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MARS ANOMALY RESEARCH

The Current Situation

NOTE: The following is the full text of an address delivered by Professor Stanley V. McDaniel to a convention in Manchester, England on December 7, 1996. The convention was sponsored by Amateur Astronomy and Earth Sciences Magazine and was presented by remote audio link.

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The Meteorite Evidence for Life on Mars

In 1966 an Hungarian scientist, Dr. Barthalamew Nagy (pron. Naazh), began looking closely at meteorites believed to be about 4 billion years old. These visitors from outer space had been found in a variety of locations: Canada, France, Africa. In 1975 Dr. Nagy came to the conclusion that the compounds and small objects found in these meteorites would "confidently be assumed to be of biological origin" if thought to have originated on the= Earth.=20

Unfortunately Dr. Nagy's decade-long work was dismissed on the grounds that one of the meteorites he had studied appeared to have been contaminated by Earthly biological entities.=20

However, in the early 1990's two American investigators, Mr. Vincent DiPietro and Dr. John E. Brandenburg, studied Nagy's work and began their own investigation of the meteorites. They reported their work, supportive of Dr. Nagy's, at the American Geophysical Union conference in 1995.=20

Scientists Brandenburg and DiPietro had a specific interest in the question whether an environment conducive to the evolution of life can have existed on Mars for a period sufficient to give rise to intelligent life-forms. Along with another researcher, Gregory Molenaar, they put forward in 1991 "The Cydonian Hypothesis." This is the hypothesis that certain structures on Mars, most of them in the region called "Cydonia," may possibly have been built by an indigenously evolved race of Martians. Should the meteorite evidence for microbial life be sustained, they believe that the time period for evolution on Mars would have been sufficient to give rise to intelligent beings.=20

Given the possibility of a long time period during which Mars was capable of supporting life, is there any reasonable evidence for the hypothesis that

Mars may once have been occupied by intelligent beings?=20

I say occupied because even were the time period too short for the evolution of intelligent beings this would not rule out occupation of Mars in the distant past by a spacefaring race. It is a premise of the SETI investigations that intelligent life is likely to be present throughout the galaxy. It has even been speculated, based on probabilities, that our solar system may have been visited on repeated occasions by interstellar travelers. Included in these speculations has been the further suggestion that eventually we may encounter artifacts left behind by such visitors.[1]=20

Another scenario that has been suggested is the rather tenuous view that visitors to Mars may have come from the Earth itself, at a time when some presently unknown civilization of intelligent humanoid beings existed here, millions of years ago.=20

The Fourth Possibility: Planet V

And now there has been added to this mix of theories a fourth possibility. In a paper titled "Are the Mars Meteorites Really from Mars?" Dr. Thomas van Flandern, an astronomer and former director of the Celestial Mechanics Branch of the U.S. Naval Observatory, argues that although the meteorites do seem to show their origin in a life-bearing planet, possibly that planet was not Mars. Instead, Mars was the Moon of this other planet, which exploded about 65 million years ago. He calls this other planet "Planet V," and suggests that its destruction was the source of the asteroid belt now circling the Sun between Mars and Jupiter.[2]=20

Pointing out that there are serious problems in explaining how the meteorites were tossed off the surface of Mars, Dr. van Flandern says "The explosive breakup of a larger body solves all the dynamical problems involved in the delivery of life-bearing meteorites to Earth." Van Flandern argues that this scenario explains several characteristics of Martian geology: "One side of Mars would have been heavily impacted by the explosion and would have accumulated much water on a temporary basis." The theory also explains the similarity between various features of the meteorites and the present Martian environment.=20

But if Dr. van Flandern's hypothesis is correct, then a fourth possibility is that visitors from Planet V were the builders of the Cydonian structures. Even if intelligent humanoids on Planet V had relatively primitive means of space flight, some of them could have reached their moon (Mars), established a colony, and built the large structures some now suspect of being= artificial.=20

Given the cogent argument regarding the origin of the meteorites which Dr. van Flandern sets forth, it seems that the meteorites may be better evidence for the existence of Planet V than for previous life on Mars. And since the hypothetical Planet V would have been Earth-like and a member of our own solar system, the probability of humanoid life evolving on such a planet is perhaps greater than for such evolution in the unknown regions of interstellar space.=20

The Problem of the Face

So the question is this: Have such artifacts -- either originating with interstellar visitors, constructed by indigenously evolved Martians, or by an unknown terrestrial civilization, or by the former inhabitants of Planet V -- been discovered already via the Viking cameras which, in 1976, sent back images of the curious objects in the Cydonia region?=20

And here we run up against a serious difficulty. Science requires objectivity. But the Martian data found at Cydonia puts a tremendous strain on our objectivity. Indeed, for some scientists objectivity appears to fly out the window. Why is this? Certainly it is because one of the objects looks like a gigantic sculpture of a face.=20

The present Search for Extra-Terrestrial Intelligence (SETI) keeps alien life at a comfortable distance. The search is confined to stellar regions outside the solar system, and our contact with intelligent alien life is anticipated to be in the form of an antiseptic series of prime numbers. Thus the SETI astronomers can comfortably converse by radio transmission with alien astronomers who, perhaps somewhat in the former's own image, are effectively disembodied minds. And these cosmic pen pals are so far away that their bodies, their arts, their emotions, and their personal= motivations can be easily ignored -- In the eyes of some, this is the ideal scientific conversation.=20

But the Face on Mars is in an entirely different category. Though

undoubtedly hundreds of thousands if not millions of years old, it has presence. Such presence, indeed, that anthropologist Randolfo Pozos wrote:

"When people first see it, there is, almost always, a strong visceral reaction."

