Immortality may already be part of our DNA

by MARK PAVILONS

The complex tug-of-war between life and death has plagued humankind from the very beginning.

Looking up at the stars in the night, even our cave-dwelling ancestors wondered about ?what's next.?

Humans have been driven to uncover the answers, through gods, various religious texts, even the search for the fountain of youth and Shangri-La.

I will admit it, death scares the hell out of me.

But iconic rockers Queen warned us of the pitfalls of wanting to live forever:

?This world has only one sweet moment set aside for us ... Forever is our today.?

Be careful what you wish for ? because forever is a very long time. Time itself may last forever, but biological beings don't. Science may extend our lives, but immortality may be always out of reach.

?Always; for everlasting time; eternally? are some definitions of forever. And our lexicons are quick to point out that no one can live forever. An interesting entry and reminder.

And yet, science is continually finding fault with that accepted fact.

If an insect, embedded in amber for 100 million years, can be revived, well that changes everything.?Okay, science isn't there yet, but hope remains. And then we're in store for many more Jurassic Park scenarios.

There is also an argument that we can live longer in space, without the stresses of gravity on our bodies.

But the biggie in terms of forever is whether space is infinite. Does it go on forever? If not, where and when does it end? What's on the other side? These are mind-tripping thoughts.

Some also argue that energy can't be created or destroyed, so the energy contained in our bodies when we pass has to go somewhere. It doesn't just cease to exist.

Does it float up to the heavens, join with all other human souls who have ever lived and died? Do we become one with the universe? That would be really cool.

We don't even fully understand the miracles associated with human creation and life itself. From microscopic cells, the unbelievable journey of conception/fertilization creates a new, unique human being. That in itself is crazy complicated and yet oh, so simple. It's still a miracle if you ask me.

Some important texts indicate that ?the Lord God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature.?

There's the amoeba-to-man journey on earth, which took literally millions of years. If we want to go back even further, the creation of the universe and sun and planets are equally impressive and almost unbelievable ? almost like conception itself.

The cosmos exploded, and bits and pieces came together to form suns and planets.

Ours settled nicely into an orbit around our sun, without which nothing could survive.

What are the odds?

Then, once the sun warmed our globe, it took billions of years to become hospitable enough to host life.

From the primordial ooze sprung life in its simplest form, a single cell of gooey goodness. Was it a natural evolution? Or was it somewhat divine?

Our evolution can be explained by science, fossils and a dash of speculation.

Humans have been roaming this rock for roughly 300,000 years. We only put on pants, skirts and shirts in the last 10,000 years or so.

So, let's review. Our planet, and all life therein, resulted from a cosmic roll of the dice. It happened by accident.

And then life began by accident, by a collision of all of the right conditions, elements, gases and substances.

And here we are, modern, intelligent creatures making a mess of things.

We beat the odds, baby, and have evolved to make some really cool gizmos, buildings, art, music and beverages. We still make bad fashion choices.

They say our DNA actually harbours memory, not our own, but tidbits passed down from our very first ancestors. Isn't that a form immortality? If bits of me and my family tree are passed through DNA to my children, grandchildren, etc. maybe our collective ?souls??are eternal.

It's estimated the universe began some 13.8 billion years ago and has been growing ever since. Now, I don't know about you, but 14 billion is pretty close to ?forever??isn't it?

Will the universe continue evermore??If it does, then why would life not carry on until the end of time?

We've witnessed that given the right conditions, life can just appear out of nowhere. It can grow and learn and drive a car. It can fly. It can chew gum but it has trouble opening a carton of milk.

If we reduce or remove the stresses on the body ? gravity, tissue decay and organ failure ? could we not live forever? Is it science fiction or fact?

Scientists believe that we will learn how to grow or clone new organs, replacing our old ones as they wear out. It will be much like a tune-up or oil change. If we can keep replacing organs, we can increase our lifespan indefinitely.

Then, when it's just physically too much, we will just download our consciousness ? our essence ? into a USB or computer brain. We may carry on as androids or floating balls of intelligence.

Who wants to live forever? Maybe we already do, on some level.

The universe, at least in our limited minds, appears to stretch on forever. If that's the case, the Creator's handiwork is truly marvellous.

Who's to say that grand design doesn't include each and every one of us?