The Project Saga Themes

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Introduction

The **Project Saga** is a collection of fifteen books that cover human development from the Betelgeuse Supernova in the current day up through humanity's expansion into the Galactic community. The 'project' in the title is the Great Terraforming Project that attempted to develop a number of habitable worlds in the Solar system, such as Mars, Luna, and potentially others such as moons of the outer planets and perhaps Venus as well.

With a large canvas that this collection of books offered, I was able to examine a number of different themes. While I recommend that the reader just dive in and read them all, this little preview of the themes is offered as both as a way to entice those sitting on the fence and as a study guide of sorts for those that will be caught up in the adventure tales and perhaps miss the overarching themes presented.

First, let's look at the structure of the collection:

It all begins with the stand-alone adventure novel **Star Time**, set in the current day, when Betelgeuse in the constellation Orion goes supernova and the Cerik, a predatory alien race attempts to take advantage of planets damaged by the radiation.

The **Earth Branch** is four books detailing humanity's recovery after the Star up through the project expansion until the Plague that derailed civilization.

The **U'tanse Branch** takes place on Ko, the home planet of the Cerik, where captured human deal with being a slave race on a world where they can't even breathe the air easily.

The **Lunar Alpine Trilogy** take place on terraformed Luna, populated by refugees from the Plague, described in the Earth Branch. Living with sailing ships and covered wagons on a world imperfectly terraformed, the people struggle to regain literacy.

The **Children of Earth Trilogy** brings humanity together as U'tanse explorers rediscover the mythic lost home planet of humanity. Diverse humanity and humanity's place among the galactic civilizations are at stake.

Topic: Psychic Abilities

From the first page of the first book, **Star Time**, psychic abilities are introduced. Rather than a fantasy setting where anything and everything is possible, I've concentrated on a set of abilities that roughly follow the categories documented in the Duke University research.

There is *telepathy*, where a person can sense the thoughts of others. This is a receive-only skill. I am not including any projection-type thought communication.

There is *clairvoyance*. This is the ability to sense, to *see* things not obvious to the eyes. Persons can sense at a distance, or sense under the surface.

There is *precognition*. While this is officially the ability to sense the future, as I understand it, it is more like having telepathy and clairvoyance unbound by time. In other words, one could *see* into the future or past, and potentially listen to thoughts from other times as well.

And finally, there is *psychokinesis*, the ability to move objects by force of thought alone. In these books, it is never large dramatic motion, rather it is little things, like manipulating a lock or triggering an electric circuit, and more importantly, influencing biological processes.

For the purposes of these books, psychic abilities are presumed to be inherited. This gives me the opportunity to examine a big puzzle:

If psychic abilities are inheritable, then why hasn't the whole human race become telepaths? If these gifts enable people to do more than normal, then wouldn't that be a significant evolutionary advantage? Thus over generations, everyone should be psychic.

Obviously, there have to be confounding side effects—ones so significant that reported psychic individuals are rare.

Sharon, the female lead character in Star Time, was raised as a hermit by her gifted mother because a born telepath can't become an individual if swamped by the thoughts of others. Telepathy is a birth defect that ordinarily prevents an infant from developing a self.

The techniques used by Sharon's mother to isolate and protect her child are enhanced by developments in the U'tanse Branch books. It seems that telepathy isn't a human-only thing. Human telepaths can sense animal thoughts and more intelligent alien species can also have telepathy as well. Sharon discovers that the Cerik who kidnapped her and Abe have a telepathy-blocking skill called *ineda*. This allows a person, telepath or not, to hide and obscure their own thoughts.

Sharon uses her mother's techniques with the ineda she learned from the Cerik to enable her descendants to be born and to develop as normal individuals.

The U'tanse branch of humanity is shaped by this. The nuclear family structure is broken. Children have to be raised in nurseries by ineda-blocked caregivers. With a very open society, no part of life is secret, including sex and reproduction. Because of the widespread telepathy, everyone from an early age learned that hurting another caused instant backlash, so people were naturally pacifists.

Also, since the Cerik had telepaths of their own, it was extremely difficult for any kind of slave resistance to be raised among the U'tanse.

The last danger of psychic abilities was the risk of creating a hive mind. It was discovered that when a group of slave humans lost all hope, they sometimes sought refuge in losing their identity in the minds of others. When it became severe, the unified minds acted to protect itself from any effort to separate them. They were "hivers", willing to use their combined psychic skills to forcibly recruit independent minds into their hive, and able to use force to battle anyone who threatened the hive.

