#### I affirm the resolution “The appropriation of outer space by private entities is unjust.”

#### Observation One: The burden of the affirmative is to prove that appropriation of outer space by private entities is unjust. The resolution is a values question asking whether an action is right or wrong, not whether a ban on that action is effective. The aff just has to prove the statement true and the neg just has to prove that it is just.

#### My value is human dignity

#### Human dignity is the pre-requisite to all other values

Hill 95 “Autonomy and Self-Respect” Google Books Pg. 102, (1995)

Most valuable things have value only because they’re valued by human beings. Their value is derivative from the fact that they serve our interests and desires. Even pleasure, which we value for its own sake, has only derivative value, that is, value dependant on the contingent fact that human beings want it. Now if valuers confer derivative value on things by their preferences and choices, those valuers must themselves have value. In fact, they must have value independent of, and superior to, the derivative values they create. The guiding analogy is how we value ends. We value certain means because they serve intermediate ends, which in turn we value because they contribute finally to our ultimate ends, that is, what we value for its own sake. The value of the means and the intermediate ends would be worthless to us. So, it seems, the source of derivative value must itself be valuable for its own sake. Since the ultimate source of the value of our contingent ends such as health, wealth, and even pressure, is their being valued by human beings, human beings, as valuers, must be valued for their own sakes.

#### Capitalism uses workers as a means to an end by using them as instruments and forcing them to generate wealth for the wealthy which violates their human dignity

Husami 78 Husami, Ziyad. "Marx On Distributive Justice". Philosophy & Public Affairs, vol 8, no. 1, 1978, pp. pp. 27-64., Accessed 31 Oct 2020.

Capitalism, Marx thought, had made stupendous technical progress-its development of productive forces far surpassing that of all earlier social formations. That aside, no social system has ever been condemned more radically, indicted more severely, and damned more comprehensively than capitalism was by Marx. It is a system of domination of men by men, of men by things, and of men by impersonal forces. The exploitation associated with private property in the means of production sets class against class; competition turns capitalist against capitalist and worker against worker. In their social relations and in the state, men are afforded only a spurious community. Labor and the means of labor are separated; they devolve on different classes. Yet material production, the basis of social life, requires their union. Capitalism thereby locks the social classes, which represent the elements of the production process, in an antagonistic interdepend-ence, an interdependent antagonism. Capitalism also creates a society in which man is subordinated to production rather than production to man. Production is impelled by profit, not by the satisfaction of human needs. The worker is used as means for the generation of material wealth-wealth that is wielded against him. Bourgeois society expands material wealth and contracts human possibilities; it fosters outer wealth and inward poverty. Capitalism is a system of contradictions between the social process of production and the private mode of appropriation; between the planning and rationality of the individual production units and the anarchy of social production at large; between the unrestricted de- velopment of wealth in the form of commodities and the restricted power of society to consume; between professed ideals and actuality. Its spokesmen preach liberty, equality, fraternity, representative gov-ernment, and the greatest happiness for the greatest number. Capitalism engenders servitude, inequality, social antagonism, unrepre-sentative government for society, "autocratic rule," and "barracks discipline" in the workplace. It achieves the greatest misery for the greatest number. Did Marx consider capitalist society just? Did he condemn it, at least in part, on the grounds of its injustice? His direct and explicit statements on this subject are few and far between but, in numerous passages throughout his works, Marx employs the sort of language typically used in philosophical discourse on justice and seems to be condemning capitalism for its injustice. A few illustrations are in order. The Communist Manifesto, while pointing out the deficiencies of the petty-bourgeois socialism typical of Sismondi, praises it because it "dissected with great acuteness the contradictions in the conditions of modern production. It laid bare . . . the concentration of capital and land in a few hands . .. , the misery of the proletariat . . ., the crying inequalities in the distribution of wealth."1 The Holy Family states that the proletariat is dehumanized. Its "life situation" is the negation of its "human nature." Through wage labor, the proletariat class is forced into "creating wealth for others and misery for itself." In the Poverty of Philosophy, we are told that the bourgeois are "indifferent . . . to the sufferings of the proletarians who help them acquire wealth." The German Ideology states that the proletariat "has to bear all the burdens of society without enjoying its advantages." Capital, vol. i, says that "the capitalist gets rich, not like the miser in proportion to his personal labor and restricted con-sumption, but at the same rate as he squeezes out the labor power of others, and enforces on the laborer abstinence from all life's enjoyments." Capital, vol. 3, speaks of "coercion and monopolization of social development (including material and intellectual advantages) by one portion of society at the expense of the other."2 The preceding and similar passages yield the picture of a society with extreme inequalities of wealth. This wealth is produced by one class and enjoyed by another which is indifferent to the poverty, suffering, and misery of the producers. One class monopolizes material and intellectual advantages such as access to education and culture at the expense of another class which is coerced into shouldering all the burdens of society. The capitalists do not amass their wealth and its attendant material and cultural enjoyments from their own labor but by exploiting the labor power of the workers. The attempt to deduce from such passages a Marxian conception of justice may be considered objectionable on the ground that Marx did not necessarily consider a society that fits this description unjust. Without prejudging the case, it should be noted at the outset that, especially with Marx, one must avoid rending a passage from its immediate context, textual or theoretical. Some of Marx's interpreters, such as Robert C. Tucker and Allen W. Wood, assert that Marx con-siders capitalism just." They base this opinion largely on the strength of a single passage in which Marx seems to be saying that the appro-priation of surplus labor-that is, the exploitation of labor power-is 'a piece of good luck for the buyer [of labor power, the capitalist], but by no means an injustice (Unrecht) to the seller [the worker]."4 To be sure, Tucker and Wood admit that Marx considered capitalism exploitative, but they ascribe to him the view that capitalist exploitation does not exclude capitalist justice. Actually, the passage on which they rely is bogus-it occurs in a context in which Marx is plainly satirizing capitalism. Marx, immediately after the passage in question, characterizes the appropriation of surplus labor as a "trick." He writes: Our capitalist foresaw this state of things [the appropriation of surplus value] and that was the cause of his laughter.... The trick has at last succeeded [Das Kunststiick ist endlich gelungen]; money has been converted into capital. [Capital, I: 194] Tucker and Wood sunder the bogus passage from its context and, in consequence, fail to ask what Marx means by the "trick" of exploiting labor power. Marx elsewhere uses identical and far more explicit language when he characterizes exploitation as "robbery," "usurpation ," "embezzlement," "plunder," "booty," "theft," "snatching," and "swindling." For instance, in the Grundrisse, he speaks of "the theft [Diebstahl] of alien labor time [that is, of surplus value or surplus labor] on which the present wealth is based."5 If the capitalist robs the worker, then he appropriates what is not rightfully his own or he appropriates what rightfully belongs to the worker. Thus there is no meaningful sense in which the capitalist can simultaneously rob the worker and treat him justly. But Tucker and Wood, having failed to take note of the "trick" and its meaning, roundly-and falsely-declare that the worker, though exploited, is not cheated or robbed or treated unjustly. Having suspended judgment on the suitability of deducing a conception of justice from relevant or seemingly relevant passages in the Marxian corpus, I shall proceed to formulate the problem of capitalist injustice within the Marxian theoretical framework. My concern in this essay is to ascertain Marx's position on this question, but not to assess its validity.

