



**BOOK AND
MULTIMEDIA
REVIEW**

Forbidden Science 5: Pacific Heights, The Journals of Jacques Vallee 2000 - 2009

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This is an astonishing book, and on a number of levels. I learned much about the author, some of which I knew, some of which I had forgotten (like the fact that we had corresponded as early as October of 2007). Allow me to explain why this book moved me so, why I think it is so important to what is going on today in the American public media and the U.S. political, military, and intelligence communities, and why you should, yes, really read these pages . . . like right now.

First, the personal part. I wrote and published a chapter essay on the life and work of the author in a book entitled *Authors of the Impossible: The Paranormal and the Sacred* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010). That book features four English and French authors over the last 150 years whom I consider to be especially important to the ongoing conversation about the reality of the paranormal and its double or paradoxical translation into physical events and human experience. Jacques Vallee was one of them. The book under the present review convinced me, again, that my earlier assessment was more than correct. Jacques Vallee is that good, and that important of an author.

I should add in this same context that it was Vallee himself who initiated our Archives of the Impossible project at Rice University in 2014, an initiation that was actually a multi-year series of events that I am certain will be discussed more in *Forbidden Science 6*, presumably on the decade from 2010-2019. The Archives of the Impossible today are some actual physical archives consisting of about 15 separate collections (and well over one million documents) on different aspects of anomalous phenomena, from the UFO encounter and the abduction experience through declassified documents on the remote viewing program, to physical mediumship, paranormal pop-culture, and New Age evolutionary spirituality. In the last two years, I have personally hosted two international conferences on the same archives to an enthusiasm that simply broke all of our academic assumptions and models. To give you some sense of what happened: a normal academic event might get 500-1000 views in its entire life; our first conference in March of 2022 garnered 150,000 views *in two weeks*.

Much of this overwhelming interest was due to the presence and vision of Jacques Vallee, who convinced me to envision and then enact the archival project with our Director of Woodson Research Center (our special collections unit). For personal and professional reasons, Jacques's own archival donations are on moratorium for ten years. That is, they are not available for research or public inspection. Confidentiality and secrecy are thus woven into the original gift and are clearly on display again in the present journals.

"Display" is chosen deliberately. Vallee's argument about the phenomenon works in paradoxical ways (much like the phenomenon itself). He consistently insists that the phenomenon communicates itself in both physical *and* paranormal ways, that is,



that it works in *both* dimensions, not in one or the other. Yes, there is a physics involved. Hence, all the careful attention to material detail--landing marks, the flight of apparent objects, burns, deaths, injuries, and wild physical coincidences in the immediate environment. But, the actual physics displayed by such objects do not follow our present models. There are too many behaviors to list here that are well-known; the phenomenon clearly violates our naive notions of linear time. Words like past, present, and future cease to seem as fixed or absolute. Space-time becomes hyperdimensional.

Yes, there is also a biology involved. Hence Vallee's keen interest in bodies and their various physiological and neurological responses to the phenomenon--a kind of "read-out" to invoke the immunologist Colm Kelleher, who appears throughout these journals. But what Vallee calls the "paranormal realities" go well beyond physics and biology, beyond the sciences entirely, into a set of imaginal displays, a kind of physical-spiritual theatre that we should watch with great interest (I reject, utterly, the common religious notion that we should ignore such things for the sake of some contemplative goal) but not, please note, take too literally. This is precisely what so many do, of course, including in Washington, D.C. today. Human beings believe what they see or, worse, what they are told. They interpret things as if their appearances and rumors were what is actually so.

They also follow the reigning ideology and mythology of their place and time, in our own case, some kind of secular physicalism or reductive materialism. And so we end up with something like the ETH or Extra-Terrestrial Hypothesis, an astrophysical or science-fiction framework that Vallee continuously rejects as naive and inadequate to the phenomenon itself (since the ETH can actually explain very little about the full phenomenon, which overflows into all kinds of *bizarrie*). As a historian of religions who is trained to be suspicious of any and all belief systems (including secular and scientific ones), I can only celebrate this radical doubt and long-learned skepticism. Why we should reject every other belief system in its literal form, *except this one*, is simply beyond me.

The older demonological framework, about which we know a good deal--historically, sexually, and theologically--is even worse (but is perhaps a good reminder here). The demonologies (comparatively speaking, there are hundreds, if not thousands, of them) carry some truth, as Vallee himself acknowledges in an appropriately dark and suspicious mood, but they themselves are deeply problematic and almost certainly are reflections or reflexes of our own primate fear before, well, we do not know.

There is a particular recurring image in these journals that seems especially significant: the religious art

of the stained-glass window. Vallee writes of how he and his late wife, Janine, helped out with the restoration of stained-glass windows in the Cathedral of Our Lady of Chartres. He also writes about creating his own stained-glassed windows in his San Francisco home, which I have seen and written about in the aforementioned chapter essay (I also thought these were especially significant then). Such windows display mythical and religious figures (Melchizedek, a rose, and a goddess, for example), but they also filter and shape a pure white light from outside the study entirely. That doubleness--the light as light, and the light as mythical theatre, apparition, or display--is important again. In one of the windows, there is a little mischievous demon that refracts and scatters the pure white light. Seems about right.

