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EXPLORATION VERSUS EXPLOITATION OF SPACE: A NEW PARADIGM SHIFT

Abstract

Exploration of space, the ultimate frontier for scientific research, on one side, and exploitation of space, the last chance for the survival of the human species, on the other side, seem today to be in opposition and there is nothing to suggest that a consensus or an agreement between them can be found. Curiosity, desire for knowledge, even if they are in the service of human progress seem to be arguments that are too weak compared to those of the need to ensure the survival of humanity ... or to promote free enterprise! Without being enough to provide a truly effective solution to this opposition between exploration and exploitation, one characteristic can be made: the unlimited, even infinite nature of space. This observation concerns the human inability to know everything about the universe as well as the survival of humanity. It certainly does not depend on the limitation of the resources available, if those in space are really so important, but on the capacity to manage them and to manage our activities accordingly. In short, we must change the paradigm: on one side, recognizing the limits of our knowledge and our technical mastery of reality, and, on the other, admitting that the sustainable development of our species is not only linked to access to resources (whether or not they are limited), but more than ever dependent on their rational management for the benefit of humanity and our capacity to choose our future. We need a conspiracy, not an opposition between exploration and exploitation of space, for the good of humanity.