

**FEATURE: "Maybe We're All Martians"**

PROF.: A space scientist says, "Maybe we're all Martians"!

VOICE: (CURIOUS) What does he mean by that?

PROF.: Give me 15 minutes, and we'll discuss that.

FORMAT: THEME AND ANNOUNCEMENT

PROF.: The late astronomer Carl Sagan wrote, "Many years ago, so the story goes, a celebrated newspaper publisher sent a telegram to a noted astronomer: 'Wire collect five hundred words on whether there's life on Mars.' The astronomer dutifully replied: 'Nobody knows, nobody knows, nobody knows...' 250 times."

VOICE: (LAUGH) Repeating the same two words, 250 times?

PROF.: Yes.

VOICE: Is it still true that "nobody knows" whether there's life on Mars? Or have the space vehicles that landed there in 2004 and 2012 discovered some kind of life?

PROF.: No, they haven't detected even the simplest life forms.

VOICE: But the fact that scientists are spending three billion dollars to research that possibility, shows how intensely some people want to know. Why such extraordinary effort and expense?

PROF.: Well, scientific curiosity is part of the reason. But some scientists have also said that they hope to find out whether temperatures on Mars have always been so cold that human-like life would not have been able to live there.

VOICE: When you say "human-like life," do you mean also other warm-blooded mammals?

PROF.: Yes. If it once had complex life forms, some researchers hope to find out why the temperatures became so extremely cold, and maybe figure out how to keep our planet from either overheating or overcooling to the point where human life could become extinct.

VOICE: So they may learn something that might enable us to survive on Earth.

PROF.: Well yes, possibly. But *the reason that NASA talks about most*, is that evolutionary theorists can't demonstrate that non-living substances evolved into the first living cell on Earth.

- VOICE: That's interesting. If non-living chemicals didn't spontaneously develop into something alive, that's a major problem for the theory of evolution. Someone expressed it as "If there's no kick-off, there's no game."  
How do scientists explain why they haven't found definite evidence that the first life developed from non-life here on Earth?
- PROF.: Some explain the lack of evidence by speculating that biochemical evolution might have occurred here on Earth, but that the evidence eroded away. One NASA website says, "Mars may be a fossil graveyard, recording the chemical conditions that fostered life on Earth, where the record of...life's first moment is likely to have been eradicated forever."
- VOICE: You said "some" scientists explain the lack of evidence that way. Are there other theories?
- PROF.: Yes. Other scientists explain the lack of evidence that non-living materials evolved into the simplest living cell, by assuming Earth hasn't existed long enough for natural processes to have produced the first cell here. Project chief engineer Gentry Lee explains, "Maybe life evolved first on Mars and was knocked off the surface and carried to the Earth. *Maybe we're all Martians!*"
- VOICE: "Maybe we're all Martians"? Is he saying that maybe the first living substances developed on Mars, and maybe we're descended from them?
- PROF.: He hopes at least some organic chemical such as an amino acid may have developed on Mars and traveled to Earth, as the first step toward making life here.
- VOICE: If they found that, it could mean some living substance from Mars could have been our great-great-great-grandfather. Their statements contain many "maybes" and "may haves" – lots of speculation.
- PROF.: So that's one motive for space vehicles to explore Mars – to find clues that could indicate that life evolved there. Because scientists admit they have no evidence that living organisms evolved on Earth from non-living chemicals.
- VOICE: As we said, "If there's no kick-off, there's no game!"  
I understand from news reports that the primary thing they are seeking, is *water*. NASA chose the landing sites for the Mars rovers because those locations looked as if they may have had water at one time.
- PROF.: Yes. They believe that if they discover water on Mars, it could indicate past or present life.
- VOICE: We often hear the statement, "Where there's water, there's life." Is that true?

- PROF.: It's more accurate to say, "Where there's life, there's water." Because living organisms contain water, but not all water contains life. Living cells have more ingredients than mere H<sub>2</sub>O.
- VOICE: That's an interesting way to express it – "Living cells have more ingredients than merely H<sub>2</sub>O."
- PROF.: Those who give the impression that water equals life, are *making a mountain out of a molecule!* Taking one small ingredient of life, they talk as if it equals life.  
Biochemist Dr. Michael Behe points out the fallacy of naively assuming water equals life. He states, "It's like saying if we find iron on Mars, we should be looking for a car, because cars contain iron. Nobody has the foggiest idea how we could get from simple chemicals, with or without water, to the first cell."
- VOICE: World renowned biologist Dr. Lynn Margulis adds, "To go from a bacterium to people, is less of a step than to go from a mixture of amino acids to a bacterium."  
Amino acids are already a major step above non-living chemicals. Is she saying that progressing from those acids to a simple bacterium, would be more difficult for natural processes to achieve, than for a bacterium to evolve into humans?  
Is that why she says, "To go from a bacterium to people, is less of a step than to go from a mixture of amino acids to a bacterium"?
- PROF.: Yes.
- VOICE: Then why do many scientists insist that non-living chemicals transformed themselves into living substances?
- PROF.: The late biochemist and science writer Isaac Asimov admitted that scientific facts didn't force him to accept the theory of evolution and reject an alternative theory of how life originated. His atheism drove him in that direction.
- VOICE: Really? What did he say?
- PROF.: Well, in *Asimov's Biographical Encyclopedia of Science & Technology* he wrote, "For nearly a century it had been assumed that Pasteur had laid to rest forever the bogey of 'spontaneous generation.' "
- VOICE: Isn't that the hypothesis that living matter originated spontaneously from non-living matter? Didn't French chemist Louis Pasteur disprove it in the nineteenth century?

