



112. Human Evolution with John L. Petersen

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Future Sense is a podcast edited from the radio show of the same name, broadcast on BayFM in Byron Bay, Australia, at www.bayfm.org. Hosted by Nyck Jeanes and well-known international futurist, Steve McDonald, Future Sense provides a fresh, deep analysis of global trends and emerging technologies. How can we identify the layers of growth personally, socially and globally? What are the signs missed; the truths being denied? Political science, history, politics, psychology, ancient civilisations, alien contact, the new psychedelic revolution, cryptocurrency and other disruptive and distributed technologies, and much more.

This is Future Sense.

Nyck: You're tuned to BayFM. It's Monday, the 16th of March. My goodness, the year is already zooming by and so much is going on.

Thanks for your texts coming in regarding everything. Yes, lots of stuff to say. As I said, we're waiting on a piece from Mia Armitage, our Community Newsroom editor and main news person in the station. We will be hopefully getting her talk with local Lennox Head GP, Dan Ewald, adjunct professor and primary adviser to the North Coast Primary Health Network, fairly soon, so we'll probably play that towards the end of the show.

I'm now going to play some pieces from John L. Petersen, talking to Steve McDonald, my co-host, who is over there in the US. He just visited John and recorded these pieces with Mitch Schultz, who's also often on this show. John is considered to be one of the most informed futurists in the world.

Now, there are quite a few pieces here. I'm going to play what I can this morning. We'll see how far we go with everything going on. He does range very widely and very deep, and it's pretty out there. It's pretty out there. Of course, you are listening to *Future Sense* so you're going to get a bit of that here, and I'll just say that there's nothing that we say on this show that we are personally saying 'this is the truth'. These are just other ways of approaching—other ideas, other ways of looking at things—that may be valuable to you. You do your own research. You do your own thinking about everything. My personal feeling is that you can have your beliefs about anything. Have your beliefs, but don't believe in them too much. It becomes too fundamentalist; it closes down conversation.

John Petersen, as one of the world's top futurists, certainly is in the business of looking at all sorts of things from all sorts of angles in order to try and get the best estimation of what's going on. That doesn't mean he's right. It just means that he's looking at information that

most of us do not look at. Most of the time, that's what a futurist does. He was a graduate electrical engineer, originally. He also promoted rock concerts, produced conventions, he worked as a DJ, amongst other things; and he had a lot of government and political experience, including stints at the National War College, the Institute for National Security Studies, the Office of the Secretary of Defence, and the National Security Council staff at the White House. He was a naval flight officer in the US Navy, served in Vietnam and the Persian Gulf Wars, both. He has served in senior positions for a number of presidential political campaigns and was an elected delegate to the Democratic National Convention in 1984. He has twice been the runner up to be secretary of the Navy. So this man is a heavyweight. In 1989 he founded the *Arlington Institute* as I said earlier, a not-for-profit future-oriented research institute. The *Arlington Institute* operates on the premise that effective thinking about the future is impossible without casting a very wide net, and this is what he talks about in much of the following that I'm going to be playing this morning.

He ranges widely. The man is, you know, he's getting on in years, clearly, so he stumbles and fumbles a little bit around. I did the best, quickly yesterday, to edit some of that out so that we get the clear stuff as clear as possible, but he does go on a little bit and I acknowledge that. However, if you are interested, have a good listen to this man, because he really touches on some quite brilliant things, in my opinion.

He is actually an award-winning writer. Petersen's first book, *The Road to 2015: Profiles of the Future*, was awarded outstanding academic book of 1995 by *CHOICE Academic Review*, and remained on the *World Future Society's* bestseller list for more than a year. His co-authored article, *The Year 2000: Social Chaos or Social Transformation*, regarding the Y2K situation, was one of the most highly acclaimed writings on Y2K at that time. His 1988 book-length report, *The Diffusion of Power: An Era of Realignment*, was used at the highest levels of American government as a basis for strategic planning. He's a past board member of the *World Future Society*, writes on the future of aviation for *Professional Pilot* magazine, and is the chairman of the board of directors of the *Charles A. and Anne Morrow Lindbergh Foundation*, and many other things. This guy is not a lightweight. You can check out the website at <https://arlingtoninstitute.org>.

