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Trinity Saint David

Magic, Myth and the Space Race

Nicholas Campion

Sophia Centre for the Study of Cosmology in Culture,
School of Archaeology, History and Anthropology

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Applicants wanted for a one-way ticket to Mars

By Melissa Hogenboom
BBC News



Want to go to Mars? Dutch organisation Mars One says it will open [applications](#) imminently. It would be a one-way trip, and the company hopes to build a community of settlers on the planet.

Uncharted waters, mountains or far away lands have always drawn explorers. History books show that desire for adventure, even in the face of extreme danger, did not deter the likes of [Columbus](#) or [Magellan](#).

Related Stories

[How to get along for 500 days alone together](#)

[Older couple wanted for Mars mission](#)

This seminar - space

- Background in celestial journey stories and literature
- Politics and ideology of the space race
- Consequences of the space race
- Representations in cinema.
- This seminar overlaps mainly with Sacred Geography, Astral Religion, but also Sky and Psyche.

Considerations

- What is 'space'.
- Space is the area we occupy.
- 'Space' is also an abbreviation for 'outer space', the area beyond the earth's atmosphere, and including everything that exists from the Moon to the farthest galaxies.
- Space and Sky.
- When we look at the sky we see 'outer space'
- Visually, in that the sky includes the celestial bodies – sun, moon, stars and planets, it is a representation of 'outer space'

Sacred Geography: Applying the Theory of Space

- ‘The human spirit is inexorably drawn to the appeal of place, whether real or imaginary. Landscape, after all, is a constructed reality – a form which is given to nature by a particular human perception’.
- Belden Lane, *Landscapes of the Sacred : Geography and Narrative in American Spirituality*, Expanded ed. edn. (Baltimore, Md. ; London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001) pp.37 & p.58

-

Lane’s point of reference is the landscape, but we could equally consider the extension of the same principle to the **skyscape**, defined as the ways in which we experience and conceptualise the sky.

We could, then say that ‘Skyscape, after all, is a constructed reality – a form which is given to nature by a particular human perception’.

Lane added, (2001: 59) ‘the poet also reminds us that sacred places are , first, of all, “storied” places – elaborately woven together on a cultural loom that joins every detail of the landscape within a given community of memory’.

As I shall argue, outer space, then, is a ‘storied’ placed.

- The Greek word *ourania* is usually translated either as 'sky' or 'heaven', words which have radically different meanings in English.
- 'Sky' is the space above us, normally regarded as neutral and valueless,
- 'heaven' is a paradise; it is the realm of God in the Abrahamic faiths, the home of angels and saints, and the destination of the virtuous.
- *Psalms* 19.1 clearly associates what would now be distinguished as 'space', 'stars' and 'heaven' as blended utopian concepts, located 'up there' in a zone which is effectively physically unreachable for human beings, but represents a source of power, wisdom or morality: **'The heavens are telling the glory of God, and the firmament proclaims his handiwork'**.

A political perspective. John Bird, *The Big Issue*, 10-16 June 2013, p. 15

THE MIX COMMENT

Listening to all the comments around last week's 60th anniversary of the Queen's Coronation had the same feel to it. People doing strange things that did not quite fit with my own sense of reality. People dressed strangely and talking strangely, about a life a million miles from me and my concerns.

Whereas I was a Marxist-Leninist in the time of the Moon landing and space probes, in Coronation time I was a poorly dressed, deeply stressed slumboy who was about to see his whole family flattened and broken up. The little street party, the fly by from RAF fighter planes was the last distraction for me before poverty and homelessness caused us to be broken apart. Westminster Abbey, where it all took place in June 1953, was about three miles from our front door. This wasn't a million miles from us but it might as well have been.

Celebrating the past seems at times necessary. I cannot pass a D-Day anniversary on June 6 without thinking of all those men who died on the beaches of Normandy, trying to get a foothold into Nazified France. The enormous sacrifice made so that we can have our Coronations and our space flights, and our Moon landings. That above all else seems worth celebrating.

History constantly laps at the door of today. It is even a kind of history in and around *The Big Issue*. You see old photographs of earlier times and not only does everyone associated with its creation look so young but they also look strangely dressed. And often working on strange computers that have long since gone to landfill.

So much has changed in the two decades since our creation. But so much has also remained. The mainstream thinking around poverty is still limited. Governments still function in their separated fashion; so one government department still creates problems to be solved by another.

Social Security is still used not as a golden opportunity for social mobility but a badly constructed shed on the edge of things.

That vast amount of money that goes out but brings few returns for its users. No new bright future there. No step over choppy waters.

Space vehicles may penetrate the outermost reaches of the cosmos; queens may pacify troubled breasts but we still can't get our heads round giving people opportunity out of poverty. So maybe we need to commemorate that dumbness; 60 years after men died on beaches so that we can have a future. ●

John Bird

John Bird is the Founder and Editor in Chief of *The Big Issue*.
john.bird@bigissue.com
@johnbirdwords
Photo: PA

THE FIGHT FOR A BETTER FUTURE GOES ON

John Bird

I missed the first landing on the Moon. I was a Marxist-Leninist at the time and all that brouhaha around putting a man on the Moon seemed surreal compared with the racism and the poverty that the Moon men temporarily left behind. The gap between rich and poor was growing once again. Although my mum and dad in their council flat in south-west London seemed to be able to have a week's caravan holiday at last.