- PROF.: Yes. Asimov wrote, “But Pasteur only disproved spontaneous generation under the specialized conditions of his experiment. He kept sterile solutions as long as four years without life developing. ...But what if he had kept it a billion years? ...After all, from the mere fact that we are here, we are forced to *assume* that once upon a time at least one case of spontaneous generation took place (*assuming, further, that one eliminates supernatural creation from consideration*).”
- VOICE: (SURPRISED) So he just “assumed” to eliminate supernatural creation? He just “assumed” God out of existence?
- PROF.: Exactly! He realized there is no proof of spontaneous generation – of nature producing life from non-life. But he preferred that unproven idea, instead of the idea of God as creator.
- VOICE: Are you saying some of the people who sent space vehicles to explore Mars, wanted to discover evidence that spontaneous generation occurred there? That would convince them that it probably occurred on Earth, but that the evidence has eroded away.
- PROF.: Yes. Sagan said if life existed only on Earth, it could be a miracle performed by God. But in his mind, if life exists in two or more places, it would prove that life originates itself by natural processes, with no need for God.  
Sagan believed enthusiastically in extra-terrestrial life. But even he acknowledged, “...the essence of life is not so much the atoms and simple molecules that make us up, as *the way in which they are put together*.”  
Ingredients are only part of the recipe.
- VOICE: Hmm, that sounds logical. We need a chef – to blend ingredients in the proper proportions, then bake them at the proper temperature for the right length of time.
- PROF.: More than a century ago, one of Darwin's friends admitted the reason he believed in evolution was not completely scientific. He used the same word as Asimov: “assumed.”
- VOICE: Which of Darwin's friends was this?
- PROF.: Aldous Huxley. He wrote, “I had motives for not wanting the world to have a meaning, and consequently *assumed* that it had none, and was able without any difficulty to find satisfying reasons for this assumption. The philosopher who finds no meaning in the world is not concerned exclusively with a problem in pure metaphysics...”
- VOICE: ...Not just a problem in philosophy.

PROF.: “He is also concerned to prove that *there is no valid reason why he personally should not do as he wants to do*. For myself, as no doubt for most of my friends, the philosophy of meaninglessness was essentially an instrument of liberation from a certain system of morality. We objected to the morality because it interfered with our sexual freedom. ...There was one admirably simple method of confuting these people and justifying ourselves in our erotic revolt: We would deny that the world had any meaning whatever.”

VOICE: (SURPRISED) I had never heard anyone admit before, that this was their real reason for refusing to believe that God was our creator.

PROF.: Yes. The desire to discover life elsewhere in the universe, has motives beyond scientific curiosity.

VOICE: Carl Sagan thought finding life on a second planet would prove life was a natural phenomenon. That drove him to want life to exist on Mars.

PROF.: As images and data continue coming in from space, beware of how they're interpreted. Some scientists will try to “spin” them. Atheists sleep better when they find some semi-credible hook on which to hang their preference – to explain our existence, without having to acknowledge a Creator who holds us accountable for our actions.

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For further reading:

NASA Announces News Activities for Mars Landing

[http://www.nasa.gov/mission\\_pages/msl/news/msl20120730\\_prt.htm](http://www.nasa.gov/mission_pages/msl/news/msl20120730_prt.htm)

[http://www.nasa.gov/mission\\_pages/msl/news/msl20120819b\\_prt.htm](http://www.nasa.gov/mission_pages/msl/news/msl20120819b_prt.htm)

Mars Rover Test Fires Rock-Zapping Laser, <http://news.discovery.com/space/mars-rover-test-fires-rock-zapping-laser-120819.html#mkcpgn=emnws1>

Early Mars Maybe Not So Wet

<http://news.discovery.com/space/mars-water-history-dry-clay-120909.html>

“Mars Dead or Alive,” Nova, Jan. 6, 2004, [www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/mars/rover.html](http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/mars/rover.html)

Is there anything out there?, *The Times (London)*, January 3, 2004.

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[http://www.space.com/scienceastronomy/mars\\_tape\\_030819.html](http://www.space.com/scienceastronomy/mars_tape_030819.html)

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Carl Sagan, “Blues for a Red Planet,” chapter in *Cosmos* (NY: Random House, 1980)