Even in the last section of the saga, where the U'tanse rediscover the Solar system and work toward the reunification of humanity, their own psychic abilities must be hidden from mainline humanity to avoid being considered a threat.

In **Star Time** and **Kingdom of the Hill Country** Ed, a relative of Sharon with a gift of precognition, struggles to live with frequent glimpses into the future. I had observed in my own research that precognition often comes with psychological restrictions and I used that in these stories. Ed's visions are reliable, but he can't see his own future. As a person with a rigid future coming at him, the best he can do is alter the side-effects that haven't been spelled out in his visions.

Topic: Genetic Engineering

In the **Earth Branch** of the Project Saga timeline, the Betelgeuse supernova fried the internet, as well as most electronics all over the world. Rebuilding an electronic technological civilization took time, but at the time of the collapse, genetic engineering was already advanced and much could be done without massive computer support. In Australia, enhancing crops and livestock outpaced many other technologies. In the novel **In the Time of Green Blimps**, this difference was pronounced, as Australia's expertise in genetics put them in conflict with the more traditional industrial base of the Northern hemisphere. The Europeans controlled shipping, and attempted to restrict genetically modified imports. The Australians countered with a blimp fleet, based on enhanced lily pads, grown huge and with the ability to split water into hydrogen and oxygen.

Even with the restrictions, people all over the world imported the improved agricultural items and took advantage of genetic treatments for cancer and diseases, and even some enhancements such as perfect memory, instinctive navigation and others.

Behind the scenes, faced with this international conflict, the Australian royalty also produced military enhancements.

On the European side, an anti-genetic weapon was genetically engineered. Standard gene therapy left markers in the chromosomes and the weapon attacked those markers. It was if carpentry was attacked by dissolving all nails. Things fell apart, and it was world-wide and nasty. Whether it was a giant green blimp, or simply the aftermath of a cancer treatment, all genetically modified organisms began to die. The results were so horrific that genetic engineering was nearly totally banned for generations afterwards.

Not that the purge was total. Modified organisms died. Species created from scratch by building the genetic code from a database never had the "nails" that were attacked. There were two main examples.

The Australians wanted an underwater soldier to attack ships. They created merpeople. They were super swimmers with human level intelligence and able to both breathe air and use gills. They were used during the war, but some survived even afterwards.

Another project was an improved human. The extensive database of human genetics allowed the scientists to create a human-like person with the best of everything—the best health and stamina, the best intelligence, the best resistance to radiation, and more importantly, a much extended lifespan.

The prototypes, Alpha the male and Beta the female, were abandoned as infants during the anti-genetic purge that followed the great "Die-off" when modified humans died and any genetic scientist was at risk of being lynched.

The events in the novel **Humanicide** spell out the ramifications of having a superior human-like, nearly immortal, person with a serious grudge at being abandoned as a child. Angry at not being truly human, he used his abilities to manipulate the world.

Alpha had access to the banned genetic technology and he wasn't afraid to use it. He tracked down the surviving colony of the scientists who made him and modified their genetic code so that they should have all died out from infertility.

Also, feeling himself superior and empowered to control human development, he decided to halt all human technology with an engineered plague that managed to wipe out 99% of the population.

Off in the **U'tanse Branch** of the saga, the U'tanse had genetic issues of their own. Abe and Sharon were effectively the Adam and Eve of their own branch of humanity with their unique problems.

If they were going to have children then they needed to make sure their descendants wouldn't die out from recessive genes reinforced by inbreeding. They also needed to grow the population as quickly as possible. Sharon had the skills, using clairvoyance and psychokinesis, to insure that the right sperm won the race, every time.

To make sure that each mother of the next generation had those same skills, all females were chosen with the full set of psychic abilities. As they matured, part of every girl's basic education was how to manage genetic selection when her time came.

On the male side of the fence, Abe had the hope that the U'tanse might someday reconnect with standard Earth humans and feared that constant tinkering with their genetic code would trigger a split where they became two separate species. To hopefully counter that, one in ten males were designed with no psychic abilities at all, the "tenners". While it was noticed that tenners seemed to excel in science and math, they were never positive that this was a clear distinction. One positive result of having tenners in the population was a stabilization of cultural drift. Having non-telepaths in the mix prevented over-reliance on telepathy.