What I also missed about that time was the Voyager 1 and Voyager 2, two bits of sophisticated kit that threw back photographs over the next 30 years, showing us deep space and the planets thereof. But hearing on the news the other day that what was launched when I was in my 30s has now reached some other great point in space got me very excited.

I was very lucky then to see a programme on BBC Four last week all about this piece of strange history. Strange to me because I had missed it all. I was too wrapped up in the day-to-day political clash between labour and capital, between Marxists, leftists of various strengths, and Tories. So photos of planets back then seemed the ultimate game of hide and seek from the reality of everyday life.

Last week, though, I was riveted by the sight of strangely dressed men and women from the 1970s and '80s playing around with computers that have long since gone to landfill. And their attachment to the whole project was infectious. Their passion for knowledge seemed greater than anything. And I was absorbed into their passion for the course of the programme.

THE BIG ISSUE / p15 / June 10-16, 2013

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Gender Issues

**Maiden Voyage:**
The First Woman in Space
Maiden Voyage: The First Woman in Space

ON NOW : PM
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Listen now
30 mins

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**Saturday**
10:30
BBC Radio 4
FM ONLY

In 1963 Valentina Tereshkova, a simple factory worker, was sent on a solo mission to space. She became a hero in her country, a legend around the world and an icon of gender equality.

But what really happened on the flight was kept secret in Soviet times and remains mysterious, earning Valentina the moniker 'Greta Garbo of Space'. No woman... [SHOW MORE](#)

3 DAYS LEFT TO LISTEN
Duration: 30 minutes

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b026x9mr>

The Ascent to the Stars

- **Egyptian Pyramid Text Utterance 508 (Old Kingdom)**
- **‘I have trodden those thy rays as a ramp under my feet whereon I mount up to that my mother, the living Uraeus on the brow of Re’.**

Claudius Ptolemy 2nd c: astronomer, astrologer, geographer, polymath

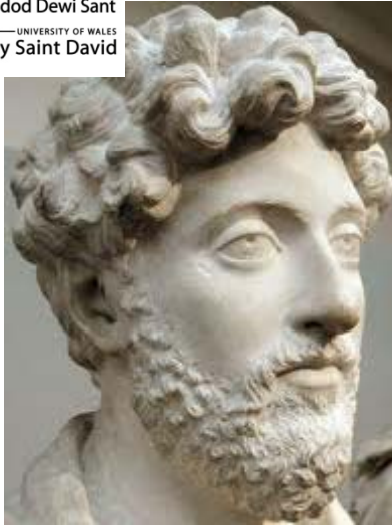
- ‘I know that I am mortal, the creature of one day. But when I explore the winding course of the stars I no longer touch with my feet the earth. I am standing near Zeus himself, drinking my fill of Ambrosia, the Food of the Gods’.

- Claudius Ptolemy, ‘Anthologia Palatina’, ix.577, quoted in Cumont, Franz, *Astrology and Religion Among the Greeks and Romans* (New York: Dover, 1960), p. 81.



Value placed on the sky

- "We all have need of Zeus. For we are also his offspring...He tells us what time the seasons are favorable both for planting of trees and for casting all manner of seeds. For himself it was who set the signs in heaven, and marked out the constellations, and for the year devised what stars chiefly should give to men right signs of the seasons, to the end that all things might grow unfailingly."
- Aratus, *Phaenomena*, trans. G. R. Mair (Loeb Classical Library Volume 129: London: William Heinemann, 1921) p. 1
<http://www.theoi.com/Text/AratusPhaenomena.html>



Marcus Aurelius. Emperor 161-80

- ‘Survey the circling stars as though yourself were in mid-course with them. Often picture the changing and re-changing dance of the elements. Visions of this kind purge away the dross of our earth-bound life’.
- Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations*, trans. Maxwell Staniforth, Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin, 1964, V.47, p. 112; see also IX.29, p. 144.
- *One’s soul can be cleansed by an imaginative union with the stars.*
-

The Soul's Ascent to the Stars: The Corpus Hermeticum c 2nd/1st c BCE

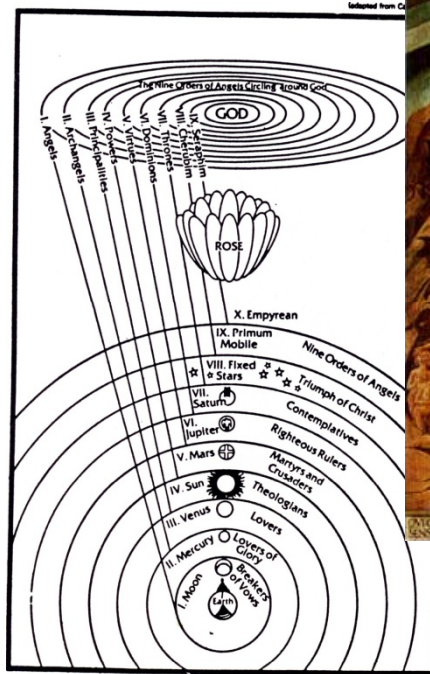
- As the soul ascends to the stars it sheds its vices.
- As it passes the moon it sheds inconsistency, Mercury trickery, Venus deceit, the sun pride, Mars recklessness, Jupiter greed, and Saturn falsehood.
- At the eighth sphere, that of the stars, the soul begins to praise God, and is encouraged by the sound of voices from the higher levels. Finally the soul is reunited with God. In fact, it becomes God.

•

[\[1\]](#) Libellus I.25, in Scott, *Hermetica*, Vol. 1, p. 129.

