

Ian Woodson Fisher (editor)

*“Magnificent degrees and permutations of variability”:
Letters between Frank Herbert and His Editors (1959-1968)*

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Frank Herbert Papers.

Document Box 10, Folder 6.

Nine letters, dated May 26, 1959, to October 15, 1968 (numbered 1 to 9 below).

Introduction

The correspondence edited below is a part of the “Frank Herbert Papers” held in CSUF’s University Archives and Special Collections (UA & SC). The journalist and science fiction author Frank Herbert (1920-1986) is best known for his *Dune* book series which consists of six volumes with publication dates ranging from 1965 to 1985. The collection was obtained by one of CSUF’s professors of English, Willis E. McNelly (1920-2003), who became a member of the Science Fiction Writers of America (SFWA) after striking up a friendship with Herbert in San Francisco in 1969. The donation of the “Frank Herbert Papers” led to several other science fiction authors, such as Ray Bradbury (1920-2012) and Philip K. Dick (1928-1982), donating some of their materials to UA & SC. The nine letters in this edition, dated May 26, 1959, to October 15, 1968, are correspondence between Frank Herbert, his literary agent Lurton Blassingame (1904-1988), and John W. Campbell, Jr. (1910-1971), and range in length from one to five pages with occasional handwritten notes and insertions.

Campbell, the editor of *Astounding Science Fiction* and later *Analog Science Fiction and Fact*, published Herbert’s first novel, *The Dragon in the Sea*, known as *Under Pressure* during its 1955-1956 serialization. In this edition’s first correspondence (1959), Blassingame alerts Herbert to Campbell’s thoughts on an upcoming story. Letter 2, addressed by Herbert to Campbell (1959), concerns that story, a novella called “The Priests of Psi,” first published in 1960 and republished in a collection in 1980. Letters 3 to 6 (1963), revolve around Campbell’s detailed remarks on *Dune* and Herbert’s lengthy response to these comments (which he first ran by his agent to ensure the tone would be acceptable). Letter 7 and 8 (1964) are a brief exchange between Blassingame and Herbert concerning plans for an anthology dealing with E.S.P. (extrasensory perception). In the final letter (1968), Campbell details to Blassingame his rejection of the *Dune* sequel, called at the time *The Messiah* (published by Galaxy as *Dune Messiah* in 1969).

The storylines of *Dune* and *Dune Messiah* take center stage in the conversation between Herbert and Campbell. In *Dune*, the protagonist Paul Atreides and his

family, Duke Leto and the consort Jessica, are ordered to take control of the planet Arrakis, or “Dune,” which they find has been filled with saboteurs. Duke Leto is assassinated by his personal doctor, Yueh, who had been blackmailed by the evil Baron Vladimir Harkonnen. Paul and Jessica escape into the desert, where they are adopted into the tribes of the Fremen people who revere them as religious figures due to the Bene Gesserit sisterhood’s “Missionaria Protectiva.” Paul and Jessica both undergo transformations due to the spice drug “Melange,” granting Paul extraordinary powers of precognition. Jessica and Paul champion a Fremen uprising, which threatens to unbalance the universe’s supply of the spice and thereby draws the Spacing Guild and the Emperor Shaddam IV into the conflict. Paul uses the machinations and scheming of all these groups against them, becoming Emperor himself by the end of the first novel (the demand to finish and *Dune*’s increasing scope drove Herbert to make the ending more abrupt). Between the first and second novel, the Fremen uprising and Paul’s ascent to the throne lead to a universe-wide jihad of violence, and the second novel (*Dune Messiah*) revolves around the inescapable fate that Paul faces when he desperately tries to avoid the future in which all the forces he has overthrown plan to assassinate him but narrowly fail. He is unable to change his fate, eventually loses his wife Chani, and is cast out into the desert as a leper after a dirty nuclear device is set off.

The letters edited here offer a unique and personal insight into both the traditional boundaries of the science fiction genre and Herbert’s contribution to bucking that trend. Campbell and Herbert both shared an interest in world building, as well as pseudo-science and E.S.P., which proved to be fertile ground for the “soft science fiction” style that Herbert promoted. As revolutionary as Campbell was as an editor in the genre, Herbert’s complexity of thought and the non-traditional structure of *Dune* and its sequel *Dune Messiah* proved to be too much for Campbell, as we can see in his rejection of *Messiah* for publication. These letters reveal that, while the initial scope of Herbert’s story quickly exploded (*Dune*-as-trilogy becoming “*Dune* as part 1 of a trilogy” and eventually six books), the public reception of *Dune* by itself can sometimes miss out on the thoughtful commentary on human nature that thematically ties the series together, themes that are present in Herbert’s correspondence even as far back as 1959. All participants in this conversation – Herbert, Campbell, and Blassingame – were involved in the science fiction and fantasy renaissance of the 1950s and 1960s and the transformation of these genres from “pulp” fiction to genres featuring many works of considerable cultural value.

The transcriptions below preserve the spelling and capitalization of the original correspondence. Obvious corrections (whether done by typewriter or by hand) have been implemented and are not indicated in the edition below.

*Edition: Letter 1, Lurton Blassingame to Frank Herbert,
May 26, 1959, New York, New York*

Front (single-sided): [header] Cable: LUBLAME,¹ MUrray Hill² 7-7491-2 [letterhead] LURTON BLASSINGAME, TEN EAST FORTY-THIRD STREET,³ NEW YORK 17, N.Y. [footer] Representatives in Hollywood, Paris, London, Oslo, Stockholm, Buenos Aires, Hamburg, Rotterdam, Helsinki [text typewritten; signature "Lurton" in blue pen]

May 26, 1959

Dear Frank:

John Campbell says he will be glad to see the story⁴ again. He makes suggestions to let you see what is wrong with a story but he very seldom asks for revision because he doesn't want you to make revision unless you agree with his viewpoint. If you think that his suggestions will improve the story -- fine. He'll be very glad to read it again and buy it if it comes off, but he won't guarantee to buy it since he feels that you may not agree with him but would simply make changes because he had asked for them.

