

THE GREATEST REALITY IN THE UNIVERSE

“If God had intended man to fly he would have given him... what ?” The popular, and humorous, answer is “wings”. It is humorous because it is wrong, or rather, because the reality conveyed by the answer is incongruent, for man doesn't have wings ; yet he flies ! The answer panders to the materialist view of reality and, quite unconsciously, mocks it. That man flies is, in a sense, miraculous. He does something he ought not be able to do—*but he does it.*



Let's try some others. “If God had intended man to travel to the bottom of the sea he would have given him gills to extract oxygen from water, and fins and a skin as tough as a fishy one with scales.” Yet man *does* travel to the bottom of the sea, despite lacking gills, fins and a scaly skin. “If God had intended man to communicate with his fellows instantaneously on the other side of the world he would have given him... what ?” Now, this one is tougher to answer. For the business is, in a material sense, quite impossible. Yet he does it. Man *does communicate* with his fellows on the other side of the world instantaneously—or almost so. In each case he transcends the limitations of matter.

So, what is it that God has given man that enables him to do these things which, materially speaking, are impossible with his lack of the proper material equipment ? Before we answer that question let us consider some other important issues.

The Greatest Reality in the Universe

What is the greatest reality in the universe ? Modern thinkers are likely to answer, “light”, or “gravity”, or “dark matter”, or whatever science's current hypothesis asserts to be the ultimate of material being so far discovered. The blinkers of materialism restrict their vision to things physical, whether size, or force or power. Einstein's work might incline them to think that the constant, c , the 'speed of light', is the greatest reality, for there seems to be no entity in the universe beyond its purview. Yet the 'speed of light' is but an accident, something which exists not in itself, but only in other things—*eis accidit*, it befalls them.

You may have observed from the quotations that we took from Darwin in the last lesson how, when it comes to issues they cannot solve, such as the origin of matter, the origin of life, the origin of existence itself, materialists simply take them for granted. They make no effort to explain them. Immersed in the fog that Bacon and Descartes, and their successors, have generated, modern man is so convinced such questions can never be answered that he doesn't trouble himself over them. (Calling the materialist imposture 'a fog' is useful, incidentally, for fog renders those who suffer it blind to much of

the world around them.) How far they are from the wisdom of the ancient philosophers who said “It is matter that impedes knowledge”. It is no accident that in our own, blind, age it is matter, to the exclusion of everything else (including common sense), that preoccupies thought.

The Centre of the Universe

Where is the centre of the Universe? It is typical of the materialist attitude to reject the view that has obtained since the dawn of man's existence that the world in which we live (& since the discovery of the solar system, this planet *Earth*) is the centre of the universe. It is implicit in the revelation made by God to the Jewish people, adopted by the faithful after the death, resurrection and ascension into heaven of God's Son, Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. The first words of the Book of *Genesis* run—

“In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.”

And, in the writings of the prophet *Isaiah* we read:

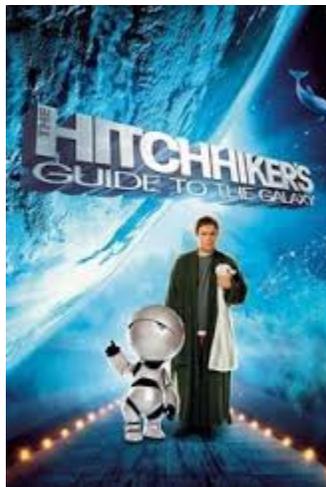
“Thus says the Lord, Heaven is my throne, earth the footstool under my feet. What home will you build for me, what place can be my resting-place? Nothing you see about you but I fashioned it, the Lord says ; my hand gave it being...” (66: 1-2)

The proto-martyr Stephen quoted these words to the Council of the Jewish Sanhedrin as he argued with them. (*Acts 7 : 49*)

The modern attitude is that the centre of the universe can only be determined through consideration of its *material* structure, though just where that centre is they are quite unable to say since they cannot say just what are the limits of the universe.

The prejudice *against* the *Earth* being the centre of the universe arises, of course, from the atheistic belief system which flowered during the Enlightenment and reached a pitch late in the nineteenth and early in the twentieth centuries with the apparent justification of its stance in the Darwinian thesis. Driven by this spirit, companion to the philosophy of materialism, modern scientific thought rejects the possibility that *Earth* could be the centre of the universe. In his science-fiction pastiche *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, Douglas Adams put the issue humorously when he wrote—

Far out in the uncharted backwaters of the unfashionable end of the Western Spiral arm of the Galaxy lies a small, unregarded yellow sun...



Now, if we were to isolate the greatest reality in the universe and we were to find it in some particular place in the universe *and no where else*, would it not be reasonable to think *that place* is the centre of the universe? Wouldn't this determine the issue as far as man with his limitations can know ?

The Tyranny of Distance

The Australian professor of history, Geoffrey Blainey, coined the term 'tyranny of distance' to identify the burdens that faced the settlers of the great southern continent. The expression is even more appropriate for astrophysics. In July 2015 the probe *New Horizons* visited the furthest planet in the solar system, *Pluto* (& its moon) which takes some 248 years to orbit the Sun. The probe was launched on 19th January 2006. Travelling at some 58,000 km per hour, faster than any other spacecraft so far launched, the journey took 8½ years. The achievement begged the question, "Where to now?" The closest star to our solar system is *Alpha Centauri*, some 4.3 light years distant. *Pluto* is (depending on the juxtaposition of the two planets) between 4.25 and 7.4 light hours distant from *Earth*. If we assume 6 light hours as the distance travelled by *New Horizons*, it would take a space ship travelling at a similar speed 53,735 years to reach *Alpha Centauri* ! Where to now ? Answer : *Nowhere*.

The Answers

Constrained by matter—for we are material creatures—we must recognise matter as the greatest *obstacle* in the universe. The universe's greatest reality, then, must be something that transcends matter's strictures, something *not comprised of matter*.

Let's revisit the questions posed at the beginning. If God had intended man to fly, to travel to the bottom of the sea, to communicate with his fellows on the opposite side of the globe, he would have given him a power *that transcends* the limitations presented by a lack of wings, lack of a body apt for living in (let alone penetrating to the bottom of) the sea, that transcends distance and the bulk of the planet. Since man does do these things it is clear that God *has given him* such a power. It is called *intellect*. We may not be able to travel to *Alpha Centauri* or visit its planets (if it has any), but intellect overcomes the tyranny of distance ; it enables us to extract from data an immense amount of information about the star. Aristotle saw the issue profoundly when he said that to know something is in a sense *to become that thing*. He said something else, something which answers our question : "The least degree of intellect in one is greater than the whole of the rest of material reality".

Accordingly, answer no. 1 is : *Intellect is the greatest reality in the universe*.

Despite man's researches nowhere but on our own planet is there found any creature which possesses intellect. Nor, given the immensity of the distances involved, *will there ever be discovered such a being* ! Which leads us to answer no. 2 : this planet, *Earth*, is the centre of the universe.

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I said above that this planet is the centre of the universe "as far as man with his limitations can know". But there is another way man can know, a way that transcends his limitations. He can know with a knowledge conveyed to him by his Creator, Almighty God. This is the knowledge that is given us in divine revelation and assures us that this planet, *Earth*, is the centre of the universe.
