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Law's Empire and the Final Frontier: Legalizing the Future in the Early *Corpus Juris Spatialis*

Barton Beebe

I. INTRODUCTION: THE "GOLDEN AGE" OF SPACE LAW

"Who owns the universe?" What is the legal status of "advanced forms of non-earth life?" "To transfer title of *Moonacre* (a privately-owned space-platform) from A to B would a lawyer use a 'bill of sale' or would he use a 'deed'?" "What kind of twig-breaking will be sufficient to establish seisen where no twig has ever grown?" "What law . . . would be that to rule over us in common with one-, bi-, tetra-, or multi-dimensional races?" Is "trespass in vacuo" actionable, and does "Earth law" provide useful analogies? "What law would govern in a world where a man is able to carry a ten story building?" Should the profession launch an inquiry into

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8. JULIAN G. VERPLAESTE, INTERNATIONAL LAW IN VERTICAL SPACE: AIR, OUTER SPACE, ETHER 402 (1960) ("What rules of law should be contrived to cope with the situation where a man needs machinery to carry his handkerchief? What would be movable and immovable, mortgage and pawn? What would be consent and negligence?").
“the legal aspects of rainmaking?”[9] What are the career prospects for the “space lawyer,”[10] and to what extent should she prepare for “relativity problems?”[11]

As improbable as they may sound to modern readers, such questions were highly fashionable in legal thought and law school classrooms during the “golden age”[12] of space law. Roughly contemporaneous with the “Space Age” itself, this period began with the Sputnik and Explorer launches of the late 1950s, reached its height with the “space boom” of the mid-1960s, and ended with the latter stages of the Apollo program and the “space bust” of the mid-1970s.[13] During this period, an international Corpus Juris Spatialis, or body of space law, quickly developed. Despite the tensions of the Cold War and the spacepowers’ difficulties in predicting their own interests in outer space, Apollo-era space law managed several substantive achievements: the 1959 Report of the Ad Hoc Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space,[14] the 1963 Declaration of Legal Principles Governing the Activities of States in the Exploration and Use of Outer Space,[15] and the near-legendary Outer Space Treaty of 1967.[16] These advances were followed by a period of consolidation,[17] in the Rescue

Agreement (1968),18 the Liability Convention (1972),19 and the Registration
Convention (1975),20 and then by the still-controversial Moon Treaty
(1978).21 “[A]rrived at by nations operating behind an almost Rawlsian veil
of ignorance,”22 the Cold War Corpus Juris Spatialis was, for many, an
inspiring experiment in peace through the rule of law.23

This Note explores an alternative, somewhat less monumental
dimension of early space law, one that was an experiment not so much in
the rule of law as in the rule of lawyers. The subject of this Note is the
diverse, profuse, sometimes brilliant, and often bizarre discourse of Apollo-
era legal commentary on outer space. This discourse is remarkable above
all for its sheer, forgotten mass. The British barrister Harold Caplan began
his address to the Fifth Colloquium on the Law of Outer Space (1964) by
diagnosing the “logorhoea which is endemic wherever Lawyers and Space
meet.”24 He then admitted his own “infection,” yet enthusiastically
observed that “[a]s long ago as March 1961” the U.S. Senate’s Legal
Problems of Space Exploration: A Symposium25 showed “no less than 16
distinct Bibliographies devoted to Space Law.”26 As early as 1958, Leon
Lipson and Myres McDougal also noted, though not so enthusiastically, the
legal community’s considerable interest in space law in their seminal article
Perspectives for a Law of Outer Space.27 There, the two sought to arrest the

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18. Agreement on the Rescue of Astronauts, the Return of Astronauts and the Return
of Objects Launched into Outer Space, opened for signature Apr. 22, 1968, 19 U.S.T. 7570, 672
U.N.T.S. 119.

19. Convention on International Liability for Damage Caused by Space Objects, opened for

20. Convention on Registration of Objects Launched into Outer Space, opened for signature

21. Agreement Governing the Activities of States on the Moon and Other Celestial Bodies,
(asserting that the Moon Treaty marks a “Second Era” in outer space law).

22. GLENN H. REYNOLDS & ROBERT P. Merges, OUTER SPACE: PROBLEMS OF LAW AND

23. See Heidi Keefe, Making the Final Frontier Feasible: A Critical Look at the Current
(“The treaties were perhaps one of the first real attempts at establishing a global community
that would work together to accomplish a goal. Space would not be divided up, as were the land
masses on earth, through conquest and colonialism. Rather, the vision for space was one of
humans working in harmony to better the lives of all mankind by exploring and possibly
exploiting space resources for the good of all, in the spirit of cooperation and harmony.”).


26. Caplan, supra note 12, at 3. For bibliographies of Apollo-era space law, see, for example,
Kuo Lee Li, WORLD WIDE SPACE LAW BIBLIOGRAPHY 647-51 (1978); JOHN J. LOONEY,
BIBLIOGRAPHY OF SPACE BOOKS AND ARTICLES FROM NON-AEROSPACE JOURNALS, 1957-77
(1979); and IRVIN L. WHITE ET AL., LAW AND POLITICS IN OUTER SPACE: A BIBLIOGRAPHY 43-
46 (1972).

27. McDougal & Lipson, supra note 11, at 407.
momentum of the movement “[b]efore legal speculation reaches escape velocity.” 28 Even then they were apparently too late, and it was left to Nicholas Katzenbach to acknowledge the full scope of lawyerly hubris in the pages of the June 1958 Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists: “We have already explored Space, the Moon, Mars, and other bodies and are fast reducing the whole universe to a purely legal problem... By comparison the scientists are barely off the ground.” 29

The “extensive and chaotic body of literature” on the law of outer space, which broke in “the midtwentieth century... the monopoly of science fiction writers,” 30 was indeed controversial. Its critics seem to have enjoyed ridiculing it, and in ever more hyperbolic terms. Thus, space law’s Cold War context produced “the political bedlam of space law.” 31 Its naïveté before the language of realpolitik risked “suicide by semantics.” 32 Its tendency towards prescription was symptomatic of a “Mosaic Syndrome” 33 and threatened to unleash the “psychoses of a gold rush.” 34 To make matters worse, a young reviewer writing in the pages of the Harvard Law Review anxiously denounced the movement’s most revered text, Myres McDougal, Harold Lasswell, and Ivan Vlasic’s Law and Public Order in Space. 35 The treatise’s “excessive conceptualism” 36 and “heavy

28. Id. at 407.
29. Nicholas Katzenbach, Law and Lawyers in Space, 14 BULL. ATOM. SCI. 220 (1958); see also AMERICAN BAR FOUND., REPORT TO THE NATIONAL AERONAUTICS AND SPACE ADMINISTRATION ON THE LAW OF OUTER SPACE 3 (Leon Lipson & Nicholas deB. Katzenbach, project reporters, 1961) [hereinafter REPORT TO NASA] (noting the “considerable interest [in space law]... shown by the organized Bar, governments, and universities in many countries”); Eilene Galloway, Preface to SENATE SPECIAL C. ON SPACE AND ASTRONAUTICS, 85TH CONG., SPACE LAW: A SYMPOSIUM 1, at v, v (Comm. Print 1958) [hereinafter SYMPOSIUM 1958] (“[T]he quality and quantity of published articles in this field are a matter of amazement to those who have only recently become aware of the impact of satellite development upon society.”); Arnold W. Knauth, Legal Problems of Outer Space in Relation to the United Nations, in SYMPOSIUM 1961, supra note 7, at 252, 252 (describing political and academic attention to space-law issues).
30. WHITE, supra note 26, at 6.
33. Caplan, supra note 12, at 6; see also Nicholas M. Poulantzas, Synopsis of Recent Developments in Extra Atmospheric Law and Some Relevant Theoretical Problems, in INTERNATIONAL ASTRONAUTICAL FEDERATION, PROCEEDINGS OF THE SEVENTH COLLOQUIUM ON THE LAW OF OUTER SPACE at 24, 28 (1965) [hereinafter SEVENTH COLLOQUIUM] (“An epidemic tendency today of publicists of outer space law is the formulation and proposal of more and more general principles of law. A cure should be applied to stop this trend.”).
35. MCDOUGAL ET AL., supra note 2.
layers of rules and generalities of dubious value”37 resulted in a “handbook of analogies”38 that was “high-sounding, but on examination almost meaningless,”39 “even casuistic.”40 The book, in Richard Posner’s view, was a failure; “the tough questions for the most part get swept under the rug.”41 Nor did the magnitude of the movement escape the somewhat derisive notice of the popular media. Early space law earned for itself such dubious honors as a center column article in the Wall Street Journal,42 an appearance in Grin & Bear It,43 and a misprint to which the New Yorker called attention: “Every 24 hours many thousand meteorites approach the earth from outer space, but many fail to survive contact with the outer lawyers of the atmosphere.”44

It is appropriate that the early years of space law should be described with images of psychosis and escape, for Apollo-era space law was a talking cure. The disease was the rise of science and the prognosis was the death of law. In seeking to make sense of the extraordinary outpouring of legal commentary on outer space in the late 1950s and early 1960s, this Note interprets early space law as a means by which the legal profession sought to assert its continued vitality in an age of science and technocracy. Part II shows how the overriding positivism and technological spectaculars of the Space Age were perceived to threaten the prestige of legal practice and the utility of legal knowledge. The image of outer space itself—as a “legal vacuum,” as the scientized, utopian future of humanity—posed a radical challenge to law’s claims to universality. The result was the law’s own, professional “Sputnik Crisis.” Part III evaluates the legal estate’s efforts to coopt what threatened it. Early space law sought to reduce outer space to the familiar rhetoric of property and sovereignty, and to develop a legal code for scientific custom in space. In assimilating to the law the very space that science identified as its own, the legal profession resisted the 1960s’ orthodox image of the future as one of technological heavens and

37. Id. at 1371.
38. Id. at 1373.
39. Id. at 1371.
40. Id. at 1373.
41. Id. at 1371. But see C. WILFRED JENKS, SPACE LAW 125 (1965) (calling Law and Public Order in Space “a major intellectual achievement”).
43. The cartoon showed an expert telling a conference of generals that “[t]here are bound to be legal squabbles about claims on the moon, gentlemen. I think the first astronaut we land there should be a lawyer.” The cartoon is cited in Albert M. Kuhfeld, The Space Age Legal Dilemma, in SYMPOSIUM 1961, supra note 7, at 773, 775.
44. See id. at 774.
technological earth. Space law set in its place an image of the future in which law would function as the countercultural, humanist antidote to the proliferation of perfect technology. Perhaps visionary, perhaps opportunistic, early space law sought to acculturate the future to the law, and to claim that future’s utopian largesse as new, professional property. In conclusion, Part IV speculates on what early space law has to say about the legal futurist impulse in our own new age of digital and genetic information.

