

Are we nothing, or are we everything?

by Mark Pavilons

Humans have an amazing capacity for pretty much anything.

Put a problem or puzzle in front of us, and we're bound to solve it.

We can create something out of nothing, but not on the grand scale of the universe. At least not yet!

We can learn, grow, accumulate knowledge and wisdom. We can apply it to society as a whole, and we can teach, instruct, guide and inspire.

That's pretty cool for a species that's still pretty young in the grand scheme of the cosmos.

Okay, along with all those good things, we also created reality TV and plastic. It can be argued that we've done more harm than good on this planet of ours.

That's history.

What's important is the here and now, and perhaps the tomorrow and the days that follow. Evolution, progression and the passage of time combine to carry us, like a wave, into the unknown. We're riding high at the moment, at the height of our technological prowess and scientific savvy. Every year, every decade, we move closer to curing diseases, solving cosmic riddles and finding ways to improve life on Earth.

I think it's important to be humble, when thinking about our accomplishments, legacies, handiwork and creations. Our lives often can't be measured in physical, even logical terms.

Are we everything or are we nothing?

Aye, there's the rub as William Shakespeare once pointed out. He believed we are all merely actors in one huge play, performing our roles from birth to death. In our last scene, as we prepare to exit stage right, we become childish in our old age. We lose all of our senses and fade into oblivion.

Now, Will was known for his tragedies and overtones of doom and gloom.

But what does await us at the end of our strange eventful history?

Only those who've had near-death experiences, who've been to the great beyond and back, can shed a tiny bit of light on the subject. But even their descriptions are vague and imperfect.

But if you believe in ghosts, spirits or apparitions, you may also believe in another level of existence or dare I say, afterlife.

Regardless of your beliefs and faith, I do hope there's more than our humble existence here on earth, spinning and flying through our neck of the universe. There has to be!

To what end? I'm really not sure. In my mind, I believe that all who've lived and died somehow combine forces in the next plane of existence. Bits of our memories, spirits and yes knowledge, are gathered and collected, assembled in some form to become part of our massive realm the cosmos that gave birth to everything.

Or not.

I hate, and fear the idea of passing away and facing an eternity of "nothingness," just empty, hollow blackness. Of course, it won't matter to me, I'll be gone and won't feel a thing!

They say your life passes before your eyes when the end is near. I'm not sure that I'd enjoy my personal highlight reel all that much.

As we age, become frail and begin to count the seasons, what goes through our thoughts? What do we hold dear?

The minutiae of everyday tasks - doing online shopping, taking out the trash, getting tires for our cars and brushing our teeth - may not contribute to our overall well being. They are pretty meaningless in the big picture.

What's not meaningless is what we've created to date. That's as unique and different as we are, as each wondrous snowflake that falls from the heavens.

If you're a parent, you are everything to your children - creator, giver of life, mentor, guide, provider and defender. Without much training or experience, we invent life and bring human beings into existence. That's crazy, and a task that should never have been left to mere mortals! We are the builders of miracles.

Some of us do this over and over again, until we get it right LOL!

This one monumental achievement is the ultimate in legacies. While a person won't last as long as a steel bridge or concrete office tower, they have the potential to save the world. They can, and maybe will some day, fly to the stars, cure cancer or dance into the hearts of millions.

We may or may not witness these feats. It's okay if they don't become famous, and merely meander through life, making spirits bright. It's okay if they are "average" and just work hard, contribute, touch hearts and raise families.

Our role in all of this - the designers - set the whole thing in motion. We are immensely important, as were each and every one of our ancestors. Our very existence is due to them, and so on and so forth. Just as birth is a miracle, so is our lineage.

Even if we don't have offspring our very existence is essential, ordained if you will. The fact we're here in the first place must mean something. We can all do great things, instead of merely reproducing.

I don't know if being remembered is really important. We're remembered by our loved ones, but as time moves forward, memories fade and our footprints wash away.

My wife has an almost photographic memory, but my memories of my parents and sister are blurry at best. The reality is that all of us will some day be forgotten.

Who wants to live forever anyway?

Just as we should count our blessings every day, we should all be thrilled that we got the chance to ride this merry-go-round of humanity.

To exist at all is the most profound things in the universe. And that means everything!