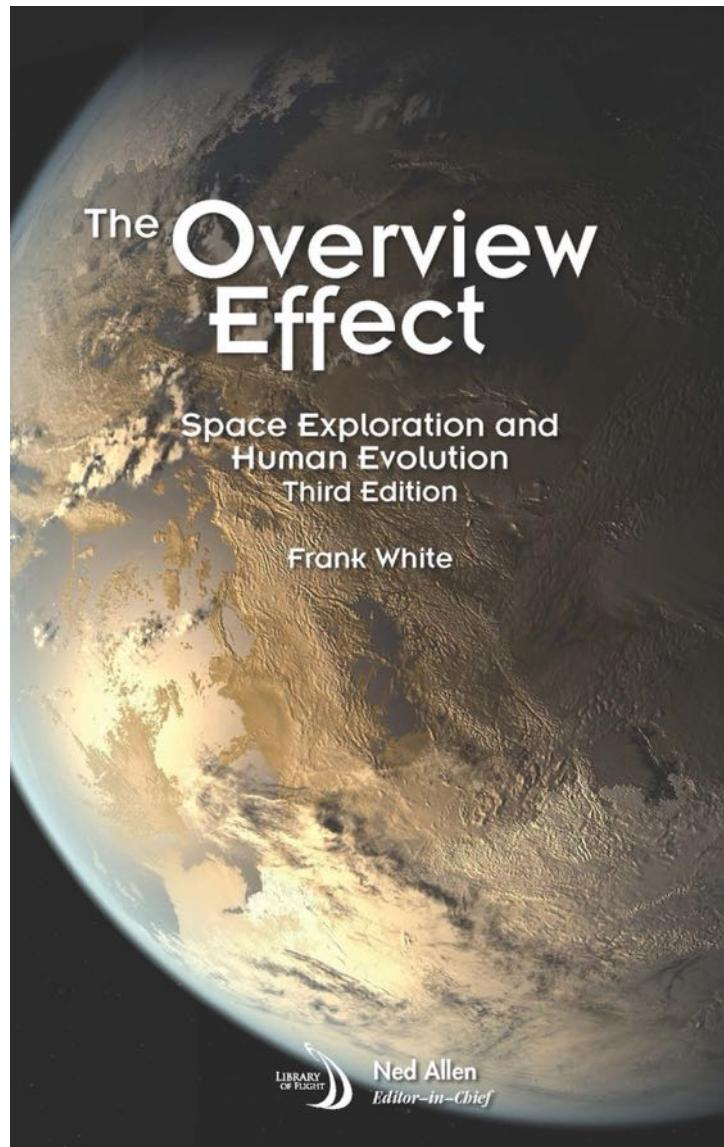


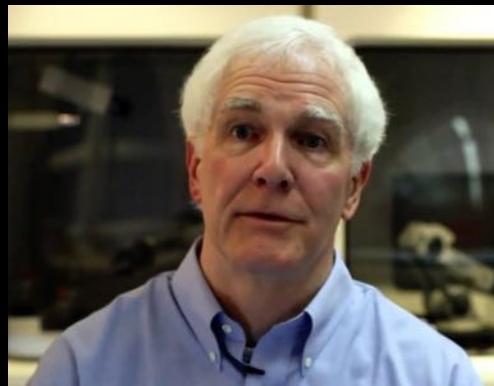
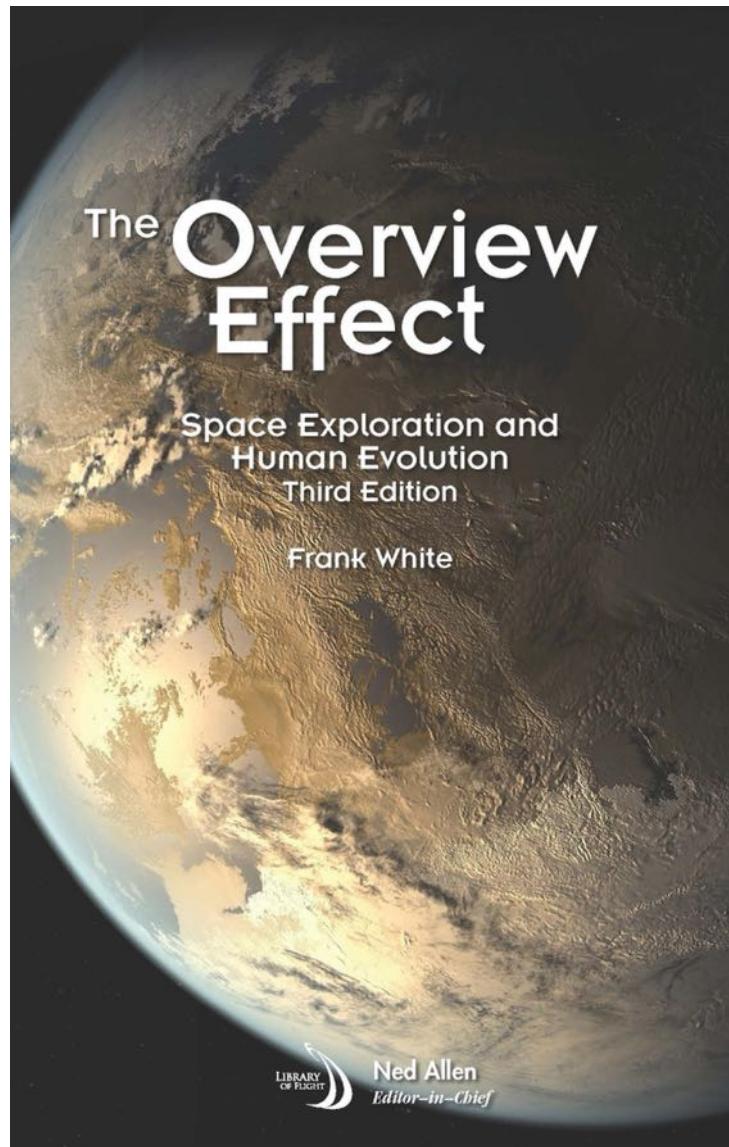
# RETHINKING THE OVERVIEW EFFECT

The Case for Multiple Cultural Experiences of Earth from Space

Jordan Bimm, PhD (University of Chicago)



Frank White coined “the overview effect” in 1987.



“That experience of seeing the Earth from orbit, or from the moon, and having a realization of the inherent unity and oneness of everything on the planet. It’s a realization that we are all one in terms of our place in the universe and our destiny... It’s a shift in consciousness, a shift in awareness, and identity, and a harbinger of many more evolutionary transformations.”

*- Frank White*

Marc Garneau (STS-41-G): "Looking down at Earth. It's very, very beautiful. There are wars going on, there's pollution down there, but these are not visible from up above. It just looks like a very beautiful planet, particularly when you see it interface along the edge with space. There you suddenly get the feeling that, 'Hey, this is just one small planet which is lost in the middle of space'."

Al Sacco Jr. (STS-73): "Once you get into space, I tell them about something I call "The Astronaut's Secret." It's a realization all of the astronauts have, which is that we are a member of the whole human family. It goes beyond being a citizen of the Earth' you are really a citizen of the universe. When you are in orbit, you ask yourself, 'Why do people have the differences that they have down on Earth?' You see that Earth is just a small part of a large universe, and you have a feeling about it that is hard to describe."

Jake Garn (STS-51-D): "You fly over Ethiopia and you have vivid pictures in your mind of those starving little kids with their bony ribs, or Iran and Iraq and the war that is going on there, or Afghanistan or Nicaragua, and you look at the trouble spots. You fly over Africa and you think, 'how sad,' because certainly we have the natural resources to take care of all of God's children... You recognize that the Russians, the Nicaraguans, the Canadians, the Filipinos—it doesn't matter where they're from—all they want is to raise their kids and educate them, just as we do... As you fly around you look at the controlled countries compared to the democratic ones, and there is such a vast difference. It made me feel even more strongly that as Americans who enjoy so much, we really have an obligation and responsibility to our fellow human beings to try to help them have freedom and opportunity."

Quoted in *The Overview Effect* (1987)



