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CSICOP Questions Truth of Movie Based on Travis Walton UFO Abduction

CSICOP has issued the following press release:

The Committee for the Scientific Investigation of Claims of the Paranormal (CSICOP) challenges the claim of Paramount Pictures that its new film "Fire in the Sky" which opens on March 12, 1993 is based on a "true story." In a statement released today Paul Kurtz, chairman of CSICOP, commented that "the film is largely fiction and ought to be labeled as such. The public is being deceived by Paramount's promoting the film as a true story.

"Fire in the Sky" is based on the claim of Travis Walton, of Snowflake, AZ, that in late 1975 he was "zapped" and abducted by a UFO (Unidentified Flying Object) and held hostage¹ for five days.

Philip J. Klass, chairman of CSICOP's UFO Subcommittee, who spent many months investigating the alleged incident shortly after it was reported, uncovered extensive evidence to indicate the incident was most likely a hoax. This evidence and details of Klass' rigorous investigation were reported in his book *UFOs: The Public Deceived* (published in 1983 by Prometheus Books).

Klass learned that shortly before Walton's alleged abduction he had told his mother that if he was ever abducted by a UFO she should not worry because he would be all right. Later, when Travis' mother was informed that her young son had allegedly been zapped and abducted by a UFO, she took the news calmly and responded, "Well, that's the way these things happen," according to a law enforcement officer who was present.

During the several days that Travis was "missing" his older brother Duane was asked if he was concerned for Travis' well-being. Duane replied that Travis was "having the experience of a lifetime... All I can say is that I wish I was with him."

Shortly after Travis reappeared, he was given a "lie detector" test, administered by Jack McCarthy, then one of the most experienced and respected polygraph examiners in Arizona.² After a lengthy test involving Walton's claims of UFO-abduction, McCarthy reported: "Gross deception." Further, McCarthy reported that Travis was holding his breath to try to "beat the machine."

Professor Kurtz said: "The public is being inundated by Hollywood films and television programs claiming that thousands of Americans are being abducted by aliens. These programs offer no credible scientific evidence or critical dissent. They seem to be motivated solely by profits, and no matter how outrageous a claim there is always somebody willing to turn it into a 'true' movie."

"None of the cases," stated Klass, "stand up under scrutiny. They can be given natural, prosaic explanations without postulating extraterrestrial

visitation and kidnapping. But, of course, Hollywood wouldn't be able to turn that into a movie."

"Many in the media release irresponsible and sensationalistic reports of abductions. There is a critical need for balanced reporting and labeling," said Kurtz.

CSICOP, an organization devoted to the scientific investigation of claims of the paranormal, includes hundreds of scientists and skeptical investigators. CSICOP also publishes the quarterly journal, the *Skeptical Inquirer*.

Editor's Notes

1. Presumably "prisoner" is meant.
2. This should probably not be interpreted to be giving credence to the claim that a polygraph is a "lie detector." Certainly one should be skeptical of such a claim.

MIS-Fire in the Sky

By Chris Rutkowski

I saw "Fire in the Sky" at a preview last night. There was mixed reaction from the audience.

First of all, the movie does not resemble Walton's book in the least. I thought his ghostwritten version of what he claimed was bizarre enough without Tracy Torme's "artistic licence." If you like movies with lots of gore, shock effects and gallons of brown goo, this is the one for you. Walton's original claim of a sterile, antiseptic alien spaceship and operating room has given way to an interior that attempts to outdo the "Alien" series of flicks. Membraneous pods, "E.T."-like aliens and slimy honeycombs populate the ship's interior.

Good news for horror buffs: the audience liked that stuff.

What was odd was the complete contrast with the rest of the movie, in which crusty James Garner grilled the other work crew about their apparent murder of Walton. Garner's character, the sheriff, didn't believe a word of the abduction story, and kept trying to trip them up through his investigation. That part of the movie, including the social and public effects of an alleged UFO on a community, was actually very good.

In essence, it's not necessary to debunk the movie because it bears no resemblance to even the original story. I'm amazed that MUFON devoted half of its most recent issue to a preview of the movie, including a new article by Walton. In the movie, APRO investigators, with the group name changed to AFAR, are portrayed as complete geeks with absolutely no scientific credibility. Why a UFO organization would want to be associated with such a portrayal is beyond me.

Walton is said to be rewriting his book, *The Walton Experience*, to be released with the movie title. A much more interesting book about the case is Bill Barry's *Ultimate Encounter* (Pocket Books, 1978), which gives more background and includes skeptics' comments. I doubt if that book will become available again.

In summary, "Fire in the Sky" is a misfire. Although the investigation process is fairly well detailed and the dynamics of the characters is acceptably

portrayed, the movie skews badly after Walton is found, degenerating into a slimy horror flick with no resemblance to the original account, however truthful it was in the first place.