#### Since capitalism uses workers as a means to an end this means it is an unjust system. Thus we are morally obligated to not perpetuate capitalism which means my value criterion is deconstructing capitalism.

#### Contention One: Capitalism

#### Outer space has turned into capital’s new internalized “outside”, a new domain into which it can expand for further exploitation of resources and investment of surplus capital – space development and exploration are mere “spatial fixes” for capitalism to postpone its inevitable internal contradictions: the emptying out of all productive possibility

Dickens 10 (Peter, Prof @ Universities of Brighton and Cambridge. “The Humanization of the Cosmos—To What End?”, Nov 01, 2010. Monthly Review, https://monthlyreview.org/2010/11/01/the-humanization-of-the-cosmos-to-what-end/)

The Cosmos: Capitalism’s New “Outside” Instead of indulging in over-optimistic and fantastic visions, we should take a longer, harder, and more critical look at what is happening and what is likely to happen. We can then begin taking a more measured view of space humanization, and start developing more progressive alternatives. At this point, we must return to the deeper, underlying processes which are at the heart of the capitalist economy and society, and which are generating this demand for expansion into outer space. Although the humanization of the cosmos is clearly a new and exotic development, the social relationships and mechanisms underlying space-humanization are very familiar. In the early twentieth century, Rosa Luxemburg argued that an “outside” to capitalism is important for two main reasons. First, it is needed as a means of creating massive numbers of new customers who would buy the goods made in the capitalist countries.7 As outlined earlier, space technology has extended and deepened this process, allowing an increasing number of people to become integral to the further expansion of global capitalism. Luxemburg’s second reason for imperial expansion is the search for cheap supplies of labor and raw materials. Clearly, space fiction fantasies about aliens aside, expansion into the cosmos offers no benefits to capital in the form of fresh sources of labor power.8 But expansion into the cosmos does offer prospects for exploiting new materials such as those in asteroids, the moon, and perhaps other cosmic entities such as Mars. Neil Smith’s characterization of capital’s relations to nature is useful at this point. The reproduction of material life is wholly dependent on the production and reproduction of surplus value. To this end, capital stalks the Earth in search of material resources; nature becomes a universal means of production in the sense that it not only provides the subjects, objects and instruments of production, but is also in its totality an appendage to the production process…no part of the Earth’s surface, the atmosphere, the oceans, the geological substratum or the biological superstratum are immune from transformation by capital. 9 Capital is now also “stalking” outer space in the search for new resources and raw materials. Nature on a cosmic scale now seems likely to be incorporated into production processes, these being located mainly on earth. Since Luxemburg wrote, an increasing number of political economists have argued that the importance of a capitalist “outside” is not so much that of creating a new pool of customers or of finding new resources.10 Rather, an outside is needed as a zone into which surplus capital can be invested. Economic and social crisis stems less from the problem of finding new consumers, and more from that of finding, making, and exploiting zones of profitability for surplus capital. Developing “outsides” in this way is also a product of recurring crises, particularly those of declining economic profitability. These crises are followed by attempted “fixes” in distinct geographic regions. The word “fix” is used here both literally and figuratively. On the one hand, capital is being physically invested in new regions. On the other hand, the attempt is to fix capitalism’s crises. Regarding the latter, however, there are, of course, no absolute guarantees that such fixes will really correct an essentially unstable social and economic system. At best, they are short-term solutions. The kind of theory mentioned above also has clear implications for the humanization of the cosmos. Projects for the colonization of outer space should be seen as the attempt to make new types of “spatial fix,” again in response to economic, social, and environmental crises on earth. Outer space will be “globalized,” i.e., appended to Earth, with new parts of the cosmos being invested in by competing nations and companies. Military power will inevitably be made an integral part of this process, governments protecting the zones for which they are responsible. Some influential commentators argue that the current problem for capitalism is that there is now no “outside.”11 Capitalism is everywhere. Similarly, resistance to capitalism is either everywhere or nowhere. But, as suggested above, the humanization of the cosmos seriously questions these assertions. New “spatial fixes” are due to be opened up in the cosmos, capitalism’s emergent outside. At first, these will include artificial fixes such as satellites, space stations, and space hotels. But during the next twenty years or so, existing outsides, such as the moon and Mars, will begin attracting investments. The stage would then be set for wars in outer space between nations and companies attempting to make their own cosmic “fixes.”

#### NewSpace actors have already begun their colonization of the cosmos. Asteroid mining, space travel, a beach resort on Mars – all spoils from venture capitalists’ most recent trophy hunt

Shammas and Holen 19 Shammas, V.L., Holen, T.B. One giant leap for capitalistkind: private enterprise in outer space. Palgrave Commun 5, 10 (2019). <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41599-019-0218-9> Shammas works at Oslo Metropolitan University, Work Research Institute (AFI), Oslo, Norway and Holen is an independent researcher in Oslo

