# Internet, the poet and the astronaut

by Adriano V. Autino

In the first months of the new millennium, we are present to the boom of a wonder called "New Economy". As Dale M. Gray acutely notices in his article "Imponderables", the International Space Station is assembled in orbit in the middle of the telecommunications gold rush and the boom of the Internet frontier. Large capitals are moved in the whole planet, around the internet business and enterprises which produce on-line services. In the same time, with the agreements recently drown up between private firms about the reutilization of MIR, the commercial astronautics is being born, and we hope very much for such prospect, the only one that could really open the high frontier to the private investors, then to the society.

Such very fluid situation seems to deny the analysis of those, in the space community, nervously observed the boom of the Internet frontier, as it, in some way, usurped the starting opportunities of space frontier. As I said in preceding interventions, the keys for a true restart of development are: (i) the opening of the system, (ii) the start moving of large capitals, (iii) creation of new economy, (iv) the growth of new markets. If a similar virtuous cycle starts (all the prerequisites seem to exist) the conditions for the success of more ambitious projects are given, enclosed the solution of the main problem: to overcome the terrestrial gravity well. I add that, without this last solution, also the internet economy is going to be inadequate to relaunch a true long term development.

It was launched also an interesting discussion between critics and supporters of techniques, as a more or less essential tool for human development. Galimberti, for instance, on RAI 3, speaks about Kant's concept of human kind as an end, and asks himself if we should update it, moving air and water from the category of the means to the category of the ends. If we mean that air and water are essential components of the human body too, and that our life depends on their pureness, I could agree. But, in a certain sense, also our body could be counted as a mean, a personal and emotional one, but a mean of our living and progress, as water made, intelligent, creatures. Water is intimate and emotional, as I maintain in a little comment to the fascinating article by Adelia Bertetto about Schauberger. But how could we think to solve the problems of six billions of human bodies and of the precious liquid nourishment that they share intimately and supports their life, with less technique? This is madness. To accuse the technique for all the evils of the world, to hope for its decrease because of its scarce predictability, it hides a basic fault of the anti-technological think. They believe that Mankind is sitting on an island of steadiness, safety and predictability, in which there's time to decide whether to move, and in which way. The reality is naturally (I want underline that I never use this word without a good reason) quite the opposite. The reality is always changing, we are sitting on a grain of sand

spinning in the cosmos and, even if we believe to be still, our future is completely unpredictable. A non-technological future is also less predictable than a technological one or, may be, sadly predictable like a scenario of new madness and return to authoritarian social models to manage scarce resources. A chance of major safety, for Mankind, will come from the opening of the world system, starting to live out of this grain, learning to navigate in the cosmos. In this scenario, that in my opinion is strongly humanistic, the only ethic approach (perhaps still linked to Kant's ethics of human-kind and its evolution as categorical last end) is pursuing the safety and reliability of all the systems to which we rely ourselves and our water. This involves a better control, an higher level of management of technique and its tools, and the creation of ever more human tools to use and design the systems.

Even respect to the action for a goal, vs. the work without apparent goals of the just finished industrial age, the above sketched goals can bear any comparison. The new electronic society holds greatly higher ideological contents. In the overcoming intellectual work, each person thinks more than in the past about the meaning of what he is producing, also if the industrialist mass-worker seemed more ideologized in his struggle against the exploitation. The last goal of the global communication can only be the one, categorical, to help conceiving methods and technologies to overcome our frontiers, and continue human growth. Checkmate to the technique detractors, thus? I don't think so: such discussion is going to continue and, even if we would better avoid it, it could produce something good, if the critics do not want to destroy but maybe to propose the poetry of murmuring or impetuous water, near the poetry of genetic interaction of water molecules in our bodies (water bubbles in the space).

And, about the goal of technique and techniques, we need to deeply reflect. In facts I were astonished when a friend, who makes high quality stereo amplifiers, made me hear the higher quality of the old electronic tubes sound, compared to the transistorized and integrated one. More incredible is the comparison between the analogue sound of a vinyl record and the digital sound of a compact disk. It's undeniable that the overcome of the integrate chips and of the optical disks extended the life of our musical memories, but an RCA tube of 1940 and a vinyl disk give the sensation to be in front of an orchestra, the CD not so much. The lesson that I learned is that we need a better clarification of requirements, thus, and of our goals. Our concept of technologies of frontier shouldn’t be taken as a convulsed going along the way of technologies targeted to them-selves. We are interested to technologies which allow us to get over frontiers. Sometimes, like in the case of the sound we must, also if inclined to see the future, be able to look at the past for conserving precious tools and methods. We shouldn’t forget that more than 30 years ago some people stepped on the lunar ground, with more backward and expensive technologies, but they came back safe and sound. Certainly different was the spirit and the requirement by which, 30 years ago, the industrialist west civilization in the middle of the Cold War, went to the Moon, but it's a good thing to remember the courage

and the generosity of those men. We should also ask ourselves if we (electronic society) didn't waste, until today, their gift.

We (TDF) have been also criticized, because we're considered too slow in proceeding (here I like to compare us to the calm power of a great river, vs. over-hasty mountain streams J ), we don't grind dozens of projects, we don't precipitate to join with other components of the astronautic-humanist movement. Well, though we know that our work is very urgent, we like to reflect very well about what we are doing. Our work has, necessarily, the slow rithm of adding, steadily, a brick to the building only when sure not to cause its collapse. We give very importance the political-philosophical elaboration work, that's very poor in every context, where much more attention is paid to do than to the goals and the requirements (and such behavior is source of many risks for many people). In this sense we try to fill the big gap existing in Italy and in other countries, (or should I say "in the World"?)

Nevertheless we started some research projects: please see, e.g., the Availability and Safety of the Systems and Software project, of which we publish the 3° chapter. And we are discussing, on a input from our Scientific Director, Dr. Marco C. Bernasconi, the following problem: to design a program made by affordable steps, on the path of the Mercantile Astronautics, in the Geo-Lunar space. Once made the above, we'd like to try the feasibility analysis of the first step. The steps, expecially the first ones, should be economically affordable for a private investment program, of course without disregard any governmental help. We willingly accept ideas: our forums are open, and your hints will be discussed during a seminar that we are preparing. I consider the setup of similar projects of vital importance, as I said, in this phase of moving economy. Everything is good: even modest approaches, as long as they are concretely oriented on the vector that carries us to the stars.