Skeptics don't really need to bother with the movie. It should be forgotten soon.

Chris Rutkowski is a Science Educator for the Royal Astronomical Society of Canada whose last appearance in AS was "The End of Crop Circles" in the November/December 1992 issue. This article was originally posted to the Usenet sci.skeptic group on March 12, 1993.

Linda Napolitano UFO Abduction Case Criticized

By Jim Lippard

In several presentations at UFO conferences and in articles in the September and December 1992 issues of the *MUFON UFO Journal*, abduction researcher Budd Hopkins has promoted an alleged UFO abduction case in New York City involving Linda "Cortile" (since revealed to be a pseudonym for Linda Napolitano). The case has attracted attention because of several alleged independent eyewitnesses to the abduction, including a prominent public official. (It was later claimed that this person was former United Nations Secretary General Javier Perez de Cuellar.)

Now this case has come under considerable fire from Joseph J. Stefula (former MUFON State Director for New Jersey, who resigned as a result of this case), Richard Butler (a former law enforcement and security police specialist for the U.S. Air Force), and George P. Hansen (a parapsychology researcher and CSICOP critic—see "Articles of Note," *AS*, May/June 1992 and January/February 1993). Stefula, Butler, and Hansen have issued a 25-page report which they have circulated themselves, both electronically and on paper, pointing out numerous flaws in the evidence. They have heavily criticized Hopkins, as well as Jerome Clark (editor of the *International UFO Reporter*), Walter Andrus (head of MUFON), and David Jacobs (UFO researcher, author, and history professor at Temple University) for their handling of the case and the overall role they play in ufology—the report compares their actions to players in a role-playing game such as *Dungeons and Dragons*. Clark and Andrus are singled out for the heaviest attack for allegedly attempting to suppress criticisms of the case, a charge which Clark disputes. (Clark has since agreed, despite personal animosity between himself and Hansen, to publish an article from Butler, Stefula, and Hansen criticizing the case.)

Linda Napolitano claims to have been kidnapped and assaulted by federal agents named Richard and Dan who were eyewitnesses to her UFO abduction, which led Butler, Stefula, and Hansen to ask why this hadn't been reported to the proper law enforcement authorities. This in turn led to a vitriolic exchange of correspondence between Clark and Hansen, in which Clark stated that he was unconvinced that the kidnapping and assault actually took place.

Butler, Stefula, and Hansen identify a possible source of Napolitano's story in the science fiction novel *Nighteyes* by Garfield Reeves-Stevens, which was published a few months before Linda Napolitano first claimed to have been abducted. Two pages of their report list similarities between the novel and elements of Napolitano's abduction reports.

Copies of the Butler, Stefula, and Hansen report may be obtained for \$4 from Bob Girard, 1443 S.E. Port St. Lucie, Port St. Lucie, FL 34952, or via download from GENIE's PSI-NET software library.

Book Review

The Retreat to Commitment by William Warren Bartley III

2nd revised edition, Open Court Publishing, 1984, 283pp.

Reviewed by David A. Snodgrass

Persons who consider themselves skeptics would no doubt also be willing to consider themselves rationalists. It is safe to say that it is difficult to imagine that anyone could be a skeptic without at the same time being a rationalist. (An exception might have to be made for so-called radical skeptics.) The essence of the skeptic's approach to paranormal claims, for example, is that he, in thinking about and investigating those claims, is first and foremost concerned to be rational in that thinking and investigating. We can generalize this concept beyond the realm of investigation of paranormal claims. The essence of the skeptic's approach to the world and to life in general is that he makes a conscious and constant effort to be rational in that approach. Since the practice of skepticism is inseparable from the practice of rationality, it behooves us to think critically about what the practice of rationality consists of.

In his book *The Retreat to Commitment*, William Warren Bartley III presents an original and important theory about what it is to practice rationality. Bartley makes two central claims in his theory of rational practice. The first claim is that the practice of rationality is identical with the practice of criticism, and that there exist no logical barriers that would in any way limit the practice of criticism. (Bartley concedes that there are, of course, other barriers that limit the practice of criticism, and therefore of rationality; subjective barriers such as neuroses, and objective barriers such as those discovered by physics, for example, the uncertainty principle or the speed of light. The point of Bartley's claim about the logically unlimited character of criticism, and therefore of rationality, is that in the course of the critical examination of, and argument about, for example, theories of psychology and physics, it is never logically necessary to say: "Here all criticism must stop.") The second claim is about why the unlimited nature of rationality (or criticism) has generally gone unnoticed, at least in the main rationalist traditions of our culture. It has generally gone unnoticed because it has generally been assumed that the practice of criticism is inseparable from the practice of justifying our theories, ways of life, and so on. According to most rationalists, in order to critically support a theory, it is necessary to rationally