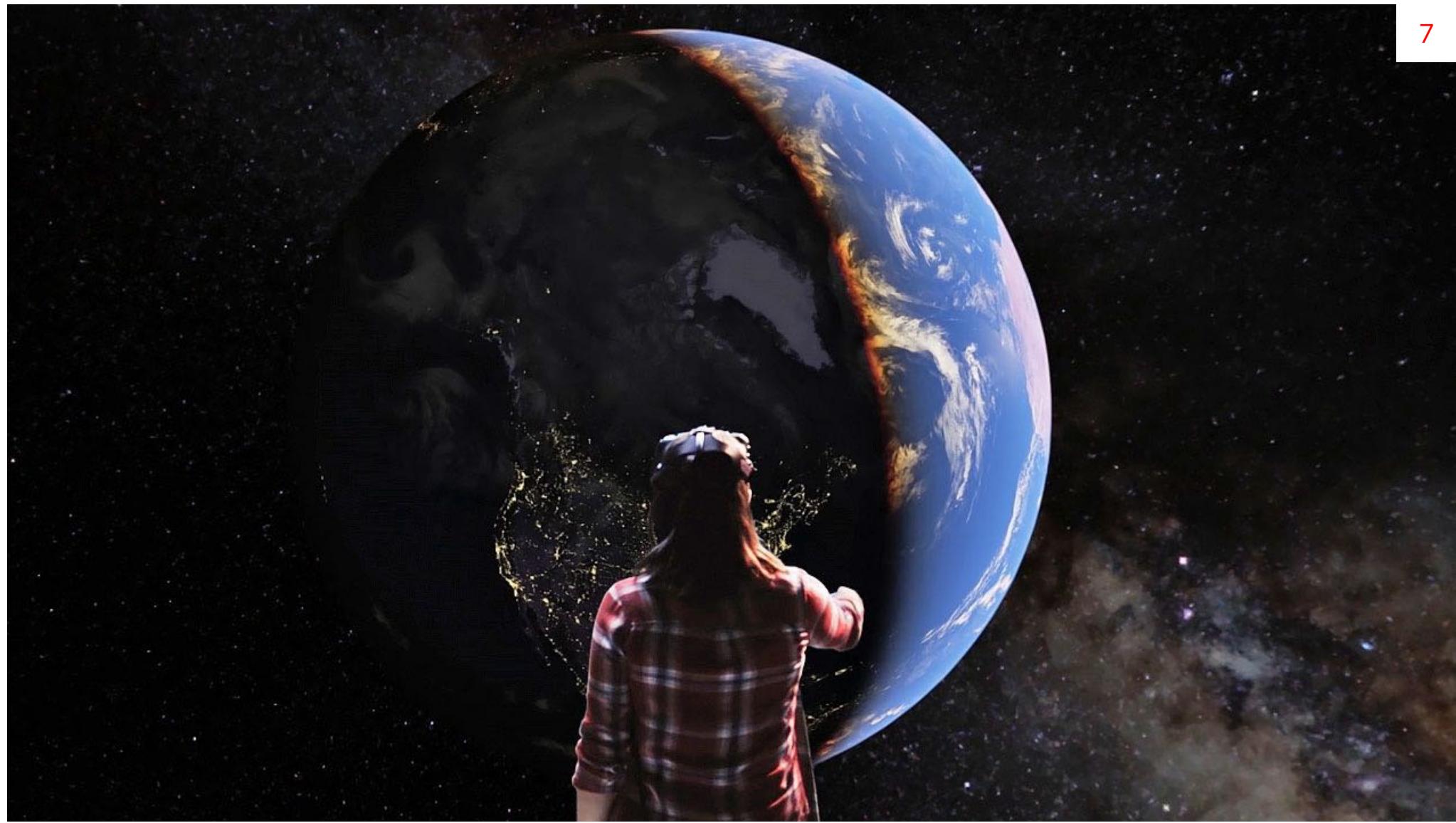


## President Bill Clinton on Overview:

“Nearly three decades ago when the Apollo astronauts first went to the Moon, we gained an entirely new perspective on the global challenge we face today. For looking down on Earth from the vantage point that revealed no political boundaries or divisions, the astronauts had the same chilling sensation. They were simply awestruck by how tiny and fragile our planet is, protected from the harsh void of space by an atmosphere that looked as thin and delicate as the skin of an onion. Every astronaut since has experienced the same insight, and they've even given it a name, the Overview Effect. It has instilled in each new astronaut a passion to convince people we must work together on Earth's behalf... I challenge everyone in this room to rise to a vantage point high enough to experience the Overview Effect. It will enable us to reach common ground.”

*Remarks at the White House Conference on Climate Change October 6, 1997*





“I went up expecting that experience, and I had it.”

*Loren Acton, payload specialist, STS-51F*





# 1. THE WHOLE EARTH





12

1946

1967





1968



1972



# 1. THE WHOLE EARTH



## 2. “THE ASTRONAUT’S SECRET”



Al Sacco Jr. (STS-73): “Once you get into space, I tell them about something I call ‘The Astronaut’s Secret.’ It’s a realization all of the astronauts have, which is that we are a member of the whole human family. It goes beyond being a citizen of the Earth’ you are really a citizen of the universe.”