This isn't very clear but it's the best I can get out of John.

Hastily

Lurton

Mr. Frank Herbert
2380 Hall Avenue⁵
Stockton, California

*Edition: Letter 2, Frank Herbert to John W. Campbell,
June 12, 1959, Stockton, California*

Page 1 of 2 (single-sided): [text typewritten; left margin, handwritten: "a thin veneer of words over a primitive psyche"]

Frank Herbert
2380 Hall Ave.
Stockton, Calif.
6/12/59

Mr. John W. Campbell, Jr.,
Editor, Astounding S-F,⁶

¹ Lurton Blassingame.

² Neighborhood (Manhattan, New York).

³ Address (near Grand Central Terminal, Murray Hill neighborhood, New York); built 1956; still in use (2020).

⁴ "The Priests of Psi," novella by Frank Herbert (first published 1960).

⁵ Address (Stockton, California); built 1953; still in use (2020).

⁶ American science fiction magazine with changing titles; published since 1930.

304 East 45th St.,⁷
New York 17, N.Y.

Dear Mr. Campbell:

Enclosed is virtually a complete rewrite of "Priests of Psi." I found your criticisms much to the point...and much to my chagrin! No excuses offered. I guess this can happen to any writer.

What hit me strongest was the thought that Orne⁸ had to have a more logical reason for siding with the Abbod.⁹ (How did I miss that?) Now, he has the strongest of reasons: their purposes coincide.

One of the major difficulties with this story, as I see it, is that anything touching religion must immediately be suspected of mysticism. My aim was to show a logical function for religion in an advanced society.

If you accept this one, I want to do a further story on "religious engineering." The thought being that the religions could be shaped and geared to the particular needs of new worlds. (Harking back to the ways Catholicism was fitted to the Mexican Indians, for example.)

Religion is always a touchy subject, and must be even more so in S-F where mechanistic "science can solve anything" bias is always suspected. (If "science can solve anything," perhaps that's a Faith, too.) But we do have in such a subject something that goes to the very core of the finest in human aspirations -- leaving aside for now how those aspirations are sometimes deflected into baser activities. The writer (and the editor and his readers, too, I suspect) must continually ask when dealing with

Page 2 of 2 (single-sided): [text typewritten; left margin, hand-drawn bracket for the text paragraph starting with "There's also the question;" unsigned]

- 2 -

such a story: "Why do I have my particular reaction toward religion? Is there more in my reaction than meets my conscious eye?"

At least, that's one of the problems I found in writing this story. And my first answers didn't always ring true!

There's also the question of the matrix and the object, where the matrix is our trained way of looking at the universe, and the object is the universe. I think we are too often prone to mistake clear reasoning for correct reasoning. Logic, after

⁷ Address (Manhattan, New York); built 1929; still in use (2020).

⁸ Main character in "The Priests of Psi;" employee of the Investigation and Adjustment Agency.

⁹ One of the Priests of Psi of the planet Amel.

all, is an arbitrary extension of the matrix. If the original starting point is distorted, what does that do to the logic?

When we remove the matrix, it's plain that we're dealing with an enormous, mysterious interacting complex. But one interacting complex nonetheless. (This is what is known as the grand view!) What I'm driving at is Tao,¹⁰ which in its original concept was neither a mystical nor religious idea. Tao was a cousin of Maya,¹¹ which when divested of the religious gimcrackery (all, by the way, added later) was a remarkably clear and scientific concept of how a human being looks at (measures) the universe (nature, to the writers in Sanskrit).¹² It's interesting to note that we still have the root "Ma" in so many matters dealing with science and measurement: matter, matrix, machine, the Greek macro-, magazine (out of Arabic: "to store up a measured amount"), mathematics, etc. etc. etc.

I enjoyed your comment that the nature of science is "explaining things in terms of their results." How true! Lest I get into that field now, I'm going to sign off because the major explaining that now interests me is whether the "things" and "results" come out even for you in this rewrite.

Best regards,

*Edition: Letter 3, John W. Campbell to Frank Herbert c/o Lurton Blassingame,
June 3, 1963, New York, New York*

Page 1 of 4 (single-sided): [letterhead] analog: SCIENCE FACT - SCIENCE FICTION,
420 LEXINGTON AVENUE,¹³ NEW YORK 17, NEW YORK, MURRAY HILL 9-5900,
John W. Campbell, Editor [footer] A CONDE NAST PUBLICATION [text typewritten]

June 3, 1963

Mr. Frank Herbert
c/o Lurton Blassingame
10 East 43rd Street
New York 17, New York

Dear Frank:

Congratulations! You are now the father of a 15-year -old superman!

But I betcha you aren't gonna like it...

¹⁰ Chinese for "the way"/"the path" (i.e., the natural order of the universe which must be accepted for human intuition to reach its full potential).

¹¹ Hindu and Buddhist belief; posits that human perception of reality is far removed from what reality actually is.

¹² Language of ancient India; primary language for most works of Hindu philosophy.

¹³ Address (Manhattan, New York); known as the "Graybar Building;" built 1925-1927 in the Art Deco style; still in use (2020).

This is a grand yarn; I like it, and I'm going to buy it. But I have some comments that may make you want to make a slight change in the ending.

As the father---and/or step-father!---of several literary supermen, I've learned something about their care and upbringing. They're very recalcitrant. Also hard to live with.

