

14.5: Milky Way Galaxy Research

The Milky Way Galaxy: A brief astronomical history

Aristotle (384-322 BC) wrote in *Meteorologica* that **Anaxagoras** (500-428 BC) and Democritus (460-370 BC) thought the Milky Way might consist of distant stars. Aristotle thought that the Milky Way was due to the ignition [that] *takes place in the upper part of [Earth's] atmosphere, in the region of the world which is continuous with heavenly motions* . Other contemporaries of Aristotle argued against his idea about the Milky Way, including the argument that the galaxy's parallax would be measurable if Aristotle's idea was correct.

Recall, Abū al-Rayhān al-Bīrūnī (973-1048), a Persian astronomer and one of the most-respected Muslim scientists of his time, proposed that the Milky Way was a collection of countless fragments of the nature of nebulous stars.

This 180 ° photograph is bounded on the horizon towards the image's bottom by the trees surrounding Yosemite Valley. The dark lanes within the broad band of stars are dust lanes within the Milky Way Galaxy.



The Milky Way as seen from Earth; Yosemite Valley, CA. Image courtesy of Mike Reynolds, Ph. D. of Florida State College at Jacksonville.

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