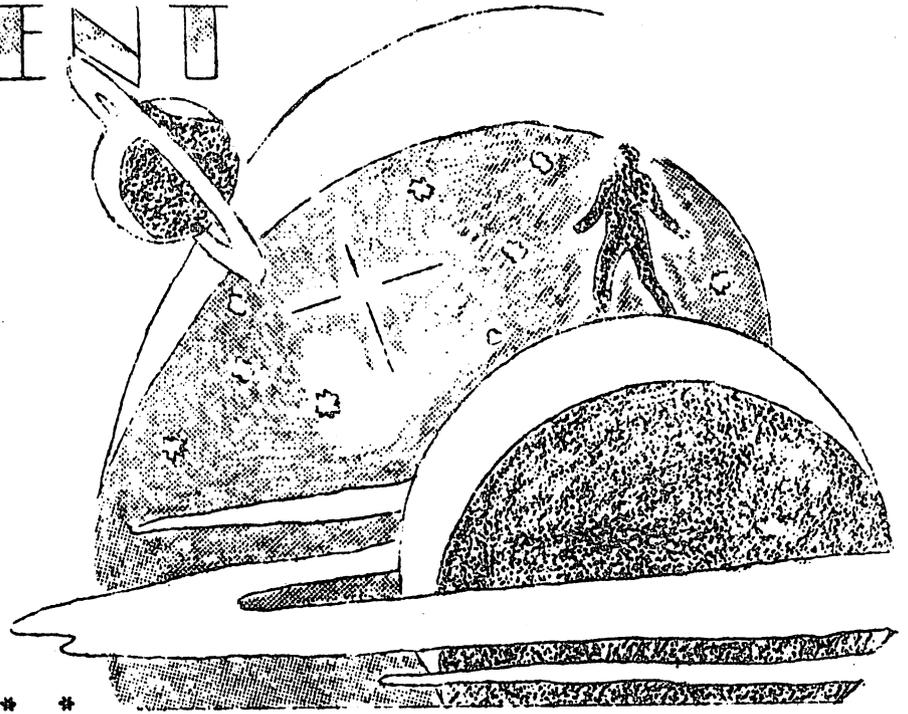


# DIFFERENT



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## *A Purpose for Science Fiction*

A SPEECH DELIVERED AT THE CONVENTION MEETING OF THE ESFA,  
MARCH 6, 1949

By Sam Moskowitz

"In 1940 the United States was unprepared for war. Even though everyone who understood military tactics realized that the next war would be fought in the air, the Air Corps of the army was more and more neglected....The foreign nations could put thousands of the most modern planes into the air at a day's notice, but the United States was still making use of machines that were antiquated survivors of the experimental age in flying....The Japanese laid plans to blow our cities to smithereens." Does that sound like history? It shouldn't, because it is fiction, science fiction to be specific, and is a direct quote from the opening paragraphs of "The Bloodless War" by David H. Keller, M.D., which appeared in the July 1929 issue of Air Wonder Stories.

Since the advent of Jules Verne, science fiction has been noted for its prophecy, its ability to predict with uncanny accuracy scientific advances of the future, and even the political consequences of these advances. Up until now, these predictions have been lumped with the Oracles of Nostradamus and The Standard Text of Astrology, as a kind of crystal-gazing.

Still there must be proportion to all things, and that a certain number of the Oracles of Nostradamus might approach truth is inherent in the law of averages, as are the chances that a fortune teller will tell you a few right things along with some of the hogwash. Still, this does not smoothly explain away the fantastic percentage of correct guesses in the works of science fiction. It does not explain why within a few years after publication, elaborately detailed fantasies blossom into reality. It does not explain the plague, which literary circles call "dating", which overtakes and buries even many of the master works of Jules Verne, H. G. Wells and Edgar Allan Poe. They were wondrous tales, conceived and popularized as fantastic thrillers, but long since outdated and now maintained only by the literary skill of the author, who with all substance gone from his tales, posthumously borrows time for them, on literary quality alone. It does not explain why almost every major advance in science, architecture, sociology, philosophy and psychology has been predated by an alleged tale of fiction.