You can't think like a superman. You can't imagine his motivations. He's altruistic--and superman. Which means he will sacrifice the highest good you can imagine, for the sake of something you couldn't understand even if he explained it to you. He is gentle---which, when properly defined, means that he is kindly, but absolutely ruthless. Like the man who loves horses, and sorrowfully shoots the stallion with a broken leg. I doubt that the stallion would approve of that action.

No human being can write about the thoughts, philosophy, motivations, or evaluations of a superman.

There are two ways that supermen have been handled successfully in science-fiction; Method 1 is that van Vogt¹⁴ used in "Slan!"¹⁵... and is what you've got here, so far. You don't talk about the superman, don't try to portray the superman, but show a superboy, who hasn't yet developed his powers out and beyond your ability to conceive of them. Method 2 is that used by Norvel W. Page¹⁶ in "But Without Horns"¹⁷ in the old UNKOWN.¹⁸ The superman never appears on stage at all---you encounter only people who have met him, and the results of action he's taken. You never meet him, and never do understand what his motivations are.

Page 2 of 4 (single-sided): [header typewritten] Mr. Frank Herbert, - 2 -, June 3, 1963
[text typewritten]

If "Dune"¹⁹ is to be the first of three, and you're planning on using Paul²⁰ in the future ones...oh, man! You've set yourself one hell of a problem!

You might make the next one somewhat more plottable if you didn't give Paul quite so much of the super-duper.

You'd have someone exceedingly hard to defeat, and yet having certain definite limitations, if you gave him just one talent; the ability of transtemporal clairvoyance.

¹⁴ Alfred Elton van Vogt (1912-2000); Canadian-born science fiction author.

¹⁵ Science fiction novel by Alfred Elton van Vogt; serialized 1940 in *Astounding Science Fiction* (edited by John W. Campbell); published as a novel 1946.

¹⁶ (1904-1961); pulp fiction writer and journalist.

¹⁷ Novella by Norvel W. Page; published 1940 in *Unknown* magazine.

¹⁸ American pulp fantasy fiction magazine; published 1939-1943; edited by John W. Campbell.

¹⁹ See introduction.

²⁰ Paul Atreides; protagonist of *Dune* and *Dune Messiah*.

Now that could work like this: a man remembers the past he has experienced, but nobody knows how that's done. Suppose it's done by a faculty which any remembering entity actually has, of being able to "see" across time, and perceive the actual original event. When you "remember" going to the beach for a swim last summer, you perceive-across-time the actual event.

Now this time-scanning would, inherently, allow you to perceive anything anywhen anywhere. Which could simply drive you completely nuts. Data is useless, unless you can organize and relate it. Unlimited access to unlimited data would require infinite time to scan it all! And until you've scanned nearly all of it, you wouldn't know what data went with what.

So normal people use as an index-mark, as a guide-line, the "I was there" factor in using their transtemporal clairvoyance. You can remember what you heard, saw, felt, tasted, thought, and your mood.

Once in a while, somebody slips a bit...and gets somebody else's "I" as a guide-line; then you have Joe Blow "remembering" somebody else's life-track...and we have "proof" of reincarnation.

Now if Paul has as his new talent the ability to use someone else's "I was there" guide-line---if he can remember anyone else's memories---he would be very hard to defeat.

Notice: If I could remember what you remembered, I would, in effect, have telepathy! I would not know what you are-now-thinking, but I would be able to "remember" what you were thinking a millisecond ago...which amounts to the same thing.

If, before he can "remember" someone else's memories, he must identify their "I-track"---if it is essential that he first have a take-off point of direct contact---then the only way an enemy could keep Paul from knowing his plans would be to make sure Paul never

Page 3 of 4 (single-sided): [header typewritten] Mr. Frank Herbert, - 3 -, June 3, 1963
[text typewritten]

encountered him. To find the I-track of one individual among the n-billion people in the Galaxy would be impossible without a contact point.

If you wind up this yarn with Paul acquiring that talent, all the present explanations can come out of it. I.e., he can remember back along Baron

Harkomen's²¹ line, Yeuh's²² Kynes,²³ the Fremmen²⁴ he encountered, etc., to get the whole present background.

BUT...he doesn't have so much precognition that you can't build a workable plot for the next yarn.

You know the trouble with time-travel stories; if the guy has a time-travel machine, and the villain doesn't, and the villain kidnaps the heroine, there's no sweat. The hero doesn't chase the villain; he looks annoyed, steps into the time machine, goes back 30 seconds before the villain's villainy, and tells the heroine, "Hey, honey--- that stupid louse, Rudolph the Villain is about to kidnap you. He's making a nuisance of himself, isn't he. Let's go somewhere else."

Give your hero precognition that works, and it's sort of like old-fashioned Presbyterian Predestination.²⁵ There's no use trying, because he already knows what has to come. And everybody else is stuck with it, whether they like it or not.

However, with all the data-sources he gets with everybody's memories...he still doesn't know the future. He knows what they think the future is, and what he thinks it'll be...but not what it will be.

Incidentally, I find that the following is a useful analogy describing the process of Time. Imagine an immensely tall glass cylinder filled with water. The bottom of the thing is sitting in a tank of liquid air; naturally the water in the bottom is frozen solid, and as heat drains out to the liquid air, the surface of crystallization advances steadily up the column of water. The interface between still-liquid water and solidified ice is the instant Now; the frozen ice is the Past, and the free liquid water is Future.

Now when a substance crystalizes, there are intermolecular forces at work that reach out from the already-solid crystal to drag in and align free molecules of the liquid, forcing each new molecule added to the crystal to fall into a precise alignment with the already-crystalized molecules. The interface, in other words, is not a no-thickness geometrical surface---it's a volume. Liquid well away from the interface is really pretty free, but liquid molecules near

²¹ Baron Vladimir Harkonnen; antagonist in *Dune*; ultimate mastermind behind the misfortunes of House Atreides.

