THE DISCOVERY OF THE FUTURE

by Robert A. Heinlein

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(Ackerman concludes introduction of Guest Speaker comparing him with the author of "Odd John", "Last and First Men", "Star Maker", naming him "the American W. Olaf Stapledon".) (Heinlein speech starts:

Thank you, Forry. -- Mr Chairman ...I have here in my hand the manuscript of a speech. If it works out anything like synopses I have used, this speech will still be left when I get thru.

Before I start in, I want to mention an idea that came to me that I think might be fun. It was an innovation in political speaking that was introduced out in California by Upton Sinclair that raised Cain with the ordinary run of political speakers: that of asking questions from the platform -- I mean, answering questions from the platform. (That isn't going to look so good on the platter, is it?) I want to put this one reservation on it, and that is that any questions should be in writing with names signed so that we can read them into the mike and so that I can have clearly in mind what the questions are.

In the course of the last day and a half I have gained the impression that quite a number of people have been interested in the background of some of my stories and in some cases in my social and political ideas, economic ideas, etc. -- some of which, but not all of which, shows in my stories; and some of them have evidenced an interest in my own personal background. So, if the question comes along, I will do my best to answer it, perhaps dodging the embarrassing ones a little, but not too much.

To get to the matter of the talk itself: THE DISCOVERY OF THE FUTURE . Olon (Wiggins, Convention Director) told me there was no time limit on me, so I assumed that he wanted my usual three hour speech. Or perhaps we can just keep going here until the hall is cleared.

Anyhow! Forry told you that I had been reading science fiction for a long time. I have. I have been reading science fiction as long as I could get hold of it; and I probably experienced much the same process that most of you did: Parental disapproval, those funny looks you get from friends, etc. for reading "that kind of junk". Well, we here, the science fiction fans - we are the lunatic fringe! We are the crazy fools who read that kind of stuff; who read those magazines with the covers with the outlandish machines and the outlandish animals on it, etc. You leave one around loose in your home. Your friends will pick it up, those who are not fans, ask you if you really read that stuff, and from then on they look at you with suspicion. Apparently we're not quite right in the head.

know better. There won't always be an England--nor a Germany, nor a United States, nor a Baptist Church, nor monogamy, nor the Democratic Party, nor the modesty tabu, nor the superiority of the white race, nor aeroplanes -- they will go -- nor automobiles -- they'll be gone, we'll see them go. Any custom, technique, institution, belief, or social structure that we see around us today will change, will pass, and most of them we will see change and pass.

In science fiction we try to envision what those changes might be. Our guesses are usually wrong, they are almost certain to be wrong. Some men with a greater grasp on data than others can do remarkably well at it. HGWells, who knows probably of the data that makes up the world, oh, on the order of 10 times as much or perhaps higher than that than most science fiction writers or the best of the science fiction writers, has been remarkably successful in some of his predictions. Most of us--we aren't that lucky. I do not expect my so-called History of the Future to come to pass, not in anything like those terms. I think some of the trends in it may show up; but I do not think that my factual predictions as such are going to come to pass, even in their broad outlines.

(Somebody put a glass of water around here, I've got to find it now, I'm drying up. Do you suppose it could be the altitude, Olon?)

# # #

Now, where were we? --You speak of this sort of thing to an ordinary man, tell him things are going to change; he will admit it--oh, yes, he will admit it--but he does not believe it, he does not believe it at all, it is just with the top of his mind. He believes in "progress"--quotation marks on that; he believes in "progress". He thinks things will get a little bit bigger, and louder, and brighter, and a few more neon signs. That's standard, that's orthodox doctrine; he believes in that. But he does not believe that any actual change in the basic nature of the culture in which he lives or its technology will take place. Oh no! Aeroplanes he thinks are all right; but those ..er..those crazy rocket ship things--! Why, a rocket ship couldn't possibly fly--it hasn't got anything to PUSH on. That is the way he feels about it. There will never be rocket ships. That is alright for Buck Rogers in the funny papers. But he does not believe that there could be rocket ships; nor does he believe that there will be things that will make rocketships look like primitive gadgets that even the wildest of the science fiction writers have not been able to guess or think about. Rocketships are about as far as I am willing to go because I have not got data enough to think about to make a reasonable guess about the other forms of transportation or gadgets that we may have. --But this same man did not believe in aeroplanes in 1910!

