

## **Back to Basics**

My father passed away. He was laid into the same red soil in which he planted trees all his life, in the vicinity of those plantations that he watered routinely, near the house that he built in his rugged hands - and I grew in, surrounded by the people he loved and loved him in return, under the blue sky that I study as an astronomer. In astronomy we realize that matter takes new forms over time. The matter we are made of was produced in the heart of a nearby massive star that exploded. It assembled to make the Earth which nourishes plants that feed our body. A speck of this material takes form as our body during our lifetime but then goes back to Earth (with one exception, namely the ashes of Clyde Tombaugh, the discoverer of Pluto, which were put on the New Horizons spacecraft and are making their way back to space). What are we then, if not just a transient shape that a speck of material took for a brief moment in cosmic history on the surface of one planet out of so many? We are insignificant not just because the cosmos is so vast but because we are merely a transient structure that comes and goes, recorded in the minds of other transient structures. And that is all.

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