what he perceives to be evidence UFOlogists purportedly rely upon to support the alien hypothesis but evidence that a “skeptical” (sic) would consider unreliable.

Rebuttal 9: To support his contention, the list of perceived *unreliable* evidence which UFOlogists rely on to support their own (alien) hypothesis consists:

(1) *the testimony of people who claim to have seen aliens and/or alien spacecraft.* Here the author (once again), without corroboration or considered explanation, is merely reiterating the unreliability of eyewitness testimony argument.

(2) *facts about the type of people who give the testimony.* Of course the author, by impugning by implication the character of the eyewitnesses, is in fact merely restating the unreliable eyewitness testimony argument (again...).

(3) *the lack of contrary testimony or physical evidence that would either explain the sighting by conventional means (weather balloon, prank, meteor shower, reflection of light, etc.) or discredit the reliability of the eyewitness.* Ignoring for a moment the semantic difficulties within this statement and concentrating on just the author’s apparent meaning; with this statement, the author simply restates, in different words, his original contention as supporting evidence for his original contention... but wait, let us examine this a little more closely. First, the basic logical structure of the author’s argument as it includes this statement and put as simply as possible, is: “All the evidence has not been explored because all the evidence has not been explored”. This is hardly a convincing argument. In fact it is so very obviously a logically flawed argument (technically, a circular argument) that it constitutes no argument at all.

Second, this section of the article was supposed to contain a list of examples of reasons UFOlogists use to support their alien visitation hypothesis, and that a sceptic would consider not to meet strict evidential requirements. The actual statement constitutes no such thing. That is, it certainly does not constitute a reason for a belief in the alien hypothesis – as the author told us it was going to be – and in fact it is quite difficult to make proper sense of it at all in this context. What is it that the author is actually saying here? One is lead inexorably to the conclusion that the author has very little understanding of his own objectives in this section of the article and that his grasp of what constitutes a valid logical argument seems totally non-existent.

(4) *alleged weaknesses in the arguments of skeptics against the UFOlogists.* *The last item is irrelevant to the issue, yet it plays a disproportionately large role in UFOlogy.* First, once again, this statement does not contribute to the author’s own stated aim in this section of the article, which was that it was to constitute a list of reasons for a belief in the alien hypothesis that a sceptic would not consider able to fulfil strict evidential requirements. In other words, this statement does not constitute a reason for a belief in the alien hypothesis. What does it constitute then? Well, we do know that the author has the temerity to contend that any weaknesses in his own arguments are *irrelevant* to the topic at hand. Imagine that! Someone approaches you and states “*I do not believe your hypothesis concerning reality to be correct. I have no legitimate arguments to show you how your hypothesis might be incorrect, but that is irrelevant, because your beliefs are simply wrong*”. Apart from being mind bogglingly boring and irritating, it is, once again, an example of a circular argument and

completely without substance. You would probably consider this person to be an idiot at best. You might even pity such a person for being unable to grasp the fundamentals of basic social interaction. Certainly you would not take seriously any contention that this person might have to make on the subject of your belief systems. I therefore simply ask you, the reader, why then should we take anything this author has to say on the subject of UFOs seriously? Especially if, *by his own admission*, he has no sound arguments to support his own propositions? For the author to cry foul because he has no logical arguments to make on the subject is the height of hypocrisy.

Statement 10: *It seems reasonable to believe that the only reason we cannot explain these sightings by conventional means is because we do not have all the evidence - not because these sightings are probably due to alien visitations. If we had all the evidence, we would probably be able to explain the sightings by some conventional means. The fact that we cannot prove that Mr. and Mrs. Barney Hill were not abducted by aliens, does not support the hypothesis that they were abducted by aliens.*

