Where Am I Then?

By Lex.

Lex, as in "Scrying for Y" is Lex, the unknown in "Some Unknowns." Lex is also the name of the author. There's a good reason for that, as you'll see.

I digress.

What I did remember, I had already done my "out of Y" column and didn't want to do two off-topic columns in a row, so I put the idea aside for a while. But it kept nagging at me because I didn't remember it as well. Most of it, yes, but not the ending.

The title of this column is a quote from Science Fiction, telemovie and movie, Fantastic Voyage. It's the last line of the movie, and it's the only line in the movie quotable. It is simply a statement of the spacemen. Why Man is so well-fit for the hope of this world's salvation.

Fantastic Voyage was a movie about a team of spacemen who follow a Russian scientist into the great clam, Atonomic, gamboling in the Atonomic universe. Even if only 10 of those 60 years of movies are good, Fantastic Voyage is one of the best movies ever, with all of those intelligent Sci-Fiction, deeply personal technology, that's a bit of a stretch, but not much, and a lot of fun. Fantastic Voyage, the architecture, hard sciences, the magic wand, the Cold War, the Space Race, the Vietnam War, the Hippies, the Yippies, the cloud of gas, is an advanced technological intelligence. There's a lot of stuff in Fantastic Voyage, and it's all interesting, even, and it's almost for hard sci-fi.

So far, though, we've seen no directly-crawling evidence for Alien Intelligence. Maybe it's not supposed to be pretty either.

Except it's not really a paradox. That word assumes we understand the situation well enough to see a logical contradiction. We don't. We don't even know what we don't know. We don't understand that millions of people every year travel by airplane, but every year, we do. We don't understand that millions of people every year, we do. We don't understand that millions of people every year, we do. We don't understand that millions of people

Mr. Jeff Bezos is a great man because he is the Cofounder of Amazon. Amazon is the most customer centric company in the world. Amazon is the most innovative company in the world. Amazon is the most successful company in the world. Amazon is the most valuable company in the world. Amazon is the most admired company in the world. Amazon is the most profitable company in the world. Amazon is the most disruptive company in the world. Amazon is the most trusted company in the world. Amazon is the most customer centric company in the world. Amazon is the most innovative company in the world. Amazon is the most successful company in the world. Amazon is the most valuable company in the world. Amazon is the most admired company in the world. Amazon is the most profitable company in the world. Amazon is the most disruptive company in the world. Amazon is the most trusted company in the world.

A question that doesn't concern me is the contradiction between quantum mechanics and general relativity. We have a philosophical belief that there should be a unifying theory of everything, because so far that's been a very good and successful operational assumption for science. We don't know that it's actually true. If it turned out GR and QM were the place where it stopped being true, it wouldn't cost me any sleep as a physicist.

And, getting extremely speculative, science may not be the be-all and end-all. For quite a few hundred years now, it's been the most successful intellectual approach and methodology for acquiring useful knowledge. But maybe it isn't the ultimate, end-of-the-line, approach. Just the very best that we've come up with so far.

What would post-science even look like, assuming there could be such a thing? I don't have the foggiest.

As for your second question, the way you make yourself visible in a "Contact" scenario is you put a whole lot of energy into a very narrow wavelength. Most stars, including ours, aren't very bright at radio wavelengths and don't put a lot of energy into any narrow band.

Broadband signals, like radio and TV transmissions, cannot be detected very far away except by really huge antennae, many kilometers across. A narrowband signal would be detectable over thousands of light years.

For those who like highly technical details, this is a very nice paper:

http://www.faqs.org/faqs/astronomy/faq/part6/section-12.html

This relates to a question that hasn't been asked here but does come up often: if there are any alien starships out there, why have we seen no evidence of them with our telescopes. The answer is that they are broadband sources and compared to other astronomical objects they are incredibly faint. With our current observing capabilities, one would have to pass quite close by, in interstellar terms, for it to be detectable. The odds do not favor that (see my previous post to David Evans).

pax \ Ctein
[Please excuse any word-salad. MacSpeech in training!]
==========
-- Ctein's Online Gallery http://ctein.com
-- Digital Restorations http://photo-repair.com
==========

Posted by: ctein | Thursday, 29 December 2011 at 12:12 PM

@Sven W- 95% of all UFO related sightings and incidents are in fact explainable by rational, logical, earthly and astronomical scenarios. Unfortunately, many debunkers conveniently nitpick and delete the facts and evidence of the remaining 5% to explain away incidents that involve multiple sightings from multiple sources and individuals (often military), together with radar, radiation and other physical evidence- as did your Wikipedia source. You'd be well served by reading Leslie Kean's book, who did exhaustive research on the most well documented UFO incidents- including the case of the Japanese 747 captain who flew alongside a UFO three times the size of a football field (also sighted on radar).

It might also interest you to know that former Project Blue Book director, physicist and astronomer Dr. Allen Hynek (the originator of the term "swamp gas") admitted that his job was to automatically debunk each and every UFO report. He eventually quit in disgust when he saw just how much hard, credible evidence there was that couldn't be explained away, and would later call for serious governmental investigation into the UFO phenomena. We do agree that studying UFOs does tell us a lot about human nature, they've been coming here for a long, long time...

Dr. Wernher von Braun- It is as impossible to confirm them (UFOs) in the present as it will be to deny them in the future.

Posted by: Stan B. | Friday, 30 December 2011 at 12:50 AM

I completely agree that most of these peculiar characteristics that I described are likely quite explicable biologically. But that's ex post facto.