justify it. A common way of rationally justifying a theory is to claim that its rational justification is based on the fact that there is empirical evidence for it. The original and important facet of Bartley's theory of rationality is that it clearly shows how the ubiquitous and apparently innocuous practice of rationally justifying theories, ways of life, etc. is really not so innocuous after all. In fact, the practice of rational justification has made it impossible for persons who strive to practice rationality to consistently claim that they in fact practice rationality in all aspects of their lives, simply because they are unable to consistently claim that they practice rationality with regard to the most fundamental principles of rational practice: the fundamental principles of rational practice itself. But why is a rationalist who claims that rational practice consists of the justification of, for example, theories, unable to consistently make the claim that he practices rationality with respect to rationality itself?

Consider again the common method of rationally justifying a theory by showing it to be based upon empirical evidence. What if the rationalist is now asked to justify this fundamental principle of rational justification itself? What criterion of rational justification is he to appeal to? Well, the options are pretty limited. In fact, there is just one: An empirical rationalist can only justify his own fundamental principle of rational justification by claiming that it, too, is based upon empirical evidence. But this really amounts to no justification at all, because the critic of the empirical rationalist will simply point out that the "justification" of the practice of rationally justifying everything by appeal to empirical evidence, by appealing to empirical evidence, is merely arguing in a circle. The critic of empirical rationalism could at this point dismiss it as being irrational. But suppose that he is charitable and accepts the empirical rationalist's "justification" of empirical rationalism (perhaps on the ground that there is empirical evidence that persons who practice empirical rationalism tend to live longer because, for example, they tend to cross the street against the light less often than persons who do not practice empirical rationalism). Since we grant that a position is rationally acceptable if, and only if, it is rationally justifiable, the critic can go on to demand the rational justification of the "justification" just given. Again, the only option open to the empirical rationalist is to justify the previous justification by appeal to empirical evidence. And again, the malicious critic can demand (on pain of its being admitted that there is none) the rational justification of the previous justification of the first justification, and so on, *ad infinitum*. It is clear, then, that the classical rationalist principle "Accept all, and only, those positions that can be rationally justified" cannot be extended to that fundamental rationalist principle itself. The result is that if we identify the practice of rationality with the practice of rational justification, then rationalists cannot consistently claim to be rationalists "all the way down," because the fundamental principles of their rational practice cannot themselves be "justified" without resort to circular reasoning or entrapment in

infinite regress. If the practice of rationality is identical with the practice of justification, then the scope of rational practice is severely limited.

According to Bartley, the failure of justificationist rationalists to justify their own practice of rationality has led to a crisis of integrity for rationalists in general. Moreover, the failure of justificationist rationalists to justify their own rationalist practice has provided a powerful and insidious weapon for irrationalists to use against rationalists. This "weapon" is in fact a very good argument, which is precisely why it is so powerful and insidious when used against rationalists. Bartley calls this anti-rationalist argument-weapon the *tu quoque*, and it goes like this: Since rational practice cannot itself be rationally justified, so-called rationalists cannot criticize and reject any other practice, including the practice of irrationalism, on the grounds that those rival practices are unjustified and so irrational. The failure of rationalists to justify their own practice of rationality means that the playing field has been totally leveled in the contest between rational practice, irrational practice, and any form of nonrational practice whatsoever. The choice of one of these kinds of practice must in fact be based upon something other than rational justification (whim, pleasure, taste, existential anguish, and faith are some of the more common substitutes for rational justification in choosing one practice over another) and the robust irrationalist is much more self-critical and honest—much more rational—in his recognition of this fact than is the self-righteous, self-deceiving rationalist. So the *tu quoque* argument against rational practice consists simply in the irrationalist's replying "You too!" to the rationalist, every time that the rationalist challenges the irrationalist's irrationalism on the grounds that it is unjustified. The best that we can do, given the failure of rationalists to justify their own rationality, is to commit ourselves (through whim, faith, or whatever) to our practices, including the practice of rationality. Hence "the retreat to commitment" of Bartley's title.

