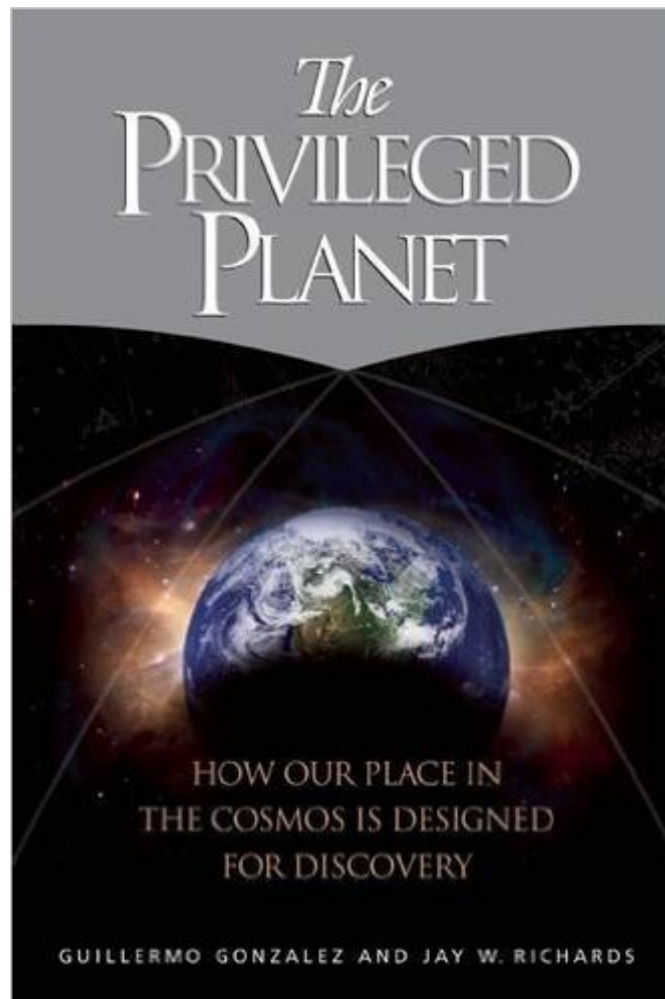


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The Privileged Planet: How Our Place In The Cosmos Is Designed For Discovery



Synopsis

Earth. The Final Frontier
Contrary to popular belief, Earth is not an insignificant blip on the universe's radar. Our world proves anything but average in Guillermo Gonzalez and Jay W. Richards' *The Privileged Planet: How Our Place in the Cosmos Is Designed for Discovery*. But what exactly does Earth bring to the table? How does it prove its worth among numerous planets and constellations in the vastness of the Milky Way? In *The Privileged Planet*, you'll learn about the world's life-sustaining capabilities, water and its miraculous makeup, protection by the planetary giants, and how our planet came into existence in the first place.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I got this book as soon as it became available, so I thought I'd be the first one to write a review. I've followed the debates over design and fine tuning for a while, and had heard this book was in the pipeline. I am thoroughly impressed with the clarity of its argument, the elegance of its prose, and the staggering level of scholarship displayed in its pages. I have no doubt that it will raise the level of debate on the larger issues about the meaning of it all. The book is richly illustrated with both color and black and white pictures. Gonzalez and Richards' (G and R) argument is something that, so far as I know, has not really been discussed before, namely, that the universe is fine-tuned for scientific discovery itself. This is a completely new angle. But the book is more than an argument for purpose in the universe. In fact, in many ways, it's a sweeping overview of the history of scientific discovery itself. I would like to say something about the Publishers Weekly review that is posted on .com. It's baffling. I thought Publishers Weekly reviews were supposed to be more or less

descriptive rather than editorial. But this review must have been written by someone who either didn't read *The Privileged Planet* carefully, or didn't understand the argument. First of all, the description of their treatment of habitability is inaccurate. G and R don't claim that Earth is the only habitable planet. They argue that, given what we already know about what it takes to make a habitable planet, such planets are probably rare. And they definitely don't argue that just because the Earth is well suited for life, therefore it was designed. In fact, they go to great lengths to show why that's not a very good argument.

Co-authored by two Discovery Institute Fellows, astronomer Guillermo Gonzalez and philosopher Jay W. Richards, *The Privileged Planet* presents a new form of design argument which can be applied to the level of the cosmos. Design proponents have long held that the physical constants of nature and properties of our solar system appear finely tuned and specified to allow for advanced life. But Richards and Gonzalez take this argument to a new level by arguing that the same set of circumstances which permit advanced life are also optimized for a range of scientific discoveries. Chapter eight, for instance, centers on research by Gonzalez that was featured in a cover story of *Scientific American* in 2001. Like our solar system's habitable zone, our galaxy has a habitable zone as well. This broken ring roughly have way from the galaxy's center is far enough away from the radiation-filled center of the galaxy, between its radiation-filled spiral arms, but not so far out that it lacks the heavy elements needed for terrestrial planets like Earth. This location is also well situated for making a range of scientific discovery. While other locations might allow improved observation of this or that feature, the Galactic Habitable Zone offers an overall better location for a range of important scientific observations. This is but one of many instances of what seems to be a consistent correlation between the requirements for life and the requirements for scientific discovery. But any book coauthored by a philosopher must investigate the philosophical implications. Richards and Gonzalez recounts that a historical myth developed, according to which, when it was discovered that the Earth was neither the center of the Solar System nor the Universe, Earth became insignificant.

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