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Magic, Myth and the Space Race

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Applicants wanted for a one-way ticket to Mars

By Melissa Hogenboom

BBC News



Want to go to Mars? Dutch organisation Mars One says it will open [applications](#) imminently. It would be a one-way trip, and the company hopes to build a community of settlers on the planet.

Uncharted waters, mountains or far away lands have always drawn explorers. History books show that desire for adventure, even in the face of extreme danger, did not deter the likes of **Columbus** or **Magellan**.

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APRIL 21, 1961

TIME

THE WEEKLY NEWSMAGAZINE

MAN IN SPACE



RUSSIA'S
YURI GAGARIN

STOOD BY SEARS

JOHN LUCKER PHOTOGRAPH

The Ascent to the Stars

- **Egyptian Pyramid Text Utterance 508**
- **‘I have trodden those thy rays as a ramp under my feet whereon I mount up to that my mother, the living Uraeus on the brow of Re’.**

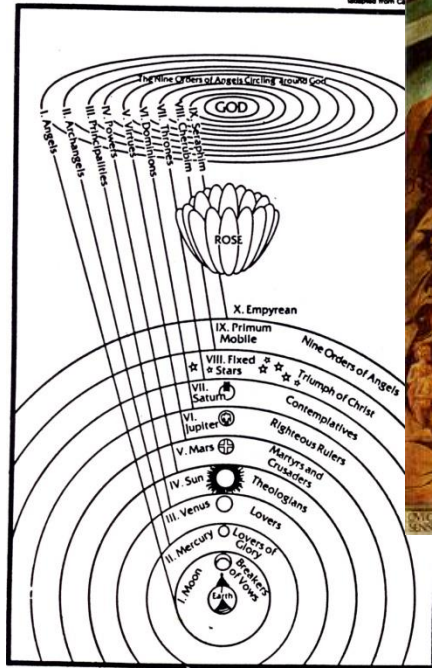




Marcus Aurelius. Emperor 161-80

- ‘Survey the circling stars as though yourself were in mid-course with them. Often picture the changing and re-changing dance of the elements. Visions of this kind purge away the dross of our earth-bound life’.
- Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations*, trans. Maxwell Staniforth, Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin, 1964, V.47, p. 112; see also IX.29, p. 144.
- *One’s soul can be cleansed by an imaginative union with the stars.*
-

The Journey to the Stars - Dante



- ‘Astrologically...this process [alchemy] corresponds to an ascent through the planets from the dark, cold, distant Saturn to the sun....The ascent through the planetary spheres therefore meant something like a shedding of the characterological qualities indicated by the horoscope...The journey through the planetary houses, like the crossing of the great halls in the Egyptian underworld, therefore signifies the overcoming of a psychic obstacle, or of an autonomous complex, suitably represented by a planetary god or demon. Anyone who has passed through all the spheres is free from compulsion; he has won the crown of victory and become like a god.’
- – Jung, CW14, ¶308.



The Historiography of the Space Race

- 'OBJECTIVE TRUTH'

- <http://www.jpl.nasa.gov/news/news.cfm?release=2011-318>
-
- PASADENA, Calif. - **The 75th anniversary of the first rocket experiments** at the site that became NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory in Pasadena, Calif., will be celebrated with a special free, public screening of the new documentary, "The American Rocketeer" at the California Institute of Technology's Beckman Auditorium on Tuesday, Oct. 25 at 8 p.m.
-
- On Halloween day in 1936, a group of Caltech students, led by Frank Malina, conducted the first stand-up rocket engine test in a dirt gulch known to the residents of Pasadena as the Arroyo. Little did they know that this day would go down in history as the beginning of what is now JPL, the world's leading center for robotic exploration of the solar system and beyond.
-

- NARRATIVE TRUTH

- The 90-minute episode takes viewers on a journey through Malina's life **using personal letters, video footage, drawings and paintings** to reveal an **extraordinary story** of how JPL came to be.
-
- **"This is a very personal story** about a person few even know," said Blaine Baggett, JPL's director of communications and education. "Yet Malina was a major pioneer in American rocketry. This film attempts both to shed light on his important contributions, while **revealing the reasons why he has been forgotten**. The time is long since past that the **public should know the name Frank Malina.**"
-