There is another aspect to this doubled view that comes into gradual but rather clear focus in the present journals. Vallee has a long history of interacting with government, military, and corporate institutions, often around the phenomenon itself. He argues, in coded ways, that there is likely a very secret "black project"; that it is probably in the corporate world and not the government or military worlds (and so beyond any and all FOIA regulations or even political need-to-know); and that--and this is key--that *the possessors of the secret do not themselves understand what they possess*. They, too, are basically clueless. In simple terms, there is indeed an actual secret, *but no contemporary human being or organization understands it*.

And probably cannot. This is the other thing one takes away from Vallee--that there is something eerily or cosmically non-human about the phenomenon; and that, accordingly, our evolved cognitive, sensory, and imaginative capacities are inadequate and always will be. The phenomenon thus tries to communicate in the only way it can speak to us, that is, through symbol and myth, but we are always messing up the message, mistaking the imaginal form for the actual content, as it were. We are fooled by the stained-glass windows, confusing them with the light outside. We are focusing on the light scattered by the tricky demon instead of on the light itself. Today, then, we are always turning everything into a "threat," or a promise of a new propulsion technology or free energy from the quantum vacuum, when, in fact, the phenomenon could care less about our political, military, or capitalistic interests. There is, in the end, then, a certain profound ethical impulse at work in Jacques Vallee, but it is not our own. And that which is truly ethical emerges from that which is truly non-human, cosmic, and ecological in the broadest and most radical sense.

We also miss the deeper esoteric message that is the "intersign," anomaly, or synchronicity of the phenom-

enon--the wild coincidence that is no coincidence, the paradoxical sign that points to the fact that everything is connected within an invisible but active information network. Only a combination of science and esotericism, a "forbidden science," can begin to plumb that hidden information network. That the history of science itself likely began within esoteric convictions and invisible colleges is highly relevant in this context. What one eventually sees is that Jacques Vallee is precisely such a secret scientist. He does not want to practice a science or an esotericism. He wants to practice *both*. And so he does. This is finally what a "forbidden science" involves: a double approach to a doubled appearance of a unified or connected reality.

There is so much more in these pages still. One is reminded, for example, that Vallee was trained in remote viewing by none other than Ingo Swann; and that Vallee himself helped create the coordinate system that became the classical remote viewing technique in Palo Alto in the 1970s. Such a technique was based, in turn, on the information theory of computer science (Vallee holds a Ph.D. in computer science and AI from Northwestern University) but was never fully theorized as such. One also learns in these journals that it was Jacques Vallee who helped create the data organization and software programs for what became BAASS (Bigelow Aerospace Advanced Space Studies), a secret government-sponsored UFO research program that was first revealed in in the *New York Times* in December of 2017 by Helene Cooper, Ralph Blumenthal, and Leslie Kean and then written about more extensively, from the inside now, by James T. Lacatski, Colm A. Kelleher, and George Knapp in *Skinwalkers at the Pentagon: An Insiders' Account of the Secret Government UFO Program* (2022). The latter three authors, like Vallee himself, insist on the doubled technological and paranormal aspects of the phenomenon. They report, in effect, on another forbidden science.

Do I have any reservations about this book? Some. I always quietly react to Jacques's rejection of some of the wilder aspects of the human religious imagination and its encounters, for example, around instectoids and psychedelic experience. Vallee wants to keep everything on his table except, oddly, these things. Perhaps this is a result of where he has lived for so many years--in the Bay Area of San Francisco, in "Pacific Heights," as the subtitle of these journals has it. He has seen a great deal, of course, and he has reason to be suspicious. But a thousand bad trips

and a hundred lost lives do not erase a single psychedelic revelation of reality or, for that matter, the removal of the fear of death such revelations sometimes bring. The scholarship on the psychedelic humanities, for example, is quite serious and international now and extremely sophisticated. It would resist such resistances. People have esoteric and paranormal encounters with reality on psilocybin. Philosophers change their minds dramatically, because of the plants (or toads). Humans "become" God on LSD. They also encounter instectoid presences or mechanical bugs in their bedrooms. *These things happen*. It does no good at all to write such moments off with deflecting words like "drugs" or associate them with paranoid conspiracy theories, which, of course, abound in this realm.

But are not these conspiracy theories also part of the data, part of the human response? And why not? The phenomenon is indeed mind-bending and likely *inherently* elusive, deceptive, and tricky. Reality really does dissolve, then. Is not this the ultimate conspiracy theory, even if the deconstruction also involves the deconstruction? But, really, these are the only moments where I flinched and wished for something more, where I wanted Jacques Vallee to be more Jacques Vallee, where I wanted suspicion of the suspicion.

There is actual talk of "non-human intelligences" and "intelligent or extraterrestrial technical supremacy" in the U.S. Congress and media as I write these lines in July of 2023. If Jacques Vallee is correct in these journals, that political conversation will grow (and almost certainly screw things up in the process). But we will not begin to understand what is happening until we can practice a forbidden science with Jacques Vallee, that is, take the esoteric as seriously as we take the scientific. That will mean, in practice, hiring anthropologists, philosophers, and historians of religions and esotericism alongside rocket scientists, astrophysicists, biologists, and propulsion experts. Obviously, we are not there. Not even close.

Finally, reading these volumes, I was so struck by their prescience. It is as if the events Vallee is writing about in the first decade of the twenty-first century are back again, but with a new clarity and a new public obviousness. What was predicted twenty years ago is now more so, only we are still messing up the story. Let's see what happens now . . .