PLAYBOY INTERVIEW: STANLEY KUBRICK

a candid conversation with the pioneering creator of "2001: a space odyssey," "dr. strangelove" and "lolita"

Throughout his 17-year career as a moviemaker, Stanley Kubrick has committed himself to pushing the frontiers of film into new and often controversial regions—despite the box-office problems and censorship battles that such a commitment invariably entails. Never a follower of the safe, well-traveled road to Hollywood success, he has consistently struck out on his own, shattering movie conventions and shibboleths along the way. In many respects, his latest film, the epic "2001: A Space Odyssey," stands as a metaphor for Kubrick himself. A technically flawless production that took three years and $10,500,000 to create, "2001" could have been just a superspectacle of exotic gadgetry and lavish special effects; but with the collaboration of Arthur C. Clarke, astrophysicist and doyen *of science-fiction writers, Kubrick has elevated a sci-fi adventure to the level of allegory—creating a stunning and disturbing metaphysical speculation on man's destiny that has fomented a good-sized critical controversy and become a cocktail-party topic across the country. An uncompromising film, "2001" places a heavy intellectual burden upon the audience, compelling each viewer to unravel for himself its deeper meaning and significance. Its message is conveyed not through plot or standard expository dialog but through metaphysical hints and visual symbols that demand confrontation and interpretation.*

"2001" begins several million years in the past, with a vivid—and, to some, mystifying—sequence on the dawn of man. At first an apelike vegetarian living peacefully among other animals, he suddenly becomes a carnivorous and warlike protohuman, eager and ready to kill his neighbor in defense of the territorial imperative. The cosmic midwife of this transmogrification is a mysterious black monolith that appears at a crucial point in the ape's evolution and apparently inspires him to employ a bone as both weapon and tool. The monoliths are, in a very real sense, the protagonists of the picture; they appear, Siva-like, to offer man options for both good and evil, as represented by the weapon-tool—which, when flung triumphantly into the air by a jubilant warrior ape, dissolves into a spaceship languidly approaching a satellite space station.

The year is now 2001. Another monolith has been discovered buried beneath the moon's surface—and man is ready for his next evolutionary leap. The monolith broadcasts an earsplitting signal toward the planet Jupiter, and a team of five astronauts (three in hibernation) is sent there to determine the source of the mystery. But in the course of the journey, four of them die at the hands of Hal 9000—the ship's omniscient and omnipresent computer—who is so anthropomorphic that he suffers from the all-too-human sin of hubris. *The remaining astronaut (Keir Dullea) performs a mechanical lobotomy on Hal's memory circuits.*

Pursuing another monolith, floating among Jupiter's moons, Dullea is suddenly swept into a cosmic maelstrom that hurtles him through inner and outer space into new dimensions of consciousness. Finally, he emerges from his space capsule, death-eyed and white-haired, in an eerie Regency bedroom replete with Watteau paintings, French provincial furniture and a luminously glowing floor. Here he witnesses—and experiences—the successive stages of his life from old age into senescence and death—a death that becomes a mystical rebirth as the astronaut, shrunken and desiccated like the first apes, gazes up at yet another monolith at the foot of his bed and is absorbed into a sunburst of energy. Reborn as the first of a new race, the astronaut in the last scene floats fetally in space within a cosmic placenta—his huge eyes, worldly and other-worldly, turning for a last look at the earth he has left behind forever.

Critical reaction to "2001" was vehemently divided between those who declared it either an unqualified masterpiece or an absolute disaster. "Technically and imaginatively," wrote Penelope Gilliatt of The New Yorker, *"it is staggering."* The Washington Evening Star *called it "a gorgeous, exhilarating and mind-stretching spectacle," and* Cue *observed that it "dazzles the eyes and gnaws at the mind." But other reviewers concurred with the film critic for* Women's Wear Daily, *who termed it "not the worst film I've ever seen, simply the dullest," and with John Simon of* The New Leader, *who loftily dismissed the epic as "a kind of space-'Spartacus' and, more pretentious still, a shaggy God story." But Andrew Sarris of the* Village Voice *waxed most passionate of all the critics in his denunciation: "It is*

"In '2001' the message is the medium. I tried to create a visual experience, one that bypasses verbalized pigeonholing and directly penetrates the subconscious with its emotional and philosophical content."

"Within 200 years we will have reached a stage of genetic engineering where another race could transmit its genetic code to us by radio and we could then duplicate one of their species in our laboratories."

"All the attributes assigned to God could be the characteristics of biological entities who have evolved into something as remote from man as man is remote from the primordial ooze from which he first emerged."

anti-human, anti-science, and anti-progress . . . completely sexless, soulless: A dirge for the future."

Though Kubrick is by now accustomed to living in the eye of such critical hurricanes, his early background was hardly tempestuous. He was born in the Bronx in 1928, the son of a doctor who still practices there. Kubrick's adolescent ambition to become a jazz drummer was sidetracked at the age of 13, when his father gave him his first camera—a Graflex. Habitually quiet and introspective, young Kubrick made few friends, but his photographic talent blossomed rapidly. In 1945, two months before he graduated from Taft High School in the Bronx (with a lukewarm 67 average), he snapped a picture of a weeping news dealer surrounded by papers announcing F.D.R.'s death, submitted the photo to Look *and received $25 for his first published work. Shortly thereafter,* Look *also gave Kubrick his first job: he became one of the youngest photographers in the magazine's history.*

Kubrick stayed with the magazine until 1950, supplementing his modest income by playing chess in Washington Square Park at 25 cents a game (he is still a superior player); but he was becoming increasingly intrigued with cinema. His first film, "Day of the Fight," was a short documentary about prize fighter Walter Cartier. It cost all of $3900 to make, but Kubrick soon found he couldn't retrieve even this investment. Finally he sold the work to RKO-Pathé at a $100 loss. After one more unheralded documentary, Kubrick decided to try his hand—and his luck—at a feature-length film. He quit his job at Look, *raised $20,000—mostly from his father and his uncle—and began shooting "Fear and Desire," the story of four soldiers, isolated behind enemy lines during World War Two, who gain insights about themselves in their struggle to rejoin their outfit. Kubrick now regards the film as pretentious and amateurish, but many critics welcomed it as a remarkably sensitive first effort. Though rejected by all major distributors, "Fear and Desire" toured the art-house circuit and eventually broke even.*

After a decidedly commercial murder mystery called "Killer's Kiss," Kubrick went to work on "The Killing," an intricately contrived melodrama involving a race-track robbery. The film starred Sterling Hayden and won Kubrick his first widespread recognition. As Time *breathlessly declared: "At 27, writer-director Stanley Kubrick has shown more audacity with dialog and camera than Hollywood has seen since the obstreperous Orson Welles." Time subsequently called "The Killing" one of the ten best films of 1956, but the movie proved a box-office dud.*

Undismayed, Kubrick again focused his attention on a military subject: the blood-soaked battlefields of the western

front in World War One. The result was "Paths of Glory," the tragic story of three innocent French soldiers who live through a futile engagement with the Germans only to be executed as cowards by their own high command. With Kirk Douglas in the leading role, the film movingly depicted the bleak horror and meaninglessness of war. Though it, too, fared only modestly at the box office, it was universally hailed as a major work of cinematic art, and it made Kubrick a name to be reckoned with. Douglas, impressed with Kubrick's talent, asked him to direct the forthcoming "Spartacus," in which Douglas was to play the starring role. "It was the only film I didn't have full directorial control over," Kubrick recalls ruefully; but "Spartacus" was viewed by the critics as a cut above the standard Cinemascopic spectacular. It also made money.

Never one to rest on his laurels, Kubrick had already selected his next film: an adaptation of "Lolita," Vladimir Nabokov's sexy, scintillating best seller. Undaunted by the looming censorship problems involved in depicting the story of a passionate liaison between a middle-aged man and a sensuous nymphet, Kubrick selected James Mason to play Humbert Humbert and a Hollywood unknown—Sue Lyon—for the lead role. Kubrick then wisely decided to make the film in England, where the chance of censorial intervention was less likely than on home shores. The result was one of the biggest box-office hits in Hollywood history—and a superabundance of rave reviews. Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., then moonlighting as a film critic from his Presidential advisory post, called "Lolita" "a brilliant and sinister film, wildly funny and wildly poignant."