◀ Buzz Aldrin’s self-facing photograph Gemini 12, 1966.



### 3. “BREAK-OFF”

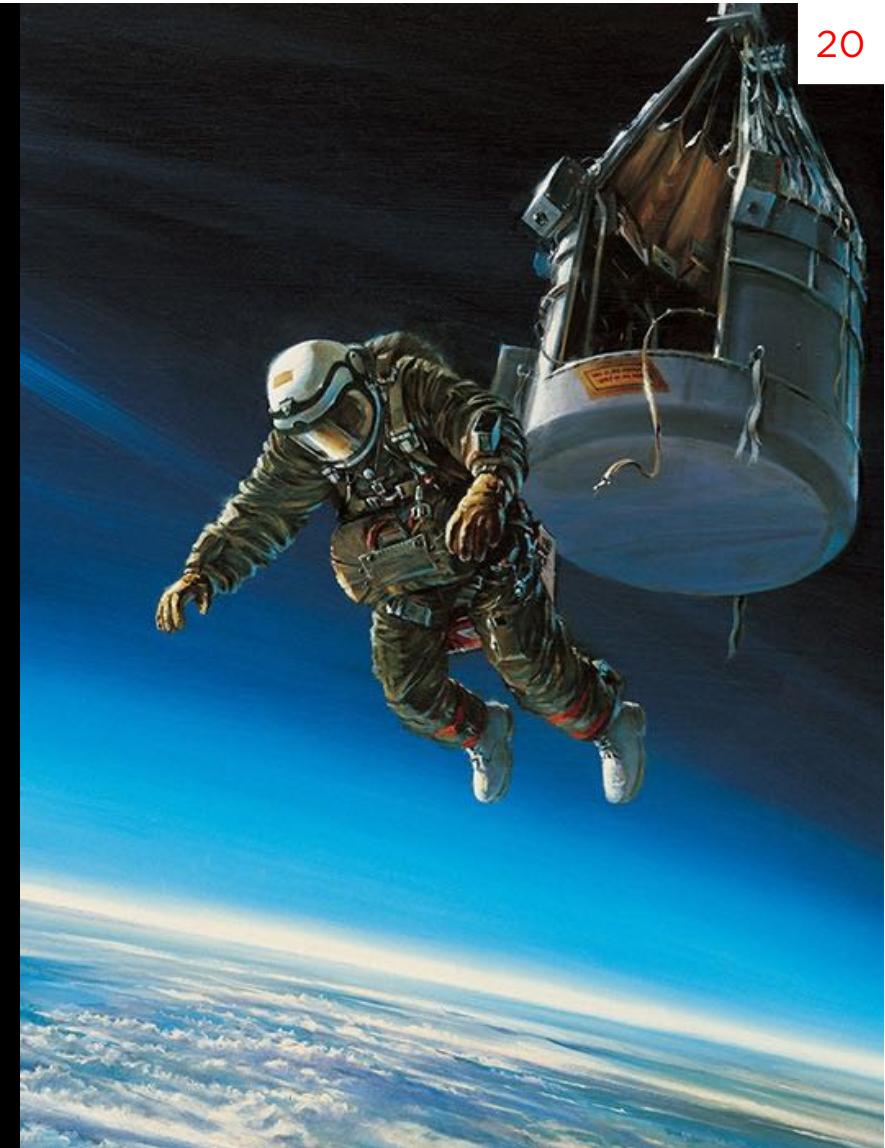
# THE BREAK-OFF PHENOMENON

Pilot 1: "I have left the world. There is only the ship to identify myself with... and with this adrenaline-inflicted state floats the feeling of detachment."

Pilot 2: "It seems so peaceful; it seems like you are in another world... I feel like I have broken the bonds of the terrestrial sphere".

Pilot 3: "He feels alone, light, remote, and insecure. He is unhappy until he gets to a lower altitude. He feels the need to have an important objective to take his mind off of it."

Long, Lonely Leap (Stuart Brown) ▶





◀ *Emergence*  
(Dan Namingha)

# THANK YOU

JORDAN BIMM, PhD  
University of Chicago  
@jordanbimm  
jordanbimm@uchicago.edu

Research assistant:  
Giacomo Cetorelli

*Emergence*  
(Dan Namingha)