²² Wellington Yueh, the Suk; character in *Dune*; (imperially trained) doctor; being blackmailed to assassinate Duke Leto Atreides

²³ Liet-Kynes; character in *Dune* (originally scoped to be the protagonist); imperial planetologist sent to observe the planet Arrakis ("Dune"); father of Chani, Paul's eventual love interest.

²⁴ "Native" inhabitants of the planet Arrakis ("Dune") after the Scattering of the Butlerian Jihad.

²⁵ Doctrine developed by French Protestant theologian John Calvin (1509-1564).

Page 4 of 4 (single-sided): [header typewritten] Mr. Frank Herbert, - 4 -, June 3, 1963
[text typewritten; signature "John W. Campbell" in blue pen]

the interface are already subjected to the alignment forces, and are being dragged into place.

Moreover, some crystals manage to grow faster than others; there will be spikes of crystal reaching out well ahead of the slower-growing mass.

If you watch the way crystals grow---epsom salts²⁶ crystalizing when a solution is poured out on a pane of glass, for instance---it gives a remarkable mental picture of how alignment forces reach out from the past through the instant-Now, and into the Future...and yet do not completely determine the future, because there are liquid zones among the out reaching crystal forces.

One other item that makes supermen such nasty people to live with, when they're 15-year-old supermen. They are adolescent demi-gods---and personally, I can't imagine anything more horrible. An adolescent, no matter how intelligent, is not wise; he's only smart. Furthermore, adolescents have the most ghastly-horrible tendency to be sure they have The Answers to all the world's problems, and it is only the stupid conservatism of the old foggies that makes them reject it.

And having all the knowledge in the world means nothing---because all knowledge is filtered through the individual's attitudes and beliefs.

Can you imagine a sincere, dedicated, enormously intelligent, practically omniscient teen-ager...with the typical teen-age tendency to be Sure He's Right about matters that only adult experience can make understandable?

Hitler²⁷ was Sure He Was Right. So was Torquemada.²⁸

The ordinary, every-day adolescent is something of a problem to live with. A genius-grade adolescent is much worse to live with, because he's just as certain he has the proper, logical, and righteous answers figured out, and being extremely smart, is very difficult to unconvince.

Want to try it with Paul---when he's decided, at age 16, How the Galaxy Should Be Rearranged And Right Away Quick?

God preserve us! No one else would be able to!

Regards,

John W. Campbell

JOHN W. CAMPBELL

²⁶ Magnesium sulfate.

²⁷ Adolf Hitler (1889-1945); leader of the Nazi Party; chancellor of Germany (1933-1945).

²⁸ Tomás de Torquemada (1420-1498); Spanish Dominican friar; first Grand Inquisitor of Spain.

Editor

JWC: ff

*Edition: Letter 4, Frank Herbert to John W. Campbell,
June 8, 1963, San Francisco, California*

Page 1 of 5 (single-sided): [text typewritten; bottom, following the words: "Like this;" a hand-drawing: six waves/troughs with seven crests, a chip floating atop the center crest, an arrow pointing left from the chip across the three crests to the left, the two waves/troughs furthest to the left shaded]

Frank Herbert

412 Mississippi St²⁹

San Francisco 7, Calif.

June 8, 1963

Mr. John W. Campbell

Editor - Analog

420 Lexington Ave.

New York 17, N. Y.

Dear John:

Sincere thanks for the two-edged congratulations.

As for your liking the new parenthood...let me put my reaction this way: the blessing appears not only to be mixed, but more on the order of a parfait that tangled with Mr. Waring's blender.³⁰ Out of the resultant mess, however, I still can distinguish two ingredients -- a sense of gratification that this long labor has been favored by someone whose judgement I admire...and a sort of small-mouse feeling in the face of the mountain of work I can still see ahead.

Perhaps it's naivete, but I'm flattered by the length of your letter. I have editing chores of my own in addition to writing and I know what happens to your time. (On second thought, what does happen to your time?)

So -- to the subject of Time...

Your analogy of an advancing surface of crystalization touched a particular chord of interest in me. With your permission, I may adapt it (or part of it) to my needs.

First, though, here's how I see the Time and plot problem for a sequel to Dune:

You will recall that Paul has a vision of Time as the surface of a gauze kerchief undulating in the wind. As far as it goes, this is accurate, but immature. It's the child-vision. Clarification is yet to come and he isn't going to like what he sees.

²⁹ Address (Potrero Hill neighborhood, San Francisco); built 1938; still in use (2020).

³⁰ Culinary tool; developed 1937 by Frederick Jacob Osius; named after and promoted by popular entertainer Fredrick Malcolm Waring, Sr. (1900-1984).

Think now of a coracle,³¹ a chip floating on a stormy sea. The man of vision is in the coracle. When it rises to a crest, he can see around him (provided he has his eyes open at the moment and it's light enough to see -- in other words, provided conditions are right). And what does he see? He sees the peaks of many waves. He sees troughs and flanks of his own wave complex. Troughs of subsequent waves are increasingly hidden from him.