It would be a mistake for us to think, as skeptics and rationalists, that the crisis of rationalist integrity described by Bartley is of academic interest only. Bartley focuses upon the moral, cultural, and practical consequences of the failure of rationalists to justify their own rational practice. In his book, Bartley analyzes the specific consequences of that failure for contemporary Protestant theology and religious life, but he carefully points out that his focus on Protestantism is for illustrative purposes only. Protestant theology's gradual movement away from rationalism and into fideism happens to provide a particularly vivid illustration of the consequences of the rationalists' failure to justify their own practice, but those consequences are by no means limited to Protestant thought. The main consequence for our culture as a whole is that the *tu quoque* argument against rationalism has put down deep and extensive roots. (A bit of anecdotal evidence for this claim: I have myself encountered the *tu quoque* four times over the past two years, twice in conversation and twice in print.) The specific consequence of that failure for contemporary skeptics should be clear: If the *tu quoque* argument

against rational practice is valid and sound, it follows that the choice between, for example, the practice of skepticism and the practice of occultism can never be made rationally. Another important consequence of the cultural spread of the *tu quoque* is that argument itself is severely devalued. Arguments are no longer taken seriously as arguments, but are used instead (if they are used at all and not abandoned in favor of the use of brute physical force) for such purposes as the spread of propaganda and the evocation of emotion. Under the reign of the *tu quoque* argument against rational practice, we may take or leave argument in precisely the same way that we may take or leave a given flavor of soda pop.

Bartley's solution to the "dilemma of ultimate commitment" posed by the failure of justificationist rationalism is simple and profound. Bartley shows that rationalists have been skewered on the dilemma precisely and only because they have mistakenly assumed that criticism, for example the criticism of a practice, is identical to the justification¹ of that practice. It is crucially important to realize and appreciate just how mistaken that assumption is. In fact, there is nothing in logic that shows criticism and justification to be the same kind of thing. The rationalist's propensity to make that identification, and to cling to it so tenaciously, can be explained by closely examining the history of rational practice itself. For one thing, our ideas about what it is to practice rationality have largely or wholly sprung from our Western philosophical tradition, and, as Bartley points out, that tradition has developed in tandem with Christianity which, in its orthodox forms, is fundamentally concerned with the justification of its beliefs. (Think of the genre of Christian literature known as "apologetics.") Thus, when rationalists have rebelled against (i.e., criticized) various forms of religious authority, they have felt compelled to demonstrate that rebellion (criticism) will not lead to social anarchy by showing that the rebellion (criticism) is itself grounded upon (justified by) some form of rational authority. But, as we have seen, at the end of the justificationist road lies the *tu quoque* argument against rationalist practice itself.

Bartley shows that, contrary to the standard assumptions of Western rationalists, the practice of criticism can be completely decoupled from the practice of justification. He offers the following as the core proposition of rational practice: "*Nothing gets justified; everything gets criticized*" (p. 112; emphasis Bartley's), and the very first thing that goes unjustified but gets severely criticized is this core proposition of rational practice itself. An immediate consequence, therefore, is that the *tu quoque* argument against rational practice is defanged: One can be a rationalist "all the way down" as long as one holds all of one's beliefs and actions open to potential (and optimally continual) criticism and potential refutation including, most importantly, one's fundamental principle of rational practice itself, which is just the proposition that one ought to hold all of one's beliefs open to potential (and optimally continual)

criticism and potential refutation. The *tu quoque* argument is valid but not sound, because its fundamental premise is false. Rational practice is not identical with the practice of justification, but it is identical with the practice of criticism. Bartley calls his theory of rational practice "pancritical rationalism" because of the comprehensive logical scope that the practice of criticism has. There are no logical barriers to the practice of criticism, and therefore there are no logical barriers to the practice of rationality. In fact, we become involved in another kind of "infinite regress" if we practice pancritical rationalism: the practice of criticism can be carried on *ad infinitum*. And it ought to be, if we aspire to practice rationality with regard to everything, including our rational practice itself.

An important consequence of the decoupling of criticism from justification is that the onus is now on the irrationalists and nonrationalists to practice "pancriticism" themselves, if they expect to maintain intellectual parity with rationalists. As Bartley puts this point:

Whereas many...have argued that we may decide as we please, freely and irrationally, between two unjustifiable theories, I suggest that we can decide freely and irrationally, as a matter of taste, only between two theories against which there exist no criticisms one is unable to defeat. This reduces the area of whim considerably...Moreover, once the retreat to commitment involved in the justificational framework is no longer necessary, then it is also no longer possible to avoid facing these criticisms by citing the *tu quoque*. (p. 136)

The identification of rational practice with the practice of criticism, with the recognition that the scope of criticism is logically unlimited, has sweeping moral implications. One of these implications is that we ought to practice radical humility with regard to our own beliefs and actions. We ought to be always willing to "turn the other cheek" to and "go the second mile" with the critics of our own beliefs and actions (p. 163). Bartley's theory of pancritical rationalism implies an "ethic of argument" that invokes the moral sentiment of ...*respect* for people...one owes respect to all—at least until they very definitely show themselves unworthy of it. One of the most important ways of indicating prima facie respect for a person is to attempt to take his views seriously. This would be impossible if rationality were so limited that critical argument was impossible. (p. 165; emphasis Bartley's).²

Notes

1. More precisely, within the justificationist framework, the criticism of theories, ways of life, etc. is the

attempt to disjustify them by showing that, for example, there is no empirical evidence for them. Throughout this review, the concept of "justification" should be taken to imply the concept of "disjustification" as well.

