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Letters : Earthy philosophy

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The letter quoting Ludwig Wittgenstein on Geocentrism (Letters, 23 March 1996, p.64) reminds one of Bertrand Russell's observation . . .

“Whether the earth rotates once a day from west to east as Copernicus taught, or the heavens revolve once a day from east to west as his predecessors held, the observed phenomena will be exactly the same: a metaphysical assumption has to be made.”

And in a letter to *New Scientist* (16 August 1979, Darcy Readyhoff, lecturer in navigation at RAF Cranwell, wrote:

“One can of course believe anything one likes as long as the consequences of that belief are trivial. But when survival depends on belief, then it matters that belief corresponds to manifest reality. We therefore teach navigators that the stars are fixed to the Celestial Sphere, which is centred on a fixed earth and around which it rotates in accordance with laws clearly deduced from common-sense observation. The Sun and the Moon move across the inner surface of this sphere, and hence perforce go around the Earth. This means that students of navigation must unlearn a lot of the confused dogma they learned in school. Most of them find this remarkably easy, because dogma is as maybe, but the real world is as we perceive it to be.”

After all, the most straightforward explanation of the zero-velocity result of the Michelson-Morley experiment and the positive-velocity of the Michelson-Gale experiment is that the universe really is going around a fixed Earth!

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