

Redefining Humanness in Upcoming Era of Human Space Exploration

As we improve our capabilities in human space flight and exploration, I believe that there is an important ideological dilemma that we will soon have to face. Humanity today is bounded to Earth, our 'home' planet, but as we begin to develop our competences in the space sector, we must evolve to attain a new definition of humanness, one that isn't solely 'Earthian'.

If one thing is true about all human beings today, it is that we are all born somewhere, at some time, on this planet. This makes us all 'Earthians', fundamentally creating a common cultural background within all of us, among the infinite, cold, and mostly empty space. Up until today and most likely still for another few decades, Earth will remain to be our only 'home', both in terms of physical and intellectual resources and in terms of cultural –or perhaps even spiritual identity. We may in fact maintain this notion for a much longer amount of time; it is indeed the most comfortable idea to conceptually have the Earth as a sub-eternal home. However, this may in the future become fetters to our will to explore outward and reach beyond a 'comfortable zone' into further human space exploration.

I believe that Tsiolkovsky's line "the Earth is a cradle of humanity, but mankind cannot stay in the cradle forever" best underlines the alternative –and necessary new perspective. If we expand our reach to other planets and satellites, and an increasing proportion of humanity lives in space colonies, our humanness will no longer be defined by our nature as 'Earthians'. Rather, it will be the fundamental human will to explore, mutually support one another, and prosper as a civilization that will define our species. The idea of colonizing Mars for the price of the first colonisers given only one-way tickets is morally disturbing for us because of our tie to our current 'home planet'. This however is only because we are inherently 'Earthians', and it takes a burst of courage to take the first step to becoming an interplanetary state of mind. This alternative philosophical approach to space exploration does not mean to less appreciate the rich resources given to us on Earth, both materialistic and cultural. In fact, I believe that by taking the first step to expediting new worlds and beginning construction of colonies, we will truly realise the incredible blessing we've had being on Earth.

As we approach a new era of human space flight and exploration, I believe that humanity must grow out of our self-made constraint of Earth being our one and only home. This isn't to disregard what the Earth is for us and take its resources for granted until it is inhabitable. Rather, it is to venture outward and obtain higher intellectual and technological wisdom to truly appreciate its value. I believe that our focus on outer space exploration and eventual colonization of near Earth systems is in fact a parallel process of redefining our identity as the 'descendants' of Earth, a more advanced notion from simply being mere 'Earthians'.