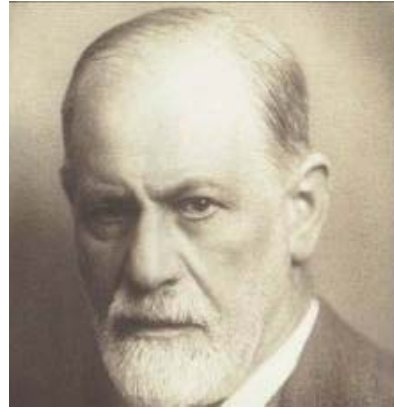


The Journey to the Stars - Dante



- ‘Astrologically...this process [alchemy] corresponds to an ascent through the planets from the dark, cold, distant Saturn to the sun....The ascent through the planetary spheres therefore meant something like a shedding of the characterological qualities indicated by the horoscope...The journey through the planetary houses, like the crossing of the great halls in the Egyptian underworld, therefore signifies the overcoming of a psychic obstacle, or of an autonomous complex, suitably represented by a planetary god or demon. Anyone who has passed through all the spheres is free from compulsion; he has won the crown of victory and become like a god.’
- – Jung, CW14, ¶308.





- Hypothesis:
- In the Narrative sense, space exploration is a psychological enterprise
- Technology is an adjunct to the psychological imperative.
- Scientific discoveries serve
- psychological needs.



- We could equally say that the Space Race is
- a religious enterprise
- a mythical enterprise
- a desire for salvation parallel to the acquisitive functions of consumerism.....
- and....?

Approaches to the history of Space Flight

- *Objective Truth*
- Technology
- Budgets and finances
- Celestial mechanics
- *Narrative Truth*
- Ideological and cultural contexts
- Propaganda
- Film
- Conspiracy theorists
- New Age and New Religious Movements
- Cultural consequences

The Historiography of the Space Race

- 'OBJECTIVE TRUTH'
- <http://www.jpl.nasa.gov/news/news.cfm?release=2011-318>
-
- PASADENA, Calif. - **The 75th anniversary of the first rocket experiments** at the site that became NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory in Pasadena, Calif., will be celebrated with a special free, public screening of the new documentary, "The American Rocketeer" at the California Institute of Technology's Beckman Auditorium on Tuesday, Oct. 25 at 8 p.m.
-
- On Halloween day in 1936, a group of Caltech students, led by Frank Malina, conducted the first stand-up rocket engine test in a dirt gulch known to the residents of Pasadena as the Arroyo. Little did they know that this day would go down in history as the beginning of what is now JPL, the world's leading center for robotic exploration of the solar system and beyond.
-
- **NARRATIVE TRUTH**
- The 90-minute episode takes viewers on a journey through Malina's life **using personal letters, video footage, drawings and paintings** to reveal an **extraordinary story** of how JPL came to be.
-
- "This is a **very personal story** about a person few even know," said Blaine Baggett, JPL's director of communications and education. "Yet Malina was a major pioneer in American rocketry. This film attempts both to shed light on his important contributions, while **revealing the reasons why he has been forgotten**. The time is long since past that the **public should know the name Frank Malina**."
-