Like this:

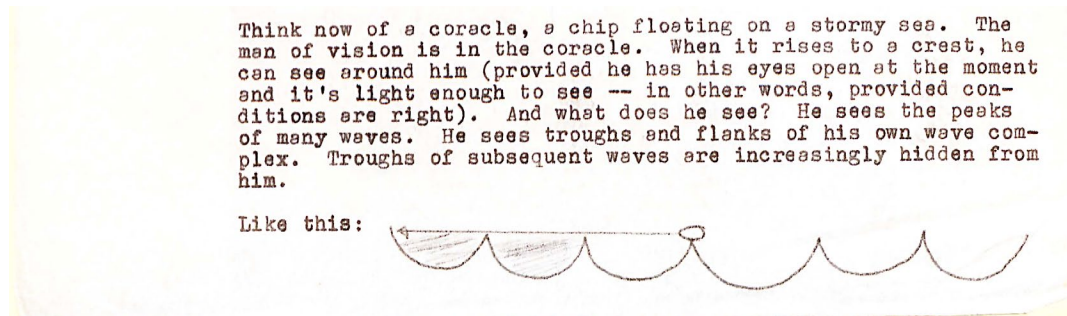


Figure 1: Letter 4, Frank Herbert to John W. Campbell, June 8, 1963, page 1.

Page 2 of 5 (single-sided): [header typewritten] Mr. John W. Campbell, - 2 -, June 3,³² 1963 [text typewritten]

Considered one way, your surface of crystalization is similar to this stormy-sea concept. If you could photograph that surface on movie film at one frame per minute and view it at 16 fps,³³ the surface would heave and undulate in a similar manner as it advanced. (It's the idea of an advancing surface that catches my interest.)

Now, consider Time as a system with its own form of obedience to its own form of entropy. What disrupts it? What causes Time storms? Among other things, a man of vision with his eyes open in good light and on the crest of the wave can cause Time storms. If you see that-which-is-not, that's hallucination. If you see that-which-is-not-yet, you give the not-yet a feed-back circuit for which it is not-yet prepared. You set up a channel for convection currents across regions delicately susceptible to the slightest deflection.

(Think of the region beyond your surface of crystalization. Within this region there's another barrier area within which the molecular tip-over toward one crystalizing system or another becomes extremely delicate.)

Prescience, then, shakes down to this:

³¹ Small round boat.

³² Should be "June 8."

³³ Frames per second; frequency rate.

Man of vision opens his inner yes. He may find it dark all around him. He may find himself in the trough of the wave...in which case he sees only the flanks of adjoining waves towering over him and a limited curve of his own trough. He may find himself on a crest in good light...in which case he QUICK looks all around.

Vision ends.

The Time he "saw" may maintain itself in similar motions for a period, but it is in motion, it is changing. And the very action of his looking has accelerated and twisted and distorted the directions of change. (Do you think John the Baptist³⁴ could predict all the outcomes of his prophecies?) Add the further complication that there are many men of vision with varying degrees of aptitude.

Most philosophies of Time I've encountered contain an unwritten convention that this "thing" is something ponderous (read juggernaut) and requires monstrous, universe-swaying forces to deflect it to any recognizable degree. Once set in motion, they say, Time tends to be orderly in its direction.

Obviously there is in mankind a profound desire for a universe which is orderly and logical. But the desire for a thing should be a clue to actualities. Local areas of order exist, but beyond is chaos. Time in the larger sense is a disorderly harridan.³⁵ (I'll digress on this a bit later.)

We can still see the thumb upraised in the Roman arena,³⁶ yes. Its effects are all around us if we have the eyes for it, but we are looking backward here, not forward. While we're looking backward, then, what of the Natufian³⁷ herdsman who carved himself a whistle from a twig to while away his hours on a hillside? Is there a

Page 3 of 5 (single-sided): [header typewritten] MR. John W. Campbell, - 3 -, June 3,³⁸
1963 [text typewritten]

line between him and a Greek herdsman playing the pan pipes near Athens...and between that herdsman and Bach?³⁹ What of the sidelines, then twisting away to...where?

And what of the Chellean⁴⁰ nomad crossing the site of the future Gursu-Babylon?⁴¹ Does the stone he accidentally kicks aside influence the future location of a temple? If this isn't enough complication, consider the negative side -- the downturned

³⁴ New Testament figure; itinerant Jewish preacher and prophet; relative of Jesus.

³⁵ From the French "haridelle" (nag, horse); derogatory term for a bossy old woman.

³⁶ Thumb signal (*pollice verso*); used to determine the fate of a defeated gladiator.

³⁷ Ancient culture in the eastern Mediterranean region.

³⁸ Should be "June 8."

³⁹ Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750); German Baroque composer.

⁴⁰ Early Stone Age (named after findings from Chelles, France).

⁴¹ Ancient Babylonian state (modern-day Iraq).

thumb, the uncarved whistle, the unkicked stone...what if...what if...what if...what if...

What if a wandering cow had distracted the Natufian gentleman and he'd left the whistle-building to another herdsman in another culture? The line might still wind its way to Bach, but over other hills and dales,⁴² and a person gifted with both views would hear a difference -- perhaps a profound difference.

We've narrowed our focus here down to a two-value system (on-off, yes-no), however. What we have in actuality is a multi-valued, extended-spectrum system -- magnificent degrees and permutations of variability. The Time surface is in a constant state of flux It's only when we look backward and isolate a line out of context that we perceive any degree of order. And if we take this order and project it into the future, the distance during which it will continue to hold true is distinctly limited. (Couldn't you visualize certain possible changes in conditions which would make some of our laws of physics inoperable?)

The Time surface is in a constant state of flux -- one of your crystal extrusions may project for ten million years ahead of the surround-surface in one cross-section instant only to be lopped off in the next. (There's a fascinating side consideration here if we continue viewing this as a "crystal." It exists one instant and is-not in the next instant. What happens to its components, if you give them substance? Do they enter the surrounding solution? If so, where?)

Let's isolate that cross-section (see above) idea for a moment. This is the abstraction process, the taking-out-of-context, the stopping, the isolation. You limit your knowledge of a subject when you do this with any flowing process. To understand a flowing process you have to get in with it, flow with it. This is the larger meaning within the gestalten⁴³ concept.

