The Sociology of Interstellar Exploration

Annotations on Social Order, Authority and Power Structures

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Bochum
„Homo homini lupus.“
–Thomas Hobbes, 1657

„Man is naturally good and vice and error are alien to him.“
–J. J. Rousseau, 1762
World Ship Society & other long term missions

Societies & Social Groups on Earth
❖ are social systems that strive for stability;
❖ use varied forms of political structures;
❖ vary in their success of achieving stability;
❖ can be long-living, rapidly changing or break up in chaos;
❖ use and integrate resources from other systems.

Space Missions
❖ are limited in time and range;
❖ rely on military structures and strong hierarchies;
❖ are controlled from earth;
❖ use specific communication codes and commands;
❖ have clear and achievable objectives.
World Ship Society

- is a self-sustaining social system;
- has no other social systems to rely on for resources;
- has to strive for stability by integrating interior elements for growth and development;
- is not limited in time and range;
- has to rely on clear authority and power structures.
Legal, Traditional & Charismatic Authority

- legal authority: resides in office, not person;
- traditional authority: based on holy orders & customs;
- charismatic authority: legitimimized by personal qualities and based on emotional devotion and charismatic gifts.
Some things to consider...

❖ What kind of political system would be adequate?
❖ How would we deal with authority in separate social sub-systems, like religion, economy, education?
❖ How would our concepts of being individuals have to adapt to a society that cannot afford even limited instability?
❖ What would family, work, reproduction, medical treatment, faith …mean?
❖ What would it mean to be an individual in a world ship society?