

It's that time of year again, when I've been taking advantage of the clear and long night skies to look at the universe spreading out before us like some giant invitation, which has sparked the synapses since the first person had the first thought.

The science journalist, Michael Hanlon, wrote in the last 2013 edition of the Daily Telegraph:

"...if intelligent life is as common as some suspect then it is certain that by now the aliens have used their telescopes to detect us. Maybe a signal is overdue. Or maybe someone is on their way. Or, of course, there is simply no one out there. The wonderful thing is that any of these possibilities is equally awe-inspiring."

He's right, it *is* awe-inspiring. Just imagine the first possibility; what does that mean to each of us in the greater scheme of things? A universe teeming with life is logical, if for no other reason than statistics and probability. There's so much of it and even in our little corner of this galaxy the small amount of the universe we can observe is mind-blowingly enormous.

The second possibility is no less awe-inspiring. An unimaginably large universe, yet we comprise the only "life" in it! How could that be? Yet, given the empirical evidence to which Hanlon alludes (*viz*, nobody has popped by yet), it is a realistic other option. What does **that** mean for each of us?

Thinking on either case, there is the obvious point, that the universe exists and we are in it. (For now...) That's what our life seems to be for: to make sense of our existence. In order to make sense, it has to be done with regard to the relationships we have within it.

In case you think this is just rambling amateur philosophy, I would point out that all this was summed up at least 3,000 years ago:

"[O Lord,] when I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars that you have established; what are human beings that you are mindful of them, mortals that you care for them." - psalm 8, vss 3,4.

But know each one of us God does; we who are uniquely made to reflect, in some way, his glory.

Go on, pop outside the next clear evening, look up for 20 minutes and know that in all the universe, you count for something. And so does the next person. And the next. And the next...