No longer terra nullius, space is now the new terra firma of capitalistkind: its naturalized terroir, its next necessary terrain. The logic of capitalism dictates that capital should seek to expand outwards into the vastness of space, a point recognized by a recent ethnography of NewSpace actors (Valentine, 2016, p. 1050). The operations of capitalistkind serve to resolve a series of (potential) crises of capitalism, revolving around the slow, steady decline of spatial fixes (see e.g., Harvey, 1985, p. 51–66) as they come crashing up against the quickly vanishing blank spaces remaining on earthly maps and declining (terrestrial) opportunities for profitable investment of surplus capital (Dickens and Ormrod, 2007a, p. 49–78). A ‘spatial fix' involves the geographic modulation of capital accumulation, consisting in the outward expansion of capital onto new geographic terrains, or into new spaces, with the aim of filling a gap in the home terrains of capital. Jessop (2006, p. 149) notes that spatial fixes may involve a number of strategies, including the creation of new markets within the capitalist world, engaging in trade with non-capitalist economies, and exporting surplus capital to undeveloped or underdeveloped regions. The first two address the problem of insufficient demand and the latter option creates a productive (or valorizing) outlet for excess capital. Capitalism must regularly discover, develop, and appropriate such new spaces because of its inherent tendency to generate surplus capital, i.e., capital bereft of profitable purpose. In Harvey’s (2006, p. xviii) terms, a spatial fix revolves around ‘geographical expansions and restructuring…as a temporary solution to crises understood…in terms of the overaccumulation of capital'. It is a temporary solution because these newly appropriated spaces will in turn become exhausted of profitable potential and are likely to produce their own stocks of surplus capital; while ‘capital surpluses that otherwise stood to be devalued, could be absorbed through geographical expansions and spatio-temporal displacements' (Harvey, 2006, p. xviii), this outwards drive of capitalism is inherently limitless: there is no end point or final destination for capitalism. Instead, capitalism must continuously propel itself onwards in search of pristine sites of renewed capital accumulation. In this way, Harvey writes, society constantly ‘creates fresh productive powers elsewhere to absorb its overaccumulated capital' (Harvey, 1981, p. 8). Historically, spatial fixes have played an important role in conserving the capitalist system. As Jessop (2006, p. 149) points out, ‘The export of surplus money capital, surplus commodities, and/or surplus labour-power outside the space(s) where they originate enabled capital to avoid, at least for a period, the threat of devaluation'. But these new spaces for capital are not necessarily limited to physical terrains, as with colonial expansion in the nineteenth century; as Greene and Joseph (2015) note, various digital spaces, such as the Internet, can also be considered as spatial fixes: the Web absorbs overaccumulated capital, heightens consumption of virtual and physical goods, and makes inexpensive, flexible sources of labor available to employers. Greene and Joseph offer the example of online high-speed frequency trading as a digital spatial fix that furthers the ‘annihilation of space by time' first noted by Marx in his Grundrisse (see Marx, 1973, p. 524). Outer space serves at least two purposes in this regard. In the short-to medium-term, it allows for the export of surplus capital into emerging industries, such as satellite imaging and communication. These are significant sites of capital accumulation: global revenues in the worldwide satellite market in 2016 amounted to $260 billion (SIA, 2017, p. 4). Clearly, much of this activity is taking place ‘on the ground'; it is occurring in the ‘terrestrial economy'. But all that capital would have to find some other meaningful or productive outlet were it not for the expansion of capital into space. Second, outer space serves as an arena of technological innovation, which feeds back into the terrestrial economy, helping to avert crisis by pushing capital out of technological stagnation and innovation shortfalls. In short, outer space serves as a spatial fix. It swallows up surplus capital, promising to deliver valuable resources, technological innovations, and communication services to capitalists back on Earth. This places outer space on the same level as traditional colonization, analyzed in Hegel’s Philosophy of Right, which Hegel thought of as a product of the ‘inner dialectic of civil society', which drives the market to ‘push beyond its own limits and seek markets, and so its necessary means of subsistence, in other lands which are either deficient in the goods it has overproduced, or else generally backward in creative industry, etc.' (Hegel, 2008, p. 222). In this regard, SpaceX and related ventures are not so very different from maritime colonialists and the trader-exploiters of the British East India Company. But there is something new at stake. As the Silicon Valley entrepreneur Peter Diamandis has gleefully noted: ‘There are twenty-trillion-dollar checks up there, waiting to be cashed!' (Seaney and Glendenning, 2016). Capitalistkind consists in the naturalization of capitalist consciousness and practice, the (false) universalization of a particular mode of political economy as inherent to the human condition, followed by the projection of this naturalized universality into space—capitalist humanity as a Fukuyamite ‘end of history', the end-point of (earthly) historical unfolding, but the starting point of humanity’s first serious advances in space. What role, then, for the state? The frontiersmen of NewSpace tend to think of themselves as libertarians, pioneers beyond the domain of state bureaucracy (see Nelson and Block, 2018). ‘The government should leave the design work and ownership of the product to the private sector', the author of a 2017 report, Capitalism in Space, advocates. ‘The private companies know best how to build their own products to maximize performance while lowering cost' (Zimmerman, 2017, p. 27). One ethnographer notes that ‘politically, right-libertarianism prevails' amongst NewSpace entrepreneurs (Valentine, 2016, p. 1047–1048). Just as Donald Rumsfeld dismissed the opponents to the Iraq War as ‘Old Europe', so too are state entities’ interests in space exploration shrugged off as symptoms of ‘Old Space'. Elon Musk, we are told in a recent biography, unlike the sluggish Big State actors of yore, ‘would apply some of the start-up techniques he’d learned in Silicon Valley to run SpaceX lean and fast…As a private company, SpaceX would also avoid the waste and cost overruns associated with government contractors' (Vance, 2015, p. 114). This libertarianism-in-space has found a willing chorus of academic supporters. The legal scholar Virgiliu Pop introduces the notion of the frontier paradigm (combining laissez-faire economics, market competition, and an individualist ethic) into the domain of space law, claiming that this paradigm has ‘proven its worth on our planet' and will ‘most likely…do so in the extraterrestrial realms' as well (Pop, 2009, p. vi). This frontier paradigm is not entirely new: a ‘Columbus mythology', centering on the ‘noble explorer', was continuously evoked in the United States during the Cold War space race (Dickens and Ormrod, 2016, pp. 79, 162–164).

#### Defense contractors and space corporations have captured the US congress with massive lobbying to ensure their control of outer space at the expense of social programs – ensures that the wars that plagued the Earth will be exported to the heavens

Grossman 21 Grossman, Karl. "Insane U.S. Plan To Spend Billions On Weaponizing Space Makes Defense Contractors Jump For Joy—But Rest Of World Cowers In Horror At Prospect Of New Arms Race Leading To World War III | MR Online". MR Online, 2021, <https://mronline.org/2021/09/01/insane-u-s-plan-to-spend-billions-on-weaponizing-space-makes-defense-contractors-jump-for-joy-but-rest-of-world-cowers-in-horror-at-prospect-of-new-arms-race-leading-to-world-war-iii/>. Karl Grossman is an author, TV program host and full professor of journalism at the State University of New York/College at Old Westbury. For 30 years, he has hosted the TV interview program Enviro Close-Up with Karl Grossman. He is the author of six books.

