CONTACT PARANOIA AND PRONOIA: AN ANTHROPOLOGIST LOOKS AT SETI

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Summary

Will radio contact with an extraterrestrial civilization more advanced than ours lead to the devastation of the human spirit, or to a Golden Age for humanity? Analyses of terrestrial contact situations within our species suggest that neither the paranoid nor pronoid scenario would prevail--and that, instead, the enormous problems of translating the signal and understanding the senders would preoccupy our species for centuries if not millennia.

Editor's Note: The subject matter of this paper was given as a public lecture following the closing dinner at the Symposium. The related paper may be found in *Acta Astronautica*, Vol. 21, No. 2, pp. 117-121 (1990).