

"Rejected -
Convention
Committee"

THE SPEECHES BY DONALD A.
WOLLHEIM AND JOHN B. MICHEL
SUPPRESSED BY THE COMMITTEE
OF THE NEWARK CONVENTION
Pamphlet N°2 CPASF

SCIENCE-FICTION AND SCIENCE

By Donald A. Wollheim

**THE POSITION OF SCIENCE,
CORELATIVE TO SCIENCE-FICTION AND THE PRESENT CRISIS**

By John B. Michel

Two speeches prepared for the Fourth Eastern Science-Fiction Convention at Newark, May 29, 1938, but rejected because they destroyed the "Gernsback delusion".

Pamphlet No. 2 of the Committee for the Political
Advancement of Science-Fiction. New York, 1938

FORWORD

The two speeches presented in this little pamphlet were written originally with the intention of having them given at the Newark Fourth Eastern Science Fiction Convention. According to a decree laid down by the self-appointed Convention Committee all speeches had first to be submitted to this committee for approval. The reason for this fascistic action of censorship was to prevent any new or original ideas from being presented. The convention was to be kept down to an empty routine of mere blabber about how good or bad some particular yarn was---the convention was not to do any original or constructive work. Apparently it was the belief of the committee that fans were incapable of withstanding new ideas or with coping with strange or unusual conception of their hobby. They were, accordingly, to be insulated.

In the words of one of the Committee members in a letter published in JEDDARA, ---"Every talk must be first read by the convention committee so that no more screw-loose, scatter-brained, Michel-Wollheim ideas of forming a fine federation of African Bush Savages, Chinese, Japs, Indians, men from Venus ideas creep in." Well, nothing daunted, Michel and Wollheim submitted speeches anyway. They were rejected. However these two individuals cannot so lightly toss aside all the progressive ideas and dreams of civilized man, nor so crudely deny the Utopian and Progressive side of science-fiction. Nor do they believe that science-fiction fans are as stupid, stodgy and hopeless as Mr. Moskowitz thinks they are. Therefore, the two speeches have been published in pamphlet form.

Mr. Wollheim's speech is a clear statement of the position now being held by an increasing number of fans today. It presents a question of vital concern to all readers, writers and publishers of science-fiction. Mr. Michel's speech is designed for the consideration of the advanced fan and is suggested for careful study.

SCIENCE FICTION AND SCIENCE

by Donald A. Wollheim

Mr. Chairman, Fellow science-fiction fans : -

The primary purpose of any convention is of course to resume old acquaintances, to make new ones and to solidify good feeling amongst those with whom the convention goesers have much in common. But once the convention has actually convened, it is necessary to find more adequate reasons for carrying on what might be termed the "real business" of the convention. And this business is almost in every case to serve: the past and to draw up the new alignments for the future.

This is as true of a science fiction convention as of any other kind. Especially is this true at the present moment when science-fiction fandom is becoming increasingly critical of its former standards and is seeking new standards or measurements and goals. At the moment, the ranks of the fans seem almost split in half on an issue of what shall be the aim of science-fiction activities.

In the past it was always taken for granted that science-fiction could have only the one objective---to rouse interest in science and to awaken a desire among readers to study science and to embark upon a scientific career. Of course, it was always recognized that not all could be expected to rush off and become scientists, but that was the aim of science fiction anyway---to cause as many as possible to devote their energies and talents toward the realization of the inventions and discoveries prophocied by the writers of fantastic fiction.

No one doubted this aim at first. The boliof in a science-future for science-fiction readers was first formulated by Hugo Gernsback, so called "Father of Science Fiction" and taken for granted thereafter by the various persons who were to follow in his footsteps. Towards this aim the discussions pages of the magazines were opened---letters criticizing and debating the various science items of the stories. Then "Science tionaires" and Science pages and features began to make their appearance. Fans formed clubs devoted to the making of science-students out of science fiction fans.

The first such club was the first International Scientific Association which existed from 1928 to 1933. Following it came the second ISA which ran from where the

first left off up to 1937 and a revival of which is now being suggested. These clubs were as powerful as an Stf.-founded club is likely to be. They ran up large and active memberships---they published long-lived and well-attended magazines---they had branches and members in many sections. The aim of these clubs was to interest science-fiction fans towards a study of science and thus to cause some to embark upon a scientific career. There were other clubs of this nature; in fact, all Stf. clubs had this aim including the many chapters of the Science Fiction League.