2. My immediate inspiration for the writing of this review stems from two comments made by Jim Lippard. The first comment was made at a meeting of the Phoenix Skeptics during which Jim was describing his exchanges with a group of Australian skeptics following his criticism of their handling of a debate with creationist Duane Gish. Jim stated (and I paraphrase, but this paraphrase captures the core of his comment) that everything is open to criticism, most especially one's own views. It struck me as amazing and important that this idea would have to be explicitly stated during the course of a discussion between skeptics, and that the critical spirit Jim espoused seemed to play no part in the Australians' response to his criticisms. Bartley's theory of pancritical rationalism provides us with a powerful argument in support of Jim's dictum, and the Australians' dogmatism provides us with an example of why Bartley's assertion that "There is nothing intrinsically rational about any particular position or context—including that particular context known as 'rationalism' or the 'rationalist identity' or 'the rationalist tradition'" (p. 171) is true: simply substitute "skepticism," "the skeptical identity," and "the skeptical tradition" into Bartley's sentence.

The second comment by Jim that inspired this review appears in his note to Jeff Jacobsen's article "Science and Dianetics" (*AS*, July/August 1992). In that note, Jim observes that, in reference to Karl Popper's attempt to find a line of demarcation between science and pseudoscience based upon the notion of falsifiability, "it is the opinion of many philosophers that there is no principled way of distinguishing science from pseudoscience, or even from nonscience." It is important to note that Bartley claims that his theory of pancritical rationalism is a generalization of Popper's approach to the problem of criticism and justification (p. xiii), but that Bartley can be counted among the philosophers who have questioned the importance of trying to demarcate between science and pseudoscience. He argues that "the fundamental problem of modern philosophy...is the problem of defeating the *tu quoque* by showing that it is possible to choose in a nonarbitrary way among competing, mutually exclusive theories, and—more broadly speaking—among competing 'ways of life'" (p. 83). Thus, the fundamental problem here is not that of distinguishing between science and pseudoscience, but of finding a principled way of distinguishing between competing and incompatible theories and ways of life. If Bartley's theory of rational practice is correct, there is a principled way of making that distinction.

Camille Paglia: Astrologer

"I'm an astrologer—people don't mention this! I mean, everyone's attacked me for everything else. I mean, I'm an astrologer—it's right in my book. I endorse astrology. I believe in astrology. Will someone attack me for that? No!" —Camille Paglia, "The M.I.T. Lecture: Crisis in the American Universities," in her *Sex, Art, and American Culture* (1992, Vintage), pp. 253-254.

Skeptical News

Eldon Byrd's libel lawsuit against James Randi and CSICOP is scheduled to go to trial on May 24. Uri Geller's lawsuits are still pending.

Mike Stackpole and Ted Karren were guests on the Phoenix local cable TV show "Arizona Now and Then" on February 1 to discuss predictions by psychics and the Phoenix Skeptics. (Our predictions were published in the last *AS*.)

Phoenix Skeptic Jeff Jacobsen attended the recent convention of the Cult Awareness Network and reports that Scientology members were there distributing anti-CAN literature, picketing the hotel, and occasionally representing themselves as CAN members in dealing with the hotel. Jeff also reports that someone set off the hotel fire alarm in the middle of a speech by ASU psychologist Robert Cialdini, the author of the excellent book, *Influence*. In related news, CAN has been fighting off numerous lawsuits filed by Scientologists.

Jim Lippard's "Report on the 1992 CSICOP Conference" is being reprinted by *BASIS*, the Bay Area Skeptics' newsletter, and (in small pieces) by *The Skeptic*, the newsletter of the North Texas Skeptics. One comment prompted by this summary is that the Robert Young explanation of the Kecksburg UFO (being the Lake Erie meteor) is contradicted by satellite data, according to skeptic James Oberg, who has speculated that it may have been a Russian satellite reentry. (Oberg emphasizes, however, that it is more likely that nothing at all landed at Kecksburg.) Young's *SI* article (Spring 1991) has also been criticized for overlooking the content of Stan Gordon's investigation of the Kecksburg incident, while making indirect reference to it on p. 284 of his article. (Gordon is founder of the Pennsylvania Association for the Study of the Unexplained and Pennsylvania MUFON director.)

