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PHILOSOPHICAL AND RELIGIOUS IMPLICATIONS
OF EXTRATERRESTRIAL LIFE

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If any evidence of extraterrestrial life (especially of an intelligent one) were ever discovered, what reactions would it be likely to cause in our society and how should we manage it?

An important issue to be addressed in order to answer this question in a correct way is what implications such a discovery would have for our philosophical and religious beliefs. In fact, since a physical contact with an extraterrestrial civilization seems to be excluded, and any evidence should be almost surely indirect (e.g., radio waves), reactions are not likely to be based on military, political or economical considerations, but mainly a) on psychological mechanisms and b) on the fears and/or the hopes raised at the cultural level, which is one of the two fields which could be really affected by such a discovery (the other being science).

While the former issue is matter for psychologists and sociologists, the latter will be discussed in this paper, especially focusing (both due to practical and methodological reasons, to be better explained in the paper itself) on the beliefs typical of our Western tradition.

Then, some practical recommendations will be sketched, based on the results of this analysis.