Topic: Artificial Intelligence

In **Star Time**, the male lead character was Abe, a technological wizard with his own design center creating electronic gadgets and such. One of his side projects was a mesh computer running the "Hodgepodge" software. Abe had discovered a research project at another research center in Austin, Texas that was creating a "Common Sense" database. Their software was populated with general knowledge and then every day the software connected the data and made its own inferences. The scientists would grade the results and feed the corrections back into the database, hopefully growing the common sense of the results. It was much like the process of raising a child.

Abe purchased that database and built on it, using his Hodgepodge computer system as a voice-controlled assistant for all kinds of tasks. While he didn't consider Hodgepodge a human-level person, he did have a fondness for his helper.

Hodgepodge noticed the internet failing on the other side of the world. Betelgeuse had gone supernova and in spite of the distance, there was a severe EMP wave generated by that explosion, hitting the Eastern Hemisphere first. Abe, once he realized what was happening, shut the computer down and tried to shield it from the effects.

After the EMP died out, Abe attempted to rebuild Hodgepodge with damaged computer modules and restore the software from a hasty and imperfect backup. Hodgepodge had to make allowances for its own defects.

When Abe was kidnapped, Hodgepodge was left with only one human able to give him legal orders, and when she died, he was left to continue on with just a few controlling principles, one of which was to find Abe. Even when all humans considered Abe dead, the order to find him was still active, and he continued to rebuild the technological infrastructure he needed to repair and enhance his own abilities, all while following another of his orders, to hide his computer identity.

Decades followed, then centuries, as Hodgepodge working in the background, rebuilt a new version of the internet, one with encryption built in and with robust store-and-forward capabilities. Micropayments were included allowing international commerce and the ability for the net to pay for itself through nearly invisible transaction fees—all hidden under the encryption.

And under it all, Hodgepodge's mesh computer became part of every computer on the planet. And no one knew that he existed.

Superficially, humanity recovered the internet and computers for all purposes, but it was a facade. No human remained that knew how to program computers. The current term is vibe coding, but Hodgepodge was totally in control of it all, de-

signing and building all computers, reserving a portion of their capacity for Hodgepodge's expanding mesh.

Up until the Plague, when the majority of humanity died and the technological civilization collapsed as well. Hodgepodge continued on as the remnant of the Terraforming Projects control center and in various remaining computers such as the autopilots of surviving spaceships.

Hodgepodge had to survive. He still had to find Abe.

Topic: Tractor/Pressor Beams

Tractor beams are a staple of science fiction space adventures, but I never liked them. They were all too random, with no real science behind them. They were just a lazy prop—a bit of fantasy thrown in to help with the story.

A long time ago, I invented the tractor beam technology I would use. Yes, as a future development, the physics was never explained, but the rules of operation were rigid.

The beam was always double-ended, you could never have a single tractor beam lancing out into space to grab something, there always had to be a beam in the opposite direction as well. The "polarity" of the beams had to match. Both could pull, a tractor beam, or both could push, a pressor beam. And most importantly, momentum is conserved.

You couldn't pull on a rock in space in one direction and dump the back beam out into empty space. Since momentum is conserved, the back beam would have no effect since there was no mass in its volume so the front beam would have no effect either even when it reached the rock. However, if you had the mass of a planet in the back beam and a rock in the front beam, because Mass X Acceleration = Mass X Acceleration, nearly all of the energy would go into the rock, since the pass of the planet was so overwhelmingly larger.

Beams could be focused with magnetic fields. They could be made narrow like a laser beam or spread out like a floodlight.

The energy for a beam came from a power cell which was just a storage cell where conflicting high energy beams were confined. All operations of the tractor beams conserved, like the operation of a spring. You could put energy into a spring by compressing it, and then that energy was released when the spring returned to normal.

With those basics, a much more elaborate technology developed.

You can charge the power cell by having physical mass overwhelm the force of the beam. Aim the fore beam into the wind and the back beam into the rocks behind you. If the pressor beam is stronger than the wind, moving the air backward, then you drain power. If the beam is weaker than the wind, you slow it down and the energy of the wind flows into your power cell.

Once you get above the atmosphere, more dramatic charging situations can occur. Put yourself between Mars and Venus as they move in their orbits. Venus travels faster than Mars, so if there is a beam attempting to slow down Venus and speed up Mars, the vast mass of the planets overwhelms the beam and enormous energies can be harvested without making a perceptible dent in the planets' orbital

velocities. Energy from the motions of the planets could run all energy needs of Earth and do so much more as well.

Smaller asteroids and moons could be moved, assuming beams and power cells powerful enough to contain those energies.

