

## Letter from the Earth

**By Daniel Fox**

*The following is not to be taken literally. It is a humoristic perspective, and it does not aim to anthropomorphize the planet.*

It has come to my attention that in the last two thousand years, there has been some misunderstanding about your perception of what I am, what our relationship is, and what you are. So, as we enter what will be for me one of my most exciting evolutionary chapters since the disappearance of the dinosaurs (yes, I am talking about something that happened sixty-five million years ago), I want to set the record straight and hopefully to remind you of the bigger picture and your role in it. Now I know that your first reaction will be to reject all this, but I am asking you, for the sake of our relationship, to take a moment and read.

### **What Am I?**

Perhaps I can start by telling you what I am not. This might come as a surprise, but I am not something for you to save. I am not some little fragile entity that needs to be protected. I am not yours to manage either. I am also not your mother. The fact that you bring me down to a gender proves to me that you have failed to recognize what I am. I understand that you like to bring things to your level so that you can feel better about yourself, but there are things that simply are bigger than you. I know you like to categorize everything because it helps you to make sense of the world around you. It gives you a sense of place. It brings you peace when you feel there is a structure you can explain. But understand, not everything can be categorized. You cannot reduce me to a nice little concept that fits neatly into your perception of what is right and what is wrong, what should be and what should not be. A binary way of looking at the world like that simply does not work. The scale on which I exist and live and the dynamics I deal with are simply out of your realm of comprehension. Just to give you an idea of what we are talking about, you have a rough understanding of my age, 4.5 billion years, and my lifespan, 7.6 billion years. Whether the numbers are correct or not does not really matter: the lesson is the same. So, for the sake of the exercise, going along with those numbers, I can tell you that one minute of your life (given that you live for a hundred years) is the equivalent of 144 years for me. The time you will take to read this page (six minutes), represents 864 years of my existence. One day in your calendar is 207,360 years in mine. One month is 6,220,800 years. A month ago, on my timeline, your species was emerging! Also do not forget, I am just a speck in a much bigger picture. A picture whose timeline is apparently at least twenty times longer than mine. Yes, I know, quite a perspective you might say! It is OK if you have trouble wrapping your head around it. I too find it difficult to process. I mean, can you make sense of the difference between twenty billion years and fifty billion? I sure cannot!

Much like you, I have a goal. That goal is to become more than what I started with. I want to evolve. I want to spread the knowledge I have acquired over time to new places. I want a legacy. I want to connect. I want to have a purpose that is beyond me. I mean who does not? Just like your body, which started as a simple cell, a cell that then multiplied, evolved, and then turned into the creature you are, with an amazing brain, two legs, and two arms, roaming everywhere it can roam, I, too, started as a tiny little thing, billions of years ago.

My beginnings were quite primitive. I was not the complex entity I am today. You could think of this chapter in my life as my baby phase. It was a time of profound transformation where I had to tough it up and find ways to protect myself. I will be honest with you: it was pretty brutal. I certainly did not get to be who I am today because I had it easy. The resiliency I have was truly born out of fire and other tragic and monumental events I had to go through.

Now as time went on, slowly and gradually, and with luck, I added layers of complexity onto my world. I started to experiment. I started to push the boundaries. I started to get out of my comfort zone to see what would happen. Some of my experiments were brilliant and some others, well, they did not get too far. For a while, I thought I had it figured out. I had this one project going. It went on for a long time and it was wonderful and beautiful. But also, for some reason, it was not going anywhere either. Well, it was, but not in the direction I wanted it to. Then the project kind of ended: it totally collapsed. I mean everything disappeared! It was not even my fault! You can thank the universe for this one! All I had built was destroyed. I mean everything. If you want a metaphor, think of Steve Jobs being fired from Apple. Yep. That is how it felt. I had spent so much energy and time building something and out of nowhere, coming from the sky, I lost it all. But I am an entrepreneur, and I was not going to let this cataclysmic event bring me down. I looked at what I had left and started to build on it.