I have spoken primarily of mechanical changes because they are much easier to show, to point to, than the more subtle sociological changes, cultural changes, changes in our customs, and things of that sort. Some of these can be pointed out. I would like to point out one of them right now. The word "syphilis" could not be used in public even as short a time as 15 years ago. Yet as I used it here now I did not see any shock around the room; nobody minded it; even the Ladies Home Journal runs articles on it. We are getting a little more civilized in that respect than we were 20 years ago. Our grandfathers considered that word indecent, and they believed that the things that were decent and indecent were subject to absolute rules, that they were laws of nature; and the majority of the people around us now believe that their criteria of decency and indecency are absolutes, that they won't change, that there are some things that are right and some things that are wrong. They do not know enough about past history in that respect to be able to make any predictions about the future.

I could think of some rude words to use in that connection. Words that are still rude now, and I think it quite possible that 20 years from now on this same platform I could use those words and not produce any shock around the room. For things do change. And words which we consider utterly indecent at the present time may very possibly simply be used as tags, as terms with no emotional connotation to them, 20 years from now.

But we happen to live in a period of sudden and drastic change in a good many of the things that happen to us. And I think it is extremely important that we be prepared for that change and for that reason I think that science fiction fans are better prepared to face the future than the ordinary run of people around them, because they believe in change.

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(I'll be getting a frozen face on that one. That went on the platter too --someone just took a picture of me...for the benefit of those who otherwise wouldn't understand that remark. Uh, where were we again - I get off the track - I've got a one-track mind and I slip a gear every now and then...)

To that extent, I think that science fiction; even the corniest of it, even the most outlandish of it, no matter how badly it's written; has a distinct therapeutic value because all of it has as its primary postulate that the world does change, and I cannot overemphasize the importance of that idea in these days. Unless you believe in that, unless you are prepared for it--as I know all of you are--you can't retain your sanity these days, it's an impossibility. When a man makes predictions and they keep failing to come out,

time and again, things don't come out the way he wants to, he goes insane, functionally insane--it's been proved in the laboratories time and again. It's been proved with respect to men, but I'll give an illustration with respect to animals...the well-known experiment performed with rats, in which a rat was disappointed in his predictions time and again, and he went crazy. It happens to work the same way with men. Things do not necessarily work the same way with animals as they do with men, but in this case there is data to prove it, and the inability to believe in change makes absolutely certain that your prediction will disappoint you. That does not apply to this group but it does apply to a great many people.

For that reason I believe that we are in; we are now entering in to, and are already part way in to; a period in which large portions of the human race will be in a condition of, if not insanity, at least un-sanity. I think we see that over a large portion of the world today, that we see it in the United States today, I think we have seen it crawling up on us for a number of years. In 1929 we had the market crash and people jumped out of the window from not being able to predict things that were perfectly obvious, written on the face of the culture, something that would happen.

And the Depression came along, and the madhouses filled up again, and other only slightly less slap-happy individuals proceeded to be a little bit unsane by concocting the most wildly unscientific schemes for making everybody rich by playing musical chairs, that sort of thing. Not quite crazy--they could still find their way around and take street-cars and not get lost; but not quite sane either. And that kind of thing can lead, if it goes on enough, to a condition of mass insanity that none of us are going to like.

Nevertheless, we science fictionists, I think, are better prepared for it than others. During a period of racial insanity, mass psychoses, hysteria, manic depression, paranoias, that sort of thing, it is possible for a man who believes in change to hold on, to arrest his judgment...to go slow...to take a look at the facts, and not be badly hurt. Oh, things probably will happen to us, very unpleasant indeed--we can't separate ourselves from the matrix in which we find ourselves; nevertheless, WE stand a chance, for I am very much afraid--and I speak quite seriously in this--I am very much afraid that a great many people of the type who laugh at us for dealing with this stuff, will not be able to hang on.