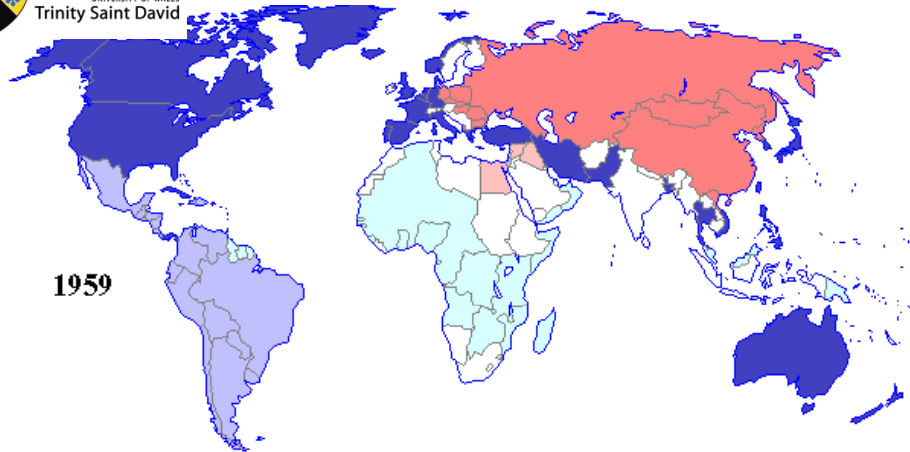


Max Weber

- Technical Rationality
- V
- Value Rationality



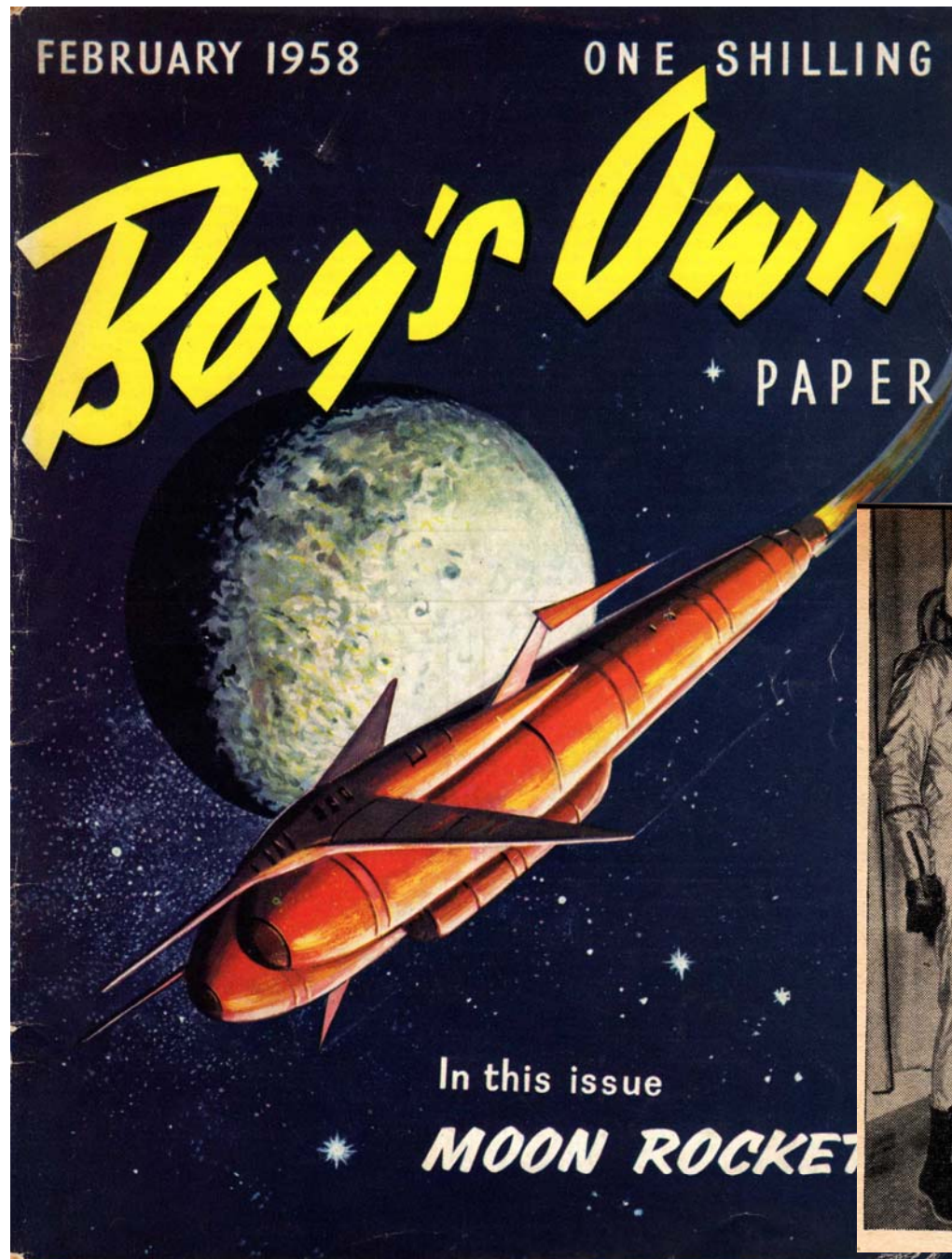
- What value do we put on space exploration?
- How does it express our values?



Contexts



- Political analysis tends to be dominated by material considerations.
- The Cold War tends to be analysed in terms of competition for resources, strategic control and competing economic models.
- Psychological considerations tend to be emphasised less, perhaps because they are difficult to measure.
- The Cold War could then be analysed in terms of greed, fear, jealousy, anger and concepts such as 'otherness'



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MOON ROCKETS

PATRICK MOORE,
well-known for his Television
talks on Astronomy, and
author of *The Amateur Astronomer*
(Lutterworth Press), writes about
the next stage in the Conquest
of Space

LEFT: Scott Crossfield, the American who has flown
at twice the speed of sound, in his new pressure suit

Two truths in Kennedy's speech to congress of 25 May 1961

- **OBJECTIVE/TECHNOLOGICAL**
 - We propose to accelerate the development of the appropriate lunar space craft. We propose to develop alternate liquid and solid fuel boosters, much larger than any now being developed, until certain which is superior. We propose additional funds for other engine development and for unmanned explorations
- **NARRATIVE/VALUE**
 - Finally, if we are to win the battle that is now going on around the world between freedom and tyranny, the dramatic achievements in space which occurred in recent weeks should have made clear to us all, as did the Sputnik in 1957, the impact of this adventure on the minds of men everywhere, who are attempting to make a determination of which road they should take... Now it is time to take longer strides--time for a great new American enterprise--time for this nation to take a clearly leading role in space achievement, which in many ways may hold the key to our future on earth.



Religious Perspectives



- After the Apollo Moon landing, the US government was concerned that public support for the space programme would decline, so a deliberate attempt was made to use the churches to gain support
- Billy Graham: 'It is hard to believe that we earthlings are alone in this spacious and wonderful Universe. Already we have received visits by creatures from outer space, including many angels, and Jesus Christ'.
- Speaking in 1969, praising the Apollo Moon programme (Oliver, p. 53)

Magical Perspectives: John (Jack) Whiteside Parsons (1914-52)

- 1942: appointed as head of the Agapé Lodge by Aleister Crowley.
- 1942: made the crucial breakthrough in the development of rocket solid fuel, using asphalt and potassium perchlorate.