I'm going to play some of these segments now. This is the first piece, where he talks about a bit of something we often hear on this show: the work of Clare W. Graves. He doesn't mention Graves specifically here, but talks about the change and the evolution of the planet, and the transition times between eras—between paradigms—that may occur. And he goes pretty far out here, but it gets further out as we go forward.

So let's have a bit of listen to John Petersen here from the *Arlington Institute* on BayFM 99.9.

John Petersen: I'm John Petersen and I'm a futurist. I'm the Founder and the President of the *Arlington Institute*, which is a think tank that I put together about 30 years ago, and we're located in Berkeley Springs, West Virginia, about 100 miles from Washington and Baltimore, up in the mountains.

Steve: So, give us a summary—maybe in a minute or two—of what you understand about this big consciousness shift that's going on in the world.

John Petersen: From what we understand about how the world works, and this reality works, there is a kind of a universal template—there's a universal pattern of evolution, and however you define it and wherever it comes from, whether you're a Darwinian or someone else, there is constant change and upgrading and evolution in terms of animals and plants and human beings, of course. The dynamics of that transition and that process can be mapped, going back to the earliest things that we understand, like single-cellular life or multiple-cellular life, and vertebrates and mammals and so on. They have a common kind of pattern that's underneath that evolution.

There are long periods of time that are then followed by subsequent periods that are one tenth of the length of the time that was before them, and they're constantly getting shorter and shorter and shorter. So they start with billions of years and go to millions of years and then hundreds of thousands of years and then tens of thousands of years and so on, and each one of these transitions is an extraordinary kind of jump. The evolutionary biologists call them 'punctuations'. They go from one level up to the next level, and not only are the periods of time—the eras—becoming shorter and shorter, but the transition times are getting shorter. So the time between single-cellular life and multiple-cellular life is billions of years or something like that, and it keeps getting shorter by a factor of 10 until you're into a period of time, for instance, where you moved into cities and towns that became active and organised agriculture, and then when humans went into cities and towns and written language first started up, and then you find yourself five hundred years ago or so when Gutenberg invented movable type and humans started to fundamentally change the way that ideas got transmitted and proliferated across all of the species.

Each one of those transitions is getting shorter and shorter and shorter, so the one associated with movable type was maybe three hundred years; and if you then projected that further and you said computers and information technology represented a similar kind of extraordinary kind of change, then it would be about a 30 year transition and then you can easily see the progression: the next one would be three years, and so on. So the period of time—the transition periods—are getting shorter and shorter, and at the same time, each succeeding era, although shorter, has an extraordinary kind of increase in the amount of information content, knowledge, complexity—you can measure it in any number of ways—again, by a factor of roughly about 10.

So you get shorter and shorter periods with extraordinary explosions of information, and so you get an exponential curve. That is what we're riding, and now we're into what appears to be a dramatic kind of transition into a new space where the essence of who we are as human beings is going to fundamentally change in a very short period of time. The characteristics of that kind of change is an evolution of the species, away from being just physically-oriented on the planet, to the linear scientific paradigm that we've all grown up with, to being this expanded multidimensional kind of space where we're not only physical, but we have this engagement with larger, other dimensions of reality, and we become, if you will, participants and citizens in the larger sphere of activity.

What that means in practical terms, it seems to me, is that the folks at the beginning of that—at the leading edge of that transition—start to see themselves in a different way in the context of this reality. I live here in an area with a lot of woods and trees and things, and I literally come out in the morning and I talk to the trees because I see them as an integral part of this larger kind of reality that I live in; and let me assure you that as an engineer, and with the way I was raised as a conservative Christian and out of the Midwestern part of the United States, that's not the way I was raised.

