



Dear {{ contact.FIRSTNAME }}}

Welcome to the thirty-fifth instalment of the serialisation of my upcoming book **“The Futures Effect - Change Your Story, Change Y’our Future!”** - the second volume in the **“Futurize Yourself”** series - that is scheduled for publication in 2023.

This week I’m sharing the sixth episode of Chapter Four: **“Making decisions that work for you”**.

FEEDFORWARD

Remember that two weeks ago I mentioned I had had a great conversation with Dana Marduk, a futurepreneur from Iraq. This conversation is now available on YouTube: <https://youtu.be/HGyzGtzzfP4>. In our conversation we covered, among other topics, the futures aspects in wellbeing, business and education but also “the futurepreneurship of you as a multi billion organisation (MBO)”. Watch the podcast to find out what an MBO is and what it means for you!



Happy reading!

Be good to you, be good to y’our future, always.

Tom

PS: Audio and video links in this newsletter will redirect you to the respective platforms as Sendinblue doesn't support iframe embedding. My apologies for the inconvenience but I hope you will check them out.

PREVIOUS EPISODES

CH4.6 Making decisions that work for you



I’ve been told that one of my traits is to “re-search for the answer.” I do what? That was the first thought going through my mind when I heard it. However, once the words sank in, I had to give [Fredrik Haren – The Creativity Explorer](#) – credit for figuring me out so well after a very short conversation on establishing my inner theme.

Re-searching for the answer – yes, that is something I do. I seem, indeed, to have an inquisitive mind that has a tendency to wonder, and to question some set ideas and philosophies of life we have adopted. That wondering and questioning – that is what Fredrik meant.

For example, in my previous book I question the quote “If you can imagine it, you can achieve it. If you can dream it, you can become it.” Another quote I have questioned in an article is: “Life is like a box of chocolates. You never know what you’re gonna get.” Really? ... you NEVER know what you are going to get?

I don’t question everything all the time (rest assured!), but when I do it’s like a flashbulb going off in my head after I’ve heard, read or even said something myself that suddenly says: “Hang on a minute. That feels off.” For example, the statement: “Life can only be understood backwards but must be lived forwards.” It’s a quote from Søren Kierkegaard that I used in my previous book. It seemed fitting at the time of writing to illustrate how I got to where I had been when my life-crisis hit me.

While writing this chapter, though, I thought about that Kierkegaard quote again, and (yes, you can hear me coming) it suddenly felt incomplete, discordant, somehow off, and I couldn’t let it go. So I started searching the internet to get some background on the quote, and it turns out that the quote is but a paraphrased quotation of what Kierkegaard wrote. So here is the complete paragraph translated from Danish: “It is quite true what philosophy says, that life must be understood backwards. But then one forgets the other principle, that it must be lived forward. Which

principle, the more one thinks it through, ends exactly with temporal life never being able to be properly understood, precisely because I can at no instant find complete rest to adopt the position: backward” ([Kirmmse, 2008](#)).

What do you think? I don’t consider myself knowledgeable about philosophy, but for me the full phrase tells a slightly different story – and, reading some blogs on the topic, it seems that I’m not the only one who thinks this.

First of all, Kierkegaard said: “life must be understood backwards...” and not “life can only be understood backwards...” There is big difference between “must” and “can only”. “Can only” to me means there is no other way, while “must”, on the other hand, isn’t that determined.

When I spoke about my thoughts to one of my dear futures thinking allies and the founder of [Silicon Humanism](#), Sylvia Galluser, she responded: “‘must’ is interesting on many levels: is it a ‘must’ in the sense of requirement in the thought process, or in the sense of moral obligation to live a better life, or is it closer to a ‘should’ as an advice or a recommendation, or is it a probability (people tend to...), etc.?”

So what did Kierkegaard mean?

A sense of requirement, obligation, advice or something else, however you choose to interpret “life must be understood backwards”. It doesn’t say it is the only way. Yes, we should consider the past, look backwards. We must learn from our experiences, so to speak, to understand where we are, but it isn’t the “only” timeframe to consider.