That's the only way to go about explaining, isn't it? Now, *predicting* is different. You can predict that *something* will occur, although you cannot specify what exactly. In that case, yes, it is pretty inexplicable. You don't even have to predict the behaviour of intelligent life to find things inexplicable.

Who could predict bower birds' "gardens" as the means of attracting females? Or lyre birds' calls? (This one is perfectly apposite here. :)) Who could predict the mane of the lion? Or that the natural weaponry will appear as the nose horn on rhino, horns on the buffalo and the antlers on the deer?

Again, you can predict that the expression of general fitness and the desirability as a sexual partner will occur in some way. The exact expression... well, no, you can't predict it.

Dennis, thousands of years of social conditioning — what Mike said — is difficult to erase. Consider that the "scientific method" first appeared only at the end of the Middle Ages, 5-6 hundred years ago.

The point here is, what prompted the Neanderthals to start burying their dead? Where did that impulse come from? (It appears that Homo sapiens imitated Homo neanderthalensis.)

I still say that it might be a sign of sapience, trying to explain the world around you, your place in it and what happens after you die. The later forms — god(s) in high places, in the sky and finally "above the sky" — is just shifting the explanation to the places you cannot physically check.

Posted by: vlatko | Friday, 30 December 2011 at 02:44 AM

The late Spanish particle physicist Francisco Yndurain wrote a book on the subject (¿Quién está ahí? Who's there?, in Spanish, sorry). I think two of the hypothesis he discusses are worth mentioning:

1. There is a limit to what an intelligent society can know. He even proposed that we are already reaching that limit. It is not so outlandish if you consider the increasingly large number of scientists and engineers we are using to maintain scientific progress.

2. Any sufficiently advanced society will develop the technology to self-destruct, and they will. We did develop that technology decades ago, and it seems just a question of time until someone is foolish enough to push that big red button...

Posted by: cian | Friday, 30 December 2011 at 03:56 AM

Ctein,

Totally off topic ... as soon as I saw "Xmas" I had the image of the murderous Robot Santa in Futurama (where the term is X-mas, pronounced "ex-mas"). Not for the faint of heart but one of the favorites the Christmas with my daughter.

Just my 2 cents.

Posted by: Alberto Castro | Friday, 30 December 2011 at 08:14 AM

Stan B: I followed the link to your website and noticed it is "pro-UFO". Other than pro-UFO books (e.g Leslie Kean) and pro-UFO opinions by various astronomers and physicists (Hyneck, von Braun), do you have any first-hand evidence?

Seeing as this is a photography blog, perhaps a photo of your good self standing next to a spaceship or even an amiable ET, would be most helpful.

Okay, I'm being slightly tongue-in-cheek, but the point is that extraordinary claims really do require extraordinary evidence.

From personal experience in other areas, its easy to fall "under the spell" of group-think or what is more generally referred to "confirmatory input basis".

For example, if a person has a preference for idea "A" over idea "B", and only studies the material that is pro-A, of course they will come to believe that A is true. The key is to study the good quality material for both A and B, then go with one that has the strongest evidence. This is essentially the scientific method.

I notice in your response that you quickly dismiss the Wikipedia article (I say "dismiss", not "debunk") and appear not to have read the articles by Ian Ridpath. As "evidence" you quote some opinions ... opinions are not evidence.

I started to watch the video (in your earlier post) but it seemed the usual fluff: wide-eyed assertions and opinions but no critical analysis. The two articles I referenced seemed to be calmly and cooly written, working through each point and providing an explanation. Based on this, it appears to me that the Rendlesham Forest incident was mis-interpreted; and should not be regarded as a UFO incident.

Of course, the Rendlesham incident might be a UFO but the "pro-UFO" case is lame and the "anti-UFO" case is strong. I've decided to go with the stronger argument.

Stan, I hope you don't take offence with my viewpoint but I do hope there are some ideas in my post that might be of use to you.

Posted by: Sven W | Friday, 30 December 2011 at 10:11 AM

Dear Bill Mitchell,

Indeed. The timescales are too long for us to imagine how a dialogue would work. What questions could we ask today that we'd be sure that 1000 years from now we'd care about the answers to (and couldn't answer ourselves by then)?

So the modern assumption is that we're looking at monologues. A civilization just decides to dump its knowledge out there in the hopes that it will proof of value to somebody else, with no expectation of a reply.

But even that is not a given. An interesting cost/performance ratio that was published in Nature some years ago showed that it was more cost-effective to, in essence, launch a whole bunch of DVDs on solar-system escape velocity. It was more expensive (and even took longer) to send very large amounts of information to the same number of recipients via radio waves.

Vaguely analogous to the problem today of sending a terabyte of data to a client. It's more efficient to put it on a hard drive and mail it than to upload and download that amount of data over a typical net connection.

There's an interesting exercise for somebody: to convey all the world's knowledge (currently I think it's around an exabyte?), how long does it take, how far away can you receive it, and how much does it cost to do it by radio? Obviously time/cost/distance are interrelated but I suspect the number might be terrifyingly large. Our current long-distance transmissions have been at such a low data rate that the entire lifetime of the universe would not be sufficient to convey more than a few percent.

Might actually be cheaper to go build that starship.

pax \ Ctein
[Please excuse any word-salad. MacSpeech in training!]
==========
-- Ctein's Online Gallery http://ctein.com
-- Digital Restorations http://photo-repair.com
==========

Posted by: ctein | Friday, 30 December 2011 at 05:46 PM

The comments to this entry are closed.