I promised a certain digression earlier (one among many) and this appears to be the moment for it. Time, the disorderly harridan...We are, of course, considering chaos vs. order. Within this there is always the unspoken judgement -- one thing is "right" and the opposite is "wrong." So lets look at the logical projection of completely orderly Time and a universe of absolute logic. Aren't we saying here that it's possible to "know" everything? Then doesn't this mean that the system of "knowing" will one day enclose itself? And isn't that a sort of prison?

For my part, I can conceive of infinite systems. I find this reassuring -- the chaos reassuring. It means there are no walls, no limits, no boundaries except those that man himself creates. Magnificent degrees and permutations of variability.

⁴² English expression; used, for example, in William Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (act 2, scene 1).

⁴³ *Gestalt* (German for "form") psychology; early twentieth-century concept arguing that we see entire patterns and configurations, not merely single components.

Page 4 of 5 (single-sided): [header typewritten] MR. John W. Campbell, - 4 -, June 8, 1963 [text typewritten; line above the fourth paragraph, left aligned, handwritten in blue pen: “* by impending accident,” to be inserted after “a split second from death;” in the bottom line, before “ORACLE,” hand-drawing of a printed C intersecting the top right corner of a square]

Now, of course we build walls and erect barriers and enclosed systems and we isolate and cut cross sections to study them. But if we ever forget that these are bubbles which we are blowing, we’re lost. If we ever lose sight of the possibility that a wall we’ve erected may someday have to be torn down, then we’ve bricked ourselves in with the amontillado⁴⁴ and we can yell “For the love of God, Montessor!”⁴⁵ all we like. There’ll be nobody listening outside who gives a fat damn.

We seem to have wandered somewhat off the Time track, but now you know some of the background which flows over into my stories and which I’m pouring right now into a sequel to Dune. You may understand now, also, why Time travel stories have always been somewhat disappointing to me. They may have excellent plotting, wonderful linearity. Tremendous sense of direction...but little or no elbow room.

Before winding this up, I’d like to take one more side trip in Time through the concept of “how long.” The length of an operation, of course, depends on the viewpoint and the field of operations.

e.g. Through a combination of circumstances too tedious to detail here, I found myself one morning a split second from death.*⁴⁶ During a period of time which could not possibly have been more than 1/25th of a second, I calmly considered at least eight distinct solutions, examining them in great detail, calling on memory aspects that wandered through a number of cross references that could only be referred to as enormous. Out of this and still within this shutter-blink of Time, I decided upon a solution which had its main inspiration in a circus trick I had seen just once, and I altered that circus trick to suit my needs. The solution worked precisely as I had visualized it. I could cover at least ten of these single-space pages with elements that went into that solution and still not exhaust them.

Obviously there are certain conditions under which our view of Time may be compressed to the point where, for all practical purposes, the process is instantaneous. (Consider the hours-long dream that occurs between the ringing of the alarm and the hand reaching out to shut the damn’ thing off.)

⁴⁴ Medium dry sherry; originally from Montilla, Spain.

⁴⁵ Line uttered by Fortunato in “The Cask of Amontillado” (1846), a story by Edgar Allan Poe (1809-1849), in which Fortunato is immured alive by Montresor in an act of revenge.

⁴⁶ Handwritten in blue pen: “* by impending accident,” to be inserted after “a split second from death.”

Another way of looking at this is to say that the Time it takes for a given event (a vision, for example) may be almost interminable for one person (the one with the vision) but practically instantaneous to an outside observer.

We can postulate, also, that External Time (in the larger sense) has different speeds and currents for different viewpoints, that not only is the course within a given locale variable, but also the local-speed-effect varies.

These ideas, then, form some of the boundaries (man-made) of Paul's prescience. He's in a situation where he must learn new ground rules. (There are rules, but he has to learn a shifting frame of reference to recognize them.) He's within the coracle. While on that word, I might add that I've been using the title "Muad 'Dib"⁴⁷ for the first draft of the sequel. I think, though, that this would be a better title:⁴⁸ ORACLE.⁴⁹

Page 5 of 5 (single-sided): [header typewritten] Mr. John W. Campbell, - 5 -, June 8, 1963 [text typewritten; signature "Frank Herbert"]

If I tell you any more now, I'll be giving away the sequel. It goes without saying, though, that your comments will be received with great interest and open mind. Tell if what I've said here meets your plot objections. If not, I'm perfectly willing to find some common ground for ending the first story that will hold up in subsequent ones.

Warmest regards,
Frank Herbert
Frank Herbert

P.S. I quite understand that what I've been discussing here is the subjective relationship between real time and time dilation. But this strikes me as a subject which deserves much greater exploration -- especially where it regards what we commonly refer to as "the speed of thought."

*Edition: Letter 5, Frank Herbert to Lurton Blassingame,
June 9, 1963, San Francisco, California*

Front (single-sided): [letterhead] from the desk of FRANK HERBERT [text typewritten; signature "Frank"]

412 Mississippi St.
San Francisco 7, Calif.

June 9, 1963

⁴⁷ Name chosen by Paul Atreides (in *Dune*) when he is finally accepted into his "sietch" or tribe; a reference to the fictional kangaroo mouse which is able to survive on Arrakis; Paul's other sietch name is Usul or "foundation of the pillar."

⁴⁸ Inserted here: hand-drawing of a printed C intersecting the top right corner of a square.

⁴⁹ From the Latin *oraculum*; a divine prophecy.

Mr. Lurton Blassingame
Ten East 43rd St.
New York 17, N.Y.

Dear Lurton:

Here are the synopses and a long letter to John Campbell re the sequel. Sorry I couldn't provide you with a carbon, but I ran short of the right sized carbon paper over the weekend. If you think the letter is in order, please send it along to him. I'll leave that to your judgement.