Rebuttal 10: Where to start on this illogical mess? First, the general thrust of the statement is clear; and that is a reiteration of the author's contention that UFOlogists have not taken into account the sum total of all the available evidence, and that if they did, they would discover their alien hypothesis to be untenable. Let us pause for a moment of recollection. In previous incarnations of this contention, has the author provided any rational arguments in support? The only one that I can think of - that even remotely touches on the subject - is the unreliability of eyewitness testimony argument. But the author has repeated this argument in various guises *ad nauseum*, and has *never* provided a rational, considered exploration of exactly why eyewitness testimony might be considered to be unreliable, and under what conditions, and in what circumstances. To the contrary, it is the sheer quantity of technically qualified, trained, observer status eyewitness testimony that provides the alien hypothesis with some considerable legitimacy. So where exactly is the *author's* evidence that UFOlogists do not take into account the sum total of all available evidence? Exactly, the author has supplied none, and therefore we must, as rational, impartial sceptics, reject the author's contention until proof has been supplied. But now let us explore the author's argument in finer detail.

Contention 1: *It seems reasonable to believe that the only reason we cannot explain these sightings by conventional means is because we do not have all the evidence - not because these sightings are probably due to alien visitations.*

The first section of this statement is almost (finally!) logical. Indeed, we cannot explain many UFO sightings by conventional means because it is true that we have no evidence to indicate that it is a conventional phenomenon that we are observing. The contentious part in this statement is of course in the author's use of the word "*only*". That is definitely *not* a logical part of the statement. For example, it is clear that lack of evidence might not be the *only* reason for being unable to explain the UFO phenomenon as conventional. For example, our own perceptual limitations might play a role in the phenomenon's interpretability. But let us pass this by as a minor slip by the author in an otherwise welcome rational statement.

Contention 2: *If we had all the evidence, we would probably be able to explain the sightings by some conventional means.* Here the author has turned clairvoyant, has travelled into the future, and has there determined that future knowledge has turned out to support a conventional interpretation of the UFO phenomenon. This is of course poppycock and a totally irrational line of argument. For example, it is equally likely that future knowledge will turn out to actually *support* the alien hypothesis, or indeed, that future knowledge will turn out to support *neither* the conventional interpretation *nor* the alien hypothesis, but something entirely different and completely outside of our current knowledge altogether. Moreover, it is the *current* weight of reliable and well documented evidence that tends to support the alien hypothesis. We do not need to travel to the future to gather this evidence, it exists in the here and now. The author has only to conduct a minimal amount of research to discover this fact for himself (for example a good place to start would be the website at: <http://www.ufoskeptic.org/>).

Contention 3: *The fact that we cannot prove that Mr. and Mrs. Barney Hill were not abducted by aliens, does not support the hypothesis that they were abducted by aliens.* Here the author irrationally turns conventional scientific wisdom on its head and hopes that we, the reader, will not note this logical error. Nevertheless, for interest's sake, if nothing else, let us first refresh our memory. Betty and Barney Hill, in September 1961, claimed that they were abducted by aliens after stopping their car on Interstate Route 3 in New Hampshire (US) to observe what they thought originally might have been an aeroplane or military helicopter, but subsequently could only suppose to be a UFO with alien beings inside. Their subsequent experiences were to become one of the very first extensively documented and researched of the classic abduction cases. The Hill's abduction exhibited all the hallmarks of the classic abduction experience: missing time, alien "examination" and specimen collection, information exchange, and physical and mental pathology following the experience. Following their experience, and remembering only parts of their ordeal, once at home, the Hill's telephoned the nearby Pease Air Force Base to report a UFO and also contacted a national UFO group. Eventually they also sought medical help. What then followed was a series of comprehensive and extensively documented research efforts by qualified medical examiners, numerous government agencies and reputable private UFO interests alike. Betty, a 41 year old welfare worker, and Barney, her 39 year old husband, while obviously traumatised by their experience, were a normal, average, middle class couple who were to become part of one of the most remarkable investigations in UFO history. Interestingly, none of the researchers who investigated the case at the time could find fault with the Hill's story. Indeed, all were equally impressed with the veracity of the Hill's experience and their straightforward, down to earth nature. Their landmark case and has changed the world of UFOlogy forever.

