

The Time of Our Lives

by [Larry McCloskey](#) (February 2025)



Huygen & Coster Making Clocks (Hugh Chevins, 1955)

My dogs often sit staring, watching my every move, waiting for something; a gesture, a guttural encouragement, some indication that their lives can begin again. Their gaze is 100% focused, admiring, loving even. Or maybe they just want a biscuit. Whether dogged devotion or superficial desire for biscuit, looking deep into their eyes I always have the same pervasive thought—I am looking at time.

Something long past buried is revealed, if only I could

understand. The dogs are transparent enough, so maybe my lack of understanding is about the nature of time. I would explain better if I knew better, but I don't.

Much of human misunderstanding may be about time. Physicists understand time, though understanding is difficult—not just because its concepts are difficult, but because the science is impossible to reconcile with how we actually live our lives.

First, the Big Bang 13.8 billion years ago, wherein ingredients of the universe exploded from an infinitely dense point with incomprehensible force, expanding at the speed of light (186,282 miles per second, which is more than seven times around the earth each tick of Grandad's clock). These billions of years later the universe continues to expand at a rate that approximates the speed of light (the rate changes as the universe expands, so its precise computation at any given time is complicated).

Until astronomer Fred Hoyle came up with the term Big Bang in 1949, the universe's beginning was more commonly known as a singularity. Today, the word singularity is used to denote a time in the near future when technology becomes out of control and irreversible. Interesting commentary on human behaviour—we seem less interested in the truly miraculous singularity that began the universe, than the hypothetical technological singularity that might end our existence in it. And given that it hasn't happened and is therefore still preventable, why isn't averting a potentially destructive AI singularity not a progressive *cause célèbre*?

The Olympics can be traced to 776 B.C., Olympia, Greece. The original measure of time was less about events held (i.e. apene, racing chariots, and kalpe, trotting horse race with mares), then about the interval of time between Olympics. This four year interval is known as the Olympiad, and was measured by monitoring the planetary motion as well as movement of the sun and moon.

Throughout Olympic history, ever more sophisticated means of time measurement were developed in response to the need for exacting, precise instruments to adjudicate closely won events such as the 100 meter sprint. For example, in 1916, faced with criticism about unfairness, the International Olympic Committee tasked clockmaker TAG Heuer to improve the stopwatch (accurate to a fifth of a second). Heuer revolutionized and patented the Mikrograph, the first mechanical stopwatch accurate to a thousandth of a second.

There exists a whole Olympic time measurement history, with Omega's revolutionary 2012 Quantum Timer able to measure to one millionth of second, which is more than enough minutia for the brain. Suffice to say, more than money or the number of our Facebook friends, we live and are ruled by the perception of time.

And now for the assault upon our agreed upon measures of time: past, present and future.

Our brains process time as a consequence of change; that is, towards entropy and chaos. Entropy refers to the degree of disorder or randomness in a system, and the second law of thermodynamics says that entropy always increase with time. What we call empirical evidence of time is really just a reflection of the static configurations we use to record subjective experience as measured in clocks, heartbeats, planetary motions; that is, what we believe are the rhythms of the universe.

We experience change which our brains then re-create as units of time. In its simplest form, Einstein's Special Theory of Relativity says time is relative to your frame of reference. "Time does not exist—we invented it. Time is what the clock says. The distinction between the past, present and future is only a stubbornly persistent illusion."

Based on how we live our lives, it is easy to conjure a theory

of Einstein as relatively insane. But it is also easy to experience the illusory nature of time. Time in solitary confinement slows to hours between seconds, versus the realization that a seemingly recent event was actually years ago. I remember my Aunt Isobell, our family historian, vividly recounting events 80 years in the past, while unable to recall what she had for breakfast. Time seems to move just slow enough to convince us it isn't moving as fast as memory later informs us—and still we dismiss perceptual inconsistencies for adjudication of time by the electronic device on our wrist.

All of which lends itself to a stubborn, perhaps insane long held thought, whose insanity has been legitimized in science as follows: if physics proves time is a stubbornly persistent illusion, we are left with undifferentiated time, only parsed into past, present and future as means of coping with subjective human experience that constitutes our lives—which logically leads to the compelling and terrifying concept of perpetual time.

