

Book Review: *Beyond UFOs*, by Jeffery Bennett

© 2009 by Craig R. Lang, MS CHt

www.craiglang.com

I'm almost finished reading the book *Beyond UFOs*, by Jeffrey Bennett. So far, I love it. In a word, the book is excellent - but I say that with reservations. In a sense the title, *Beyond UFOs* is a misnomer. Jeffery Bennett really has little to say about UFOs, except to devote some printspace to expressing skepticism. What the book is REALLY about is exobiology and the latest in SETI theory. I wish he had forgotten the "U" word. The book is fascinating enough without any reference to UFOs and the obligatory skepticism Bennett throws in.

Bennett is a traditional scientist, and has very-much of a mainstream scientific viewpoint on extraterrestrial life. However, to his credit, he leaves the rhetorical door open to the possibility that UFOs could just be real. He states that he is unconvinced by any claims made to-date regarding UFO evidence. However he also states that any civilization visiting us would probably be so far in advance that we would probably not expect much physical evidence from their visitation.

However Bennett describes how he, himself, saw a UFO once, a distant nocturnal light that behaved in a non-orthodox manner - what we would refer to as a maneuver of the first kind or MA1. He states that it meets the technical definition of UFO - something unidentified seen in the sky. However, he expresses doubt that it was an "alien spaceship" or anything like that. Still, he does not rule it out. Like any true scientist, he expresses an open mindedness, tempered with skeptical discernment. And while I question the degree to which he extends his skepticism, I do believe he is barking up the right tree...

Bennett makes some interesting speculative calculations, based upon the number of probable civilizations, the life span of civilizations, etc... In logic similar to that behind the Drake equation, he argues that any civilization out there that would be visiting us would most likely be very old - probably in excess of twenty to fifty thousand years. Thus, their technology, and their behaviors, would be nearly indecipherable to us. How could we extrapolate the current rate of technological advancement over the last 50 to 100 years, out another ten-plus thousand? In short, we couldn't. Thus, we can't even imagine what a civilization such as that of the Visitors would be like.

He briefly refers to Clarke's Third Law, "Any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic." When we examine the descriptions of abduction and contact experiences, we find just such a scenario, where the Visitors seem to exhibit nearly "magical" qualities. Thus, current UFO encounter reports seem to reflect what Bennett describes. Unfortunately, Bennett does not seem to examine these reports enough to get the flavor of the phenomenon. He merely states that he is unconvinced by the evidence.

Again, I think that his comments are somewhat justified though in my view, inordinately skeptical. He claims that there is no evidence for alien visitation. However, he does not address any of the physical evidence cases in the UFO literature, including many classic radar-visual, ground-trace and artifact cases.

There are many such physical evidence cases, largely unacknowledged by science. I often challenge skeptics who make the "no evidence" claim to read the Sturrock Report, or its popularly published book equivalent, [The UFO Enigma: A New Review of the Physical Evidence](#). This is usually enough to quash the "no-evidence" claims, though even this doesn't do anything to build a claim for alien visitation.

Ultimately, Bennett has a good point, that there will always be a divide between the mainstream science community and those "hobbyists" who explore beyond the "acceptable" bounds of mainstream science to study things like UFOs. And so, I question whether *Beyond UFOs* is "beyond" anything. Rather, it simply takes a different tack - exploring the fields of exobiology and SETI theory, building theoretical underpinnings for the search for alien life - yet discounting the possibility that alien life might have already found us.

When taken in its proper context, *Beyond UFOs* is a fascinating book. I think you will find that it is an excellent layperson's guide to both SETI theory and exobiology. All in all, this book is a well written, good read. Just ignore most of what he says about UFOs.