The important thing about it is to hang on to your sanity, to preserve your sanity while it happens, no matter what bad things may happen to the world. As individuals it may be difficult for us to do anything about it,

even tho all of us in our own way and according to our lights are trying to do something about it. But this series of wars that we find the world in now may go on for another 5 years, 10 years, it may go 20 years, it may go 50 years--you and I may not live to see the end of it. I personally have hopes--wishful thinking--I have hopes it will terminate quickly enough so that I can pass the rest of my lifetime in comparative peace and comfort. But I'm not optimistic about it. And during such a period it is really a difficult thing to keep a grip, to keep a grip on yourself; but I think that we are better prepared to do it than some of the others.

I can speak more freely here than I could in, for example, in a political meeting, because it's a highly selected group. I've known quite a lot of science fiction fans, and I've observed, statistically, certain things about them. Most of them are young as compared with other groups, most of them are extremely precocious--quite brilliant--I'd be very much interested to see IQs run on a typical group of fans. But even without running IQs I know that--I know that most of the people in here are 'way above the average in intelligence. I've had enough data on it to know. I'm not trying to flatter you, I'm not interested in it. I am interested in the fact that you have unusually keen minds. However, that fact lays us open --and I included myself in it--lays us open to dangers that don't hit the more phlegmatic, the more stolid. We; unless we are able to predict, unless we are able to observe the data; are even more likely to be subjected to functional unsanities than those around us.

I'm preaching--sure; I know that. I could have filled up a speech with wisecracks and with stories and anecdotes; but I feel very deeply serious about this. I mean it. And if you can bear with me for a few minutes along this line, I still want to talk about it.

There's a way out, there's a way out, there's something that we can do to protect ourselves, something that would protect the rest of the human race from the sort of things that are happening to them and are going to happen to them. It's very simple and it's right down our alley: the use of the scientific method.

I'm not talking about the scientific method in the laboratory. The scientific method can be used to protect our sanity, to protect ourselves from serious difficulties of other sorts--gettin' our teeth smashed in, and things like that--in our everyday life, 24 hours of the day.

I should say what I mean by the scientific method. Since I have to make the definition in terms of words, I can't be as clear as I otherwise might be, if I were able

to make an extensional definition on it. But I mean a comparatively simple thing by the scientific method: the ability to look at what goes on around you ...listen to what you hear...observe...note facts...delay your judgment...and make your own predictions. That's all, really all there is to the scientific method: To be able to distinguish facts from non-facts.

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I used the term "fact". I used it in a technical sense, and I should say what I mean by a fact. A fact is anything that has happened before this moment, on July 4th, 1941. Anything that has already happened before this moment. Anything after this moment is a non-fact. Most people can't distinguish between them, they regard as a fact that they're going to get up and have breakfast tomorrow morning. They get the difference between facts and nonfacts completely mixed up, and in particular, these days people are getting very mixed up between facts and theories, isms, ologies, so forth and so on, so-called "laws of nature", depending on what year you happen to be speaking.

That distinction between fact and fiction, fact and nonfact, is of extreme importance to us now. It even has become a strong issue in the field of science fiction. Without refering to any movement by name, or any person by name, simply because I wish to make an illustration--this is an illustrative point and has no personal...nothing personal with respect to anyone--I want to invite your attention to the fact that the science fiction field has been very much stirred up by a semi-political movement which uses the word "fact" quite extensively. But it uses the word fact with reference to what they are ...what they predict, will happen in the future; and that's a nonfact. And any movement, institution, any theory, which does not make a clear and decided distinction between fact and nonfact, cannot by any stretch of the imagination be called a scientific movement. It simply is not because it does not use the scientific method. No matter how complicated the terminology may be, no matter how complicated their terminology may be or how much they may use the argot of science.

--here's something, I'm going to have to make an excursion here...I've wandered somewhat from the talk that I had in mind making.

