

## The Space Age

*The Practical Values of Space Exploration, Report of the Committee on Science and Astronautics, the US House of Representatives, 1960 CE*

All of the glowing predictions being made on behalf of space exploration will not be here tomorrow or the next day. Yet this seems less important than that we recognize the significance of our moment of history. We may think of that moment as a new age—the age of space and the atom—to follow the historic ages of stone, bronze, and iron. We may think of it in terms of theories, of succeeding from those of Copernicus to those of Newton and thence to Freud and now Einstein. We may think of our time as the time of exploiting the new fourth state of matter: plasma, or the ion. Or we may think of it in terms of revolutions, as passing from the industrial cycle of steam through the railroad-steel cycle, through the electricity-automobile cycle, into the burgeoning technological revolution of today. However we think of it, it is a dawning period and one which—in its scope and potential—promises to dwarf much of what has gone before. Those who have given careful thought to the matter are convinced that while some caution is in order, the new era is not one to be approached with timidity, inhibited imagination or too much convention. Neither is there any point in trying to hold off the tempo of this oncoming age or, in any other way, to evade it. Mark Twain once listened to the complaints of an old riverboat pilot who was having trouble making the switch from sail to steam. The old pilot wanted no part of the newfangled steam contraptions. "Maybe so," replied Twain, "but when it's steamboat time, you steam." Today is space time and man is going to explore it.

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