Two truths in Kennedy's speech to congress of 25 May 1961

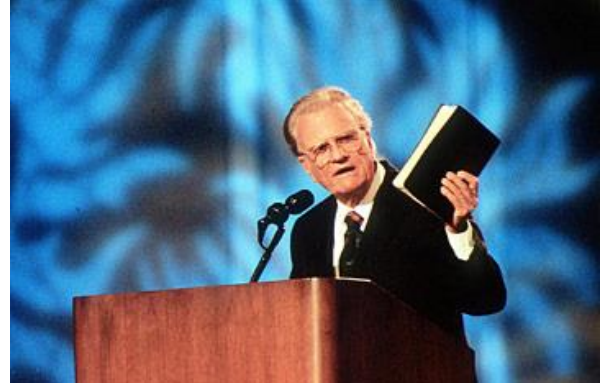
- OBJECTIVE/TECHNOLOGICAL

- We propose to accelerate the development of the **appropriate lunar space craft**. We propose to develop **alternate liquid and solid fuel boosters**, much larger than any now being developed, until certain which is superior. We propose **additional funds for other engine development** and for unmanned explorations



- NARRATIVE/VALUE

- Finally, if we are to win the battle that is now going on around the world **between freedom and tyranny**, the dramatic achievements in space which occurred in recent weeks should have made clear to us all, as did the Sputnik in 1957, the impact of this **adventure on the minds of men everywhere**, who are attempting **to make a determination of which road they should take**... Now it is time to take longer strides--time for **a great new American enterprise**--time for this nation to take a clearly leading role in space achievement, **which in many ways may hold the key to our future on earth.**



- Billy Graham: It is hard believe that we earthlings are alone in this spacious and wonderful Universe. Already we have received visits by creatures from outer spade, including many angels, and Jesus Christ
- Speaking in 1969, praising the Apollo Moon programme (Oliver, p. 53)

With Frank Malina on that day was
Jack Parsons (1914-1952)



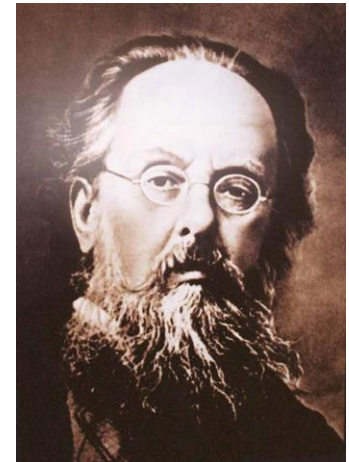
- ‘Every man and woman is a star’,
- ‘Plunge from the height, O God, and interlock with Man!’
- A star is a god



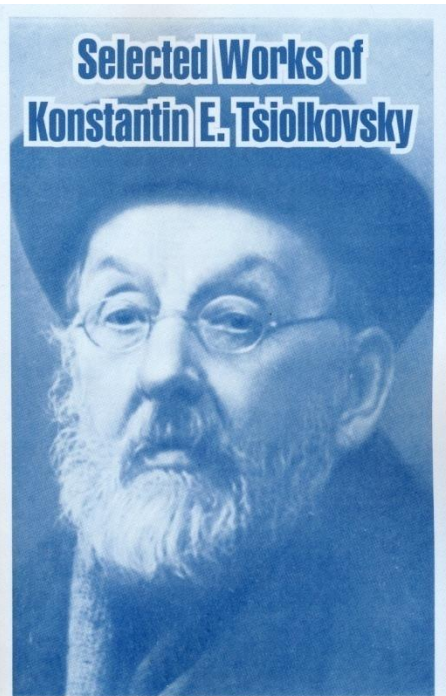
Aspirations: The Soviet Cosmic Utopia

The next stage of human evolution is in space

- Konstantin Tsiolkovsky (1857-1935): 'Mankind will not be bound to Earth forever'.
- *Rocket engineer, enthusiastic reader of Jules Verne, hailed by the Soviet government as 'an ordinary person who had become a great scientist when freed from the oppression of the bourgeoisie'.*



Matter and feeling are inseparable. All matter is alive, although we should consider living only that which has a sufficiently strong sense of feeling. The universe is rationally-organised. Lower life forms in which spirit is dormant evolve into higher ones in which it is awakened. Eventually we will cease to be physical and become one with rays of cosmic energy.



To obtain greater speed, in place of a gas or steam we can take some explosive substances like powder, pyroxylin, dynamite, etc.