Well before the returns on "Lolita" were in, Kubrick was characteristically blocking out his next project. He had long been concerned with the prospect of accidental nuclear holocaust; and his fears were reinforced by a novel, "Red Alert," by Peter George. In collaboration with George—and with an indeterminate amount of assistance from black humorist Terry Southern (Kubrick and Southern still disagree heatedly on the extent of Southern's participation)—Kubrick produced "Dr. Strangelove," an overwhelming critical and commercial success. The film's darkly satirical antiwar message offended some Cold Warriors and travelers on the ultraright, but critic Stanley Kauffmann described it as "the best American picture that I can remember since Chaplain's 'Monsieur Verdoux' and Houston's 'Treasure of the Sierra Madre.'" And Time *declared, "It fulfills Stanley Kubrick's promise as one of the most audacious and imaginative directors the U.S. cinema has yet produced."*

Kubrick's meteoric career—launched into even higher orbit by his ambitious space odyssey to 2001—has made him a near legend in Hollywood, where he has

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won the devoted admiration of his co-workers and the respect of fellow directors and actors; no mean feat in Tinseltown. Marlon Brando, who has worked with Kubrick (though not always harmoniously), reports: "Stanley is unusually perceptive and delicately attuned to people. He has an adroit intellect and is a creative thinker, not a repeater, not a fact gatherer. He digests what he learns and brings to a new project an original point of view and a reserved passion." Kirk Douglas is more blunt: "Success can't hurt that kid. Stanley always knew he was good."

To discover what has made Kubrick so respected—and controversial—a director, and to plumb both his own complexities and those of "2001," PLAYBOY *interviewed Kubrick at his elegant mansion outside London, a short drive from MGM's studio at Borham Wood, where he is working on his latest film—a biography of Napoleon. Interviewer Eric Norden found Kubrick—"a slim, relaxed man with thinning hair, dark beard and intense eyes"—sprawled in a chair on the spacious expanse of lawn overlooking his elegantly tended gardens. "As Kubrick crossed one scuffed shoe over a wrinkled pants leg," writes Norden, "I began by asking him to decipher the metaphysical message of '2001.' Though his answer was enigmatically evasive, he was far more voluble about his space odyssey, and the destiny it prophesies for the human race, than about himself as man or moviemaker. It may be that he feels his private life is too dull to talk about, or perhaps too interesting, or simply nobody's business but his own. But I think it's more likely that he is one of those rare men whose self-concern is plural and impersonal, to whom the present is less real than the possible, who live less in the world of tangible reality than in the uncharted country of the mind." But not completely uncharted. Norden might have added, since many of Kubrick's imaginative extrapolations are predicated on theories and formulations with which science-fiction fans are fondly familiar. What lifts Kubrick's prognostications beyond the realm of most conventional sci-fi speculation is his preoccupation not with mechanistic externals but with the philosophical implications of man's future.*

PLAYBOY: Much of the controversy surrounding *2001* deals with the meaning of the metaphysical symbols that abound in the film—the polished black monoliths, the orbital conjunction of earth, moon and sun at each stage of the monoliths' intervention in human destiny, the stunning final kaleidoscopic maelstrom of time and space that engulfs the surviving astronaut and sets the stage for his rebirth as a "star child" drifting toward earth in a translucent placenta. One critic even called *2001* "the first Nietzschean film," contending

that its essential theme is Nietzsche's concept of man's evolution from ape to human to superman. What *was* the metaphysical message of *2001*?

KUBRICK: It's not a message that I ever intend to convey in words. *2001* is a nonverbal experience; out of two hours and 19 minutes of film, there are only a little less than 40 minutes of dialog. I tried to create a *visual* experience, one that bypasses verbalized pigeonholing and directly penetrates the subconscious with an emotional and philosophic content. To convolute McLuhan, in *2001*, the message is the medium. I intended the film to be an intensely subjective experience that reaches the viewer at an inner level of consciousness, just as music does; to "explain" a Beethoven symphony would be to emasculate it by erecting an artificial barrier between conception and appreciation. You're free to speculate as you wish about the philosophical and allegorical meaning of the film—and such speculation is one indication that it has succeeded in gripping the audience at a deep level—but I don't want to spell out a verbal road map for *2001* that every viewer will feel obligated to pursue or else fear he's missed the point. I think that if *2001* succeeds at all, it is in reaching a wide spectrum of people who would not often give a thought to man's destiny, his role in the cosmos and his relationship to higher forms of life. But even in the case of someone who is highly intelligent, certain ideas found in *2001* would, if presented as abstractions, fall rather lifelessly and be automatically assigned to pat intellectual categories; experienced in a moving visual and emotional context, however, they can resonate within the deepest fibers of one's being.

PLAYBOY: Without laying out a philosophical road map for the viewer, can you tell us your own interpretation of the meaning of the film?

KUBRICK: No, for the reasons I've already given. How much would we appreciate *La Gioconda* today if Leonardo had written at the bottom of the canvas: "This lady is smiling slightly because she has rotten teeth"—or "because she's hiding a secret from her lover"? It would shut off the viewer's appreciation and shackle him to a "reality" other than his own. I don't want that to happen to *2001*.

PLAYBOY: Arthur Clarke has said of the film, "If anyone understands it on the first viewing, we've failed in our intention." Why should the viewer have to see a film twice to get its message?

KUBRICK: I don't agree with that statement of Arthur's, and I believe he made it facetiously. The very nature of the visual experience in *2001* is to give the viewer an instantaneous, visceral reaction that does not—and should not—require further amplification. Just speaking generally, however, I would say that

there are elements in any good film that would increase the viewer's interest and appreciation on a second viewing; the momentum of a movie often prevents every stimulating detail or nuance from having a full impact the first time it's seen. The whole idea that a movie should be seen only once is an extension of our traditional conception of the film as an ephemeral entertainment rather than as a visual work of art. We don't believe that we should hear a great piece of music only once, or see a great painting once, or even read a great book just once. But the film has until recent years been exempted from the category of art—a situation I'm glad is finally changing.

PLAYBOY: Some prominent critics—including Renata Adler of *The New York Times*, John Simon of the *New Leader*, Judith Crist of *New York* magazine and Andrew Sarris of the *Village Voice*—apparently felt that *2001* should be among those films still exempted from the category of art: all four castigated it as dull, pretentious and overlong. How do you account for their hostility?

KUBRICK: The four critics you mention all work for New York publications. The reviews across America and around the world have been 95-percent enthusiastic. Some were more perceptive than others, of course, but even those who praised the film on relatively superficial grounds were able to get something of its message. New York was the only really hostile city. Perhaps there is a certain element of the lumpen literati that is so dogmatically atheist and materialist and earth-bound that it finds the grandeur of space and the myriad mysteries of cosmic intelligence anathema. But film critics, fortunately, rarely have any effect on the general public; houses everywhere are packed and the film is well on its way to becoming the greatest money-maker in MGM's history. Perhaps this sounds like a crass way to evaluate one's work, but I think that, especially with a film that is so obviously *different*, record audience attendance means people are saying the right things to one another after they see it—and isn't this really what it's all about?

PLAYBOY: Speaking of what it's all about—if you'll allow us to return to the philosophical interpretation of *2001*—would you agree with those critics who call it a profoundly religious film?

KUBRICK: I will say that the God concept is at the heart of *2001*—but not any traditional, anthropomorphic image of God. I don't believe in any of earth's monotheistic religions, but I do believe that one can construct an intriguing *scientific* definition of God, once you accept the fact that there are approximately 100 billion stars in our galaxy alone, that each star is a life-giving sun and that there are approximately 100 billion galaxies in just the *visible* universe. Given a planet in a stable orbit, not too hot and not too cold, and given a few billion years of chance chemical reactions created by the interaction of a sun's energy on the planet's chemicals, it's fairly certain that life in one form or another will eventually emerge. It's reasonable to assume that there must be, in fact, countless *billions* of such planets where biological life has arisen, and the odds of some proportion of such life developing intelligence are high. Now, the sun is by no means an old star, and its planets are mere children in cosmic age, so it seems likely that there are billions of planets in the universe not only where intelligent life is on a lower scale than man but other billions where it is approximately equal and others still where it is hundreds of thousands of millions of years in advance of us. When you think of the giant technological strides that man has made in a few millennia—less than a microsecond in the chronology of the universe—can you imagine the evolutionary development that much older life forms have taken? They may have progressed from biological species, which are fragile shells for the mind at best, into immortal machine entities—and then, over innumerable eons, they could emerge from the chrysalis of matter transformed into beings of pure energy and spirit. Their potentialities would be limitless and their intelligence ungraspable by humans.

PLAYBOY: Even assuming the cosmic evolutionary path you suggest, what has this to do with the nature of God?

KUBRICK: Everything—because these beings would *be* gods to the billions of less advanced races in the universe, just as man would appear a god to an ant that somehow comprehended man's existence. They would possess the twin attributes of all deities—omniscience and omnipotence. These entities might be in telepathic communication throughout the cosmos and thus be aware of everything that occurs, tapping every intelligent mind as effortlessly as we switch on the radio; they might not be limited by the speed of light and their presence could penetrate to the farthest corners of the universe; they might possess complete mastery over matter and energy; and in their final evolutionary stage, they might develop into an integrated collective immortal consciousness. They would be incomprehensible to us except as gods; and if the tendrils of their consciousness ever brushed men's minds, it is only the hand of God we could grasp as an explanation.