Our human-centric perception of time is cause for other persistent illusions. Ernest Becker's 1973 book *Denial of Death* exposes that many of our illusory mechanisms result from being the only species with foreknowledge of our inevitable demise, in time. Most of us cannot face the reality of death and so we create impenetrable narratives that deflect and deny. Our many daily preoccupations—ie. obsession with material goods, dedication to causes, ideologies, identity politics and 'my truth' insistence—are examples of subjective illusion conjured at the expense of objective reality.

Interestingly, Becker argues—from a psychological rather than religious point of view—that our only escape from denial of death exists in the possibility of transcendence. If science, and therefore death cannot be denied, perhaps we can transcend what is, for what else might come to be. If death is change rather than oblivion, perhaps we can cope rather than deny. It is a question of meaning. In an odd and perhaps satisfying

way, both physics and our archetypal grasp of transcendent possibility have the potential to allow us to see beyond notions of time that we live and are limited by.

This convergence of thought may explain why some of the most notable scientists throughout time—Galileo, Newton, Pascal, Copernicus, Bacon, Descartes, Heisenberg and Einstein among them—believed in God. Though they didn't necessarily come together on the subject of time—Einstein's 1905 published Theory of Relativity is relatively recent—from observations of planetary motion, to Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle, quantum entanglement, seemingly impenetrable black holes that can shed information, wave-particle duality, and the uncertainty principle, physicists are left with Quantum Weirdness, or contradictions that defy human intuition, bias and conceit.

Certainly, there are many within the scientific community such as Lawrence Kraus who disparage notions of humankind having anything significant to do with physics. Kraus disparages human centric views of the universe, is a passionate atheist (A Universe From Nothing), even as he speculates about unfounded multiverses as defence against the spectacularly unlikelihood of our existence.

But, whether human centric bias or proof that humans are central to design and function of the universe, it seems physics and humans are entangled. Accomplished Astrophysicist Amit Goswami, writes, "There is no object in space-time, without a conscious subject looking at it."

Biologist Richard Dawkins and Kraus argue that humans are insignificant to science, to the universe, to meaning. But Goswami and other highly credible scientists argue human/universal entanglement is real, and cannot be dismissed by claiming, as has fraudulently said about Covid vaccines and climate change, that "the science is settled." A basic premise of the scientific method is that it remains dynamic, is never

beyond questioning, is never fully settled. The best physicists know that the more one knows about physics, the more it is revealed to be uncertain. In *The Physics of God*, Joseph Selbie writes, "One of the best kept secrets of science is that physicists have lost their grip on reality."

We humans are not comfortable with uncertainty— though the quest for certainty (greatly exacerbated by the decline of religion) explains the rise in scientific materialism. Richard Dawkins, as its high priest, articulates its central premise: science will answer all questions, in time. This is satisfying answer to those with an obsession to know, though certainty of death without possibility of transcendence seems a bitter pill to swallow for scientific materialist adherents. Praying for the totality of life to be nothing more than cells that lived and are no more, seems an odd victory to celebrate. Bottom line: physicists say we don't know everything, which causing us to lose our grip, is logically because we can never know, which further logically leads to the insight we are not meant to know. And the certainty of collective human uncertainty is the good news.

Uncertainty also reinforces a strange and satisfying convergence between science and faith. Astrophysicist Robert Jastrow, writes in *God and the Astronomers*:

"At the moment it seems that science will never be able to raise the curtain on the mystery of creation. From the scientist who has lived by his faith in the power of reason, the story ends like a bad dream. He has scaled the mountains of ignorance; he is about to conquer the highest peak; as he pulls himself over the final rock, he is greeted by a band of theologians who have been sitting there for centuries."

If God exists, if life after death has meaning, so too does life before death. Something, much actually, is required of us. If God does not exist, nothing is required of us, because nothing matters, though in denying death, we require a

narrative that our material preoccupations have meaning. And yes, either a sad irony or a willfully blind state of mind deftly achieved by a human-centric, illusory interpretation of time.

Progressives pull off this stubbornly progressive illusion with the following slight of hand: The past is fraught with oppression, so best to deny or else correct according to progressive dictates. What we have learned from ignoring the past (and yes, the ultimate oxymoron) is that the future requires a Utopian narrative so as not to be oppressive. And parenthetically, no amount of failed Utopian narratives ever lessens the need for continued progressive dictates, since the moment of realization of failure is necessarily in the past and subject to denial or reinterpretation according to a binary oppressor/oppressed narrative. Progressive leaders are rarely subject to the consequences of their failed vision; progressive followers (the other 99 percent) generally accept the next Utopia du jour rather than question their narrative addiction. And if the Utopian narrative is not enough, ruling progressives dispense party favours in the form of increased state dependency since no amount of over-spending in the present can ever pierce the bubble of required future remedies.

