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## AN EDITORIAL ON TELEPATHY

One of the favorite themes of science fiction has always been telepathy. The reason for that should be obvious; authors had to use telepathy. Whenever men met an alien life or civilization, the only means of communication that wouldn't take months of hard labor was by giving the aliens the power to read minds. Anyone who has spent the effort needed to learn another language can appreciate this.

Fortunately, the ESP work being done at Duke University came along to give a vague basis for the assumption, and clothed it all with a semblance of scientific possibility. It wouldn't have mattered, though; repeated use of the power in fiction naturally led to reader acceptance. We take our space ships and our telepathy for granted.

Maybe we take it too much for granted. There have been a few excellent stories which went a little deeper into the problem of establishing communication between alien thought patterns. A rare story will also appear which goes into some of the problems of telepathy among people on Earth. But the surface has only been scratched.

What will happen to the morals and the ethics of a society in which telepathy works? The Kinsey report which has been published and the one about due both indicate the wide disparity between the theory and practice of our moral structure. This would certainly break down before the impact of mind reading; when men can no longer conceal their thoughts, they will either have to change their conduct to what is acceptable or change what is acceptable to conform to the facts. There can be little question as to which alternate will be chosen!

What will happen to some of our so-called basic instincts? The whole game of courtship depends on arousing the other by suggestion, half-promises, coquetry and illusion. When a man and woman know just exactly what is going on between them and what each has in mind, the basis of half our literature is going to become absurd. The family-life

basis of society will either come to a grinding halt, or it will assume a stability and reality now unknown; people will get married, if at all, only because they know each other. Children will know whether they are wanted or not, and the basic insecurities behind many neuroses will disappear, perhaps.

Business will have some odd reactions, to say the least. So will all facets of daily life. Ethics will become necessary, of course, but we don't really know what is ethical, yet, because each of us can see no further than our own mind will permit. What becomes of the domineering mother, the man making a secret killing in the market, or the artists and writers who know what others think of their work?

Politics will obviously change. How many men today could stand the test of their real motivation being known? But let's not be too hasty. After all, nobody is perfect, and a race of telepaths would know that those nasty thoughts were so normal that they wouldn't use the term "nasty" anymore—we hope. Science would be out in the open; it would have the free exchange of ideas it wants. It would also exist in circumstances where real coordination between the specialized sciences would be inevitable. Psychology might become a real science; at present, analysis is only a clumsy means of trying to get behind the mental barriers that would no longer exist for a true telepath.

Or, what would happen to man's relations with the other animals? Would we still go hunting? How would we get along with our domestic dogs and cats? They have definite thoughts, however rudimentary. The level of thinking in a common alley cat might surprise men—and the cat's reaction to man might give a better basis for determining the realities of ethics, character and general behavior than even the closest human-to-human relationship. Yet this facet of telepathy seems to have been completely neglected.

Take a novel which is generally recognized as a classic. Now assume telepathy, and go through it, paragraph by paragraph, asking yourself what would be valid. Try to imagine what would change. Extend the situations there into a world where thoughts were common property. It's one of the best eye-openers possible, and a game that will afford you hours of amusement, if you'll try it.

You'll also see that science fiction doesn't need any new ideas. There is plenty of meat on the old bones still. A thousand stories can be written with the single assumption of the "overworked" theme of telepathy, and they can be sounder, deeper stories than any yet produced.

Maybe we should all stop racing madly through the universe and do a little deeper digging right here on our own world. Maybe we should stop taking things for granted. What do you think?

LESTER DEL REY

that, and agreed it was natural. While the fuel trick had been buried, technology in other lines had advanced a little. If there was another, later ship, it would probably be better, though still not good enough.

And there was going to be another. The clippings had proved that. All the signs that Bill and Wollen could remember from their pasta were out again, obvious to those who could read the meaning. Somewhere, someone else had discovered how to use water in an atomic power plant for fuel, and they were building a ship. In another year, it would be winging up towards the Moon. And the whole story would start over again; the fuel supply rockets would not arrive, and somehow the headlines and memories on Earth would change.

Bill had a picture of thousands' and millions of people scuttling about, destroying that "ridiculous" bit of evidence, or "correcting" some mistake, to hold man down from his great leap. It had been easy to keep him fooled once. The Greeks had invented a toy steam-engine twenty-five hundred years ago, and the idea had somehow been glossed over until Watt came along. It was harder now—it must take more work each time.

Whatever was causing it was

losing. But that whatever might still win. Man was getting close to destruction now. He had bombs that could annihilate great masses. He had a thousand new toys of war. And he was blundering along, closer and closer to using them all.

Bill helped Wollen unload the new batch of supplies off the little truck into the shed beside the rocket. Around them, the swamp was a perfect camouflage, and the hollow into which the rocket had settled in its landing glide concealed it almost completely.

The blond man wiped his hands, and stopped for a breather, picking up the conversation where he'd dropped it. "You can't give them—or it—a name, Bill. Maybe it's caused by aliens, in spite of what we believe. Maybe it's caused by a group right here on Earth who can control men's thoughts on any one limited subject at a time. Maybe it's some supernatural drive. I've even thought about the old idea of the mass-mind, capable of taking over individual humanity; that would be a pretty basic, conservative force, and it wouldn't want newfangled ideas. The thing has been operating for a good many thousand years, fighting a constant delaying action. But this is its last stand. Once we spread out, we can't be con-

trolled—one planet will discover what the next one doesn't. It has to win now. And that means we have to win."

"We'll win," Bill answered him, and began unloading the truck again. "We've got to win, so we will."

Unconsciously, they both looked up to the sky, where the Moon would be. There was time enough for them to get the big ship righted and ready to take off. The repairs needed were minor, and the fuel for the rocket was all around them, while the atomic motors were good for at least one more trip. They'd make the Moon, and still have some leeway to maneuver about, or to jump from one crater to another.

Men had struggled with electricity and tamed it before they knew what it was. They'd been fighting gravity for millennia, whenever they did work, and still knew nothing about it, really. They knew nothing about their own minds and the minds of the larger groups being studied in mob psychology, beyond a hint and a suggestion. Men somehow always had to beat down the opposing forces and only learn what they were after the battle was won.

It didn't matter what had been doing it. Maybe they'd never know. Or maybe they'd learn as

soon as it was finally overcome. All they had to do was fix it so they couldn't lose.

In another year, the third rocket would go up. This time two men would be watching for it from the Moon—men in a worn space-ship, who'd spent months baking out supplies of water from gypsum for fuel. Bill and Wollen would be ready. They'd ferry the fuel to wherever the next ship landed, and the new ship could head back for Earth less than a day after it touched the Moon.

That wouldn't leave time enough for the records to be changed and old memories replaced with false ones.

Bill grinned to himself. So he'd be a hero, after all, with his supposed-death probably explained as a cover-up for his initial flight. They'd find some way to explain it all, of course.

He shouldered another load of hydroponic tanks to replace those Wollen had left on the Moon, and his face sobered. It would take more than heroism. It would take men too stubborn to have good sense.

"Pumpkins!" he said with a new depth of feeling. "Tomatoes!"

He carried the tanks into the ship and began bolting them down, ready for an early planting.