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UFO UpDates Mailing List

Re: MAGONIA ETH Bulletin #4

From: Jerome Clark <jkclark@frontiernet.net>
Date: Thu, 02 Jul 98 12:44:20 PDT
Fwd Date: Fri, 03 Jul 1998 00:14:02 -0400
Subject: Re: MAGONIA ETH Bulletin #4

> Date: Wed, 1 Jul 1998 22:57:57 -0500 (CDT)
> To: UFO UpDates - Toronto <updates@globalserve.net>
> From: Dennis Stacy <dstacy@texas.net>
> Subject: Re: UFO UpDate: Re: MAGONIA ETH Bulletin #4

> >To: "UFO UpDates - Toronto" <updates@globalserve.net>
> >From: Jerome Clark <jkclark@frontiernet.net>
> >Subject: Re: UFO UpDate: Re: MAGONIA ETH Bulletin #4
> >Date: Wed, 01 Jul 98 11:08:33 PDT

> <snip>

> >The weight of evidence, of course, is currently falling in
> >the direction of Swords and others who suspect the galaxy --
> >and the larger universe -- is densely populated. All one
> >has to do is to read the newspapers; you don't have to go
> >to obscure scientific journals anymore to follow the argument.
> >The discovery that planets are apparently ubiquitous should
> >give heart to anyone sympathetically inclined to the ETH.

> No, Jerry, that is just the point. The weight of evidence *isn't*
> falling in Swords's direction, as you would know if you had
> thoroughly read and digested Davis's article in The Anomalist 5
> (and followed up on the 149 footnotes/references therein, as you
> are always urging others to do). Name any of the "others who
> suspect the galaxy -- and the larger universe -- is densely
> populated."

Don't you read the papers? Do I really have to go out and dig up
stuff that you already know is there? At least I HOPE you do, or
I don't know what you're doing here. Just, however, to be sure I
understand you correctly: are you saying that SETI scientists do
NOT "suspect the galaxy -- and the larger universe -- is densely
populated?" By "densely populated" I mean many hundreds of
thousands, or several millions, of intelligent civilizations.
Some, presumably, in our galactic neighborhood. Is it your
contention that this particular heresy is ufology's alone?

> Secondly, if the universe *were* as densely populated as you seem
> to assert here, then we would already have word of same from SETI
> -- ufologists need not apply.

What is the basis of this claim?

> Thirdly, there is no "discovery that planets are apparently
> ubiquitous," unless you've been reading other newspapers and
> sources than I have. To the best of my knowledge, about eleven
> giant gas planets have been *indicated* to date, a couple or

> three of which may have been more or less confirmed. But to refer
> to such huge masses, typically on a Jupiter scale, as even
> remotely possible sources of ET intelligence on your part, is

> disingenuous at best.

Oh, my. If I were you, I wouldn't be throwing around adjectives such as "disingenuous" here when you're using this sort of argument, if argument it is. (I can think of more colorful characterizations.) Come back and talk sense next time, and maybe we can discuss this productively.

> >If the galaxy is full of millions of advanced civilizations, we
> >ought to EXPECT to see them. If we don't see them or any
> >evidence of them, they likely don't exist, and the SETI program
> >is a big waste of time, money, and personnel, and all those
> >popular and academic books on intelligent life elsewhere
> >are destroying trees for nothing.

> I'm always amazed at the animosity shown by ufologists towards
> SETI. If I were a Freudian, I would suspect some sort of penis
> envy. After all, if SETI exhibited any success, wouldn't
> ufologists be the first to say I told you so!?

I am always amazed at the animosity shown by SETIans towards ufologists. If I were a sociologist or philosopher of science, or maybe a psychologist, I would suspect some species of intellectual anxiety. After all, if ufology exhibited any success, wouldn't SETIans be embarrassed as hell?

A witty and insightful piece on the irrational hostility of SETIans toward ufology's ETH, together with a discussion of its possible psychological foundations, is Don C. Donderi's "The Effect of Conscious and Unconscious Attitudes About UFO Evidence on Scientific Acceptance of the Extraterrestrial Hypothesis," JUFOS 1 (old series, 1979): 35-40. Donderi, a McGill University psychologist, uses his professional training to probe this curious phenomenon.

