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May 16, 2008

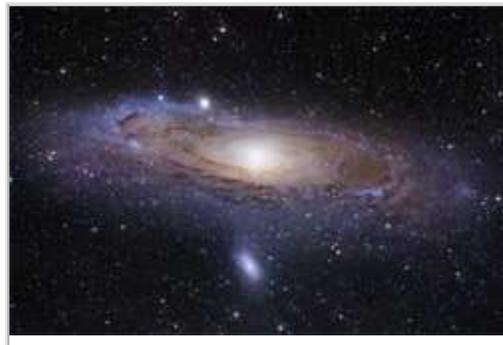
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A brighter universe found: ours

May 16, 2008
Courtesy Science & Technology Facilities Council, U.K. and World Science staff

The Universe is twice as bright as previously believed: dust turns out to block about half the starlight from us, astronomers have found.

"Interstellar dust grains have a devastating effect on our measurements of the energy output from even nearby galaxies," said Richard Tufts of the Max Plank Institute for Nuclear Physics in Heidelberg, Germany, one of the researchers.



The dusty galaxy NGC 4565 (Courtesy Robert Gendler)

Astronomers have long known there's dust out there, but didn't know how much this restricts the light we can see. The dust itself glows, because it absorbs and then re-emits starlight.

Something "very wrong" has afflicted past theories touching on the issue, said Simon Driver of the University of St Andrews, U.K., lead author of a report on the findings. The previous models, he continued, show the glowing dust's energy output

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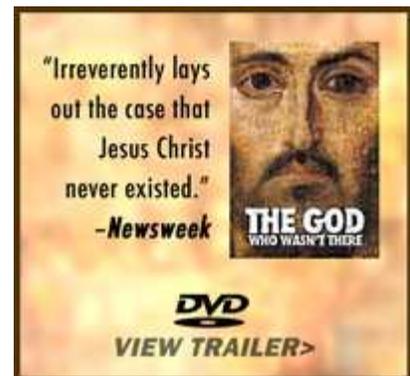
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