

Refuting Fermi: No Evidence for Extraterrestrial Life?

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In a recent article, Seth Shostak drew attention to what has become known as the Fermi Paradox.¹ Typically discussants raise the famous off-hand luncheon comment by Enrico Fermi, “Where is everybody?” when dismissing the existence of intelligent extraterrestrial life. The invocation of such a distinguished figure is polemic and used to make the position academically unassailable. In the ranks of scientific loyalists there is a constant refrain pertaining to the existence of intelligent extraterrestrial life. Best phrased by Carl Sagan, known for his “billions and billions” quotation in developing the hypothesis that we share the universe with other forms of intelligence, he added “but there is not one shred of evidence to support it.” Really? Actually, the book he co-edited with Thornton Page, *UFOs: A Scientific Debate*, refutes his own statement.² The deductive error is conflation of lack of evidence with proof beyond a reasonable doubt.

Edward Condon fostered this misconstruction in his fatally flawed and internally inconsistent report on UFOs. Despite the widely published conclusions, his report too contained substantial evidence supporting the physical existence of these objects.³ The error is the *a priori* assumption that UFOs cannot exist therefore no evidence to the contrary will be considered, never mind accepted. Few scientists would allow such faulty logic to prevail in their own field of expertise. Yet, in the emotionally laden field of UFOs, scientists let Condon stand uncorrected and disregarding pertinent facts has become the accepted norm.

The undeniable reality is that there are a substantial number of multi-sensor UFO cases backed by thousands of credible witnesses. In the physical domain there are many photos, videos, radar tracking, satellite sensor reports, landing traces including depressions and anomalous residual radiation, electromagnetic interference, and confirmed physiological effects. Personal observations have been made both day and night, often under excellent visibility with some at close range. Included are reports from multiple independent witnesses to the same event. Psychological testing of some observers has confirmed their mentally competence. Why is none of this considered evidence?

There are over 3000 cases reported by pilots, some of which include interference with flight controls. On numerous occasions air traffic controllers and other radar operators have noted unexplained objects on their scopes. So too have several astronomers and other competent scientists reported their personal observations. Many military officials from several countries have confirmed multi-sensor observations of UFOs. The most senior air defense officers of Russia, Brazil, Belgium and recently a former Chief of Naval Operations in Chile all have stated that UFOs are real. These cases and comments are a miniscule fraction of the total body of evidence.

¹ Shostak, S. 2001. “Fermi’s Paradox III: Zookeepers, Alien Visitors, or Simple Life; How Can We Explain Our Isolation?” *Space.com*, Nov. www.space.com/searchforlife/shostak_fermi3_011129.html

² Sagan, C. & T. Page 1972. *UFO’s: A Scientific Debate*. New York: W. W. Norton Co.

³ Condon, E. U. 1969. *Scientific Study of Unidentified Flying Objects*. Ed. D. S. Gillmore. New York: Bantam Books-NY Times.

Of course they do not constitute irrefutable proof. However, to state there is no evidence suggestive of intelligent extraterrestrial life simply belies the facts. Decades in duration and global in nature, there are too many hard sensor data-points and millions of eyewitnesses to ignore. We certainly can debate the significance of specific data and question whether or not it establishes a causal relationship between the observations and extraterrestrial life. However, it is only through ignorance or pomposity that one can say no evidence exists.