What was the results of these clubs? Did they succeed in their objects? The editors, writers and fans agreed that fans could and would become scientists. The clubs set out to prove it. They proved what? They produced a few scattering sincere science students. They produced also a large amount of writers, poets, arisists, amateur publishers and kindred types that were not technicians. The percentage of scientists to literateurs and artists was about one to twenty.

And what of the scientists that arose from the ranks of science-fiction? With very few exceptions, if, any at all, they proceeded immediately to denounce science-fiction as "juvenile", as "dreaming", as "time-wasting", as the "refuge of intellectual frauds or the mentally shiftless". In short, those few fans who had succeeded in realizing a science career foreswore their former reading and denied it as a responsible element. On the other hand, several dozen writers, editors and artists gave Stf. credit for first awakening and developing their talents.

Did these scientifically minded Stf. clubs achieve any practical results, or add, in their work, even the tiniest mite to the ~~store~~ of man's knowledge? Not that I know of. They did add reams and reams of writing and other non-technical stuff.

In the light of these results and facts over ten years of actual experience are we not justified in re-examining the nature of science-fiction? Evidently it is not the agent for making scientists it has been cracked up to be. Certainly no one in his right mind can deny that the magazines worked towards that angle with might and main. Nor can any one deny that the results obtained did not justify in the smallest degree that work.

Why was this so?

Science Fiction is a form of escape literature. That is obvious, that is correct. Being fiction based on fantasy it is more intensely escapist than the average literature. That it is also based on the probabilities of science does not alter the

escapist fantasy-base. The readers are motivated primarily by a strong desire to escape, even if only in their imaginations, to a world wherein science has fulfilled its promises. The worlds they escape to, might exist, that is beside the question. The point is they do not exist now, the readers are too impatient and dissatisfied with present-day progress to accept it, and therefore rush ahead to watch the imagined outcome of science as it might be.

True science itself does not deal with probabilities. It deals with facts. One definition of science states that it is the orderly accumulation and classification of facts. What is done with these facts, what could be done with these facts (but hasn't), what facts remain undiscovered and hence hypothetical are not the problem of the research scientist. He follows a trail based upon exact routine work - upon often grimly monotonous reiteration of test after exact test. If he speculates upon what he might find ten years from now, he wastes his time, and makes his work less exact and hence less scientific. His work is today, now, with exact actual knowledge, and not dreamed fantasies.

An escapist or fantasy-dreamer has not the patience or doggedness to pursue this iron grind. The stf fan reads his science-fantasies because he wants to escape the grim monotony of the present for the glamor and glitter of ~~xxxxx~~ a non-existent future. He pins his hope in science as the maker of that future but he himself by the very nature of his mind cannot partake of the work of present-day science. His mind is not the trained patient mind of the scientists, his is the wild flaming mind of the utopian, of the champion of science, not of the worker in science.

It is the few exceptions to this that succeed in buckling their minds down to present routine that fooled Gernsback. It is the struggle that many of these exceptions had against the fantasy-thinking of stf that caused their denigrations of it afterwards.

One might point in rebuttal of this argument to the example of a certain science-fiction fan who studied and mastered science, received a degree in science, and yet today is the editor of one of the big newsstand science-fiction magazines. Here, one might say, is the proof that an stf fan can make a scientist and still believe in stf. This particular person in fact has repeatedly championed this theory.

It happens though that my contention still holds. For this fan who mastered science is not a scientist today. He has reverted back to his former science-fantasy field. Does a man study science in high school and college, master a B.D., an M.S.,

or finally perhaps a Ph.D. only to become the editor of a pulp magazine? Why did he not utilize this hard won technical knowledge to pursue a research career? Why is his trained brain not put to use today to advance the frontiers of man's knowledge and power? Surely enough non-technical persons could be found to edit a pulp magazine?

The answer is easy but sad. Society had no place for this trained mind, there was not room for another scientist. He could not find a job. Since he has to live, he took to writing fantasies and thus found his way to the editor's desk. But the knowledge and technical ability and genius that won him his degree stagnates. The achievements and triumphs that he might have won for mankind are lost for lack of a laboratory.

Such would be the fate of any man who actually succeeded in mastering science. Society of today would find no place for him. Society today rejects him and his donations and makes the path hard for those who would follow. Learned idiots in power make brainless remarks that we need less education. High seated jackasses call for science to "take a vacation". Bloating nincompoops bury the latest achievements of science in order not to cut down their profits. Why? Because the economic breakdown of society caused by a planless and mad system has left no place for any ~~future~~ further advancement of knowledge. Yet such an advance is vital if mankind is to ~~not~~ exist further.