“Rigged Game in Washington” The Global Network Against Weapons and Nuclear Power in Space was formed in 1992 at a meeting in Washington, D.C., and has been the leading group internationally challenging the weaponization and nuclearization of space. Its coordinator, Bruce Gagnon, in a 2021 interview with me, said: “The aerospace industry has long proclaimed that ‘Star Wars’ would be the largest industrial project in human history. Add the nuclear industry’s ambition to use space as its ‘new market,’ and one can imagine the money that would be involved. These two industry giants have put their resources together to ensure their ‘control and domination’ of the U.S. Congress. Both political parties are virtually locked down when it comes to appropriating funds to move the arms race into space and to colonize the heavens for corporate profits. Just one example is the recent approval in Congress of the creation of the ‘Space Force’ as a new service branch in the military.” “During the Trump administration (with the Democrats in control of the House of Representatives) the Space Force was ‘stood up’ as they like to say in the biz,” said Gagnon. “The Democrats could have stopped the creation of this new military branch. During the little congressional debate that did occur, the only thing the Democrats requested was to call it the ‘Space Corps’ (like the Marine Corps). It’s a rigged game in Washington when it comes to handing out money to the aerospace industry.” Gagnon continued: “In his book, [The Pentagon’s New Map: War and Peace in the 2lst Century](https://www.amazon.com/Pentagons-New-Map-Twenty-First-Century/dp/0425202399), former Navy War College Professor Thomas Barnett writes that, under globalization of the world economy, every country will have a different role. We won’t produce shoes, cars, phones, washing machines and the like in the U.S. anymore because it is cheaper for industry to exploit labor in the global south. Our role in the U.S., Barnett says, will be ‘security export.’ That means we will endlessly fight wars in the parts of the world where nations are not yet ‘fully integrated’ into corporate capitalism. Having a dominant military in space would enable the U.S. to see, hear and target everything on the Earth.” “In order to put together a global ‘Leviathan’ military capability,” Gagnon continued, “space must be militarized and weaponized. The cost of doing so is enormous and requires cuts in social and environmental spending and larger contributions from NATO member nations.” “In addition to using space technology to control Earth on behalf of corporate capital, the new Space Force will have another key job. They will be tasked with attempting to control the pathway on and off the planet Earth. In the 1989 Congressional Study entitled [Military Space Forces: The Next 50 Years](http://coat.ncf.ca/our_magazine/links/55/Articles/55_12-13.pdf), congressional staffer John Collins writes on pages 24 and 25: “[Nature reserves decisive advantage for L4 and L5, two allegedly stable [space] libration points that theoretically could dominate Earth and moon, because they look down both gravity wells. No other location is equally commanding](https://coat.ncf.ca/our_magazine/links/55/Articles/55_12-13.pdf)…. Armed forces might lie in wait at that location to hijack rival shipments on return.” Privatized Gold Rush “The Pentagon is looking to a future where space would be fully privatized and a new gold rush would ensue. Corporations and rich fat-cats like Jeff Bezos, Elon Musk and Richard Branson, while ignoring the UN’s Outer Space and Moon Treaties that call the heavens the ‘province of all mankind,’ would move to control the shipping lanes from Earth into space. The Space Force would be used by these ‘space entrepreneurs’ as their own private pirate forces to ensure they controlled the extraction of resources mined from planetary bodies. This provocative vision would in the end recreate the global war system, which has been deeply embedded into the culture and consciousness here on Earth. Russia, China and other space-faring nations are not going to allow the U.S. to be the ‘Master of Space.’” Says Gagnon: “I call this the bad seed of greed, war and environmental devastation that we are poised to plant into the heavens.” “It is my hope that the global public would quickly awaken to a deep understanding and not allow corporate oligarchs or the military to encircle our planet with so much space junk that we would be forever entombed on Earth, or continue to punch a hole in the Earth’s delicate ozone layer from toxic rocket exhaust after each of their tens of thousands of coming launches, or ruin the sacred night sky with blinking satellites for 5G that will in the end be used by the Space Force for expanded ‘space situational awareness’ and targeting capabilities.” “We have reached the point in human history where we need the immediate intervention by the citizen taxpayers of the planet to ensure that our tiny orbiting satellite called Earth remains livable for the future generations,” Gagnon declared. “We can’t fall for the public relations story-line of the cowboy sailing off into space to discover the new world. We know how that movie turns out in the end—just ask the Native American people.” U.S. Army Colonel John Fairlamb (Ret.), in 2021 wrote in The Hill, the Washington, D.C., news website: “Let’s be clear: Deploying weapons in space crosses a threshold that cannot be walked back.” Fairlamb’s background includes being International Affairs Specialist for the Army Space and Missile Defense Command and Military Assistant to the U.S. Secretary of State for Political Military Affairs. “Given the implications for strategic stability, and the likelihood that such a decision [to deploy weapons in space] by any nation would set off an expensive space arms race in which any advantage gained would likely be temporary, engaging now to prevent such a debacle seems warranted,” wrote Fairlamb. His piece was headed: “The U.S. should negotiate a ban on basing weapons in space.” “It’s time,” Fairlamb wrote, “for arms control planning to address the issues raised by this drift toward militarization of space. Space is a place where billions of defense dollars can evaporate quickly and result in more threats about which to be concerned. Russia and China have been proposing mechanisms for space arms control at the United Nations for years; it’s time for the U.S. to cooperate in this effort.” As Alice Slater, a member of the boards of both the Global Network Against Weapons and Nuclear Power in Space and the organization World BEYOND War, says: “The U.S. mission to dominate and control the military use of space has been, historically and at present, a major obstacle to achieving nuclear disarmament and a peaceful path to preserve all life on Earth. Reagan rejected Gorbachev’s offer to give up ‘Star Wars’ as a condition for both countries to eliminate all their nuclear weapons … Bush and Obama blocked any discussion in 2008 and 2014 on Russian and Chinese proposals for a space-weapons ban in the consensus-bound Committee on Disarmament in Geneva.” “At this unique time in history when it is imperative that nations of the world join in cooperation to share resources to end the global plague assaulting its inhabitants and to [avoid catastrophic climate destruction or Earth-shattering nuclear devastation,”](https://worldbeyondwar.org/time-to-negotiate-for-peace-in-space/) said Slater, “we are instead squandering our treasure and intellectual capacity on weapons and space warfare.” And yet far worse is to come—unless there is a return to the vision of the Outer Space Treaty of 1967. The latter needs to be expanded, U.S. Space Force dismantled, and a full global commitment made to keep space for peace. As we go to press, Breaking Defense published an article: [“Pentagon Poised To Unveil, Demonstrate Classified Space Weapon.” This was its headline. Above the headline it stated: “Show Coverage: Space Symposium 2021”](https://breakingdefense.com/2021/08/pentagon-posed-to-unveil-classified-space-weapon/?utm_campaign=Breaking%20News&utm_medium=email&_hsmi=151302334&_hsenc=p2ANqtz-_WjJRXNH7oSN8eQo0iMMC52dIbrytHkcSOFjM1_zECxrz5zqaTLiWTN0lmaYIYa35tfuqxon2uOPfvbhS1zFeBwuIlrg&utm_content=151302334&utm_source=hs_email) The piece begins: [“For months, top officials at the Defense Department have been working toward declassifying the existence of a secret space weapon program and providing a real-world demonstration of its capabilities.”](https://breakingdefense.com/2021/08/pentagon-posed-to-unveil-classified-space-weapon/?utm_campaign=Breaking%20News&utm_medium=email&_hsmi=151302334&_hsenc=p2ANqtz-_WjJRXNH7oSN8eQo0iMMC52dIbrytHkcSOFjM1_zECxrz5zqaTLiWTN0lmaYIYa35tfuqxon2uOPfvbhS1zFeBwuIlrg&utm_content=151302334&utm_source=hs_email) It continues: [“The system in question long has been cloaked in the blackest of black secrecy veils—developed as a so-called Special Access Program known only to a very few, very senior government leaders.”](https://breakingdefense.com/2021/08/pentagon-posed-to-unveil-classified-space-weapon/?utm_campaign=Breaking%20News&utm_medium=email&_hsmi=151302334&_hsenc=p2ANqtz-_WjJRXNH7oSN8eQo0iMMC52dIbrytHkcSOFjM1_zECxrz5zqaTLiWTN0lmaYIYa35tfuqxon2uOPfvbhS1zFeBwuIlrg&utm_content=151302334&utm_source=hs_email) The August 20th article features below its headline a large illustration of—as its caption reads—“Directed energy anti-satellite weapons for the future (Lockheed Martin)” Space Symposium 2021 was to be held in Colorado Springs, Colorado between August 23 and 26. A main speaker was to be General John W. “Jay” Raymond, chief of space operations of the U.S. Space Force. Breaking Defense describes itself as “the digital magazine on the strategy, politics and technology of defense,” adding: “It’s a new era in defense, where new technologies, new warfare domains and a rapidly shifting military and political landscape have profound implications for national security.” Profound, indeed!

