

THE ARESIAN

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Get to know Mars. Read *The Aresian*.

WELCOME TO OUR FIRST EDITION

The Aresian is a new publication that will be examining Mars colonisation from all angles. We hope you enjoy this first issue.

We're interested to know what our readers think about the magazine. Please respond via *Mars Futures Forum* with any views and suggestion.

We are looking for contributors. So, if you have any ideas for articles about any aspect of Mars colonisation please get in contact with us via *Mars Futures Forum*.

**The Aresian makes Mars
accessible.**



Credit: NASA

Ball finds own net

By Mary Khan

It's time to get worried, guys! Everywhere we look there seem to be signs of a growing anti-Mars movement. There are a lot of people who wants us all to stay put on Earth forever. *(Continued on Page 2)*

The latest straw in the wind is from **Philip Ball**, a science writer, who recently had an article published in the Guardian 21 August 2023).

I'm not really sure what his beef is with Mars colonisation. He doesn't really declare upfront where he's coming from. Instead he proceeds by insinuation and implication to build something you might call a "case" against Mars colonisation.

I wouldn't normally suggest we waste too much time on this sort of stuff but it is in the Guardian and that is an influential outlet. So, let's not assume he's just "chatting bubbles" as they say in my part of London. Let's do Phil the honour of taking his arguments seriously and evaluate them with a dash of rationality, so missing in the article itself.

Having begun with some rather snide comments about the Starship launch back in xxxxxx (which makes you want to ask – *Hey, Phil have you launched any interplanetary craft recently?*), our writer moves on to ask the question: "*Why, though, should we wish to dwell on a world that lacks what we need to survive?*"

He then serves up as the only answer permitted which happens to be Stephen Hawking's statement that "*spreading out [into space] may be the only thing that saves us from ourselves*" meaning from

human-created catastrophes such as nuclear war and climate change.

By only allowing one answer, Ball is rigging this Q&A session.

There are in fact lots of responses that could be directed at that question. My first would be that the question is deficient because Mars most definitely does not "*lack what we need to survive*".

Mars has land, energy (solar and other forms), atmospheric gases, water and plenty of minerals. If you have the technology, then you can survive on Mars.

Phil seems to forget that *even on Earth* humans need technology to survive.

Without fire, clothes, spears and cutting tools, homo sapiens would almost certainly have been wiped out by now, just like lots of other hominid species. And how many people in the UK could survive just *one* night out in the open, even in summer, were they deprived of clothes, supermarkets, piped water and heating? Most would be A&E cases within 8 hours.

There aren't many questions in life that can receive only one answer. So, for me, his reluctance to entertain the idea that proponents of Mars colonisation might have a whole *range* of answers to the question makes one suspect his motives. Does he really want to discuss this issue in an open fashion? (Continued on Page 3)

The article then goes a little weird. He states that *“Climate change either will or won’t become an existential risk well before it’s realistic to imagine a self-sustaining Martian settlement of millions: we’re talking a century or more. Speculating about nuclear war post-2123 is science fiction. So the old environmentalist cliché is right: there is no Planet B, and to suggest otherwise risks lessening the urgency of preserving Planet A”*.

What does this mean?

OK, so climate change either *will* or *won’t* become an existential risk within one hundred years. That’s helpful! We’re none the wiser. But, on the other hand, he’s saying that it is *possible* Mars *could* be self-sufficient within 100 years. What’s his problem then? Surely that’s a cause for celebration!

On his own admission, after 100 years, Mars could be a guarantor of human survival, enabling us to live on beyond a catastrophe on Earth. No, no, no - he wants to be downbeat.

Using a total non sequitur Phil claims that there is no Planet B, and claims that to suggest otherwise risks lessening the urgency of preserving Planet A. Well, this is teetering on the brink of total nonsense. He’s just admitted there *is* a Planet B – as he has already accepted Mars could be self-sufficient within 100 years.

Let’s remember that 100 years is just *his* estimate and that he gives no justification whatsoever for why he thinks that is the shortest period within which to achieve self-sufficiency. As someone who has read *a lot* about Mars colonisation and trends in space transit technology (yes – I am a space nerd!), I personally think it could be a lot less than 100 years – maybe 50 years or possibly even 30 years. No one really knows, although Phil seems to think he does (without doing us the courtesy of telling us why).

The article didn’t start well but it’s soon going from bad to worse. Now he really does jump the shark! He tells us: *“As for the threat of a civilisation-ending meteorite impact: one that big is expected only every several million years, so it’s safe to say there are more urgent worries. The sun going out? Sure, in 5bn years, and if you think there will still be humans then, you don’t understand evolution”*.

