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Understanding our concept of the passage of time

by Mark Pavilons

?Why can't things stay the way they are?? asked the young inquisitive boy.

?Because of the passage of time,??was the learned response.

?Time? What does that have to do with anything??

What indeed.

Our concept of time is based on our planet's position in our solar system. A day (24 hours) is based on one revolution of our pretty green blue marble. A year is how long it takes for our planet to circle our life-giving sun, or sol. That's 365 days give or take. One would think everything is perfect, in sync and in harmony with the heavens above.

Guess again.

This concept of time ??inutes, hours, days, months, years ??nly applies to us on earth and our 7 billion inhabitants. But on nearby planets, with a sun of their own, minutes could be hours and days could be weeks.

Jupiter rotates once on its axis every 9 hours, 55 minutes and 29.69 seconds. A day on Venus lasts for 116 days and 18 hours, our time.

It's all relative.

We mark ?earth hours.? But there is no one correct time in the universe.

Here's some more space stuff to wet your whistle.

The Earth is travelling around the sun at roughly 30 kilometres per second. Our Milky Way Galaxy is motoring through space at a phenomenal 200 kilometres per second! There's a whole scientific exploration regarding space and time and their unique relationships.

With fancy timepieces on our wrists, and armed with smart devices, we always know exactly what time it is, here and around the world.

What if I'm lost in the forest or desert island, or choose to live off the grid? Am I out of sync? Do I have any concept of time? Does time really matter?

I've often fantasized about living in a log cabin, or deserted island, away from it all, from ?civilization? as we know it. My wife says I'm stupid and that it's an escape.

But think about it.

Stripping our lives to the bare bones, living in complete harmony with nature, with nary a carbon footprint.

As I drive through King's countryside, and during our occasional jaunts across Ontario, I scan the expansive countryside. There are many ideal locations for this cabin in the woods. I?could pull of the road literally anywhere in Ontario, dash a few hundred metres

into the woods, and set up camp. No on would know I was there or find me for months, maybe years!

Of course that's considered trespassing and squatting. But there's so much empty land out there waiting to be discovered and enjoyed!

My dad taught me to enjoy and respect trees. I?marvel at some of these beauties, especially giant willows and birch.

Sometimes I wish I were a tree, a 100-year-old oak, swaying in the breeze, catching the winds, the scents, the passage of time. I tower above mere mortals, enjoying the view.

Time may heal wounds and it will wash over the current scars left behind by the pandemic. That doesn't make it any easier for those knee-deep in turmoil.

I don't think any of us will remember these times fondly, and share COVID-19 stories with our grandchildren or great-grandchildren.

Of course, time will also allow us to grow, evolve and innovate, resulting in some really cool gadgets, procedures and methods to keep us all safe in the future. We may end up owing a certain amount of gratitude to this nasty virus, for giving us a needed wake-up call.

Again, this won't soothe the pain for those who've lost loved ones too early due to the virus.

If only we could ?turn back time.?

Despite our mental prowess, our race is a young one in the cosmos. Plus, our species has only really ?evolved? scientifically in the last 75 years or so. Check out our slow progress:

Humans have been on earth roughly 6 million years and modern humans evolved roughly 200,000 years ago. Civilization as we know it, arose roughly 6,000 years ago. Industrialization only started in the 1800s.

Yes, that's a long stretch of time, indeed.

Now we're on a roll, however. We're making progress, advances and innovations in leaps and bounds, on yearly basis.

Tesla launched its first Roadster in 2008 and we've improved electric vehicles immensely in the past decade.

The iPhone is only 10 years old. Remarkable innovations that occurred in the last decade include Android, GPS, social networks, YouTube and touch screens.

We've seen the cancellation of the Space Shuttle program, but it's being replaced by private contractors. Virgin Galactic plans to operate a fleet of five SpaceShipTwo spaceplanes in a private passenger-carrying service and has been taking bookings for some time, with a suborbital flight carrying an updated ticket price of $250,000 U.S.

Time well spent?

So, while most of us are living on ?borrowed time,??we dwell upon it, or take it in stride.

I?mentioned to my kids the other day that their lifespans may increase to as much as 150 in the decades to come. Innovations in medicine, robotics and organ cloning will all lengthen our longevity.

With that much extra ?time on their hands??imagine what they can accomplish.

For me, chilling on a beach in the Caribbean, where time crawls at a drunken snail's pace, is just fine.

We all know we have a finite amount of time to spend on this beautiful planet. I know it's cliche to say we shouldn't waste a single moment, but our lives are made up of millions of moments, some of which are just boring and mundane.

I think a more sensible way of living is to spend time wisely. Always make time for love, fun and frivolity!