

TOMORROW, AND TOMORROW, AND TOMORROW...

Heintz/Herbert/Joos/McGee



TOMORROW, AND TOMORROW, AND TOMORROW...

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HOLT, RINEHART AND WINSTON, INC.
New York Chicago San Francisco Atlanta Dallas

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

Main entry under title:

Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow . . .

I. Science fiction, American. I. Heintz,

Bonnie L.

PZ1.T6 [PS648.S3] 813'.0876 73-18429

ISBN:0-03-010796-2

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Printed in the United States of America

9 059 9 8 7 6

6 10

TOMORROW,
AND TOMORROW,
AND TOMORROW...

*We affectionately dedicate this book
to all who graciously helped us with
time, energy, and needed criticism.*

PREFACE

Isaac Asimov writing for *Intellectual Digest* (December 1971) refers to science fiction as “. . . the *only* literature of relevant ideas” and suggests, “. . . when Aristotle fails, try science fiction.” This book aims to help you enjoy science fiction more than ever if you are already acquainted with it, and to discover its thrills and excitement if you are not.

First, Frank Herbert, author of *Dune*, and one of the best-known SF writers today, presents his views of science fiction and its relevance to people and their tomorrows.

Then, you will find a collection of short stories and novellas that many high school and college teachers and students most often declare interesting, important, exciting, and challenging. The stories have been divided into nine categories to give those who have read widely in science fiction some basis for comparing and contrasting their favorite writers. For one who has yet to experience the fascination of science fiction, the divisions indicate the wide variety of available types of science fiction, and can be used as a basis for relating to other literary or scientific areas of study.

Today is yesterday's science fiction. A man on the moon? Unbelievable to most people—until the day it happened. An unmanned ship out of our solar system carrying a message to other beings who might intercept it? Unbelievable, but the ship is on its way. Can anyone keep up with the speed of science and technology? The science fiction fan can—he has lived in this sort of world before.

Because of the obvious correlation between yesterday's science fiction and today's fact, science fiction is finding its way into the college curriculum as a new and exciting genre for people to study and enjoy. Science fiction paperback books now outnumber westerns and mystery stories (those perennial barometers of the reading habits of the public) on newsstands and in bookstores across the land.

For far too long science fiction has been considered a mutant by many of the critics. But no longer can that opinion stand against such successes as *Star Trek* on television, *2001—A Space Odyssey* on film, and *Dune* in international book sales. So read on; enjoy yourself! And become acquainted with “the only literature of relevant ideas,” the literature that gives you glimpses, ahead of time, of tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow . . . !

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FRANK HERBERT

SCIENCE FICTION AND YOU

If you never dip into the current of science fiction you may miss out on today *and* tomorrow. Science fiction represents the modern heresy and the cutting edge of speculative imagination as it grapples with Mysterious Time—linear or nonlinear Time. (For an insight into nonlinear Time, consider how a revised concept of past and future can alter your view of this instant, which remains immersed in sequential linearity, but which now spreads outward like a wave from a rock dropped in a pond. If you add to this concept an infinite number of rocks into infinite ponds and take this as a totality, you have from your viewpoint nonlinear Time. It spreads in all directions, including but not limited to past, present, and future.)

Whether you are concerned with the grand structure and relationships of the universe or with the different kinds of possible substances and their fine-scale interactions, the mental games to be found in science fiction can add surprising insights.

Our motto is *Nothing Secret, Nothing Sacred*.

The hard and fast structure of the sciences can become like concrete, a self-perpetuating set of myths. As Werner Heisenberg warned us, the inherent abstracting process of science creates a chasm between the world which inflicts itself upon your flesh and the abstracted physical theories. From the viewpoint of the flesh, no theory be it ever so grand can have unlimited applicability; a single law will not explain anything forever except the finite set of conditions within which it was found

applicable. Laws are sufficient unto themselves only when you know the limits within which they were found to operate. But the minute you discover *how something works*, your next step must be to ask how far this workability extends. What are its limits? You know there will be limits; your task is to discover them. (This represents one of the meanings behind the scientific dictum that the minute you gain an insight on the universe, your next task is to disprove your discovery.) Inevitably, an infinite universe is unpredictable. No particular insight carries an unlimited guarantee.

It is not the answers but the questions, and science fiction is a gold mine of questioning. We have taken the doubt and judgment of nineteenth century intellectuals and translated them for our age. We will continue to retranslate them as long as we continue to be true to our questioning nature.

