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MORAL CONSIDERATIONS WITH RESPECT TO THE EXPLOITATION OF OUTER SPACE
NATURAL RESOURCES IN THE LIGHT OF POSSIBLE EXTRATERRESTRIAL INTELLIGENCE

Abstract

This paper discusses the possibility of an encounter with extraterrestrial life from the perspective of law and morality as two disciplines historically and semantically interrelated and interconnected. Specifically, the paper explores the permissibility of extraterrestrial mining not from the perspective of law (international and space law) but rather from the perspective of morality. The purpose of the paper is to assess whether the regulation of the exploitation of space mineral resources would be morally acceptable given that such resources exist beyond terrestrial jurisdiction, and whether in such a regulative attempt the possible existence of extraterrestrial intelligence should be taken into account.

Outer space is considered as a Global Commons. Looking at this characterization from the perspective of possible extraterrestrial intelligence raises a question as to who is the subject of such Commons. Is it humankind or all the potential living beings that could access the goods of our Galaxy? It is from this perspective that the paper wishes to bring to the fore the question of morality in regulating outer space activities as far as the exploitative human presence in outer space is concerned. The paper suggests that principles or guidelines, similar to the Rules of Metalaw that Ernst Fasan proposed during the 1970s, be established towards the purposes of using outer space ‘in the interest of mankind’ by simultaneously taking into account the interests of other possible living species.

Keeping in mind that alien intelligence might eventually approach our planet or areas in proximity, it is indeed critical to think about how best to approach such peculiar morph of life. It is, however, even more important to be further prepared to share areas of potential common interest. This practical question is one with deep moral underpinnings that arise from rethinking the role of human beings, and readjusting their description to beings of a shared *cosmos*.