Now, remember my goal. What I want my legacy to be about. I want to be the starting point, not the end. I want to connect with others. I want to reach out. I want to find others like me. So, how do I achieve that? How do I get through the limits and challenges that were given to me and get to fulfill my dreams? How do I spread the knowledge I have? Well, I keep pushing the boundaries and I keep trying. I keep looking for new ways. And I know that this by itself is designed to create conflict. Now before you make a judgment, let me remind you that it is exactly the same journey you, your body, and your mind experience, but on a smaller scale. How did you get to be who you are today? Was it a straight line? Did you have any setbacks? Did you fail? Did you make any mistakes? How did you get to develop the skills you have? How did you achieve the impossible? It certainly was not by sitting back and letting the world go by. Nor was it without its share of challenges, struggles, and suffering. You have tried. You have failed. You have tried again. You have learned. You have adapted. You have transformed. Then new challenges

found you. And the cycle kept repeating. That is what you do—you keep on trying and failing so you can move forward.

Before I get to the next point on my agenda, I need to circle back to the first question—Who am I? I know you like clear answers, so here it is. I am the planet of course, and the knowledge I have is life, and life is nature. There is no such thing as life and nature. They are both the same. My goal is to spread life. Spread life to places that have no life. I am not interested in keeping things the way they are. So, I am definitely not a fan of the status quo. I embrace disruptions. In fact, I thrive on them. I do everything I can to create change and force innovation. I want to evolve. Hopefully, I and the others can create this mosaic of life across the universe. I agree, not a small endeavor I can assure you. But I am committed to it.

Earlier I mentioned one of my projects that lasted for a long time but then got destroyed. I also said that it was not going anywhere. What I meant is that it had reached a plateau, and if the randomness of the universe had not reset the clock, well, I am not even sure we would be here talking to each other. I mean it is quite extraordinary that the mammals have done more in terms of evolution in the last sixty-five million years than the dinosaurs did in two hundred million years. I do not want to say anything bad about the reptiles. They were amazing, but again, I wanted more. Now even within the mammals, one species has proven extremely resourceful and quite surprising, a bit arrogant from time to time, but still the only one who has risen to the task and is about to help me to fulfill my dreams. So yes, this new era we found ourselves in is about to be one of my most exciting evolutionary milestones.

Which leads me to my next point—WHO ARE YOU?

You are a vessel for something that is much bigger than you. You are a tool for life to expand. You, along with other species, are doing the same as I am doing. In fact, the same as what the universe is doing and what galaxies are doing. We are born. We grow and expand. We evolve and connect. We slow down and settle. Finally, we reach the end of the journey, only to be recycled into something else and reborn for a new journey. The Big Bang, as you call it, was not the beginning of it all; it was only the start of a new chapter in a book that has neither a beginning nor an end.

While life gave every organism the same tools for evolution, you somehow, through immense luck, managed to acquire certain skills that allowed you to make quantum leaps in development. Some of those little discoveries were simply born out of a biological and evolutionary purpose, but they evolved and became much more. The consciousness you possess today, while extremely complex and powerful, started like everything else: a simple spark, nothing more. A cell that grew and continues to grow. But as life is built on duality, these new powers came with their own burden. Your sense of awareness allows you to study the past, question the present, and imagine a future. It also makes you compare and wonder what is missing. Your emotions enhance your journey in ways that

are truly magical, but they also offer tragedies, pain, and suffering. Your remarkable ingenuity either builds or destroys the greatest of castles.

Altogether, they set the stage for a complicated journey. While your lives are rich with discoveries and your capacity to engineer the impossible is truly remarkable, you are still a young and immature species. You try to grasp the immensity of the universe and struggle to accept the limited but really important part you play in it. So, you create stories that give meaning to lives that have no purpose other than to push life forward. That said, for the record, I must share with you how I am amazed at your creativity in creating stories, they are truly incredible and have the power to get you through the unthinkable. But be warned, they also have the capacity to take away everything you have built and to destroy all the work you have accomplished.