So, the present is where it's at; mindfulness rules. It is our happy place from which unpleasant thoughts can be avoided. And who after all, wants to embrace unpleasantness?

The contradictory answer should be—bearing in mind that contradiction is central to understanding life—everyone.

The truth is, denial, avoidance and repression costs us. Or succinctly put by an anonymous psychiatrist, "All psychological pain can be derived from not being able to reconcile the world as it is from what you would have it be." Perhaps best and starkly refined by Philip K. Dick, "Reality is that which when you stop believing in it, it doesn't go

away.”

It turns out, not only is the progressive Utopian promise a lie, if realized, a care-free, pain-free life is detrimental to our health. We are literally supposed to find ourselves—that is, an inner life of humility and substance—in grit and adversity, not comfort and riches. Psychiatrist and Auschwitz survivor Victor Frankl, was not defeated by painful experience, rather he was painfully liberated by captivity; it is how he discovered what matters in life. “There is nothing in the world, I venture to say, that would so effectively help one to survive even the worst conditions as the knowledge that there is meaning in one’s life.”

The conservative view of time, entropy and change, differs markedly from Utopian progressives. From the non-existent border, to post-Covid inflation funding and the Afghanistan debacle, Biden’s only progress was in the service of entropy. Even as they exited office, Democrats doubled down on their failed progressive ideology because, believing in nothing, they have no where else to go.

Conversely, conservatives tend to believe in the presence of God’s hand. They believe in the reality of entropy, as pertains to both the universe and human endeavours. They believe that the best defence against the vicissitudes of entropy is to actively conserve; that is, employ wisdom of the past towards hard work in the present to decrease chaotic change in the future. If time is a reflection of change, human denial of entropy is perhaps the heartfelt meaning of Einstein’s stubbornly persistent illusion.

Throughout the western world, we have had years of failed progressive rule. Trump and his strategic appointments will enact change that will make progressives apoplectic. Changes will not be progressive, and will be radically designed to reverse Utopian malfeasance and neglect. (Trump’s vision is perhaps more accurately defined as counter-revolutionary than

radical. It is indicative how far the progressive agenda has gone awry that the determined application of what used to be considered ubiquitous American values, will be viewed as radical).

Parenthetically, visiting the great Cathedrals of Europe recently, I was amazed at the degree to which planners/builders/labourers paid it forward; that is, made a lifetime contribution towards a future outcome that they would ever experience or derive benefit. Difficult concept for modern sensibilities. Truth is, the realization of meaningful material outcomes requires the non-material application of faith. It explains why Utopian ideals are untethered to outcome. Satisfying unregulated appetite in the mindless moment followed by unrealized promises, is the Utopian way. Progressives never built a Cathedral, though they are good at identifying the accomplishments of Western civilization as proof of oppression.

David Brooks (hardly a Trump supporter), writing in the *New York Times* (antithetical to all things Trump), captures what is needed to wake us from the complacent, mindless moment. "The word "faith" implies possession of something, whereas I experience faith as a yearning for something beautiful that I can sense but not fully grasp. For me faith is more about longing and thirsting than knowing and possessing."

In knowing and possessing the narrative, progressives do not need faith—they believe in themselves, their narrative, their tribe, and their borrowed convictions. Though an imperfect alternative, conservatives know that much of what there is to know is owing to the giants upon whose shoulders we are perched. Imperfect knowing is as much as we can achieve, and only happens when one dispenses known narrative for lowly, uncertain faith. At which time, we may experience the time of our lives.

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Larry McCloskey has had eight books published, six young adult as well as two recent non-fiction books. *Lament for Spilt Porter* and *Inarticulate Speech of the Heart* (2018 & 2020 respectively) won national Word Guild awards. *Inarticulate* won best Canadian manuscript in 2020 and recently won a second Word Guild Award as a published work. He recently retired as Director of the Paul Menton Centre for Students with Disabilities, Carleton University. Since then, he has written a satirical novel entitled *The University of Lost Causes* (Castle Quay Books, June, 2024), and has qualified as a Social Work Psychotherapist. He lives in Canada with his three daughters, two dogs, and last, but far from least, one wife. His website is larrymccloskeywriter.com.

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