

ProgBlog 29
2015

Finding Future X in the Year 2015

By Michael Lee

“I think the odds are no better than fifty-fifty that our present civilisation on Earth will survive to the end of the present century.”

Sir Martin Rees, *Our Final Hour* (2003)

To many, the future is just one big question mark: ?. They ask questions like: What is the future? Where is it? How can we know about it in advance? Isn't life just random?

And, yet, critical aspects of human life, including our economic and social development, are absolutely future-dependent and future-focused, such as:

- Planning
- Strategy
- Investments
- Insurance programs & pensions
- Business confidence
- Public policy
- Sustainable practices
- Risk management
- Environmental management

In addition, the scientific method itself, which has revolutionized knowledge and human progress more than anything else, is literally predicated upon the capacity to predict future occurrences of phenomena according to the regularities underpinning the discovered and proven laws of nature.

Few seem to know where, or how, to find the future. Thought leaders in all walks of life in today's post-modern culture seem to be regularity-averse, besotted with Black Swans, holding up quantum physics, which deals with particles a millionth of a millionth of an inch in size, as more dominant in influence than the macroscopic, planetary universe of Isaac Newton, Pierre-Simon Laplace and Albert Einstein. The latter's relativity theories alone have accumulated conclusive proofs for over a century, while celestial mechanics still rules supreme out in the solar system, as the successful Apollo 11 mission of 1969 demonstrated in a memorable way.

We therefore need to represent the future with a large X for: Unknown. Future X. That's how post-modernism sees the future. And it happens to be a destabilizing point of view, due to the range of activities, policies and systems, many listed above, which depend on some degree of understanding and management of the future.

But is the future really a puzzle we can't solve?

Let's start our search for Future X in the most logical place – looking at time. Ocean tides, for example, can be accurately timetabled and predicted because of consistent influence of the Moon's gravity as Earth and Moon go through the choreography of their orbits. In each 12 hour period, Earth rotates 180 degrees, while the Moon turns 6 degrees around Earth. As a consequence, high tide will occur approximately every 12 hours and 25 minutes. The moon turns once as it orbits Earth: both its spin and its orbit follow cycles which are repeated endlessly.

Our solar system itself is stable and largely predictable. Earth completes one rotation on its axis every 24 hours to make each day. At the same time, it revolves around the sun in about 365.25 days to produce each year. Pretty regular stuff. There are so many elegant regularities in physics. Recent field experiments on a South African game reserve demonstrated that a dung beetle navigates its direction by the stars and Moon. The beetle can detect regularities in the heavens and orientate itself by their patterns.

Speaking of time, Einstein revealed to us the unity of space-time. In his 1916 book *Relativity* he wrote: "...there is no more common-place statement than that the world in which we live is a four-dimensional space-time continuum."¹

But what precisely is the 4D world this great scientist thought so commonplace? Time and spatial factors work together in a happy marriage he called the space-time continuum. And he wanted us to see the world in four dimensions. We're all inside space, in which time is ticking.

And time is the dimension we understand least. It's not surprising we tend see the Future as a gigantic X. Yet, time brings changes which are caused, according to the law of causation, in a world which is much more regular than post-modernists and the merchants of uncertainty would like us to believe.

In a 4D world, in which time and space are married, it's not surprising that time deeply affects the way things behave. They age. They change. They evolve. They work in cycles, in seasons, in defined time periods.

I see cycles, in nature, in history, in social development, in economics, as time patterns, that is, they exhibit regularity in the dimension of time. 4D vision is the awareness that time is present with us as we journey through our world, bringing continuous change and yet regularity.

Furthermore, not only is life highly cyclical, it is coded – in DNA, the template for all growth. In a largely pre-determined process, each DNA code is executed like the running of a computer program, with all its instructions. An acorn, for example, is intelligent because it has DNA inside it – it knows how to become an oak tree, because it's programmed to do so.

¹ Einstein, A. 1916. *Relativity*: 65. Florida: Red and Black Publishers.

In many ways like this, time also delivers to us the hidden order of an encoded regularity. Further, these patterns of behaviour provide us with templates for viewing future developments. With everything behaving in cycles through time, the world becomes open for anticipation and prediction.

Life is regularity in motion, from our heartbeats to our daily routines. It's a pendulum-regulated universe.

And the very same processes of time and change they encapsulate will produce the future.

Yet, it's fashionable to believe the future's uncertain and unknowable, that it will always be an X or a question mark.