In his editorial "The Wonders of Flight", published in the November 1930 issue of Wonder Stories, Hugo Gernsback, pioneer scientific-fictionist and science fiction publisher, rose outraged to the defense of his authors against the article in a popular science magazine by John B. Rathbun, titled "500 Miles An Hour Can't Be Done." In a time when 200 miles an hour was considered sparkling speed, Gernsback replied: "We will see airplanes or kindred machines reach a speed far beyond even 1000 miles per hour, and even 2000 miles per hour will be attained by the present generation. An airplane propeller will of course be totally useless...and the plane will have to be propelled by rocket power, which is already coming into use...."

Science fiction editors such as Hugo Gernsback, and the many dozens of authors who wrote for his and later magazines, were not trying to prophesy; in an age that had already produced electricity, radio telephone, airplanes, automobiles, submarines, etc., it took only a little logical deduction and added imagination to arrive at the conclusion that progress was inevitable, and that the rate of scientific progress was constantly accelerating as new discoveries came to the fore.

There was only one difference between the science fiction writer and the too-matter-of-fact scientific man, and that difference in a single word was imagination!

Buck Rogers was only a comic strip, deliberately aimed at semi-juvenile consumption, yet its scientific extrapolations were based on facts, and Buck Rogers rocketships, rocket projectiles, television sets, and what-have-you are here today, only 20 years after the inception of the strip. Buck Rogers was based on an adult science fiction story written by the author for Amazing Stories a few years preceding the strip. Like most science fiction stories of the period it was merely an extension of a known fact, and in common with most science fiction stories it served a great purpose admirably, and that was the education of the public to accept new scientific advances as possibilities and not delay them with superstition, ignorance and skepticism.

Through the years, one of the greatest battles progress of any sort has had to fight has been against the barriers set up by the very people it would aid.

Science fiction is an excellent form of entertainment, even escape, true, but it is also the greatest medium of sugar-coated education ever conceived, and in that fact lies its future greatness.

Today when a world trembles upon the brink of atomic holocaust, the thing most likely to set off the blaze is ignorance by the people of the true destructive potentialities of atomic warfare. Those who conceive of the atomic bomb as just a super-blockbuster will be contemptuous of its great danger to civilization and willing to risk its encounter. Few of these people will ever read "No Place to Hide". But science fiction stories, well-plotted thrillers written by competent authors around the theme of atomic energy are easily digested, and portray even more vividly and dramatically, due to the element of poetic license, what atomic war foregathers, than the finest popular scientific treatise ever written. Though they do not admit it, people are impressed by these tales, just as they were impressed by H. G. Wells' "War of the Worlds" broadcast. Nobody in his right mind (they said) conceived that Martians really existed until they heard so over the radio, and having been introduced to the theme through fiction previously, they believed it. By the same token, if a competent science fiction story on the theme of atomic energy is written and read, a moving-picture may be based on the theme, radio will air it, comic strips utilize it, propoganda mediums further it, and science fiction, the fiction of a logically projected imagination, will have served a vast and mighty purpose.

The greatest error of our times has been the inclination of the public to label science fiction as "escape literature". This error arises from a tendency to overlook clear-cut designations in the grouping of fiction. Science fiction is a segment of a broad field titled in its overall distinctions as fantasy. But it belongs to that field purely because its products seem to be flights of fantasy and imagination. The fantasy story is, according to dictionary definition, a story "having on basis in fact." That is true of the pure fantasy, it is true of the ghost story, but it is obviously not true of the science fiction story, which is based upon facts and is lumped into the fantastic category because it gropes beyond these facts to realities that may be. How can science fiction stories of atomic energy, television, rocketships, not be based on facts? Events prove beyond the denial of any reasonable person that a good many of them are based not only on the facts of today, but the facts that will be.

That accounts for science fiction's high percentage of accurate predictions, because among the inevitable quantity of poorly written, badly thought out yarns, are dozens that explore, carefully, logically and thoughtfully, the problems and events of tomorrow as based on today's knowledge, and which present material that is based upon facts and not fancy. That is why science fiction is increasingly popular in the scientifically-minded America of today. That is why it must be differentiated from other types of fantasy. That is why it is the literary medium of destiny if its powers are fully grasped and utilized by the world today.

