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REVISITING KRAFFT EHRICKE'S 'EXTRATERRESTRIAL IMPERATIVE' IN THE DAWN OF A NEW SPACE EXPLORATION ERA

Abstract

Human Space Exploration is gaining traction in many forums, and traditional Space Agencies are not the only players this time. Hand to hand to with institutional programs like NASA's Artemis or ESA's Moon Village that plan to bring humans back to the Moon, there are private actors like Blue Origin or Space X that plan on similar or even bigger goals, like having the first human settlement on Mars or beyond, like making humans a multiplanetary species. And on top of that there is the increasing number of companies planning for space mining and space resources utilization missions.

With different stakeholders and interest in play, these opportunities that open for human space exploration activities in the coming few years and decades, albeit fascinating for many, come with many unanswered questions in the moral and ethical planes. Many discussions focus on the technical means to achieve those goals, even in the ethical validity of sending humans in high-risks missions, or in the right or lack of it for humans in general or individual nations or corporations to exploit the resources of other planetary bodies. But often the debate in and outside the space community misses the big "Why", the existence or not of ultimate reasons that would justify human space exploration beyond utilitarian and practical reasons like scientific discovery or economic exploitation.

To contribute to this debate, in this paper I would like to revisit Krafft Ericke's 'Extraterrestrial Imperative' philosophy in the light of the current space exploration programs and concepts. In particular his view of space travel as an endeavor that challenges humans "in all forms of [their] physical and spiritual existence", and summarized in his Three Fundamental Laws of Astronautics published in the 1957 article "Anthropology of Astronautics":

- **First Law:** *Nobody and nothing under the natural laws of his universe impose any limitations on man except man himself*
- **Second Law:** *No only the Earth, but the entire Solar System, and as much of the universe as he can reach under the laws of nature, are man's rightful field of activity*
- **Third Law:** *By expanding through the universe, man fulfills his destiny as an element of life, endowed with the power of reason and the wisdom of the moral law within himself*