

Space Journal

Volume 1 | Number 1


Article 12

7-1-1957

Reaction

Wernher von Braun

Follow this and additional works at: <https://louis.uah.edu/space-journal>

 Part of the [Astrophysics and Astronomy Commons](#), [Propulsion and Power Commons](#), [Space Habitation and Life Support Commons](#), and the [Space Vehicles Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

von Braun, Wernher (1957) "Reaction," *Space Journal*: Vol. 1: No. 1, Article 12.
Available at: <https://louis.uah.edu/space-journal/vol1/iss1/12>

This Department is brought to you for free and open access by LOUIS. It has been accepted for inclusion in Space Journal by an authorized editor of LOUIS.

because it is there

By Wernher von Braun

Explorers and scientists have never been motivated by economic urgency but by a fundamental drive to conquer the unknown and to seek the truth. The benefits of their undertakings come only in the wake of their actions. An example of man's desire to overcome nature is the conquest of Mt. Everest by Sir Edmond P. Hillary and the Sherpa, Tensing Norkay. When asked why he was motivated to scale Everest, Sir Edmond electrified the world with the simplicity of his answer: "Because it is there."

Vasco da Gama eventually reached Calicut, thus being the first European to complete a sea voyage to India. Upon his return he had covered approximately 24,000 nautical miles, his voyage being one of the finest feats of seamanship known up to that time. It must be realized also that Christopher Columbus in his conceptions was but one among many, and that his greatness lay in his faith and persistence in his dream in the face of repeated rebuffs and disappointments.

Both of these men were motivated by a burning desire to discover the unknown. In the case of da Gama's voyage, it opened the way for the India trade which soon brought Portugal immense wealth. The Columbus voyage profoundly changed the course of world events, and with it American history begins. In both instances it can be readily seen that the benefits of their explorations came in the wake of their discoveries.

The same situation prevails with regard to research. People are gradually beginning to learn that research must be supported for its own sake. Knowledge is power, and there should be a concerted effort to inculcate in the minds of men the idea of "Ars Gratia Artis" with regard to research. Man's future well-being as well as his security will depend upon the growth of fundamental knowledge. Research is like saving: If postponed until needed, it is too late to start.

Man must have the intellectual freedom to think those dangerous thoughts which are the quintessence of science. Success in research is not measured by the amount of money expended. Real effectiveness comes from the brilliance of an imaginative and unfettered scientific mind. A hundred scientists, or even a thousand, cannot be equivalent to one first-rate man working in an environment where he has freedom to exercise his imagination.

There is nothing fictional about proposals of interplanetary travel, except that the engineering difficulties are staggering. No basic physical laws are violated. We have, or will acquire, the basic knowledge to solve all the physical problems of interplanetary flight. The matter of expenditures is petty and insignificant compared to what mankind stands to gain by conquering space.

The "Reaction" Department will be reserved in future issues of SJ for vox populi. Since this is the first issue, Dr. von Braun is pinch-hitting for the readers.