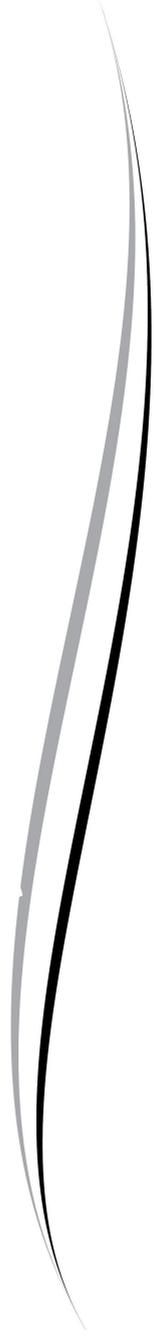
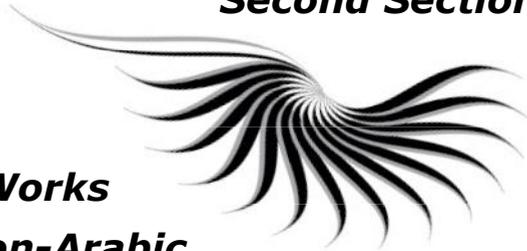


***Second Section***

***Works  
in Non-Arabic  
Languages***







# Philosophy of the Future between Divinations and Prophecies

**Prof. Mustafa El Nashar**

*Professor and Head of Philosophy Department, Faculty of Arts – Cairo University – Egypt*

## **Abstract**

The main idea of the study is discussing which frame would image the philosophy of future, divinations or prophecies. Based on this discussion, the questions are: what is the meaning of the philosophy of future? Why discussing philosophy of future between divinations and prophecies is problematic? After analyzing philosophy of future concepts, we could find that using divination as the frame of this branch of philosophy is more contributing in developing the methodology of this philosophy. Moreover, the prophecies are more related to religious not to philosophy.

Key words: philosophy of future, divinations, prophecies, predictions.

## **ملخص البحث**

إن فلسفة المستقبل هي ذلك الفرع من الفلسفة المعنى بتأمل وقراءة صورة المستقبل على أصعدة عديدة من مستقبل الحياة الاقتصادية والسياسية إلى مستقبل التطورات العلمية والتكنولوجية التي ستشهدها البشرية بدون حد أقصى للمدى الزمني؛ فقد يكتفى الفيلسوف بقراءة مستقبل القرن الذي يعيش فيه والقرن الذي يليه، وقد تتسع قراءته لتوقعات المستقبل حتى نهاية الألفية التي لا يزال يعيش بداياتها، ولدينا كم كبير الآن من الكتابات التي تقرأ صورة مستقبل التقدم البشرى في مجالات العلم والفلسفة في القرن الحادى والعشرين،

Philosophy of the Future between Divinations and Prophecies, Vol. 3, Issue No.1, January 2014, P.P. 7 – 26.

كما أن لدينا بعض الكتابات التي تطرح تصورات المستقبل حتى نهاية الألفية، والطريف أن من يتنبأون بصورة المستقبل في الألفية كلها يقدمون تصوراتهم على أنها " تاريخ المستقبل " !! فأين الحدود الفاصلة بين الممكن والمستحيل في هذه القراءات والتصورات ازاء المستقبل؟؟ وكيف يمكن أن نميز فيها بين التكهّنات التي تتعلق بالغيّب الذي لا يمكن التنبؤ بصورته، وبين النبوءات التي قد تصدقها بعض الشواهد التي بدت فيما يقدمه العلماء والفلاسفة من مذاهب واكتشافات تسهم فعلا في التقدم الذي تشهده الحياة البشرية؟! إن هذا التساؤلات وغيرها إنما تكشف عن أن المستقبل لا يزال مجالا للتكهن والنبوءة!! ومن ثم فهو سيظل مجالا لكل الممكنات . ولاشك أن منها ما هو يوتوبى خير ومنها ما يمكن أن يكون شرا يحمل نذر القضاء على انسانية الانسان بل على حياته كلها . وعلى ذلك فلا داعى للإفراط فى التنبؤ بخيرية المستقبل . وعلى الانسان دائما أن يرفع راية الحذر من أى تقدم علمى

يجرزه العلم لأنه بقدر ما فيه من الخير بقدر ما يحمل بذور الشر !!.

The Philosophy of the future is that branch of philosophy concerned with contemplation and reading the image of the future in several aspects from future of the economic and political life to the future of technical and scientific developments that will be witnessed by the humanity without a maximum for timeframe. It may be enough for the philosopher to read about the future of the century in which he/she lives and the following century. His/ her reading may be expanded to include expectations for the future till the end of millennium that he/she still lives in its beginnings. Now, we have a great deal of writings that read the image of future of human progress in the areas of Science

and Philosophy in the Twenty-first century <sup>(1)</sup>. We also have some of writings that propose perceptions for the future till the end of the millennium. What is funny is that those who prophesy the image of the future in the whole millennium provide their perceptions as "History of the Future" <sup>(2)</sup>!! Thus, where are the borderlines between the possible and the impossible in these readings and perceptions about the future? How can we differentiate in such readings and perceptions between the divinations related to the unseen that can't be predicted and prophecies that may be confirmed by some of evidence that appeared in doctrines and discoveries of scientists and philosophers that contribute to the progress witnessed by the human life now?

