

The Black Swan

Article by Ralph Miller



I recently had a conversation with a close friend about the way current world events seem to be setting the stage for something really interesting to happen. Something really big! We talked about how the world is going to change in some fundamental way; you know things will change but you can't put your finger on it to describe what the change would be. You just feel it.

I have felt for a long time now that a great transformation will happen and the form it will take will be something we never anticipated. This article will really be a continuation of some of the perspectives I began discussing in the two articles entitled, *The 2012 Problem* and *2012 Revisited*. Those articles deal with the notion that from the perspective of the Mayans, the year 2012 will herald the 'end of time' or at least the end of the Mayan calendar. My belief is that a new human consciousness will go beyond traditional notions of temporal reality. Traditional notions of 'time' will no longer be relevant in the same way.

My friend mentioned the theory of the Black Swan and suggested that it was quite similar to the concept of 'profound change' that I was describing. Black Swan theory was put forth by Nassim Nicholas Taleb. Taleb is a mathematician, writer and scholar in the field of randomness. The theory was described in his 2007 book entitled, *The Black Swan*. The idea is simply that the collective view was that all swans were white. Since swans were only white, the concept of a black swan was a metaphor. It is reference to anything that is utterly improbable. It refers to events or things which are not predictable but at the same time feel inevitable.

The impossibility of a black swan in Western culture was due to the simple fact that nobody had ever seen anything but white swans. The existence of a black swan would require the world to accommodate its existence; a world where there are both white and black swans. The 17th Century discovery of black swans in Australia transformed the meaning of the concept. What was thought of as utterly impossible actually did come to pass.

The black swan is the harbinger of 'things' and/or events that will have monumental 'culture changing' potential! It's the answer to the notion that 'something's got to give'. Or, 'that something big is bound to happen.'

Certainly inventions borne of human innovation such as the telephone and the internet represent a few historical examples of black swan ideas. To have contemplated the full impact of the internet on life as we know it today would have been almost impossible. However, when viewed as a part of history and having the ability to track the development of the internet, the invention seems entirely feasible.

In a way, the internet was an unlikely idea. You take data (files, photos, emails, etc.) and you break the data into lots of individual packets. The packets are sent out to a destination that each packet is addressed to. The packets travel on thousands of different routes to their destination. When they arrive at the destination they assemble themselves into the whole original file or email

or whatever. Think about this as a possible future technology. I don't know ... sounds pretty implausible to me.

911 is a black swan. 911 changed everything. We know it happened because we all saw the images over and over. Think about it as a possible future event ... hijacked airliners flying into buildings. I guess the CIA talked about this as a possibility before it happened but I don't think most people ever thought it could actually happen. Human nature seems to operate in a way that, as an improbable event passes from a future possibility into present reality, the event now seems quite plausible.

The current worldwide financial crisis will likely be on a par with, if not surpassing, the Great Depression of 1929. I suppose most people would think that would be the worst case scenario; some people are optimistic and some are pessimistic. We all feel something will happen. We just don't know what it is.

Gerald Celente is a very well respected American futurist. Many of his predictions have been stunningly accurate. He is sought out for his advice by politicians and leaders of commerce throughout the world. In a very recent interview he suggested that we will be entering a process in which America will become the world's first undeveloped country. I guess that means that the process of development and culture begin to reverse instead of go forward.

We can already see signs of this backward trend happening. The staggering cost of two wars prevents public expenditures for badly needed works projects, such as rebuilding roads and bridges, or to update its electric distribution system and grid, especially in the Northeast. My view is that we culturally we are becoming reactive; and find little time and resources to develop proactively for the future. Celente predicts that there will be food riots and tax revolts in urban areas. He sees the politicians promising quick solutions that will never come. You can watch a video of the interview [here](#).



A bridge in Missouri that's in need of repair.
(Missouri Department of Transportation)

In a similar vein to Celente, a well respected Russian professor Igor Panarin revealed his views of a bleak picture of America in the coming decades during a recent interview. He predicted that America could split up into up to six separate countries or political entities. This would be in a similar fashion to the breakup of the Balkan Peninsula in Europe. You can read the entire interview [here](#).