### **To Boldly Go**

Life is continuously moving forward, boldly going where it has not been. When not in motion, it is because something is holding it. Not because it wants to stop. Just like water in a glass, its desire for expansion is contained. But take the glass away and the water goes everywhere. Some of it will dry. Some of it will nourish certain organisms. Some of it will sneak through cracks and merge with other waters until it finds the ocean. Even there, contained by the earth's crust, it still moves, trying to find a place to go. So do you.

Being an ambassador for life, you are constantly moving forward, looking for new places. And when those places are not reached, it is not because you do not want to, but because you cannot. These mountains locked you in until you found a way over or around them. These oceans kept you from going further until you learned to ride them. The sky was the realm of dreams until you discovered how to build wings. You have found a way to overcome every obstacle. Propelled by this relentless and eternal inner force, you fulfill life's mission with undeniable creativity and resourcefulness.

Now, for the first time in billions of years, you are about to leave the nest and embark on a journey like no other, bringing along the knowledge I have given you to new destinations. This is so exciting! Do you know how many other planets have tried and failed? Their numbers are staggering!

Now do not be fooled. Just like everything else before, this new chapter will grow into its own journey of transformation, unveiling with it known and new unimaginable struggles, threats, and pains. My advice: do not think you can avoid them, just be prepared. They are part of the process.

### **Remember**

While you are a species worthy of special recognition, you are also nothing more than one piece in a puzzle made of thousands of other pieces. By yourself, you mean nothing. By yourself, you are nothing. It is together that you become something. It is your connections to others and everything else that brings value to your existence. Just like

me. If it was not for the Sun, the Moon, Jupiter, the comets, and so many others, I would have nothing to show. If it was not for them, I would be meaningless and would have not been able to nurture life, including you. You owe what you are today not only to them, but also to everything else that came before. Your existence is built on the disappearances of past species and the failures of past societies.

As you venture forward, be grateful and humble. Do not be greedy and righteous. Life uses diversity not only to enrich the experience, but also most importantly to develop the resilience needed to face the unknown. Remember, it is not about you. It is not about me either. It is about life and its mission to become more than what it was. To evolve and connect, just like a fungus that stretches on a log, or the neurons in your brain. If you fail in recognizing your place in it, if you mistake your importance for entitlement and treat what is around as slaves to your illusion of being a master, know that there is a future waiting for your failure and disappearance.

Now make me proud and boldly go where no life has been before.

Sincerely yours,  
The Planet

P.S. Stop thinking you are bad species. Evolution is messy. Life is messy. I am messy. The universe is messy. You make a mess, and it lasts for a year. Humanity breaks something, and it takes a hundred years to fix it. I make a mess, and it lasts for a million years. The universe makes a mess, and it goes on for a billion years. What matters is what you do once you realize either you have made a mistake or what was once a solution has outlived its purpose and is now a problem. So, stop obsessing on finding someone to blame; instead move forward with acquired wisdom and continue being creative and resourceful. Oh, and if you had forgotten, life/nature created you. Not the other way around.

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**Editors' Notes:** Daniel Fox's artful personification of the Earth raises a number of nuanced, and potentially controversial viewpoints. He portrays the Earth as resilient and messy, even as he suggests higher aspirations for terrestrial life as it migrates into space and onto other worlds. He depicts humans as shepherds of life in the solar system, but also as simply one species among many. In the end, he unequivocally advocates for gratitude and humility. This thought-provoking piece is an excellent addition to this philosophical volume. **Gordon Arthur and Mark Wagner.**



**About the Author:** Daniel Fox is the author of *Feel the Wild*, founder of The Future of Space, and founder of Space 100.10. He is a major space advocate, believing that it is nature's goal to venture into space. Space is nature. His mission is to do everything he can to promote, inspire' and bridge our species' journey into outer space. As he says: "We are ambassadors for life, and it is our responsibility to share Earth's knowledge and gift so that we can support the universe's goal to connect."