

Why should we care about fossils on Mars?  
What has a Martian fossil ever done for me?

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A discussion between the Voice of Reason and the Average American.

**Average**

I've been listening very closely to what everybody has been saying, and if you ask me, it is all just a big waste of money. Mars Fossils? Who needs them? We need to spend this money on Earth--in America!

**Reason**

It WILL be spent on Earth. Do you think we are paying Martians? It is good Americans who will get the jobs this project will generate. Space has always mainly been about fossils on Earth (otherwise known as the military-industrial complex), and not fossils on Mars or anywhere else.

**Average**

That's another thing. The whole space thing is a boondoggle; a waste of money on certain privileged sectors of the economy--the military, the aerospace industry (which is just another part of the military), and rock scientists. Not many people on Earth will profit from space activities economically. Forget space and feed the poor. House the poor. Give health to the poor. Don't continue to feed old Cold Warriors and their running dogs.

**Reason**

Look, buddy, who ISN'T an old Cold Warrior, or a direct beneficiary thereof? Who isn't in the military, or hasn't been in the military or the military industry, or had some important member of their family in the military or the military industry? Virtually nobody. And I don't want to support anybody who is an unpatriotic war resister, do you? So forget that line of argument.

Anyway, the science and technology which will get us to those Martian fossils and back is the cutting edge technology that will give you three-dimensional television, a cure for cancer, and tastier bubble gum with longer-lasting bubbles. It's all part of the same bag. The more you know about science, the more you know about space, the more you know about the Earth, the more you know about taco shells that don't disintegrate when you bite into them.

All good science is comparative, and the problem with science so far is that it's been stuck on planet Earth with nothing to compare it to. As Konstantin Tsiolkovsky said

**Average**

Who?

**Reason**

Tsiolkovsky. He's a dead Russian

**Average**

Good!

**Reason**

Anyway, as Tsiolkovsky said, it's time we humans grew up, got out of our cradle, and began exploring our neighborhood.

**Average**

Tsiolkovsky said that?

**Reason**

Close enough. And as Chris McKay said here just the other day, until we begin comparing apples with oranges, we'll will never discover the fruits.

**Average**

First Russians and then fruits. Well, what do you expect from a person from that other Bay Area, yonder to the West?

**Reason**

I suggest we change the topic.

**Average**

Well that's just it. I don't give a rip about fossils on Mars anymore than I do about fossils on Earth. The only true science is creation science, and we know that God placed those fossils in the Earth just a couple of thousand years ago. About the same time he put them on Mars, I suppose. It's all right there in the Bible. You don't need to go any farther than that. And they've got this new book on the Biblical Code too, if you like to find patterns in random numbers.

**Reason**

Well, look. I don't want to get into a religious argument with you, but just suppose we do find fossils on Mars that are different from anything we have found on Earth. Wouldn't that be great?

**Average**

I don't see how. Do you mean dead fossils?

**Reason**

There aren't any other kind.

**Average**

So, you want to spend all that money to go find some different dead fossils on Mars? No way!

Now, find me some live fossils, I might be interested.

**Reason**

So, if we find something living on Mars now you might be interested?

**Average**

Sure. Real interested. Especially if he knows how to pitch left-handed.

**Reason**

Now wait a minute. If we find life, it's not going to want to play baseball. We're talking about microbes and stuff. Not baseball players.

**Average**

No baseball players? No intelligent life?

**Reason**

Which is the intelligent life? The ones that like to play baseball or the ones that don't?

**Average**

Well, either way, now that I think about it, I don't want you to go looking for any kind of life anywhere. It might be evil, bad, hungry. Let sleeping fossils lie, that's my motto.

I seen this movie once where some mad scientist, pretty much like you, went prying around in Antarctica--or was it the ocean floor?--anyway, and awoke this monster that had been sleeping for a long time. And he rose up and ate Tokyo, which was alright, but then he took a hankering for Houston, which wasn't.

**Reason**

Look. Forget the movies. Exploring Mars for fossils won't be like any movies you've seen, It will be completely different.

**Average**

It will? Not even like Star Trek, or Deep Space Nine or none of those fancy space operas my kids watch? Then I'm even less interested than I was. I mean, I've watched NASA movies since they pretended to land on the Moon, and I can tell you, the little cartoons they run--simulations, they call them--are way more interesting than the actual landing--or what they SAY is the actual landing.

**Reason**

Yeah, but imagine how exciting it will be! If we find life, or evidence of life on Mars, and it turns out to be just like life on Earth--to have have the same DNA--then that means life like ours exists on two places, and if two, then probably more. There could be a whole universe of Earthlike life out there--waiting to play baseball, if that will make you feel any better.

And if it isn't like ours--if it represents an entirely different kind of life--then that's even more exciting. It means we are just one kind of a myriad of living possibilities that we should go and seek out.

And if there is no sign of life on Mars at all, then that means it is our manifest destiny to go where no one has ever gone before--to be fruitful and multiply--to give life to a barren cosmos.

No matter what we discover--life, no life, our life, or uncertain life--it still means there is a future for space exploration, because if life isn't in the neighborhood of Mars and Venus, then let's cross the street; it might be there just around the corner, on some of the outer moons. And then one day, we can grow up and leave our neighborhood and go exploring the city and then the state and then the world and then the cosmos.

That's why its the endless frontier, always challenging us, always urging us to be better than we are now. That's what makes us human--the quest, the journey, the thirst for knowledge and adventure.

(Singing) "Climb every mountain, ford every stream, follow every rainbow till you find your dream."

**Average**

Huh. Well, ain't you a weird one. How about them Astros?