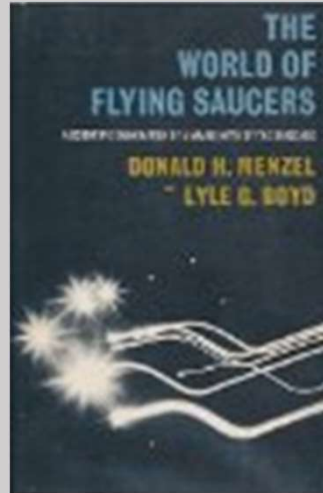
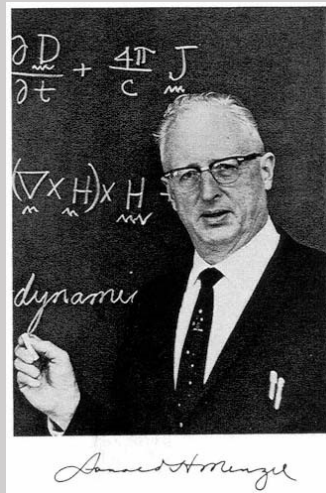


MCLL S 115: February 4, 2019
Debunkers, Skeptics and Science

We have reviewed evidence for the ET origin of some UFOs. We will next review the interactions between ETs and humans. But first we will review the other side of public opinion: the skeptics and debunkers, who have been active ever since UFOs came to public attention in the 1940s.

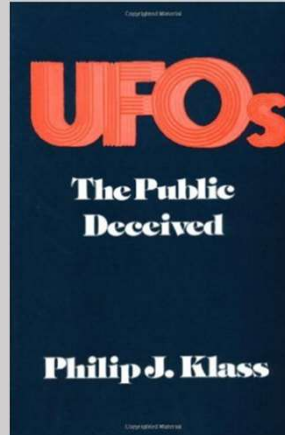
Donald H. Menzel
Harvard Astronomy Professor (1901-1976)



Donald H. Menzel was a leading adviser to the US government during WW II and the cold war. He was also a leading debunker of UFO observations; claiming that all of them were perceptual errors or some form of social hysteria.

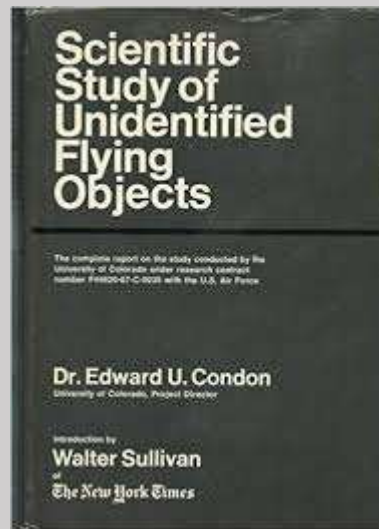
He also was a prolific scientist, and wrote lots of scientific books. I do not profess to understand his motives. He must have known that his UFO answers were technically inadequate – or maybe he didn't.

Philip J. Klass, science journalist (1919 – 2005)



Ditto Philip J. Klass. He was technically trained and an editor of *Aviation Week*, the leading American technical journal in the aerospace field. He was relentless in his attacks on other technical people who supposed the ETH might be tenable, in particular James E. McDonald, an astrophysicist, who came to an unhappy end, partly, at least, as a result of the professional attacks, led by Klass, that he experienced on account of his interest in UFOs.

Edward U. Condon, nuclear physicist



Edward U. Condon was a leading figure in US science during and after WWII. He occupied many official positions of importance and had also actually contributed to science.

He was given the position of Director of the “Scientific Study of Unidentified Flying Objects” carried out with US Air Force money between 1966 and 1968.

The Committee’s data showed that about thirty percent of the cases investigated by the Committee’s scientists remained unidentified after analysis.

Condon’s conclusions were different...