Indeed, reactions to the existence of the Face are usually strong, but they vary widely. At one extreme are those who refuse to admit that it even looks like a face. Others have gone to the opposite extreme: This is proof, they say, that humanoid aliens once inhabited Mars.=20

Certainly it is not proof. But there is a reasonable middle ground. Responsible scientists may choose to encounter this admittedly strange object scientifically, that is to say, place it under investigation. Apply tests which could turn out negative and weaken the hypothesis that the object may be artificial, or turn out positive and strengthen that hypothesis. This responsible and objective approach, I am sad to say, has been utterly rejected by the scientific community as a whole. However, a few scientists and engineers have chosen to follow the appropriate response: careful study, hypothesis, and test.=20

Tests Performed on the Face

Let us consider, for a moment, those tests that have been performed on the Face and what their results have been.=20

1. Light and Shadow=20

It is the stated conclusion of NASA scientists that the facial appearance is a "trick of light and shadow" -- an illusion of lighting. This conclusion was based on the alleged fact that in other images, taken at a different lighting angle, the facial characteristics "disappear."=20

Unfortunately the NASA opinion is not a scientific one. When pressed on the matter NASA has admitted that the disconfirming images, alleged to have existed for almost two decades, cannot be identified. There is no scientific support for the "illusion" hypothesis.=20

In my book The McDaniel Report I pointed out that besides the fact that there is no evidence for the "trick of lighting" theory, there are also serious logical flaws in this NASA position. Apparently as a result of these criticisms Dr. Carl Sagan, in a recent book, stated that NASA's "light and shadow" position was an unfortunate error. In so doing, Dr. Sagan finally abandoned his own long-standing view as expressed in his 1985 article "The Man in the Moon" in Parade Magazine. He now confirms what independent investigators have validated many times over. Three separate tests, from the areas of image processing (using a sophisticated technique called photoclinometry), geology, and sculptural modeling, working with the primary two Viking frames taken at different lighting angles, have confirmed that the face is a result of the underlying three-dimensional structure of the landform and not an illusion of lighting.=20

2. Chance Erosion=20

So the object is undoubtedly shaped as it appears to be. This certainly does not prove that it is artificial; but what has been shown is that the Face passes its first test. Yet perhaps, even though it is indeed shaped like a Face, this is merely an accident of erosion. Against this hypothesis four major tests have been performed. In each case the tests turn out positive.=20

The first test is the result mentioned above, that the facial appearance is a result of a three-dimensional structure and is not a face only when seen from a particular angle.=20

The second test is the observation of general symmetry. Relatively speaking the Face is a highly symmetrical object. The mouth continues to the darker side of the Face, the "headpiece" or "helmet" shows a noticeable symmetry, there are two eye sockets, and so forth.=20

The third test was performed by an artist with anthropological training. James Channon studied the Face from the viewpoint of the classical proportions and relationships as indicated in art and anthropology. His assessment was that the Face does not violate classical humanoid proportions in a number of parameters. This differentiates the Face from various chance features resembling faces.[3]=20

The fourth test is the presence of fine detail. At least three

particularly compelling items, which one would not expect from on the hypothesis that the facial appearance is simply a product of erosion, have been identified. These are the fine detail around the eye, an apparent "pupil" in the eye socket, and the apparent "teeth" in the Face's mouth.=20

With each such detail, consistent with a Facial interpretation and inconsistent with the theory of chance wind erosion, the probability that the Face is a product of wind erosion is decreased. One would have to advocate a kind of "selective erosion" to maintain that view.=20

Yet these details might still be the result of some remarkable coincidence. Researchers sought out other means of testing the possible artificiality of the landform.=20

3. Fractal Analysis=20

In a paper published in the Journal of the British Interplanetary Society in 1990, Dr. Mark J. Carlotto and M. C. Stein proposed to apply an entirely quantitative and mathematical technique called fractal analysis to the area. On the fractal test, the Face jumped out as unique over 15,000 square kilometers of Mars -- registering high on the scale of probable= artificiality.=20

With this result, the theory that the Face is a result of "selective wind erosion" is weakened even further. Scattered all over the Cydonia Plain are other knobs or mesas, all of which have been subjected to the erosive forces operating on that landscape over millions of years. As one would expect from natural erosion, none of these objects show up on the fractal test as anything but clearly natural (registering on average 5 on a scale of 1 - 75 from "probably natural" to "probably artificial."). At the top of the scale, registering 75, the Face is quantitatively unlike any of these other objects.[4]=20

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