'Magick is a system of philosophy and a way of life which, a common denominator of all cultures, [and] is universal to mankind

'It is therefore essential that the magician have a comprehensive knowledge of the various planes interaction results in comprehensive reality'



Magick and Space



- Crowley: 'Every man and woman is a star',
- 'Plunge from the height, O God, and interlock with Man!'
- A star is a god
- Parsons: 'Magick is a system of philosophy and a way of life which, a common denominator of all cultures, [and] is universal to mankind' (1989, p. 45).
- As a scientist, Parsons was clear that the scientific and magickal world views are compatible. 'It is therefore essential', he wrote, 'that the magician have a comprehensive knowledge of the various planes whose interaction results in comprehensive reality' (1989, p. 47).
- In Parsons' world-view, knowledge of rocket fuel was therefore as important to the practice of magick as were the rules and rites set out by the OTO.



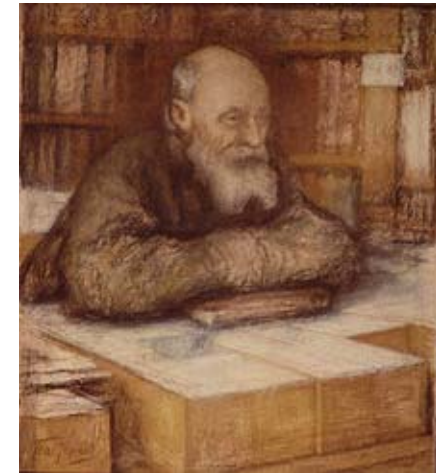
Crowley & Parsons: The Age of Horus is Beginning

- At the end of the Age of Osiris, 'Feeling himself unloved and unknowing of the way to live, Western man moves in a sterile wasteland of the mind, lacking the knowledge, understanding and will to save himself by an act of love'
- In the 'Age of Horus'. A new and better world will come about through psychological revolution, that is, through the self-aware recognition, and full expression, by each individual of their dual male/female nature.



Nikolai Fedorov (1829-1903),

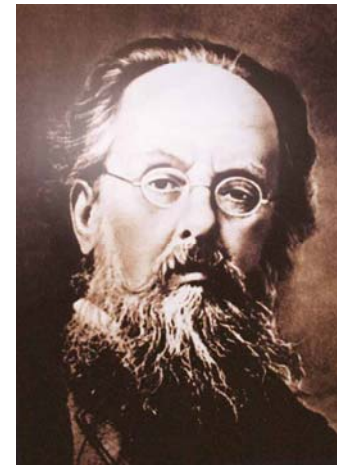
- (pronounced Fyoderov)
- Cosmism
- The Science of Resurrection
- We should become “captain and crew of spaceship earth.”



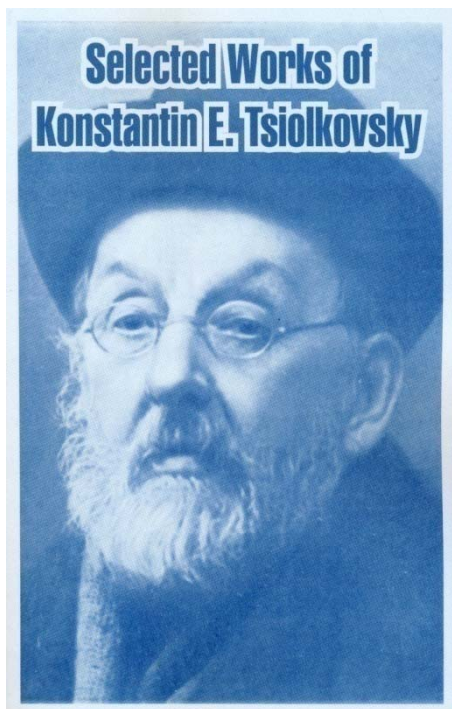
Aspirations: The Soviet Cosmic Utopia

The next stage of human evolution is in space

- Konstantin Tsiolkovsky (1857-1935): ‘Mankind will not be bound to Earth forever’.
- *Rocket engineer, enthusiastic reader of Jules Verne, hailed by the Soviet government as ‘an ordinary person who had become a great scientist when freed from the oppression of the bourgeoisie’.*



Matter and feeling are inseparable. All matter is alive, although we should consider living only that which has a sufficiently strong sense of feeling. The universe is rationally-organised. Lower life forms in which spirit is dormant evolve into higher ones in which it is awakened. Eventually we will cease to be physical and become one with rays of cosmic energy.



To obtain greater speed, in place of a gas or steam we can take some explosive substances like powder, pyroxylin, dynamite, etc.

With a long enough pipe, the speeds of emerging explosive substances can reach (in empty space) 5 km/sec. Which means that our vehicle, if it has the same mass as the exploding material, can obtain the same speed.

But suppose the mass of explosives is three times the weight of the rocket with everything it contains. We take the weight of the rocket as unity; the weight of the explosives will be 3 ($2^2 - 1 = 3$).