II. LAW AND THE ROCKET STATE

In an infamous phrase, President Nixon called Apollo 11 the “greatest week in the history of the world since the Creation.” 45 If the mythmakers at NASA were to be believed, then Nixon was not far off the mark. For a democracy capable of Hiroshima, NASA introduced the rocket launch as the new spectacle of state power and the surveillance satellite as the new symbol of state knowledge. 46 For a nation fearful of communist expansion, Tranquility Base confirmed the full reach of Manifest Destiny. For a postwar culture aspiring to make sense of its momentum in the world, the frontier epic of space exploration valorized American exceptionalism and interpreted it as foreordained by the gods. 47 Yet the space program held out the promise of something greater still. As a vehicle for what David Nye has called the “American technological sublime,” 48 NASA presented itself as

46. William Atwill proposes an interesting reading of the space program along these lines: Add to this ambivalence [about the Manichean nature of technology] the very public (televised) history of the space age and you have, perhaps, the best example of Guy Debord’s postmodernist “Society of the Spectacle” as well as this century’s benign version of Michel Foucault’s “spectacle of the scaffold” in the sense that the space program served as a public stage on which a sovereign’s power and control were inscribed on the hearts and minds of the assembled though a mediated enactment upon representative individuals. . . . [T]he space program was the most effective display of power in this century, a dispersed, nearly invisible coercion of the souls of people by way of a technological display apparently benign in its application. We were thrilled at the technological possibilities of communications satellites, weather satellites, probes to distant planets, and voyages of men to the moon, but all those years of admonition to “watch the skies” hovered at the edge of our consciousness to remind us that more sinister payloads could also be delivered.
47. See generally James L. Kaufmann, Selling Outer Space: Kennedy, the Media, and Funding for Project Apollo, 1961-1963 (1994) (discussing NASA’s public relations strategies); Howard E. McCurdy, Space and the American Imagination 139-61 (1997) (discussing the frontier imagery used to promote space exploration in America).
48. David T. Nye, American Technological Sublime 256 (1994) (“In an atomic age, the pilgrimage to the Kennedy Space Center promised a sublime experience that renewed faith in
an image of the nation’s technological future. In Houston, Cape Kennedy, Washington, and now on the Moon, the promise of the Great Society would be fulfilled by America’s “new priesthood”49 of scientists and technicians, a caste of “saviors and miracle workers”50 who could command enormous instrumental power and symbolic capital51 with an aura of total competence.

Of course, that “Whitey’s on the moon”52 meant different things to different people. For many of its critics, the space program represented the birth of a new, technocratic order in society. As the defining moment in the history of the American Rocket State,53 Apollo 11 could be understood as the prodigy not of miracle workers, but of specialists without spirit. At NASA and elsewhere, the nation’s new class of “technologues”54 promised neutral technical means towards self-evident political ends and fashioned a legitimating ideology out of the “end of ideology” itself. In doing so, they made the dream of escape into space all the more appealing as they created on Earth the material conditions for the “technocratic consciousness”55 of “one-dimensional man.”56 No wonder American liberal intellectuals responded to the space program’s “behemoth piece of American

America and in the ultimate beneficence of advanced industrialization. This final avatar of the technological sublime is a literal escape from the threatened life-world.”).


51. This term is adapted from Pierre Bourdieu. See generally Richard Terdiman, Translator’s Introduction of Pierre Bourdieu, The Force of Law: Toward a Sociology of the Juridical Field, 38 HASTINGS L.J. 805, 812 (1987) (“Symbolic capital, for Bourdieu, designates the wealth (hence implicitly the productive capacity) which an individual or group has accumulated—not in the form of money or industrial machinery, but in symbolic form. Authority, knowledge, prestige, reputation, academic degrees, debts of gratitude owed by those to whom we have given gifts or favors: all these are forms of symbolic capital.”).

52. GIL SCOTT-HERON, Whitey on the Moon, in SMALL TALK AT 125TH AND LENNOX 26 (1970); see also The Ones Who . . . , in SCOTT-HERON, supra, at 10 (discussing government spending on space exploration).

53. The term “Rocket State” is adapted from the “Raketen-Stadt,” THOMAS PYNCHON, GRAVITY’S RAINBOW 297 (1973), a place that William Atwill describes as “a ‘Rocket City’ of the psyche, a world shaped not by geography and national origin but by the intricately multinational lines of technocracy that emerged after World War II and burgeoned in the Cold War climate of the next two decades,” ATWILL, supra note 46, at 6-7.


56. See generally HERBERT MARCUSE, ONE-DIMENSIONAL MAN: STUDIES IN THE IDEOLOGY OF ADVANCED INDUSTRIAL SOCIETY (1964) (analyzing the decadence of critical rationality in Western technological societies).
calculus,”57 says Tom Wolfe, with “amazing hostility.”58 No wonder the nation’s poets tended to ignore the whole thing.59 The nation’s lawyers, however, did not have that luxury. For them, or at least for those who called themselves “space lawyers,” the Space Age threatened the art of legal practice and the scope of legal knowledge. Indeed, for some, it meant the death of law.

Section A surveys the rise of the American Rocket State as a technocratic ideology. After a review of the Sputnik Crisis, the Section considers the American space program’s evolving mandate as a model for national progress. It then assesses contemporary criticisms of technocracy and space exploration. Section B describes how the American legal profession responded to Sputnik and to the sudden clamor for scientific supremacy that followed in its wake. Section C speculates on why the legal profession reacted as nervously as it did to the onset of the Space Age. As in the scientific future it predicted, so in the scientific frontier it opened up and explored, the Space Age promoted a world in which legal knowledge would become obsolete.

A. The Birth of the American Rocket State

The origins of the American Rocket State have been traced to wartime Germany.60 The more conventional account begins on October 4, 1957, when the Soviet Union successfully orbited Sputnik I, and the American “Sputnik Crisis” began.61 Within a month, the Soviets orbited Sputnik II, which carried the dog Laika, earning the satellite the popular name “Muttnik.”62 More ominously, the weight of Sputnik II implied a Soviet

58. See Tom Wolfe, Foreword to ARNOLD BEICHMAN, NINE LIES ABOUT AMERICA at xi, xxiv (1972).
59. See generally RONALD WEBER, SEEING EARTH: LITERARY RESPONSES TO SPACE EXPLORATION 81-91 (1985) (describing the ironic and dismissive view of the space program held by various American poets in the 1960s and 1970s).
60. See, for example, Dale Carter’s detailed reading of Pynchon and postwar America, in DALE CARTER, THE FINAL FRONTIER: THE RISE AND FALL OF THE AMERICAN ROCKET STATE (1988). Consider also McDougall’s authoritative remarks concerning the legacy of wartime Germany’s Vergeltungswaffen (or “vengeance weapons”), the V-1 and V-2:

By investing the dwindling resources of the Nazi Empire in these technical adventures, which, without atomic warheads, could only stoke the determination of the enemy, Hitler did achieve a vengeance of sorts. He hastened the day when staggering costs and numbing fear accompanied the efforts of his conquerors to refine the V-2’s offspring into engines of terrible destruction.

MCDougALL, supra note 13, at 41.


62. See LEVINE, supra note 13, at 57; cf. The Shaggiest Dog, N.Y. TIMES, Nov. 5, 1957, at L31 (“The whole future of our own race, Communists and bourgeois alike, the bound and the
ability to deliver nuclear warheads to any spot on the globe. On December 6, America attempted its first, hurried response. In a now famous image, the U.S. Navy's Vanguard TV-3 rocket, the American “Kaputnik,” exploded on the launch pad while the world media watched. This series of events was a “propaganda triumph” for the Soviet Union and probably its finest hour on the world stage. For the United States, it was declared an unthinkable reversal. The Soviets had refuted in an instant what America’s postwar “victory culture” had taken for granted: the nation’s overwhelming technological superiority, the preeminence of its democratic institutions, and the unrivaled ingenuity of American capitalism. Or so said congressional Democrats, and as President Eisenhower recovered from his stroke of November 1957, his popularity fell as much as twenty-five points from its postelection high.

The immediate effect of the Sputnik Crisis in America was a call for total mobilization, for “blood, sweat and tears,” in pursuit of scientific and technological superiority. This call extended to the nation’s educational system, to its industrial base, to its commodity culture, and, of course, to its methods of governance. Ever prudent, Eisenhower refused to be carried away by the panic. In his 1958 State of the Union Address, he declared that the Soviet Union had begun to wage “total cold war,” but proposed only modest reforms. It was left to the Kennedy and Johnson Administrations, to the New Frontier and the Great Society, to wage total cold war in return.
One result was that by the mid-1960s, science became "the major Establishment in the American political system," and the technocratic rhetoric of systems theory, cybernetics, and synoptic decisionmaking became the new language of power. As Hans Morgenthau wrote in 1964, "in the eyes both of the political authorities and the public at large, the scientific elites appear as the guardians of the arcana imperii, the secret remedies for public ills." It was one such guardian, Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara, who probably expressed the new technocratic ethos best in *The Essence of Security*: "If it is not reason that rules man, then man falls short of his potential." Truly, it was, for some, an Apollonian age—one that began and would end in war.

The rise of NASA both contributed to and reflected the more general rise of technocracy in American society. In March 1958, NASA was established as a civilian agency charged with defending American prestige in the eyes of the world. With its famed "aura of competence," the space program soon came to represent big, expensive government that worked. NASA chief James E. Webb called his agency a "prototype for tomorrow," the "pattern needed by this nation" in which progress obtained through


In the beginning, a current saying in Washington goes, were the lawyers; next came the economists; and then came the businessmen. Now it is the scientists' turn. This new breed, or more precisely, these new hybrids, who began their more or less reluctant ascent to power during the Second World War, are now so thoroughly enmeshed and infiltrated into every level of government that no one seems capable of stating with any precision just what their function is.