In the light of that, the duty and purpose of science-fiction and its readers should ~~not~~ stand out clear and brilliant. If we believe in science, if we believe that science can give mankind a future more to our liking, if we want to see or help bring about that future then we must awaken to our position as defenders of science. We are not scientists, we are the advocates of science. We believe in science and it holds for us the future of the world. Today it is menaced on all sides by the onrush of a new barbarism - by the insanity and incompetence of the morons now wielding power over a large part of this globe.

Science-fiction should present an unyielding front to the enemies of science, we should oppose the war-makers, the new barbarians who call themselves "fascists" and destroy science in those unhappy regions in which they gain their hold. We who believe in science, who express our belief by our enjoyment of it, must realize that today science is menaced by reaction. Must realize that today science, and with it all humanity, is fighting for its very life. And that we, as champions of science,

can only redeem our beliefs by fighting shoulder to shoulder with science and with those millions and millions of humans who champion progress.

The duty and purpose of science-fiction can only be to defend science, to urge its readers and followers to defend the cause of science, to cease the delusions that anyone can follow of science career when already existing scientists are finding themselves cast out and helpless. Such a course, to continue the old delusion, suicidal. We who believe in science must defend it. We are not scientists, we are its defenders. It is the duty of science-fiction to point out continually that science must win, that progress must go on, that reaction and fascism must be defeated.

READ "THE SCIENCE FICTION ADVANCE"

THE POSITION OF SCIENCE, CORELATIVE TO SCIENCE FICTION AND THE PRESENT AND DEVELOPING INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC, POLITICAL, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL CRISIS.

by John B. Michol

Mr. Chairman, visitors and comrades : -

It has been given me to understand that all speeches at this gathering must concern themselves with the fields of science-fiction or fantasy. The subject I am about to discuss concerns, of the two, science-fiction. I have also been advised that short speeches are desired because of the great number of subjects to be dealt with here this afternoon, and will therefore confine myself to basic statements.

Practically, nobody gains anything from doing nothing.

An inactive body does either one of two things. It stays where it is, set, immovable, or else it decays, degenerates back through its previous stages of development until the end is reached and the body disappears. As natural laws operate eternally, whatever forces acted to first produce it reactivate themselves and development starts again. If the same state of non-development is reached the conditions will repeat themselves ad infinitum. The result, as can be seen, is precisely nothing.

Today, the world finds itself in much the same position as our hypothetical body. Taking the state of civilization as a whole and observing the various forces operating within its framework, it is immediately apparent that a number of contradictions exist that in the end threaten to nullify its progress and throw it into retrogression.

The structure of our civilization is based upon the standards of development of various aspects or manifestations of the creative thrust which activates the whole of man's progress. These aspects are, namely, economic, political, social and cultural. The first aspect concerns the development standards of the means by which the race exists and shields itself from want and the destructive powers of nature. The second concerns the methods by which we evolve the growth of the stages of the first and the third and fourth are reflections or mental by-products of the operation, by the two former, upon society as a whole. The force that continues and guarantees the advance of the standards of these aspects is science, the forms of which are determined by what is technically known as the dialectic, which term may be defined as follows:- The dialectic is a process resulting from the conflicts of the varied interests of humanity which coalesces the nebulous forces released by those conflicts

into a rigid thread running through history which determines irrevocably the course of human affairs and which lasts as long as opposing interests exist in human intercourse.

We see, therefore, that the growth of man's knowledge is a result of an inflexible process depending entirely on the operation of natural laws. We see further that man has advanced and we know by reviewing history the steps taken to effect this advance. Again this chain of reasoning may be used to present the fact that man's progress has been accompanied by a like progress in science.

Science, in that light, is the result of man's conflict with nature and a reflection of his inner conflicts. It is at once an outgrowth of his advance and an aid to future advance. Ipso facto, it is a part of man and inseparable from his future. We may conclude, on that basis, that the forms of our civilization, from the very earliest times have grown more and more scientific, or, to rephrase further, the base and motivating factor being economic, the methods of production by which man maintains himself have become increasingly scientific. This has led to increasing consolidation and expansion of the forms of production. To illustrate:- The age of feudalism amalgamated the scattered, anarchic means of the idyllic age preceding it, the age of capitalism and its ensuing phases superseded and further developed and improved man's multiple weapons of ~~war~~ defense against nature and it is obvious that any further advance, which is inevitable, must mean greater consolidation, improvement and expansion of the means of production. The forms this will take, are, of course, debatable. But due to evolution of scientific methods tending always to destroy old ways and substitute new ones, it is clear that the fabric, base and framework of the state of the next great advance must be scientific and nothing else.