Edward U. Condon

- **... further extensive study of UFOs cannot be justified in the expectation that science will be advanced thereby.**
- **... whatever effect there has been has been bad.**
- **... fantastic propositions that are being supported by appeals to fallacious reasoning or false data.**

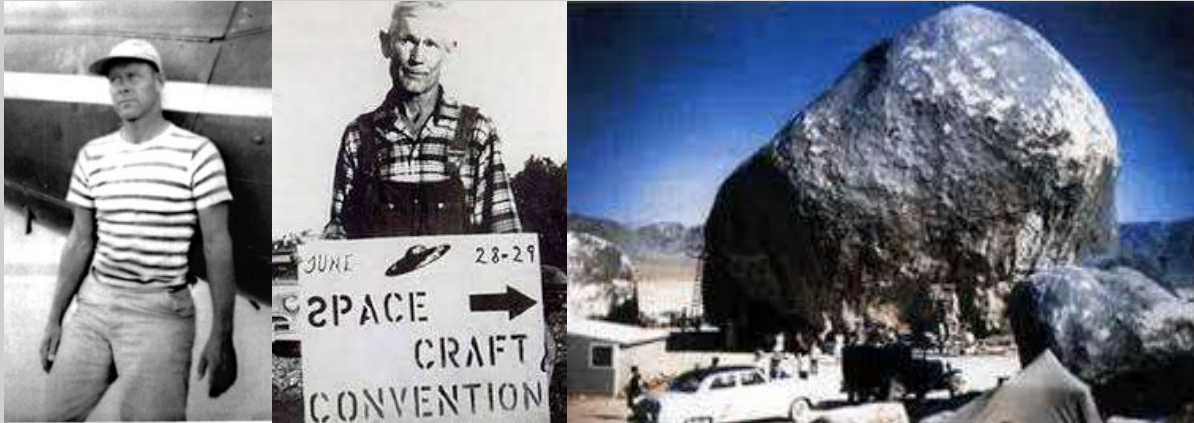
Edward U. Condon, (Scientific Director). *Scientific study of unidentified flying objects*.

New York: Bantam Books, 1968, pps. 1 - 6

These are excerpts from the introduction to the US Government “Condon commission” study completed in 1969. You will for the moment have to take my word for the fact that the conclusions drawn by Condon bore no relationship to the analytical – or, in Dr. Johnson’s phrase, the “human experience” aspect of the report.

There was a plausible alternative: Contactees

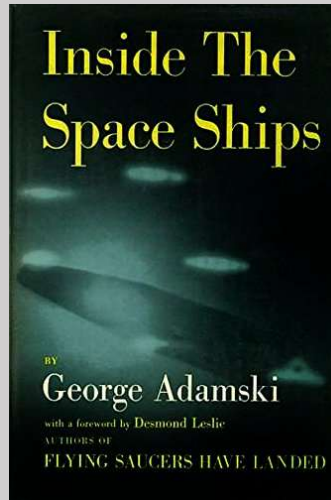
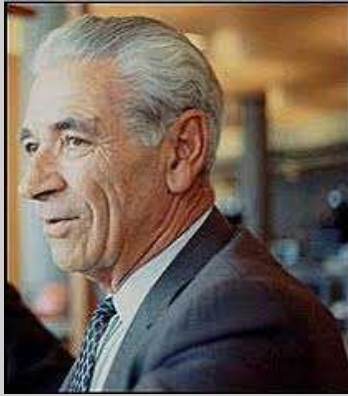
Early heart of the Contactee Movement: George Van Tassel and Giant Rock, California



In the 'fifties, people who claimed to be in friendly contact with ETs wrote books, gained followers, and held conventions. There was no substantive basis for their claims.

They were not like the people who, from the 'sixties on, have reported some kind of contact with ETs. We will deal with these aspects of the UFO phenomenon, which I have worked on with other interested people from MUFON, for some time now.

George Adamski
1891 -- 1965



Founder of he “Royal order of Tibet”

...another well-known “contactee” of the ‘fifties.

The “Respectable” Skeptics live mostly in Academia

Carl E. Sagan (1934 – 1996)



“..there are no instances out of the hundreds of thousands of UFO reports filed since 1947 – not a single one – in which many people independently and reliably report a close encounter with what is clearly an alien spacecraft” Sagan in *Broca’s Brain*, 1974

At the University of Chicago in 1955:

Sagan: BSc 1955

Donderi: BA 1955

Stanton M. Friedman, BSc 1955

The University of Chicago Connection.

Carl Sagan, UFO skeptic, and Stanton Friedman, probably the best-known public advocate of the extraterrestrial hypothesis, are both classmates of mine (see above). I know Friedman well; I was acquainted with Sagan but did not know him well. Sagan was the best-known American scientific popularizer in the ‘sixties and ‘seventies. He was the mentor of Neil Degrasse Tyson, who has inherited that role.

The UFO Skeptic's Home Page: the Skeptical Inquirer



The UFO Skeptic's Page

Robert Sheaffer

NEWS:

My review "[Unexplained Cases - Only If You Ignore All Explanations](#)" of Leslie Keel's book *UFOs: Generals, Pilots and Government Officials Go on the Record* is now available here.