#### Financial frenzy will turn to bloodlust, outer space privatization is the most likely cause of armed conflict

Dickens and Ormrod 07 Dickens, Peter, and James Ormrod. Cosmic Society. Routeledge, 2007. Peter Dickens is an Affiliated Lecturer in the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences at the University of Cambridge and Visiting Professor of Sociology, University of Essex. James Ormrod is a Lecturer in Sociology at the University of Brighton.

These fixes could easily become the basis for a new global war, one in which a militarized outer space would be an important part. This is because there is a potential and actual contradiction between regional ‘fixes’ such as those attempted by China, India and Japan and the demands for capital to find new sources of accumulation. A regional fix is often made ‘autarchic’: a zone that, on account of active state intervention, allows limited trade with the outside world. As Harvey (2006) suggests, this may not be a problem so long as there are sufficient resources of capital and labour in the region in question for local capital to continue accu- mulation. But, if this is not the case, capital will inevitably move elsewhere. In the process, however, it confronts other capitalist enterprises over access to labour and resources. Nationally based private enterprises therefore finish up competing for shrinking opportunities for accumulation and this indeed is a recipe for potential armed conflict. As the next chapter discusses in more detail, China, Japan and India are amongst the countries now attempting to secure military presences in outer space. If Harvey’s theory is correct, these are means of protecting regional interests by ensuring that capital in these regions will have ready access to resources and labour beyond their own limits. Regional investments in outer space could thereby form an important form of future wars over resources, hostilities which could even include confrontations with the military might of the United States. Initially these conflicts might be land-based with satellites engaged in surveillance and the guid- ing of Earth-based weapons, but later they could easily be of a ‘star wars’ type with hostilities taking place in outer space. As Harvey points out, war can be seen as the ultimate and most catastrophic form of ‘devaluation’: one in which whole societies are obliterated and the prospects for a new round of investment and accumulation may be started. But regional, government-organized alliances do not have to be formed for military and surveillance purposes. Europe can also be seen as an attempted autar- chy. It is making, albeit rather gradually, its own regional fix while raising trade barriers and pressurizing developing countries to open up markets. On the other hand, its outer space policy seems quite distinctive from that of other regions. The European Space Agency (ESA) does not appear to be imperialist in intent. It is relatively collaborative, allowing access to a range of players. These include public and private sector organizations and, perhaps surprisingly, a very substantial investment from China. ESA’s Galileo system of thirty satellites circling the globe is to be used for peaceful purposes such as environmental monitoring and the satellite guidance of private vehicles. It is set to radically change how physical movements, especially on the roads, will be tracked. It will also pave the way for individualized road pricing, insurance pricing and monitoring. From a geopolitical viewpoint, however, the importance of Galileo is that it opens up the possibility of an independent force in outer space. It is will allow, for example, surveillance that cannot be controlled by the US. This is making American authorities treat the Galileo system with a high degree of suspicion (Mean and Wilsdon 2004).

#### Space exploration is a smokescreen for unending extraction of Earth’s resources, exhausting the planet past the brink of a livable climate. Inaction on emissions isn’t accidental, the billionaire class is jumping ship to board another

Jackson 21 Jackson, Tim. "Billionaire Space Race: The Ultimate Symbol Of Capitalism’S Flawed Obsession With Growth". The Conversation, 2021, <https://theconversation.com/billionaire-space-race-the-ultimate-symbol-of-capitalisms-flawed-obsession-with-growth-164511>. Tim Jackson is an ecological economist and writer. Since 2016 he has been Director of the Centre for the Understanding of Sustainable Prosperity (CUSP) at the University of Surrey in the UK, where he is also Professor of Sustainable Development.