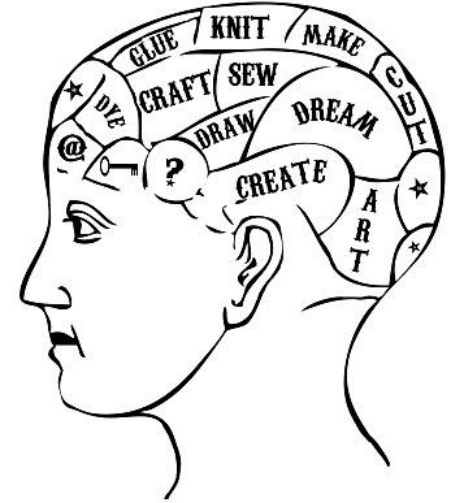
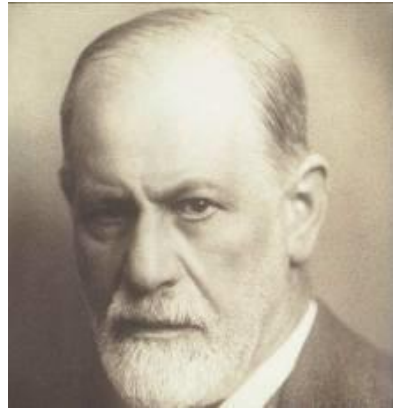
With a long enough pipe, the speeds of emerging explosive substances can reach (in empty space) 5 km/sec. Which means that our vehicle, if it has the same mass as the exploding material, can obtain the same speed.

But suppose the mass of explosives is three times the weight of the rocket with everything it contains. We take the weight of the rocket as unity; the weight of the explosives will be 3 ($2^2 - 1 = 3$).

Context: The Soviet Cosmic Utopia

- October 17-31 1961.
- 22nd congress of the Soviet Communist Party adopts the Third Programme.
- The USSR was to achieve communism within twenty years: 'this generation will live under it'.





- Hypothesis:
- In the Narrative sense, space exploration is a psychological enterprise
- Technology is an adjunct to the psychological imperative.
- Scientific discoveries serve
- psychological needs.



The Celestial Journey secularised

- Jules Verne *De la Terre à la Lune*, 1865
- filmed 1958



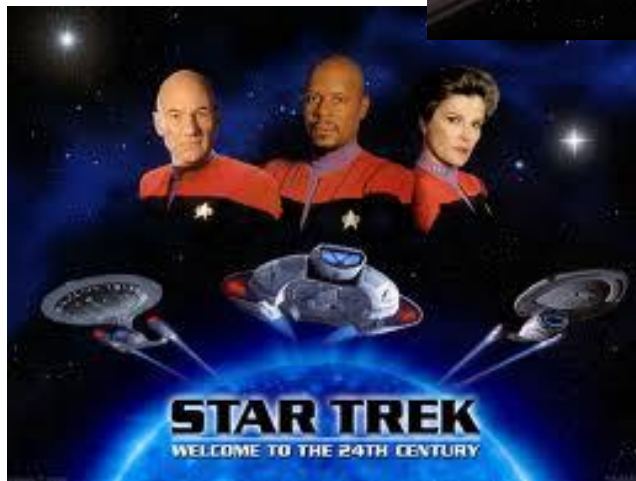
The Celestial Journey humourised

- Georges Melies *La Reve d'un Astronome* 1899
(*The Astronomer's Dream*)



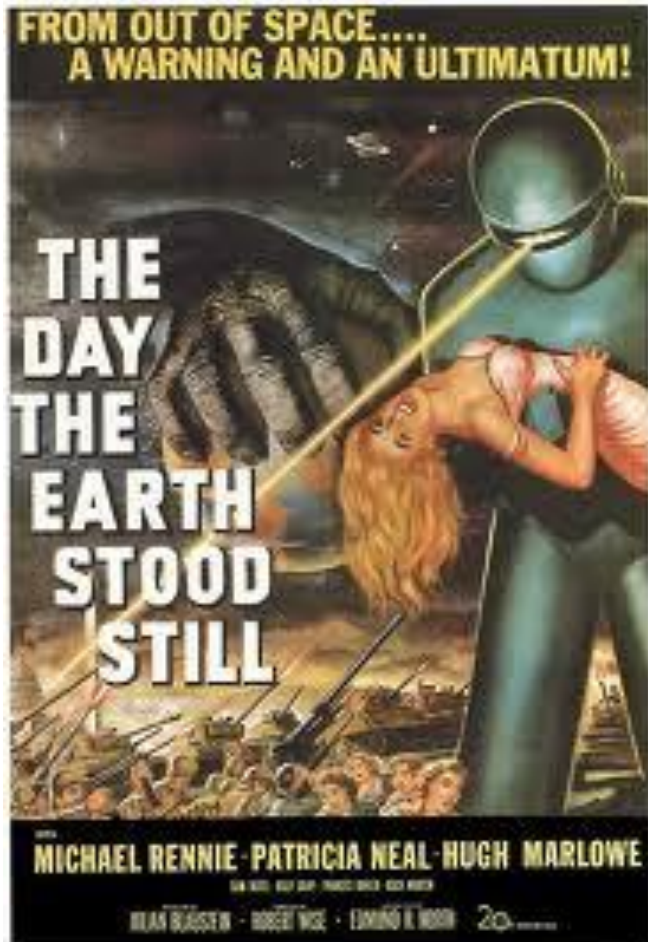
Myth and Mass Culture - Block-buster Franchises:

