

Where Are The Real Aliens?

VOICE: Millions of people have seen aliens. Movie screens have shown extra-terrestrials living in a fictional world “a long time ago in a galaxy far, far away.”

PROF.: Even after the most recent *Star Wars* production, we're still waiting to hear from a *real* E.T. One world-famous scientist asks, “Where are they?” Do they really exist?

FORMAT: THEME AND ANNOUNCEMENT

PROF.: Journalist Dick Staub has been a fan since the first *Star Wars* film in 1977. He was fascinated by the technological advances in the film. He remembers, “...they were amazing for all of us.”

PROF.: The cinematic effects have become more spectacular with each new film. *Star Wars* is more than just entertainment. Many moviegoers wish that what they see in fantasy on the screen, could be real in their own lives.

He says the *Star Wars* films have become a prevailing myth of popular 21st-century culture.

VOICE: Is a myth always fiction?

PROF.: No. Philosophers define a myth as “a traditional story..., ...*servicing usually to explain some phenomenon of nature, the origin of man*, or the customs, institutions, religious rites, etc. of all people...”

VOICE: So the *Star Wars* films are more than entertainment. They deal with issues like how the human race originated.

PROF.: In the 1960s, astronomer Frank Drake tried to estimate how many civilizations might exist in our galaxy. In what is now called the Drake Equation, he began by estimating how many of the billions of stars in our Milky Way might resemble our sun. He multiplied that by the percentage of stars that he thought might have planets, how many planets would have temperatures in which creatures resembling humans could survive, and so forth...

VOICE: ...Multiplying speculative estimates by other speculative estimates.

PROF.: Yes, then multiplying those estimates by estimates of additional factors. No one claimed it was more than a very rough approximation, based on speculation.

VOICE: How many planets do scientists think might have intelligent life on them?

PROF.: Estimates vary widely. The late astronomer Dr. Carl Sagan estimated one million in our Milky Way galaxy alone. Some scientists have speculated there may be as many as *ten trillion advanced civilizations*.

VOICE: But they haven't *observed even one!* So why do they make estimates in the trillions?

PROF.: They begin by assuming that nature generates life from non-living substances. Natural forces are supposedly so automatic that life is sure to originate spontaneously everywhere that water exists.

VOICE: But life requires more than just water.

PROF.: Definitely! Author Lee Strobel has researched numerous statements made by origin-of-life scientists. He reports, “Though the specific numbers that scientists...plugged into Drake's equation mostly amounted to rank conjecture fueled by their own biases, ...this did lend an air of scientific certainty to a highly speculative issue.” He writes sarcastically, “To them, life is like a soup mix: just add water!”

VOICE: The *Star Wars* films don't pretend to be reality. Most movie-goers understand they are primarily entertainment.

PROF.: But one on-line article says we *reveal* something real *about ourselves* – by the way we react when we watch them.
I've been reading an article by author Peter Burfeind [BUR-feend] entitled “Aliens Don't Exist, But They Tell Us a Lot About Atheists.”

VOICE: “Aliens Don't Exist, But They Tell Us a Lot About Atheists”? What does he mean by that?

PROF.: He subtitles the article, “Lacking any evidence of an actual alien, Hollywood's aliens speak more about the modern psyche fueling the imaginations of their designers.”
He begins, “In his movie ‘Expelled,’ Ben Stein challenged Richard Dawkins about the remarkable phenomenon of life on planet earth: how could life arise, given the sheer magnitude of its improbability? Dawkins suggested *aliens* possibly deposited life on earth.”
Burfeind reacts, “Dawkins...is an atheist, a scientist who claims to be directed only by provable facts. Yet he's willing to posit the source of earthly life to a concept lacking any evidence...”

VOICE: Dawkins admits that life did not “pop into existence” here on Earth. So he speculates that maybe it originated spontaneously somewhere in space, and aliens delivered it to Earth.

PROF.: By that logic, the “popping into existence” would have gone far beyond a mere amino acid. It would have needed to develop into some kind of alien life that was capable of *delivering* simple life to Earth. Then that simple life would have needed to re-evolve into increasingly-complex creatures, eventually producing humans.

The late physicist Enrico Fermi earned a Nobel Prize for producing the world's first nuclear reaction. During lunch, he and several colleagues were discussing whether aliens might exist. Fermi began calculating probabilities, and reasoned that a vast number of alien species *ought to* exist. Many of them might have evolved millions of years ahead of intelligent life on Earth. So the galaxy ought to be teeming with aliens.

