

THE SLOW GROWTH OF HUMILITY

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SYMPOSIUM ON THE OCCASION OF THE 400TH ANNIVERSARY OF GALILIEO'S
DISCOVERY OF THE FOUR LARGE SATELITES OF JUPITER

PADOVA, 7—9 JANUARY 2010

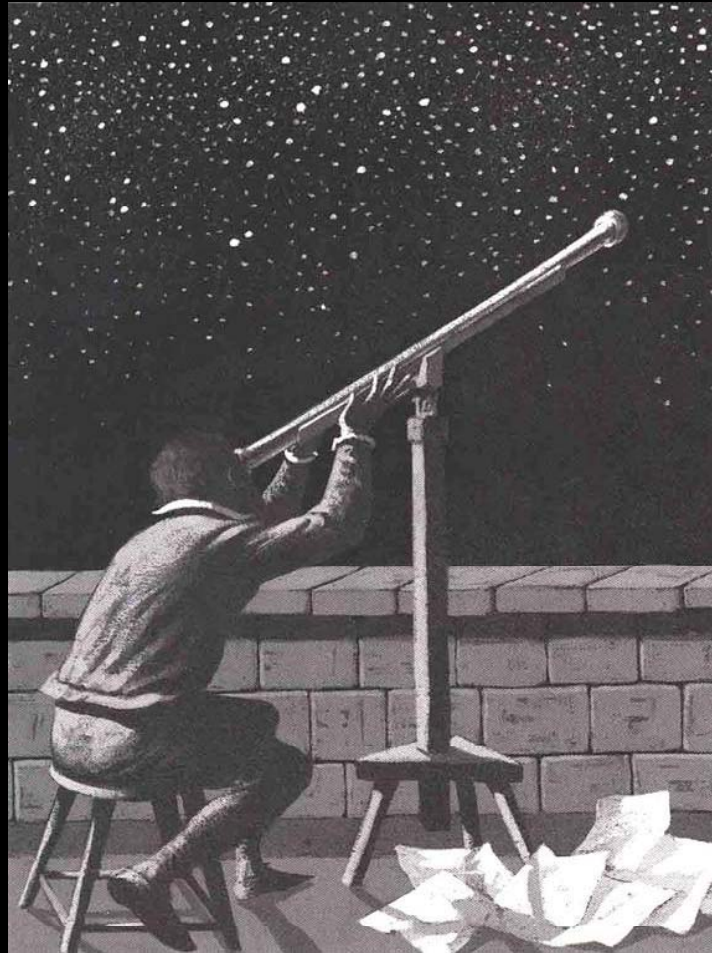
**The Earth-Centered Solar System satisfied
A Deeply grounded human need to feel
“special”; hence the shattering effect of
Galileo’s discovery.**

**The reluctance to give up an exalted place
in the universe has stayed with us and will
soon face its severest test.**

**Christiaan Huygens included some
interesting remarks about this conflict in a
surprisingly prescient and charming book
called COSMOTHEORIS, published in 1685. I
will quote some of his comments as we go
along.**

The Center of the Known Universe





....There were two stars on the eastern side and one to the west. The most easterly star and the western one appeared larger than the other. I paid no attention to the distances between them and Jupiter, for at the outset I thought them to be fixed stars, as I have said. But returning to the same investigation on January eight -- **led by what, I do not know** -- I found a very different arrangement. The three starlets were now all to the west of Jupiter, closer together, and at equal intervals from one another

“... LED BY WHAT, I DO NOT KNOW...”

--GALILEO

**JUPITER HAS HIS FOUR MOONS
WHICH WE OWE TO GALILEO,
AND ANYONE CAN IMAGINE THAT
HE WAS IN **NO SMALL RAPTURE**
AT THE DISCOVERY.**