Growth wars Ever since 1972, when a team of MIT scientists published a massively influential report on the [Limits to Growth](https://www.clubofrome.org/publication/the-limits-to-growth/), [economists have been fighting](https://science.sciencemag.org/content/366/6468/950) about whether it’s possible for the economy to expand forever. Those who believe it can, appeal to the [power of technology](https://andrewmcafee.org/more-from-less/overivew) to “decouple” economic activity from its effects on the planet. Those (like me) who believe it can’t point to the [limited evidence for decoupling](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/332500379_Is_Green_Growth_Possible) at anything like the pace that’s needed to avoid a climate emergency or prevent a catastrophic decline in biodiversity. The growth debate often hangs on the power you attribute to technology to save us. Usually it’s the technophiles arguing for infinite growth on a finite planet – sometimes putting their hopes in speculative technologies such as [direct air capture](https://theconversation.com/new-co-capture-technology-is-not-the-magic-bullet-against-climate-change-115413) or dangerous ones like nuclear power. And usually it’s the sceptics arguing for a [post-growth economy](http://www.timjackson.org.uk/postgrowth). But the simple division between technophiles and technophobes has never been particularly helpful. Very few growth sceptics reject technology completely. No one at all is asking humanity to return to the cave. My own research teams at the University of Surrey have been [exploring the vital role](https://www.cusp.ac.uk/team/team/t_jackson/) of sustainable technology in transforming the economy for almost three decades now. But we’ve also shown how the dynamics of capitalism – in particular its relentless pursuit of [productivity growth](https://www.nytimes.com/2012/05/27/opinion/sunday/lets-be-less-productive.html) – continually push society towards materialistic goals, and undermine those parts of the economy such as [care, craft and creativity](http://www.timjackson.org.uk/pwg), which are essential to our quality of life. And now suddenly, along comes a group of self-confessed technology lovers finally admitting that the planet is too small for us. Yes, you were right, they imply: the Earth cannot sustain infinite growth. That’s why we have to expand into space. Wait. What just happened? Did somebody move the goalposts? Something is wrong. Maybe it’s me. One thing I know for sure. I’m no longer the same kid I was – the one from the debating society. This house believes that humanity should grow the fuck up. Before it spends [trillions of dollars](https://www.sciencefocus.com/space/top-10-what-are-the-top-10-most-expensive-space-missions/) littering its [techno-junk](https://www.esa.int/Safety_Security/Space_Debris/The_cost_of_space_debris#:%7E:text=Space%20debris%20is%20expensive%2C%20and%20will%20become%20even%20more%20so&text=For%20satellites%20in%20geostationary%20orbit,higher%20than%205%E2%80%9310%25.) around the solar system, this house believes that humanity should pay a little more attention to what’s happening right here and now. On this planet. The human condition Perhaps ironically, it was from space that we saw it first. In October 1957, the Soviets sent an unmanned orbital satellite called [Sputnik](https://www.nasa.gov/multimedia/imagegallery/image_feature_924.html) into space. It was one of those odd moments in history (like the coronavirus) that dramatically reshapes our social world. Sputnik kicked off the space race, intensified the arms race and heightened the cold war. It was a huge blow to US self-esteem not to be the first nation to reach space and it was the jolt it used to kickstart the Apollo Moon shot. No one likes coming second. Least of all the most powerful people on the planet. But Sputnik also signalled the beginning of a new relationship between humanity and its earthly home. As the political philosopher [Hannah Arendt](https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/arendt/) remarked in the prologue to her 1958 masterpiece, [The Human Condition](https://www.google.co.uk/books/edition/The_Human_Condition/bGlwDwAAQBAJ), going into space allowed us to grasp our planetary predicament for the first time in history. It was a reminder that “the Earth is the quintessence of the human condition”. And nature itself, “for all we know, may be unique in providing human beings with a habitat in which they can move and breathe without effort and without artifice”. Fair point. And nothing we’ve learned in the intervening years has changed that prognosis. Mars may be the most habitable planet in the solar system, outside our own. But it’s still a very far cry from the beauty of home – whose fragility we only truly learned to appreciate fully from the images sent back to us from space. Nature photographer Galen Rowell once called William Anders’ iconic photo [Earthrise](https://www.nasa.gov/centers/johnson/home/earthrise.html) – taken from the Apollo 8 module in lunar orbit – “the most influential environmental photograph ever taken”. Earthrise brought home to us, in one astonishing image, the stark reality that this shining orb was – and still is – humanity’s best chance for anything that might meaningfully be called the “good life”. Its beauty is our beauty. Its fragility is our fragility. And its peril is our peril. In the very same year that Arendt published The Human Condition, a Shell executive named Charles Jones presented [a paper](http://www.climatefiles.com/trade-group/american-petroleum-institute/1958-air-pollution-research-program-smoke-fumes/) to the fossil fuel industry’s trade group, the American Petroleum Institute, warning of the impact of carbon emissions from fossil fuel combustion on the atmosphere. It was early evidence of climate change. It was also evidence, according to lawsuits [now being filed](https://www.theguardian.com/environment/ng-interactive/2021/jun/30/climate-crimes-fossil-fuels-cities-states-interactive) by cities and states in the US, that companies like Shell knew it was happening more than 60 years ago – three decades before James Hansen’s [scientific testimony](https://grist.org/article/james-hansens-legacy-scientists-reflect-on-climate-change-in-1988-2018-and-2048/) to Congress in 1988 brought global warming to public attention. And they did nothing about it. Worse, argue plaintiffs like the [state of Delaware](https://eu.delawareonline.com/story/news/2020/09/10/delaware-sues-exxon-chevron-and-bp-role-climate-change/3457202001/), they lied over and again to cover up this “inconvenient truth”. Why such a thing could happen is now clear. Evidence of their impact was a direct threat to the profits of some of the most powerful corporations on the planet. Profit is the bedrock of capitalism. And as I argue in [my new book](http://www.timjackson.org.uk/postgrowth), we have allowed capitalism to trump everything: work, life, hope – even good governance. The most enlightened governments in the world have turned a blind eye to the need for urgent action. Now we’re on the verge of being too late to fix it. Achieving net zero by 2050 is [no longer enough](https://theconversation.com/2050-is-too-late-we-must-drastically-cut-emissions-much-sooner-121512). We need much more, much faster to avoid ending up in an unliveable [hothouse](https://theconversation.com/hothouse-earth-our-planet-has-been-here-before-heres-what-it-looked-like-101413). Even as I write, [record-breaking temperatures](https://www.nytimes.com/2021/07/10/us/west-heat-wave-death-valley.html), 10-20℃ above the seasonal average, have forced citizens on the west coast of North America into [underground shelters](https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2021/07/01/portland-heatwave-like-microwave-hairdryer-blowing/) to avoid the searing heat. [Wildfires](https://news.sky.com/story/us-wildfires-firefighters-grapple-with-raging-blazes-as-temperatures-soar-to-54c-in-californias-baking-death-valley-12354197) are raging in California’s Death Valley, where temperatures have reached an astonishing 54℃. On the storm-struck east coast, [flood waters](https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2021/jul/09/new-york-city-storm-flooding-climate-change) have inundated the New York subway system. Thousands remain homeless and hundreds are still missing, meanwhile, as [historic flooding](https://news.sky.com/story/germany-and-belgium-floods-rescuers-search-for-hundreds-of-missing-as-more-than-120-die-in-historic-disaster-12357532) across central Europe has left almost 200 people dead. In the face of the blindingly obvious, even recalcitrant presidents and politicians