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by [Newsfeed](#) on Thu Jul 19, 2007 12:18 pm

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eSkeptic

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of the Skeptics Society

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In this week's eSkeptic:

- skepticism in the media: Michael Shermer on Larry King Live

- commentary: David Sloan Wilson Responds to Dawkins
- store special: The Science of Good and Evil (\$10)
- video on the web: Remote Viewing on YouTube

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## MICHAEL SHERMER ON LARRY KING LIVE ON UFOS

I thought eSkeptic readers might appreciate some of the more amusing (and nasty) letters I have received (appended below), plus one very revealing letter about Apollo 11 astronaut Buzz Aldrin's "UFO sighting" on the way to the moon, recounted by him on the show (revealing UFOlogist Stanton Friedman to be an incompetent researcher). Unfortunately it took Buzz a long time to get to the point of the story -- which was that the UFO turned out to be one of the panels from the Apollo rocket booster -- so I fear that it might have been missed by viewers that he was, in fact, a UFO skeptic.

Please note as well that former Arizona governor Fife Symington described what he saw during the "Phoenix Lights" event as "otherworldly." I spoke at length with Fife before and after the show and found him to be a most thoughtful, intelligent, and warm individual with no special propensity toward gullibility (any more than the rest of us normally express), so after the show I asked him, "How do you know what you saw was 'otherworldly,' when none of us has any experience whatsoever with other worlds? Yet we have vast experience with strange and unusual secret military aircraft from this world that we find out about years later." His response to me in private was similar to what he said on the show: it is possible that it was some secret military experimental aircraft, but he was so awed by what he saw that the military aircraft explanation just seemed too unlikely. I noted both on the show and in private that in science it's okay to just say "I don't know" and leave it at that.

Overall I find such shows to be a frustrating experience, which is why I brought along the little toy aliens to break up the gravitas of the conversation, plus to make the point that whatever actual aliens from another planet will look like, it most definitely will not be that they are bilaterally symmetrical bipedal primates, which only happened once on this planet in two billion years of biological evolution and hundreds of billions of different species.

--Michael Shermer

## THE LETTERS (spelling left as is)

Hello saw you make an ass out of yourself on Larry last night. I guess with all your genius you could dispute actual witnesses to the Rosewell crash. I guess you were there so it must not be true. I came to the conclusion that you talk to much. You sound more like a

mina bird than someone with a PHD.

--rich sottilaro

After seeing you work on Larry King I just felt I needed to congratulate you on being such a supreme ass. No, really. Because not that many people can pull it off. You did make one valid point though when you asked where was the evidence. Granted, the evidence so far is circumstantial. Videos (some with crystal clear clarity), eyewitness reports, and so on and so forth. And Freidman wasn't really helping his own argument when he tried to sell his book. But from a odds standpoint, do you REALLY think that out of hundreds of thousands of reports that everyone is either lying or tricked by an optical illusion? Wouldn't that be akin to flipping a coin and always coming up heads? Not everyone can be mistaken or lying. And if we think its more than possible for us to go out there then why do skeptics think its impossible for them to come here? Is it ego? Insecurity? Look, I am not going to sit here and knock you down or call you names because I don't agree with your opinions. But, that being said lets be realistic. You were being an ass on King's show. In any other situation, if you treated different people the same way you would still be an ass. Don't get me wrong. I'm not trying to be rude or ill mannered. But you were being a total jerk.

--Anonymous

i saw your segment on larry king live. i must say you guys are all asking and talking about the wrong thing. you need to ask yourself, why is there an area 51 for space resaerch on ufo's. if there was no alien then why is there a cover up. the govt knows and puts it off on us as a joke. also we are living in space there are 9 planets in our solar system; and how can you possibly believe that we are the only one alive in the solar system. much less the galaxy, if scientist say that there are millions of galazies out there. how do they know? have they been to them already? then why say that? thank you, and feel free to respond.

--kenny

Michael, you did an excellent job on Larry King Live last night confusing the issues. I'm sure you were damn proud of yourself. You do realize that UFO's are not a scientific issue yes? We don't need science to prove truth. Science is incapable of proving truth. In light of ET truth, science is obsolete and impotent as is religion. Science and religion are false gods, leading our planet to disaster. UFO's are a political issue. I don't know how you can sleep with yourself at night, knowing that you exist only to confuse and not to clarify. You are no better than George Bush who invented WMD's so that he could direct attention away from the real problems of his inadequacy as a leader. I feel sorry for skeptics. You are not leaders. You are not part of the solution.

