

# The Justice Academy Journal

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## The Importance of Perspective

### Celebrating One Trillion Miles Traveled

Throughout human history (perspective) has played a significant role in shaping ideology, influencing social beliefs, guiding scientific discovery, and determining our value systems. Perspective is a complex issue because each of us develops our individual perspectives based on a wide variety of factors, which are predicated upon a lifetime of experiences, and perceived knowledge, which may or may not be correct. Perspective is shaped by aggregating all of the facts and discoveries that we possess about a particular issue and then forming conclusions based on the information and understanding that we have amassed since our birth. Hopefully, we then integrate this knowledge within a decision making process to derive conclusions and beliefs. The result is our perspective on the issue.

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JusticeAcademy.org also sponsors comprehensive research into a variety of issues relative to the law and justice professions, as well as authoring and advancing national strategic initiatives that deal with specific challenges. The intention of this service is to support professional development, personal advancement, and departmental competency of the law and justice community, as well as to serve as a mechanism for the proliferation of exemplary training resources nationwide.

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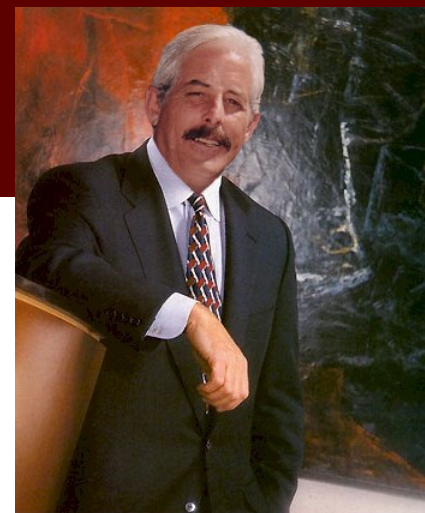
What is important to recognize about perspective is not that it is an ending point, but rather, that our perspective also serves as a point of departure for all of our subsequent decisions and judgments about future issues. We use perspective as an anchor point for our beliefs about the world and gauge each new fact or discovery relative to its pertinence and impact upon our existing core beliefs (or perspective). Unfortunately, perspective (or the lack thereof) can be a contaminating influence in the search for truth.

People who firmly believed that the earth was flat made subsequent judgments about our importance within the universe, religion, and political beliefs based on this fallacy. Values were formed that placed the earth in a special position within the universe. Religious dogma was shaped to reinforce the belief that since the stars revolved around the earth then our planet must be the center of all things, and extrapolated this to mean that we humans were exceptional creatures in comparison to all others and as such, merited a position of supreme importance. Obviously, later discoveries by Copernicus and Galileo altered this view of the universe, resulting in a need to reassess everything we knew to be true and absolute one minute prior to their discoveries. Many however simply could not accept these revelations and rejected their implications because the significance of this new information stood in direct conflict with their long held perspective. For many, delusion was preferable to enlightenment.

An excellent demonstration of the importance of perspective can be found in the question, “how many directions are you moving, this very minute”. I have used this question for decades to profile the importance of perspective in critical thinking. Invariably, when I ask this question of a classroom full of students, I get a plethora of responses. Mostly the students simply guessed and shouted out a number that they hope was correct, but when I challenged their assertion by saying, “you’re not moving at all are you, because you’re sitting in this classroom”, they unanimously agreed that it cannot be possible to be moving while sitting still. This is the same group mindset has caused countless cultures to form inaccurate conclusions and values about the world. As I explained that their perspective of sitting still and motionless was wrong, and in fact, they are moving in four distinctly different directions at once, they began to notice a fracture in their collective perspective.

I began by reminding them that they are moving in an arc around the planet, as it orbits its axis at about one thousand miles per hour. Additionally, I pointed out that they are moving around the Sun as the earth travels in its orbital path. To make matters more complicated, the Sun is traveling around the spiral arm of the Milky Way galaxy,

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Hal Campbell currently serves as the Executive Director of JusticeAcademy.org. He also serves as a member of the teaching faculty for the University of Maryland concentrating in the areas of public policy strategy, criminal law, constitutional law, justice administration, empirical analyses, and higher education.

Judge Campbell recently concluded a term of service as a member of the judiciary in the State of Montana. His appointment to the bench was bestowed by the Montana Supreme Court, Commission on Courts of Limited Jurisdiction. Prior to this appointment to the bench, he served for over twenty-five years as a tenured professor and department chair with the California State University. His public policy and law enforcement experience includes a variety of senior management positions with the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department. From 1978 to 1989 he held positions in the department including Law Enforcement Planning Coordinator, Chief Analyst, and began his career as a Deputy Sheriff.

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while the galaxy itself travels away from the center of the universe. Therefore, essentially, each of us is moving in four different directions at the same time, while sitting perfectly still. Our perspective however is limited by our failure to sense any of these motions and it's not hard to imagine how it is that people conclude (falsely) that they are anchored firmly to their seat and sitting perfectly still.

In truth we are moving in four spatial directions simultaneously and at the incredible velocity of nearly two million miles per hour. To be more precise, as we sit perfectly still we orbit the earth at about 1000 mph. Next, the earth orbits the sun at about 67,000 mph. The sun orbits the galaxy at about 514,000 mph. And finally, the galaxy moves away from the center of the universe at an astonishing 1,339,000 miles per hour. Combined, this relative velocity equals about 1,921,000 miles per hour in four directions, at the same time, within our three dimensional space.

This relative velocity translates into an unimaginable number of miles traveled each year of about 17 billion miles. As we orbit the earth's axis we cover about 8,760,000 miles annually (24,000 miles a day times 365 days a year). As the earth orbits the sun we travel another 585 billion miles each year (67000 mph times x 24 x 365). As the sun moves along its path around the Milky Way galaxy we add another 4 billion 231 million miles traveled to our annual total (514,000 mph x 24 x 365). Finally, as our galaxy moves away from the center of the Big Bang at a velocity of 1.3 million mph, we cover another 11 billion, 388 million miles traveled every year. Combined our annual miles traveled through the universe totals approximately 16,837,960,000 miles.

The importance of this exercise in perspective can be found in pointing out that false conclusions are an easy thing to fall victim to and all too often, many of our perspectives are found to be based on previously inaccurate conclusions. It is important to remember that perspective matters in determining absolute truth and we need to be careful to avoid falling victim to haphazard acceptance of incorrect prior beliefs, as we endeavor to extend the reach of human knowledge. Nothing should be taken for granted and everything that we think we know for certain should be reassessed (continually) based on new information. Simply having our eyes open does not assure the attainment of truth, especially if our minds are closed because of limited perspective. If we fail to fully understand the point of departure we occupy because of our limited perspective before we search for new discoveries, and if that point of departure is predicated on a fallacy that we have previously accepted as true, then our perspective is inaccurate and everything we build on top of it is contaminated.

I am delighted to say that as I write these words, I have completed 23,115 orbits around the earth, and sixty-three complete orbits around the sun. Relative to my orbital movement around the galaxy I regret to say that I have only traveled a small fraction of the distance needed to complete just one revolution around the galaxy (230 million years to go around just once). And, relative to the enormity of the universe, I have traveled for no more than an insignificant distance relative to the immense size of the universe as measured from the center of the Big Bang to farthest regions of space that we can detect (13.8 billion light years). The grand total of the distance I have traveled during my lifetime is impressive however and has now surpassed one trillion miles.

1,060,791,500,000 miles to be exact.



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- Last Chance Deferred Imposition of Sentence Project
- School Violence Predictive Model
- Tactical Incident Team Advisory Network
- National Text Blocking for Drivers Project
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