THE END

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# As A Matter of Record —

By Thomas S. Gardner

I WAS very much interested in Charles D. Hornig's discussion in the Summer 1946 issue of the late Time-Binder.

Differences of opinion often arise from insufficient information, prejudices, and general lack of a common viewpoint. In the first place I was literally shocked to see my "contribution" to the conscientious objector problem in Evans' magazine. I had sent Evans a six-page letter which I had written to a friend of mine who is a C.O., giving my position in detail regarding pacifism and the war. I tagged on a few remarks in a personal letter to Evans regarding the long letter and gave him permission to publish the whole thing. Instead, my tagged-on remarks were published, which resulted in a very big dog being wagged by a very little tail! I was very sorry that EEE did not have room for the works, and realize that many of my remarks were non-understandable without the whole discussion. Try it sometime -- taking the end remarks on anything and making sense out of them. However, I shall be glad to discuss some of the problems Charlie brought up. In only one or two places will I jump on him with both feet.

When I was an undergraduate at Columbia university, I met many atheists and agnostics who were also conscientious objectors. As I, too, am not religious I saw quite a bit of them. Do not confuse moral sense with religion. I personally know about 50 scientists who are atheists and agnostics, who are also the possessors of a very high moral sense. A close study of prehistory, early religion and modern ethics will show that, although religion grabbed hold of morality as a means of controlling their flocks, in reality morality and religion are two different things. By definition a religious person is one who believes in the following tenets: Belief in a god or gods who are above man, and who were the prime movers of the universe. (The belief of a personal god taking part in human affairs is a lack of rationalization of the above.) Secondly, the belief in a non - physical, non-material part of human beings, called soul, psyche, etc. And last, particularly in the Western religions, the belief in a free will. If your definition does not base religion on the above tenets, then we are talking about different things.

You realize, of course, that the sacredness of human life is a developed concept necessary to civilization but which has no basis in nature. The sacredness of human life ceases when it becomes necessary to kill to preserve your culture, life, and civilization. There is no proof, scientific or otherwise, that human life is any more sacred than any other form of life, except as defined by the law of the land. The rest is bologna.

It is true that many conscientious objectors differ widely in belief. So do chemists. I know chemists who are Mormons, other Protestants, Catholics, Jews, atheists, agnostics, and Mohammedans. That doesn't mean very much. A C.O. could also be an Australian aborigine living in the bush, and it still wouldn't mean anything. A C. O. should not bind his belief, it seems, to be to your tenet you put forward of being a follower of Jesus.

I have a great deal of respect for the C. O.'s who served in the medical corps, who volunteered for medical research, and who felt that their personal consciences would not let them kill. However, I have no respect for those who demanded that other people be handicapped by their beliefs and refused any kind of work during wartime. My method would be "no workee, no eatee" unto the end.

I object exactly 100% on the castigations on the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. In the first place, we were at war which means, if you don't know already, to kill your enemies in any way possible. Hiroshima made it possible to save an invasion of Japan, which our and England's military men estimated would cost a million American and half a million English casualties. Now I ask you, if you can and are willing to face reality, which would you personally rather see: the 89,000 dead of Hiroshima, or the million and a half Americans and British? I prefer to see the Japs dead. Take your choice. Your statement about the unwarned bombing of Nagasaki is hogwash. It happened after the Hiroshima incident, and after we had warned them that more was to come. Charlie, do you actually believe in resisting evil, or allowing evil to overcome you? What I mean is, it is nice to be in America where you were away from the war-fronts, and relatively safe. Suppose you had been in Poland, or France, or any other dozen ravished countries. Would you have resisted the Nazis and Japs? I have never yet found a C. O. willing to give a straightforward answer to that question.

The next paragraph is where I am really going to jump on you, Charlie. I quote from your discussion: "We risked the lives of millions of Americans when we swallowed the propaganda that the Japanese were set on destroying us -- or the Nazis of enslaving us. We have no proof that either contention was correct." If you believe that then I would suggest a good psychiatrist at once! What proof do you want? I can read German and read in their publications about 1935 their plans for conquest of America, their schemes for killing and enslaving and keeping down the populations of bordering countries, and the Japanese stated the same. In their writings, in books, magazines, plans, radio broadcasts, and actions during the war they emphasized their desire to destroy the U. S. How much proof do you need? I am very much amazed at your statement. Before the war I met Nazis from Germany who came to this country on some engineering work. They freely admitted the whole works. Outside of Nazis and people who naively thought that they would personally be spared if Germany took America, you are the only person to state the above. I know you are neither Nazi nor naive so for pete's sake straighten out your thinking, or go to Europe and investigate for yourself their ambitions.

