

Part I

Essays

First Contact

Let us therefore tell the truth to ourselves: we are not searching for “all possible civilizations,” but above all those which are anthropomorphic. We introduce the law and order of experiment into Nature and after phenomena of this kind we want to meet beings similar to ourselves. Nevertheless, we do not succeed in perceiving them. Do they in fact exist at all? There is indeed something deeply saddening in the silence of the stars as an answer to that question, a silence which is so complete as to be eternal.

—Stanislaw Lem, *Summa Technologiae*

Sometimes, in the dark of the night, I lie awake and wonder if different intelligences can communicate at all; or, if I’ve had a particularly bad day, whether the phrase ‘different intelligences’ has meaning at all.

—Isaac Asimov, *Gods Themselves*