Now available as a book- [Psychic Vibrations](#) - Skeptical Giggles from the Skeptical Inquirer. And enter discount code `SPSKREC` using that link to get 25% off! You can [download a Preview of Psychic Vibrations \(PDF\) here](#).

Read my Blog, <http://www.BadUFOs.com>. Check it out!

See my [Historical UFO page](#). Some "White Papers" by Philip J. Klass concerning Dr. J. Allen Hynek, Dr. James McDonald, the Condon Report, and much more.

My photo of a UFO made from a banana-split dish and modelling clay (from *UFO Sightings*)

I have been interested in UFOs since I was a child in the 1960s. Reading the widely-published misinformation of authors such as Donald E. Keyhoe and Frank Edwards, I was persuaded that 'there must be something to it!' Of course, UFOlogy in those days was **much** less wild than it is today. Even Keyhoe disbelieved most if not all claims of UFO "contact", and the early "abduction" cases. As I noted in [The UFO Verdict](#) (chapter 3),

the willingness to believe on the part of the UFO movement has steadily grown with each passing year



The Committee for Skeptical Inquiry – a source of articles and information about many unverifiable statements about how the world is.

Skepticism – that is, an attitude of suspended judgment until the evidence is in – is a successful method of negotiating life.

Closed-mindedness to the evidence; or refusal to acknowledge evidence – is not.

How skeptics react to a real event :

Part of the story of St-Adolphe d'Howard , 2014 to present

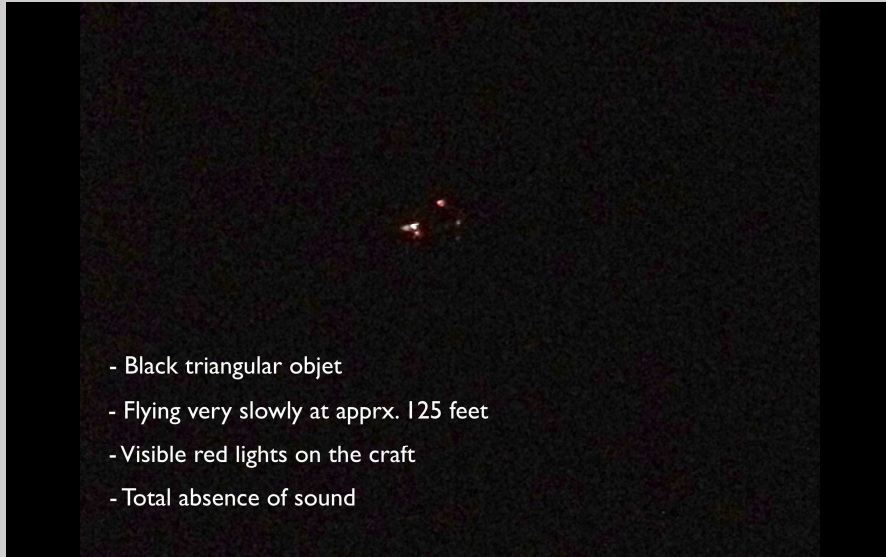


These are slides borrowed from Luigi Vendittelli, who gave a talk on the St-Adolphe d'Howard sightings last year. This is an ongoing series of events that have been observed from the village of St-Adolphe d'Howard (North of St-Saveur, South of Ste-Agathe) over the past four years.

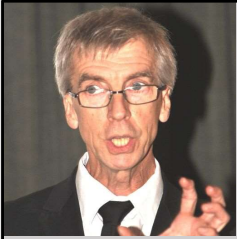
I have visited the most likely observation point several times myself, but have not observed the phenomenon (which has been observed, photographed and described by many people in the neighborhood, several of whom I know quite well).



Newspaper accounts in Informations du Nord, the local weekly, written by Pierre Deslauriers, the journalist who took the photo accompanied by the gentleman in the top photo, Benoit Meilleur.



The description. Vendittelli's talk went on to describe similar sightings over southwest Ontario, along lake Ontario and Lake Erie. I have talked to witnesses of those sightings as well.



The St-Adolphe skeptic: Dr. Robert Lamontagne

Conférence devant le Laurentian Club «Les OVNIS n'existent pas»:

Sherlock Holmes had some advice for Professor Lamontagne:

“It is a capital mistake to theorize before you have all the evidence. It biases the judgment. “

“It est une erreur capitale de théoriser avant d'avoir toutes les preuves. Il sollicite le jugement.”

