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The first wave of foreign insurgents onto a large island continent lying between the Indian and Pacific Oceans in 1788 can be examined as a metaphor for the dire straits all life on earth finds itself in today.

The passengers and crew of those eleven ships came from a society that considered the 'great unknown continent' to be empty and ripe for exploitation. There was a disregard for the existing inhabitants and their culture, as well as for the land with which those inhabitants were intimately and inextricably bound. The foreigners manipulated the official record so that they could consider themselves as having come into a vast land with unlimited resources, in relation to which there were no competing interests.

Insurgents from Europe did the same, as they entered areas of Africa, Asia and the Americas. Where there was inconvenient evidence of existing human habitation, there were often attempts at expunging it, either in the official record or in reality, or both.

The attitudes that pertained then still exist today, despite our supposed sophistication and enlightenment. Inconvenient truths are still ignored or the evidence of it obfuscated. There is still a sense for many people that the resources of the earth are relatively inexhaustible and that the oceans can provide humans with protein for ever. This allows businesses to exploit the little that is left while they can still get away with it.

Those with vested interests in continuing to exploit the dwindling resources of anything, spin stories. We are told that to halt the exploitation will have our society regress into a primitive state, or we will all go hungry, or our economy will suffer. We are faced with competing interests: those of the exploitative few and those of all of us – that is, all living organisms.

There are many people who contemplate the possibility of there being (other) intelligent life in the universe. If life has evolved elsewhere and it is a natural condition that an over-powerful dominant species will evolve, it is unlikely that any planet harbours life that has evolved much past the current state of *Homo sapiens*. There is, therefore, unlikely to be a species anywhere with the technology to communicate with us, unless there is an intelligent species out there that has avoided the insane belief that a finite planet can have infinite resources.

There are also people seriously advocating setting up a human colony on Mars and terraforming the planet to make it conducive to human habitation. There are many things wrong with the very concept. I will look at just a few.

The enormous cost in money and resources could make a considerable difference to turning around the dire environmental degradation here on Earth.

Thousands of experiments, over centuries, in setting up isolated human settlements have shown the inherent difficulties, including those arising from the difficulty people have in

getting on with each other. And I would hazard a guess that none of these settlements would have managed to exist at all if they did not have access to resources from outside the settlement.

To imagine that we could terraform a planet and look after it, when we cannot look after a planet that is already terraformed, is the pinnacle of hubris. Some of those advocating Martian colonisation claim that this may be the only way to “save humanity”. This assumes that ‘humanity’ defines more than a species of mammal, and ignores that that mammal would probably not survive if isolated from all the other life forms with which it has evolved over millions of years.

My final question about such a planetary adventure is: How long will it take a human settlement on Mars to get to the point that almost every colonising enterprise has reached on Earth: face to face with exhaustion or pollution of everything they rely on for their existence?

It is true that adventures have helped humans develop their skills and their technologies and, perhaps, their brains. So, go on an adventure for adventure’s sake, for the challenge, for enjoyment, for recreation and sport. Don’t dress it up as something it cannot be: something that will make a difference to the wrong thinking we are stuck in. Adventuring often requires a shift out of our comfort zone and that is what we need to do now. We need to see corporations for what they (mostly) are: entities that exist to make the maximum profits for their owners. We need to do the uncomfortable thing and say “STOP RIGHT NOW”.