

New explanation postulated for Fermi paradox

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(PhysOrg.com)—Enrico Fermi, the famous Italian physicist, once asked the question; if intelligent life has come to exist many times in our galaxy, why is there no sign of it? It's a clearly valid point, when you consider the number of planets and solar systems that exist out there. If there are other intelligent beings out there somewhere, how come they haven't responded to our messages?

Adrian Kent, of the Perimeter Institute in Waterloo, Canada has published a paper in *arXiv*, somewhat humorously titled, "Too Dammed Quiet?" where he suggests the reason we haven't heard from other life forms out there, is because maybe they are keeping quiet on purpose, to protect themselves from others that might hear their "noise" and come to investigate, and perhaps cause them harm.

Kent takes the idea of Darwin's *survival of the fittest* concept to a galactic level, in that he believes it's possible that there are only so many habitable planets and if so, that would mean scarce resources, which would mean only the smartest, strongest, or most careful would survive; which would leave at least some of the aliens out there keeping a lid on things to assure their own survival; sort of like how certain species of birds on this planet freeze to avoid being noticed by predators.

But, if what Kent has to say is true, that begs even more questions, such as, who are they hiding from, and why haven't we heard anything from those pesky predators?

His paper raises even more difficult questions, which of course we have no answers to, such as is it possible that the vast expanse of the universe is so great that the laws of physics will forever prevent any life forms that do crop up, from ever being able to contact one another? Or, is it conceivable, that the events that led to our existence are so rare that there really isn't anyone else out there?

Kent's paper has no doubt some added credence due to his support of Stephen Hawking's parallel suggestion in "Into the Universe," the Discovery Channel documentary that made headlines all over the world last year; but as with all hypothetical suppositions, ultimately, it's all, as Kent himself reminds us, pure speculation; at least until we hear otherwise from someone out there who can settle the matter for us, once and for all.

More information: Too Damned Quiet?, Adrian Kent,
arXiv:1104.0624v1 [physics.pop-ph] arxiv.org/abs/1104.0624
Fermi paradox: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fermi_paradox

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