PLAYBOY: If such creatures do exist, why should they be interested in man?

KUBRICK: They may not be. But why should man be interested in microbes? The motives of such beings would be as alien to us as their intelligence.

PLAYBOY: In *2001*, such incorporeal creatures seem to manipulate our destinies and control our evolution, though

whether for good or evil—or both, or neither—remains unclear. Do you really believe it's possible that man is a cosmic plaything of such entities?

KUBRICK: I don't really *believe* anything about them; how can I? Mere speculation on the possibility of their existence is sufficiently overwhelming, without attempting to decipher their motives. The important point is that all the standard attributes assigned to God in our history could equally well be the characteristics of biological entities who billions of years ago were at a stage of development similar to man's own and evolved into something as remote from man as man is remote from the primordial ooze from which he first emerged.

PLAYBOY: In this cosmic phylogeny you've described, isn't it possible that there might be forms of intelligent life on an even higher scale than these entities of pure energy—perhaps as far removed from them as they are from us?

KUBRICK: Of course there could be; in an infinite, eternal universe, the point is that *anything* is possible, and it's unlikely that we can even begin to scratch the surface of the full range of possibilities. But at a time when astronauts are preparing to set foot on the moon, I think it's necessary to open up our earth-bound minds to such speculation. No one knows what's waiting for us in the universe. I think it was a prominent astronomer who wrote recently, "Sometimes I think we are alone, and sometimes I think we're not. In either case, the idea is quite staggering."

PLAYBOY: You said there must be billions of planets sustaining life that is considerably more advanced than man but has not yet evolved into non- or suprabiological forms. What do you believe would be the effect on humanity if the earth were contacted by a race of such ungodlike but technologically superior beings?

KUBRICK: There's a considerable difference of opinion on this subject among scientists and philosophers. Some contend that encountering a highly advanced civilization—even one whose technology is essentially comprehensible to us—would produce a traumatic cultural shock effect on man by divesting him of his smug ethnocentrism and shattering the delusion that he is the center of the universe. Carl Jung summed up this position when he wrote of contact with advanced extraterrestrial life that the "reins would be torn from our hands and we would, as a tearful old medicine man once said to me, find ourselves 'without dreams' . . . we would find our intellectual and spiritual aspirations so outmoded as to leave us completely paralyzed." I personally don't accept this position, but it's one that's widely held and can't be summarily dismissed.

In 1960, for example, the Committee for Long Range Studies of the Brookings Institution prepared a report for the National Aeronautics and Space Administration warning that even indirect contact—i.e., alien artifacts that might possibly be discovered through our space activities on the moon, Mars or Venus or via radio contact with an interstellar civilization—could cause severe psychological dislocations. The study cautioned that "Anthropological files contain many examples of societies, sure of their place in the universe, which have disintegrated when they have had to associate with previously unfamiliar societies espousing different ideas and different life ways; others that survived such an experience usually did so by paying the price of changes in values and attitudes and behavior." It concluded that since intelligent life might be discovered at any time, and that since the consequences of such a discovery are "presently unpredictable," it was advisable that the Government initiate continuing studies on the psychological and intellectual impact of confrontation with extraterrestrial life. What action was taken on this report I don't know, but I assume that such studies are now under way. However, while not discounting the possible adverse emotional impact on some people, I would personally tend to view such contact with a tremendous amount of excitement and enthusiasm. Rather than shattering our society, I think it could immeasurably enrich it.

Another positive point is that it's a virtual certainty that all intelligent life at one stage in its technological development must have discovered nuclear energy. This is obviously the watershed of any civilization; does it find a way to use nuclear power without destruction and harness it for peaceful purposes, or does it annihilate itself? I would guess that any civilization that has existed for 1000 years after its discovery of atomic energy has devised a means of accommodating itself to the bomb, and this could prove tremendously reassuring to us—as well as give us specific guidelines for our own survival. In any case, as far as cultural shock is concerned, my impression is that the attention span of most people is quite brief; after a week or two of great excitement and oversaturation in newspapers and on television, the public's interest would drop off and the United Nations, or whatever world body we then had, would settle down to discussions with the aliens.

PLAYBOY: You're assuming that extraterrestrials would be benevolent. Why?

KUBRICK: Why should a vastly superior race *bother* to harm or destroy us? If an intelligent ant suddenly traced a message in the sand at my feet reading, "I am sentient; let's talk things over," I doubt very much that I would rush to grind him under my heel. Even if they weren't superintelligent, though, but merely more advanced than mankind, I would tend to lean more toward the benevolence, or at least indifference, theory. Since it's most unlikely that we would be visited from within our own solar system, any society capable of traversing light-years of space would have to have an extremely high degree of control over matter and energy. Therefore, what possible motivation for hostility would they have? To steal our gold or oil or coal? It's hard to think of any nasty intention that would justify the long and arduous journey from another star.

PLAYBOY: You'll admit, though, that extraterrestrials are commonly portrayed in comic strips and cheap science-fiction films as bug-eyed monsters scuttling hungrily after curvaceous earth maidens.

KUBRICK: This probably dates back to the pulp science-fiction magazines of the Twenties and Thirties and perhaps even to the Orson Welles Martian-invasion broadcast in 1938 and the resultant mass hysteria, which is always advanced in support of the hypothesis that contact would cause severe cultural shock. In a sense, the lines with which Welles opened that broadcast set the tone for public consideration of extraterrestrial life for years to come. I've memorized them: "Across an immense ethereal gulf, minds that are to our minds as ours are to the beasts in the jungle—intellects vast, cool and unsympathetic—regarded this earth with envious eyes and slowly and surely drew their plans against us. . . ." Anything we can imagine about such other life forms is possible, of course. You could have psychotic civilizations, or decadent civilizations that have elevated pain to an aesthetic and might covet humans as gladiators or torture objects, or civilizations that might want us for zoos, or scientific experimentation, or slaves or even for food. While I am appreciably more optimistic, we just can't be sure *what* their motivations will be.

I'm interested in the argument of Professor Freeman Dyson of Princeton's Institute of Advanced Study, who contends that it would be a mistake to expect that all potential space visitors will be altruistic, or to believe that they would have *any* ethical or moral concepts comparable to mankind's. Dyson writes, if I remember him correctly, that "Intelligence may indeed be a benign influence creating isolated groups of philosopher kings far apart in the heavens," but it's just as likely that "Intelligence may be a cancer of purposeless technological exploitation, sweeping across a galaxy as irresistibly as it has swept across our own planet." Dyson concludes that it's "just as unscientific to impute to remote intelligence wisdom and serenity as it is to impute to them irrational and murderous impulses. We must be prepared for either possibility and conduct our searches accordingly."

This is why some scientists caution, now that we're attempting to intercept radio signals from other solar systems, that if we do receive a message we should wait awhile before answering it. But we've been transmitting radio and television signals

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for so many years that any advanced civilization could have received the emissions long ago. So in the final analysis, we really don't have much choice in this matter; they're either going to contact us or they're not, and if they do we'll have nothing to say about their benevolence or malevolence.

Even if they prove to be malevolent, their arrival would have at least one useful by-product in that the nations of the earth would stop squabbling among themselves and forge a common front to defend the planet. I think it was André Maurois who suggested many years ago that the best way to realize world peace would be to stage a false threat from outer space; it's not a bad idea. But I certainly don't believe we should view contact with extraterrestrial life forms with foreboding, or hesitate to visit other planets for fear of what we may find there. If others don't contact us, we must contact them; it's our destiny.

PLAYBOY: You indicated earlier that intelligent life is extremely unlikely elsewhere within our solar system. Why?

KUBRICK: From what we know of the other planets in this system, it appears improbable that intelligence exists, because of surface temperatures and atmospheres that are inhospitable to higher life forms. Improbable, but not impossible. I will admit that there are certain tantalizing clues pointing in the other direction. For example, while the consensus of scientific opinion dismisses the possibility of intelligent life on Mars—as opposed to plant or low orders of organic life—there are some eminently respectable dissenters. Dr. Frank B. Salisbury, professor of plant physiology at Utah State University, has contended in a study in *Science* magazine that if vegetation exists on a planet, then it is logical that there will be higher orders of life to feed on it. "From there," he writes, "it is but one more step—granted, a big one—to intelligent beings."

