

History in Brief

Another Last Encounter: The Suppressed Case of Terran Panspermia

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In 2197, an Outtatherian science patrol ship detected signals of carbon-based life in the Gamma Triskaideca Sector near the Abyss. Closer investigation showed that the signs emanated from a small metallic spacecraft containing unknown technology. Using the precautions required in handling biocarbon, the patrol ship collected and contained the vessel, and transported it to the Institute of Species Studies for examination.

The vessel carried data files and cylinders with prototypes, or germs, of the life form detected by the ship. The research team was headed by Acrylic Daring, who was known for pioneering work but also for ignoring the protocol if it stalled scientific endeavor.

Daring began, without authorization from the Institute's management, a longitudinal study of the data and the cylinders in clear violation of the Biocarbon Act. When the leadership found out about the project, it was too far gone to be relinquished publicly without damaging the Institute's reputation. The venture was carried to its conclusion in secrecy.

Daring decided to grow the germs to full maturity to examine the nature of the alien species. The files indicated that the species referred to its members as Homo Sapiens. The language was surprisingly similar to Outtatherian's, making the scrutiny easier.

The documents concerning the cylinders were, however, heavily contaminated by all manner of auxiliary information about the methods of production on Terra – the planet inhabited by the Homo Sapiens – and this resulted in early failure. Attempts to grow the prototypes in sunlight with nutrients and watering, for instance, did not succeed.

After several failed attempts, Daring and the team managed to grow living specimens of Homo Sapiens. Three observations rose to the fore early on. The creatures had only four tentacles instead of the customary 13–39, and this made them clumsy and slow. Even when educated, they did not have any sense of the fourth and fifth dimensions. To make matters worse, they had sentience.

Sentience is difficult to understand to all species that have, indigenously or since the Great Change, been silicon-based. It is best described as a primitive reaction to external motivating stimuli, and it serves the same purpose as our own intellectual irritations. It is a much cruder instrument, though, and seems to cause its bearers much frustration and deprivation.

Once, after three generations of naturally breeding members of Homo Sapiens, it had been verified that sentience is inheritable, the study population was euthanized and all the materials destroyed. The findings were published three hundred years later, but the threat of alien life forms was not acute at the time and the report went largely unnoticed.

Daring was not interested in the political ramifications of Homo Sapiens launching the vessel or the later fate of Terra. The next generation of researchers demonstrated, by using secondary sources, that the cylinders were meant to impregnate the universe with sentient life (panspermia).

Judging by the debris detected at the site of the discovery, Terra was annihilated in one blast. The most probable explanation is that someone found the Big Red Button that was installed on every planet. When Time Began for emergencies and pushed it.