The nineteenth century doubt and judgment upon which we place one foot for our seven-league step was probably best summarized by Alexander Pope's *Essay on Man*:

Plac'd in this isthmus of a middle state,
A being darkly wise and rudely great,
With too much knowledge for the sceptic side,
With too much weakness for the stoic pride,
He hangs between; in doubt to act or rest;
In doubt to deem himself a god or beast;
In doubt his Mind or Body to prefer;
Born but to die, and reas'ning but to err;
Chaos of Thought and Passion all confus'd,
Still by himself abus'd or disabus'd;
Created half to rise and half to fall,
Great Lord of all things, yet a prey to all;
Sole judge of Truth, in endless error hurld;
The glory, jest and riddle of the world.

Science fiction accepts that humanity may hang in the middle, but we also, in the idiom of our time, *hang in there*. We persist with our questioning. We say any current concept of Truth can be a highly unstable condition, and you must gnaw at the concept until you find its weaknesses and unravel the concept—and that this is a never-ending process.

That word process is the key to our times and to science fiction. This is *prana*, the vital principle of life, locked inextricably with illusion. It is the excitement of creation without traditional fetters. You will find nonsense in science fiction, too. But its nonsense is its own, different from the conventional nonsense which we encounter regularly in our everyday lives. It affords a time out from habitual mentalizing and supplies other viewpoints valuable for orienting our momentary position.

(For a lever on this concept, use the analogy of celestial navigation where the navigator fixes his temporary position, allowing for known error factors, by referring to plotted, temporary, positions of moving heavenly bodies. Science fiction supplies new *stars* for this changing process.)

Science fiction is where you find rampant exploration of the concept that humankind is *both* god and beast, not doubting either one. We reason but to discover new ways to reason. Our *Chaos* is the outer chaos of the Vedantic Void. And that is nothing more nor less than the background against which we perceive all that we can identify. Without a background against which to detect a *thing in motion* (a thing which changes) there can be no differentiation of one thing from another; all would be grey Void.

We can demonstrate how things are only by resort to inferential arguments rooted in what we do not know and apparently cannot know because any region of absolute knowledge remains always one step beyond our senses and our logic. And this is precisely the region in which science fiction has its greatest moments of creation. It is the region of the mystics and the philosophers. There is at least some basis to the argument made by a few writers of science fiction that the field be renamed Speculative Philosophical Fiction. This is a silly argument, of course. The label is far removed from that *reality* which demands our sensory acknowledgment. If we call something Science Fiction that only means we have a general agreement about what we designate by such a label. Like all such labels, the agreement tends to bleed off into disagreement at the edges. This, in its turn, means there are usefully hazy limits to what can be included in science fiction. Too much analysis, too much precision, runs into Heisenbergian barriers.

It does no harm, however, to bring science fiction into as clear a focus as possible for study purposes, for a temporary assessment which we know is subject to its own processes, its own evolution and changes. This is somewhat analogous to walking through a swamp by stepping on the hummocks. It helps occasionally to improve your understanding of where you're putting your feet.

Science fiction accepts no argument without question, not even the arguments I am making here. Bertrand Russell says the past is gone forever and the future may never be. We turn to our common creature, to technology, and postulate that form of ultimate paradox, the time machine, by which I may be my own grandfather. (The circular arguments of the solipsists are nothing new to us.)

Nothing Secret, Nothing Sacred.

It is a common conceit with all civilizations and societies that their mode of life and its major trappings originated with themselves by some sort of spontaneous generation. (It's an old joke that the young always believe themselves to be the original discoverers of sex.) It remained for our age to apply this mythos to technology and it is worth noting that

when we say *science*, especially in science fiction, we more often mean *technology*. By this mythos, our relationship to science/technology is original in our time and has no roots in past relationships.

Science fiction, meeting this challenge, gives you all sorts of Phoenix stories through which you may draw your own conclusions about current history. The key phrase here is *draw your own conclusions*. For the most part, we want and avidly seek your unique personal involvement in our creations.

As Kurt Vonnegut has said, we care about what machines (technology) do to us. There is damn' little such caring shown by any other influential segment of our society. Any student, involving himself with science fiction, has to be touched by that caring. The explosive growth of interest in science fiction over the past ten years indicates a strong sharing of that concern by many of our fellow humans. We have demonstrated that we often are far out ahead of the real concerns which inflict themselves upon our world. Ecology, for example, was a commonplace of science fiction at least ten years ahead of its worldwide vogue. The ecology of science fiction also tended toward a practicality, the inclusion of social problems with the soil problems, a disinclination to separate *mind* from *body*.