-C. HUYGENS

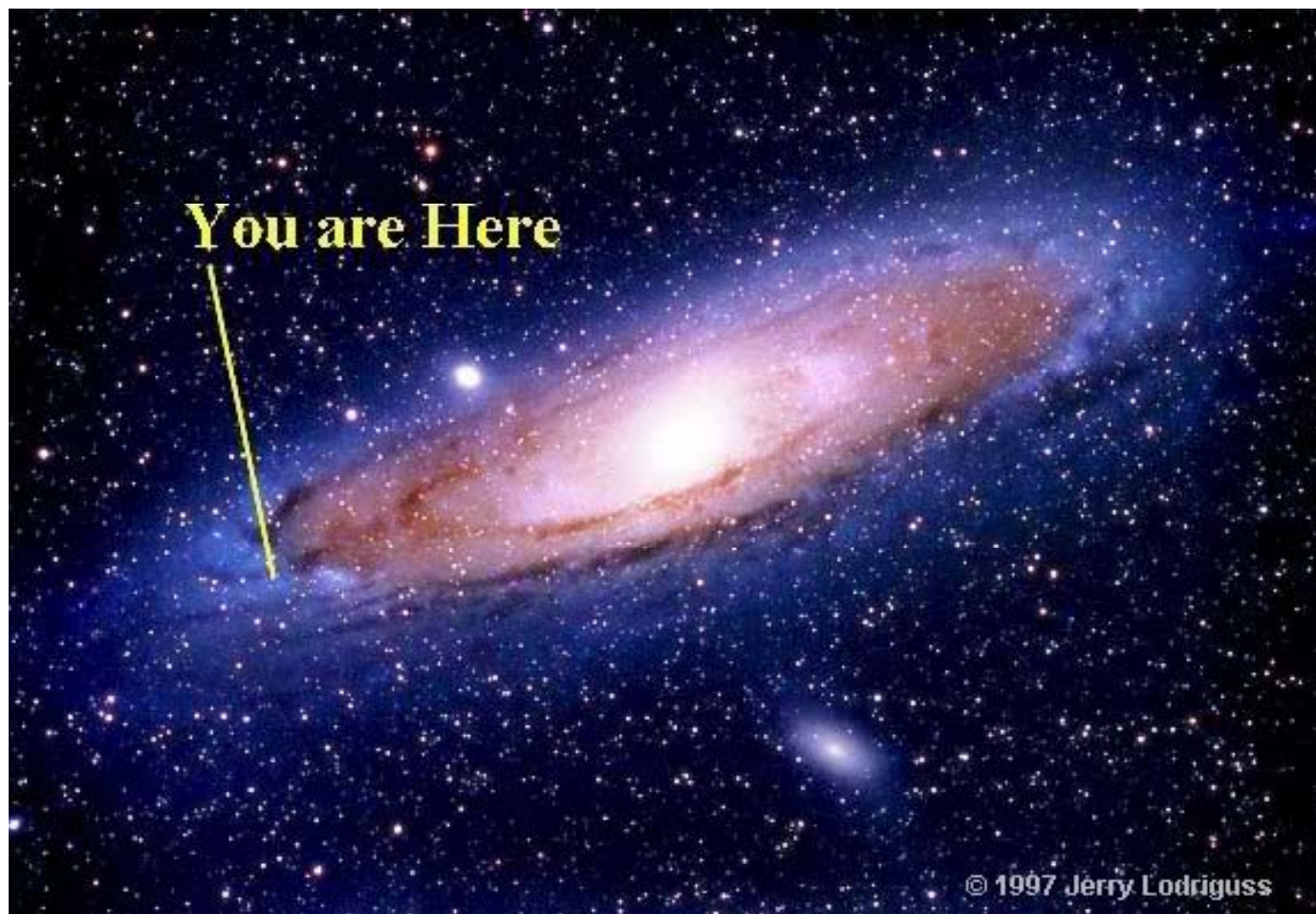
**HOW DID THIS CLEAR DEFEAT OF THE
EARTH-CENTERED SOLAR SYSTEM
CHANGE OUR SENSE OF OUR OWN COSMIC
IMPORTANCE?**