With the Hill's experience in mind as a welcome divergence, let us now return to the author's statement. As mentioned, with this statement, the author has turned standard logical procedure on its head, in essence placing the cart before the horse, and this causes the reader to have to wade through a string of double negatives to try and work out the legitimacy of the argument. A simple logical exercise to illustrate the fallacy in this line of argument is appropriate. Consider this statement (merely a re-statement of the author's argument): *The fact that we cannot prove X was not caused by Y, does not support the hypothesis that X was caused by Y.* It is quite a brain bender to try and follow the logic, but one helpful approach is to simply to remove the double

negatives, while retaining the structure, and see if the argument still makes sense. Thus: *The fact that we can prove that X was caused by Y, does support the hypothesis that X was not caused by Y.* Immediately, with this very simple operation, we can see the glaringly obvious logical flaw in the argument. The first statement is diametrically opposed to the second. In terms of logic, restating the primary contentions in this way should not destroy the argument's logical consistency (that is if it was consistent to begin with). But here it does seem to do exactly that. There is however no mystery here, it simply means that the original statement contains the very same logical flaw - and it is only the convolutions of the double negatives that make it difficult for we mere mortals to see it. In short, the author's argument commits a severe logical error and is thus no argument at all.

If the reader remains unconvinced that this exercise does indeed point to a logical flaw in the author's argument, let us then attempt to restate the argument in more simple way. Thus: *We cannot prove a hypothesis, therefore the hypothesis is rejected.* This argument, while seemingly intuitively attractive on the surface, actually demonstrates in the author a complete lack of understanding of the scientific method. If the author understood how science works, then he would know that we cannot actually *prove* anything at all. Nothing! There will *always* remain a circumstance where an hypothesis about reality might be falsified if new knowledge comes to hand. The best we can hope for in science is to run as many observational experiments as possible and then determine if any of them falsify a particular hypothesis. The fact that an experiment does not falsify a hypothesis, does not prove that hypothesis to be true under all possible conditions. (and before the reader leaps on this as showing a flaw of argument akin to the one described above, please conduct the term reversal experiment and see the result). No, an experiment that does not falsify a hypothesis merely indicates that at this particular time and place, the hypothesis held true. It in no way implies that at another time and under another circumstance it will hold true. Nevertheless, as time goes by, and more and more experiments are conducted that do not falsify the hypothesis, the more certain we may become that the hypothesis actually describes reality. However, this description of reality will *always* remain just a *hypothesis*. In other words, we can never attain the certainty of "proof positive". There will always remain that small possibility, that niggling doubt, that small probability, that future knowledge will falsify our hypothesis, indeed *any* hypothesis. The author then quite obviously does not understand science or the scientific method and his argument has now proved to be logically flawed by two independent methods.

Statement 11: *Many UFOlogists think that if eyewitnesses such as Whitley Strieber, Betty and Barney Hill, or other alleged alien abductees are not insane or evil, then they cannot be deluded and are to be trusted with giving accurate accounts of alien abduction. Yet, it seems obvious that most sane, good, normal people are deluded about many things and not to be trusted about certain things.*

Rebuttal 11: The author's argument here is that sane people can be deluded. This is (again? ...how boring) a re-statement of the unreliability of eyewitness testimony. The author really is having a hard time coming up with any different (or logical) arguments. He resorts to restating this eyewitness testimony argument over and over (and over), in different guises. However, as already indicated, the author has provided no rational, considered, exploration of the pros and cons of this argument. He simply seems to believe that if he restates the argument enough times, the audience will get

sucked into it. There is nothing new at all in this statement by the author and his audience is more intelligent than the author gives them credit for and refuses to fall for his obvious trickery.