Salisbury also points out that a number of astronomers have observed strange flashes of light, possibly explosions of great magnitude, on Mars' surface, some of which emit clouds; and he suggests that these could actually be nuclear explosions. Another intriguing facet of Mars is the peculiar orbits of its twin satellites, Phobos and Deimos, first discovered in 1877—the same year, incidentally, that Schiaparelli discovered his famous but still elusive Martian "canals." One eminent astronomer, Dr. Josif Shklovsky, chairman of the department of radio astronomy at the Shternberg Astronomical Institute in Moscow, has propounded the theory that both moons are artificial space satellites launched by the Martians thousands of years ago in an effort to escape the dying surface of their planet. He bases this theory on the unique orbits of the two moons, which, unlike the 31 other satellites in our solar system, orbit *faster* than the revolution of their host planet. The orbit of Phobos is also deteriorating in an inexplicable manner and dragging the satellite progressively closer to Mars' surface. Both of these circumstances, Shklovsky contends, make sense only if the two moons are *hollow*.

Shklovsky believes that the satellites are the last remnants of an extinct ancient Martian civilization; but Professor Salisbury goes a step further and suggests that they were launched within the past hundred years. Noting that the moons were discovered by a relatively small-power telescope in 1877 and not detected by a much more powerful telescope observing Mars in 1862—when the planet was appreciably nearer earth—he asks: "Should we attribute the failure of 1862 to imperfections in the existing telescope, or may we imagine that the satellites were launched into orbit between 1862 and 1877?" There are no answers here, of course, only questions, but it is fascinating speculation. On balance, however, I would have to say that the weight of available evidence dictates against intelligent life on Mars.

PLAYBOY: How about possibilities, if not the probabilities, of intelligent life on the other planets?

KUBRICK: Most scientists and astronomers rule out life on the outer planets since their surface temperatures are thousands of degrees either above or below zero and their atmosphere would be poisonous. I suppose it's possible that life could evolve on such planets with, say, a liquid ammonia or methane base, but it doesn't appear too likely. As far as Venus goes, the Mariner probes indicate that the surface temperature of the planet is approximately 800 degrees Fahrenheit, which would deny the chemical basis for molecular development of life. And there could be no indigenous intelligent life on the moon, because of the total lack of atmosphere—no life as we know it, in any case; though I suppose that intelligent rocks or crystals, or statues, with a silicone life base are not really impossible, or even conscious gaseous matter or swarms of sentient electric particles. You'd get no technology from such creatures, but if their intelligence could control matter, why would they need it? There could be nothing about them, however, even remotely humanoid—a form that would appear to be an eminently practicable universal life prototype.

PLAYBOY: What do you think we'll find on the moon?

KUBRICK: I think the most exciting prospect about the moon is that if alien races have ever visited earth in the remote past and left artifacts for man to discover in the future, they probably chose the arid, airless lunar vacuum, where no deterioration would take place and an object could exist for millennia. It would be inevitable that as man evolved technologically, he would reach his nearest satellite and the aliens would then expect him to find their calling card—perhaps a message of greeting, a cache of knowledge or simply a cosmic burglar alarm signaling that another race had mastered space flight. This, of course, was the central situation of *2001*.

But an equally fascinating question is whether there could be another race of intelligent life on earth. Dr. John Lilly, whose research into dolphins has been funded by the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, has amassed considerable evidence pointing to the possibility that the bottle-nosed dolphin may be as intelligent as or more intelligent than man. [See *Deep Thinkers* in PLAYBOY, August 1968—*Ed.*] He bases this not only on its brain size—which is larger than man's and with a more complex cortex—but on the fact that dolphins have evolved an extensive language. Lilly is currently attempting, with some initial success, to decipher this language and establish communication with the dolphins. NASA's interest in this is obvious, because learning to communicate with dolphins would be a highly instructive precedent for learning to communicate with alien races on other planets. Of course, if the dolphins are really intelligent, theirs is obviously a nontechnological culture, since without an apposable thumb, they could never create artifacts. Their intelligence might also be on a totally different order than man's, which could make communication additionally difficult. Dr. Lilly has written that "It is probable that their intelligence is comparable to ours, though in a very strange fashion . . . they may have a new class of large brain so dissimilar to ours that we cannot within our lifetime possibly understand its mental processes." Their culture may be totally devoted to creating works of poetry or devising abstract mathematical concepts, and they could conceivably share a telepathic communication to supplement their high-frequency underwater language.

What is particularly interesting is that dolphins appear to have developed a concept of altruism; the stories of shipwrecked sailors rescued by dolphins and carried to shore, or protected by them against sharks, are by no means all old wives' tales. But I'm rather disturbed by some recent developments that indicate not only how we may treat dolphins but also how we may treat intelligent races on other planets. The Navy, impressed by the dolphin's apparent intelligence, is reported to have been engaging in underwater-demolition experiments in which a live torpedo is strapped to a dolphin and detonated by radio when it nears a prototype enemy submarine. These experiments have been officially denied; but if they're

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true, I'm afraid we may learn more about man through dolphins than the other way around. The Russians, paradoxically, seem to be one step ahead of us in this area; they recently banned all catching of dolphins in Russian waters on the grounds that "Comrade Dolphin" is a fellow sentient being and killing him would be morally equivalent to murder.

PLAYBOY: Although flying saucers are frequently an object of public derision, there has been a good deal of serious discussion in the scientific community about the possibility that UFOs could be alien spacecraft. What's your opinion?

KUBRICK: The most significant analysis of UFOs I've seen recently was written by L. M. Chassin, a French air force general who had been a high-ranking NATO officer. He argues that by any legal rules of evidence, there is now sufficient sighting data amassed from reputable sources—astronomers, pilots, radar operators and the like—to initiate a serious and thorough world-wide investigation of UFO phenomena. Actually, if you examine even a fraction of the extant testimony you will find that people have been sent to the gas chamber on far less substantial evidence. Of course, it's possible that all the governments in the world really *do* take UFOs seriously and perhaps are already engaging in secret study projects to determine their origin, nature and intentions. If so, they may not be disclosing their findings for fear that the public would be alarmed—the danger of cultural shock deriving from confrontation with the unknown which we discussed earlier, and which is an element of *2001*, when news of the monolith's discovery on the moon is suppressed. But I think even the two percent of sightings that the Air Force's Project Blue Book admits is unexplainable by conventional means should dictate a serious, searching probe. From all indications, the current Government-authorized investigation at the University of Colorado is neither serious nor searching.

One hopeful sign that this subject may at last be accorded the serious discussion it deserves, however, is the belated but exemplary conversion of Dr. J. Allen Hynek, since 1948 the Air Force's consultant on UFOs and currently chairman of the astronomy department at Northwestern University. Hynek, who in his official capacity pooh-poohed UFO sightings, now believes that UFOs deserve top-priority attention—as he wrote in PLAYBOY [December 1967]—and even concedes that the existing evidence may indicate a possible connection with extraterrestrial life. He predicts: "I will be surprised if an intensive study yields nothing. To the contrary, I think that mankind may be in for the greatest adventure since dawning human intelligence turned outward to contemplate the universe." I agree with him.

PLAYBOY: If flying saucers are real, who or what do you think they might be?

KUBRICK: I don't know. The evidence proves they're up there, but it gives us very little clue as to what they are. Some science-fiction writers theorize half-seriously that they could be time shuttles flicking back and forth between eons to a future age when man has mastered temporal travel; and I understand that biologist Ivan Sanderson has even advanced a theory that they may be some kind of living space animal inhabiting the upper stratosphere—though I can't give much credence to that suggestion. It's also possible that they are perfectly natural phenomena, perhaps chain lightning, as one American science writer has suggested; although this, again, does not explain some of the photographs taken by reputable sources, such as the Argentine navy, which clearly show spherical metallic objects hovering in the sky. As you've probably deduced, I'm really fascinated by UFOs and I only regret that this field of investigation has to a considerable extent been pre-empted by a crackpot fringe that claims to have soared to Mars on flying saucers piloted by three-foot-tall green humanoids with pointy heads. That kind of kook approach makes it very easy to dismiss the whole phenomenon which we do at our own risk.

I think another problem here—and one of the reasons that, despite the overwhelming evidence, there has been remarkably little public interest—is that most people don't really *want* to think about extraterrestrial beings patrolling our skies and perhaps observing us like bugs on a slide. The thought is too disturbing; it upsets our tidy, soothing, sanitized suburban *Weltanschauung*; the cosmos is more than light-years away from Scarsdale. This could be a survival mechanism, but it could also blind us to what may be the most dramatic and important moment in man's history—contact with another civilization.

PLAYBOY: Among the reasons adduced by those who doubt the interstellar origin of UFOs is Einstein's special theory of relativity, which states that the speed of light is absolute and that nothing can exceed it. A journey from even the nearest star to earth would consequently take thousands of years. They claim this virtually rules out interstellar travel—at least for sentient beings with life spans as short as the longest known to man. Do you find this argument valid?