Greenfield, supra note 50, at 124. Later in the article, Greenfield makes explicit reference to Sputnik: "What has happened since Sputnik rattled the china in 1957 has been an elevation of scientists, who were for the most part already there, to posts of new responsibility with access to the top." *Id.* at 132. A survey of postwar literature on the relation between science and government may be found in Sanford A. Lakoff, *Scientists, Technologists and Political Power*, in *Science, Technology and Society: A Cross-Disciplinary Perspective* 355 (Ina Spiegel-Rössing & Derek de Solla Price eds., 1977).


76. ROBERT S. MCNAMARA, *The Essence of Security* 109 (1968); *cf.* NEIL SHEEHAN, *A Bright Shining Lie: John Paul Vann and America in Vietnam* 290 (1988) (quoting McNamara's statement that "[e]very quantitative measurement we have shows that we're winning this war").

77. *See generally* MCCURDY, supra note 47, at 83-107 (discussing how NASA developed a reputation for competence during the 1960s).
"'adaptive, problem-solving, temporary systems of diverse specialists, linked together by coordinating executives in organic flux.'" As Webb’s exotic rhetoric suggests, and as Walter McDougall has persuasively argued, NASA helped to convert American politics over to the "technocratic temptation" by serving as a "model for the application of the technocratic method to civilian goals." Despite the protestations of many in the American scientific community, NASA was also popularized as the archetype of state-sponsored "command technology" and as proof, however tenuous, of the material, intellectual, and spiritual advantages that would flow from it.

Though the American space program became a cultural icon in the 1960s, the technocratic worldview that it came to symbolize was not without its detractors. For Hannah Arendt, space exploration abetted modernity’s "rebellion against human existence." The narrator of Norman Mailer’s *Of a Fire on the Moon* offered a subtle, though hardly reassuring, variation on this theme. For him, space exploration held out the hope of humanistic rebellion against modernity: "[T]echnology had penetrated the modern mind to such a depth that voyages in space might have become the last way to discover the metaphysical pits of that world of technique which choked the pores of modern consciousness." When the likes of Arendt or Mailer criticized the space program in these terms, they did so as part of the Space Age’s wide-ranging and oftentimes best-selling literature on the specter of technocracy in the industrialized world. This literature took a

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79. McDOUGALL, supra note 13, at 306 (“For the commitment to go to the moon did more than accelerate existing trends in space. It served as a bridge over which technocratic methods passed from the military to the civilian realm in the United States, to political problems at home as well as abroad. Sharp disagreements arose over the goals that government ought to pursue, but by 1964 little dissent remained over the methods. Under the impact of total Cold War, with the space program serving as lever, Left and Right, dove and hawk succumbed to the technocratic temptation.”).
80. Id. at 194.
84. See, e.g., GUY BENVENSTE, THE POLITICS OF EXPERTISE (1972); JACQUES ELLUL, THE TECHNOLOGICAL SOCIETY (John Wilkinson trans., 1967); VICTOR C. FERKISS, TECHNOLOGICAL
variety of forms. In its more precise incarnations, it predicted—and
sometimes purported to expose—the devolution of political authority upon
the bureaucratic expert and the reordering of political values according to
the imperatives of scientific/technological convergence. In its more
ambitious incarnations, it also criticized the totalitarian spirit of the age
and declared the death of the subject. For those who subscribed to this
critique, the space program was little more than technocratic pyramid-
building and a well-orchestrated distraction from the discontents of
 technological civilization. The astronaut, meanwhile, became the
controversial ideal type of the technocratic Zeitgeist—a scientific superman
to his many admirers, a soulless organization man, the consummate
"cheerful robot," to the few who begrudged him his fame.

B. The Death of Law?

1. The Sputnik Crisis in American Law

Given the degree to which the Sputnik Crisis permeated American life,
it may not surprise that the American legal profession experienced its own
Sputnik Crisis, one that took the form of a sudden flood of legal
commentary on space exploration in seminars, and symposia, in bar
journals, both local and national, in law journals, and in legal newspapers,
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and in the popular media.95 To be sure, this was a distinctively professional rather than patriotic crisis. The "rival system[]"96 was not communism, but science. The remarks of Senator Kenneth B. Keating are representative in this regard. In a January 1958 address before the New York State Bar, Keating spoke of the "recent Buck Rogerish achievements"97 in space exploration and the "new-found glamor of the sciences." "Technology with a capital 'T' is on every tongue. Definitely, the sciences are on the ascendency. There is no question about that."98 He then cautioned: "The lawyer should not resent this."99

Resentment was nevertheless the order of the day, and for good reason. Not only did science reveal in the satellite orbits of 1957 and 1958 the rhetorical force of its achievements, but it was perceived to have done so in a profoundly lawless fashion. In one respect, the spacepowers neither sought nor expressed any opinion on the legality of their acts. Thus the "Chairman's Message" in the May 1958 issue of the American Bar Association's Section of International and Comparative Law Bulletin complained: "In 1957 the U.S.S.R. launched its sputniks into space. Later, American satellites joined in circling the earth in flights completely free from even the pretense of legal control."100 In another respect, science ostensibly extended itself beyond the rule of law into a "realm where no


97. Keating, supra note 91, at 72.

98. Id. at 73.

99. Id.

law exists.” In early 1957, Eugène Pépin admonished his colleagues to update existing international air law in anticipation of satellite overflights: “It is to be hoped that jurists will not let themselves be outdistanced by technicians.” Yet with the satellite orbits of the late 1950s, this is precisely what had happened, or so it seemed to those lawyers for whom “legal vacuum” was a favored expression of self-reproach.

This identification of science as the antagonist, combined with the spacepowers’ reticence, created the conditions for a surprisingly altruistic, cosmopolitan discussion of space law in the months following Sputnik. This altruism was tempered, however, by the legal profession’s insistent rhetoric of prerogative and entitlement, of exclusive competency over “the domain of the space lawyers.” Alarmist statements were typical. Lawyers declared that the franchise was now imperiled, if not on Earth, then certainly in outer space:

Admittedly, most of the space-law problems are still in the future. However, this is not in itself a reason why lawyers should not concern themselves with the questions that may arise or their possible solutions. If lawyers do not concern themselves with these questions, others will—and we may some day find ourselves confronted, by default, with undesirable laws or regulations or, by the same token, we may find that non-lawyers have entered the field to our disadvantage.

101. Eilene Galloway, The Community of Law and Science, in Symposium 1961, supra note 7, at 450, 451; see also Matthew J. Corrigan, Outer Space Lawyers: Eagles or Turtles?, 51 A.B.A. J. 858, 858 (1965) (“[T]he launching of Sputnik I precipitated us into the outer space with immediateness and something of a state of shock. There were no laws for outer space.”).


103. See, e.g., Survey of Space Law, H.R. Doc. No. 86-89, at 1 (1959) (characterizing outer space as “a politico-legal void”); Ralph R. Mickelson, Space Law and Air Rights from the Ground up, 49 Ill. B.J. 812, 821 (1961) (“Essentially, we are in a legal vacuum demanding and requiring clarification of the legal positions of nations as they reach into outer space.”); Joseph J. Simeone, Jr., Space—A Legal Vacuum, Mil. L. Rev., Apr. 1962, at 43; cf. Imre Csabafi, Current Problems of Space Law in 1962, in Fifth Colloquium, supra note 12, at n.p., 8 (“outer space was a virgin space before man entered it, to which in absence of human activities the provisions of law did not apply”); Schacter, supra note 1, at 71 (characterizing outer space as “legally . . . a no man’s world”); Simpson, supra note 91, at 356 n.5 (“At least one husband is apparently depending upon space travel to solve his marital problems. He has enthusiastically volunteered his wife as a passenger in the first rocket ship to the moon.”); Wurfel, supra note 93, at 271 (characterizing outer space as a “Pandora’s box of space facts with the lid ajar”).


In this sense, the Space Age would be “a turning point in our honored profession,” one in which lawyers were going to be either “Eagles or Turtles.” Some would eventually counsel against this paranoid style. Others, such as the irrepressible William Hyman, were far less restrained: “The void in space is law. This must be filled and it must be filled immediately. The time for launching is now! Go! Go!! Go!” Such enthusiasm had a predictable result. “Many scientists like to jibe their lawyer friends for what they allege is an unnecessary desire to ‘get into the space act,’” wrote Philip B. Yeager in the American Bar Association Journal. Yet, as far as Senator Keating was concerned, the very fate of the bar demanded immediate action: “[A]t the threshold of a new age of exploration and discovery... the American lawyer... must lead the way.... We choose between greatness—and oblivion.”

2. Big Science and the Law’s “Cultural Cringe”

The legal profession’s Sputnik Crisis soon expanded beyond mere calls for the rule of law in outer space. As American society turned to science, American lawyers began to suggest that the choice between greatness and oblivion had already been made—if not in outer space, then certainly on Earth. “The technocrat is not the new messiah,” declared Arthur Selwyn Miller in the Buffalo Law Review, “and it is high-time lawyers recognized it.” Yet many legal commentators openly acknowledged the ascendancy of the scientific estate in the early 1960s and acceded to its privileging of technical “competence” over “customary knowledge.”

In an act perhaps best described as “cultural cringe,” to borrow a term from postcolonial studies, various lawyers declared their loss of status, if not their outright “abdication” of social and political authority. “The
simple fact is that law has not kept abreast of science,” reported Chief Justice Warren in his 1963 address on the subject. Others spoke of the lawyer’s “inertia,” scientific illiteracy, irrational devotion to an “ancient common law tradition,” and blindness to the social implications of science. These were the source of “embarrassing contrasts in a society in which the hallmark of science is impatience with the status quo.” This embarrassment had basic guild implications, as one commentator noted: “The notion of the omnicompetence of the lawyer, cherished by the profession for centuries, is a myth.” Given this state of affairs, the coming of the Washington “superlawyers” must have seemed far off indeed. In the near term, an altogether different story was being told: “Lawyers are losing caste” and are “on the verge of plummeting in social importance,” though it remained to be seen whether science would, in fact, “reduce [them] to nothing more than electricians’ helpers . . . .”

