



## Stephen Hawking Is Hawking Alien-invasion Theory Again

*War of the Worlds*, *Independence Day*, *Invaders from Mars*... The idea of advanced alien creatures targeting our world for conquest has long been the stuff of science fiction. But this fantasy could become fact, warns famed physicist Stephen Hawking.

"If aliens visit us, the outcome could be much like when Columbus landed in America, which didn't turn out well for the Native Americans," Professor Hawking recently told [El País](#). "Such advanced aliens would perhaps become nomads, looking to conquer and colonize whatever planets they can reach," he continued.



Hawking, long a prophet of (possible) doom who has [warned](#) that man could author his own demise by creating uncontrollable artificial intelligence (AI) or just via good old-fashioned human aggression, has been [speaking of the possibility](#) of extraterrestrial invasion since at least 2010. And when Hawking, a wheelchair-bound cult figure who suffers from Lou Gehrig's disease (ALS), says something, people listen.

Yet it's no revelation that extraterrestrials advanced enough to travel light years through space *could* conquer us without breaking a sweat. But would they? And do they even exist?

As to the latter, the *Mirror* [writes](#) that to Hawking's "mathematical brain," the "existence of aliens is beyond doubt." His rationale is commonplace: With billions of stars in the Universe, and many billions more planets, probability dictates that the conditions allowing for life, and thus life itself, must exist on a multitude of worlds elsewhere. And this is true — presupposing that life can arise as some sort of cosmic accident.

Science tells us that life began in the "primordial soup," the hot prehistoric oceans, where the first amino acids became the first proteins and then eventually the first simple life forms. But this raises a question: How can chemicals suddenly "decide" to become alive? And if they did, how is it they'd have a will to continue living and become more complex?

If this can happen via an accidental process, Hawking is undoubtedly correct that intelligent life almost certainly exists elsewhere. If, however, an intelligent hand is necessary to spark the miracle of life, then it's entirely possible that intelligent life is a phenomenon restricted to Earth. Note that scientists hope to one day create "artificial life" in the laboratory but have not yet done so, even through purposeful activities, let alone accidentally. And if they do succeed, replicating what is already observed in nature, remember that man himself is an intelligent hand.

Assuming for argument's sake, however, that aliens exist (apart from those streaming across the southern border), it's far from a given that they'd be interested in our little blue orb. This is not to say, as many do, that creatures technologically advanced enough to easily destroy us would be morally advanced enough to not want to, that they'd be saints (soon to be) on Earth. Rather, Hawking's thesis



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dictates that countless Earth-like planets exist, and logic dictates that a multitude would be *uninhabited* by intelligent life. So unless impelled by sadistic impulses, why would extraterrestrials bother with a “used” planet populated by pesky humans when fresh new worlds are there for the taking? What are the odds that Earth would be the only suitable planet such aliens could reach?

Moreover, would such an advanced civilization have our need for “resources”? Perhaps they’d have developed a [molecular assembler](#) or other technology that greatly diminishes the need for raw materials, as we conceive of them. The point is that theorizing about the technological status of some advanced alien civilization is much like theorizing about an advanced human civilization of the future: It’s perhaps impossible to accurately conceive of its technology. Figures such as Thomas Malthus’ and Paul Ehrlich’s predictions of mass starvation were wrong, for instance, precisely because they couldn’t foresee modern advances in food production.

The reality is that Hawking’s concerns almost seem to fall into the category of *War of the Worlds*, which portrayed lumbering alien ships slowly dismantling man’s handiwork piecemeal with laser beams. (One could say it’s more likely they’d surreptitiously deposit on Earth trillions of nano-robots designed to invade our bodies and induce sudden death, but who knows what technology would be at their disposal? What’s for sure is that Will Smith and Jeff Goldblum wouldn’t appear to save the day.)

Hawking also [told \*El Pais\*](#) that since AI will overtake man within a century, “we need to make sure the computers have goals aligned with ours”; and that “because there’s an increasing risk that a disaster will destroy Earth ... the survival of the human race will depend on its ability to find new homes elsewhere in the universe.” But if ours is just a godless universe populated by cosmic accidents, why the concern? What does it matter? How can one say, objectively, that it’s better for man to flourish than perish?

Oh, it’s clear we possess an innate will to live, but an ant also has this animalistic instinct. But do we have a higher purpose? It’s as G.K. Chesterton wrote when critiquing the claim of, ironically, H.G. Wells (*War of the World’s* author) that life is a “tissue of births” and man’s “chief function” is parenthood. Chesterton [pointed out](#), “It is as if a man were asked, ‘What is the use of a hammer?’ and answered, ‘To make hammers’; and when asked, ‘And of those hammers, what is the use?’ answered, ‘To make hammers again’. Just as such a man would be perpetually putting off the question of the ultimate use of carpentry, so Mr. Wells and all the rest of us are by these phrases successfully putting off the question of the ultimate value of the human life.”

If I had Hawking’s worldview, I don’t think I’d trouble much over AI, aliens, or aggression. My philosophy might rather be, eat, drink, and be merry for tomorrow we die.

Stephen Hawking certainly is an interesting character whose every word commands media attention. Yet as he [put it](#) himself, “Sometimes I wonder if I’m as famous for my wheelchair and disabilities as I am for my discoveries.” It’s politically incorrect to say but nonetheless true that he receives the exposure he does not because of his brilliance (while he is brilliant, his theories have [sometimes been wrong](#)) but because, with his tragically novel appearance and technology-generated, robotic voice, he has become a comic-book-like figure with a cult of personality. Yet if he wants to sound an alarm about civilizational demise, he’d do more good lending his prominent voice to warnings about illegal-alien invasions of the West than something that, frankly, was done far better by science-fiction writers decades ago.



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