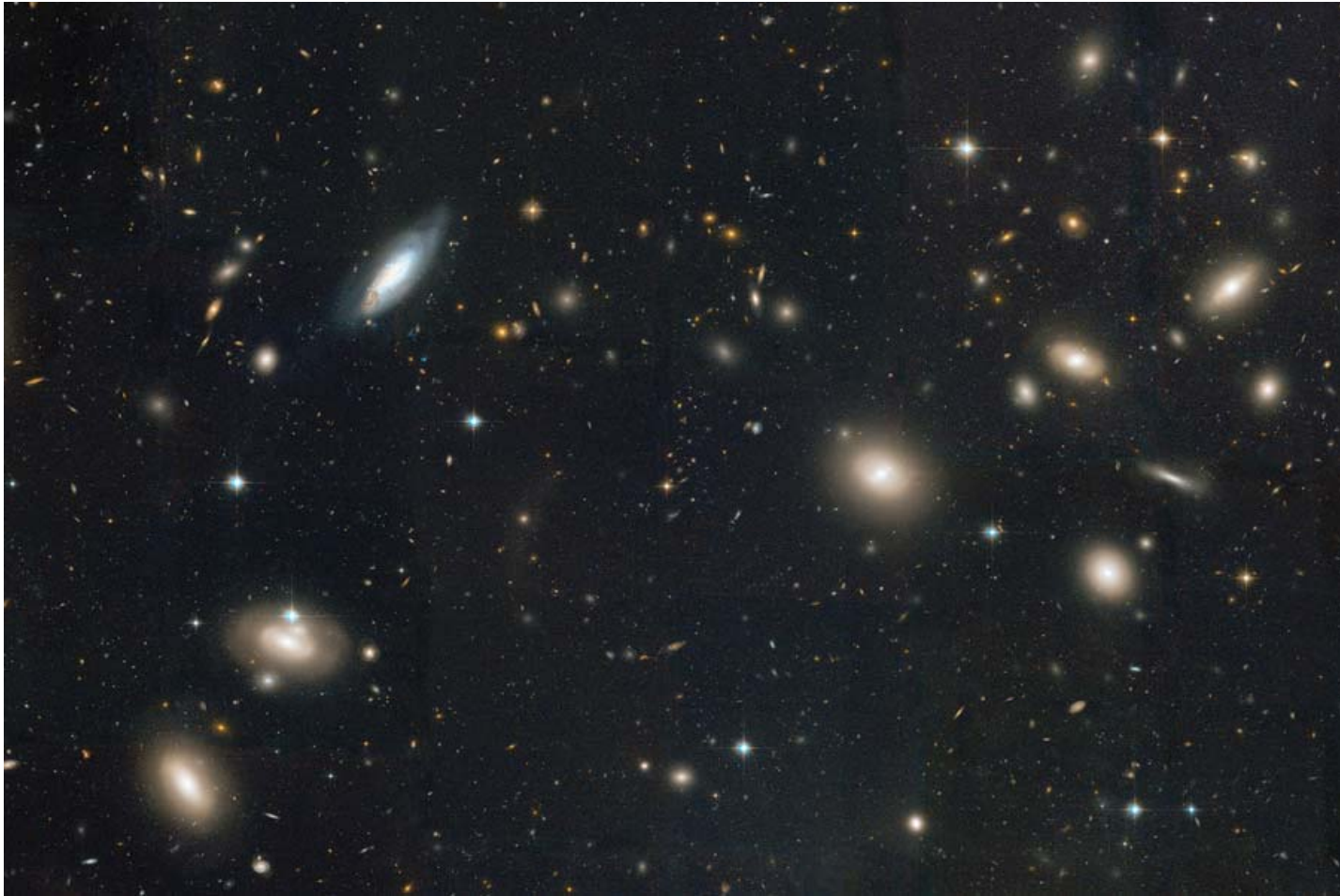
NOT AT ALL!!

**BUT MORE BAD NEWS WAS ON THE WAY.
ON A GALACTIC SCALE OUR PLACE IN
SPACE APPEARED MORE AND MORE
ORDINARY**

You are Here



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SO WHERE ARE WE IN THE COSMOS?

THERE'S NOTHING EXALTED ABOUT

OUR POSITION IN OUR SOLAR SYSTEM

OUR SUN

OUR POSITION IN OUR GALAXY

OUR GALAXY

WHAT'S LEFT?

OUR PLANET?

LIFE!!??

The greatest challenge to our egocentrism is probably waiting for us somewhere in the depths of space: other advanced civilizations on other worlds.

Huygens speculated on this probability using Galileo's stunning discovery for support.

God had no design to make an enumeration of all his works. Under the general name of stars or Earth are understood *all* the heavenly bodies, *even the little gentleman around Jupiter*. So why must all those beings, which God has been pleased to place on these bodies, be excluded?

-Huygens, 1695

**CONJECTURES ARE NOT USELESS BECAUSE
THEY ARE UNCERTAIN**

IN SUCH NOBLE AND SUBLIME STUDIES AS
THESE, 'TIS A GLORY TO ARRIVE AT
PROBABILITY,
AND THE SEARCH ITSELF REWARDS
THE PAINS.

But would even *contact* bring global
humility?

Would it change our behavior?



This shows us how vast those Orbs must be, and how inconsiderable this Earth is, the Theatre upon which all our mighty Designs, all our Navigations, and all our Wars are transacted when compared to them. A very fit Consideration, and matter of Reflection, for those Kings and Princes who sacrifice the Lives of so many People, only to flatter their Ambition in being Masters of some pitiful corner of this small Spot.

Christiaan Huygens 1695

IF ONLY THEY WOULD CONSIDER AND
REFLECT.....

THE END