The rise of the scientific estate did more than threaten the prestige and independence of lawyers. It also challenged law’s cherished self-conception as an instrumental, even constitutive force in society. An orbit around the moon convinced Frank Borman, of Apollo 8, that “[m]an can now do technology], the profession will abdicate its position of primary responsibility for creating and enforcing the rules by which society governs itself.”); Morgenthau, supra note 75, at 1406 (“The ascendency of the scientific elites, then, is a function not only of their monopoly of esoteric knowledge, but also of the abdication, in the face of it, of the politically responsible authorities and of the politically conscious public.”).

116. Foreword to Law, Science, and Technology: A Symposium, 33 GEO. WASH. L. REV. 1, 1 (1964) (“Lawyers are members of a profession devoted to precedents and relying heavily upon stare decisis, and they are particularly susceptible to inertia.”).
117. See Spencer M. Beresford, Lawyers, Science, and the Government, 33 GEO. WASH. L. REV. 181, 207-08 (1964) (“At present, the legal profession is one of the last strongholds of the scientifically illiterate. Like the British Civil Service, the American legal profession, in spite of all that science has accomplished in this century, is still dominated by men trained almost exclusively in literature and the social sciences.”).
119. See Gordon Brewster Baldwin, Law in Support of Science: Legal Control of Basic Research Resources, 54 GEO. L.J. 559, 590 (1966) (“Lawyers, reflecting their own education, the immediate interests of their clients, and the political concerns of the lay public, have long been unconscious of the active and passive role of law affecting science. Therefore, it is not surprising that they are usually blind to the interactions of science and society.”).
120. Parker, supra note 118, at 41.
121. Miller, supra note 111, at 619.
123. Miller, supra note 111, at 615.
125. Loevinger, supra note 96, at 541.
anything he wants to technically."126 This was to some extent the technocrat’s article of faith, one that “subtly shifts the emphasis of the persistent political question ‘Can we do this?’ from the consideration of legal constraints to consideration of physical constraints.”127 In this limited sense, the technocrat’s “one best method” participated in the postwar period’s notorious “end of ideology”128 both at home and abroad. Instrumental reason promised to depoliticize the management of public affairs and render obsolete—or at least inconsequential—the kind of complex normative disputes in whose resolution lawyers claimed to specialize.129 In the view of some, the legal estate had already yielded its traditional authority to this false promise of positivism and engineered consensus, at the very least in the realm of technology policy,130 if not in American governance more generally.

C. Scientific Space and the Mythology of Modern Law

Leon Lipson was reportedly fond of saying that “[s]pace is a place, not a topic.”131 Lipson’s remark may be understood as part of his attempt to reign in some of the especially fantastic ideations that characterized early space law. Yet outer space was more than just a geographical concept in the 1960s. The recent “spatial turn in critical thinking”132 in the law and

129. This version of the end-of-ideology thesis was emphasized most often by critiques of the thesis. See, e.g., Robert A. Haber, The End of Ideology as Ideology, in THE END OF IDEOLOGY DEBATE, supra note 128, at 182, 183 (attributing to the end-of-ideology thesis the argument that “the problems which are pressing for the society are of high complexity, do not have clear solutions, and political methods don’t appear the most fruitful means of treatment”); Stephen W. Rousseas & James Farganis, American Politics and the End of Ideology, in THE END OF IDEOLOGY DEBATE, supra note 128, at 206, 207 (citing Lipset’s claim that “the ideological issues dividing left and right [have] been reduced to a little more or a little less government ownership and economic planning”).
130. See Harold P. Green, The New Technological Era: A View from the Law, BULL. ATOMIC SCIENTISTS, Nov. 1967, at 17 (“[O]ur decisions concerning government-sponsored technological programs are made within small, closed circles of specialists on the basis of their expert judgments and predictions of the magnitude of the social consequences and the feasibility of their being controlled through technological means. . . . [T]he effect of our present obsession with technological advance is to displace the courts as the forum for protecting and vindicating individual rights which are disturbed by technology . . . .”).
132. Edward Soja, Symposium: Surveying Law and Borders—Afterword, 48 STAN. L. REV. 1421, 1423 (1996) (“The spatial turn—or what might be called the spatialization of critical studies—reflects the growing interest in the power of space and spatial thinking as a way of interpreting not just the contemporary world, but of dealing with critical questions of all kinds—including those addressed by critical legal scholars. Increasing attention is being given to the problems of the city, urban and regional issues, to locality, to the body, to place, to the
elsewhere should help us to appreciate that outer space was also a thoroughly politicized and socially constructed realm. As the Soviet and American culture industries of the time knew all too well, space functioned primarily as a metaphor for the future, and for the scientific worldview—be it capitalist or communist—that would dominate that future. Ludwig Teller attested to this construction of space in the *New York Law Forum*:

> Space is no longer an ordinary word of the English language. It has taken on a secondary meaning identified with the science and technology of astronautics and expressive of the awesome responsibilities which missiles and satellites and flight beyond the earth’s atmosphere and into the mysterious reaches of outer regions have imposed upon us. Who controls space controls the world.¹³³

Indeed, “space” was a topic. To the extent that it was a metaphor for the scientific future, outer space was also a metaphor for the profound challenges that this future presented to the status of legal knowledge. By the unparalleled force of its technological spectacles, space exploration helped establish science as a center of political and normative authority. At the same time, it opened up a new geography, the geography of the future, that seemed intelligible only to scientific knowledge. This put the legal estate on the defensive, and challenged the traditional prerogatives of law’s empire itself. The scientific frontier in outer space promoted in the popular imagination on Earth an alternative language of command, a new standard of authority and competence, and a new force for the construction of the future. As the Sputnik crisis suggests, space exploration was local, as much for the scientific culture in orbit as for the legal culture on the ground.

Two factors help to explain why the legal estate reacted so closely to the arrival of the Space Age. The first was that Apollo-era space-law commentators failed to realize, as did most of the world at the time, that the imminence of extraterrestrial colonization, industrialization, and militarization was a “fabricated illusion.”¹³⁴ This illusion was fostered in order to justify the enormous sacrifice of public capital necessary to fuel space exploration and win the space race.¹³⁵ The astrophysicist James Van Allen did his best to debunk this illusion in testimony before Congress: “I do not subscribe to some 99% of what is written about this subject—space

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¹³⁵. See generally KAUFFMAN, supra note 47 (discussing NASA’s public relations strategies); McCURDY, supra note 47 (same).
exploration—as having any validity.” Notwithstanding such voices of dissent, space lawyers believed the hype (indeed, contributed to it) and sought to acculturate to the law the ninety-nine percent that Van Allen ridiculed. To be sure, this was a losing proposition. After all, how do you reduce to an object of law the utopian visions of science fiction? The ninety-nine percent described a future dedicated to “[t]he accelerating momentum of history, the figurative shrinking of the globe, the telescoping of time,” a future that would transcend the law’s traditional dictum ex facto jus oritur, that the law arises out of the fact. As the space politician Emilio Daddario urged, “we must build a body of law which can be reconciled with facts we have yet to learn about the world of outer space.” The legal profession’s fate, in other words, would henceforth be a struggle to anticipate and bring within the law a new era of overwhelming technological, cultural, and geographical discontinuity—an era, in more recent terms, of “cyberspace” and “cybertime.”

A second, closely related condition concerned what this seemingly inevitable future implied about the law’s present. The common aphorism of the Space Age, “Who controls space controls the world,” was underwritten by a subtle post-Orwellian message: Who controls the future controls the present. Space was the new high ground in more than just military terms. It was also an ethical or normative high ground, the blankness on which Space Age culture could project its “image of the

139. See M. Ethan Katsch, Cybertime, Cyberspace and Cyberlaw, 1995 J. Online L. art. 1, § 56 (“Our relatively brief experience with cyberspace indicates clearly that the computer is a space machine, negating physical distance and creating new spaces in which novel relationships and activities can occur....[T]he computer should also be considered to be a time machine, creating a new environment in which our relationship with time becomes different from what it has been. Just as cyberspace calls upon us to explore what it means to be able to work in and with virtual spaces, cybertime should make us sensitive to issues of time that are in the background of much legal work.”); cf. Michel Foucault, Of Other Spaces, in The Visual Culture Reader 237, 237 (Nicholas Mirzoeff ed., 1998) (“The present epoch will perhaps be above all the epoch of space. We are in the epoch of simultaneity: we are in the epoch of juxtaposition, the epoch of the near and far, of the side-by-side, of the dispersed. We are at a moment, I believe, when our experience of the world is less that of a long life developing through time than that of a network that connects points and intersects with its own skein. One could perhaps say that certain ideological conflicts animating present-day polemics oppose the pious descendants of time and the determined inhabitants of space.”).
140. Teller, supra note 133, at 275; see also Stephen Gorove, On the Threshold of Space: Toward a Cosmic Law, 4 N.Y.L.F. 305, 307-08 (1958) (“He who controls the Cosmic Space, rules not only the Earth but the whole Universe.”); William A. Hyman, Sovereignty over Space, in International Astronautical Federation, Proceedings of the Third Colloquium on the Law of Outer Space 26, 35 (1960) [hereinafter Third Colloquium] (“The nation which controls space will control the world.”).
future.” To its great credit, early space law seems to have operated according to this principle. It feared the dominance of science and technology not only in the future as it would be lived, but also in the future as it was currently being imagined, mapped out, advertised—the future as it existed in the present. In this sense, the legal profession sought to intervene in the construction of a purely scientific image of the future, lest this prophesy become self-fulfilling. The law’s post-Sputnik reaction may appear comical to our eyes, in that it lent credence to the fabulous ninety-nine percent, in that it took the eccentric worldview of science fiction at its word. Yet this merely indicated the extent to which lawyers at the time understood the stakes involved. Fearful of being augured out of the Space Age, and mindful of the popularity of Futures Studies in the 1960s, they shrewdly sought to exploit the possibility that, as one space lawyer wrote, “the idea of law is a picture of the future.”