I want to make another comment on the matter of science fiction and the fact that you and I have to put up with an awful lot of guff from people because of the orthodox point of view with which it is regarded.

I have never been able to understand quite why it is that the historical novel is the most approved, the most, uh, oh, uh what's the word? give me a word quick--yes, the most sacred (word supplied by Mrs Heinlein from floor)--forms of literature.

The contemporary novel is next so; but the historical novel, if you write an historical that's, oh, that's literature.

I think that the corniest tripe published in a science fiction magazine (and some of it isn't too hot, we know that; some of my stuff isn't so hot) uh, beats all the Anthony Adverses and Gone With the Winds that were ever published, because at least it does include in it that one distinctly human-like attempt to predict the future.

One would think in the attitude on that subject that the literary critics and the professors of English and so forth; those who make a business of deciding what is good and what is bad in literature; had some connection in their ancestory with the Fillyloo Bird. I think you know the fillyloo bird: He flew backwards because he didn't care where he was going but he liked to see where he'd been...

# # #

I'm going to cut this short now. I hope we will come to a question period, I'd much rather deal with that than with this comparatively formal business. I do want to mention, however, the fashion in which the scientific method--just the matter of observing what goes on around you, observing it thru your own eyes instead of taking other people's opinions, reserving your judgments until you have enough data on which to make a judgment--can be of real use to you even now, quite aside from any possible worse period in the history...in coming history.

I mentioned that it can keep your teeth from getting knocked in; that's an important point. It can because you'll stay out of controversies and out of arguments that you would otherwise get into. If you are talking with a man who obviously does not bother to use the scientific method or does not know how to use the scientific method in his everyday life, you'll never get into an argument with him--you'll know better, you'll know there's no point in an argument with him, that you cannot possibly convince him. You can listen--and you'll get some new data from him--and you'll be better able to predict thereafter, if on no other point than the fact that you'll be better able to predict what his reactions will be.

There are other advantages, in the way of keeping yourself cooled down, so you can be a little happier. For example, a man who uses the scientific method cannot possibly be anti-Semitic. I have made that an illustration because it's caused a lot of trouble in the world lately. Why can't he be anti-Semitic? For a very simple reason: He doesn't have enough data, consequently he hasn't formed an opinion. No matter how long he lives he can't possibly know all Jews, and unless

he knows all Jews he can't hate all Jews, because he doesn't form an opinion unless he has data. It is possible for him to hate an individual Jew as it's possible for him to hate an individual Irishman or Rotarian or man or woman or so forth. Possible; not as likely as it is with other people, because a person using the scientific method deliberately delays his reactions.

But he can't possibly be anti-Semitic. He can't hate all Capitalists, he can't hate all Unions, he can't hate all women--you can't be a woman-hater, not if you use the scientific method, you can't possibly: you don't know all women...you don't even know a large enough percentage of the group to be able to form an opinion on what the whole group may be!

By the same reasoning, it's very difficult for him to hate at all; and if you can just manage to keep hate out of your life (or a goodly portion of it--I can't keep it all out of my life myself, I've got to sit down and whip myself about the head and shoulders to get myself calmed down at times)...but you can help yourself with this method. If you can keep hate out of your life you can keep from getting your teeth knocked in. You can keep out of a lot of difficulties and take care of yourself in a better fashion.

A man with the scientific method cannot possibly believe that all politicians are crooks, for he knows that one datum destroys the generalization. I'll give one datum on that point: Senator George Norris; whether you like him or not the man's a saint on earth. Whether you agree with his opinions or not, he's not...a bad man.

And because he's never entirely certain of his own opinions on any subject, a man using the scientific method stays out of arguments, keeps himself from the emotional upsets that cause you to lose sleep and upset your stomach and get you such things as herpes and -- oh, I'm not an MD, but there are plenty of functional disorders that a man can avoid, can very well avoid.

But there's a rough picture of the Scientific man in everyday life. Such a man stands a better chance of living thru our period to a ripe and happy old age, in my opinion.