Star Trek and Star Wars: final frontiers, boldly going,
Joseph Campbell - the hero's journey

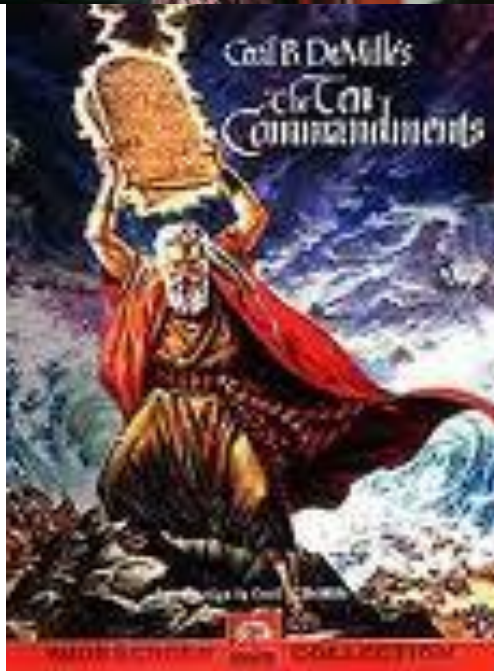


Messages from the Sky –

The Day the Earth Stood Still 1952

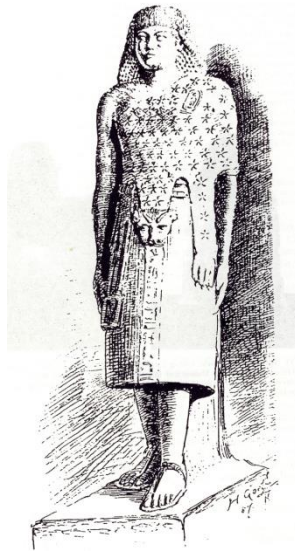


Messages from the Sky – *The Ten Commandments* 1956



The Astronaut as Hero, Priest or Psychopomp

- *'the heavens, formerly the province of priests, were now to be seized by uniformed astronauts'* Stephen Shukakis (2009)



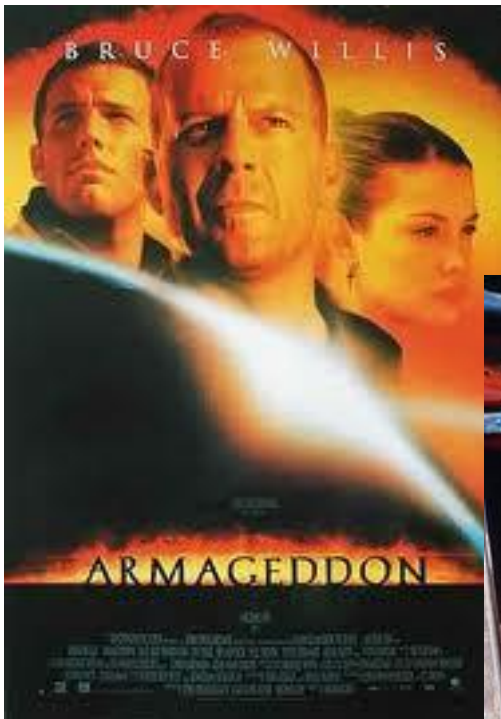
The Astronaut as Hero

‘Fiction’, ‘Fact’ and ‘Faction’: Star Trek and Apollo XIII



The Astronaut as Saviour

- The Astronaut as Cowboy. Or the Cowboy as Astronaut: the Astronaut as authentic American hero





The Great Feat Will Go Down in the Ages

SPEECH BY N. S. KHRUSHCHOV

Dear Comrades,

Dear Friends,

Citizens of all the world,

I address you with a sense of great joy and pride. For the first time in history a man from the planet Earth, our Soviet man, broke through into space in a ship created by Soviet scientists, workers, technicians, and engineers, and performed the first unexampled trip to the stars. *(Stormy applause.)*

The satellite spaceship *Vostok* ascended to a height of more than 300 kilometres, girdled the earth and landed safely at a predetermined point in the Soviet Union.