Fermi went silent for a time, thinking through the implications. Suddenly he asked, “Where are they?”

VOICE: That question has been repeated many times. We still have discovered nothing. Where are they?

PROF.: That question has developed into “The Fermi Paradox.” Wikipedia explains, “The Fermi Paradox...is the apparent contradiction between the *lack of evidence* and high probability *estimates*, ...for the existence of extraterrestrial civilizations.” The basic points of the argument...are:

- There are billions of stars similar to our Sun...,
- Some of these stars probably have Earth-like planets, and some might develop intelligent life,
- Some civilizations might develop interstellar travel, so the galaxies could be completely visited and occupied by now.

VOICE: That is a logical train of reasoning. How do scientists explain the lack of evidence?

PROF.: They have attempted to solve the paradox in several ways: Maybe aliens once existed, but they developed military technology to such an extent, that they destroyed themselves.

Alternatively, radio and TV signals have been entering space from Earth for decades. If aliens observed our wars, violence and murders, they reasoned they would not enjoy our company.

VOICE: Another set of “maybes.”

PROF.: An even more novel idea is on the website of seti.org, the Search for Extra-Terrestrial Intelligence organization. Entitled “What's Blocking Galactic Civilization?”, the article asks, “Why does the cosmos look so untouched and unconquered? What is keeping advanced extraterrestrials from claiming every star system in sight?”

The author speculates, “One possible explanation is that interstellar travel is *just too costly.*” For comparison, he estimates the cost of sending a small rocket from Earth to Alpha Centauri. To get a modest interstellar vehicle to our nearest stellar neighbor in 50 years would require about 150 billion billion joules of energy.

VOICE: Billions of billions of joules? How much would that much energy cost?

- PROF.: He estimates the average price here on Earth as about ten cents per kilowatt-hour. After additional conjecturing and calculating, he concludes the trip would cost **\$40 billion per passenger**. He concludes, “The fact that the trip is costly, in whatever currency, is reason enough to deter any alien society from trying to settle distant real estate. With far less expenditure, *the extraterrestrials could pursue the good life at home.*”
- VOICE: ...Enjoying life on their home planet.
- PROF.: Burfeind suspects Dawkins would accept any alien scenario, as long as it doesn't involve the God who reveals Himself in the Bible.
He interprets, “...lacking any evidence of an actual alien, *Hollywood's aliens speak more about the modern psyche fueling the imaginations of their designers.* ...But in the end, the phantasmic reality of aliens on the silver screen only serves as an escape from facing the Fermi Paradox, reminding us to what extent people will go to prop up the delusions of modernity.”
- VOICE: A scholar in the journal *Psychology Today* reached a similar conclusion. In an article entitled “Atheists Love Aliens,” he concluded, “The less people believe in God, the more they believe in E.T.”
Aliens fit into the definition of a myth, “..a traditional story..., ...*servicing usually to explain some phenomenon of nature, the origin of man*, or the customs, institutions, religious rites, etc. of all people...”
- PROF.: After decades of attempting to find meaning in life, Prof. C. S. Lewis concluded, “*The one true myth*” is *Christianity*. The Bible provides the best explanation of why the universe exists and functions so perfectly, the best account of the origin of man, and the best instruction of how to live life in harmony with other people and with God.
- VOICE: The original *Star Wars* film describes “The Force” as “an energy field created by all living things [that] surrounds us, penetrates us, [and] *binds the galaxy together.*” That sounds similar to one thing the Bible says about God: “He existed before anything else, and he holds all things together.”
- PROF.: Yes, but the genuine God is far more than just a “Force.” His mind is so vast that he can be continually aware of billions of humans and interact with each of them.
It's fun to fantasize that beings more advanced than we are, may have existed “a long time ago in a galaxy far, far away.” But it's more important to be in contact with the “true and living” God who exists today.
- VOICE: The One who holds the galaxies together, offers to keep our individual lives from falling apart. He inspired the Apostle James to promise, “If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it shall be given to him.”

VOICE: A songwriter encapsulated the idea beautifully: “The hopes and fears of all the years, are met in Thee tonight.” The aspirations yearned for in fictional myths, are fulfilled in the “true myth” of Jesus Christ.

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Sources:

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Fermi Paradox

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