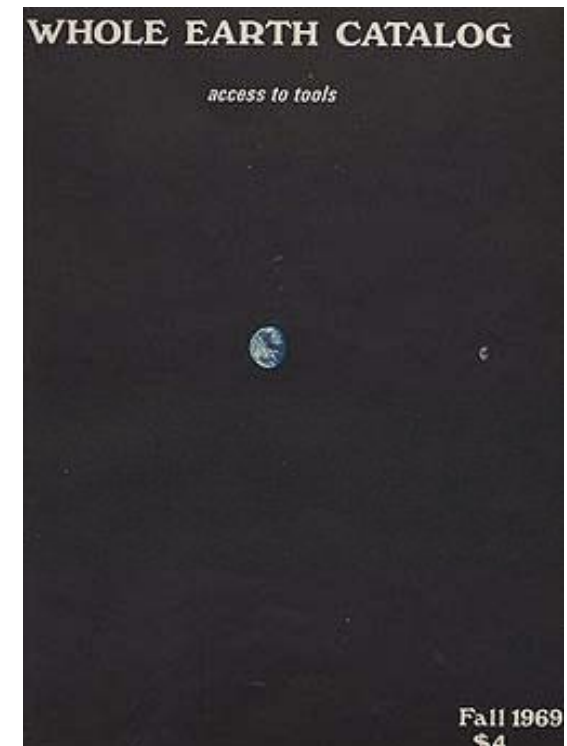
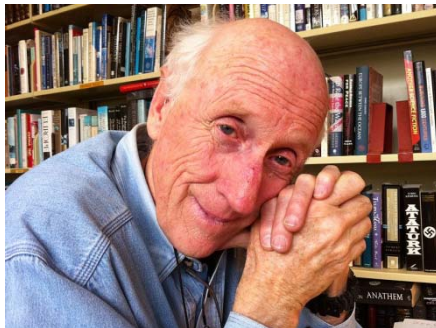
Context: The Soviet Cosmic Utopia

- October 17-31 1961.
- 22nd congress of the Soviet Communist Party adopts the Third Programme.
- The USSR was to achieve communism within twenty years: 'this generation will live under it'.



Seeing the Earth from Space: consequences

- Ecology, environmental movement, green politics, counter-culture
- The *Whole Earth Catalogue* (published 1968-72, occasionally to 1988)
- Stewart Brand (below in 2010):
 - Biologist, associated with Ken Kesey,
 - early LSD use



Religion: The Overview Effect

- Named by Frank White in 1987 in order to describe the experiences reported by some astronauts when seeing Earth from space for the first time.
- Frank White, *The Overview Effect—Space Exploration and Human Evolution* (Boston, Houghton-Mifflin, 1987).



The Overview Effect: a personal testimony

- Geoff Hoffman described his own experience beginning with the launch, in which for the first time on a solo mission, he waited in the capsule completely alone, without the army of technicians who had been present on previous days, the shaking produced by the temperature fluctuations in super-cooled fuel, a lurch to left and right at ignition, and then an awesome shaking at lift-off. **The vehicle, he said, 'is alive'. A period of transition followed as noise and blue sky gave way to silence and black sky. Hoffman described the shocking beauty of the sun set in a black sky, a black unlike any black he had witnessed before, the profound sense of dislocation from the body that results from weightlessness, and the strange sensation of looking down at the earth, watching the terrestrial sky from above instead of from below, witnessing the flash of lightning storms and meteors plunging into the atmosphere. He saw the world as one, drawing salutary ecological lessons from the visible deforestation of tropical areas. Inspired by the ethereal nature of the earth's halo, Hoffman hesitated to use the word 'spiritual', put to him in a leading question, but was happy to describe the condition that he experienced on his mission as being a 'state of grace', words which he said had been suggested to him by a Jesuit priest.**
- Geoff Hoffman, BBC Radio 4, IPM, 25 May 2013,



The Overview Institute.

- The Institute's apocalyptic and Utopian agenda is clearly spelled out:
-
- *'We live at a critical moment in human history. The challenges of climate change, food, water and energy shortages as well as the increasing disparity between the developed and developing nations are testing our will to unite, while differences in religions, cultures, and politics continue to keep us apart. The creation of a 'global village' through satellite TV and the Internet is still struggling to connect the world into one community. At this critical moment, our greatest need is for a global vision of planetary unity and purpose for humanity as a whole.'*
- 'Overview', <http://vimeo.com/55073825>; The Overview Institute,
- <http://www.overviewinstitute.org/>.
- The Overview Institute: Declaration of Vision and Principles,
- <http://www.overviewinstitute.org/index.php/about-us/declaration-of-vision-and-principles>
- [accessed 25 May 2013].



The Overview Institute and the Maya Prophecies compared

- **'We live at a critical moment in human history.** The challenges of climate change, food, water and energy shortages as well as the increasing disparity between the developed and developing nations are testing our will to unite, while differences in religions, cultures, and politics continue to keep us apart. **The creation of a 'global village' through satellite TV and the Internet is still struggling to connect the world into one community. At this critical moment, our greatest need is for a global vision of planetary unity and purpose for humanity as a whole.'**
- **'December 21, 2012 marks the completion of the Great Mayan Cycle, and the beginning of a New World Age. There are many predictions of what might happen on this day that, if they do not occur, could mislead many to perceive this date as meaningless. By focusing too heavily on external events, one may be missing the true significance of this prophetic date. Regardless of what happens externally on this day, **December 21, 2012 is a clear marker of the transition of World Ages. This synchronization is inviting all of humanity to open to imagining, envisioning and actualizing the possibilities of gradual, positive transformation of our human culture in harmony with the Earth. As we *internally align* with this grand shifting of cycles we can contribute our personal inspiration and commitment to being part of this collective****

transformation'.

