

Rhetoric of Discarded Paradigm. Flat-Earthers as an Interpretive Community

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The Problem

The Object

1. Facebook Group: "ZIEMIA - - PŁASKA" ("EARTH - - FLAT")
— ZP
2. 7742 members (15 September 2018)

The Notions

1. culture of conspiracy¹
2. participatory culture²
3. interpretive community³
4. Cartesian Freedom⁴

¹Barkun 2003; Goldberg 2001

²Jenkins 2006

³Fish 1980

⁴Sartre 1962

Henry Jenkins:

1. With relatively low barriers to artistic expression and civic engagement
2. With strong support for creating and sharing one's creations with others
3. With some type of informal mentorship whereby what is known by the most experienced is passed along to novices
4. Where members believe that their contributions matter
5. Where members feel some degree of social connection with one another (at the least they care what other people think about what they have created)⁵

⁵Jenkins 2006

Stanley Fish:

*"Interpretive communities are made up of those who share interpretive strategies not for reading (in the conventional sense) but for writing texts, for constituting their properties and assigning their intentions. In other words, these strategies exist prior to the act of reading and therefore determine the shape of what is read rather than, as is usually assumed, the other way around."*⁶

⁶Fish 1980, p. 171.

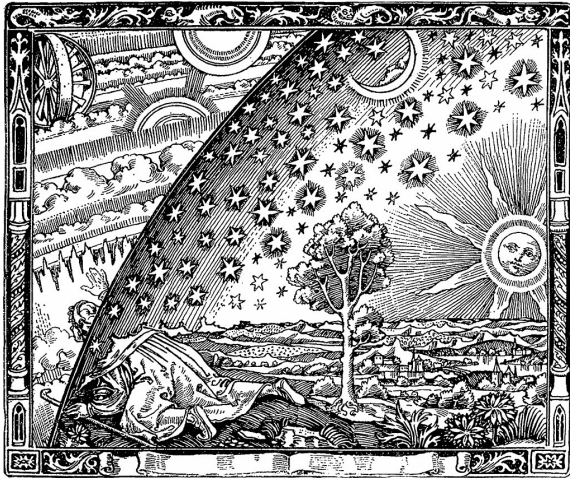
Jean-Paul Sartre:

*"Since the order of truths exists outside of me, that which will define me as an autonomy is not creative invention but refusal. It is by refusing to the point of being unable to refuse any more that we are free."*⁷

⁷Sartre, 1962: 189.

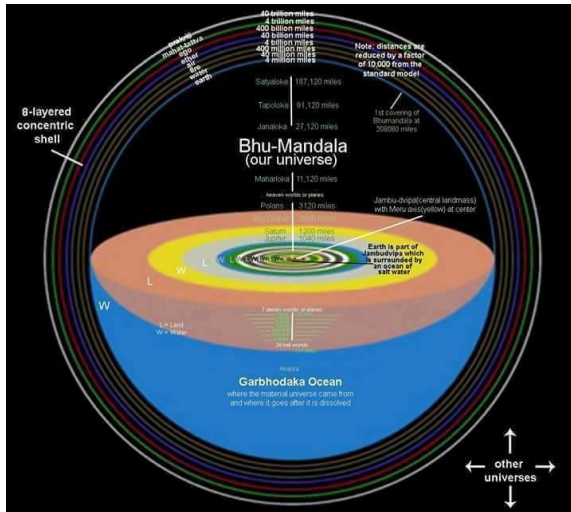
A Short History of the Flat Earth

Biblical Cosmology



Flammarion engraving, 1888

Structure of the world



Modern Presentations

Bedford Level Experiment



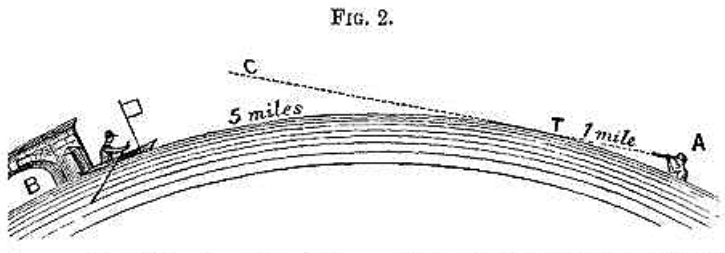
Old Bedford Level, Welney, Norfolk, UK

Bedford Level Experiment



Old Bedford Level, 2008

Zetetic Astronomy



Zetetic Astronomy. Earth not a Globe! An Experimental Inquiry into the True Figure of the Earth: Proving it a Plane, without Axial or Orbital Motion; and the only Material World in the Universe! By Parallax, London 1965.