In thus calling into question the sufficiency and scope of legal knowledge, the Rocket State posed a profound challenge to what Peter Fitzpatrick has called the “mythology of modern law.” Fitzpatrick locates this mythology within the framework of the colonial imagination:

Thus modern law emerges, in a negative exaltation, as universal in opposition to the particular, as unified in opposition to the diverse, as omnicompetent in contrast to the incompetent, and as controlling of what has to be controlled. . . . Law is imbued with this negative transcendence in its own myth of origin where it is imperiously set against certain “others” who concentrate the qualities it opposes. Such others are themselves creatures of an Occidental mythology, a

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141. Cf. 1 Fred L. Polak, The Image of the Future: Enlightening the Past, Orientating the Present, Forecasting the Future 31 (Elise Boulding trans., 1961) (“It is the positive ideas and ideals of man, cast in the form of images of the future, picturing another and better world to come, which have here largely made history what it is. . . . [T]o the extent that these perfectionist and idealistic images of the future have served as predominating motifs and guiding stars to the societies which have held them, they have indeed been active in shaping the future for those societies.”); 2 id. at 115 (“The prevailing positive images of the future, perpetually breaking through the frontiers of time, have formed powerful—often the most powerful—long-range dynamic force pushing history through time. . . . [T]he history of culture is the history of its images of the future.”).

142. See supra note 136 and accompanying text.


mythology which denies its own foundation by consigning myth in
general to the world of these others.\footnote{146}

This "negative transcendence" is the "fateful dimension" that the
Enlightenment project sets for itself, explains Fitzpatrick. "[W]ith its
claims to a sole rationality, to universality, comprehensiveness and
consistency... [i]t can only relate to that part of nature which persistently
stands outside of its project, which persistently denies it, as something
essentially 'other.'"\footnote{147}

The culture of space exploration made untenable law's claim to
universal modernity. If the rhetoric of the Rocket State was to be
believed—and for the most part it was believed—then law itself had
become a kind of colonial other. It had begun to "concentrate the qualities
it opposes." In the judgment of science, its mentality was "savage,
primitive, underdeveloped."\footnote{148} In its own judgment, its origins were
"ancient," its "omnicompetence" was a "myth," its likely fate was
"oblivion." No longer could it claim possession of "the arcana imperii."\footnote{149}
Instead, to expound legal knowledge in the Space Age was to preach the
beliefs of the "stone age."\footnote{150} To restore legal knowledge was to demand
that it "give up its present unscientific form and join with science in the
cooperation of man with man in the conquest of nature."\footnote{151}

In the most general terms, then, the Space Age violated, however
briefly, law's traditional sense of empire. In the blankness of outer space,
legal knowledge confronted a twentieth-century heart of darkness that
formed an all-encompassing periphery to its claims to universality,
omnicompetence, and centralism. This periphery was no savage darkness,
however. On the contrary, it described the "endless frontier"\footnote{152} of scientific
enlightenment. It was a kind of empire unto itself, and one with a future.

\begin{footnotes}
\item[146] Peter Fitzpatrick, The Mythology of Modern Law 10 (1992); cf. Jacques
Derrida, Margins of Philosophy 213 (Alan Bass trans., 1982) ("Metaphysics—the white
mythology which reassembles and reflects the culture of the West... has erased within itself the
fabulous scene that has produced it, the scene that nevertheless remains active and stirring,
inscribed in white ink, an invisible design covered over in the palimpsest.").

\item[147] Peter Fitzpatrick, 'The Desperate Vacuum': Imperialism and Law in the Experience of
Enlightenment, in Post-Modern Law: Enlightenment, Revolution and the Death of

\item[148] Lyotard, supra note 112, at 27.

\item[149] See supra note 75 and accompanying text.

\item[150] D.G. Brennan, Why Outer Space Control?, in Symposium 1961, supra note 7, at 511,
511 ("We are rapidly entering the space age with an international political and legal structure
better suited to the stone age.").

\item[151] Thomas A. Cowan, Law and Technology: Uneasy Leaders of Modern Life, 19 Case W.
Res. L. Rev. 120, 124 (1967).

\item[152] Vannevar Bush, Science: The Endless Frontier (1960).
\end{footnotes}
The result was that the "everywhereness" of law, its universality which "exceeds [sic] all finitude," had been undone by the Rocket State. Law's empire had become merely "local knowledge."

III. LEGALIZING SPACE: THE EMPIRE WRITES BACK

Commenting on the outpouring of writing on space law in the wake of Sputnik, Euthymène Georgiades observed that "jurists, it appears, like nature, abhor a vacuum." This Part examines the ways in which legal knowledge rushed in to fill this vacuum. The overriding assumption of this Part is that early space-law commentary sought only incidentally to state a coherent doctrine of space law. The equitable distribution of craters on the moon was not its primary concern. Rather, Apollo-era space law was cultural work. It sought to affirm the legal estate's "capacity to persuade people that the world described in its images and categories is the only attainable world in which a sane person would want to live." This meant the extension of legal images and categories, of legal discourse, into the discursive field of outer space. For better or worse, it meant the strange "imbrication" of legal meaning into a culture of space exploration.

Section A considers space law's attempt to establish a boundary between atmospheric space and outer space. Section B discusses the attempt to codify space law. Section C concludes by examining early space law's effort to defend the legal rights of extraterrestrial civilizations.

A. "Who Owns the Universe?"

In the early years of space law, variations on this question entitled innumerable popular and scholarly publications throughout the West.
much to the chagrin of Chairman Krushchev, who declared himself too historically advanced to consider the issue.\textsuperscript{160} Of course, Krushchev had a point. The question of ownership tended to function in the West as the catchall for a wide variety of inquiries into more specific issues relating to extraterrestrial sovereignty, jurisdiction, conflict of laws, and property rights. Such inquiries typically began with a question that remains unresolved to this day: Where does sovereign airspace end and outer space begin?

The question of atmospheric sovereignty received “more attention from the legal writers than any other space law problem.”\textsuperscript{161} In the process, it provoked a chaos of unsatisfactory answers, indeed “a complete lack of authoritative prescriptions.”\textsuperscript{162} The most bizarre of such prescriptions was the notion of space-cone sovereignty, in which the classical doctrine \textit{cujus est solum, ejus est usque ad coelum} (“he who owns the land, owns it to the skies”) enjoyed an enormously expansive and latter-day Ptolemaic reading.\textsuperscript{163} This view made the Soviet Zadorozhnyi’s claim seem

\textsuperscript{[R.B.P.Q.] 227 (1952); Who Owns the Moon?, SAT. REV., Dec. 7, 1957, at 32; Who Owns the Unknown?, 180 ECONOMIST 727 (1956).}

\textsuperscript{160.} To a reporter’s question concerning whether Luna 2’s impact on the surface of the moon signaled a Soviet intent to claim possession, Krushchev responded:

\begin{quote}
I do not want to offend anybody, but we represent different continents and different psychologies, and I would say that this question reflects capitalist psychology, of a person thinking in terms of private ownership.

But I represent a Socialist country, where the word “mine” has long receded in the past and the word “our” has taken its place, and therefore when we launched this rocket and achieved this great thing, we look upon this as our victory, meaning the victory not only of our country but of all countries of all mankind.
\end{quote}


\textsuperscript{161.} Martin Menter, \textit{Astronautical Law, in SYMPOSIUM 1961, supra note 7, at 349, 365; see also Hal H. Bookout, Conflicting Sovereignty Interests in Outer Space: Proposed Solutions Remain in Orbit!, MIL. L. REV., Jan. 1960, at 23, 25 (“Since commencement of the venture into upper areas of space—marked by the blast-off of Sputnik I on October 4, 1957—the pages of law reviews and political journals have been drenched with writings concerning the problem of the extent of national sovereignty into space.”).}

\textsuperscript{162.} Gorove, \textit{supra} note 140, at 328.

\textsuperscript{163.} “This hypothesis is accomplished by projecting a nation’s boundaries upward perpendicularly to the earth’s surface from the center of the earth through the nation’s boundaries to infinity.” Joe C. Savage, Note, \textit{Legal Control of Outer Space}, 52 KY. L.J. 404, 409 (1964). Of the concept of space-cone sovereignty, C. Wilfred Jenks observed: “Such a projection into space of sovereignties based on particular areas of the earth’s surface would give us a series of adjacent irregularly shaped cones with a constantly changing content. Celestial bodies would move in and out of these cones all the time.” C. Wilfred Jenks, \textit{International Law and Activities in Space, 5 INT’L & COMP. L.Q.} 99, 103 (1956); see also United States v. Causby, 328 U.S. 256, 261 (1946) (declaring that the \textit{cujus est solum} doctrine has “no place in the modern world.”).

Still, the notion of the space cone had its uses. Consider, for example, the reasoning of Franco Fiorio:

But the “size and power” criteria, too, lose significance in the true space age, because the cone of space rising over the vertical of the territory of a small country like the Republic of San Marino, expands to infinite size at the outer reaches of the universe
reasonable, that Sputnik did not orbit over the United States, but rather that the United States rotated under Sputnik.\(^6\) Most commentators, in contrast, sought to establish an altitudinal boundary between sovereign airspace and the *res nullius*, *res communis*, or *res extra commercium* of outer space. To do so, they typically began with the alleged constants of geophysical and astronomical science. A common proposition was that airspace sovereignty should simply end where "airless outer space" \(^{16}\) begins—notwithstanding the fact that, as Arthur C. Clarke observed at the time, it is no more possible to establish "where the atmosphere ends than one can define the moment when a musical note ceases." \(^{16}\) A related and equally suspect proposal sought to limit sovereignty to the "point of nullity of the field of gravity." \(^{16}\) Other commentators sought to calibrate sovereignty according to technological variables. Thus, sovereignty should end at the minimum altitude necessary for orbit, \(^{16}\) at the maximum altitude at which aerodynamic lift is available, \(^{16}\) or at the farthest technological reach of the subjacent nation \(^{16}\) or of any nation. \(^{17}\) Still others propounded elaborate regimes of "zones" or "belts." Arnold Knauth, for example, envisioned a scheme of as many as ten zones, starting with the "altitude to which an aircraft can lift a weight or cargo or military weapon," progressing through such boundaries as the "known orbit of the moon," and ending with "trans-lunar space (ad infinitum)." \(^{17}\) William Hyman urged the establishment of "Neutralia," which would function as a "buffer zone" between airspace

\[\text{just the same way as the cone of space rising from the territory of a large nation such as the United States of American [sic] or the Soviet Republic.}
\]
\[\text{Space is therefore a great equalizer and we feel that each nation, large or small, including San Marino, has the right to stand up and be heard on space problems.}
\]

Franco Fiorio, *Space Law—Point of View of a Small Country*, in *INTERNATIONAL ASTRONAUTICAL FEDERATION, PROCEEDINGS OF THE FOURTH COLLOQUIUM ON THE LAW OF OUTER SPACE* 111 (1963) [hereinafter FOURTH COLLOQUIUM]. Fiorio was the Consul General of the Republic of San Marino in Washington, D.C., at the time he wrote this.