--Mike Bird, director, Exopoliticstoronto

I saw you on Larry King, last night. Please, if you would, e-mail me PROOF that you REALLY ARE the Publisher, and PROOF that your name REALLY IS "Michael Shermer." If you can't PROVE both of the above things to MY COMPLETE SATISFACTION, then you are a LIAR. (Naturally, your "proof," if any, will be subject to MY verification process.) I look forward to your response, with the necessary PROOF.

--"Scorp"

#### THE LETTER ABOUT BUZZ ALDRIN'S UFO EXPERIENCE & STANTON FRIEDMAN'S "RESEARCH" SKILLS

I am a publisher and author. I am also a friend of Buzz Aldrin. I watched Mr Shermer on Larry King yesterday and wanted to provide you with this little nugget of information for future use.

In 1999 I edited and published a book called Apollo 11 -- The NASA Mission Reports. During the course of editing the various documents it occurred to me that the crew of Apollo 11 must have been debriefed after their flight, but I had never seen such a debriefing. I was about to publish my book when I approached NASA about the subject of the debriefing. I was told that it made sense that such a thing existed, but not one person I spoke to at the Johnson Space Centre had ever seen the debrief. A quest to exhume the tape or transcript ensued and about eight weeks later, to my complete surprise I was called and told that the debriefing had been found.

Here is where it gets interesting. On the airplane home from Houston I read the entire transcript, which came in a four-inch ring binder. To my utter astonishment, about half way through, I found the crew talking about an "anomolous" sighting of an unexplained object during the outbound flight to the moon. All three crew members described the object differently. Now I was aware that this was a contentious issue, and I also knew that I could have capitalized on the latent publicity in this. However, that was not what my series of books was about, so I simply published the report, without any fuss.

I OCR'd and published the transcript as my book "Apollo 11 The NASA Mission Reports Volume 2" in the summer of 1999. It was on sale in practically every Barnes and Noble, Borders, and every other major bookseller in America, as well as at WH Smith in England and Chapters/Indigo in Canada. This pretty much covers the bulk of English speaking book stores. Over the course of the next 18 months I received one phone call for an interview, with a local radio station in Toronto. That was it.

Then, at least two years after I had sold well over 20,000 copies of the book, I received a phone call at my office from Stanton Friedman. I recognized the name, but couldn't understand what he was calling about. My book was "old news" at this point. Friedman began the conversation by asking me if it was true that I had published a book with the "famous" Apollo 11 UFO sighting. I replied that I had. Friedman then said, "How did you do that? Do you realize how many years my colleagues and I have been trying to get our hands on that document? How did you get NASA to release it to you?" I replied, "I asked them for it."

Friedman then asked me if he could get his hands on a copy of my book and I promptly told him that he could buy a copy at any bookstore. He thanked me and hung up.

I guess my question is this. If Stanton Friedman has "done the research," (as he boasted he had on Larry King, and upbraiding Michael Shermer for not doing the research), why is it that he couldn't get this report "for years" when it took me only one phone call to acquire this "classified" document from NASA. And after two years in practically every bookstore in the English speaking world, why was Friedman still unaware of its "release" if he is such a tireless researcher?

I should also point out that I have interviewed Apollo 14 astronaut Edgar Mitchell for my book Apollo 14 -- The NASA Mission Reports. Ed Mitchell is one of the most charming, open-minded and intelligent individuals I have had the pleasure to meet. I have never met anyone whose willingness to believe in "things possible" has been so frequently and regularly misquoted. If you were to believe half the things attributed to Ed Mitchell you would think he has an alien spaceship parked on his front lawn.

I congratulate Mr Shermer for his efforts on CNN, despite being surrounded by people who clearly have little regard for the scientific process and who apparently are not that good at "doing the research," despite claims to the contrary.