KUBRICK: I find it difficult to believe that we have penetrated to the ultimate depths of knowledge about the physical laws of the universe. It seems rather presumptuous to believe that in the space of a few hundred years, we've figured out most of what there is to know. So I don't think it's right to declaim with unshakable certitude that light is the absolute speed limit of the universe. I'm suspicious of dogmatic scientific rules; they tend to have a rather short life span. The most eminent European scientists of the early 19th Century scoffed at meteorites, on the grounds that "stones can't fall from the sky"; and just a year before Sputnik, one of the world's leading astrophysicists stated flatly that "space flight is bunk." Actually, there are already some extremely

"One thing about these film-obscenity cases—you get to see a lot of great movies!"

"I got news for you—her voice ain't the only thing about her that's 'technically augmented.'"

interesting theoretical studies under way—one by Dr. Gerald Feinberg at Columbia University—which indicate that short cuts could be found that would enable some things under certain conditions to exceed the speed of light.

In addition, there's always the possibility that the speed-of-light limitation, even if it's rigid, could be circumvented via a space-time warp, as Arthur Clarke has proposed. But let's take another, slightly more conservative, means of evading the speed of light's restrictions: If radio contact is developed between ourselves and another civilization, within 200 years we will have reached a stage in genetic engineering where the other race could transmit its genetic code to us by radio and we could then re-create their DNA pattern and artificially duplicate one of their species in our laboratories—and vice versa. This sounds fantastic only to those who haven't followed the tremendous breakthroughs being made in genetic engineering.

But actual interstellar travel wouldn't be impossible even if light speed *can't* be achieved. Whenever we dismiss space flight beyond our solar system on the grounds that it would take thousands of years, we are thinking of beings with life spans similar to ours. Fruit flies, I understand, live out their entire existence—birth, reproduction and death—within 24 hours; well, man may be to other creatures in the universe as the fruit fly is to man. There may be countless races in the universe with life spans of hundreds of thousands or even millions of years, to whom a 10,000-year journey to earth would be about as intimidating as an afternoon outing in the park. But even in terms of our own time scale, within a few years it should be possible to freeze astronauts or induce a hibernatory suspension of life functions for the duration of an interstellar journey. They could spend 300 or 1000 years in space and be awakened automatically, feeling no different than if they had had a hearty eight hours' sleep.

The speed-of-light theory, too, could work in favor of long journeys; the peculiar "time dilation" factor in Einstein's relativity theory means that as an object accelerates toward the speed of light, time slows down. Everything would appear normal to those on board; but if they had been away from earth for, say, 56 years, upon their return they would be merely 20 years older than when they departed. So, taking all these factors into consideration, I'm not unduly impressed by the claims of some scientists that the speed-of-light limitation renders interstellar travel impossible.

PLAYBOY: You mentioned freezing astronauts for lengthy space journeys, as in the "hibernacula" of *2001*. As you know, physicist Robert Ettinger and others have proposed freezing *dead* bodies in liquid nitrogen until a future time when they can be revived. What do you think of this proposal?

KUBRICK: I've been interested in it for many years, and I consider it eminently feasible. Within ten years, in fact, I believe that freezing of the dead will be a major industry in the United States and throughout the world; I would recommend it as a field of investment for imaginative speculators. Dr. Ettinger's thesis is quite simple: If a body is frozen cryogenically in liquid nitrogen at a temperature near absolute zero—minus 459.6 degrees Fahrenheit—and stored in adequate facilities, it may very well be possible at some as-yet-indeterminate date in the future to thaw and revive the corpse and then cure the disease or repair the physical damage that was the original cause of death. This would, of course, entail a considerable gamble; we have no way of knowing that future science will be sufficiently advanced to cure, say, terminal cancer, or even successfully revive a frozen body. In addition, the dead body undergoes damage in the course of the freezing process itself; ice crystallizes within the blood stream. And unless a body is frozen at the precise moment of death, progressive brain-cell deterioration also occurs. But what do we have to lose? Nothing—and we have immortality to gain. Let me read you what Dr. Ettinger has written: "It used to be thought that the distinction between life and death was simple and obvious. A living man breathes, sweats and makes stupid remarks; a dead one just lies there, pays no attention, and after a while gets putrid. But nowadays nothing is that simple."

Actually, when you really examine the concept of freezing the dead, it's nowhere nearly as fantastic—though every bit as revolutionary—as it appears at first. After all, countless thousands of patients "die" on the operating table and are revived by artificial stimulation of the heart after a few seconds or even a few minutes—and there is really little substantive difference between bringing a patient back to life after three minutes of clinical death or after an "intermezzo" stage of 300 years. Fortunately, the freezing concept is now gaining an increasing amount of attention within the scientific community. France's Dr. Jean Rostand, an internationally respected biologist, has proposed that every nation begin a freezer program immediately, funded by government money and utilizing the top scientific minds in each country. "For every day that we delay," he says, "untold thousands are going to an unnecessary grave."

PLAYBOY: Are you interested in being frozen yourself?

KUBRICK: I would be if there were adequate facilities available at the present time—which, unfortunately, there are not. A number of organizations are attempting to disseminate information and raise funds to implement an effective freezing program—the Life Extension Society of Washington, the Cryonics Society of New York, etc.—but we are still in the infancy of cryobiology. Right now, all existing freezer facilities—and there are only a handful—aren't sufficiently sophisticated to offer any realistic hope. But that could and probably will change far more rapidly than we imagine.

A key point to remember, particularly by those ready to dismiss this whole concept as preposterous, is that science has made fantastic strides in just the past 40 years; within this brief period of time, a wide range of killer diseases that once were the scourge of mankind, from smallpox to diphtheria, have been virtually eliminated through vaccines and antibiotics; while others, such as diabetes, have been brought under control—though not yet completely eliminated—by drugs such as insulin. Already, heart transplants are almost a viable proposition, and organ banks are being prepared to stock supplies of spleens, kidneys, lungs and hearts for future transplant surgery.

Dr. Ettinger predicts that a "freezee" who died after a severe accident or massive internal damage would emerge resuscitated from a hospital of the future a "crazy quilt of patchwork." His internal organs—heart, lungs, liver, kidneys, stomach and the rest—may be grafts, implanted after being grown in the laboratory from someone's donor cells. His arms and legs may be "bloodless artifacts of fabric, metal and plastic, directed by tiny motors." His brain cells, writes Ettinger, "may be mostly new, regenerated from the few which would be saved, and some of his memories and personality traits may have had to be imprinted onto the new cells by microtechniques of chemistry and physics." The main challenge to the scientist of the future will not be revival but eliminating the original cause of death; and in this area, we have every reason for optimism as a result of recent experience. So before anyone dismisses the idea of freezing, he should take a searching look at what we have accomplished in a few decades—and ponder what we're capable of accomplishing over the next few centuries.

PLAYBOY: If such a program does succeed, the person who is frozen will have no way of knowing, of course, if he will ever be successfully revived. Do you think future scientists will be willing, even if they're able, to bring their ancestors back to life?

KUBRICK: Well, 20th Century man may not be quite the cup of tea for a more advanced civilization of even 100 years in the future; but unless the future culture

has achieved immortality—which is scientifically quite possible—they themselves would be frozen at death, and every generation would have a vested interest in the preservation of the preceding frozen generation in order to be, in turn, preserved by its own descendants. Of course, it would be something of a letdown if, 300 years from now, somebody just pulled the plug on us all, wouldn't it?

Another problem here, quite obviously, is the population explosion; what will be the demographic effect on the earth of billions of frozen bodies suddenly revived and taking their places in society? But by the time future scientists have mastered the techniques to revive their frozen ancestors, space flight will doubtless be a reality and other planets will be open for colonization. In addition, vast freezer facilities could possibly be constructed on the dark side of the moon to store millions of bodies. The problems are legion, of course, but so are the potentialities.

PLAYBOY: Opponents of cryogenic freezing argue that death is the natural and inevitable culmination of life and that we shouldn't tamper with it—even if we're able to do so. How would you answer them?

KUBRICK: Death is no more natural or inevitable than smallpox or diphtheria. Death is a disease and as susceptible to cure as any other disease. Over the eons, man's powerlessness to prevent death has led him to force it from the forefront of his mind, for his own psychological health, and to accept it unquestioningly as the unavoidable termination. But with the advance of science, this is no longer necessary—or desirable. Freezing is only one possible means of conquering death, and it certainly would not be binding on everyone; those who desire a "natural" death can go ahead and die, just as those in the 19th Century who desired "God-ordained" suffering resisted anesthesia. As Dr. Ettinger has written, "To each his own, and to those who choose not to be frozen, all I can say is—rot in good health."

PLAYBOY: Freezing and resuscitation of the dead is just one revolutionary scientific technique that could transform our society. Looking ahead to the year of your film, 2001, what major social and scientific changes do you foresee?