And finally, a question: I'm curious. When was the last time you took a pro-UFO position in any argument on this subject? Or is that occurrence lost in the dim mists of antiquity?

Just wondering.

> >The point Dennis misses here, I think, is the one I have
> >attempted to make continually (not "constantly," Dennis),
> >albeit so far without any notable success: namely that,
> >contrary to what debunkers and Purely Speculative
> >Hypothesizers (if there is any longer a distinction) want us
> >to believe, the ETH is neither absurd nor indefensible.
> >Swords shows that the ETH can be defended using principles
> >embraced by many scientists writing and researching in
> >exobiology. You can determine that easily by reading this
> >literature for yourself. Swords does not go beyond that
> >observation, and neither have or do I.

Dennis has yet to acknowledge what you just read.

> And the point Jerry misses here is this: a "densely" populated
> universe is still separated, one civilization from another, by
> immense distances, which involve gigantic expenditures in terms
> of energy and other resources, to surmount. Clark seems to say,
> hey, there's a lot of us out there, so interstellar travel should
> be a relative snap, even though it still takes us a couple of
> years to get to Mars, a planet within our own solar system.
>
> Clark also ignores the fact, which I raised, that the Swords
> argument actually *reduces* the density, i.e., number, of
> intelligent life forms capable of space travel, by imposing
> additional restrictions (atmospheric oxygen content ratio, etc)
> on same.

Oh, I see. So they can't get here from there, is that it? How, I would like to know, do you know that? Remote viewing? Deeply rooted faith? The conviction that the science and technology of the late 20th Century will be the science and technology of the late 30th Century?

> In other words, Clark seems to have overlooked one of the major

> implications of Sword's own theory: namely, that the universe can
> be densely populated, but only a very small segment of same will
> ultimately achieve space travel. Put another way: the latter is
> hardly a given, as Clark seems to believe.

Nor is it a given that at a certain stage of development, a civilization -- or a whole lot of civilizations -- won't achieve space

(and even intragalactic) travel. What's odd about arguments like Dennis' is that he assumes that only ufologists, whom he seems to regard as uniquely evil or something (otherwise why would he attack only them for holding opinions that are not theirs alone?) entertain these heresies. In fact, many of the criticisms could be applied equally to anti-ETH SETI advocates, but whenever somebody like me points that out, the Dennis Stacys of the world go ballistic (or, more specifically and weirdly, begin to ruminate about penis envy[!?!]). A number, in my reading of them, do not even dispute the possibility of ET visitation; they just don't think it is happening at the moment. Dennis, I gather, is arguing that it could never happen, or is so unlikely that only dimwitted ufologists could consider the possibility -- which puts him at odds, of course, not just with pro-ETH ufologists.

The subject of doable interstellar travel has its own considerable literature among space scientists and engineers. There is far from a consensus, as Dennis seems to want us to believe, that travel through the galaxy will be forever impossible. Maybe Dennis should go there with his arguments and try to tell the nonufologists why they're wrong.

Which leads me to ask: what would you prefer, Dennis: an occult explanation for puzzling UFO reports? Or a debunking one? Beyond that, I confess that more and more I am at a loss to follow your thinking on our subject. All I detect is an unrelenting hostility to it.

> In addition, you can read the available scientific literature,
> Davis included, and find any number of scientists who disagree
> with Swords. So what determines your choice as to who's
> ultimately "right" or "wrong" in this matter? Prior disposition,
> I suspect.

And, of course, an acquaintanceship with the UFO evidence, which is certainly suggestive in a number of intriguing ways of ET visitation, as (for example) the late Clyde Tombaugh (you know, the famous "believer" and pseudoscientist) remarked. Unlike Dennis apparently, I don't consider the matter closed. I consider it one requiring a lot more and much better funded investigation before we know "who's ultimately 'right' or 'wrong' [why the scare quotes, by the way?] in this matter."

> Clark prefers Swords's description of the universe. Over the
> years, I've come to prefer Davis's.

As the great Ralph Stanley says, You go to your church, I'll go to mine. I just hope that next time you attend services, you'll hear a more compelling sermon. I have the distinct impression, watching the deep convictions you exhibit based on what looks to me like shaky foundations, that you are of a far more fundamentalist disposition than I am. You might try a little tolerance for ambiguity, my friend.

Cheers,

Jerry Clark

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