165. Alex Meyer, *Legal Problems of Outer Space*, in *SYMPOSIUM 1961*, supra note 7, at 500, 506. For a survey of the various altitudes proposed as the outer limit of the atmosphere, see REPORT TO NASA, supra note 29, at 11-18.


Finally, some commentators simply proposed arbitrary limits on airspace, at 30 miles, 50 miles, 100 miles, or, as a 1961 Note in the Harvard Law Review suggested, 50,000 miles.

The boundary theorists were often ridiculed for their various efforts to maintain “astrolegal” appearances. Writing in the American Bar Association Journal, Senator Keating was among the first to express dismay at the boundary theorists’ “too-anxious desire to resolve at once the thorniest legal question-mark conjured up by our prototype activities in space . . . .” Others shared in Keating’s frustration. Harold Caplan feared that law would cede outer space to science: “The indications are that scientists, left largely to themselves, could evolve a code of human conduct for peaceful activities in space . . . . Will scientists leave the jurists stranded on the earth interminably arguing about the upper altitude limit for sovereignty?”

The aviation authorities Sir William Hildred and Sir Frederick Tymms equated the efforts of the boundary theorists with the notorious failures of early twentieth-century air law, in which the height of the Eiffel Tower and the vertical range of artillery had been proposed as the altitudinal extent of sovereignty. Inevitably, the Wall Street Journal was left smugly to compare the sovereignty debate to the Old World’s apparently futile attempt to divide up the territories of the New.

Yet the question of atmospheric sovereignty dominated early legal headlines on outer space, and elaborate maps of the proposed legal divisions of near-Earth outer space appeared throughout the literature. Why? Sputnik alone may provide the answer. Orbiting on the periphery, the artificial satellite nevertheless threatened to take over—or at least, define—the center. It had to be legalized. That much was obvious. What is peculiar, however, is the form of legalization that so many early space-law commentators proposed. Rather than regulate conduct according to some theory of functional sovereignty, rather than control for such specific activities as surveillance or militarization, the preponderance of legal thought sought, in the first instance, to map space, to provide “purely

174. See Murphy, supra note 91, at 33.
181. See Editorial, supra note 42, at 10.
182. See, for example, the various maps in COX & STOIKO, supra note 82.
183. See NICOLAS MATEESCO MATÉ, AEROSPACE LAW 63 (1969).
spatial solutions." Perhaps this was simply an attempt at consolidation: Inside the limits of the atmosphere was the rule of law; outside was the "law of the jungle." The "spatial turn" in legal thinking supports an alternative explanation: This act of mapping was an attempt—and a very traditional one—to expand the empire and circumscribe what lay beyond its frontiers. Like the latitude and longitude of Western cartography, the map provided legal commentators on outer space with "a symbolic statement of power and dominion." It placed borders where science could not and renamed for the law the regions that science had always claimed as its own. In short, it inscribed the legal "topic" onto the scientific "place."

The motivations that underlay law's mapping of outer space help to explain something else: all the loose talk of ownership. The compulsive reference in the West to "who owns what" and "what space is whose" was more than just the panicked response of a capitalist ideology being overflown by a Soviet satellite. In the improbable notion of ownership of a vacuum, the legal estate brought to bear on the phenomenon of space exploration perhaps the most persuasive rhetoric available to law, Western or otherwise: the rhetoric of property. Be it "mythic" in its political valence or merely the lowest common denominator of popular legal culture, property talk had the power to reduce even Tranquility Base to a question of legal possession. Notions of sovereignty may have been more appropriate, but they were a poor substitute for a mode of rhetoric in which, it has been suggested, "Property is Persuasion."

185. Andrew P. Haley, quoted in Joyce, supra note 95, at 18.
186. See generally NICHOLAS K. BLOMLEY, LAW, SPACE, AND THE GEOGRAPHIES OF POWER (1994) (discussing the theory and practice of critical legal geography); EDWARD W. SOJA, POSTMODERN GEOGRAPHIES: THE REASSERTION OF SPACE IN CRITICAL SOCIAL THEORY (1989) (asserting the importance of spatial hermeneutics in critical social theory); see also Graham Huggin, Decolonizing the Map: Post-Colonialism, Post-Structuralism and the Cartographic Connection, in PAST THE LAST POST: THEORIZING POST-COLONIALISM AND POST-MODERNISM 125, 125 (Ian Adam & Helen Tiffin eds., 1990) ("The exemplary role of cartography in the demonstration of colonial discursive practices can be identified in a series of key rhetorical strategies implemented in the production of the map, such as the reinscription, enclosure and hierarchization of space, which provide an analogue for the acquisition, management and reinforcement of colonial power.").
187. BLOMLEY, supra note 186, at 83.
191. See Sally Engle Merry, Concepts of Law and Justice Among Working Class Americans: Ideology as Culture, 9 LEGAL STUD. F. 59, 67 (1985) (arguing that a paramount legal right in popular legal culture is the right "to control who is on one's property and what happens on one's property").
In a culture of space exploration, property talk served several purposes. At a basic level, it assisted in the law's cartographic ordering of chaos. It perpetuated an age-old process in which, as Fitzpatrick argues, "the joint advance of civilization and law in progressive opposition to various savage and barbaric stages is comprehensively mapped in terms of property."\(^{193}\) Property talk also formed a kind of distraction from the utopian promise of the scientific frontier.\(^{194}\) It told a story in which outer space would not function as a realm of infinite technological and libertarian plenitude—a realm where humankind might transcend its competition for resources, and perhaps even bring about the "gradual disappearance of the juridic element in human relationships."\(^{195}\) Rather, space lawyers envisioned outer space as a finite common, already overcrowded with "sooners,"\(^{196}\) that required strict borders, clear rules, and property-based incentives for efficient exploitation. Notwithstanding Krushchev's idealism, early space law in the West insisted on viewing outer space as a potential "tragedy of the commons" and predicted, to use a cyberlawyer's recent phrase, the "economics of constraint."\(^{197}\) Space law did so in honor of where the rule of law begins and of what would be its "great and chief end."\(^{198}\) Who owns the universe? Law owns the universe.

B. Codex Juris Spatialis: The Legal-Humanist "Counterrevolution"

By 1960, the failure of any nation to protest Sputnik I and its successors had effectively suspended the debate over the altitudinal extent of national sovereignty. Space law moved on, from the map to the code. The focus of the debate shifted to the question of customary law versus codification. Should lawyers "permit the concept of Space regulation to 'just grow,'"\(^{199}\) or should they allow science to "stampede [them]... into attempting, prematurely, a statement of space law?"\(^{200}\) Those in favor of the

\(^{193}\) Fitzpatrick, supra note 147, at 95.

\(^{194}\) This idea of "distraction" is adapted loosely from Carol Rose, Property As the Keystone Right?, 71 NOTRE DAME L. REV. 529, 356-57 (1996), which describes, without endorsing, the "Distraction Argument" for the centrality of property rights, in which "[p]roperty protects all other rights because the pursuit of property makes politics seem boring."

\(^{195}\) EVGENY BRONISLAVOVICH PASHUKANIS, PASHUKANIS: SELECTED WRITINGS ON MARXISM AND LAW 46 (Piers Beirne & Robert Sharlet eds., Peter B. Maggs trans., 1980).


\(^{198}\) JOHN LOCKE, TWO TREATISES OF GOVERNMENT 350-51 (Peter Laslett ed., 1988) (1690) ("The great and chief end therefore, of Mens uniting into Commonwealths, and putting themselves under Government, is the Preservation of their Property.").

\(^{199}\) Keating, supra note 137, at 432, 435.

incremental development of space law, such as Myres McDougal and Leon Lipson, held by far the more sensible view, and the one vindicated by the pragmatic generalities of the Outer Space Treaty. As astute observers of the space law scene, McDougal and Lipson saw in codification the cartographic impulse in a new form. They attributed to the codifiers the “vague hope that by throwing a net of legal controls into the vastness of the universe one may tame the disturbing unknown.” This Section discusses the hopes of those whom McDougal and Lipson criticized.

The desire to codify took many forms. As early as 1932, Vladimír Mandl published *Das Weltraum-Recht: Ein Problem der Raumfahrt,* in which he contemplated the establishment of rules regulating such matters as the placement in orbit of “*Kunstmonde,*” or artificial satellites, and the timing of death declarations and insurance arrangements for outer-space travelers. As a space-law theorist, Mandl lived before his time, but not by much. By the early 1960s, highly specialized debates had formed around such issues as extraterrestrial jurisdiction, radio-spectrum control, space torts, and the registration and identification of spacecraft (lest a launch be mistaken for a preemptive nuclear strike). Disputes also arose over which

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201. McDougal was the leading exponent of the incremental development of space law. In *Perspectives for a Law of Outer Space,* he and Leon Lipson advocated “the slow building of expectations, the continued accretion of repeated instances of tolerated acts, and the gradual development of assurance that certain things may be done under promise of reciprocity and that other things must not be done on pain of retaliation.” McDougal & Lipson, supra note 11, at 420 (citation omitted). The article forcefully rejected the feasibility of a comprehensive space code:

> A durable agreement by explicit international convention on anything like a code of law for outer space is not, in our opinion, something now to be expected or desired. One may indeed expect with rather more confidence a series of agreements, gradually arrived at, on particular subjects . . . .

