

THE INTERDISCIPLINARY BENEFITS OF SETI

B. A. Balazs

Department of Astronomy, L. Eotvos University, Budapest, Hungary

The *aim* of those men who created the upheaval in the seventeenth century, which we now call the “Scientific Revolution,” was not the *conquest* of Nature, but the *understanding* of Nature. “Yet their cosmic quest destroyed the medieval vision of an immutable social order in a walled-in universe together with its fixed hierarchy of moral values, and transformed ... the society, culture, habits and general outlook as thoroughly as if a *new species* had arisen on this planet.”*

The aim of SETI is not to conquest but to understand either. We cannot even guarantee success in a trivial, superficial sense (that is in the form of the discovery of an alien civilization). But at its deeper levels SETI certainly *stimulates and influences our thoughts* and transforms our society:

- SETI is a logical, essential extension of the current *Origins Program*;
- SETI is a basic source of the understanding of *our position and fate* in the universe;
- SETI has a matchless *unifying power for all mankind* and it is a potential powerful tool to create a peaceful, really planet-wide civilization;
- The SETI paradigm has brought to us not only substantially new perspectives but *can help bridge intellectual gulfs* and creates a most suitable place where the two terrestrial cultures (the scientific and the literary) meet.

This contribution offers a compact survey of the items described above and in addition to this lays special stress on the interdisciplinary benefits of SETI in the field of social and political sciences.

* Quotation from A. Koestler (*The Sleepwalkers*, Preface)