are at last beginning to acknowledge the scale of the peril in which our relentless pursuit of economic growth has placed the planet. And in principle they still have time to do something about it. As I and many colleagues have argued, the pandemic offers us a unique opportunity to fashion [a different kind of economy](https://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/news-media/press-releases/economy-environment-and-peoples-well-being-must-go-hand-hand-post-covid-eu). The 26th Conference of the Parties to the UN Climate Change Convention ([COP26](https://ukcop26.org/)) in Glasgow in November 2021 could well be the place to do that. Whether that happens or not will depend as much on vision as it does on science. And on our courage to confront the inequalities of power that led us to this point. It will also depend on us going back to first principles and asking ourselves: how exactly should we aim to live in the only habitable world in the known universe? What is the nature of the good life available to us here? What can prosperity [possibly mean](http://www.cusp.ac.uk/) for a promiscuous species on a finite planet? The question is almost as old as the hills. But the contemporary answer to it is paralysingly narrow. Cast in the garb of late capitalism, prosperity has been captured by the ideology of “growth at all costs”: an insistence that more is always better. Despite [overwhelming evidence](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2Jq23mSDh9U) that relentless expansion is undermining nature and driving us towards a devastating climate emergency, the “[fairytales of eternal growth](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TMrtLsQbaok)” still reign supreme. It’s an ironic twist in the tale of the debate society kid I used to be that I’ve spent most of my professional life confronting those fairytales of growth. Don’t ask me how that happened. By accident mostly. I toyed with the idea of studying astrophysics. But I ended up studying Maths at Cambridge, where I confess to being baffled by the complexity of it all, until I realised that even math is just a trick. Quite literally a formula. Believe in it and you can travel to the stars and back. In your mind, at least. And there I was wandering around in zero G, when I woke up one day (in April 1986) to find that the Number four reactor at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant in Ukraine had suffered a catastrophic meltdown. I suddenly realised that the very same skills I’d spent my life developing were leading humanity not towards the stars but away from the paradise we already inhabit. So yes. I changed my mind. The next day I walked into the Greenpeace office in London and asked what I could do to help. They set me working on the [economics of renewable energy](https://www.elsevier.com/books/renewable-energy/jackson/978-1-4832-5695-5) I became, accidentally, an economist. (Economics needs more accidental economists.) And that’s when it began to dawn on me that learning how to live well on this fragile planet is far more important than dreaming about the next one. Not so the space race billionaires. A handful of unbelievably powerful men, whose wealth has [exploded](https://www.forbes.com/sites/chasewithorn/2021/04/30/american-billionaires-have-gotten-12-trillion-richer-during-the-pandemic/) massively throughout the pandemic, are now busy trying to persuade us that the future lies not here on Earth but out there among the stars. Tesla founder and serial entrepreneur, Elon Musk is one of these new rocket men. “Those who attack space,” he [tweeted](https://twitter.com/elonmusk/status/1414782972474048516) recently, “maybe don’t realise that space represents hope for so many people”. That may be true of course in a world where huge inequalities of wealth and privilege strip hope from the lives of billions of people. But, as the spouse of a Nasa flight controller pointed out, it obscures the [extraordinary demands](https://www.salon.com/2021/07/07/no-billionaires-wont-escape-to-space-while-the-world-burns/?fbclid=IwAR3Hzv3TGOuflDjlSatFJQN0_nastGp1MCqP-AOU0PJrUQWtHIMxNcP-BEM) of escaping from Mother Earth, in terms of energy materials, people and time. Undeterred, the rocket men gaze starward. If resources are the problem, then space must be the answer. Amazon founder Jeff Bezos is pretty explicit about his own expansionary vision. “We can have a trillion humans in the solar system,” [he once declared](https://www.nbcnews.com/mach/science/jeff-bezos-foresees-trillion-people-living-millions-space-colonies-here-ncna1006036). “Which means we’d have a thousand Mozarts and a thousand Einsteins. This would be an incredible civilisation.” Bezos and Musk have spent their lockdown contesting the top two places on the Forbes [rich list](https://www.forbes.com/billionaires/). They’ve also been playing “mine is bigger than yours” in their own private space race for a couple of decades now. Bezos’s personal wealth [almost doubled](https://inequality.org/great-divide/updates-billionaire-pandemic/) during the course of a pandemic that destroyed the lives and livelihoods of millions. He’s now stepping down to spend more time on Blue Origin, the company he hopes will deliver vast human colonies across the solar system. The [declared aim](https://www.spacex.com/mission/) of Musk’s rival company, SpaceX, is “to make humanity multiplanetary”. Just like [Kim Stanley Robinson](https://www.newyorker.com/books/page-turner/our-greatest-political-novelist)’s science fiction [trilogy](https://space.nss.org/book-review-red-mars/) back in the 1990s, Musk aims to establish a [permanent human colony](https://www.cnet.com/news/elon-musk-drops-details-for-spacexs-million-person-mars-mega-colony/) on Mars. To get there, he reasons, we need very big rockets – or, in the original terminology of SpaceX, Big Fucking Rockets ([BFRs](https://techcrunch.com/2018/09/19/18-new-details-about-elon-musks-redesigned-moon-bound-big-fing-rocket/?guccounter=1&guce_referrer=aHR0cHM6Ly93d3cuZ29vZ2xlLmNvbS8&guce_referrer_sig=AQAAAJd2kjzq4ZnY7YFIEcz1ZTmBPm7MmuQ_2wfNs9erxRMlo4qDio6p9lDkDY7I00A3KvMN5ZKZkkkxZB_ldqttJgYIGM2a4zE5NLSWLYRZMI11-1xbvn31Q6uJBOOn11q5oVbllHCYDhH3ygdBFbWUXOu2H2tXqDsVhtsvMKEe5s_w)) – eventually capable of transporting scores of people and hundreds of tonnes of equipment millions of miles across the solar system. The BFRs have now given way to a series of (more sedately named) Starships. And to prove his green credentials Musk desperately wants these [starships](https://www.spacex.com/vehicles/starship/) to be reusable. So much so that SpaceX conspired to blow up four consecutive Starship prototypes in quick succession during the first four months of 2021 trying unsuccessfully to re-land them. Move fast and break things is the Silicon Valley motto of course. But eventually you’ve got to bring the goods home. [Starship SN15](https://www.aljazeera.com/economy/2021/5/6/the-starship-has-landed-spacex-nails-reusable-craft-touchdown) finally achieved that on May 5 – three weeks after SpaceX had landed a massive [US$2.9 billion](https://www.nytimes.com/2021/04/16/science/spacex-moon-nasa.html) contract from Nasa, nudging Blue Origin into the space race shadows. Not wanting to be outdone, Bezos came up with what he must have hoped was the ultimate comeback. When Blue Origin’s [New Shepard](https://www.blueorigin.com/new-shepard/) rocket – which is also reusable – made its first manned space flight on July 20, he and his brother Mark would be two of the first few passengers on board. Wow, Jeff! Kudos man! Now you really show us your cojones! Nobody likes coming second. Least of all the most powerful people on the planet. But sometimes you get no choice. Out of the blue, without so much as a by-your-leave, Virgin boss, Richard Branson swooped in to steal everyone’s thunder. On July 11, nine days before Bezos’s big day, Branson became the first ever billionaire to [launch himself into space](https://theconversation.com/virgin-galactic-space-tourism-takes-off-with-bransons-inaugural-flight-164142). And for a cool US$250,000, he promised us, you too can be one of Virgin Galactic’s 600 or so breathless customers, waiting to enjoy three or four weightless minutes gazing back in rapture at the planet you’ve left behind. Apparently, Musk has [already signed up](https://www.theverge.com/2021/7/12/22573850/elon-musk-richard-branson-spaceplane-virgin-galactic). Bezos doesn’t need to. He’s made his own [virgin space flight](https://www.space.com/news/live/blue-origin-jeff-bezos-launch-updates) now. Prosperity as health The space rhetoric of the super-rich betrays a mentality that may once have served humanity well. Some would say it’s