

Hannah Arendt, Brian Cox, and Prince William on the Same Page about Bezos, Musk, and Branson

It is illuminating to *think with* Hannah Arendt about what a bunch of billionaires are up to.



Actor Brian Cox (Logan Roy in HBO's *Succession*) has asked an Arendtian Question of Bezos, Musk, Branson, and their likes:

"... actually one of the reasons I like Logan is that he would never do what f***ing [Richard] Branson or Musk or Bezos did: 'Let's go up in the sky because we need more spaceships.' No, we don't need more spaceships. What is happening to the planet that we need more rubble up in the sky? We don't need to go into space. **Where's their head, their sense of proportion, their living in the *real world*?**" (Full article [here](#)).

... and Prince William answers as Arendt might:

"We need some of the world's greatest brains and minds fixed on trying to repair this planet, not trying to find the next place to go and live." (Full article [here](#)).

Hannah Arendt, writing in 1958 shortly after the launch of the Sputnik satellite by the USSR, the 'first earth-born object launched into the universe', an event Arendt considered "second in importance to no other, not even to the splitting of the atom", observed with surprise the immediate reaction, as conveyed by an American reporter, as "relief about the first 'step toward escape from [peoples'] imprisonment to the earth.' "

She saw this "strange statement" as mirroring "the extraordinary line which, more than twenty years ago, had been carved on the funeral obelisk for one of Russia's great scientist: 'Mankind will not remain bound to the earth forever.' " She also noted that "such feelings had been commonplace for some time".

In her view, "the earth is the very quintessence of the human condition, and earthly nature, for all we know, maybe unique in the universe in providing human beings with a habitat in which they can move and breathe without effort or without artifice."

And so the "desire to escape imprisonment to the earth" is perverse. As she said: "a rebellion against human existence as it has been given, a free gift from nowhere (secularly speaking), which [people wish] to exchange as it were, for something [they have] made [themselves]. There is no reason to doubt our abilities to accomplish such an exchange, just as there is no reason to doubt our present ability to destroy all organic life on earth. The **question** is only whether we wish to use our new scientific and technical knowledge in this direction and this question cannot be decided by scientific means; it is **a political question of the first order and therefore can hardly be left to the decision of professional scientists or professional politicians.**"

The implication of one answer to this question is that we must all step up to the issue.

And the boys, Bezos, Musk, and Branson, need to come up with a better answer than they have so far with their excuse of 'space tourism for all' since, given the technology available for a long time, there is no way that the ordinary 'tourist' will be able to afford traveling on their toys.

Unlike the contributions of the great (albeit now derided) entrepreneurial capitalists of the 19th century who made things accessible to the masses by lowering costs and thereby opening the market to all, this generation of capitalists are not focused on extending the market but servicing privilege as is the culture of our times. Perhaps, in their reflective moments, they might consider in the spirit of Arendt how they might use their vast wealth and undoubted drive, talent, and ability to engage with the earth, the only home we will have for ages, and make it a secure home for all.

What do you think? How do you think?

Sources:

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