Sherlock Holmes in A. Conan Doyle, *A Study in Scarlet*, 1886

I was in Ste-Agathe on Monday, November 24, 2014, listening to Prof. Lamontagne give this speech (in English). His argument: the nearest exoplanets are too far away, and our rockets travel too slowly, to make it possible for other civilizations to visit us. In other words, he doesn't understand how UFOs could be ETVs, so they can't be. At the end of the talk, he put on dark glasses, held his laser pointer up towards the audience and, imitating the memory control unit of the “Men in Black”, said, “UFOs do not exist.”

After his talk I asked him to criticize three of the well-documented cases I presented earlier, from his rejectionist point-of-view. He knew nothing about any of them.

In other words, his response to the evidence was based on ignorance seasoned with ridicule.



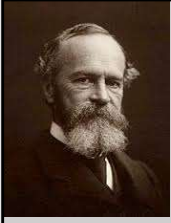
John Stuart Mill (1806-1873)

“When, from the observation of a number of individual instances, we ascend to a general proposition, or when, by combining a number of individual propositions, we conclude from them a proposition even more general, the process, which is substantially the same in both instances, is called Induction.”

Mill, John Stuart: *A system of Logic*, 8th ed. New York, Longmans, 1884, pp 125 – 126.

Now, about science. The way scientists work has evolved over the past 250 years. It used to be a process based, as John Stuart Mill wrote, on the accumulation of “a number of individual instances [like UFO reports with no conventional explanation]” from which is concluded “a proposition even more general” – e.g. that these objects were not made by people and are therefore extraterrestrial.

This was the method of scientific induction, as described by Mill.



Explaining Scientific Attitudes

William James

...We feel neither curiosity nor wonder concerning things so far beyond us that we have no concepts to refer them to or standards by which to measure them.. Only what we partly know already inspires us with a desire to know more.

(Principles of Psychology, vol II, 1890, p. 109)

The UFO evaluation conflict is caused by the cultural limits of modern science. William James, the American psychologist, recognized that some things are so far beyond our ken that, as he said in his *Principles of Psychology*, “we feel neither curiosity nor wonder concerning things so far beyond us that we have no concepts to refer them to or standards by which to measure them... only what we partly know already inspires us with a desire to know more (*Principles of Psychology*, Vol. II, 1890, p. 109).” And that is what happens even if we have many repeated examples of these “things so far beyond us”. What Mill called “individual instances” are ignored unless they fit into what is already “partially known”



Explaining Scientific Attitudes

Thomas S. Kuhn

There is no such thing as research in the absence of any paradigm. To reject one paradigm without simultaneously substituting another is to reject science itself....

... rejection of science in favor of another occupation is, I think, the only sort of paradigm rejection to which *counter-instances* themselves can lead.

Thomas S. Kuhn : *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 2nd ed.
U. of Chicago Press, 1962

Ignoring the UFO data can only be done by throwing the extraterrestrial data into scientific wastebaskets labeled “atmospheric phenomena” or “misperceptions” or “psychological aberration,” none of which bear the slightest resemblance to the data itself, This allows the scientist to pay lip service to a plausible “normal science” explanation for the extraterrestrial evidence, as long as he or she does not actually look at the evidence. Once the data have been trashed by misclassification, the scientist is then free to ignore the problem.

Instead of evidence accumulated by observations leading to the induction of a new concept (as Mill would have it), Kuhn’s “counter-instances” – the same UFO evidence – leads nowhere unless there is a Scientific paradigm already prepareds for it.



Explaining elite attitudes

Alexander Wendt and Raymond Duvall

There is a Taboo ... not in popular culture, of course, where interest in UFO abounds and websites proliferate, but in elite culture – the structure of authoritative belief and practice that determines what “reality” officially is this structure is dominated globally by three groups: governments, the scientific community, and the mainstream media.

Our thesis is that the origins of this taboo are political.. The inability to see clearly and talk rationally about UFOs seems to be a symptom of authoritative anxiety, *a socially subconscious fear of what the reality of the UFO might mean for modern government.*

Alexander Wendt and Raymond Duvall: *Militant agnosticism and the UFO taboo*, In Kean, Leslie: *UFOs: Generals, pilots and government officials go on the record*. New York: Harmony Books, 2010.