So there's this notion of this expanded sense of who you are and how you integrate into the larger reality, and you can easily project that into engagement with other life forms that are not terrestrial—call them celestial or stellar or whatever you would like to. That seems to me this natural evolutionary kind of process: that humans are moving into a new stage, and the character of that transition is one of higher levels of awareness—and consciousness, commonly—where you see yourself in larger and more integrated terms.

Nyck: We're listening there to John L. Petersen, who is the founder of the Arlington Institute in West Virginia, talking some far out stuff there, but it's going to get further out so stay tuned.

And thanks for your texts that are coming in. I'm going to read this one because it is kind of important, from a regular listener and a double subscriber to BayFM, Nicky Ramone—Mr. Wombat. I mentioned before that in this region, sometimes we think that we're immune to things. He says: "We are not immune to anything up here, let alone the anti-vaccine movement, which itself is another issue. We are the most visited town region in Australia by international people fresh off the aeroplanes, often arriving within hours from overseas. We have a local Uni that feeds on foreign students also fresh off the plane. They even had one case of Covid-19 last week at Southern Cross University from a visiting lecturer who tested positive, then closed Lismore and Gold Coast campuses for a day and told all those who'd been in contact with him or the space to self-isolate. But I would go so far," says the writer here, "to say that at least one of those told to self-isolate would have gone to the *Eat the Street Festival* in Lismore on Saturday, where people walk around in close proximity to each other, eating food, licking their fingers and exchanging cash, which is known to contain traces of, well, all sorts of other things and then lick their fingers and so on. Makes self-isolation restoring, polishing and detailing classic motorcycles," which is what Nicky does, "whilst listening to 99.9 a much more attractive proposition." Thanks Nicky for that, and certainly it's true that the self-isolation thing all sounds very good; it's good to give people responsibility for themselves—and I certainly am not in support of literally locking people up and using the military or the police to do so—however, if you're going to self-isolate, you're going to have to do the right thing and actually do it.

We'll be back in just a short time and will play the next piece of the interview here with John Petersen from the *Arlington Institute*.

Nyck: You're tuned to BayFM here on *Future Sense* with Nyck Jeanes, flying solo today. We did talk to my co-host, Steve McDonald, over there in Washington Dulles Airport, waiting to find a way to get out, to go somewhere. I'm sure pretty well everyone out there must have friends, loved ones, someone out there in the world seeking to go somewhere or to get home, and of course, as you would know now, if they are coming home, they're going to also be in self-isolation for two weeks, even if they're Australian citizens. Also this morning, you may have heard that Woolworths and IGA, I think—I'm not sure about Coles—have designated from tomorrow morning from 7am to 8am, the first hour to be just for pensioners and for disabled people to do shopping, because clearly those are the people who are finding it much harder to battle the many people in the supermarket. So far, I personally, and hopefully you haven't seen any sort of bad behaviour, so to speak, in local supermarkets, but it does exist in other places, has existed in Australia, has happened overseas, too, and we don't want that. So please give the opportunity for those less capable, less able than yourselves, to stock up wherever they need to do so. And I think also be judicious about stocking up, clearly, because if you start taking everything from the shelves, then that's just not fair, is it?

Let's play the next section of this interview with John Petersen from the *Arlington Institute*, one of the top futurists in the world. And as I said, presenting this before, as a futurist, this man listens to much information that many people will find crazy, out there, on the edge, fringe stuff, conspiracy theories and the like. But this is what a futurist does, to figure out actually what is the best way to find information that details trends that are moving towards the future. And they may be crazy trends. Galileo once did some crazy stuff and actually thought, 'hey, everything doesn't revolve around the Earth', and they all thought he was nuts. But that wasn't the case, was it?