The future, though, is coded, it has a hidden order. It's possible to construct a causal model of the future so that we can plan and manage it and thereby create more ordered lives and societies. It's based entirely on science. The future is everywhere, in DNA, in the laws of physics, in causation, but most importantly, in patterns of time. Actually, the future (f) is not X, it's: $c \times t$, where c = causation and t = time. That is, the future is causation at work over time.

Thanks to Einstein, we can see the world in four dimensions, we can hear the tick of time everywhere we go in a causal universe. As futurists, we can use the pattern recognition in the cycles of time as a basis for preconstruction of the future.

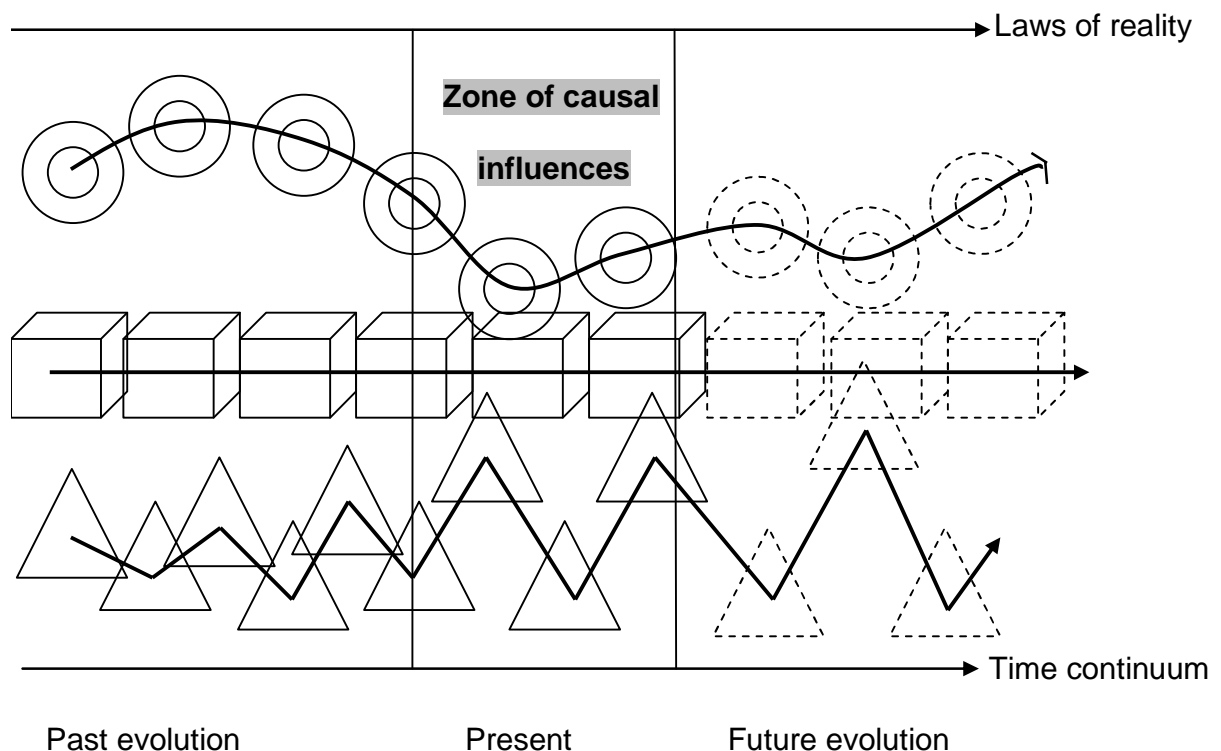


Figure 1: Preconstruction of Future Patterns

I firmly believe the laws of nature, the patterns and cycles of time and the law of causation show that it's not impossible to find the future. In fact, as a neo-progressionist, I must reject the idea of a Future X. It seems theoretically unfounded for the behaviour of the macroscopic world in which we humans actually exist, live and act within our cosmic habitat.

There's some urgency about resolving this theoretical issue in our field, given that the global economy, and business in general, need huge doses of both confidence and acute future awareness to be revived from their current worrying slumber. Furthermore, many experts are predicting that a second major international financial crisis is just around the corner, because the same kind of dodgy lending practices behind the sub-prime mortgages and their subsequent securitization which triggered the global credit crisis of 2008, have been applied on a grand scale for motor vehicle loans.

In the end, though, the long-term survival of humanity may well depend on rediscovering a love of, and belief in, the future, especially if a scientist of the calibre of Sir Martin Rees gives our current civilisation only a 50/50 chance of making it through to the end of the 21st century.²

See Michael Lee's video on YouTube "Finding Future X" at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XQItLRhZkMY>

² Rees, M. 2003. *Our Final Hour*: 8. New York: Basic Books.