Statement 12: *UFOlogists would rather follow their faulty logic than accept the conclusions of Project Blue Book, the U.S. Air Force report which states that "after twenty-two years of investigation...none of the unidentified objects reported and evaluated posed a threat to our national security." (It was in this Blue Book that Edward Ruppelt coined the term "UFO.")*

Rebuttal 12: Really, the fallacy in this argument should be obvious to a ten year old. That is, the fact that if a negative conclusion was drawn about a threat to national security of the UFO phenomenon, in itself does not negate the existence of that UFO phenomenon at all. Indeed the statement *relies on the existence* of the UFO phenomenon as a basis for its study, from which it may draw conclusion about the nature of the phenomenon. Thus, far from supporting the author's contention concerning the fictitious nature of the UFO phenomenon, it actually pre-supposes the phenomenon to be real!

Statement 13: *UFOlogists are unimpressed with the Condon Report, as well. Edward U. Condon was the head of a scientific research team which was contracted to the University of Colorado to examine the UFO issue. His report concluded that "nothing has come from the study of UFOs in the past 21 years that has added to scientific knowledge...further extensive study of UFOs probably cannot be justified in the expectation that science will be advanced thereby."*

Rebuttal 13: Again, the fallacy of this argument is obvious. The statement merely supplies one man's opinion (Condon's) that "...*nothing has come from the study of UFOs ... that has added to scientific knowledge...*" First, the UFO phenomenon must have existed for it to have been studied (boring...) and second, it is well documented that Condon actually wrote his report summary (from which his statement supplied by the author here has been drawn) before the investigation was complete - and some researchers (with good reason) speculate that it was written even before the investigation had begun - and further, it remains a fact that anyone can investigate for themselves, that Condon's summary is in direct contradiction to the actual findings of the report proper. For example, if one actually reads the content of the report, one will find a large number of "unexplained" UFO sightings to which there was nothing the researchers could bring to bear, with all their scientific resources and expertise, that could ascribe these inexplicable UFO reports to anything conventional or to anything at all within our current sphere of knowledge. The author is simply being disingenuous here in an effort to mislead the reader as to the facts. This is reprehensible conduct from a supposedly serious reporter of the facts.

Statement 14: *It is assumed by UFOlogists that the government, especially the CIA, is lying and covering up alien landings and communication. However, there is no evidence for this other than a general distrust of the government and the fact that many government officials have lied, distorted the truth and been mistaken when reporting to the general public.*

Rebuttal 14: How are we to make sense of this? Leaving aside the blatant misattributions concerning UFOlogist's assumptions about the CIA (we will come to this in the next section), the author contends that UFOlogists have no evidence for a government cover-up - but then he goes on to state that government officials have "*lied, distorted the truth and been mistaken when reporting to the general public*". The author's *own statements* indicate that a cover-up has taken place. What then *is* the author playing at? Does he take his readers, for fools? In my mind's eye I can almost see him laughing and sniggering at us collectively as he writes these foolish and narrow-minded statements. You can almost hear the derision in his tone as he voices his cynical incredulity at the gullibility of the general public if they are to believe his words. What incredible arrogance. What an anti-rational, anti-intellectual boor. It is people like this author who seem to want to maintain the misery and darkness of the human condition. He is anti-enlightenment incarnate. If I was not myself an "enlightened" person (laughs out loud), I would even suggest him to be devil in disguise, striving to sow his evil seeds of doubt and conflict among the society of humans...

Statement 15: *The CIA, however, has shown little interest in UFOs since about 1950, except to encourage UFOlogists to believe that reconnaissance flights might be alien craft.*

Rebuttal 15: Leaving aside the evidence of misinformation and therefore of government cover-up: The CIA was founded in late 1947 and it was not until 1949 that the CIA became a fully fledged "secret" intelligence gathering organisation, charged (at least in part) with internal security functions. According to the author, the CIA, almost immediately it came into existence, in *about 1950* then dropped an alleged erstwhile interest in UFO activities. When exactly does the author contend that such a newly formed organisation developed an interest in UFOs to begin with – before it was formed? Further, up until 1952, the CIA was undergoing a great deal of organisational difficulty and restructuring – it would not have had the resources to develop a serious "interest" in UFOs (or anything else of much consequence for that matter) as the author contends, then turn around and drop it's interest immediately. No serious UFO researcher contends that the CIA, as an organisation, has had much to do with UFO cover-ups at all. For the author to contend otherwise, he must live in a completely different reality to the rest of us mere mortals. Obviously the author has now descended to the realms of pure fantasy. One might be tempted to pity him if it was not for the derision and contempt which he earlier seemingly displayed toward his readers.