When we look more closely at the words and the context of what Kierkegaard said, we also need to take into account that, for him, temporal life can’t be understood properly. This because there is no moment where you can adopt the position: backward. By this he apparently meant that there is neither present nor past nor future, as life is ongoing. For me, that again doesn’t say per se that “life can only be understood backwards.”

“Life must be understood backwards...” How I understand that is that we should contemplate our past, to better figure out how we got here today in this moment, but as life is ongoing, we also have to realise that as soon as you think it, that moment is already in the past. This makes it really difficult to understand life to the full.

But life “must be lived forward,” as Kierkegaard states. This is what shouldn’t be forgotten. He draws our attention to this. Yes, we may not be able to understand life to the full, but what we do know is that it must be lived forward. Something I’ve been trying to draw your attention to every time I mention that every decision and choice you make, and every action you take, influences y’our future.

Are you still with me? I know it is a winding road that I’m paving for you while writing this, but I know where I’m going, so please stay with me for a while longer.

Before I go on contemplating this, I’d like to mention another more recent quote that I have found while digging deeper into Kierkegaard’s paraphrased quote. That quote is from the late Steve Jobs (one of the founders of Apple) who said in his 2005 commencement address at

Stanford University: “You can’t connect the dots looking forward; you can only connect them looking backwards. So you have to trust that the dots will somehow connect in your future. You have to trust in something – your gut, destiny, life, karma, whatever. This approach has never let me down, and it has made all the difference in my life.”

I wonder if Steve Jobs was a chess player? Chess players see multiple moves ahead. In other words, they see and connect the dots forward. They see in their mind a few moves ahead, with different scenarios for how the opposing player might react and plans to counteract. Looks to me a lot like connecting dots forward.

Learning from our past is essential and, yes, we – including me – often connect the dots in hindsight. This book and my previous one are full of insights, dots and learnings. Life must be lived forward, that is evident, and life only exists to us in the ongoing present, I get that – but is it truly so that life “can only” be understood, or that we can only connect the dots, backwards? As you have read, I contest that.

Yes, we must look backwards to understand where we are, but the past is not the only timeframe influencing our present. The future might not exist, but, like a chess player, we can imagine future scenarios and have them influence our decisions, choices and actions – and therefore our ongoing present. We can learn from thinking what we want and don’t want the future to be. We can backcast, meaning we can define our desirable future and then work backwards and identify dots, which are ideas or steps that can connect that specified future to the present, to then influence our decisions, choices and actions. What has got me here is the past but, for more than 20 years now, that past has been guided and influenced by the future I wanted and designed on purpose.

By the way – and thank you for pointing this out to me, Sylvia – I do not contest that not everything can be rationalised. Sometimes you have to trust your gut, destiny, life, karma, whatever. Like for Steve Jobs, this approach has often made the difference in my life too.

My point in waffling on about this is: don’t let yourself be limited by the past. Adopt a futures mindset where you learn and understand your ongoing reality by learning from the past but also from the possibilities of y’our future and, by doing so, better understand your present. This futures mindset will help you to evolve on purpose. The benefits are that you will be much better able to cope and navigate not only many of the current changes and challenges but also future ones.

I’d like to back this up with the following: “Energy flows where attention goes.” To adopt a futures-included mindset, your intention matters. Intent encourages y’our subconscious mind to bring forth a desired goal, as well the most optimal future (Hallbom, 2012). With intention, the subconscious mind can link with your conscious mind, and you’ll be able to see, hear and understand the things that will help you get to what you want or what you’re intending. You’ll be able to connect the dots forward. I really want you to spend some time thinking about this. Disagree if you want, but please think about it. Think about what the future you want, and when you have a clear image of the future you want, how will you get what you want or intend? That will depend on what you do today – your decisions, choices, actions and your thoughts.