So let's have a listen to this. John L. Petersen here, and a question from Steve, actually about the pattern of change and how things move from stability to chaos—the kind of chaos we're in now—and then eventually to a new order. We talk about this kind of thing on the radio here and how paradigms collapse as new ones emerge or vice versa—new ones emerge as soon as one collapses. Someone once said it's almost like new sprouts come out of the compost of the old, and to care, to worry too much about the old doesn't give enough energy or thought or momentum to the new things emerging. Of course, sometimes those new things are difficult to hook into—difficult to understand—because they reach outside your purview, outside your belief system. They reach beyond your value system, beyond your comfortable zone. So given all that, stay open to things that are said generally without going crazy, because there are some crazy conspiracy theories out there. Yes, there are. There are some really nutty things going on in the world, but there's also, on the fringes, some real truth that can be plumbed from those depths, I would suggest.

Here on BayFM, you're tuned to *Future Sense*.

Steve: Let's talk a little about the pattern of change—the kind of slippery dip profile where we go from stability down into chaos and then back up to a new level of stability again—and

also this parallel thing we've got happening with the old paradigm collapsing at the same time as a new one establishes itself.

John Petersen: Yeah, sure. There's a very interesting underlying principle that becomes obvious if you study these kinds of things and try to understand how this whole process works. In a sense, Einstein distilled it when he talks, in famous terms now, about saying that you can't solve a problem from the same level in which it was designed and that you've got to be at a different level. You have to see it from a different point of view. In practical terms, what that means is that you have to get yourself to a different vantage, to where you break out of or extract yourself from the constraints and the dogma and all of that history and the other kind of things that you brought with you in order to progress. I mean, that's what progression is, alright? I mean, it's change; it's something different.

But on larger scale, in social terms—in species or cultural or whatever terms—humans don't like to change. Humans want predictability, they want consistency, they want the ability to plan and anticipate. All of that is antithetical to change, and it's really tough when you have large-scale change. We don't have a history of knowing how to deal with that. We are not taught how to deal with ongoing constant change and how to be intrinsically adaptive and open and agile and the other kind of things that are central to being able to reconfigure yourself to something else.

The mechanism that gets you into that kind of space is that you get driven into a corner. Whether this is in personal terms, in terms of relationships or personal issues and problems, the way you solve the problem is that you get driven into a corner where there are no other options, which then forces you, drives you, up to another dimension to where you see the world in a different way. Psychologists and therapists and other people describe it in various terms, but that's the basic idea: that you cannot solve it from there, so you've got to navigate whatever the environmental pressures are to drive you up to another space.

That's the process that I think is going on on this planet right now, is that humanity is essentially being driven into a cul-de-sac, into a corner, from which all of the stuff that we brought with us in terms of history and experience and knowledge and presumptions, none of it frickin' works. I mean, there's no way you can get there from here. When you get into extremis, when you're finally without any other options, then it becomes obvious that you can't do it; you are forced into another place. You are forced into another place just because of the physical problems or the emotional problems or whatever it turns out to be. You start to see the world in a different way because you let go of all of the things that you've been carrying around that have constrained and tied you into a paradigmatic kind of framework. So I think that's what's happening now.

Within this kind of model, there's an absolute new world that comes out of the back end of that, that's a different level, and it operates by definition in fundamentally different ways. Reality does not make sense in that new world from this world, where it's a different set of logic and it's different understanding and it's different perceptions and different values—it's a whole different world; it's a new world. What we're in the middle of is this collapse of the old world, which you're watching implode all around us, and what's emerging are the threads that are coming together for the tapestry of what's going to be the new world. It's

an extraordinary, amazing period of time because nobody has been able to play in the middle of this space for all of human history. There's never been an opportunity to literally build a new world and, you know, be the leading edge of a new human, essentially, which is necessarily what's going to come out of all of this. To me at least, it's not really clear what this new world really is going to be. It could be any of a number of things, which is why I work with scenarios—alternative worlds—so that you can look across them all because who knows what's going to happen between now and then? You can't predict the future. Any good futurist knows that.