National Capitol Area Skeptic and National Institute of Standards and Technology research chemist Michael Epstein now has a regular column in the *Journal of Scientific Exploration*. The column, titled "The Skeptical Perspective," has so far run for two issues. The first, in vol. 6, no. 3 (1992), reported on local skeptical group activities and skeptical computer bulletin boards. The second reported on appearances of the Virgin Mary and two works by CSICOP Fellows which Epstein characterized as "rather disturbing verbiage"—Henri Broch's *Skeptical Inquirer* comment on the liquefying blood of St. Januarius, which used unverified anecdotal evidence to discredit a claim, and Susan Blackmore's book *Beyond the Body*, which discusses the use of the

drug ketamine to produce OBEs without mentioning the rather serious warnings which accompany that drug's description in the *Physicians Desk Reference*. A future column by Epstein will include some comments on skeptical computer forums by Jim Lippard. (The *JSE* is available for \$30/year for the first year, \$40/year for each year thereafter from *JSE*, ERL 306, Stanford University, Stanford, CA 94305-4055.)

Suitbert Ertel and Arno Müller have analyzed the data from the French skeptics' "Mars effect" replication study, and conclude that it shows the correlation between the position of Mars at time of birth and sports ability predicted by the late Michel Gauquelin. (See "Editorial Note Regarding the 'Mars Effect,'" *AS*, May/June 1992, pp. 6-7.) Claude Benski of the French CFEPF and Jan Willem Nienhuys of the Dutch Stichting Skepsis are expected to produce their own analysis of the data in the near future; this analysis is expected to be negative. (This replication study was agreed to by CFEPF and Michel Gauquelin in the French science magazine *Science et Vie* way back in October 1982, and the data had been collected by June 1990. It was because of the long delay that Ertel and Müller obtained the data from CFEPF and did their own analysis. The "Mars effect" has been studied by the Belgian Comité Para (in the late 1960's), CSICOP (in the late 1970's), the French CFEPF (1980's to present), and the Dutch Stichting Skepsis (1990's). Of these groups, the Comité Para, CSICOP, and CFEPF did their own replications. The Belgians replicated the effect while CSICOP did not—but Ertel's reanalysis of CSICOP's data, published in the Winter 1992 *Skeptical Inquirer*, casts some doubt on that, and Ertel is continuing to examine some puzzles in the CSICOP data. The explanation offered by the Comité Para for their replication was falsified by an experiment proposed by CSICOP Fellow Marvin Zelen conducted by Gauquelin, by other analysis by Gauquelin, by analysis by ex-CSICOP Executive Council member Dennis Rawlins, and by unpublished work by the Comité Para itself. The Dutch skeptics have suggested various explanations in terms of selection bias, but a full explanation of the "Mars effect" anomaly is still awaited.)

The February 1993 *Spy* magazine (p. 19) reported on apparent vital mythical numbers (see Max Singer, "The Vitality of Mythical Numbers," *AS*, March/April 1992) from the Centers for Disease Control. *Spy* pointed out that news reports from October 1, 1985 to present have given the number of HIV infections in the United States as one million—despite claiming (*New York Times*, October 1, 1985) that "the total may be climbing by 1,000 to 2,000 per day." While this number was definitely mythical in 1985, it may not in fact be mythical today. *Spy*'s article may be misleading because newspapers tend to report the highest number in a range of possibilities and neglect to give any information about confidence limits. Further, the accuracy of projections has improved over the last eight years—the initial projections were a bit high. For instance, in 1986 the Public Health Service's AIDS experts projected a cumulative total of 270,000 AIDS

cases (as opposed to HIV infections) by the end of 1991, with 179,000 deaths (according to Randy Shilts, *And the Band Played On*, 1987, St. Martin's, p. 586). The total number of AIDS cases in the United States reported to the CDC by the end of 1991 was 199,516, with 133,233 deaths (*HIV/AIDS Surveillance*, January 1992). The most recently reported U.S. figures, for the end of 1992, are 244,939 cases of AIDS and 171,890 deaths (*HIV/AIDS Surveillance*, January 1993).

This will be the last issue of *AS* edited by Jim Lippard. A new editor is still being sought. Any volunteers?

Upcoming Meetings

The Phoenix Skeptics will meet at the Jerry's Restaurant on Rural/Scottsdale Road between McKellips and the river bottom, with lunch at 12:30 on the first Saturday of each month except where it conflicts with a holiday.

Books of Note

(Books listed here may still be reviewed in depth in future issues of *AS*. Submissions of reviews of these books are, in fact, encouraged.)