KUBRICK: Perhaps the greatest breakthrough we may have made by 2001 is the possibility that man may be able to eliminate old age. We've just discussed the steady scientific conquest of disease; even when this is accomplished, however, the scourge of old age will remain. But too many people view senile decay, like death itself, as inevitable. It's nothing of the sort. The highly respected Russian scientist V. F. Kuprevich has written, "I am sure we can find means for switching off the mechanisms which make cells age." Dr. Bernard Strehler, an eminent gerontology expert, contends that there is no inherent contradiction, no inherent property of cells or of Metazoa that precludes their organization into perpetually functioning and self-replenishing individuals.

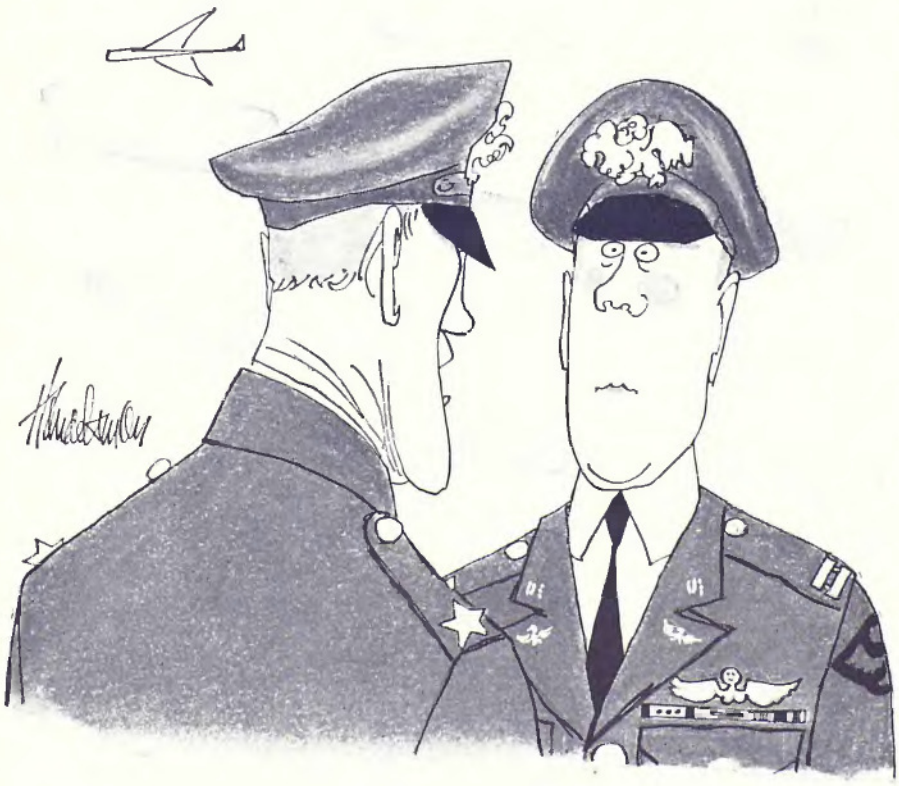
One encouraging indication that we may already be on this road is the work of Dr. Hans Selye, who in his book *Calciphylaxis* presents an intriguing and well-buttressed argument that old age is caused by the transfer of calcium within the body—a transfer that can be arrested by circulating throughout the system specific iron compounds that flush out the calcium, absorb it and prevent it from permeating the tissue. Dr. Selye predicts that we may soon be able to prevent the man of 60 from progressing to the condition of the man of 90. This is something of an understatement; Selye could have added that the man of 60 could *stay* 60 for hundreds or even thousands of years if all other diseases have been eradicated. Even accidents would not necessarily impair his relative immortality; even if a man is run over by a steam-roller, his mind and body will be completely re-creatable from the tiniest fragment of his tissue, if genetic engineering continues its rapid progress.

PLAYBOY: What impact do you think such dramatic scientific breakthroughs will have on the life style of society at the turn of the century?

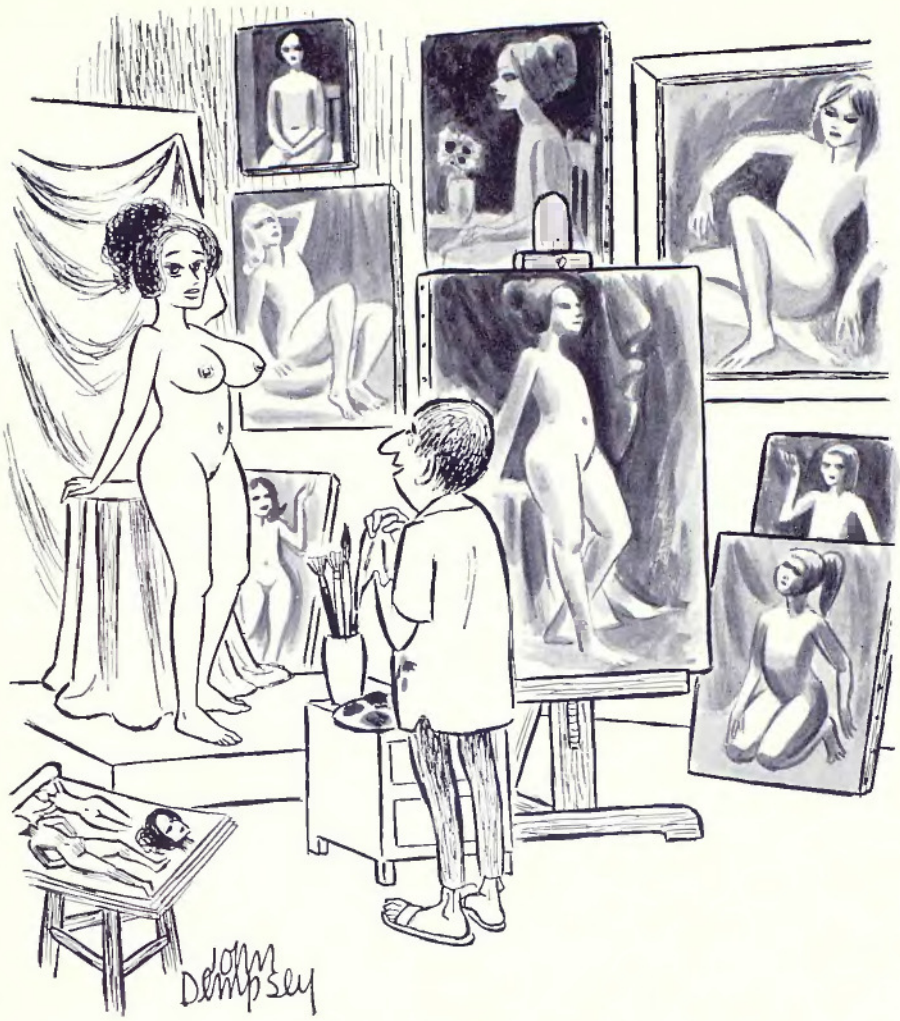
KUBRICK: That's almost impossible to say. Who could have predicted in 1900 what life in 1968 would be like? Technology is, in many ways, more predictable than human behavior. Politics and world affairs change so quickly that it's difficult to predict the future of social institutions for even ten years with a modicum of accuracy. By 2001, we could be living in a Gandhiesque paradise where all men are brothers, or in a neofascist dictatorship, or just be muddling along about the way we are today. As technology evolves, however, there's little doubt that the whole concept of leisure will be both quantitatively and qualitatively improved.

PLAYBOY: What about the field of entertainment?

KUBRICK: I'm sure we'll have sophisticated 3-D holographic television and films, and it's possible that completely new forms of entertainment and education will be devised. You might have a machine that taps the brain and ushers you into a vivid dream experience in which you are the protagonist in a romance or an adventure. On a more serious level, a similar machine could directly program you with knowledge; in this way, you might, for example, easily be able to learn fluent German in 20 minutes. Currently, the



"Remember: military targets only! Be sure you hit nothing except bases, dumps, roads, factories, bridges, trains, ships, houses, fields, forests, buildings, vehicles, or anything else that may look suspicious."



"That'll be all for now, Miss Dunn. I have to get ready for my appointment with my psychiatrist."

learning processes are so laborious and time-consuming that a breakthrough is really needed.

On the other hand, there are some risks in this kind of thing; I understand that at Yale they've been engaging in experiments in which the pleasure center of a mouse's brain has been localized and stimulated by electrodes; the result is that the mouse undergoes an eight-hour orgasm. If pleasure that intense were readily available to all of us, we might well become a race of sensually stultified zombies plugged into pleasure stimulators while machines do our work and our bodies and minds atrophy. We could also have this same problem with psychedelic drugs; they offer great promise of unleashing perceptions, but they also hold commensurate dangers of causing withdrawal and disengagement from life into a totally inner-directed kind of Soma world. At the present time, there are no ideal drugs; but I believe by 2001 we will have devised chemicals with no adverse physical, mental or genetic results that can give wings to the mind and enlarge perception beyond its present evolutionary capacities.

