

egoism, not academic interest in animal rights per se. Certainly, careerism and opportunism may contribute in significant ways to the threat of enervation which these habits of thought present, but to point out additional causative factors is in no way to rebut the claims made in my article.

Philosophers, of all people, should not be super-sensitive to criticism, since their aim is (or should be) to subordinate themselves to the truth. It is a minor misfortune when their debate takes on the acrimonious tone of a quarrel. But it is a far greater misfortune when philosophical champions of the innocent fall out over what motivates their selfless involvements. Non-human animals, as the most innocent and vulnerable "minority" on earth, need all the help they can get--from academics and activists alike. But that support must not be purchased at the cost of accepting arguments which ultimately undermine their interests. As Jamieson says, it is obtaining justice for animals which should be our sole and guiding concern.

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# Opinion



John Stockwell  
The Schweitzer Center

Quite a number of people have given consideration to the possibility of the existence of life on the moon, or on other planets in our solar system, in other solar systems of this galaxy, or in other galaxies. Some of this consideration is relatively ordered dialogue in the mainstream of science. Even without taking note of the other literature (imaginative, scientific, or "occult"), there has been Bracewell's Intelligent Life in Outer Space and Shklovskii's and Sagan's Intelligent Life in the Universe. There has even been a politically aware movement for Space Migration Now.

The arguments made for the existence of "extra-terrestrial" life are frequently both novel and surprisingly sound (for those among us who from our childhood may remember the range of "impossibilities" implicit in "crying for the moon," but which have since then been quite overturned). In most instances, however, the discourse has taken its way constrained between two alternatives: (1) are there microbes hidden in the soil of Mars, the moon, or beneath some rock, and (2) is there somewhere, if evidently not on any of the other planets in our solar system, higher life? "Higher life" usually means life like us, i.e., capable of communicating with us, or even more intelligent (capable of showing us the error of some or all of our ways and guiding us toward peace), or more spiritual (perhaps "fully realized beings"). There is another question often being asked, too: are we alone in the universe? For some other inquirers, perhaps, the finding of life in extra-terrestrial space confirms their atheism, showing life to have material cause. And there are other ramifications that get considered. The cosmonauts, we can recall, found no god while on their orbital journeys.

Although of late there has been a lull in exploration, during the past two decades we have been witnessing the entry of humans into evolutionary/environmental niches likely

to contain surprises not only at the level of the physical characteristics of the place. That life in space resembles gods, or has an IQ of 250, or can communicate with us, either overcoming our own inadequacies or matching our achievement, or even that the universe is populated with ordinary civilizations with which we can conclude bi- or multi-lateral treaties of non-aggression or whose rocker forces are a threat to our own is far less likely than that life in space, or the varieties of that life, will substantially resemble our close or more distant relatives in nature close at hand. It is nearly certain that the major surprise awaiting us in space is that the whole place is essentially like this place and, while exhibiting the usual stunning variations, contains a nature not basically unlike that here, from which we seem to have emerged to a human stage paradoxically ripe now for humane definition via the refusal of a greater elaboration of domination. Space exploration will only pose the critical question of identity afresh.

It is most important that humanity reconsider the meaning of its search for higher life in space while retaining this "mundane" view of what will be found there, in the event it does turn out (a reasonably likely eventuality) that life exists elsewhere than on Earth. Growth in awareness, with an appropriately developed ethic, is as surely at stake in the exploration of space as is the extended geographical acquaintance with the physical world.

As usual in matters of civilization, it is not at all certain that humanity will choose rightly. Humanity does not always choose badly, however; so, it is worthwhile to attempt to gain a hearing for a delicate truth: the higher emerges in communicative encounter with the natural, including especially its forms of life. The main problem of culture has to do with the means of facilitating and being open to that meeting.

Our search for intelligent life in space must proceed on the assumption that the problems of identity and communication in the offing to arise are of precisely the same character as already confront us (though still rarely in consciousness) in the presence of the rest of living nature on this planet. Questions of how to encounter and live with "people of the moon" will throw up problems of essentially the same character as

does the question now of how to encounter and live with the grey whale or that nearby small wren, for these are among the other "people" of this earth. It follows that we are already in contact with life in space and that the character of our present relations shows us mostly ill-prepared. When the continuum of contact is extended through further extra-terrestrial explorations, there will likely also be an extension of ecocide. This unfortunate prospect lies before humanity because we have failed to adequately recognize our shared identity with the natural world in the specific forms of its composition and have, therefore, acquired almost no basis upon which either to accurately perceive the nature of those new realities into which we are venturing or to conduct ourselves in ways that have much chance of facilitating the emergence of rapport. Quite simply, it is a matter of a stupidity that follows from the ignoring of the ethical. The study of the arts of inter-species communication and Ahimsa needs to be given at least equal attention with the study of means of physical transport and observation.

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Obviously, a new science is required, a soft science, if you will. And a new politics. The non-violent actions we are currently witnessing are an intimation of transfigurative possibilities open for a world culture that will choose whether to permit intelligence to be guided by compassion and that will make this critical choice soon.

We are not alone. But we will be, if the slaughter does not stop. Said Schweitzer, the way back to civilization lies through reverence for life.