But I wish to make plain that the use of the scientific method does not depend on any formal education in science. It is an attitude and a point of view and not a body of information. You need have no formal education at all to use the scientific method in your everyday life, all the time. I am not disparaging the body of scientific information that has been gathered by specialists or the equally enormous body of historical and sociological data that is avail-

able. Unfortunately, we can't get very much of it. But you can still use the scientific method, whether you've had a lot of education or not, whether you've had time to gather a lot of personal data or not.

But with respect to the acquisition of scientific training, I've heard people--oh, I've heard around fan clubs the remark that "I wish I knew something about mathematics" or "I wish I understood something about physics". The complaints that they're not fully appreciating some of the stories because they don't have enough specialized information. Or they've.. some subject was too hard, or they weren't able to go far enough in school. I greatly sympathize with that. Uh, I'm not trying to play it down, anything of the sort, it's very much of a regret to me that I'm not at least twins and preferably triplets, so that I could have time to study the various things that I'm interested in; and I know that a lot of you have felt the same way, that life is just too--not too short, but too narrow...we don't have room enough, time enough, to get around and learn all the things that we want to, and it is almost impossible for us to get a full picture of the world.

Surprising, the data that actually is available. God knows that no one can even hope to cover even a small corner of the scientific world these days. I think there's a way out of the dilemma, however; a fair one for us and a better one for our children. It's by the creation of a new technique to cover just that purpose. Men who might be considered encyclopedists, or interpreters--synthesists, I like to call them--men who make it their business to find out what it is the specialists have learned and then relay it to the rest of us in a consolidated form so that we can have, if not the details of the picture, at least the broad outlines of the enormous, incredibly enormous, mass of data that the human race has gathered. The facts behind us, the things that have happened before this moment, so that we can be better able to predict for ourselves, plan our lives after this moment.

There's only one synthesist who has really made such an attempt up to the present time, and I'm very pleased that it happens to be possibly the greatest of the science fiction writers: HGWells. HGWells perhaps didn't do a good job of it--good lord! he didn't have a chance to, he had nobody before him, he did the pioneer work, he started it. But HGWells in his trilogy--"The Outline of History", "The Science of Life" and "The Work, Wealth and Happiness of Mankind"--is so far as I know the only writer who has ever lived who has tried to draw for the rest of us a full picture of the whole world, past and future, everything about us, so we can stand off and get a look at ourselves.

It'll be done better in the future; nevertheless, it was a great work, the fact that he did it, that he tried a'tall. A wonderful work. And because he had done that kind of work, that he tried to do that kind of work for the rest of us, is the reason to my mind why his scientific fantasies are more nearly accurate in their predictions than those of, oh, myself, and various other commercial writers in the field. I don't know as much as HGWells; I probably never will know as much as HGWells; my predictions can't be as accurate.

But, after considering HGWells' trilogy--"Outline of History", "Work, Wealth and Happiness of Mankind" and "The Science of Life"--it occurred to me that it would be amusing, to me at least, and I hope to you, for me to mention some books by assorted writers that, to a certain extent, help to fill in the gaps in the picture, and to a certain extent help to make up the lack of a broad comprehensive scientific education, which no one, not even ScD's and PhD's, can really have.

For example-- In mathematics, is there one book that will help the non-mathematician, the person who hasn't specialized in it and made it his life work, to appreciate what mathematics is for? I've run across such a book; it's called "Mathematics and the Imagination", by Kasner & Newman. You don't have to have any mathematical education to read it. To my mind it's a very--very stimulating book, very interesting book; and when you've finished reading the book, you at least know what the mathematicians are doing and why. Among other things you will discover--and this runs entirely contrary to our orthodox credoes--that mathematics is not a science. That mathematics is not a science a'tall; that it's an aspect of symbology along with the alphabet; that there is no such thing as discovering mathematics, for example. Mathematics is invented, it's an invented art, and has nothing directly to do with science at all, except as a tool. And yet you'll hear the ordinary laymen speaking time and again of mathematics as a science. It just plain isn't because it has no data in it; purely inventions, every bit of it, even the multiplication tables. Yes, the multiplication tables: 2x2 is 4 is an invention in mathematics, not a fact.

