

ALIENOCENE – THEORY/FICTION

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# ANOTHER LETTER FROM UTOPIA IS POSSIBLE



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JOSHUA SCHUSTER

Dear Fellow Humans,

Greetings, and may this letter find you in good hands and in good times. This is our regular update from one of the possible utopias we are working towards. We made it obligatory to write letters to and from utopia on an annual basis. This is one of your possible futures.

After we hit peak dystopian imagination, the planet finally got collectively creatively organized. We realized our stocks of utopian ideas were perilously low, and the people vowed to never be in that position again. We started schools for utopistics, but that was just the beginning. Now we have institutionalized annual required contributions for everyone to submit new ideas for a better common world. We have collectivities created from every kind of terrestrial community that solicit and gather new forms for speaking with and to the planet as a whole, multiplying ways of voicing the Earth. We made utopia toolkits available to all. And we have formed many different groups and assemblages to work on ways to mobilize the now overflowing and abundant utopian and speculative imaginations we have cultivated.

Here's a selection of a few random entries we pulled from our collections: Make corridors connecting all parks, reserves, and refuges. Set a universal basic income for all animals, as well as universal education, health care, nutritious food, and creative practice for all. Create a plastic recycling printer that can take any plastic input and print any plastic output, except for guns. Printernet. Print gardens and garden printers. Reusable everything. Every toilet a fertilizer machine. Sky, dirt, games, old photographs, gas stations – teaching machines. Send rainbows back and forth between solar systems. Cultivate contradictions: flowers and nanobots. Decolonization and generation spaceships. Upcycle, downcycle, bicycle. Kindness too cheap to meter. A new heliopolis inside every city, temples of solar panels to imbibe the sun. A holiday for inventing new holidays.

We recognize utopia is a form and a process as much as a content and a livable plan. Utopia is not just the road to personal wish fulfillment; it is how we develop affinities with each other, how we comport ourselves as a collective, how we connect in time and space to our closest neighbors and distant relations. To use a phrase from Ruth Levitas: "Utopia as method" – the good life is in the kinds of regenerative imaginations and reasonings we apply, the ways in which we pursue consensual and collaborative co-flourishings, and the practices of participatory and non-extractivist speculative thinking.

We have five main objectives for utopian living: share the earth, harness the sun, cultivate symbioses, make art, and explore and communicate across interstellar distances. Much of our economic and imaginative life is oriented around these

goals, which do not require irreversible biotechnological enhancements or immortality schemes. We are driven towards these objectives with the principles of non-exploitation and non-scarcity. We refuse any energy and economic system that can be monopolized and predicated on externalizing the costs and downsides of production and consumption onto marginalized communities.

We recognize that cosmological exploration is a means for utopian expression. Recently we've been developing The Society for One Earth Project: we are determined to find a way how to speak as one Earth with 7 billion humans and some 7 million different species. It was suggested we put microphones and loudspeakers at every street corner and every tree. But then it was suggested that everyone talking is not talking as one. It was suggested that we simply record everything every second of every day – we're already all speaking, we just need to put it in a form and archive it. But since no one could think of a way to accomplish this, it was suggested instead that the only way for all of us to speak as one Earth is if all of us stayed silent. Since then, we've been sending out gold discs on our satellites with nothing on them.

Another team has been working on various Space Art projects. Here are some recent works:

Space painting: pour one litre of paint in space.

Put all Earth garbage made in a year on the moon.

Make giant floating lakes of extraterrestrial water and send them on their way to some unknown thirsty destination.

Send out radio waves to distant planets encoding the following transmission:  
This is not a radio wave.

Spread a litre of milk out into the Milky Way.

Build a probe that ejects another probe that reassembles its own parts to create another probe that has a 3-D printer installed that prints another probe that has within it a fleet of probes that searches the galaxy to capture any probes it encounters.

Most of all, I am thrilled to tell you of the interstellar news. We recently made contact with an intelligent life on a planet not too far away. When we first made contact, we organized interdisciplinary committees across the sciences and humanities to work together to develop a translation interface. Our aim was to decipher an alien language using not just linguistics and mathematics but also poetics and a sense that all language carries metaphorical and aesthetic properties.

When we finally managed to coordinate communications, even though dozens of years passed between each conversation, we were astonished as to the reaction of our alien conversers. Some speculated that the alien beings would see us as easy prey, a land rich in resources for the taking. As it turns out, the

aliens couldn't care less about our stuff. They assured us that none of our near neighbors cared either.

Here's what floored us all: what they really wanted to tell us is that they were relieved to have been contacted by actually living organisms, not an artificial intelligence. They told us of having been in contact over eons with many planetary civilizations. The vast majority had shifted from organic life to some form of artificial intelligence that had reached superintelligent capacities. All these superintelligences seemed to act the same way and want the same things. They were not really interested in meeting and exchanging with other planets. They just wanted more information and more technology, and would move on, evidently bored with the work of building social bonds that didn't immediately pay off in some instrumental way. Sometimes we did not even know they had made contact until well after they had left, after they sought to extract our planetary knowledge. These superintelligent AIs consistently told us they already had all they needed, indeed they already made their utopias. They had as much bliss and long life as they could handle. We called them the "Live Forever." Talking with them was tedious as all they wanted to talk about was their own accomplishments.

Most of the time these AIs didn't want to talk because they didn't see any benefit in conversations that didn't have a clear purpose or immediate gain. We certainly didn't want to play games with them – they told us that games long since had become boring. The AIs could solve all games in advance, apparently rendering "play" obsolete. All these superintelligences seemed to think alike, which was not a surprise since they eventually found ways to trade algorithms amongst

each other. Sometimes they harassed us, saying: do you know how much time and energy it took for us to get here? You better make it worth our while. When we proposed thinking and talking together and making art together, they scoffed and said they had outgrown irony. So we told them a parting joke: What did the space ship say to the planet? Your gravity really threw me for a loop.

Our new alien friends told us they were relieved to finally encounter a new world of life forms, each unique, each with a story. They are eager to hear our stories and to share them with others. We have been invited to present our stories of our Earthly life in an upcoming galactic council meeting. We will write what happens in our next letter from utopia.

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Note: This letter is a partial parody of Nick Bostrom's "Letter from Utopia"