<http://www.13moon.com/prophecy%20page.htm>

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The Celestial Journey secularised

- Jules Verne *De la Terre à la Lune*, 1865
- filmed 1958



The Celestial Journey humourised

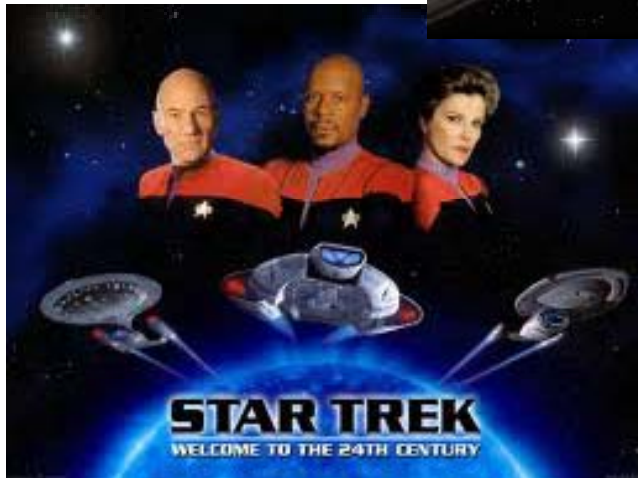
- Georges Melies *La Reve d'un Astronome* 1899
(*The Astronomer's Dream*) (Also, see Hugo)



Myth and Mass Culture - Block-buster Franchises:

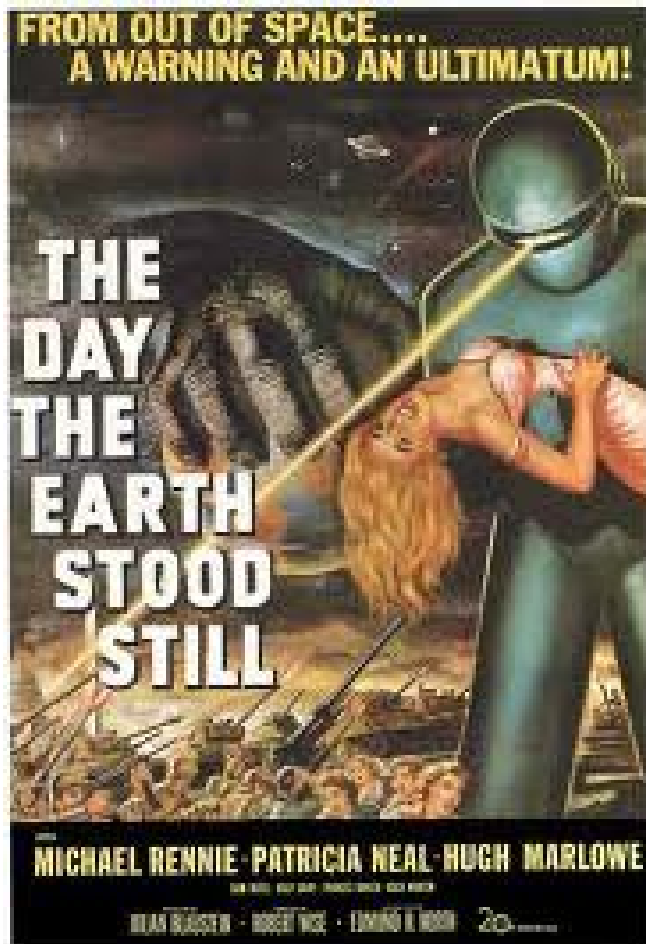
Star Trek: final frontiers, boldly going, democrat politics

Star Wars: Joseph Campbell - the hero's journey

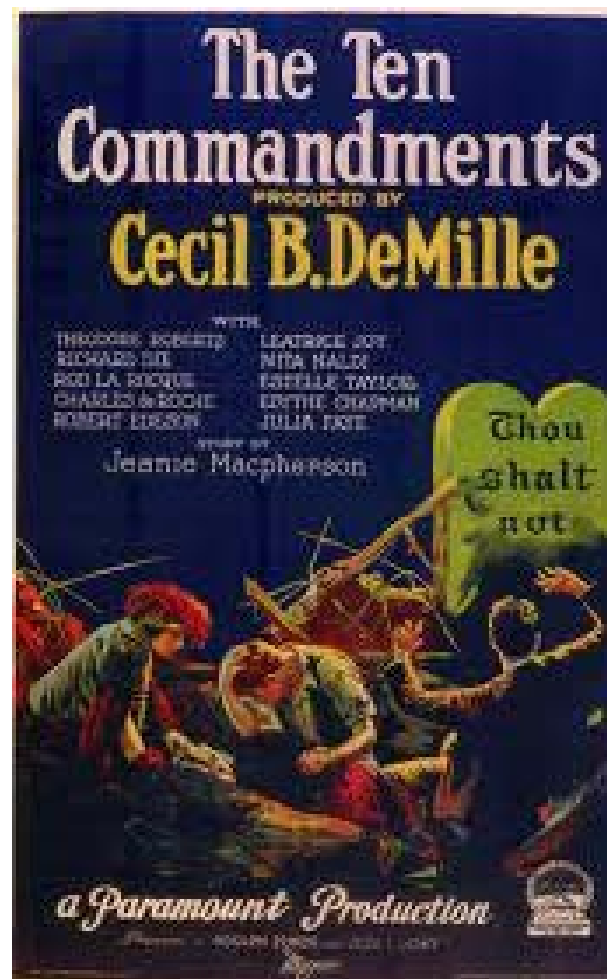


Messages from the Sky –

The Day the Earth Stood Still 1952: a Christ analogy?



Messages from the Sky – *The Ten Commandments* 1956



The Astronaut as Hero, Priest or Psychopomp



- *'the heavens, formerly the province of priests, were now to be seized by uniformed astronauts'* Stephen Shukakis (2009)
- But did this happen?