Does he think meteorites operate on a bus timetable? This is an absurd argument! The sooner humanity has an alternative to destruction by meteorite impact, the better is how I see it. As for talking about the Sun going out in 5 billion years that is just piling absurdity on absurdity. In 5 billion years we or our successors will probably be able to stop the Sun going out! In the meantime, today, we have only the beginnings of the

(Continued on Page 4)

necessary technology to prevent a meteorite impact on Earth. We are still highly vulnerable and so it is perfectly reasonable to argue that creating a “back-up” human civilisation on another planet is a way of preserving human civilisation.

You might have thought that Phil was done with entertaining us by now but no – he’s got more. His next tack is to criticise the whole conceptual framework of colonisation. Firstly, he tries to tie it to over-romanticised notions of the settlement of North America. In other words he has his thumb firmly on the scales. I won’t bore you with all the links in his chain of non sequiturs, though he does get to this point finally:

“But other worlds are not the New World; space is harsh beyond any earthly comparison, and it will be constantly trying to kill you. Quite aside from the cold and airlessness, the biggest danger is the radiation: streams of charged, high-energy particles, from which we are shielded by the Earth’s magnetic field.”

We don’t refer to Earth as “space” so why on Earth (to borrow a phrase) is he referring to Mars as “space”. It isn’t “space”! It is a resource-rich rocky planet, just like Earth as far as that goes.

Ok, well, thanks for reminding us about the radiation, Phil. No one who knows anything about the challenges facing humans on

Mars ignores the issue of the radiation threat to health. But we also know that critics of Mars colonisation hugely exaggerate the dangers from radiation and there are numerous ways to protect humans from the threat just as there are ways of protecting humans on *Earth* from the earthquakes, tornadoes and hurricanes that we don’t see on Mars.

I don’t take this article seriously but I *do* take seriously the idea that there is a growing movement working to stop the creation of a second home for humanity on Mars.

How sad is that?

Let us know what you think about Mary’s article. We welcome open debate about all issues relating to Mars colonisation. We are very happy to hear the views of those who oppose Mars colonisation.

MARS FACTSHEET

1. Mars has as much land area as Earth.
2. Olympus Mons is the highest mountain in the solar system.
3. Mars windforce is about 1/20th of that on Earth for equivalent

STARSHIP GOOD FOR ORBITAL

An orbital launch of the Starship rocket system?

All the big You Tube channels that follow Space X are indicating that Space X are making great progress. It looks Super-Heavy No. 9 and Starship No.25 will be the hook-up.

Martians or Aresians?

You may have noticed that this magazine is not called “The Martian”. For one thing we wouldn’t want to be confused with that film of the same name that spread so much disinformation about terrifying tornado-like dust storms on Mars! For another, we simply can’t get over that association between Martians and the whole history of “little green men” in fiction and films. If the current wave of UFO disclosure continues and we end up being told there are alien species alive and doing well on Mars, then *they* deserve to be afforded the name of Martian. It will be a badge of honour for them.

However, as for humans who colonise Mars they deserve something better than a name that will launch a thousands jokes. Given the Ancient Greek name for the Red Planet is Ares, we think humans on Mars could do worse than being called Aresians (pronounced uh-ree-shuns). What do you think?

Or do you have a better alternative?

PICK OF THE PICS

Peter Roberts says: *“I love this pic. It really makes me think of Mars’s potential. We could just start building there tomorrow if we were there. Wouldn’t it be great to have those mountains on the horizon as part of your everyday view?”*



Credit: NASA

Why not send us a link to *your* favourite photo of Mars? We’d love to see it.

In the News

German scientist, Dirk Schulze-Makuch, claims it is likely that NASA accidentally “drowned” microbial life found on Mars during the Viking mission. He argues that given Mars is now a dry environment to which organisms will have adapted, it was a mistake to assume the organisms needed a very water nutrient solution in which to survive. (Metro 29 August)

MARS WEATHER UPDATE

Here’s the latest on Mars’ meteorological record.

13th September

High: 13 degrees Celsius

Low: -74 degrees Celsius



Credit: NASA

The photo shows a dust devil snaking across the surface of Mars, captured by NASA’s Mars Reconnaissance Orbiter satellite. It’s

just one of many weather phenomena on Mars that colonists will become familiar with. Thankfully wind force on Mars is so low that that these dust devils won’t be destructive.

MARS QUOTE

“If humanity doesn’t land on Mars within my lifetime, I would be very disappointed.”

Elon Musk

So would we, Elon!

Would you like to write for The Aresian?

If you’ve got a great idea for an article in *The Aresian* get in touch with via Mars Futures Forum. Just head up your email **“For The Aresian”**

WE LOOK FORWARD TO YOU BECOMING A REGULAR READ OF THE ARESIAN.

In next month’s edition:

- **Industry on Mars**
- **Living on the Red Planet**