The reluctance of both the media and responsible elites to recognize the UFO evidence has been addressed by two American political scientists, Alexander Wendt and Raymond Powell, who wrote an interesting article about it a few years ago. They talked about “a socially subconscious fear of what the reality of the UFO might mean for modern government.” As soon as they had written that, they turned the argument over to the psychologists, one of whom had, fortunately, many years before, written a clear exposition of what happens to people who are confronted by a serious conflict between opposing beliefs.

The conflict produces what psychologist Leon Festinger called “cognitive dissonance” in scientists. Festinger knew that people disliked holding conflicting ideas, and that the conflict motivates them to discredit one or the other of the ideas.



Explaining the elite's "socially subconscious fear"

Leon Festinger

What is the cognitive dissonance?

The belief that humans are in control of the earth and that we are responsible for our own destiny

is inconsistent with

the fact that extraterrestrials come and go at will, disarm our weapons systems and kidnap people without interference.

In this case, the dissonance is between the belief that we control the earth and, however bad a job we do of it, we are responsible for our destiny on this planet. This is inconsistent with the evidence that extraterrestrials come and go at will, disarm our weapons systems (which they have been observed to do) and kidnap people without interference.



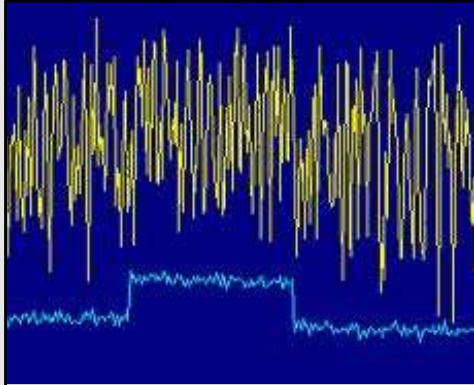
Explaining the elite's "socially subconscious fear"

Leon Festinger

There are three major ways in which [reducing dissonance] may be done:

1. By changing one or more of the elements.. (the messenger is a "wacko")
2. By adding new cognitive elements that are consonant.. (it's all cults and pop culture)
3. By decreasing the importance of the elements involved in the dissonant relations.. (the signal-to-noise ratio is low)

In order to reduce the dissonance, one has to psychologically discredit the uncomfortable information by changing an element (the messenger is a 'wacko'), add a new but consistent element (it's just some kind of pop culture) or decrease the importance of the message (the signal-to-noise ratio is low). This is the most justifiable dismissal because, in fact, except following the analyses of people who carefully review the evidence, the signal-to-noise ratio is low:



And the noise is everywhere!

*Signal plus noise:
Popular Culture*

Signal without noise.



ALIEN FACE DISCOVERED ON GOOGLE EARTH IN CANADA!!



And there is plenty of noise (uncritical nonsense), on the internet and elsewhere.



Charles Darwin, BA (*Cantab*)

The limit of man's knowledge in any subject possesses a high interest, which is perhaps increased by its close neighborhood to the realms of imagination.

Darwin, Charles (1839/1909). *The Voyage of the Beagle*. Volume 29 of Charles W. Eliot, LLD, ed, *The Harvard Classics*. New York: P. F. Collier, p. 301.

On the Origin of Species by Charles Darwin, published in 1859, explained the theory of the evolution of species by natural selection. Darwin spent from 1832 to 1836 aboard the Royal Navy brig HMS Beagle while it was surveying and exploring both coasts of South America and the Pacific Ocean. In 1839 he published *The Voyage of the Beagle* about the geology, botany, meteorology, ornithology, zoology, and the people that he met on his long voyage.



Samuel Johnson, MA, DCL (*Oxon*)

Human experience, which is constantly contradicting theory, is the great test of truth.

Boswell's Life of Johnson, Modern Library Edition, p. 274

Following, again, the example of the English man of letters Samuel Johnson, who wrote that “Human experience, which is constantly contradicting theory, is the great test of truth,” here is a summary of what our accumulated experience of over sixty-five years tells us about extraterrestrial surveillance.

Extraterrestrial UFOs are observed worldwide. There have been irregular temporal cycles in the frequency of reports, at least in the Western world, for the past fifty years or so. Extraterrestrial UFOs range from very small (tens of feet in diameter) to very large (hundreds of feet in length or diameter). Their shapes include the classic flying saucer, Saturn-shaped discs, small ovoids or spheres, large cigar-shaped craft, and large triangular, rectangular, spherical, or boomerang-shaped objects that move very slowly at very low altitudes and then disappear rapidly. The performance of all of these machines exceeds that of the most advanced terrestrial aircraft.