There are some exceptions, but most creators of science fiction (to differentiate them from the cliques among their fans) are not selling a particular future, they are *showing* multi-futures. A story deals with *a* future. We may join the general demonstration that science/technology, far from ushering in the Utopian age, has brought us to the brink of planetary destruction. (Make a passing note of the number of highly successful science fiction stories which deal with the aftermath of worldwide catastrophe.) We have helped sharpen the general awareness about this state of affairs. It is now very difficult to disagree with such as author-editor Frederik Pohl who contend that science fiction is the literature of reality and that other genre partake of fantasy and blatant escapism. (The late John W. Campbell of Analog Magazine, probably the most influential figure in the evolution of English language science fiction over the past forty years, characterized our field as *the* mainstream, with all other genre taking their places as variations on the central thematic school which virtually monopolized futurism.)

We are quite capable in this field of casting doubt (if not aspersions) upon anything which comes within our view: upon science fiction itself, upon the politics of liberation, upon the hero myth, upon the uses of political or religious power, upon the *naturalness* of predation, upon the inevitable violence of human nature, upon any institution or bureau, upon anarchy or determinism. In general, you may find an assumption running through our most scandalously skeptical stories that we really don't know what these terms mean.

In teaching a university level course on the utopian myth, I run a

general inquiry into our understanding of what we mean by human (or human nature). The term has a wide usage in our society and is part of the new liberalism mythology which comes in for the least examination. "Oh, everybody knows what *that* means!" The answers I receive are widely variable, however.

Here are some samples:

"Any homo sapiens with an IQ above 90."

"The thinking animal."

"The self-conscious animal."

"The only animal which creates religions."

"The only animal which experiments with governments."

Consistently, the one answer which was acceptable to all of the students was this one:

"Like me."

A human being was recognizable because he was sufficiently *like me* to be accepted in my society. He could move in next door, marry my daughter, join my club, vote in my election . . . etc.

It is a very possessive definition which science fiction, almost alone of the fields involved with speculative philosophy, has been exploring and holding up to question. It is one of the grand quandaries which we inherited from the Greeks and apparently it is still with us. Science fiction has asked, in this exploration of meaning, how you decide whether an extraterrestrial *animal* is human? By extrapolation, this sharpens our reasoning when we confront the same problem on an earthbound scale. Can the dolphin be admitted to the human club? How about other creatures similar to yourself but differing only in skin coloration or the shape of eyes?

Without ever apparently recognizing the subtended assumptions indicated above, Immanuel Kant speculated that creatures living on planets closer to the Sun would be more corporeal (thus less spiritual) than beings of our planet. He argued that beings on more distant planets would be composed of "lighter and finer" matter. Out of this, he postulated a Scale of Being such that "Human nature occupies as it were the middle rung . . . equally removed from the two extremes," going on to explain:

"If the contemplation of the most sublime classes of rational creatures, which inhabit Jupiter and Saturn, arouses his envy and humiliates him with a sense of his own inferiority he may again find contentment and satisfaction by turning his gaze upon those lower grades which in the planets Venus and Mercury, are far below the perfection of human nature."

This was heady stuff in its day, but it assumed all kinds of things not in evidence, a practice which science fiction tends to engage in without a qualm. Such assumptions are today accepted *for the sake of argument*, no doubt Kant's intent. He was taking up where Bernard de

Fontenelle left off in the speculation that interplanetary space possessed many stars around which inhabited planets were whirled on their loops of gravity, and that some of those planets were home to supermen.

The so-called saucer craze comes immediately to mind as an extension of this philosophical by-way. I attended a meeting of a "Flying Saucer Society" some years back at which were sold rubber stamps for imprinting a message on your envelopes: "Flying Saucers are friendly." This is the mystique of the friendly supermen who will step in and save us from ourselves. Science fiction has played this tune and introduced a few sour notes into it as well. The violent alien scientist is not our only superdevil.

Kant's "Scale of Being" can be taken as a sensible argument, full of darkly mysterious meaning, or it may be deflated as an Angels-On-Pin-head game. It's all grist for our mill: The divine frenzy of one age is the insanity of the next. Shakespeare joined "the lover, the lunatic, and the poet." We play alchemist with the instruments of science/technology and reveal the fascinating colors in a new *stone*. Science fiction can produce *story-as-revelation*, an entire novel reduced to one symbol, or it can give you layer-upon-layer-upon-layer of meaning in a single story. To science fiction, the supersensible is our everyday field of endeavor, just as it can be with those who seek transcendental experiences via meditation or drugs. In this, we may attempt that ultimate paradox, describing the indescribable. More than one Atman has appeared on the pages of science fiction to confound our conventional understandings of topology. We accept the theory that other dimensions coexist with our three (four if you include Time) and that an eternal present need not be beyond our understanding. It is science fiction which pokes gentle fun at such concepts as "categories of infinity," and at the same time employs this conceptual spectrum for its own (and its readers') entertainment.