So, it's a fascinating time where you've got the collapse of the old world and all of the old institutions and the systems and the mindsets and the principals, and the emergence of this new kind of integrated, larger, more conscious kind of perspective that is going to allow human beings as a species—certainly, as you know, a small group, probably a small number—to populate and become the basis for this new world.

Nyck: You're tuned to BayFM 99.9, and certainly, as I've been saying, regarding anything that we broadcast on this show, the opinion of ourselves and of those we interview is not the opinion of the station. We certainly don't claim that anything that is spoken here is 'the truth' about anything. It is just other ways of seeing and looking at things.

I think John Petersen, as a world-renowned futurist, is certainly worth listening to. He's certainly out there, even for me at times—and you'll hear that in the next section I'll play shortly—but I think very, very worth having a listen to. I really liked what he said there: any good futurist knows that you can't predict the future. I think that's really important. No matter what we think we know, whether you're a futurist or you're a scientist, it's doubtful whether we absolutely know which way things are going to unfold. So with regards to the current crisis and the coronavirus, of course, then the best we can do, as I've been saying endlessly here this morning, is to be very discerning and judicious about how to protect yourself and those you love, and be more careful than you think you should be. I'm finding myself doing that now, too, because I tend to be someone who doesn't really worry about things overall, doesn't give a lot of credence to those kind of dangers that are pushed out there by the media—not saying they don't exist, but it's the way that they're pushed out. Nevertheless, I'm finding myself to be a little bit more discerning about what I do and the like. So I think that's good advice generally for all of us.

We did talk to Steve McDonald over there in Washington, and I've been playing some of the pieces from when he and Mitch Schultz, the Texan Elf—those who listen to the show know him well—interviewed John L. Petersen from the *Arlington Institute* the other day. I'm going to play one more segment. This is going out even a bit further, where Mitch asks about the most exciting things that are coming. In a sense, it's a good salve today to think about the larger future in a more positive way. Are we indeed collapsing? Is the whole of civilisation actually going through such a crisis that everything is going to come down? And if so, what are the qualities of that? What are the connections that might be coming that we aren't

aware of, that we don't even believe in, perhaps? And how can we, in fact, prepare, if indeed the world is falling apart, which is pretty hard to argue with? And what might emerge from that in a more positive way? It's a tricky conversation.

Let's have a listen to this. This is futurist, John L. Petersen, and first up, Mitch Schultz, here on BayFM, 99.9. You're tuned to *Future Sense*.

Mitch Schultz: In this new world that's emerging, if you were to say, 'OK, I can make a prediction or something', what would be some of the most exciting things that you sense that are coming of that new world?

John Petersen: Well, trying to guess about what the new world's going to be is very ... I think about that all the time. I mean, I'm futurist after all. It's fascinating because there's an underlying principle about these periods of time, these historical periods of great change, the paradigmatic shifts. The most fundamental principle that I carry around with me all the time is that you cannot make sense of the world that is going to emerge from the position of the previous era. So in trying to think about what this new world might look like, what you've got to do, necessarily, is again, you've got to get outside of the box; you've got to go find sources that are not part of the past or the status quo because they are locked into the present paradigm. That then leads you into interesting and weird people who work on the edges, and whether they're channels or psychics or whatever they turn out to be, they are not part of the standard model, if you will. When you get out into those kinds of folks—and by the way, from a practical futurist point of view, if you're working yourself up an exponential curve into a place that nobody's ever been before and you really are seriously interested in trying to understand what that might be, then it's kind of stupid to go back to these guys and ask them. They've got no idea, so you've got to find yourself some of these sources, and what you necessarily have to do is go unconventional. The unconventional sources—and like I say, whether they're psychics or otherwise—what they're tied into is this larger understanding of reality that is going to be the core organising notion of what this new world is up here. The way this works is that as this world evolves, there are things that pop up all over and start to emerge within the corpus of the species that are new ideas about economy and new ideas about all of these things that finally come together at some point and start to become the core set of organising ideas of this new world.