> The modes of reaching such agreements cannot now be charted with any precision. Some agreements may be explicit and formal; some may be simply a consensus achieved by the gradual accretion of custom from repeated instances of mutual toleration. Some may be bilateral, others trilateral or multilateral; some may be within the framework of the United Nations, others within some other existing organization or some machinery yet to be set up.

See supra notes 14-23 and accompanying text. Indeed, as Walter A. McDougall writes, “[t]he most striking vindication of the [McDougal school of] realistic positivists was the fact that . . . secret [National Security Council] decisions [in 1958] had already rendered the space law debate academic.” McDougall, supra note 13, at 188.

202. McDougal & Lipson, supra note 11, at 415.


204. Id. at 33.

205. See id. at 29.

206. A detailed survey of this literature is included in REPORT TO NASA, supra note 29, at 27-32.
international agency should interpret and enforce space regulations.\textsuperscript{207} Among the advocates for codification, the Canadian Maxwell Cohen was probably the leading voice. He argued that the accelerating pace of technology had rendered the methods of international customary law largely obsolete in outer space.\textsuperscript{208} William Hyman took a different tack. In his view, the “space law gap”\textsuperscript{209} was the result of “sheer cowardice on the part of the profession”\textsuperscript{210} typified by the “anti-space law forces”\textsuperscript{211} within the American Bar Association. Those who opposed codification, such as the “collaborating pair of professors of law,”\textsuperscript{212} were no better than early opponents of child labor laws.\textsuperscript{213} These were strong opinions, yet the alternatives to codification seemed unthinkable: the possibility of orbiting missile platforms or of Cold War tensions brought to the breaking point by surveillance satellite overflights.

In their own, peculiar effort to assert the continued vitality of the legal profession in the Space Age, the space-law codifiers presented lawyers as those professionals uniquely capable of investing outer space with the humanist values that it would otherwise lack. That is to say, having been stigmatized or “othered” by the science of the time, law stigmatized in turn. It represented science as amoral, antihumanist, and dystopian. In the process, it adjusted the traditional fatalism of “death of law” rhetoric to suit the age of technocracy and space exploration—and, later on, of civil disobedience and “culpable legicide.”\textsuperscript{214} Arthur Selwyn Miller, for example, declared that “we have reached the point where the future must be planned for in a humanistic sense. Our future is being planned for us by the

\textsuperscript{207} See id. at 32-36 (surveying efforts by different organizations to coordinate a regulatory regime).

\textsuperscript{208} See Maxwell Cohen, Introduction: Law and Politics in Space, in LAW AND POLITICS IN SPACE II (Maxwell Cohen ed., 1964). Cohen compared space exploration to maritime exploration:

\begin{quote}
The traditional time-scales characteristic of the slow processes of customary or conventional law-making have been altered by the rate of technological advance in the management of space....
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
...[W]hile man crossing the oceans could afford the luxury of two or three hundred years to evolve regimes of the high seas in the movement from mare clausum to mare liberum, and yet produce in consequence only five or six main principles—widely accepted, flexible and reasonable in their enforceability—no such leisurely pace is available to man exploring space. Here the urgencies, both positive and negative, require the early fashioning of agreed-upon rules which go beyond the capacity for effectiveness of broad customary principles standing alone.
\end{quote}

\textit{Id.} at 12-13.

\textsuperscript{209} HYMAN, supra note 173, at 283.

\textsuperscript{210} Id. at 291.

\textsuperscript{211} Id. at 289.

\textsuperscript{212} Id. at 293. The reference is to McDougal and Lipson.

\textsuperscript{213} Id. at 291-92.

technocrats in the ‘technostructures’ of modern industry and government. A counterrevolution is necessary.”

Oliver Schroeder agreed. The lawyer’s role was no longer, in H.G. Wells’s phrase, that of a “property tamer,” but was now that of a “science tamer.”

With the exception of William Hyman, the codifiers were hardly the “lawyer militant[s]” or science tamers that Miller or Schroeder had in mind. Still, they were not above coopting the countercultural rhetoric of antitechnology to defend their legal prerogative in outer space. Thus C. Wilfred Jenks cited the works of Franz Kafka and Eugène Ionesco to support the idea of codification. Eilene Galloway quoted Arthur C. Clarke’s *The Challenge of the Spaceship* to the effect that “‘[m]orals and ethics must not lag behind science, otherwise the social system will breed poisons which will cause its own [sic] destruction.’” And in a remarkable essay, in which he analyzed the spacepowers’ “mutual exchange of scientific surveillance,” Philip Yeager speculated that a space code might help stave off “the Orwellian nightmare of ‘1984.’” Even Mandl, a self-styled technocrat of the 1930s, warned of the prospect of overmechanization and a time when “machines would strangle all living things.”

The space-law codifiers may have sought to position the legal profession as, in some sense, the profession of the counterculture. Indeed, they may have welcomed the idea that, as one commentator put it, “devoting thought to developing space law is just a ‘beatnik’ manifestation of being ‘far gone’ and ‘way out.’” Yet as their faith in codification itself
suggests, the codifiers were not entirely free from the technocratic temptation. On the contrary, their search for what Myres McDougal called the "Big-Solution-Now" brought them squarely within the orthodoxy of the age, as did their appeal to the "machinery of detailed administration." If they believed the hype of the Space Age, the codifiers believed also in the rising tide of "comprehensive rationality" and "policy science." Thus they produced another characteristic graphic of early space law: the long, exhaustive outline of legal problems, both current and prospective, posed by space exploration. Like the map and the bibliography, the outline was a rhetorical device. It suggested that legal knowledge could schematize the full chaos of space, order it according to the "‘A’ to ‘Z’ in the lexicon of the law.” As a code in embryonic form, the outline asserted that, at least for the law, the Space Age would remain a closed system.

C. Brooding Omnipresences: The Legal Status of Extraterrestrial Civilizations

If early space law defended the values of humanity in outer space, it claimed to defend the values of something else as well. Emboldened by a half-century of scientific writing on the possibility of exobiological life forms, and by an age-old literature, both fictional and philosophical, on the "plurality of worlds," space law populated the scientific object of outer space with legal, albeit extraterrestrial, subjects. True to its traditions, law's empire deduced the existence of the "other" and assumed that this "other" would be resolved, sooner or later, into a judicial question.

Most Apollo-era space-law commentators took for granted the need to formulate a legal theory of extraterrestrial life forms. Some went so far as to suggest that Earth law must now be subsumed within a still mysterious cosmic or interplanetary law. The aerospace industrialist and lawyer

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225. McDougal & Lipson, supra note 11, at 420.
227. See supra notes 71-76 and accompanying text.
228. See, e.g., Bohn, supra note 11, at 79.
229. Menter, supra note 161, at 363.
230. See NASA, EXTRATERRESTRIAL LIFE: A BIBLIOGRAPHY; PART II: PUBLISHED LITERATURE (1965) (providing an annotated bibliography of journal articles and books on the subject dating from 1900 to 1964).
232. See, e.g., Franz Gross, Thoughts on the Importance and Task of Space Law, in THIRD COLLOQUIUM, supra note 140, at 113, 113 ("[T]he legal problems of space can no longer be properly judged and solved from the starting point of earth but only from that of space itself. Thus
Andrew Haley was closely associated with this latter effort. A leading popularizer of space law during the 1960s, Haley told *The Washington Post* that “[o]ne of the very first professional men the prospective colonizer of outer space is going to have to consult . . . is a metalawyer.” 233 Elsewhere in his writings, he explained why this would be the case: “The indefinite projection of a system of anthropocentric law beyond the planet Earth would be the most calamitous act man could perform in his dealings with the cosmos.” 234 It would constitute the extension into space of “the bleak and devastating geocentric crimes of mankind.” 235 It risked “galacticide.” 236 Thus, the golden rule itself must yield to the new order of metalaw: “We must do unto others as they would have done unto them.” 237

The majority of commentators had little regard for metalaw. Harold Lasswell, for example, seemed more concerned with the possibility that “[g]uided TV programs” might be used to establish “empathy . . . among all members of the astropolitical arena.” 238 Still, those lawyers who wrote about extraterrestrial civilizations must have found Haley’s nearly messianic sensibility to be congenial. William Hyman spent much of his career propounding the *Magna Carta of Space*. Article 18 of this document stipulates that “[t]he peoples of the earth do hereby declare that they recognize the rights of sovereignty, ownership and control of any other planet by the inhabitants thereof.” 239 Philip Yeager took this thinking to yet another level. He argued that it was one thing for a nation to claim jurisdiction over its adjoining islands, but it was something altogether different, and would, in fact, be “a rather cosmic-shaking event for one planet, or parts thereof, to assert dominion over another.” 240 Such speculations inevitably led some Americans seriously to consider the possibility of a second American Revolution or the formation of independent states separate from Earth. In a 1958 address to the American Association for the United Nations, Arnold Knauth rejected the idea that there could be an “emperor or president of Outer Space,” but contemplated

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234. HALEY, supra note 201, at 394.
235. Id. at 419.
237. HALEY, supra note 201, at 395; see also ERNST FASAN, RELATIONS WITH ALIEN INTELLIGENCES: THE SCIENTIFIC BASIS OF METALAW (1970) (discussing the development of the concept of metalaw and asserting its continued relevance); GEORGE S. ROBINSON & HAROLD M. WHITE, ENVOYS OF MANKIND: A DECLARATION OF FIRST PRINCIPLES FOR THE GOVERNANCE OF SPACE SOCIETIES 207-59 (1986) (same).
239. HYMAN, supra note 173, at 304A.
240. Yeager, supra note 7, at 760.
the possibility that “[t]he first groups who go may make their own Mayflower Compacts.”

Myres McDougal and Leon Lipson spoke of “wars of interplanetary independence.”

What motivated this theorizing? Some tentative explanations may be proposed. Philip Yeager offers the beginnings of one. He urges that lawyers prepare for the possibility of life on the moon, if only because:

[I]t would have the virtue of humility. It would not cast lawyers and political scientists in the poor light which some physical scientists have achieved by their narrow assumptions that no intelligent life can exist in the Solar system, or anywhere in the universe, except under the physical conditions and according to the physical laws which they themselves have thus far managed to observe.