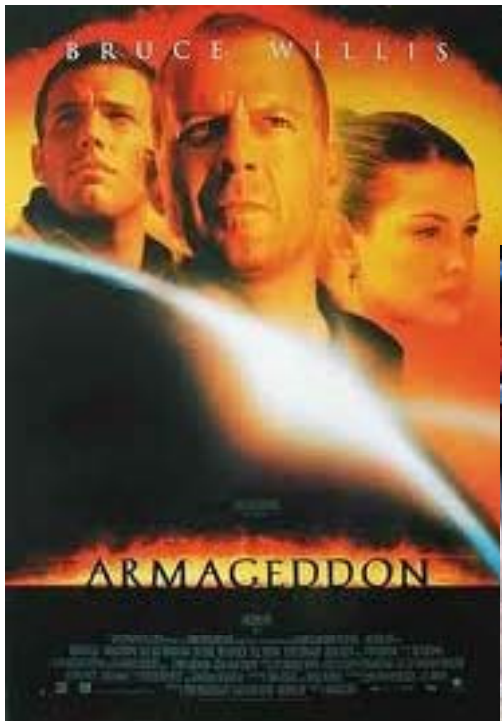
The Astronaut as Hero

‘Fiction’, ‘Fact’ and ‘Faction’: Star Trek and Apollo XIII



The Astronaut as Saviour

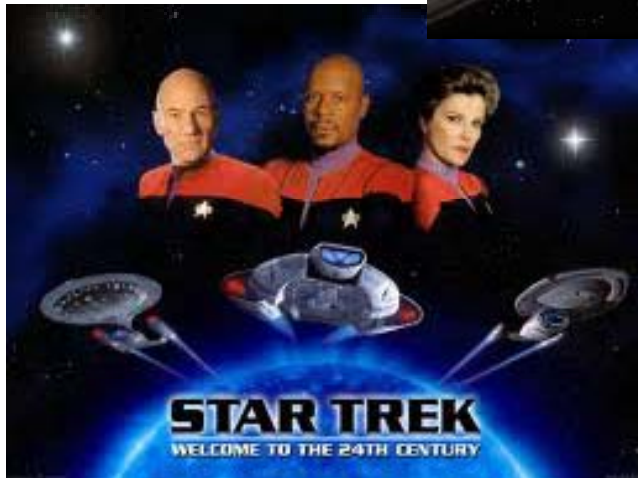
- The Astronaut as Cowboy. Or the Cowboy as Astronaut: the Astronaut as authentic American hero. The Christ sacrifice.



Myth and Mass Culture - Block-buster Franchises:

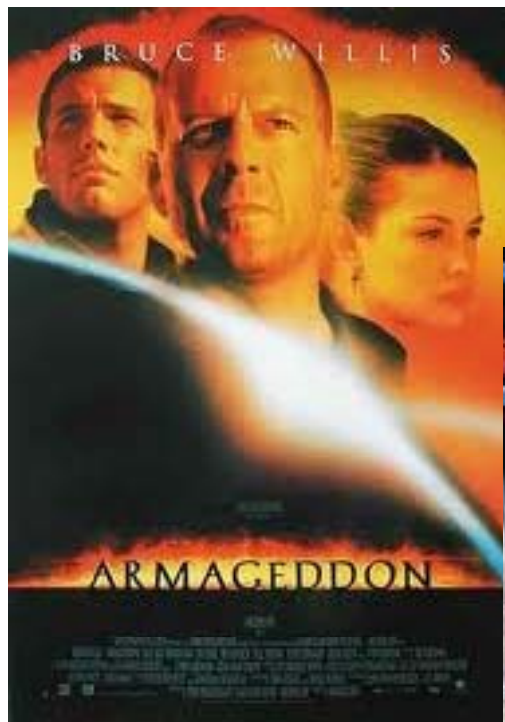
Star Trek: final frontiers, boldly going, democrat politics

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The Astronaut as Saviour

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The Great Feat Will Go Down in the Ages

SPEECH BY N. S. KHRUSHCHOV

Dear Comrades,
Dear Friends,
Citizens of all the world,

I address you with a sense of great joy and pride. For the first time in history a man from the planet Earth, our Soviet man, broke through into space in a ship created by Soviet scientists, workers, technicians, and engineers, and performed the first unexampled trip to the stars. (*Stormy applause.*)

The satellite spaceship *Vostok* ascended to a height of more than 300 kilometres, girdled the earth and landed safely at a predetermined point in the Soviet Union.

We bid a warm welcome to Yuri Alexeyevich Gagarin, the splendid space pilot, the heroic Soviet man. (*Stormy applause, cheers.*) He has displayed high moral qualities—courage, self-control, and valour. He is the first man to have seen all our planet Earth, which is in perpetual motion, in an hour and a half, taking in its vast oceans and continents at a glance.

Yuri Gagarin is our pioneer of space travel. He has been the first to orbit the globe. If the name of Christopher Columbus, who crossed the Atlantic Ocean and discovered America, has lived down the ages, what can we say about our fine hero, Comrade Gagarin, who penetrated into space, circled the entire globe and landed safely on the earth. His name will be immortal in man's history. (*Stormy applause, cheers.*)

All of us appreciate the world of thoughts and emotions that our first space traveller has brought back with him to the earth. All of us here, on this historic Red Square, share the profound emotion, pride and joy with which we welcome you, our dear friend and comrade. (*Prolonged applause.*)



The entire land basks in the reflected glory!

- *'Glory to the Native Land of the Heroes'*