If you work yourself out to these unconventional people—and you've got to be pretty selective on this because there's a lot of weird stuff out there—but if you go out there, you start to hear common themes, and the common themes are things like: this new human will have the ability to have telepathy; that vocal conversation in the way that we do it is not necessary. Anybody who's living with somebody for a long time knows that after a while, every once in a while you know what they're going to say. It's kind of like that, only far more. There's also manifestation that comes out. There's this constant notion that says that consciousness is causal and as you learn, as you work yourself up there and learn how to influence and to shape and to manage your consciousness and how you think and to be

sensitive to subtle things in ways that you haven't been before, then what happens is that you can start to manifest reality in terms that you've always done but never known that you were doing. It becomes the ability to do that in quite a different way.

Now, that is the mindset, the perspective, the essence of how you deal with the implosion of the old world which is happening all around us, and in being able, without fear and with a sense of competence and a clarity about where you're going, to be able to start to transit up this path to this new world. It's a really central issue about this whole process, because when the old world implodes, when the political system collapses, when the whole scientific thing, or whatever—when you have catastrophic cancer, with diseases and coronaviruses and whatever it is—what it's all doing, is going to your sense of security, your sense of structure, your sense of principles and rules and operating instructions and all of that stuff that you came with. If it all collapses, then you're an untethered balloon; you're just floating around there without anything.

So the question, in that context, is: how do you get your personal stuff together such that you are able to navigate and transit into that new space with a new emergent, new human kind of sense of purpose and direction that discounts the collapse of all of what you see going on around you? That, it seems to me, is the essential, the core characteristic of this emergent new human, is that they see themselves in different ways; they see the external reality at kind of an arm's length. They have not internalised it and they're certainly not generating a lot of stress about it; and more importantly, whether it's explicit or implicit, they have a clear idea of an emergent new world. They have hope. I mean, if you do not have hope in the middle of all of this thing, it's all going to come unglued, from a personal point of view. So what you're looking for is essentially: how do you maintain hope through this? And the way you do that is to access and shape and develop this new sense of who or what human is from the inside out.

The very interesting thing to me in all of this is, as this increasingly collapses, as it increasingly looks horrible or catastrophic or disruptive, how you hold onto and build and embellish that sense of this new version of who you are in this broader sense? And, by the way, that it's all going to be OK, because this is a benign and loving kind of world at its essence, and there's purpose and direction to this, and we're not the first ones that have gone through this, and we have help from other dimensions, and so on. So you're not by yourself in all of this and once you start to get all of that, then it becomes a really exciting kind of ride, because then you're looking for and going to some place that nobody's ever been before; and by the way, you get a chance to shape it and build it and be part of that, and that's what's exciting to me.

Nyck: That was John L. Petersen from the *Arlington Institute* in West Virginia, one of the world's top futurists with quite an incredible CV. He's not a crazy dude, but he's talking some far out stuff there, and I do like the fact that he's talking very positively at the end there. In the light of everything that's going on on the planet and what's happening right now around the world, perhaps, even if you're personally touched already in one way or the other, to

remain as positive as you can and perhaps to see a light at the end of the tunnel, however you particularly configure that for you at this time, because, of course, we are all different—our value systems, our needs, our desires are all different—and all of that needs to be acknowledged. But at the same time, we're all in this together.

If you're interested in more of John L. Petersen from the Arlington Institute, you can go to the website <https://arlingtoninstitute.org>, and also you can tune into the podcast from this programme through www.futuresense.it within about 24 hours or so, for an edited version of all of today's show, and particularly the interviews with John L. Petersen. I have quite a bit more of them, so we may actually just put them on the podcast and we may also play some next week. I don't know yet, with everything up in the air. We'll see how we go. We're just going with the flow.

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