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THE ASTRONAUT AND ITS STORYTELLING, EMBODIMENT FOR THE SPIRIT OF
EXPLORATION

Abstract

As new concrete projects of exploration and space travel emerge, and as knowledge and technology have developed both in human physiology and robotics, one might ask what the role of the astronaut is, as a human and more precisely as a human body in the on-going exploration of the Solar system?

In an exciting journey through centuries of human exploration, with a focus on the last decades of space exploration, we investigated the embodiment of the human explorer. From literature, travel stories and exploration reports, we compiled all sensorial, subjective and situational allusions. We then identified the characteristics and peculiar advantages of having a real physical human presence in the exploration, with a focus on both sensory and philosophical implications.

Even if the developments made in robotics or in simulating the humans senses are promising, the human body and the direct contact with exploration is probably needed more than ever. First of all, because it provides -through presence and sensory integration- information and experience that cannot be reached remotely and with time-delay. In addition, it is probably a prerequisite for a truly far-reaching storytelling of the exploration; something the space agencies and the private sector engaging resources in public communication should take into account.

By sharing his experience, adventures and sensations, the explorer has long been both the source and trigger of the spirit of exploration in the hearts and minds of those staying at home. How can the astronaut's voice and experience be heard today and tomorrow to increase public awareness and support?

This unexpected view on the body-astronaut as explorer-storyteller could become an original and refreshing advocacy both for the human central role and for storytelling in the future exploration of our Solar system.