Actually, up to now, perception on the deepest level has really, from an evolutionary point of view, been detrimental to survival; if primitive man had been content to sit on a ledge by his cave absorbed in a beautiful sunset or a complex cloud configuration, he might never have exterminated his rival species —but neither would he have achieved mastery of the planet. Now, however, man is faced with the unprecedented situation of potentially unlimited material and technological resources at his disposal and a tremendous amount of leisure time. At last, he has the opportunity to look both within and beyond himself with a new perspective—without endangering or impeding the progress of the species. Drugs, intelligently used, can be a valuable guide to this new expansion of our consciousness. But if employed just for kicks, or to dull rather than to expand perception, they can be a highly negative influence. There should be fascinating drugs available by 2001; what *use* we make of them will be the crucial question.

PLAYBOY: Have you ever used LSD or other so-called consciousness-expanding drugs?

KUBRICK: No. I believe that drugs are basically of more use to the audience than to the artist. I think that the illusion of oneness with the universe, and absorption with the significance of every object in your environment, and the pervasive aura of peace and contentment is not the ideal state for an artist. It tranquilizes the creative personality, which thrives on conflict and on the clash and ferment of ideas. The artist's transcendence must be within his own work; he should not impose any artificial barriers between himself and the mainspring of his subconscious. One of the things that's turned me against LSD is that all the people I know who use it have a peculiar inability to distinguish between things that are really interesting and stimulating and things that *appear* so in the state of universal bliss the drug induces on a "good" trip. They seem to completely lose their critical faculties and disengage themselves from some of the most stimulating areas of life. Perhaps when *everything* is beautiful, nothing is beautiful.

PLAYBOY: What stage do you believe today's sexual revolution will have reached by 2001?

KUBRICK: Here again, it's pure speculation. Perhaps there will have been a reaction against present trends, and the pendulum will swing back to a kind of neo-puritanism. But it's more likely that the so-called sexual revolution, midwifed by the pill, will be extended. Through drugs, or perhaps via the sharpening or even mechanical amplification of latent ESP functions, it may be possible for each partner to simultaneously experience the sensations of the other; or we may eventually emerge into polymorphous sexual beings, with the male and female components blurring, merging and interchanging. The potentialities for exploring new areas of sexual experience are virtually boundless.

PLAYBOY: In view of these trends, do you think romantic love may have become unfashionable by 2001?

KUBRICK: Obviously, people are finding it increasingly easy to have intimate and fulfilling relationships outside the concept of romantic love—which, in its present form, is a relatively recent acquisition, developed at the court of Eleanor of Aquitaine in the 12th Century—but the basic love relationship, even at its most obsessional, is too deeply ingrained in man's psyche not to endure in one form or another. It's not going to be easy to circumvent our primitive emotional programing. Man still has essentially the same set of pair-bonding instincts—love, jealousy, possessiveness—imprinted for individual and tribal survival millions of years ago, and these still lie quite close to the

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surface, even in these allegedly enlightened and liberated times.

PLAYBOY: Do you think that by 2001 the institution of the family, which some social scientists have characterized as moribund, may have evolved into something quite different from what it is today?

KUBRICK: One can offer all kinds of impressive intellectual arguments against the family as an institution—its inherent authoritarianism, etc.; but when you get right down to it, the family is the most primitive and visceral and vital unit in society. You may stand outside your wife's hospital room during childbirth muttering, "My God, what a responsibility! Is it right to take on this terrible obligation? What am I really doing here?"; and then you go in and look down at the face of your child and—zap!—that ancient programing takes over and your response is one of wonder and joy and pride. It's a classic case of genetically imprinted social patterns. There are very few things in this world that have an unquestionable importance in and of themselves and are not susceptible to debate or rational argument, but the family is one of them. Perhaps man has been too "liberated" by science and evolutionary social trends. He has been turned loose from religion and has hailed the death of his gods; the imperative loyalties of the old nation-state are dissolving and all the old social and ethical values, however reactionary and narrow they often were, are disappearing. Man in the 20th Century has been cut adrift in a rudderless boat on an uncharted sea; if he is going to stay sane throughout the voyage, he must have someone to care about, something that is more important than himself.

PLAYBOY: Some critics have detected not only a deep pessimism but also a kind of misanthropy in much of your work. In *Dr. Strangelove*, for example, one reviewer commented that your directorial attitude, despite the film's antiwar message, seemed curiously aloof and detached and unmoved by the annihilation of mankind, almost as if the earth were being cleansed of an infection. Is there any truth to that?

KUBRICK: Good God, no. You don't stop being concerned with man because you recognize his essential absurdities and frailties and pretensions. To me, the only real immorality is that which endangers the species; and the only absolute evil, that which threatens its annihilation. In the deepest sense, I believe in man's potential and in his capacity for progress. In *Strangelove*, I was dealing with the inherent irrationality in man that threatens to destroy him; that irrationality is with us as strongly today, and must be conquered. But a recognition of insanity doesn't imply a celebration of it—nor a sense of despair and futility about the possibility of curing it.

PLAYBOY: In the five years since *Dr. Strangelove* was released, the two major nuclear powers, the U. S. and the U. S. S. R., have reached substantial accommodation with each other. Do you think this has reduced the danger of nuclear war?

KUBRICK: No. If anything, the overconfident Soviet-American *détente increases* the threat of accidental war through carelessness; this has always been the greatest menace and the one most difficult to cope with. The danger that nuclear weapons may be used—perhaps by a secondary power—is as great if not greater than it has ever been, and it is really quite amazing that the world has been able to adjust to it psychologically with so little apparent dislocation.

Particularly acute is the possibility of war breaking out as the result of a sudden unanticipated flare-up in some part of the world, triggering a panic reaction and catapulting confused and frightened men into decisions they are incapable of making rationally. In addition, the serious threat remains that a psychotic figure somewhere in the modern command structure could start a war, or at the very least a limited exchange of nuclear weapons that could devastate wide areas and cause innumerable casualties. This, of course, was the theme of *Dr. Strangelove*; and I'm not entirely assured that somewhere in the Pentagon or the Red army upper echelons there does not exist the real-life prototype of General Jack D. Ripper.

PLAYBOY: Fail-safe strategists have suggested that one way to obviate the danger that a screwball might spark a war would be to administer psychological-fitness tests to all key personnel in the nuclear command structure. Would that be an effective safeguard?

KUBRICK: No, because any seriously disturbed individual who rose high within the system would have to possess considerable self-discipline and be able to effectively mask his fixations. Such tests already do exist to a limited degree, but you'd really have to be pretty far gone to betray yourself in them, and the type of individual we're discussing would have to be a highly controlled psychopathic personality not to have given himself away long ago. But beyond those tests, how are you going to objectively assess the sanity of the President, in whom, as Commander-in-Chief, the ultimate responsibility for the use of nuclear weapons resides? It's improbable but not impossible that we could someday have a psychopathic President, or a President who suffers a nervous breakdown, or an alcoholic President who, in the course of some stupefying binge, starts a war. You could say that such a man would be detected and restrained by his aides—but with the powers of the Presidency what they are today, who really knows? Less farfetched and even more terrifying is the possibility that a psychopathic individual could work his way into the lower echelons of the White House staff. Can you imagine what might have happened

"Could I borrow some oil? It's for my bedspring."

"Today you're going to march in there and ask for an increase in knowledge."

at the height of the Cuban Missile Crisis if some deranged waiter had slipped LSD into Kennedy's coffee—or, on the other side of the fence, into Khrushchev's vodka? The possibilities are chilling.

PLAYBOY: Do you share the belief of some psychiatrists that our continued reliance on the balance of nuclear power, with all its attendant risks of global catastrophe, could reflect a kind of collective death wish?

KUBRICK: No, but I think the *fear* of death helps explain why people accept this Damoclean sword over their heads with such bland equanimity. Man is the only creature aware of his own mortality and is at the same time generally incapable of coming to grips with this awareness and all its implications. Millions of people thus, to a greater or lesser degree, experience emotional anxieties, tensions and unresolved conflicts that frequently express themselves in the form of neuroses and a general joylessness that permeates their lives with frustration and bitterness and increases as they grow older and see the grave yawning before them. As fewer and fewer people find solace in religion as a buffer between themselves and the terminal moment, I actually believe that they unconsciously derive a kind of perverse solace from the idea that in the event of nuclear war, the world dies with them. God is dead, but the bomb endures; thus, they are no longer alone in the terrible vulnerability of their mortality. Sartre once wrote that if there was one thing you could tell a man about to be executed that would make him happy, it was that a comet would strike the earth the next day and destroy every living human being. This is not so much a collective death wish or self-destructive urge as a reflection of the awesome and agonizing loneliness of death. This is extremely pernicious, of course, because it aborts the kind of fury and indignation that should galvanize the world into defusing a situation where a few political leaders on both sides are seriously prepared to incinerate millions of people out of some misguided sense of national interest.