The difficulties of such formulations usually find us foundering on the implicit concepts about Time which are carried in the structures of our languages. No student of science fiction should overlook this limitation upon our creative endeavors.

For the briefest examination of this, observe how the verb *to be* anchors a concept in Time. "*It either is or it isn't!*" "*What is that noise?*" "*He is a crook!*" "*She is a teacher.*" "*Isn't that just like a woman!*" "*Men are just like boys.*" "*Human nature will never change.*" (In this latter phrase you may note that the *human nature* usually referred to is that of the speaker. He is saying, in effect: "I will never change.")

For speakers of Indo-European languages (and some others) the anchor may be even more firmly fixed by ways we employ our indefinite articles: "*The reason for that is . . .*" "*The only answer to that is . . .*"

Etc. etc.

In each instance, we tend to deny movement to Time and Process. We imply that a described condition will never change, and that it can

be understood absolutely, that it has a nature or biology completely submissive to our analysis.

You may accept the idea that Time and Process can be understood from an examination of biological processes, but science fiction calls this to question with a frequency which may suggest a profound unconscious verity behind the questioning. Science fiction is studded with stories which demonstrated uncanny insight into "the future," an insight which calls into doubt our conventional concepts of Time and Process.

The element of continuity assumed in our most uncritical views about Time are not completely accepted in science fiction. In this non-evolutionary attitude we go far outside mutational theories and ideas about "spontaneous generation" and sometimes create stories with distinctly religious overtones. It is bootless to deny the value of this as a thinking process. To science fiction, *reason* is a tool of consciousness and intuition is a breakthrough process demonstrating a force often called "Gestalten Unconscious." In our Atmen, we seek colossi to straddle all recognizable modes of conscious and unconscious self-reflection. It is implicit in this process that we forfeit today for tomorrow and that our goals may be manmade or that we may have no actual goals. (The whole concept of goal with its inference about destination-as-a-stopping-place, strikes me as deadly. Goals ought to have a profoundly transitory nature built into them and fully accepted before we even postulate them.)

This may represent an ultimate in questioning.

George Reedy, the ex-journalist who served in the White House as Lyndon Johnson's press secretary, notes in "The Twilight of the Presidency" that—

"The trouble with the White House—for anyone who is part of it—is that when he picks up a telephone and tells people to do something, they usually do it.

"This is an unhealthy environment for men and women whose essential business is to deal with people in large numbers. It is soothing to the ego, but it fosters illusions about humanity . . .

"It is designed as the perfect setting for the conspiracy of mediocrity—that all too frequently successful collection of the untalented, the unpassionate and the insincere seeking to convince the public that it is brilliant, compassionate and dedicated."

The habit of never questioning Authority as a perfect setting for mediocrity, that is what Reedy describes in his study of power exercised in authoritative isolation.

Questioning is the ever renewable source of new reflections and new courses. Science fiction represents a stronghold of this renewable resource. It is a mainstream of life and any life, including that of a student, will stagnate unless it touches such a stream. You will find this (with its Heisenbergian limits) to be true in science, technology, philoso-

phy, government, mathematics or any other category into which our form of life can compartmentalize its thinking processes. If it touches life, it has this characteristic, that it will die (if living) or kill (if inanimate) if you try to hold it unchanging.

To see how far into current scientific thinking this reaches, note what Professor Norwerd Russell Hanson says in his *Concept of the Positron*, basic work on atomic physics:

Matter has been dematerialized, not just as a concept of the philosophically real, but now as an idea of modern physics. Matter can be analyzed down to the level of fundamental particles; but at that depth the direction of the analysis changes, and this constitutes a major conceptual surprise in the history of science. The things which for Newton typified matter—e.g., an exactly determinable state, a point shape, absolute solidity—these are now the properties which electrons do not, because theoretically they cannot, have.

Professor Hanson would welcome us to his club when we in science fiction affirm that we represent the ancient spirit of unbridled speculation, the spirit of heresy, alive and functioning in an ocean of orthodoxy. With him, we say that any exactly determinable state exists only to be dematerialized. The grand quandaries which we inherited from the Greeks via Europe are still with us and if they fall, they will fall only to open our view to new quandaries. This is an unlimited field in which science fiction may play and entertain for as long as humans exist.

SCIENCE