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UFO UpDates Mailing List

Re: The Drake Equation

From: Dennis Stacy <dstacy@texas.net>
Date: Thu, 16 Dec 1999 19:23:03 -0600
Fwd Date: Thu, 16 Dec 1999 22:40:09 -0500
Subject: Re: The Drake Equation

>From: David Rudiak <DRudiak@aol.com>
>Date: Fri, 3 Dec 1999 21:17:59 EST
>Subject: Re: The Drake Equation
>To: updates@globalserve.net

>>From: Dennis Stacy <dstacy@texas.net>
>>Date: Mon, 29 Nov 1999 18:01:09 -0600
>>Fwd Date: Tue, 30 Nov 1999 07:54:12 -0500
>>Subject: Re: The Drake Equation

>So some talent there, but apparently since dissipated on sex, drugs,
>rock-and-roll ... and then debunking.

David,

And during the same time-frame, approximating, of course, you were no doubt squandering your family's money on charm school, which apparently was money down the drain.

So try this instead: Howabout a wonderful marriage and an 8-year-old son? How about creating The Anomalist out of thin air? What about that Donald E. Keyhoe Journalism award for my six-part series in OMNI? What about that UFO book I edited with Hilary Evans, UFOs 1947-1997: Fifty Years of Flying Saucers? What about editing the MUFON UFO Journal for 12 years? (Oh, I forgot: the CIA made me do that.)

And for my next debunking effort? Check out:

<http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/0380802651/>

And you're contributing _what_ to the UFO literature in the meantime? Pretty much zilch, as far as I can determine, but maybe you'd like to enlighten the List if I'm wrong? Favor us with a list of your UFO or relevant scientific publications, please. None? Now why did I instinctively think that?

>Thank you for your honesty here.

No thanks for honesty needed. Why would you expect anything else?

>>That said (you asked), I wasn't criticizing Mallon's science so
>>much as his use of the English language and some of his glib
>>conclusions. (See my response to Jerry Clark's post.)

>As will be clear soon, his language is the same as some of the experts
>themselves who refer to the extra-solar planets as "confirmed." His

>conclusions are also the same as many of the astronomers, who comment that
>the results suggest that solar systems are probably dirt common. E.g., one
>quote by Geoff Marcy, one of the pioneers astronomers in the detection of
>extra-solar planets, was that these early results suggest that there are
>probably hundreds of millions of earth-like planets in our galaxy.

If you want this feather in your cap, I'll happily concede the point. See, I went to charm school, too. I responded as I did because it so happened that the very day I read the Mallon quotes the NY Times had a headline announcing the first confirmation by direct observation of an extrasolar planet. As a professional writer myself, I wouldn't have used the same words Mallon did, such as "sudden profusion of confirmed planet detections" -- and that's still my opinion. But I'm confident you'll get over it.

That said, you have your experts, I have mine. Here are a couple:

"David C. Black of the Lunar and Planetary Institute in Houston, Texas considers Gatewood's sighting to be the only one that would satisfy his definition of what a planet is. "It is not clear that any of the others have anything to do with planets," he says, arguing that they probably formed in a fundamentally different way than the planets that orbit the sun." See:

<http://www.sciam.com/explorations/052796explorations.html>

And this:

<http://cannon.sfsu.edu/~gmarcy/planetsearch/bd/ecc.html>

Which contains the following:

"The occurrence of circular orbits may require special initial conditions, to avoid the gravitational perturbations and to avoid the tendency of the 2nd Law of Thermodynamics to scramble the orbital ellipticities of planets. Perhaps, our Solar System, with its coplanar, nearly circular orbits represents a remarkably fortuitous low-entropy state for a planetary system."

Note the use of the phrase "remarkably fortuitous."

When we get past the snide personal remarks and Rudiak's tendency to endlessly nitpick (this is a man who could nitpick an elephant to death with a pair of tweezers), we're left with the following:

The solar systems presently being discovered in no way resemble our own; They were completely unanticipated and cannot be accounted for by current theories of solar system formation, unless Rudiak would like to correct me. (Charm school pays off?)

They are planets and solar system by name only.

I don't really have the time or inclination to go into this (having dissipated so much of my available energies on drugs, sex, and rock and roll), but the reason why astronomers can refer to something as a Class-G sun has to do with their realization that not all suns (or stars) are created equally. Hence a classification system.

Yes, Rudiak is right if he wants to say that almost any sparkling light in the night sky is a sun and any conglomerated body circling same a planet, and that the combination of the two constitutes a solar system by definition -- thereby, somehow (and inevitably) leading to more creatures like us, only more advanced.

But it doesn't take too much deep reading or shallow Internet surfing to see that Rudiak's main gripe is both a canard and a red herring (intermixed with anything I have to say about anything).

The "solar systems" presently being discovered in no way resemble our own; for the most part it is hard to imagine how they could have given rise to life at all, let alone ETI. That is, they are non-starters from the word get-go.

What I suggested was, that as time went along, scientists would find a new terminology to refer to such systems, just as they

can now look at stars spread throughout the universe and refer to them as Class-G or other type stars.

Rudiak seems to be opposed to this idea, seemingly arguing that all classification systems are already fixed -- for now and evermore. Or that while we can apply them to suns (hey, I thought all suns were the same by definition?), we can't apply them to planets and solar systems.

My viewpoint remains the same. Rudiak needs to go back to charm school. That, or drugs and rock and roll. Nothing else seems to help much.

Dennis Stacy

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