Yet there was probably more to extraterrestrial space law than this professional one-upmanship over “physical scientists,” or over practitioners of earthbound law. As Yeager’s comment suggests, legal theory on extraterrestrials also participated in the era’s larger “culture of dissent” against, among other things, the totalizing knowledge-claims of the Rocket State. Recent work on American ufology in the 1950s and 1960s has shown how talk of extraterrestrials “established a space from which to resist the expert culture of containment and assert the authority of amateur and civilian opinion and research.” Whether already among us or yet to be encountered, extraterrestrial life forms bespoke scientific and spiritual mysteries undreamt of by systems analysis. In this sense, legal

241. Knauth, supra note 29, at 261. Earlier in the address, Knauth presented his vision of the politics of spacemen:

Outer space is going to be like the top of Mount Everest, a place to which a man goes briefly to conquer or to die, and to which he does not take his wife and children, nor where he sets up a stock exchange brokerage house. I do not know anyone who foresees a local political village life in outer space, or who expects to set up a grammar school, a high school, and a college there. These spacemen will follow their own ideas as to safety and will assume calculated and uncalculated risks; they will be hardy fellows, and are not likely to heed the recommendations of a Secretariat. If their enterprise fails, they will never face a board which wants to punish them; if they return safely, they will be heroes to many if not to all.

Id. at 257.

242. McDougal & Lipson, supra note 11, at 421.

243. Yeager, supra note 7, at 763.

244. MARGOT A. HENRIKSEN, DR. STRANGELOVE'S AMERICA: SOCIETY AND CULTURE IN THE ATOMIC AGE passim (1997) (tracing the development of a “culture of dissent” in America from the immediate postwar period through the atomic age of the 1960s).

245. JODI DEAN, ALIENS IN AMERICA: CONSPIRACY CULTURES FROM OUTERSPACE TO CYBERSPACE 41 (1998); see also ENGELHARDT, supra note 66, at 104 (“The ‘ufologists’ were also almost the only group at the time to take on the national security state directly, assailing the secrecy that surrounded the government’s UFO investigations and claiming a cover-up of information relating to the reality of space aliens.”).

246. Cf. ERIK DAVIS, TECHGNOSIS: MYTH, MAGIC AND MYSTICISM IN THE AGE OF INFORMATION 229 (1998) (“Keeping midcentury fears about nuclear apocalypse in mind, the
commentary on extraterrestrials expressed the full ambition of law’s empire. It projected the rule of law and lawyers into the cosmos, and sought to establish legal knowledge over the unknown and the unimaginable. There would be no blank spaces on the law’s map of outer space, no unregulated commons, no unregulated anything. Such principles as Ernst Fasan’s “eleven rules of Metalaw”\(^{247}\) would assimilate the universe itself, and those who still spoke of “natural law” simply lacked vision. Apollo-era legal theory on extraterrestrials thus constituted a kind of transcendental imperial principle: The “myth of modern law” became, in Andrew Haley’s words, the “rule of law governing all creation.”\(^{248}\)

To view Apollo-era legal commentary on extraterrestrials through the lens of the postcolonial helps to explain perhaps the most striking peculiarity of early space law: that Latin American commentators figured so prominently in the movement, and formed in fact their own distinctive school of thought. Myres McDougal would probably have classified some Latin American nations as among those for whom effective control “would end at the treetops,”\(^{249}\) and, it is true, only Brazil had any space policy worth mentioning. Yet the likes of the Argentinian Aldo Armando Cocca, the Uruguayan Álvaro Bauza Araujo, and the Brazilians Hésio Fernandes Pinheiro and Haraldo Valladão were leading voices in international space law. Their work deserves an extended treatment, if only to recognize their practice of subverting the terminology of first-world space law, and international law with it. What must be noted here is their overriding concern with the rights of extraterrestrial civilizations. Against the backdrop of postwar decolonization, dependency, and, in smaller measure, liberation theology, these commentators found in space law a means of resisting “the ideas of sovereignty, predominance, appropriation of territories and enslaving of the respective inhabitants, which maculated the birth of International Law in the XVth and XVIth Century.”\(^{250}\) For them, space exploration meant nothing less than *jus novum*, both in the heavens and on earth:

UFO must also be seen as a visionary projectile hurtling from the unconscious depths of the information age . . . The UFO, it seems, is a rumor of God stitched into the fabric of the military-industrial-media complex, a complex whose cybernetic tentacles encircle us still.

\(^{247}\) FASAN, supra note 237, at 71.  
\(^{248}\) HALEY, supra note 201, at 411.  
\(^{249}\) McDOUGAL ET AL., supra note 2, at 342 (“If every state were allowed to project its sovereignty upward and sideward in accordance with its effective power, there would inevitably arise countless conflicting claims with no criteria for their accommodation other than naked power. Moreover, for many underdeveloped states sovereignty would end at the treetops, while for a handful of the most powerful states, not even the sky would be the limit.”).  
First of all, it is important to stress that Space Law is of a planetary nature as well the only truly universal law. It concerns human beings as such, either in the Earth or during cosmic travels, regardless of the geographical latitude or position in space. Space law does not take into account technological or economic development. No doubt it is a total law: a *jus humanitatis*, the law of mankind.  

As voices of intervention in the dominant global narrative of technological advance, these commentators spoke from the visionary center of Apollo-era space law. Indeed, in the beginning, all of space law was, in some sense, Latin American.

IV. INFORMATIONAL FATE: WHO OWNS THE FUTURE?

Through all Eternitie so late to build
In Chaos

—John Milton, *Paradise Lost*

This Note may seem a loser’s history. The “golden age” of the *Corpus Juris Spatialis* passed as quickly as it came and is now for the most part forgotten. The Rocket State has developed ever more accurate ballistic missiles, but no *jus novum*. Modern space law has evolved, at its best, into a highly technical discourse spoken primarily by specialist practitioners. The futurist idealism remains in the literature, as does the insistence on lawyerly prerogative, but it is the message of telecommunications in space that pays for the medium.

Still, the legacy of Apollo-era space law remains vital, and for possibly obvious reasons. The millennial, recently apocalyptic rhetoric of the “Information Age” at least equals that of the Space Age. The implications for law’s empire are thought to be as grave. Be it in the form of the borderless “electronic frontier” of cyberspace or the monster hypotheticals posed by the Human Genome Project, information technology challenges the competence and universalist ambition of legal knowledge, threatening a profound reversal in the law’s “informational fate.” Indeed, the “civilization of the Mind in cyberspace” has already declared its


independence from the "increasingly hostile and colonial measures" of the empire. In the world of "code," explains one prominent commentator, new gods have begun to hand down new laws. The Rocket State of Gravity's Rainbow has given way in the legal imagination to the cryptopia of Neuromancer's Chiba City.

Apollo-era space law speaks to the status of law in both places. It does so in defense of legal futurist imaging, particularly when that imaging accepts the future of technology at its most eccentric, and intervenes in that future at its most literal. The example of space law insists that, in our own age, the call for a "politics of intellectual property" is cultural work, and the notion of "limited common property" as a "picture of the future" of property is cultural persuasion. Though essentially visionary, such work is also intensely realistic, even pragmatic. It "gives a vision depth of field." For better or worse, it counters technology's anarchic propaganda of abundance, of constraint, legal or otherwise, transcended. Here, at its most expansive and experimental, legal knowledge surveys the farthest extremes of the utopian imagination and assimilates them to the "images and categories," the grammar and lexicon, the "properties" of legal culture. Speaking at once of greatness and oblivion, it asserts possession of the future as an object of the law.

255. Id.
256. Id. ("Your legal concepts of property, expression, identity, movement, and context do not apply to us. They are based on matter. There is no matter here.").
257. See Lawrence Lessig, Reading the Constitution in Cyberspace, 45 EMORY L.J. 869, 897 (1996) ("The constraints of code in cyberspace are written by people; they are the constraints of the software that defines or constitutes cyberspace; while the constraints of technology in real space are not the constructions of people. At any one time, both constraints of technology (real and cyber) might function like a law of nature. But just as God may not plead the laws of nature as a defense, so too we, with respect to the technological constraints, or powers, of cyberspace, cannot plead 'nature' as a defense. With respect to the architecture of cyberspace, and the worlds it allows, we are God.").
258. See supra note 53.
259. WILLIAM GIBSON, NEUROMANCER 3 (1984) ("Synonymous with implants, nerve-splicing, and microbiotics, Chiba was a magnet for the Sprawl's techno-criminal subcultures.").
262. Id. at 180.
263. Robert Cover, The Supreme Court, 1982 Term—Foreword: Nomos and Narrative, 97 HARV. L. REV. 4, 9 (1983) ("But law gives a vision depth of field, by placing one part of it in the highlight of insistent and immediate demand while casting another part in the shadow of the millenium.").
Against whatever new enlightenment is being proclaimed by technology, legal knowledge thus tends to effect a romantic reaction, but one that is itself undertaken in the name of "righteousness, discipline, order, and well-articulated theory." Ever the imperialist, it talks not so much about the future as through it. Ever the proprietor, it invokes law itself as the magic solving word that can rationalize chaos and whatever might lie beyond it. As what "[w]e live in and by" or, alternatively, "as reason encoded in the doings and dreams of power," law insists all the while that its own talking cure is also curative of technological culture—and if not curative, than at least constitutive. A defense of the constitutional rights of genetic "sub-human" laborers, a vision of the human genome as the common heritage of humankind—the profession should hardly judge these for the extent to which they manage a coherent statement of legal doctrine. The lex ferenda that grows out of this futurist imaging may never be promulgated, let alone enforceable. Yet if the estate and its empire are to survive, then it must acculturate the future to the law even as it indoctrinates the present, and to do so, it must honor where the rule of law begins and what may continue to be its "great and chief end."

266. GRANT GILMORE, THE DEATH OF CONTRACT 103 (1974) ("We have witnessed the dismantling of the formal system of the classical theorists. We have gone through our romantic agony—an experience peculiarly unsettling to people intellectually trained and conditioned as lawyers are. It may be that... some new Langdell is already waiting in the wings to summon us back to the paths of righteousness, discipline, order, and well-articulated theory.").

267. RONALD DWORIN, LAW'S EMPIRE at vii (1986).


271. "Law as it ought to be."