*"The term "zetetic" is derived from the Greek verb zeteo; which means to search or examine — to **proceed only by inquiry**. None can doubt that by making special experiments and collecting manifest and undeniable facts, arranging them in logical order, and observing what is naturally and fairly deducible, the result will be far more consistent and satisfactory than by framing a theory or system and assuming the existence of causes for which there is no direct evidence, and which can only be admitted "for the sake of argument"”⁸*

⁸Rowbotham 1865: 2

- Lady Elizabeth Blunt founded Universal Zetetic Society in 1893
- literal interpretation of the Bible
 1. six day long creation
 2. flat and young Earth
 3. close Sun and Moon⁹

⁹Garwood 2007: 156-157

Zion City:

- John Alexander Dowie, a Scottish evangelist and healer, 1901
- 6500 acres in Illinois, on a western shore of Lake Michigan
- Wilbur Glenn Voliva:
 - introduces Flat Earth theory and creationism to the school curriculum in Zion City
 - 1923 — a radio station, first evangelical radio station in the history, one of the most powerful in the USA at the moment

- 1956 — Samuel Shenton creates the International Flat Earth Research Society,
- Daniel Shenton — www.theflatearthsociety.org.

The Flat-earthers and their discourse

- "group of researchers"

*"Our Group "Earth – Flat" is a site for flat-earthers and for those, who are **sincerely** interested in the topic and want to expand their knowledge on various aspects of our flat and stationary Earth, and share their insights, observations and questions"*¹⁰

¹⁰Description, "ZIEMIA - - PŁASKA",
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/310827685793049/> [retrieved
01.05.2018] later referred as D

"We are NOT interested in debates"

*"We are at a stage where we are NOT interested in debates like flat earth and earth sphere. Flat Earth is not a hypothesis, let alone a system of beliefs, it is a **verifiable and confirmable fact** that people from around the world have known for thousands of years, but indoctrination and censorship of the last 500 years have caused that this once obvious knowledge is today marginalized, manipulated and ridiculed. The materials collected and experiments undertaken **unequivocally confirm** that the earth is stationary."¹¹*

¹¹D

"Scientific methods"

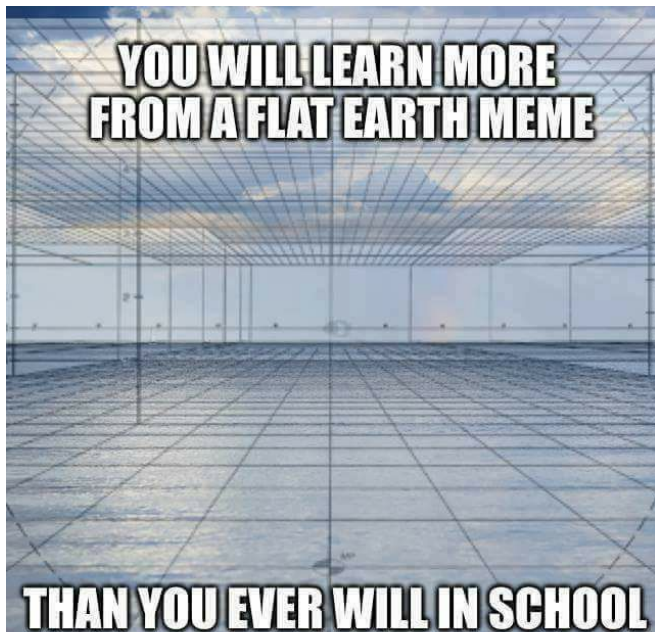
- "Start to think independently"¹²
- "Anyone who uses **scientific methods** is worthy to be heard and to be respected"¹³

¹²D

¹³D

Welcome to YoutubeVersity! An Introduction to the Rhetoric of Flat Earth

Welcome to YoutubeVersity!

