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## The Nullity of Men Related to Time and Space.

My central thought is the fact that the life of a human being is insignificant, when compared to both time and space.

If you would draw a time line of several hundred meters - from the Big Bang until now - only the last few centimetres would describe the history of mankind, a history that starts with the Australopithecus, 4.5 million years ago. (figure p3)  
Imagine the life of a single human being in this time line. It would be no more than a pixel, not larger than 15 nanometres.

A human being is also insignificant compared to the space that he lives in. Again, a single human being is no more than a pixel, living on the dot that represents the earth. The earth is circling around in the spot that is called our solar system, that is - on its turn - part of the stain that is our galaxy... (figure p3); and all of this in a nearly infinite universe consisting of billions of such galaxies.

All this might be a bit demotivating, but in my opinion you have to see everything in the correct perspectives. In the end, we are all living in our own time and space. Why should we care about things happening in another galaxy, thousands of light-years away. We would die of old age before even arriving on the edge of our own solar system. It is difficult enough dealing with problems nearby, problems that are probably of greater importance to mankind.

On the other hand, the awareness of the existence of forces that we are not able to control might help decreasing our feelings of superiority, that we have been struggling with since the origin of mankind.

This awareness might just as well help people to realise that they can not control everything in this universe in general and on planet earth in particular. Let me give you some examples:

*In December 2004 this planet earth already showed what it could do with human civilisation in a couple of hours, for a huge tidal wave arriving on the shores of Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Malaysia, Somalia and Thailand destroyed practically everything in its way.*

*In 2006, planet earth stroke again. Hurricane Katrina was formed in the golf of Mexico and grew to be the third strongest hurricane in the history of the United States. On its passage through the USA, it sailed past New Orleans and left the city in ruins.*

In both situations, the only thing the community could do was try to help the victims of the disaster. Direct prevention is impossible, rebuilding the lost community is just very difficult.

The only hope for ensuring fewer casualties in the future lies in the prediction of natural disasters. Such a prediction-system is now being used for more than 10 years and is improving exponentially. But in order to keep ameliorating the efficiency and correctness of the predictions, we have to keep researching the natural mechanisms that are behind natural disasters.

But still, the only thing people can do when such a disaster is predicted, is to evacuate everyone in the area. This will probably remain the only way of decreasing casualties for the next couple of decennia.

Again, this proves that we are not almighty. The powers of earth are not to be underestimated, but neither are ours. Until now, mankind was able to discover parts of the mechanisms that are behind the powers of nature. We even managed to convert most of the discoveries into an invention that we now benefit from, like the wheel, the compass and GPS.

Maybe later, when all the mechanisms have been fully unravelled, a direct prevention of natural disasters will be possible. Anyway, there is still a lot of work waiting for our young geographers and scientists...

It is not because we ourselves will not benefit from a certain discovery, that it should not be discovered. There will be countless generations after us, who would want us to help making their world a little better. We are at a breaking point right now; there are several problems that we - not our children - have to deal with: climate change, pollution, the decrease of earth's resources... are just the tip of the iceberg. Now is the time to find a solution and save the world of tomorrow.

I might have started my plea by claiming that a human being is of no importance in relation to time or space, but his legacy on the other hand is of extra value. Whatever one has achieved during his life, will have great impact on the ones that are to live after him.

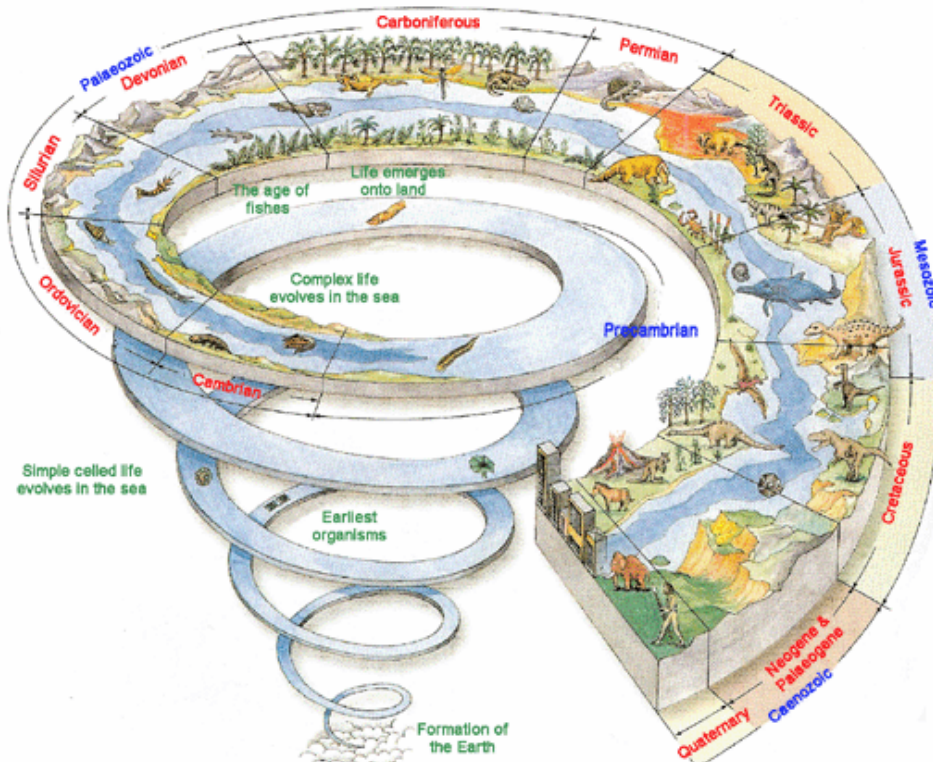
I wish to conclude by stating that there is a big difference between the time and space that you live in or care about, and the time and space that is out of reach and insusceptible anyway. Be realistic: think in the future, not in another dimension!

Thank you for your kind attention,

Sam Van de Heyning  
and all students of 6LWi + 6TWi

PS: To illustrate my project at school, I wish to make a time line of 120 metres in the school's corridor pointing out all major events in earth's history. In this way, I want to prove that the life of men is short in comparison with the time that has elapsed since the formation of earth. However, this does not mean that in this period mankind was not able to achieve innumerable things. Nevertheless, all achievements will probably be forgotten within the next era, when the existence of men has already become a myth.

Figure 1: time line of the life of earth



Source: <http://www.dinosaurisle.com/images/Timeline%203.gif>

Figure 2: multiple galaxies near the boundary of the constellation Pegasus.



Source: <http://antwrp.gsfc.nasa.gov/apod/astropix.html>

Text source: Gelaude, F., Astronomy, course for the 6<sup>th</sup> grade.