

Human Analogues May Portend ET Conduct Toward Humanity

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The history of Earth civilizations will be mirrored in the civilizations in other parts of the universe.

If it is assumed that the laws of physics and biology are the same here as elsewhere in the universe, then the evolution of life in all parts of the universe would have progressed from the simple to the complex. In the process Darwin's philosophy would have been uppermost. Almost everything in the universe would fall under the control of the most fit, most intelligent, and the strongest. The needs of this group would be justified on rational arguments and philosophies—*rational* being defined by the group to suit its own purposes and agendas. This has been the history of human civilizations throughout the ages. There is no *a priori* reason that ETI civilizations will be any different. They would also want to control the resources of the universe or other galactic civilizations for their own ends. The history of Earth civilizations will be mirrored in the civilizations in other parts of the universe.

SETI literature normally ascribes attributes of goodness, humaneness, and a general willingness of ETI civilizations to assist the less advanced civilizations. From a Darwinian perspective, this will not necessarily be the case. This is very well illustrated by an analogue from planet Earth. At the end of the 18th century an advanced civilization landed in Australia and confronted the Aboriginal peoples of Australia. The advanced civilization had passed through the hunter and gatherer stage and the agricultural stage, and was, at the end of the 18th century, at the height of its technological development. It was at a stage

where it could move over the entire oceanic and terrestrial space on Earth. When the advanced civilization arrived in Australia, there was a gap of over 10,000 years between the technologies of the advanced civilization and that of the Aboriginal peoples. Rather than treating the Aboriginal peoples in a civilized and humane manner, the advanced civilization took over their lands and in Tasmania the Aboriginal population was wiped out. It was one of the greatest genocides in the history of human civilization.

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Will a much more advanced civilization do the same with us if and when they discover planet Earth within a thousand years from now? If a discovery and physical contact are made with ETI civilizations in the distant future, the culture shock we will experience will be extremely disruptive and continue for several centuries. Our institutions will be incapable of handling the crisis and it may be the end of human civilization, as we know it today.

This has been the case with the Aboriginal peoples in Australia. They are still recovering from the contact they made with a technologically advanced civilization at the end of the 18th century.

Let us look at another scenario. It may be the case that an advanced civilization need not actually make physical contact with us. ETI civilizations could use human proxies on Earth to do their bidding through high-technology intelligent probes and the galactic internet. Thus a powerful group of human proxies may be given the knowledge and technology by ETI for the control and manipulation of human populations for political and social agendas of the ETI civilization. Again, we have human analogues for this scenario. If this happens, human civilization will be in for a long culture shock and it may not recover from the disruption of its institutions.

Null or Negative Effects of ETI Contact in the Next Millennium

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...electromagnetic (indirect) contact will probably have negligible effect on us, and physical (direct) contact will probably be harmful to us.

Every productive meeting needs an *agent provocateur*. Since I cannot be sure, looking at the list of attendees, that we have one among us, I shall assume that role until otherwise deposed.

My hypotheses are that there will likely be no positive effect from contact with ETI during the next thousand years. Yes, it would be nice to know if ETIs exist in space; the “commission” that astronomers have from the public to keep an eye on the universe demands that we strive to inventory cosmic life in all its forms, just as we do for matter and radiation. However, in the long run, electromagnetic (indirect) contact will probably have negligible effect on us, and physical (direct) contact will probably be harmful to us.

Should contact with ETI be limited to electromagnetic means, and there be little chance of ETI traveling to Earth (or us to their home) within the next millennium (owing largely to light-speed restrictions), then the impact of ETI on our civilization will be minimal, perhaps virtually zero, given the steady stream of “in-house” global problems inevitably confronting humankind while pushing out along the arrow of time. Of course, we shall study ETIs’ signals, decipher their messages, perhaps even learn some things from them (since any ETI initiating contact with us will be, essentially by definition, more advanced and knowledgeable than we). Earth’s academics will publish scholarly analyses of ETI data in the specialized cyberspace journals; commentators

will propagate opinions among the bits and bytes of the new Net; and the media hype of each new ETI finding and its cultural vicissitudes will cause the mainstream press of the third millennium to resemble the tabloid press of the late-second millennium. But indirect contact alone will likely be of meaningful concern only to a small minority of Earth’s citizens—essentially an ensemble of future people statistically indistinguishable from those currently interested in SETI. As long as contact remains solely electromagnetic, Earth-based global issues of (mostly) our own making will dominate our lives, indeed drive our future evolution during the next thousand years.

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Should contact with ETI be physical, even as a mere ceremonial visitation, then the impact could be large and negative for our species. I refer to the universality of physical and chemical phenomena in the cosmos, and by extension to the subjects of biology and its allied behavioral sciences. In short, if neo-Darwinism (or some version of it) holds cosmically, meaning that competition is at least part of any complex being’s methodology, then it is not inconceivable that they (who will be, again, more advanced than we are) would dominate us. Not that they would “come and eat us”—though they might; we do, in fact, consume many other, “lesser” species—and not that their alien posture toward us would be overtly hostile. Rather, dominance is likely to be the natural, indeed perhaps inevitable, stance of any advanced life form. It is just as reasonable to argue that advanced life, anywhere in the cosmos, will tend to control other life (as well as controlling matter and radiation locally) if given the opportunity and if in physical contact, as it is to suggest that positive consequences will result from our detection of and interaction with extraterrestrial intelligence.

Pursuing Five Strategies for Achieving Contact

[Abridged Version]

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Five strategies are especially promising...humankind should put major thought and resources into all five...

If highly intelligent life has evolved elsewhere, how might scientists detect it? Five strategies are especially promising. Because of all the positive consequences that contact will likely produce, as noted throughout the seminar, humankind should put major thought and resources into all five strategies.

Because a highly advanced civilization, thousands of years beyond our technology, could readily send small but extremely smart probes to monitor our society and telecommunications, we should try to detect such probes:

1. Pursue a variety of means for searching the solar system and our planet for physical evidence of an extraterrestrial object or its effects.

2. Invite contact through invitations to ETI on the World Wide Web.

3. Encourage contact by becoming sufficiently prepared.

In the search for extraterrestrial intelligence or technology, there is also a good chance of detecting evidence from many light-years away:

4. Search for evidence of astroengineering projects and their by-products.

5. Use radio and optical SETI to detect artificial signals.

Additional discussion of all five strategies, and the reasons for widening the array of strategies, can be found at <http://members.aol.com/AllenTough/strategies.html>.

The SETI field is united by its common aim of detecting irrefutable scientific evidence of genuine extraterrestrial intelligence. To maximize the chances of success, the wisest approach is to encourage and support all five strategies. The benefits to humankind could be extraordinary.

[The full paper is available in Section V of this volume, pages 115–125.]