Richard Broughton, *Parapsychology: The Controversial Science*, 1991, N.Y.: Ballantine, 408pp. Probably the best popular overview of the evidence for psi to date. Highly recommended for skeptics, but be warned that Broughton frequently overlooks skeptical criticisms of the evidence he presents (e.g., the Summer 1989 *Skeptical Inquirer* criticism of Zhang Baosheng). He also uncritically cites Ron McRae's *Mind Wars*, overlooking Philip Klass's Spring 1984 *SI* critique. (McRae has since confessed to making up much of his research for columnist Jack Anderson and making up many of his stories, in the June 1992 issue of *Spy* magazine—see "Articles of Note," *AS*, May/June 1992.) Especially recommended: the account of the late Charles Honorton's ganzfeld research on pp. 99-114 and the description of the debate between Honorton and CSICOP Executive Council member Ray Hyman on pp. 285-288.

John Crewdson, *By Silence Betrayed: Sexual Abuse of Children in America*, 1988, N.Y.: Harper & Row, 267pp. A detailed but relatively unsensational account of the extent and nature of child sexual abuse in the United States. Crewdson, a Pulitzer prizewinning journalist for the *Chicago Tribune* who broke the story of Robert Gallo's nondiscovery of the HIV virus, unfortunately fails to take seriously the possibility of suggested false memories, leading to his endorsement of even some rather unbelievable Satanic ritual abuse claims. On the other hand, he does present some evidence of child abuse in cases such as the McMartin Preschool case and the Jordan, Minnesota case which should be taken into consideration by those who think that the Satanism elements are sufficient to refute the molestation charges.

Marcel C. LaFollette, *Stealing Into Print: Fraud, Plagiarism, and Misconduct in Scientific*

Publishing, 1992, Berkeley: University of California Press, 293pp. Another new book on scientific fraud (see last AS's review of Robert Bell's *Impure Science*); this one focuses on publication issues such as plagiarism, questions of authorship, the review process, etc. One major flaw is that the LaFollette fails to take her own advice on page 105: "unresolved issues, like varying interpretations of data, should be described explicitly in print." She heavily criticizes the late Cyril Burt for fraud in his twin studies (on pp. 54, 57, 125-126, and 152, among other places), but fails to note recent reevaluations of the case which put Burt in a much more favorable light and his critics in a worse light (e.g., Ronald Fletcher, *Science, Ideology, and the Media: The Cyril Burt Scandal*, 1991, New Brunswick: Transaction; Robert B. Joynson, *The Burt Affair*, 1989, London: Routledge). The charge that Burt invented research assistants, for example (which LaFollette repeats on p. 152 and in a footnote on p. 228), appears to be completely unfounded (see especially Fletcher's book). LaFollette also brings up charges that *Archaeopteryx* fossils are forgeries, without mentioning the nature of the charges (that feathers were stamped on the fossils; alleged by astronomer Fred Hoyle and mathematician Chandra Wickramasinghe in a photography journal). While she does cite a rebuttal to Hoyle and Wickramasinghe's charges (A. Charig et al., "Archaeopteryx Is Not a Forgery," *Science* 232(May 2, 1986):622-626), she doesn't mention the most recently discovered specimen, which also has feather impressions (P. Wellnhofer, "A New Specimen of *Archaeopteryx*," *Science* 240(June 24, 1988):1790-1792).

Articles of Note

"Biospherians to have oxygen pumped in again," *Arizona Daily Star* (Wednesday, January 13, 1993):1A. Reports on the planned January 13 introduction of enough pure oxygen to bring the oxygen level down to the equivalent of a 6,400-foot elevation from its 13,400-foot elevation equivalent.

Sharon Begley with Mary Heger, "New Cracks in the Glass House: The Science Advisers Resign from Biosphere 2," *Newsweek* 121(March 1, 1993):67. The entire science advisory committee resigned, citing as one reason fear of damage to their reputations for being connected with the project.

Raymond Bonner, "Crying Wolf Over Elephants: How the International Wildlife Community Got Stampeded Into Banning Ivory," *The New York Times Magazine* (February 7, 1993):16-19,30,52-53. Reports on some negative consequences of the ivory ban for elephants and misinformation promulgated by groups such as the the African Wildlife Foundation and the World Wildlife Fund. While elephant populations have been declining in Kenya and Tanzania, the populations in many areas of those countries are still too great—resulting in elephants destroying the habitat of other animals

such as impala, giraffes, bush babies, and monkeys. In other countries such as Botswana, Zimbabwe, and South Africa, elephant populations have been increasing and are almost double what they were ten years ago. (See also Julian Simon, "Truth Almost Extinct in Tales of Imperiled Species," *AS*, March/April 1992.) Letters of reply from Paul Schindler of the African Wildlife Foundation and Russell Train and Kathryn Fuller of the World Wildlife Fund appear in *The New York Times Magazine* (February 28, 1993):10,12. A few more letters appear in the March 7, 1993 issue, p. 12.