Today, this evolution into that higher stage is being impeded. Science is not going ahead and is not fulfilling its historic role. By its very frustration it is aiding in the halt of all phases of progress throughout the entire world. Technically it may be argued that science has not stopped its advance in certain ways, but, to the contrary, has created more marvelous things and discovered more secrets of nature than any age before. To a certain extent this view is correct. Science has accomplished wonders, precisely up to the point where the economic conditions shaping its forms were progressive. We do know more now than we did fifty years ago. But the application of the full fruits of this knowledge ceased as soon as the contradictions of the economic system deprived it of the sustenance necessary to continue. Science

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has now for some time been stagnant. In fact we have arrived at a stage of its development where the perversion of the aims of the corpus of science threatens to create a Frankenstein monster.

This is due entirely to the economic contradictions of the present economic system, namely capitalism. On every hand these contradictions appear, throttling the very life out of scientific research.

It is now futile to further advance these sciences bearing on the production of basic commodities. Overproduction (due to the advance of ~~the~~ scientific methods improving manufacturing processes) causes price-lowering and subsequent unemployment. It is now futile to advance those sciences bearing upon the production of foods, in natural or prepared forms. Overproduction causes price-lowering and subsequent unemployment. It is futile to engage in research on the sciences of biology, medicine, surgery, psychology and all schools of thought bearing on the health of the masses. The unemployed and the masses in general have no money to pay for such things.

Factories are being abandoned, food is being destroyed. We are told on ever hand that we have too much of every thing, including education, as one college president remarked recently. And day by day the money available to finance scientific research becomes scarcer. Unlimited means can always be found, however, for the development of destructive science, now bombs, guns, gasses, tanks, battleships, air-bombers, and the like.

Science is nothing if it fails to benefit humanity. In its most practical sense it works for the fulfillment of one goal alone, the betterment of the race. In our day and age science is being hamstrung, diverted from its true course and turned to the cause of greed war and the Almighty Profit. Far from being the most progressive force in human affairs, it is in reality a coward, submissive thing, serving and feeding the money rulers of the world, prostituted, a whore in dime store daudery driving a chromium plated Model T dowj the brink of a precipice.

Let us now see what bearing all this has upon science-fiction, of which science is the basic principle.

Divorcing science-fiction from the mystic halo with which many of its deluded sycophants surround it, we see it as a force which has been created by a certain type of mind and which is influencing the lives of many people. The present day

aspects of science fiction are, of course, chiefly commercial, but even this aspect would not exist were it not for the special class of people, the base of whose conflicts with existence is of such a unique nature as to cause them to turn to scientific and futuristic fiction for escape. This superficial, crassly materialistic aspect, is however, not the true manifestation. It is, in reality, an expression that along with everything else in this age been exploited to the cause of profit.

The true science fictionist sees the field and himself in the pure form, an idealistic forward thrust, a casting about, as it were, by awakened minds for some glimpse of the unknown future. And as such an existing manifestation and living force it is a part of reality and must depend upon practical measures for its fulfillment.

The destruction of science means the destruction of science fiction and the obliteration of the true idealism. It is to the best interests, therefore, of the science fictionist to work for the breaking of the chains that hold science helpless, for the release of its mighty energies from economic bondage.

We science fictionists must stand together with embattled science. In this crisis, in the midst of the greatest upheaval in human history as rules, regulations, traditions, moralities and governments go by the board, faced with the ultimate problem of survival or extinction, is the structure to science to be brought crashing to the ground? Are the textbooks to be burned, the test tubes smashed, the brain fettered, museums and libraries turned into fortresses and barracks, six thousand years of knowledge wrung from nature to be drowned in blood?

NO! And the answer is strike!

A strike against stupidity and reaction, against war and fascism, against every force that seeks the destruction of human ideals. We must all of us NOW be ready to throw the weight of our prestige, achievements and practical help behind the upsurge of humanity rising to create a new world.

The men and women of science and science fiction must awake! Their world is tottering beneath them. Their ideals, aspirations, hopes and ambitions are driving straight into the DEAD END of Fascism. In their hands is the insight and the knowledge, incalculable potentialities of power. They are the figures

on the balance sheets of civilization. When the day of reckoning crashes over the planet will they be found assets or liabilities?

THE CONSCIENCE OF HUMANITY WOULD LIKE TO KNOW!

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HAVE YOU READ the first pamphlet of the CPASF "MUTATION OR DEATH" by John B. Michel? The speech that shock the science-fiction world and started the controversy which is growing everywhere ~~xxxx~~ that science-fiction fans gather. If you have not read this message, send a nickel now to the :- CPASF, 2391 Bedford Ave, Brooklyn ,NY

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