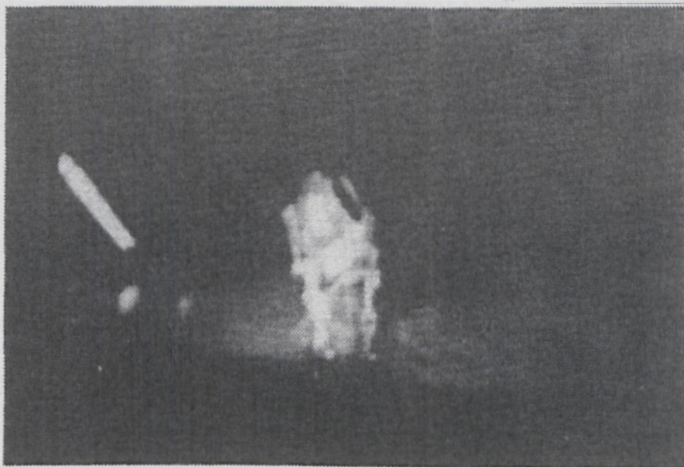


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POSSIBLE WORLDS

8mm 10 min 1985 (Exp. Dreifachproj.)

*Possible worlds: actual and non-actual*

We have been working with a threefold distinction, which is implicit in much of our thinking, between the actual world, worlds which are non-actual but possible, and worlds which are neither. But what precisely do we mean by "possible world"? More basically still: What precisely do we mean by "the actual world"?

When we speak of "the actual world" we do not mean just the planet on which we live. Nor do we mean our solar system, or even our galaxy. We have spoken of the actual world in an all-encompassing way so as to embrace all that really exists — the universe as a whole.

Again, when we speak of "the actual world" we do not mean just the universe as it is now, in the present. When we identify it — as above — with all that really exists, we are using "exists" in a timeless sense, so as to encompass not only what exists now but also what once existed in the past and what will come to exist in the future. The actual world embraces all that was, is, or will be.

Now it is clear that the actual world is a possible world. If something actually exists then it is obviously possible that it exists. On the other hand, not everything that possibly exists does so actually. Not all possible worlds are actual. It follows, therefore, that the actual world is only one among many possible worlds: that there are possible worlds other than ours. Moreover, given that by "the actual world" we mean — as we agreed a moment ago — everything that was, is, or will be the case, it follows that by "another possible world" we do not mean some planet, star or whatnot that actually exists and which is located somewhere "out there" in physical space. Whatever actually exists, it must be remembered, belongs to the actual world even if it is light-years away. Other, non-actual, possible worlds, are not located anywhere in physical space. They are located, as it were, in conceptual space; or rather, as we may prefer to say, in logical space.

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