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ROMANTICISM IN SCIENCE AS A FORM OF COGNITIVE BIAS AND SETI

Abstract

Science in 19th century was very much influenced by Romanticism. Romanticism surged as a response to Enlightenment and rationalism and physical materialism in general. Romanticism emphasized the individual, subjective, imaginative and transcendental ideology. A deepened view of the beauties of nature. In Astronomy maybe Frederick William Herschel represents the best example. Herschel was sure that the Moon was inhabited and he compared it to the prairies in England. He also thought there was life inside the Sun. It was a popular idea during these times that life populated planets everywhere. This romantic view represents a holistic form of cognitive bias, an anthropocentrism conception of intelligent life in the universe. Some SETI hypotheses may be at risk of suffering from similar romantic tendency. While they represent interesting and beautiful designs and concepts, these in many cases, present some cognitive bias risks that are usually miscalculated and disregarded. We discuss several examples of this form of Neo-Romanticism, cultural implications, cognitive bias in human perception, information processing and science work relevant to SETI.