I agree with your statement regarding getting rid of our native fascists. I disagree about the atrocities here being equal to anywhere else. We have never planned nor carried out mass slaughter, starvation, brothels for all girls under 16, nor systematic teaching of opium-smoking, as Japan did in Manchuria and China. That statement of yours is completely untrue, Charlie, and furthermore you know it to be untrue, but refuse to open your eyes.

A funny thing, in one case Science and Sanity converted a borderline C. O. into a supporter of the war. Do you recall the sections on fascism and communism and the use of the hypnotism of words? Well,

the implication was that sanity resists fascism, and we were fighting Nazism and the god-worship of Japan. You mentioned C. O.'s studying Korzybski. Were any of them converted to aiding the war effort? This is very interesting to me, and may be important in mental discipline.

Section Freedom: I agree that we are not teaching democracy in Europe. What connection has that with blasting the Nazis down? However, in Japan MacArthur is doing a good job. Would you be surprised to see Japan become a democratic country? If MacArthur stays I believe it will be. In regard to C.O.'s, they are alive now because other men died for them; they enjoy freedom now because others worked for them. If these others hadn't done so, they would be dead now, or in Nazi or Jap concentration camps. Frankly, Charlie, I am surprised at your bringing in God so much. I would have thought you would have advanced beyond such puerile concepts. Did you ever try to develop a modern mental outlook?

"Liberation -- invading a country to throw out the previous invaders, leaving the populace just as hungry as they were under the original tyrants -- " Charlie, get hold of the figures on the exports we sent to Europe since the war. Remember there are two and a half times as many hungry people in Europe as the total population in all the United States. What would you suggest? Are you forgetting the boast of Germany that it was not the duty of the conqueror to feed the conquered? A million Greeks starved to death, six million Russians, Poles, and hundreds of thousands of French, Norwegian, etc. Actually, a huge amount of food has been shipped to Europe. Although the total food supply of the U. S. would not have raised the food level there to our past average, it certainly helped while they planted their crops.

Democracy: I also object to the poll tax. Six states still have it, and I hope all will soon eliminate it. Actually, your lack of information makes you emphasize the wrong thing. The poll tax in the South enables all the Negroes to vote -- their votes are bought. A greater percentage of Negroes vote in many communities than whites. In others, they don't vote. I will be with you in any effort to improve relations and citizenship rights of all people.

Let a pacifist accept slavery, if he wishes. I favor the way of the sword and killing the oppressors. I have never contributed to the slave philosophy. Man can be great and worthwhile, and also the opposite. Charlie, what about my suggestion I made in the notes EEE published in The Time-Binder? -- to get some pacifists together and start a city or a country. Before you damn all mankind, let us see how your ideas work. If they really work, you will have many people coming to you. But as I believe that pacifism is a menace to civilization until we have a world state -- either by force of arms, or by voluntary loss of federal sovereignty to a world government -- then we must fight and keep the spark of civilization alive. What about running a business also? Your city will need them, too. Go to it. I hope you try and succeed! It would be an excellent social experiment, but until the innocuous pacifists can accomplish something outstanding, then why risk all we have on your unproven ideas?

War must be eliminated, I agree, but is pacifism the answer? I say no, for it would mean that the whole world would have to be pacifist, and human nature would revolt at such a world. However, I be-

lieve that either (1) war will be eliminated by the formation of a world state, organized by military force or by voluntary means, or (2) we will have an atomic war, after which the surviving groups will unite the world by force, following a period of feudalism.