PLAYBOY: Are you a pacifist?

KUBRICK: I'm not sure what pacifism really means. Would it have been an act of superior morality to have submitted to Hitler in order to avoid war? I don't think so. But there have also been tragically senseless wars such as World War One and the current mess in Vietnam and the plethora of religious wars that pockmark history. What makes today's situation so radically different from anything that has gone before, however, is that, for the first time in history, man has the means to destroy the entire species—and possibly the planet as well. The problem of dramatizing this to the public is that it all seems so abstract and unreal; it's rather like saying, "The sun is going to die in a billion years." What is required as a minimal first corrective step is a concrete alternative to the present balance of terror—one that people can understand and support.

PLAYBOY: Do you believe that some form of all-powerful world government, or some radically new social, political and economic system, could deal intelligently and farsightedly with such problems as nuclear war?

KUBRICK: Well, none of the present systems has worked very well, but I don't know what we'd replace them with. The idea of a group of philosopher kings running everything with benign and omniscient paternalism is always attractive, but where do we find the philosopher kings? And if we do find them, how do we provide for their successors? No, it has to be conceded that democratic society, with all its inherent strains and contradictions, is unquestionably the best system anyone ever worked out. I believe it was Churchill who once remarked that democracy is the worst social system in the world, except for all the others.

PLAYBOY: You've been accused of revealing, in your films, a strong hostility to the modern industrialized society of the democratic West, and a particular antagonism—ambivalently laced with a kind of morbid fascination—toward automation. Your critics claim this was especially evident in *2001*, where the archvillain of the film, the computer Hal 9000, was in a sense the only human being. Do you believe that machines are becoming more like men and men more like machines—and do you detect an eventual struggle for dominance between the two?

KUBRICK: First of all, I'm not hostile toward machines at all; just the opposite, in fact. There's no doubt that we're entering a mechanarchy, however, and that our already complex relationship with our machinery will become even more complex as the machines become more and more intelligent. Eventually, we will have to share this planet with machines whose intelligence and

abilities far surpass our own. But the interrelationship—if intelligently managed by man—could have an immeasurably enriching effect on society.

Looking into the distant future, I suppose it's not inconceivable that a semisentient robot-computer subculture could evolve that might one day decide it no longer needed man. You've probably heard the story about the ultimate computer of the future: For months scientists think of the first question to pose to it, and finally they hit on the right one: "Is there a God?" After a moment of whirring and flashing lights, a card comes out, punched with the words: THERE IS NOW. But this problem is a distant one and I'm not staying up nights worrying about it; I'm convinced that our toasters and TVs are fully domesticated, though I'm not so sure about integrated telephone circuits, which sometimes strike me as possessing a malevolent life all their own.

PLAYBOY: Speaking of futuristic electronics and mechanics, *2001*'s incredibly elaborate gadgetry and scenes of space flight have been hailed—even by hostile critics—as a major cinematic breakthrough. How were you able to achieve such remarkable special effects?

KUBRICK: I can't answer that question technically in the time we have available, but I can say that it was necessary to conceive, design and engineer completely new techniques in order to produce the special effects. This took 18 months and $6,500,000 out of a $10,500,000 budget. I think an extraordinary amount of credit must go to Robert H. O'Brien, the president of MGM, who had sufficient faith to allow me to persevere at what must have at times appeared to be a task without end. But I felt it was necessary to make this film in such a way that every special-effects shot in it would be completely convincing—something that had never before been accomplished in a motion picture.

PLAYBOY: Thanks to those special effects, *2001* is undoubtedly the most graphic depiction of space flight in the history of films—and yet you have admitted that you yourself refuse to fly, even in a commercial jet liner. Why?

KUBRICK: I suppose it comes down to a rather awesome awareness of mortality. Our ability, unlike the other animals, to conceptualize our own end creates tremendous psychic strains within us; whether we like to admit it or not, in each man's chest a tiny ferret of fear at this ultimate knowledge gnaws away at his ego and his sense of purpose. We're fortunate, in a way, that our body, and the fulfillment of its needs and functions, plays such an imperative role in our lives; this physical shell creates a buffer between us and the mind-paralyzing realization that only a few years of existence separate birth from death. If man really sat back and thought about his impending termination, and his terrifying insignificance and aloneness in the cosmos, he would surely go mad, or succumb to a numbing sense of futility. Why, he might ask himself, should he bother to write a great symphony, or strive to make a living, or even to love another, when he is no more than a momentary microbe on a dust mote whirling through the unimaginable immensity of space?

Those of us who are forced by their own sensibilities to view their lives in this perspective—who recognize that there is no purpose they can comprehend and that amidst a countless myriad of stars their existence goes unknown and unchronicled—can fall prey all too easily to the ultimate *anomie*. I can well understand how life became for Matthew Arnold "a darkling plain . . . where ignorant armies clash by night . . . and there is neither love nor hope nor certitude nor faith nor surcease from pain." But even for those who lack the sensitivity to more than vaguely comprehend their transience and their triviality, this inchoate awareness robs life of meaning and purpose; it's why "the mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation," why so many of us find our lives as absent of meaning as our deaths.

The world's religions, for all their parochialism, did supply a kind of consolation for this great ache; but as clergymen now pronounce the death of God and, to quote Arnold again, "the sea of faith" recedes around the world with a "melancholy, long, withdrawing roar," man has no crutch left on which to lean—and no hope, however irrational, to give purpose to his existence. This shattering recognition of our mortality is at the root of far more mental illness than I suspect even psychiatrists are aware.

PLAYBOY: If life is so purposeless, do you feel that it's worth living?

KUBRICK: Yes, for those of us who manage somehow to cope with our mortality. The very meaninglessness of life forces man to create his own meaning. Children, of course, begin life with an untarnished sense of wonder, a capacity to experience total joy at something as simple as the greenness of a leaf; but as they grow older, the awareness of death and decay begins to impinge on their consciousness and subtly erode their *joie de vivre*, their idealism—and their assumption of immortality. As a child matures, he sees death and pain everywhere about him, and begins to lose faith in faith and in the ultimate goodness of man. But if he's reasonably strong—and lucky—he can emerge from this twilight of the soul into a rebirth of life's *élan*. Both because of and in spite of his awareness of the meaninglessness of life, he can forge a fresh sense of purpose and affirmation. He may not recapture the same pure sense of wonder he was born with, but he can shape something far more enduring and sustaining. The most terrifying fact about the universe is not that it is hostile but that it is indifferent; but if we can come to terms with this indifference and accept the challenges of life within the boundaries of death—however mutable man may be able to make them—our existence as a species can have genuine meaning and fulfillment. However vast the darkness, we must supply our own light.

PLAYBOY: Will we be able to find any deep meaning or fulfillment, either as individuals or as a species, as long as we continue to live with the knowledge that all human life could be snuffed out at any moment in a nuclear catastrophe?

KUBRICK: We *must*, for in the final analysis, there may be no sound way to eliminate the threat of self-extinction without changing human nature; even if you managed to get every country disarmed down to the bow and arrow, you would still be unable to lobotomize either the knowledge of how to build nuclear warheads or the perversity that allows us to rationalize their use. Given these two categorical imperatives in a disarmed world, the first country to amass even a few weapons would have a great incentive to use them quickly. So an argument might be made that there is a greater chance for *some* use of nuclear weapons in a totally disarmed world, though less chance of global extinction; while in a world armed to the teeth, you have less chance for *some* use—but a great chance of extinction if they're used.

If you try to remove yourself from an earthly perspective and look at this tragic paradox with the detachment of an extraterrestrial, the whole thing is totally irrational. Man now has the power in one mad, incandescent moment, as you point out, to exterminate the entire species; our own generation could be the last on earth. One miscalculation and all the achievements of history could vanish in a mushroom cloud; one misstep and all of man's aspirations and strivings over the millennia could be terminated. One short circuit in a computer, one lunatic in a command structure and we could negate the heritage of the billions who have died since the dawn of man and abort the promise of the billions yet unborn—the ultimate genocide. What an irony that the discovery of nuclear power, with its potential for annihilation, also constitutes the first tottering step into the universe that must be taken by all intelligent worlds. Unhappily, the infant-mortality rate among emerging civilizations in the cosmos may be very high. Not that it will matter except to us; the destruction of this planet would have no significance on a cosmic scale; to an observer in the Andromeda nebulae, the sign of our extinction would be no more than a match flaring for a second in the heavens; and if that match does blaze in the darkness, there will be none to mourn a race that used a power that could have lit a beacon in the stars to light its funeral pyre. The choice is ours.