There are other such books. In physics, there is Eddington's "Nature of the Physical World", I think one of the most charming books ever written, one of the most lucidly and brilliantly written books. It gives a beautiful background to modern physics. It's approximately 15 years old so in order to cover a lot of the things that are currently being used for fiction in the science fiction field, you would need to supplement that. The book I got for my own purpose to supplement it--'cause you see, I'm not a professional physicist; I'm an engineer,

but I'm not a physicist--to help bring it up to date, and I can tell you why I got the book. It's White's "Classical and Modern Physics", published in 1940. It's about the latest book-bound thing on modern physics that I know of. There are later things in such publications as Physical Review and Nature; but this goes up to and including the fission of uranium--that sort of thing. It includes nuclear physics, and it delighted me to find that the author of this book thot that rocketships would fly, and thot that very likely when we got around to it we'd find life on other planets. A very stimulating thing to get from a professional scientist, particularly in the field of physical sciences. I picked that book because White is an associate of Lawrence, in the nuclear laboratory at Berkeley. In other words, he is in on the ground floor, he is the McCoy, he knows what he's talking about. It's modern physics, 1940, the best up to that time.

So far as astronomy is concerned, I've never seen anything that surpassed, for a popular notion of the broad outlines of the kind of physical world that we live in, than John Campbell's series that appeared in Astounding. When did they start?--Julie Unger can tell us, I think (from floor: "1936")--ran on for 15, 16 issues, something of the sort, his articles on the solar system. I've always been sorry that Campbell didn't go on from there and cover stellar astronomy, galactic astronomy, and some of the other side fields. But even at that, anybody that's read thru that series by Campbell on the solar system will never again have a flat-world attitude--which most people do have. Not in the science fiction field, of course; I mean, not among fans of science fiction.

(I speak many times here as if the human race were divided into two parts, as it may be--people who love science fiction and the people who don't--and I think you'll be able to keep sorted out which ones I'm talking about. I hope so. I get all tangled up. I do better on the typewriter. I hope.)

In the field of economics, an incomplete science but nevertheless one that you can't possibly ignore, I think the most illuminating book I've ever read is one by Maurice Colburn, called "Economic Nationalism". The title of it won't give any suggestion of what the contents are, but that's simply the tag by which it's known--Maurice Colburn's "Economic Nationalism".

Jim Farley's "Behind the Ballots" is probably as nice a job of recording actual data in politics as I've ever seen; however, politics--I'd never recommend that people read books in the political field. Go out and take a look yourself. Everything else you hear is guff.

I save for the last on that list of the books that've greatly affected me, that to my mind are the key books, of the stuff I've piled thru, a book that should head the list on the Must List. I wish that, I wish that everyone could read the book--it's just a wish, there aren't that many copies of it, everyone can't, nor could everyone read this particular book. All of you could, you've got the imagination for it. It's "Science & Sanity" by Count Alfred Korzybski, one of the greatest Polish mathematicians when he went into the subject of symbology and started finding out what made us tick, and then worked up in strictly experimental and observational form from the preliminary work of ETBell.

A rigour of epistomology based on ETBell (break in transcript here--some words lost) ... symbology of epistomology. Book refers to the subject of semantics. I know from conversation with a lot of you that the words epistomology and semantics are not unfamiliar to you. But because they may be unfamiliar to some, I'm going to stop and make definitions of those words.

Semantics is simply a study of the symbols we use to communicate. General Semantics is an extension of that study to investigate how we evaluate in the use of those symbols. Epistomology is a study of how we know what we know. Maybe that doesn't sound exciting. It is exciting, it's very exciting. To be able to delve back into your own mind and investigate what is is you know, what it is you can know and what it is that you cannot possibly know is, from a standpoint of intellectual adventure, I think possibly the greatest adventure that a person can indulge in. Beats spaceships.