I have been exposed to pacifist propaganda since 1926. I have noted the lives of pacifists and their outcome. No thank you. I prefer a vital life, and not the life of any pacifist I have met yet. Perhaps by example you can change my mind, Charlie. The road is open. Best of luck, and don't forget there are five parts to mental discipline and a modern mind, namely: the scientific method and its aptitudes; the mathematical approach to thinking about things; logic and especially symbolic logic; general semantics; and the creative imagination. A complete training in all five aids in forming a broad viewpoint of the world and the present. May I suggest that you lay off the pacifist propaganda and master the above?

THE END

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## *A Historical Fantasy*

Reviewed by Thomas S. Gardner

WINGED PHARAOH, by Joan Grant, Harpers, 1937.

This book belongs to the class of historical fantasies containing a great deal of source material based on fact. There is in existence what is called The Book of the Dead, which was written at least four thousand years ago in Egypt. The Book of the Dead describes the ethical and religious principles of the old Egyptian peoples. The author of Winged Pharaoh used considerable material from that book. The story is simple, the life of a female of the royal house of Egypt in the earliest days of the Old Empire, say about 3000 or 4000 B. C. The description of the childhood of the royal princess, her temple training, and her life as Pharaoh, is very well drawn. One seems to live with the main character, and the whole book is written in the stream of consciousness manner. To add to the value of this method is the use of the reincarnation theme, with the loosening of the spirit in sleep into memory-retained mythos. This is the best executed book using that theme that I have read.

The life of the Egyptians seems to be fairly authentic. The most outstanding characteristic is the very accurate portrayal of primitive psychology, especially in the main character. That characteristic is using too damn many words to say anything. Each thought is covered up with verbiage, which is true of primitive minds today. That part of the book is well-executed. Years ago when I was working in psychology I had occasion to make a study of primitive thought forms. For example, Levy-Brule's Primitive Mentality brings out points which I recognize in Grant's book. Now, I have no previous knowledge of the author, but I would suspect a leaning toward theosophy, due to the careful references to division of soul-body, lack of semantic non-identifica-

tion, and general failure to appreciate wholeness.. These points are usually found in theosophists. If I am incorrect, then the author is to be congratulated on capturing the expression forms of the theosophical mind.

Sekhet-a-ra, the child-to-be-pharaoh, was drawn in sympathetic strokes. Her brother, Neyah, co-pharaoh, was not able to take the dream trips that his sister could, and was the typical warrior-caste ruler. The most interesting thing about the book is the high moral and ethical tone of the main characters. However, the squeamishness of the author prevented historical accuracy on one point in regard to personal relations. In the book, Sekhet-a-ra married her brother in name only. In reality, in order to keep the line straight, they had children during the Egyptian period, i. e., brother-sister marriages among the royal line. Such matings produced a strong line of rulers. It may have had something to do with the Egyptian civilization lasting about four thousand years altogether. The author had Sekhet-a-ra have a child by her lover to produce an heir to the throne.

Historically there may be several errors in the book. The author points out one: introduction of the horse about a thousand years before it actually came into use. But I also doubt if Minos, i.e., Crete, had developed a civilization at the time the story was laid. Also, someone should have told the author that corn in Egypt meant wheat or barley, or both. Reference to cob, tall standing corn, etc., refers to maize undoubtedly, which was taken to Europe and the Old World only about five hundred years ago.

Due to the stream of consciousness style, the reading of the book is slower than usual. Many will not finish it, but some familiarity with the history of Ancient Egypt would make it interesting enough to finish. Breasted, Ancient Egypt, is a good account of one of the most unique and interesting civilizations ever developed on the earth. Breasted was the foremost Egyptologist; I think he is dead now, but am not sure. The true history of Egypt is far different from the conceptions given in Weird Tales, Sax Rohmer, etc., but nevertheless is just as interesting.

If one can stand the metaphysical sop in Winged Pharaoh, it can be read with interest and pleasure.

THE END

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A QUOTATION

"Unless poetry can absorb the machine, i.e., acclimatize it as naturally and casually as trees, cattle, galleons, castles and all the other human associations of the past, then poetry has failed of its full contemporary function. This process does not infer any program nor does it essentially involve even the specific mention of a single mechanical contrivance. It demands, however, along with the traditional qualifications of the poet, an extraordinary capacity for surrender -- at least temporarily -- to the sensations of urban life."

-- HART CRANE.

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