Civilizations collapse. It would be naïve to think otherwise. At the very least civilizations restructure themselves. Certainly the stock market crash of 1929 shaped America's future. The 2008 crash will likely be on par with the 1929 event. It's already being described in those terms by many analysts interviewed by the media. It's like the same lesson is repeating itself. Perhaps Obama in some strange way is stepping into the shoes of FDR. In any case it will be the test of a society. We will have to choose the way that we, as distinct cultures, are going to adapt to great change that will surely come.

Ray Kurzweil is a foremost American scientist who has made a convincing analysis of how technology will change who we are as human beings. Kurzweil puts forth the concept of 'accelerating returns' as applied to computer technology. The idea describes the trend of more and

more computer power getting packed into smaller and smaller chips. One thousand dollars today will purchase perhaps a nice 200 gig system. How will this change in the future?

By applying known trends, Kurzweil comes up with the year 2023 as the year that \$1,000 will buy the computer power of the human brain. In other words, the equivalent of 100 billion neurons with 1,000 connections per neuron each, of which makes 200 calculations per second. He goes on to make the startling prediction that 2049 will be the year that \$1,000 will purchase the equivalent computer power of the entire human race!

We are certainly on the cutting edge of a technological explosion that will transform human civilizations. There are innovations that are about to emerge that will not be anticipated. There will be accidental discoveries and applications that will develop along the way. What we are seeing is an age where a multiplicity of innovation will occur in many disciplines simultaneously.

Many indigenous traditions maintain a deep relationship or connection to the natural world. They view all living things as connected and interdependent. They understand that unseen dynamics are constantly at work. The native people who live in the mountains of Northern Colombia, called the Kogi, speak of a spiritual dimension called Aluna. In this dimension all things that are, and were and will be exist in the same way within both an instant and an eternity at the same time.

Traditionally in Vedic culture the spiritual quality of the swan has to do with its ability to travel between the worlds. The swan travels between the causal world and other unseen worlds or dimensions.

Perhaps black swan concepts are collective human ideas or thought forms that take shape in another dimension. I say this because it would seem that the unpredictable nature of 'black swans' would make them very difficult to track in this dimension. In any case, they in effect take on separate energy (or impetus) of their own and then assert themselves overtly into human culture.

The examples of the 'black swan type changes' of the past as I said, are now plausible only because they actually happened. We know that they are real. The internet seems sensible and natural. The telephone seems plausible. But how sensible is the telephone really? Airports and other public places throughout the world are full of busy commuters talking with Bluetooth devices plugged into their ears ... just talking away.

Was it sensible before the telephone existed to contemplate a new human ability to be able to talk to people who are not there? Our 'humanness' now encompasses this ability.



*Woman talking to someone
'not there'*

These are all examples from the past, but any example we can describe cannot really help us in predicting what is on the horizon because black swans have such a high degree of strangeness. A black swan has in it an expectancy of some kind of predicted outcome. The outcome itself however, has a completely unexpected and unknown quality.

Great change could come from many directions simultaneously. The change will thrust cultures into a Renaissance; a Renaissance of technology, communication, information, longevity. Technological change will mirror societal change. There are so many aspects of human culture that are presently ripe for change.

I discussed the idea of the 'end of time' in [The 2012 Problem](#) and [2012 Revisited](#) articles. As we count down the days until December 21, 2012 we anticipate that on that day something is going to happen. My view is that we are already oblivious to the transition that is almost upon us. We are watching for it to arrive and it is already unfolding!

I once had an experience in an ayahuasca vision where I was sitting inside a great entryway facing the inside of the front door to a grand home. I was waiting for the arrival of the feminine presence or goddess. I knew she was coming for sure. I just felt it best to sit in my chair and patiently watch the front door. Suddenly I became distinctly aware of a presence right next to me. I felt it as a feminine presence. She spoke to me and asked me who I was waiting for. As she asked I knew it was her. I wasn't startled at all ... it seemed sensible to me that she had arrived in that way. It made me happy to not feel alone.

Ayahuasca is a black swan. I have many times thought it so plausible that this very unique teacher plant might not exist in the first place. It certainly is a great gift to humanity and a great blessing that it does indeed exist, but you can sort of see how it just as well might not exist. True to its symbol as a swan, it can gracefully travel between different worlds. The strangeness of its existence is because of its extraordinary relationship with humankind. It is a docking station with the universe. She brings the wisdom of nature to us. She teaches us to let go.

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