Incidentally, any of you who are going to be in Denver in the next 5 or 6 weeks will have an opportunity, one of the last opportunities, to hear Alfred Korzybski speak in person. He will be here at a meeting similar to this at a meeting of semanticians from all over the world--oh, Maclean from Los Angeles, and Johnson from Iowa and Reisser from Mills College and Kendig and probably Hayawkawa from up in Canada--the leading semanticians of the world--to hear Alfred Korzybski speak. I think starting Aug. 9, isn't it Missy? The early part of August. It'll be in the newspapers in any case. And it's much better to hear him speak than it is to read his books. He's limited by the fact that he's got to stick to the typewriter, to the printed word; but when he talks--when he talks it's another matter! He gestures, he's not tied down with his hands to the desk the way I am; he walks, stumps all around the stage, and waves his hands; and when he's putting quotation marks on a word he puts 'em on (illustrates, audience laughs)...and you really gather what he means. Incidentally--he looks like A. Conan Doyle's description of Prof Challenger if Prof Challenger

had shaved the beard. Dynamic character. You may not like him personally, but he's at least as great a man as Einstein--at least--because his field is broader. The same kind of work that Einstein did, the same kind of work, using the same methods; but in a much broader field, much more close to human relationships. I hope that some of you will be able to hear him. I said that this will be one of the last chances, because the old man's well over 70 now; as he puts it, "I vill coagulate someday, I vill someday soon, I vill coagulate"--which is the term he uses for dying. He speaks in terms of colloidal chemistry. Properly, it's appropriate. He won't last much longer, in the meantime he's done a monumental piece of work. He has worked out in methodology the same sort of important work that HGWells did in the matter of description; and the two together are giants in our intellectual horizon, our intellectual matrix today, that stick up over the rest like the Empire State Bldg.

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I think that's about all that I had to say. Didn't say it too well nor too brilliantly. I'm tired and confused and nervous and quite frankly considerably stirred up by the fact that I was selected as Guest of Honor here. It embarrasses me and at the same time I enjoy it.

I started out to talk primarily about science fiction and I got off on some of my own hobbies. It's a luxury to me not to be held down by a plot and a set of characters. Here I can say anything that I like and, aside from this infernal recording machine, not be bothered.

I myself have been reading science fiction oh, I don't know, when did Gernsback start putting them in Electrical Experimenter? ("1913" from floor) --well, I've been reading about that long. And then I used to read it in Argosy and I dug up all that I could of that sort of thing out of the Kansas City Public Library. I could get cards from--every member of my family had a library card, and there were 7 of us, so I could bring home quite a number of books at one time (I wear glasses now as a result). And, never had any particular notion of writing it until about 2 years ago when a concatenation of peculiar circumstances started me writing it, and happened to hit the jackpot on the first one so I continued writing. It amazed me to discover people gave money away for doing things like that--it beats working.

I don't s'pose I'll be writing very much longer. Things shaping up the way they are, I'll probably have other things that I'll have to do, a lot of us here will have other things that we're going to have to do, whether we like it or not; and I may not come back to it; but I hope to be a fan of science fiction for at

least another 50 years if I can hold myself together that long and keep from getting my teeth kicked in.

Well, all that I really personally want to do is hang around as long as I can, watch the world unfold, see some of these changes, see what the changes really are-- that suits me.

I think that concludes it, Walt...Mr Wiggins.

(SUSTAINED APPLAUSE.....)

During the question period, which followed an intermission of about three-quarters of an hour, Mr Heinlein dealt with the inquiry of T. Bruce Yerke as to the position when faced with conscription of a Conscientious Objector with the long outlook on life rather than the temporal; Morojo's question about the advisibility of using stimulants and soporifics such as mentioned in some of his stories (benzedrine surrogate, "sleepy pills"); Milton A. Rothman's slip of paper concerning how a mere mortal could hope to gather trustworthy data from the tissue of lies, half-truths, propaganda, etc, disseminated by press, radio, films and individuals in general. Unfortunately, the Question Period was not recorded.

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