We bid a warm welcome to Yuri Alexeyevich Gagarin, the splendid space pilot, the heroic Soviet man. *(Stormy applause, cheers.)* He has displayed high moral qualities—courage, self-control, and valour. He is the first man to have seen all our planet Earth, which is in perpetual motion, in an hour and a half, taking in its vast oceans and continents at a glance.

Yuri Gagarin is our pioneer of space travel. He has been the first to orbit the globe. If the name of Christopher Columbus, who crossed the Atlantic Ocean and discovered America, has lived down the ages, what can we say about our fine hero, Comrade Gagarin, who penetrated into space, circled the entire globe and landed safely on the earth. His name will be immortal in man's history. *(Stormy applause, cheers.)*

All of us appreciate the world of thoughts and emotions that our first space traveller has brought back with him to the earth. All of us here, on this historic Red Square, share the profound emotion, pride and joy with which we welcome you, our dear friend and comrade. *(Prolonged applause.)*



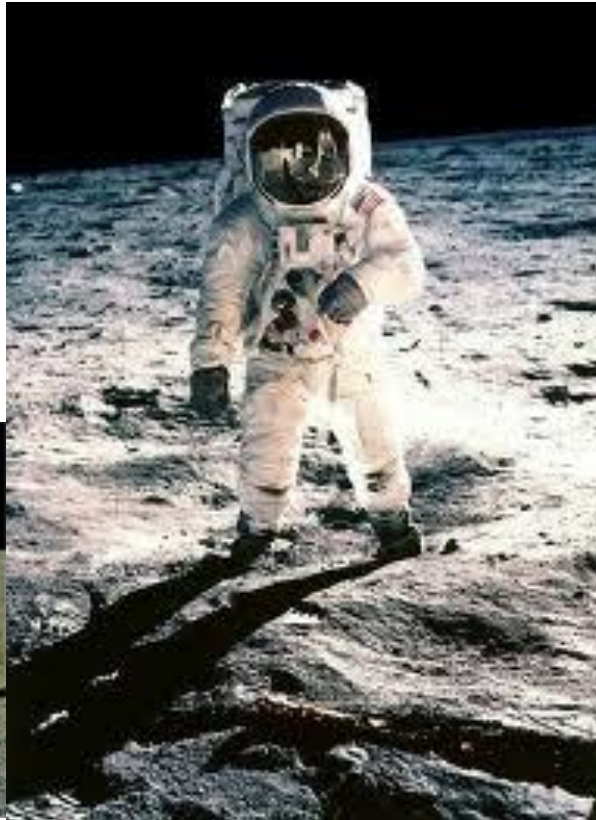
The entire land basks in the reflected glory!

- *'Glory to the Native Land of the Heroes'*

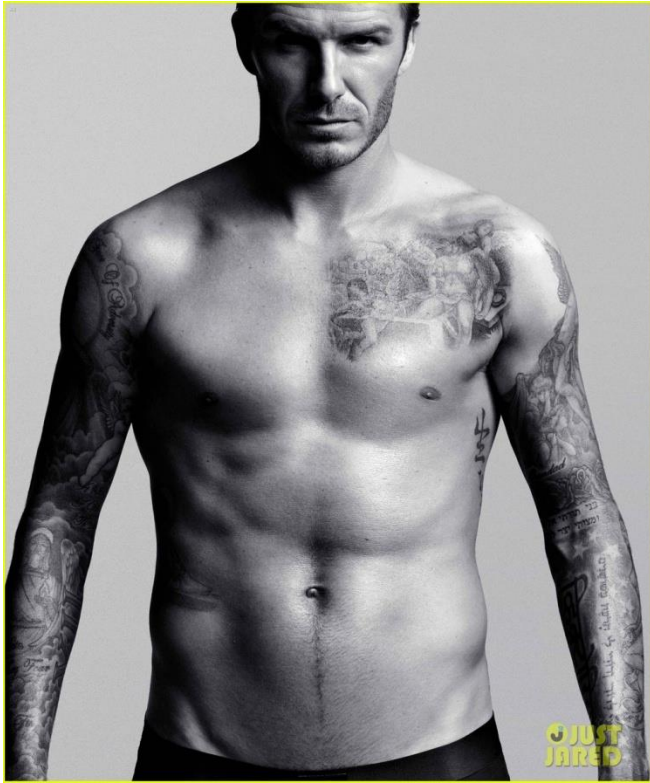


Another hero.....

- But has Gagarin been eclipsed by Armstrong?



Or have we just become more earth-bound?



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MAN IN SPACE



RUSSIA'S
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Where next?



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