Statement 16: *UFOlogists prefer another kind of lie to the government lie. They support the work of NBC, for example, which produced two dozen programs called "Project UFO," said to be based on Project Blue Book. However, unlike the Air Force, NBC suggested that there were documented cases of alien spacecraft sightings. The programs, produced by Jack Webb of Dragnet fame, distorted and falsified information to make the presentation look more believable. No UFOlogist took NBC to task for lying. To the skeptic, NBC was pandering to the taste of the viewing audience.*

Rebuttal 16: Now we are getting into the realm of the true fantasist (or should that be fanatic?). A TV program is distorting the truth? Unthinkable! And shock horror, the

program was even suggesting *that there were documented cases of alien spacecraft sightings*. Oh no, civilisation will come to an end! NBC is pandering to the tastes of their audience? Incredible! Whatever will happen next! Wake up Mr. Author, TV *is* a fantasy land. It is their stock in trade. It is the reason we all watch TV for, to *escape* reality. And has the author considered that no UFOlogist criticized the program because none thought it worth their while to bother (which makes me wonder why I am bothering to do this). Was NBC lying? Did they distort and falsify evidence? Well...this *is* TV we are talking about...I have not seen the show, but if their contention was that we are being visited by aliens in spacecraft, then there exists an almost overwhelming amount of documented evidence to support this conjecture. Is the author lying and distorting the evidence should be the real question, and *that is* evident in his statements to this point.

Statement 17: *Government agents lie for all sorts of reasons, but covering up alien landings does not seem to be one of them.*

Rebuttal 17: How does the author know this? Has he asked any qualified government representative? Has he examined any pertinent documents recovered under FOI legislation that do point to the fact that governments *have* covered up alien landings (or crash landings)? Does he in fact know that such documents exist? Has the author in fact done *any* research that would back up this, or indeed *any* of his other contentions? A resounding *no* to that question seems warranted. The author quite obviously has conducted *no research at all*. Besides, it is all too silly. The author has already stated that he believes that government officials have (in his own words) “*lied, distorted the truth and been mistaken when reporting to the general public*” and “*Government agents lie for all sorts of reasons...*”. What makes the author think it would be any different if an alien (crash) landing were to occur?

Statement 18: *Most unidentified flying objects are eventually identified as hoaxes or astronomical events, aircraft, satellites, weather balloons, or other natural phenomena. In studies done by the Air Force, less than 2% of UFO sightings remain unidentifiable.*

Rebuttal 18: The author’s facts are simply wrong here – can he actually point to *any* valid, peer reviewed “Air Force” study that provides this 2% figure? I guarantee you that he cannot - because no such study exists. Moreover, selective studies can be cited to show practically anything. For example that the moon is actually made of cheese or that there are canals on Mars. And who is now to believe a government report on the UFO issue anyway? No, it is *all* the evidence that must be accounted for, not just a small or selective portion of it – and the author went to considerable efforts (by his standards) to point out exactly this provision to the reader in previous sections. The author cannot have it both ways. Either the *sum total* of the evidence is weighed, or none at all. Of course this latter is obviously the author’s preferred position as it applies to himself. Evidence (and evidence of applied research) is *seriously* lacking in any of the authors arguments to this point.

Statement 19: *It is more probable that with more information those 2% would be identified as meteors, aircraft, etc., than that they are alien spacecraft.*

Rebuttal 19: The author has (predictably and boringly) turned into a clairvoyant again and is somehow able to foretell the future. As I pointed out earlier, it is just as likely that future knowledge will turn out to actually *support* the alien hypothesis, or indeed, that future knowledge will turn out to support *neither* the conventional interpretation *nor* the alien hypothesis, but something entirely different and completely outside of our current knowledge.

