

Isn't Space Big?

by

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People often say things like 'it's a small world', when they bump into old, random friends whilst shopping or whatever, but they usually don't truly mean that. What they really mean is 'it's a small city' or 'county' or whatever. What I'm saying is that people rarely encounter past acquaintances in foreign countries, do they? Certainly not in the lonesome countryside, overseas. If they did, that would justify the phrase 'it's a small world'. The world is actually pretty big. No where near as big as the solar system, though. The edge of that is apparently around 7.5 billion kilometres from the sun. However, the distance from the sun to Pluto is about 6 billion kilometres, Google tells me, so let's just give the solar system the latter distance, here. Who cares about a load of nothing?? And yes, Pluto is a planet. Think of the globe naming rhyme learnt in physics, 'my very easy method just speeds up naming planets...' Doesn't work without the last word, does it? Anyway, imagine coming across a long lost friend placed randomly in between THAT range. (6 billion km).

But, things get bigger... Do you have any idea how many stars and potential solar systems are in our galaxy? (The chocolatey Milky Way, that is). It's more than 10... 'No way, you're shitting me!' It's more than 100... 'Fuck off!' It's more than 1,000, or even 10,000... It's 200 billion!!! In other words, 200,000,000,000!!!!!! To put things into perspective, have you seen that crazy Youtube video, where some guy (for whatever reason) counts all the way up to just 100,000? It literally took him all day. Yeah, well times that by a whopping 2 million. (I think). Also, do you realise how long it would take light to travel across Old Milky and to vaguely appreciate each sun? 100,000 years. And light travels ridiculously fast. I recall trying to outrun my shadow when I was a boy, and I never came close. Oh... And now that I think of it... There are 100 billion other galaxies out there. How did I forget that? That's mental.

So what are the consequences of space's huge size? Well, what if future astronauts get lost there? They're screwed. I remember how bad it was when I got lost in a hospital, and even there, there were signs. Where are the signs in the never ending blackness, right? Here's something else that's worrying: The whole of space used to be smaller than a subatomic particle. That's something so small it can't be comprehended. What's going on? I just about understand one or the other - really big or really small - but both?? Space is constantly expanding?? It's bad enough when the value of money changes, imagine the thought of everything around you constantly being altered. How confusing is that?? What makes things worse, is that space is always getting sucked into black holes. Again, how can you imagine both at the same time? Thinking about that kind of stuff can drive a person mad. Very dangerous.

However, there is hope. Unless you are a physicist, you are under no obligation to ponder about this kind of stuff.

Unless you get sucked into a black hole that is, but I don't think that's going to happen. Not yet, at least. Not only do you not really have to think about space on the whole, you don't really even need to think about space in general. The only exception is if a massive meteorite comes whizzing towards Earth, but even then there's probably nothing anyone could do about it, so we're all fucked anyway. So that's good isn't it? In a way. Lastly, getting lost in space is extremely unlikely for most people, as leaving the Earth is fraught with difficulties. Do you have access to a huge rocket that can carry people? If not, don't worry. It's not as if you can climb on top of Mount Everest and jump up to the stars. And on that positive note, let's end things here. Hyvasti!!!!!!