

## **Why Men Explore**

Editor—In concept and execution the journey to the moon and back was bold, brave and of exquisite precision. It exceeded in scientific and organizational skill any prior achievement of man. And it has given mankind access to unforeseeable new knowledge.

So why do some churlish souls presume to question whether it was worthwhile, or worth the money?

I suggest that those would-be pragmatists are the victims of two major fallacies: one is that because this country is not spending enough money on the fight against ignorance and poverty, therefore it cannot afford the cost of space exploration. The fact is that we can easily afford both if we get our priorities right, i.e., if we make a sane choice between the alternatives of spending a given number of billions on mass killing or on peaceful cosmic research.

The other fallacy is the notion that the quest for knowledge is futile unless it can be shown in advance to be "useful." The truth is that if, through the ages, men had not sought and treasured knowledge for its own sake, we would still be in the stone age.

And if indeed this great adventure does have in it a touch of glorious madness and whimsy, let us remember, in the words of Trevelyan, the British historian, that "disinterested intellectual curiosity is the very stuff of civilization."

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