Bruce Johnston, "Vatican Sets Evangelical Sights on Outer Space," *London Daily Telegraph* (October 28, 1992):15. Discusses the Vatican's new telescope, a joint project with the University of Arizona on Mt. Graham near Tucson. Fr. George Coyne, head of the Vatican Observatory (who splits his time between Rome and the University of Arizona), is quoted saying that if extraterrestrial life is found, "the Church would be obliged to address the question of whether extraterrestrials might be brought within the fold and baptised." Coyne is also quoted in the article as saying that extraterrestrials would have to be asked "Have you ever experienced something similar to Adam and Eve, in other words original sin?" and "Do you people also know a Jesus who has redeemed you?"

Jenny Randles, "Keep Watching The Skies!" *Fortean Times* #65(October/November 1992):24-26. Gives some good advice on identifying common UFOs—lenticular cloud formations, meteors, various photographic errors—with ten example photographs.

Bob Rickard, "Ghostwatch: Whatever Possessed Parkinson?" *Fortean Times* #67(February/March 1993):38-42. Looks at reactions to BBC TV's "Ghostwatch" media hoax, a 90-minute fictional investigation of "the most haunted house in Britain" which ended with the demonic possession of Michael Parkinson, a popular talk show host. (The show also featured a phony live satellite link-up to "Dr. Sylvester" in New York, portraying a skeptic.) The BBC received over 20,000 calls asking if the show was for real, and was apparently responsible for the suicide of 18-year-old Martin Denham three days later. Among those commenting negatively on the BBC's hoax (p. 42) is CSICOP Executive Council member Susan Blackmore.

Andy Roberts, "Curiouser and Curiouser," *Fortean Times* #67(February/March 1993):53. A report on the Linda Napolitano UFO case which, while it doesn't mention the Butler, Stefula, and Hansen report (see article in this AS), states that "I think this is going to be *the* case on which abductions as alien events stand or fall. If (and in my opinion when) it all falls down, the nonsense that aliens are abducting human beings can be laid to rest and we can sort out just what *is* behind these experiences."

Carl Sagan, "What's Really Going On?" *Parade* (March 7, 1993):4-7. CSICOP Fellow Sagan discusses UFO abductions.

Kathleen Sharp, "The New Hidden Persuaders," *Self* (March 1993):174-175, 194-195. Reports on studies of subliminal tapes for behavior modification—they don't work. Quotes *Skeptical Inquirer* (Spring 1992) author Anthony Pratkanis and CSICOP Executive Council member Susan Blackmore.

Brian Siano, "All the Babies You Can Eat," *The Humanist* 53(2, March/April 1993):40-41. *The Humanist's* "Skeptical Eye" columnist responds to the unsubstantiated stories of ritual human sacrifice told by the pseudonymous "Elizabeth Rose" in a recent issue of *Ms.* magazine.

Paul Sieveking, "Fear and Loathing in France," *Fortean Times* #67(February/March 1993):48. Describes a child murder hysteria (there is no evidence of any killings) in Calais, France from late last year, which nearly led to a lynching of a 19-year-old former drug addict. It started with a city surveyor taking photographs outside a school in an area of Calais with an over 50% unemployment rate. A child reported to his parents that a man was taking photographs outside the school, which led to rumors

of children being found with their throats slit, being burned alive, etc.

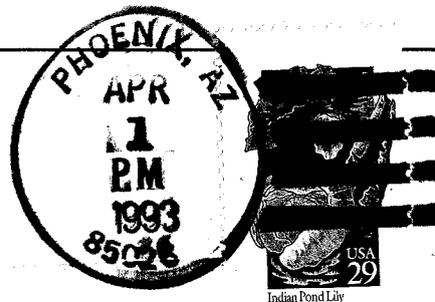
Peter Smith, "Childhood Terrors" (letter), *Fortean Times* #67(February/March 1993):65. Reports that a four-year-old son of a friend regained consciousness while undergoing a tonsillectomy and now has trouble sleeping—he will wake and claim that he is being chased by ghosts. The letter writer postulates that this phenomenon—waking during surgery, surrounded by masked beings—may be responsible for the imagery reported by UFO abductees and ritual abuse survivors. *FT* editor Bob Rickard replies that a biography of Bram Stoker by Daniel Farson reports that such a childhood experience inspired the writing of the novel *Dracula*.

"Real Incest and Real Survivors: Readers Respond," *New York Times Book Review* (February 14, 1993):3,27. Critical and supportive letters in response to Carol Tavris' "Beware the Incest-Survivor Machine" (January 3; listed in the last AS) from Judith Lewis Herman, Frances Lear, Ellen Bass and Laura Davis, E. Sue Blume, and others. Carol Tavris replies on page 27.

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