I know it might be a bit of a challenge getting to grips with this. To help you, do some research yourself on Kierkegaard’s quote and expand your

search to the Reticular Activating System (RAS). The what...? The RAS is the part of your brain right above the brainstem which is responsible for connecting the subconscious part of your brain with the conscious part. It's super interesting in connection with what we've just been discussing.

What is important now is that with intent (to have a course of action) and intention (the action of intending) the future becomes far less mysterious, and you not only start to live forward but start to understand more and more about life, and connect dots going forward. Futurizing yourself to create a GREAT future where you evolve on purpose means using and, by default, developing this innate potential you have. It means letting your intention create into reality what the future you want.

Before I started to evolve on purpose, I needed to revisit my past. Revisit it and change some of the narrative. I had a deformed image of my past, and if I had continued believing I was good for nothing then I wouldn't be an osteopath, author or wellbeing futurist today. But just revisiting my past and changing my narrative would have made no difference if I hadn't adopted a futures-included mindset. It is the future that pulled me forward. Past and future combined help me to understand life better - and, step by step over the years, have helped me to be and feel content, fulfilled and healthy, and to have what I so much longed for.

ADDENDUM

Let me quickly come back to you as regards Kierkegaard's words. I wanted to be one hundred per cent sure that the translation that I had found on the internet and also put through Google Translate was correct. So I contacted Marianne, a dear Danish friend, and asked her. By the way, the original words are: "Det er ganske sandt, hvad Philosophien siger, at Livet maa forstaaes baglaends. Men derover glemmer man den anden Saetning, at det maa leves forlaends. Hvilken Saetning, jo meer den gjennemtaenkes, netop ender med, at Livet i Timeligheden aldrig ret bliver forstaaeligt, netop fordi jeg intet Øieblik kan faae fuldelig Ro til at indtage Stillingen: baglaends".

"Livet maa forstaaes baglaends" does indeed translate to "life must be understood backwards." A thumbs-up for my feeling that something was off. Why do I suddenly have to think of Luke Skywalker and Yoda...? LOL.

Marianne also pointed out, and for some reason I hadn't spotted it, that in Kierkegaard's text he uses "Livet maa forstaaes baglaends" and "det maa leves forlaends." So twice "maa" which means "must", so why someone decided to translate his first "maa" as "can only" is a mystery to me. But something important got lost in translation, if you ask me.

To be continued next week with:

CH4.7 As we see our future, so we act. As we act, so we become.

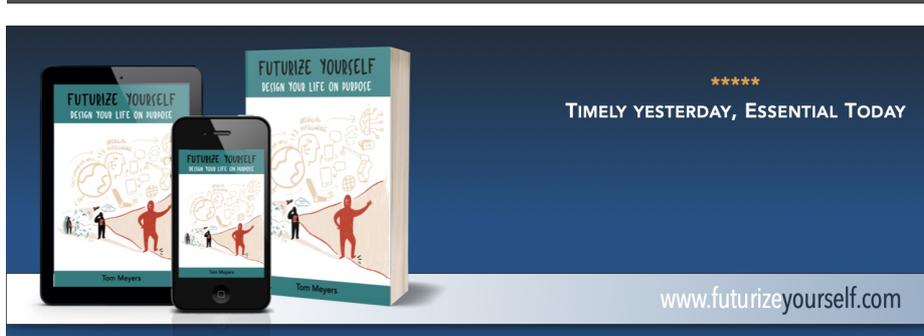
PS: There are 20 more episodes to come until the end of this unabridged edition of this book, The Futures Effect.



About the author

Tom Meyers, also known as “TomTom the Health Navigator”, is an osteopath D.O., body-centred stress coach, the founder of the “Reset Approach”, a wellbeing futurist, space enthusiast, TEDx organiser and author of “Futurize Yourself - Design your life on purpose.”

His mission is to empower you to flourish and thrive in this fast-changing, uncertain and challenging world full of opportunities.



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