The synopses, oddly enough, break the book into almost equal parts -- four of them. This doubtless comes from lavish use of cliff hangers.

A close line-count of the book's length shows that Campbell's count is correct -- 85,000 words, give or take a hundred or so.

The error came from a page count which didn't allow for the many chapter endings on short pages.

You'll have some more of the sequel shortly.

What's the word from Doubleday?⁵⁰

Regards,
Frank

*Edition: Letter 6, Lurton Blassingame to Frank Herbert,
June 11, 1963, New York, New York*

Front (single-sided): [header] Cable: LUBLAME, MURRAY HILL 7-7491-2 [letterhead, followed by a black triangle figure pointing down] LURTON BLASSINGAME, TEN EAST FORTY-THIRD STREET, NEW YORK 17, N.Y. [footer] REPRESENTATIVES IN HOLLYWOOD, PARIS, LONDON, OSLO, STOCKHOLM, HAMBURG, MILAN, ZURICH, TOKYO [text typewritten; signature "Lurton" in blue pen]

June 11, 1963

Dear Frank:

Thanks for the synopses, and also for letting me see your letter to Campbell. I think you did a brilliant job of defending your position. So far he has known of only two ways of handling supermen and I hope he will accept your arguments and say that in future he knows of three ways.

No word yet from Doubleday but I will be surprised if it is not favorable when it comes.

Cordially,
Lurton

⁵⁰ American publishing company; established 1897.

Mr. Frank Herbert
412 Mississippi St.
San Francisco 7, California

*Edition: Letter 7, Lurton Blassingame to Frank Herbert,
January 24, 1964, New York, New York*

Front (single-sided): [header] Cable: LUBLAME, MURRAY HILL 7-7491-2 [letterhead, followed by a black triangle figure pointing down] LURTON BLASSINGAME, TEN EAST FORTY-THIRD STREET, NEW YORK 17, N.Y. [footer] REPRESENTATIVES IN HOLLYWOOD, PARIS, LONDON, OSLO, STOCKHOLM, HAMBURG, MILAN, ZURICH, TOKYO [text typewritten; signature "Lurton" in blue pen; handwritten insertion at the bottom: "Area Code - NY 212"]

Jan.24, 1964

Dear Frank:

I gather from DUNE that you are interested in ESP.⁵¹ Have you done a great deal of reading in this field? If so, would you be interested in editing an anthology of stories in this basic field? A publisher is thinking about such a selection for "young adults."

I had lunch with Peter Israel⁵² this week. He has not yet read DUNE but promised to get to it soon.

I hope you get straightened out on the job soon and finish your revisions for Campbell. I'm delighted that John plans to use all of this big and excellent novel.

Cordially,
Lurton

Mr. Frank Herbert
412 Mississippi St.
San Francisco 7, Calif.

*Edition: Letter 8, Frank Herbert to Lurton Blassingame,
January 29, 1964, San Francisco, California*

Front (single-sided): [text typewritten; signature "Frank"]

Frank Herbert
412 Mississippi St.
San Francisco 7, Calif.
1/29/64

Mr. Lurton Blassingame
10 East 43rd St.
New York 17, New York

⁵¹ Extrasensory perception.

⁵² (b. 1933); American editor; editor-in-chief at G. P. Putnam's Sons Publishers (1959-1965).

Dear Lurton:

ESP is one of my interests to the extent that I have done considerable reading on it in what I would call the quasi-scientific end of the field. This includes Rene Sudre's⁵³ *Para-Psychology*⁵⁴ and a considerable amount of J. B. Rhine⁵⁵ -- including *The Reach of The Mind* and *New World of The Mind*.⁵⁶ I've also dabbled in Puharich,⁵⁷ the "sacred Mushroom" writer.⁵⁸

I'm what you might refer to as an agnostic where ESP is concerned -- a "Doubting Thomas."⁵⁹ Some of the writers on this end of the field, such as Fodor⁶⁰ and Tassi,⁶¹ are too kookie for my tastes, and I have strong doubts as to the mathematical basis for the statistics in Rhine's tests.

Okay, I'm from Missouri. This does not, however, limit my enjoyment of a good ESP story or stay my imagination in exploring the "what ifs" of possible mental powers.

Now -- does your publisher want a fiction or "non-fiction" work? Or both? What's he willing to pay for such an editing job? Would he prefer someone whose eye might be less coldly critical?

I believe I could handle such an anthology and have some ideas about it.

What now, friend agent?

Received the Seldes note this morning and cannot decipher his chicken tracks at the bottom. The typed text appears clear enough, however.

I'll begin the revisions for Campbell next week -- these include bringing Alia⁶² back from the dead. John indicates he'd like a further story featuring her and possibly another on the Space Guild.⁶³ He also gave me some additional ideas for more stories on a galactic civilization. It's a go-go-go.

⁵³ (1880-1968); French journalist

⁵⁴ *Traité de Parapsychologie* (1956; translated into English 1960); work by René Sudre.

⁵⁵ Joseph Banks Rhine (1895-1980); American botanist; founder of parapsychology research.

⁵⁶ *The Reach of the Mind* (1947); *New World of the Mind* (1953); books by Joseph Banks Rhine.

⁵⁷ Andrija Puharich (1918-1995); medical and parapsychological researcher.

⁵⁸ *The Sacred Mushroom: Key to the Door of Eternity* (1959); book by Andrija Puharich.

⁵⁹ One of the Twelve Apostles of Jesus; initially doubted the Resurrection of Jesus. See Holy Bible, New Testament, John 20:24-29.

⁶⁰ Nandor Fodor (1895-1964); Hungarian spiritualist.

