

## ARTICLE No. 2: Where is Earth?

Though we know far better than the ancients what the universe is made of,  
we have far less sense of what it might mean *for us...*" Joel Primack

Back to those photographs of Mother Earth from space; we know what She looks like and we have a healthier respect for Her size. At the same time, when you visualize a photograph of Her, do you see lines of separation that map our country's sociopolitical boundaries? Of course you don't. The 'me' and 'mine' world is manufactured by us. The photographs of Mother Earth from outer space evoke in our hearts a rational and undeniable, interdependent oneness of all life. The unity of our world looks perfectly natural. (In our minds what we know is not natural are the boundaries and rules of separation we guard now more fiercely than ever before. But I am getting ahead of myself.)

Part of the goal here is to find where we belong in the Universe before we join hearts preparing for a new world. To be convinced that we can be part of that goal, we need to feel that we belong to and can locate ourselves in time and space. To start we need new concepts about what it means to locate ourselves. With that in mind, we can call Earth the center of our visible universe. Because no point in the universe is ever still, this place is not an actual center location on a map of the universe per se. An actual center cannot exist. Nevertheless we will start with Earth as a center because it is the only possible one available to us. Now we see that where we are is really a collaboration of time, light, space, and consciousness, not an actual thing or place.

So on the surface of a much larger planet than we previously conceived, we are traveling at around 1000 miles per hour. As our planet travels completely around our sun in 365 days, the sun itself orbits around the center of our Milky Way Galaxy at the rate of 136 miles per second. Again, that counterintuitive notion, the bigger the scale the faster, not slower... The sun's orbit around the center of

our galaxy (which we take too, obviously) takes 230 million years to complete. Think too that we are not located on the outside edge of our galaxy; we are only about half way out from the center of our disc-shaped Milky Way.

If we want to think of outer space as being outside of Earth's atmosphere where satellites are, and continue out to beyond the moon and planets in our solar system to the rest of the galaxy, then we need to consider stopping our vision at the edge of our "Local Group" of galaxies. Our "Local Group" includes our Milky Way, the Andromeda, the Magellanic Clouds and another 30 or so galaxies. Our group of galaxies is bound together by gravity and does not expand anymore specifically, but does as a unit participate in the great expansion of the larger universe. Trained in space that is tamed by gravity, all the galaxy members of the "Local Group" obey known laws of physics we fairly well understand.

Outside our "Local Group" we can find the real "wild west" of space. On this scale our known rules do not govern space. Instead, Dark Energy tears apart matter and accelerates the rate of galactic expansion. Coming quickly back to our human form, and then pondering the view into a microscope, no, make that an electron microscope...we can see that space is home to trillions of particles flashing in and out of existence on a time-scale so minute that they seem to exist only on a "virtual" level. If we want to know where Earth is and where we are, we might want to slip out of a "here and there" model of space. We may need to don a much more dynamic suit of skin. And this new skin can no longer simply be the geographical boundary between two or more bodies. Our new skin plays the role of a border between the invisible, visible matter and the scale of the large that redefines energy itself.

So where we are, and where Earth is, is not lost in an incomprehensible ocean of emptiness, we are held in the body of space, and that body has a skin, and that body obeys the administrative laws of physics our own bodies follow. Scientifically and metaphorically, another way to look at this idea is that

we closely resemble a galaxy such as the Milky Way. The Earth is as much microscopic in scale as we are, and as macroscopic in scale as we, again, are.

So lest we imagine that we each are meaningless and insignificant, or that Earth is just a very tiny blue ball in a galaxy of stars, with other galaxies ad infinitum, think about the earth-bound hummingbird. Hummingbirds visit me every year and expressly demand the return of their feeders to the exact locations they previously maintained the year before. An accident that turned into an experiment, surely if I could see the wonder of God putting that kind of software in a hummingbird brain, surely human aptitude is far greater than we imagine. If God can equip a hummingbird with a kind of GPS that steers it to memorized locations of feeder after feeder, new ones that it will remember as well, that same GPS all the while steering the bird to its breeding ground, and then back to wintering territory thousands of miles in a single round-trip, God also gave us the wherewithal for connectivity far greater than mere electronic mechanical communication. It may be said that where Earth has us and where we are now points us to a return to our inner world where the extraordinary software running our minds, hearts, and souls might lead us to an unknown frontier...

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