--Robert Godwin, Editor, Apogee Space Books

## VIDEO & TRANSCRIPT

WATCH the Larry King Live video on metacafe.com:

[http://www.metacafe.com/watch/723622/la ... he=re\\_cnn/](http://www.metacafe.com/watch/723622/la...he=re_cnn/)

READ the Larry King Live transcript:

[http://transcripts.cnn.com/TRANSCRIPTS/ ... k1.02.html](http://transcripts.cnn.com/TRANSCRIPTS/...k1.02.html)

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## DAVID SLOAN WILSON RESPONDS TO DAWKINS

In eSkeptic for July 4th 2007, we published an article by David Sloan Wilson entitled "Why Richard Dawkins is Wrong About Religion" to which Dawkins replied in last week's eSkeptic. This week, David Wilson Sloan responds to Dawkins:

It is good to know that what Dawkins writes in *The God Delusion* does not depend upon the nature of religion or its consequences for human affairs, as documented by the scientific process. With respect to group selection, I invite interested readers to consult the following articles from the primary scientific literature. Note that the article by West et al. is as "anti" as anti-group selection gets among those actively debating the subject.

Borrello M E. 2005. *The Rise, Fall, and Resurrection of Group Selection*. *Endeavour* 29:43-47.

West S A, Griffin A S, Gardner A. 2007. "Social Semantics: Altruism, Cooperation, Mutualism, Strong Reciprocity, and Group Selection." *Journal of Evolutionary Biology* 20:415-432

Wilson D S. 2007. "Social Semantics: Toward a Genuine Pluralism in the Study of Social Behavior." *Journal of Evolutionary Biology*, in press. (manuscript available at <http://evolution.binghamton.edu/dswilson/> )

Wilson, D.S., Wilson, E.O. 2008. "Rethinking the Theoretical Foundation of Sociobiology." *Quarterly Review of Biology*, in press. (available at <http://evolution.binghamton.edu/dswilson/> ).

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## THE SCIENCE OF GOOD AND EVIL

\$10 special on signed  
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Because we received so many orders for the \$10 special on signed editions of Michael Shermer's *How We Believe*, we were able to work the same deal with the publisher for first-edition hardback copies of Shermer's sequel, *The Science of Good and Evil*. To receive your signed copy of *The Science of Good and Evil* at only \$10 per copy (multiple copies allowed, as many as you like), click on the order link below. If you would like the book personalized please indicate to whom it should be inscribed (use Comments box during checkout).

ORDER *How We Believe*:  
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ORDER *The Science of Good and Evil*:

<http://www.skeptic.com/productlink/b090HB>

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## REMOTE VIEWING ON YOUTUBE

In this week's YouTube video posting, Michael Shermer takes a seminar on remote viewing, a form of ESP in which one attempts to psychically view a remote object, person, or place through intuition or a sixth sense. Shermer reveals the normal explanation for this apparently paranormal phenomenon, as he puts to the test a professional remote viewer and a class of students of remote viewing. The episode is in two parts.

WATCH Remote Viewing Part 1 on YouTube:

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3D40QVp8\\_POLY](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3D40QVp8_POLY)

WATCH Remote Viewing Part 2 on YouTube:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3DQY4MTKa2ldI>

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## [Michael Shermer on Larry King](#)

by [finrod55](#) on Thu Jul 19, 2007 10:38 pm

Shermer did a great job keeping things scientifically grounded and entertaining on Larry King, but I found the format of the show annoying. It was not scientifically representative. The panel consisted of

several pro-UFOers who seemed to represent a cult of hearsay, and a single skeptic, Shermer, fighting an uphill battle against them. (Buzz Aldrin entered the fray too late to make a difference.) I'm afraid that kind of stacking of the deck sends a message to the average viewer that a belief in visits to the earth by extra-terrestrials is the orthodox, "normal" view generally endorsed by educated persons. The actual fact, that a vast majority of the professional scientific community is highly skeptical about ETs (not necessarily about extraterrestrial life, but about visits from advanced civilizations) was not made sufficiently clear to the viewer. I realize that Larry King does not make "fair and balanced" presentation a top priority, but I wish advocates and practitioners of reason such as Shermer would try a bit harder, when on national TV, to clarify to the general public that his "show me the evidence"-style skepticism is the NORM in science.

Thank you,  
finrod55

[finrod55](#)

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