

How does political philosophy contribute to the policy controversy concerning space exploration?

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Since space exploration (especially, manned space exploration) requires huge resources, it has been discussed whether governments should conduct space exploration programs as public enterprises or not. In this controversy, people mention a wide variety of considerations concerning space exploration such as cost-effectiveness of manned space exploration programs, value of big science, historical significance of human's expansion into outer space, and so on. The question how these considerations could relate to justifiability of public funding of space exploration belongs to the research field of political philosophy. In particular, the answer depends on theories of 'distributive justice' (i.e. the issue of just allocation of resources). However, almost no participant in the above controversy have referred to political philosophy. In this talk, I discuss what morals we can get about the political issue of justifiability of public funding of space exploration by reference to theories of distributive justice in political philosophy. Especially, I try to show what kinds of rationales could justify public funding of space exploration on the basis of a political theory called 'liberalism', which claims that governments must respect individuals' liberty.

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