

## Infinitesimal

*by Dennis Payton Knight*

Fifty years ago, earthlings walked on the moon. Neil Armstrong led the way and began the sojourn with an announcement and a declaration. "That's one small step for a man, one giant leap for mankind. Houston, Tranquility Base here. The Eagle has landed. Here men from the planet Earth first set foot upon the Moon. July 1969 AD. We came in peace for all mankind."

Measured in terms of historical accomplishment, that voyage to the moon was indeed a giant leap for mankind. It dwarfed the accomplishments of all the daring explorers who went before, the travels of Marco Polo, the expeditions of Ferdinand Magellan, the sailing of Christopher Columbus, the continental search of Lewis and Clark, and many more. But measured in terms of the vastness of space, it was an infinitesimal hop to the moon, too small to even comprehend.

So now I embark on a metaphysical exploration of two opposites. How big is the universe, and how small is an idea?

As for the universe of space, we can only measure what we can see or detect, which is a radius of 46.5 billion light years observable from the earth. Using simple geometry, double that to determine that the diameter of the observable universe is 93 billion light years. How many miles is that? Since one light year is about 6 trillion earth miles, I can't even count the number of zeros it would take to answer that.

And that's only the observable universe, within which are floating around what astronomers estimate to be at least a hundred billion galaxies. Our own Milky Way galaxy is about 52,800 light years across. Interestingly and ironically, that's just one zero more than the 5,280 feet it takes to make up one earth mile. So, let it be known that the size of our universe is cosmic, something beyond calculating within the parameters of the human mind.

Next up: how small is an idea? Noetic science is a new, fascinating discipline studying that very proposition. Are thoughts material? Do they have mass? Is an idea a substance that can be measured? The scientific notion is that our thinking processes are electrical impulses, and that electrical impulses can be measured using ultrasensitive devices to calculate changes; hence, thoughts do have mass.

That is the theory, and it makes sense to me, a speck of a human on a speck of a planet in this vast universe. It may be possible to measure the mass of an idea, even a bad idea, but it would take as many negative zeros as the positive ones it takes to calculate the size of the universe.

Let me think. I am infinitesimal in the scheme of the universe, and the mass of a single lousy idea in the scheme of my finite skull is infinitesimal. I believe Einstein would tell me the formula is a simple one - infinitesimal squared.

Now, how do you measure the size of a headache?