

Future Log File 2014

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Keynes once said: "... the idea of the future being different from the present is so repugnant to our conventional modes of thought and behaviour that we, most of us, offer a great resistance to acting on it in practice." Is he right? Why (not)?

Not really. Most people want to imagine a different and better – but still familiar – future, while others fantasize about visions that are outside the realm of the possible, at least for them. Only those without imagination, or utterly contented with their present lot, resist the idea of the future. Another matter is to "act on it in practice", but the lack of action in this regard is a result of caution, fear or lack of faith in one's ability to change things.

What do you think are the most relevant developments which will change our world in the next two, three decades?

First, awareness of the major impact of climate change, which is changing the biophysical ecosystems that support life, and will lead to major increases in man-made/"natural" disasters that will produce great suffering and hardship.

Second, failure of one or more very large interconnected systems of support for contemporary economic and social activity – including energy, telecommunications, water, transportation and finance –, which have become extremely complex, unwieldy and even incomprehensible. Their failure will bring to a standstill large portions of human activity.

Third, the major intellectual and existential upheavals that the transition to the post-Baconian age is now beginning to generate.

Why exactly these?

The first, because of its potential to destabilize human civilization as we know it. The second, because of its potential to disrupt life in major parts of the world. The third, because we have not experienced a similar situation for nearly five hundred years, and will alter the perception and even definition of what is to be human, changing radically the prospects for our species.

Are you afraid of them or do you think positively?

They just are. There is no point in being afraid of them, the task is to understand what is happening to us, to postulate values that we think are worth preserving and fighting for, and then adopt sensible, down-to-earth strategies to advance in the desired direction.

Where will the happiest people live on the globe in the year 2040? Why there?

This is something I never think about. I think the distribution of happy and unhappy people will remain more or less the same. It has always been like this and I see no reason why this would change.

Which book do you think will still be worth reading then? What could future generations still learn from it?

There are far too many books worth keeping and reading. I cannot choose just a few, the answer depends on how humanity will reach 2040, for this will determine what will be worth reading.