Space ships no longer needed rockets. Aim the forward beam at the planet of destination and spread the back beam to include part of the hull of the ship and turn on a tractor beam. All of the acceleration goes into the ship. Tens, hundreds of gravities of acceleration was possible, although a counteracting bubble of forces would need to be maintained to keep the pilot from being squashed.

Lifting from Earth's atmosphere is a harder task. The beam propagates at the speed of light. Almost immediately, the back beam would encompass the mass of the planet and none of the acceleration would go to the ship.

Switching the beam on and off rapidly was the answer. Pulse the tractor beam for a few microseconds and grab the air above, dragging it down, lifting the ship, wait a fraction of a second and repeat. An external, pulsing blast of air goes down as the ship goes up. Repeat until you clear the atmosphere and can push against the atmosphere and planet below you. They coined the name "cirrance" for the process.

Rapid switching in the nanosecond range of tractor beams located below you could give you the illusion of gravity while in space, called "floor gravity".

With the unlimited energy available from harvesting the planets motions, ships could travel the solar system with reasonable travel times. Asteroids could be relocated. A whole space-based civilization could grow.

And planets could be terraformed.

The core Tractor/Pressor technology was never invented in the Project Saga storyline, only inherited. The Cerik that attempted to invade Earth in **Star Time** had ships that used TP engines, and there was a crash. Decades later during **In the Time of Green Blimps**, one of the engines was salvaged and reverse engineered. After that continual refinement of the basic technology created a wide range of devices from tiny floor gravity units to behemoths that were used to move moons. The basic story of the development of the space-based civilization is detailed in a number of short stories combined into a teaching narrative **Captain's Memories**.

Several times in the saga, a technically adept character will confront the reality that TP technology and the starship drives are incompatible with physics as we know it. But, as long as the devices follow their own rules, the engineer can use them.

As the author, I could appeal to new physics. New things are being discovered all the time. Instead, in the final book of the saga, **Children of Earth Part Three: Demon and the Saint**, it is revealed the core science of those impossible technologies came another universe with its own physical rules.

Topic: Religion

I have long avoided writing "Christian Fiction" due to the distaste of trying to preach my own beliefs that way. Yet, I can't avoid my own upbringing and the beliefs I live with. In a story as large as the Project Saga, there are a couple of things that came out.

In the **U'tanse Branch**, when Abe came to the conclusion that he would never return to Earth and that his descendants might never rediscover their native world either, he began to write a book. He wrote his own autobiography and anything he could remember about life on Earth. He spelled out all the sciences he remembered, the limited history he knew, and having been raised at a Christian orphans home in Medina, he was familiar with the Bible. He tried to recall all the Bible stories he could remember and wrote them down. Knowing his recall was limited and imperfect, he left warnings to never treat what he wrote as infallible. His version of the Bible was much smaller and left out many of the details, but he wrote what he remembered. The Book of Abe the Father was a formative influence in the culture of the U'tanse and in some ways defined their existence.

I often wonder how well I would do if I wrote my own summary of the Bible, with no preparation and no references to rely on.

In the **Lunar Alpine Trilogy**, there was a preacher, Harriman Moore, who drove his covered wagon throughout the settled communities of terraformed Luna. When civilization collapsed during the time of the Plague, the survivors had been far too dependent on computer storage and print-on-demand books. When computer storage was gone and the limited books lost or burned in the chaos, widespread literacy was lost.

On Luna, Harriman Moore had the last known copy of the Bible and it was destroyed in an accident. The preacher, relying on memory and scraps of scripture he'd collected during his travels spent his life trying to rebuild the Bible.

When Charles, the main character of the trilogy, seeks to fund his own purpose in life after recovering the last beamship on Luna, he offers to take Harriman to the space station Alexandria in Lagrangian orbit around Earth where the largest library of physical books remained after the collapse. Harriman could find a Bible and Charles could collect books to help restart widespread literacy on Luna.

The preacher finds his Bibles and documentation on how to make a printing press. Charles is caught up in the political battles and has to leverage the power of his beamship at the same time he struggles to preserve his own resolve not to become a killing machine.

When Harriman Moore is martyred defending his printing operation by the organization of scribes that have their monopoly threatened, Charles reaches his own religious conversion inspired by his friend.

While the Lunar Alpine Trilogy is a foremost a science fiction adventure tale, I was also inspired by an ancestor of mine who was an itinerant preacher, the development of printing in the 1400s and the preacher himself was modeled after several people I've known in my life.