a quintessential feature of capitalism. Innovation upon innovation. A driving ambition to expand and explore. A primal urge to escape our origins and reach for the next horizon. Space travel is a natural extension of our [obsession with economic growth](https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2020/02/10/can-we-have-prosperity-without-growth). It’s the crowning jewel of capitalism. Further and faster is its frontier creed. I’ve spent much of my professional life as a critic of that creed, not just for environmental reasons but on social grounds as well. The seven years I spent as economics commissioner on the UK’s [Sustainable Development Commission](http://www.sd-commission.org.uk/) and my subsequent research at the [Centre for the Understanding of Sustainable Prosperity](http://www.cusp.ac.uk/) revealed something fundamental about our aspirations for the good life. Something that has been underlined by the experience of the pandemic. Prosperity is as much about health as it is about wealth. Ask people what matters most in their lives and the chances are that this will come out somewhere near the top of the list. Health for themselves. Health for their friends and their families. Health too – sometimes – for the fragile planet on which we live and on whose health we ourselves depend. There’s something fascinating in this idea. Because it confronts the obsession with growth head on. As Aristotle pointed out in [Nicomachean Ethics](http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/nicomachaen.html) (a book named after his physician father), the good life is not a relentless search for more, but a continual process of finding a “virtuous” balance between too little and too much. Population health provides an obvious example of this idea. Too little food and we’re struggling with diseases of malnutrition. Too much and we’re tipped into the “diseases of affluence” that [now kill more people](https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/obesity-and-overweight) than under-nutrition does. Good health depends on us finding and nurturing this balance. This task is always tricky of course, even at the individual level. Just think about the challenge of keeping your exercise, your diet and your appetites in line with the outcome of a healthy body weight. But as [I’ve argued](https://www.timjackson.org.uk/postgrowth), living inside a system that has its sights continually focused on more makes the task near impossible. Obesity has tripled since 1975. Almost two-fifths of adults over 18 are overweight. Capitalism not only fails to recognise the point where balance lies. It has absolutely no idea how to stop when it gets there. You’d think our brush with mortality through the pandemic would have brought some of this home to us. You’d think it would give us pause for thought about what really matters to us: the kind of world we want for our children; the kind of society we want to live in. And for many people it has. In a survey carried out during lockdown in the UK, [85% of respondents](https://www.thersa.org/press/releases/2019/brits-see-cleaner-air-stronger-social-bonds-and-changing-food-habits-amid-lockdown) found something in their changed conditions they felt worth keeping and fewer than 10% wanted a complete return to normal. When life and health are at stake, the ungodly scramble for wealth and status feels less and less attractive. Even the lure of technology pales. Family, conviviality and a sense of purpose come to the fore. These are the things that many people found they lacked most throughout the pandemic. But their importance in our lives was not a COVID accident: they are the most fundamental elements of a sustainable prosperity. The denial of death Something even more surprising has [emerged](https://timjackson.org.uk/consumerism-theodicy/) during my three decades of research. Behind consumer capitalism, behind the frontier mentality, beyond the urge to expand forever lies a deep-seated and pervasive anxiety. What does day two look like, Bezos once [asked a crowd](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fTwXS2H_iJo&ab_channel=AmazonNews) of the faithful, referring to his famous maxim about the need to innovate. “Day two is stasis, followed by irrelevance, followed by excruciatingly painful decline, followed by death,” he said. “And that. Is why. It is always. Day one!” His audience loved it. Musk plays out his own inner demons just as disarmingly. “I’m not trying to be anyone’s saviour,” [he once told](https://www.ted.com/talks/elon_musk_the_future_we_re_building_and_boring/transcript?language=en) TED’s head curator, Chris Anderton. “I’m just trying to think about the future – and not be sad.” Again, the applause was deafening. A well-trained therapist could have a field day with all of this. Take that miraculous day a few weeks after the Perseverance rover started sending home the most amazing selfies in the universe, when the Ingenuity helicopter made its [virgin flight](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kQMTo0KuN5M) in the wafer thin atmosphere of Mars. It was the kind of outcome that could have intelligence agencies drooling over far less benign uses of the technology. But there was also something pretty existential going on. The faint whispering of the Martian wind, relayed faithfully across the solar system, doesn’t just confirm the possibilities for aerial flight on an alien planet. It’s grist to the mill of an essential belief that human beings are endlessly creative and fiendishly clever. Our visceral response to these momentary triumphs speaks to a branch of psychology called [terror management theory](https://www.psychologytoday.com/gb/basics/terror-management-theory) drawn from the work of cultural anthropologist Ernest Becker. It was explored in particular in his astonishing 1973 book [The Denial of Death](https://www.google.co.uk/books/edition/The_Denial_of_Death/jyqGDwAAQBAJ). In it, Becker argues that modern society has lost its way, precisely because we’ve become terrified of confronting the inevitability of our own demise. Terror management theory tells us that, when mortality becomes “salient”, instead of addressing the underlying fear, we turn for comfort to the things which make us feel good. Capitalism itself is a massive comfort blanket, designed to help us never confront the mortality that awaits us all. So too are the dreams of the rocket men. When Sputnik kickstarted the first “space race” six decades ago, a US newspaper headline called it “one step toward [our] escape from imprisonment to the Earth”. Arendt read those words with astonishment. She saw there a deep-seated “[rebellion against human existence](https://www.google.co.uk/books/edition/The_Human_Condition/bGlwDwAAQBAJ?hl=en&gbpv=1&dq=hannah%20arendt%20%27rebellion%20against%20human%20existence%27&pg=PA2&printsec=frontcover&bsq=hannah%20arendt%20%27rebellion%20against%20human%20existence%27)”. It isn’t just the pandemic that locks us down, the implication is. It’s the entire human condition. The anxiety we feel is nothing new. The choice between confronting our fears and running away from them has always been a profound one. It’s exactly the choice we’re facing now. As vaccine roll-out brings a glimmer of light at the end of COVID-19, the temptation to rush into wild escapism is massive. But for all its glamour, the “final frontier” is at best an amusement and at worst a fatal distraction from the urgent task of rebuilding a society ravaged by social injustice, climate change and a loss of faith in the future. With most of us still reeling from what the World Health Organisation has called a [shadow pandemic](https://theconversation.com/domestic-abuse-and-mental-ill-health-twin-shadow-pandemics-stalk-the-second-wave-148412) in mental health, any kind of escape plan at all looks remarkably like paradise. And emigrating to Mars is one hell of an escape plan. Let’s dream of some “final frontier” by all means. But let’s focus our minds too on some quintessentially earthly priorities. Affordable healthcare. Decent homes for the poorest in society. A solid education for our kids. Reversing the decades-long precarity in the livelihoods of the frontline workers – the ones who saved our lives. Regenerating the devastating loss of the natural world. Replacing a frenetic consumerism with an economy of care and relationship and meaning. Never have these things made so much sense to so many. Never has there been a better time to turn them into a reality. Not just for the handful of billionaires dreaming of unbridled wealth on the red planet, but for the eight billion mere m ortals living out their far less brazen dreams on the blue one.