Statement 20: *The reason no logical explanation seems credible to UFOlogists is probably because those making and hearing the reports either do not want to hear a logical explanation or they make little or no effort to find one.*

Rebuttal 20: This statement assumes that highly qualified, well trained, scientifically minded UFO researchers are in fact illogical and do not accept, or search out, logical arguments. First, the author has offered no proof whatsoever for this contention, although he has baselessly repeated it throughout his article, and second, there is ample proof that it is actually the *author* who is illogical and cannot contrive a logical argument and that it is he who makes *little or no effort to find one*. Politicians are adept at this kind of deception. It is a well known political tactic to accuse your opponent of behaving exactly as you do, and then to sit back and hope that the mud sticks. Unfortunately for the author, the mud actually seems to have stuck to him.

Statement 21: *In any case, the fact that some pilots or scientists claim they cannot think of any logical explanations for some perceptual observations is hardly proof that they have observed alien spacecraft.*

Rebuttal 21: Here we go again. Let me state clearly and for the record one last time: No qualified, technically trained, scientifically minded UFO researcher is claiming (or has ever claimed) that because “*some pilots or scientists claim they cannot think of any logical explanations for some perceptual observations*” that this therefore constitutes proof of the alien hypothesis. This is a well known pseudoscientific trick on the part of the author. It is so commonly employed by quacks and charlatans that it has even been given a generic term: that is the “straw man argument”. In this type of argument, the author sets up a false hypothesis (in this case that some - un-named - person or persons out there believe that because trained observers cannot think of a logical explanation, that this in itself is a proof of the alien hypothesis), and then the author proceeds to negate the false argument. In these types of cases, the actual argument *never existed* before the author dreamt it up. It simply was not an issue in *anybody’s* mind. This is also akin to an old favourite of the media: “*Minister X has denied any involvement in a sex scandal!*”. Of course there was *no such scandal*, but by merely asking the question it forces a denial, which in turn (hopefully in the questioners mind at least) lends credence to the contention. As mentioned, the straw man argument is the province of quacks, charlatans and pseudoscientists, company in which the author seems to sit very comfortably.

Statement 22: *Finally, it should be noted that UFOs are usually observed by untrained skywatchers and almost never by professional or amateur astronomers, people who spend inordinate amounts of time observing the heavens above. One would think that astronomers would have spotted some of these alien craft. Perhaps the crafty aliens know that good scientists are skeptical and inquisitive. Such beings might pose a threat to the security of a story well-told.*

Rebuttal 22: The author here seeks to dismiss out of hand any and all UFO experiences reported by trained military personnel, trained research scientists, trained astronomers and the like. This in a misguided effort to convince his readers that no reports of this kind have (or are being) made. Simply, the author's statement is factually incorrect (to call him a liar at this point would seem trite). Professional astronomers *have* reported UFO experiences and any cursory search of a decent UFO reports database will turn up numerous examples (for example one could begin at: <http://www.afu.info/>). The author also contends that "*UFOs are usually observed by untrained skywatchers*" (one last foray into... you guessed it ...the unreliable eyewitness argument!). Well, duhhh! Who does the author think populates this planet?

Finally, the author descends into farce ("*Perhaps the crafty aliens...*"), but he is forgetting one significant point (even though, incredibly, he makes it himself): good scientists are indeed "*skeptical (sic) and inquisitive*" and that is exactly what makes them good scientists (that and proper training) with the ability to properly investigate and accurately and impartially report on the UFO phenomenon. It is however *much* more than can be said about the author. But then, a proper investigation of the facts and of the evidence would pose a real threat to the author's story, extremely poorly told as it is, and to the security of a head stuck firmly in the sand.

Dirk Biddle
15 July 2006.