⁶¹ Dan Tassi; author of *The Mind in Time and Space* (1962).

⁶² Alia Atreides or "St. Alia of the Knife" (character in *Dune*); daughter of Jessica of the Bene Gesserit, who ingested the spice drug "Melange" while gestating Alia.

⁶³ Spacing Guild (organization in *Dune*); only source of interstellar travel in the early days of the *Dune* series, who use precognition (and not computers) to calculate trajectories.

Best regards,
Frank

Edition: Letter 9, John W. Campbell to Lurton Blassingame,
October 15, 1968, New York, New York

Page 1 of 2 (single-sided): [letterhead] John W. Campbell, Editor, analog: science fiction
- science fact [footer] The Conde Nast Publications Inc.,/420 Lexington Avenue, New
York, N.Y. 10017/MUrray Hill 9-5900 [text typewritten]

October 15, 1968

Mr. Lurton Blassingame
60 East 42nd Street⁶⁴
New York, New York 10017

Dear Lurton:

Herbert's revision of "The Messiah"⁶⁵ still didn't satisfy me, but it's taken about ten days of mulling to work out a way of expressing my feeling. It's usually a damn sight easier to say "I don't like it!" than to say "...because of...".

In essence, in "Dune", Duke Leto⁶⁶ was fated to fall, and did, before the forces of malign fate. A Greek Tragedy⁶⁷ set-up. But Paul, rising against all the cruel fates, overwhelming his enemies, triumphs---a true heroic saga.

In this one, it's Paul, our central character, who is a helpless pawn manipulated against his will, by a cruel, destructive fate.

And he falls; he is a Pawn of Fate. In this one he is not a Hero---he's simply a helpless Pawn of Fate. The anti-hero, showing that even seemingly mighty men of courage and ability are helpless---that the whole world is a hopeless, overwhelming place, wherein struggle and high purpose are useless and hopeless.

The reactions of the science-fictioneers, however, over the last few decades has persistently and quite explicitly been that they want heroes not anti-heroes. They want stories of strong men who exert themselves, inspire others, and make a monkey's uncle out of malign fates!

As Paul did in "Dune"---not as he fails completely to do in "The Messiah".

⁶⁴ Address (Midtown Manhattan, New York); Lincoln Building/Grand Central Place; completed 1930; still in use (2020).

⁶⁵ *Dune Messiah* (1969); sequel to *Dune*.

⁶⁶ Duke Leto Atrides (character in *Dune*); appointed to rule the planet Arrakis by the Padishah (a Turkic-Iranian word) Emperor Shaddam IV, which the Emperor hoped would weaken and diminish his foe.

⁶⁷ Greek tragedies (dramas) usually involve elements of oracle prophecies which are unintentionally fulfilled. See *Antigone* and *Oedipus Rex* by Sophocles.

Our readers simply do not want to be told “It’s all hopeless---struggle avaieth nothing!”⁶⁸

But they liked “Dune” a great deal.

Item: If Paul can’t “see” where other oracles have muddied the waters of Time---then neither can they “see” where he is working. Because of what he does, responding to his vision of the future, alters that

Page 2 of 2 (single-sided): [header] 2-Blassingame [text typewritten; signature “John W. Campbell” in blue pen]

future to indeterminacy---the future is unstabilized; it is not determinate.

In other words, Paul can have and use free will---if he has the courage to blind himself to future vision by acting against the probable stream of Time. And in doing so, of course, blinding all other oracles!

That’s the essence of how he forced the Guild to submit in “Dune”, remember. So acting as to blind all oracles was, and remains, advantageous to him, for he’s dynamically active, whereas the Guild navigators seek to be essentially passive---they seek only to maintain the status quo.

There are ways, within the framework of the logic of the series, whereby Paul could have been the Hero, overcoming malign fate to triumph.

Item: a Hero leader who cuts and runs from the Climactic Battle is not a Messiah---even though, or particularly if, his side actually wins. Neither is he a martyr, nor a Victim of Fate.

It would leave his magnificently victorious forces in unarguable domination of the field of battle, the enemy totally crushed---but with the problem of totally reorganizing leadership on a totally different basis, since their God-King has just demonstrated unforgivable cowardice in the face of the enemy, betaking himself and his family beyond reach.

There are unquestionable ways in which his essential goals---which do not include any burning desire to rule the galaxy himself---can be attained.

The two Bene⁶⁹ groups may think to trap him on the basis that he cannot turn against his own nature, but they can be totally defeated if they think that his nature is to rule, to control---as their own is!

⁶⁸ Possible reference to “Say Not the Struggle Nought Avaieth,” by Arthur Hugh Clough (1819-1861).

⁶⁹ Groups in the *Dune* universe. The Bene Gesserit are super-human by training and genetics; use the spice drug “Melange” to become “Reverend Mothers” and see the memories of their ancestors; and control “breeding programs” intended to produce the Kwisatz Haderach, a male who can withstand the spice drug’s effects (Paul becomes the Kwisatz Haderach). The Bene Tleilax

Regards,
John W Campbell
John W. Campbell
Editor

Re: "The Messiah", by Frank Herbert
JWX;jn

ABOUT THE EDITOR: Ian Woodson Fisher of Brea, California, earned his B.M. in Music Composition and his B.A. in History at California State University, Fullerton (CSUF) (2020), where he is a member of the Theta-Pi Chapter of Phi Alpha Theta (History Honor Society). He is active as a writer of avant-garde contemporary music. He also served as an editor for this volume of "The Welebaethan: A Journal of History." The primary-source edition published above originated in the "History and Editing" course offered by CSUF's History Department.

are a secretive group who use genetic engineering to produce clone "gholas" and Face Dancers who can shapeshift; they prize genetics and keep samples from important people.