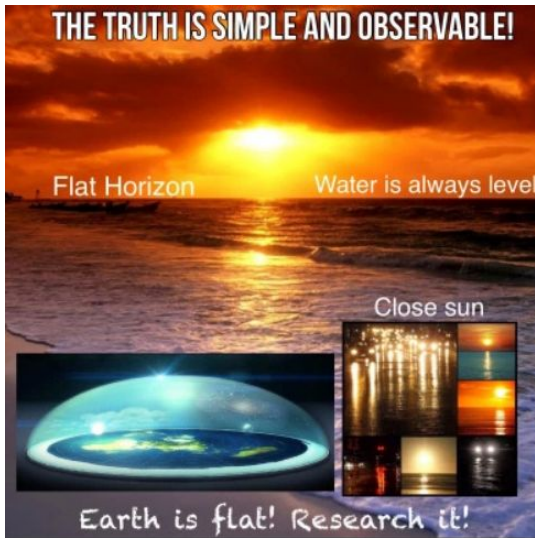


**YOU WILL LEARN MORE
FROM A FLAT EARTH MEME**

THAN YOU EVER WILL IN SCHOOL

Flat Horizon, Convex Water, and a Carousel

Flat Horizon



Visual evidence

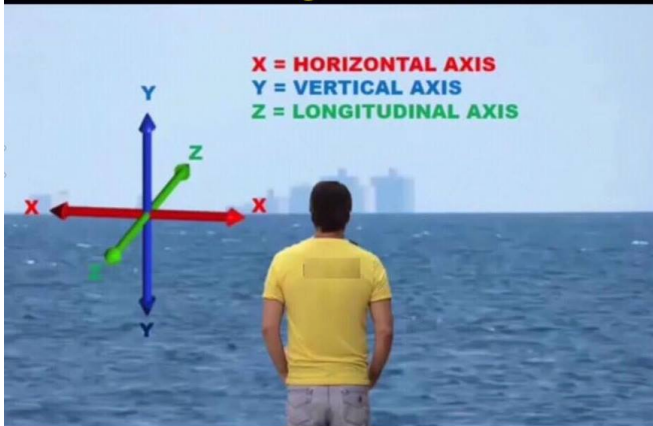
Flat Horizon



Visual evidence

Flat Horizon

If we observe no curvature along the "x" axis, then why do we assume curvature exists along the "z" axis?

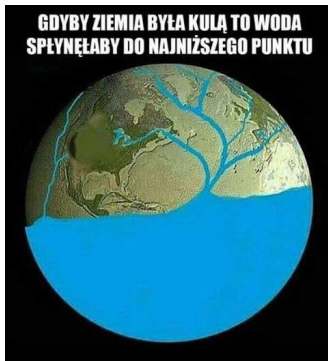


Convex Water



"Common sense"

Convex Water



"Common sense"

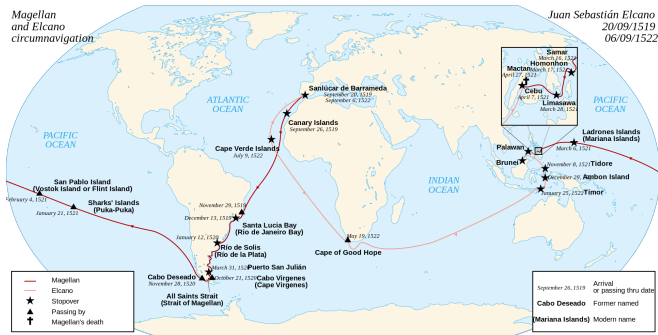
Carousel



"Common sense"

From Johannesburg to Sao Paolo trough London

Magellan–Elcano circumnavigation



Magellan–Elcano circumnavigation (1519-1522)

Magellan–Elcano circumnavigation



Magellan–Elcano circumnavigation

From Johannesburg to Sao Paulo through London



Conclusions

Filter Bubble



*"The new generation of Internet filters looks at **the things you seem to like** — the actual things you've done, or the things people like you like — and tries to extrapolate. They are prediction engines, constantly creating and refining a theory of who you are and what you'll do and want next. Together, these engines create a unique universe of information for each of us — what I've come to call a filter bubble — which fundamentally alters the way we encounter ideas and information"* ¹⁴

¹⁴Pariser 2011: 10

The End

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