### **First: The Future between Divination and Prediction**

I think that the linguistic definition of the divination and prediction may contribute to the distinction to which we look forward; divination is derived from the verb "divine" divine for someone means tells someone the unseen, divine something means tell something in terms of expectation, diviner is a person who divines the unseen <sup>(3)</sup>. It becomes clear that the term "Divination" is closely related to the religious term associated with the belief in the unseen. As we know, the unseen is only known by God and no one even clergyman themselves can allege that they know anything about the unseen except for issues mentioned in the Holy Books. But prediction is derived from the verb "predict", predict something

means rise and emerge. Prophecy is telling something before occurrence by guessing <sup>(4)</sup>.

It seems that prediction is to tell of the occurrence of an expected event before the occurrence. This telling (prediction) must have reasons from the real life and must be quite associated with the duality of cause and effect. Even if the cause is apparently disappeared, the predictor is able to expect its existence as well as the resulted issues for events have not happened yet. So divination is divination and no one has any evidence on his/her knowledge of the unseen. But prediction is vision of the future of anything for which we see the premise in the real life, whether it is related to a phenomenon or scientific theory, or it is related to an idea or a philosophical theory; This vision

for the future, both in terms of science, or at the level of philosophy primarily stems from evidence or phenomena observed by the expert, whether a scientist or a philosopher. Therefore the philosophy of the future is closer to the prophecies about the future and revealing the image that it would be in any areas of life. Idiomatically, the future is one of the three moments of time; it is known that time is three moments: past, present and future. If the past is related to the past events, they have become a property of the history and a part of memories of individuals and peoples. The present is related to the immediate moments and its basic unit is "Now". According to Aristotle- the philosophy of the time-, it is the moment that can't be caught before uttering it is a future and after utterance it becomes past. As

for the future, it is the moment that we have not lived yet. It is the area of possibilities for all what can be happened at the level of individuals and popular and cultural achievements. It's the area of possible and therefore is open for all possibilities which, in the life of individuals and peoples, are turned into aspirations dreamt to be achieved with hope of increasing human well-being and thus achieving the maximum welfare and happiness. It is a mysterious level between two levels whose features are clearly shown, horizons became apparent and events ended, of course these levels are past and present. It a mysterious level because we have not have it yet and have not known possibilities and ambitions that will be achieved. Will it be a room for optimism and aspirations, or will be a harbinger

of pessimism where dreams are destroyed and ambitions are broken in the real life?

**Since it is the mysterious level, it becomes** an area for divination or prophesy, both are attempt to elucidate the mystery and reveal the hidden. However, while divinations - as said earlier - are closer to the reading of the unseen that is known only by God as acknowledged by believers and atheists alike, prophecies may be closer to understanding due to reliance on scientific determinants and objective ground. Prophecy is available to scientists and philosophers as much as deep reading in achievements of the past and the present.

### **Second: Nature of the Future**

H.D.Jouvenel, director of *Futuribles Magazine* <sup>(5)</sup>, says: The nature of the future becomes clear

in three areas: area of freedom, area of ability and area of will.

For the future as the area of freedom; it is unlike the past whose events passed is not limited that is to say it is opened for several possible developments. Since it is not previously defined, the achieved results will be very contradictory as a result of our reactions whether familiar people or working people. For the familiar person, the future will be a source of anxiety that may be increased whenever he/she rightly or wrongly feels of acceleration or changes, overlapping and multiplication of circumstances, and the societies become facing more and more risks to entire systems as noted in the financial crisis in Asia and Russia. In contrast, the working person consciously or unconsciously seeks to resist this feeling of anxiety and grief. So he/she tries to discover

constants in the order of nature and the social order allowing him/her in any way to think about the difference between today and tomorrow, as if it was the difference between yesterday and today.

If we want to clarify this, H.D. Jovenel continues saying: The specialists in propection (prediction) are unlike specialists in divination as they believe that it is not enough to generalize the estimations. So even if we discovered constants in the past, there is no evidence on the repetition of the same systems to no end in the future. In short, they believe that areas of bewilderment and doubt are many and they are more than usually believed. If it is in fortune for the familiar person, it fortune for the working person; in which there are always areas in which the game is still open wide potentialities to act and available

opportunities for workers to change the course of events. In fact, a specialist in the prospection seeks to show the possible forms of the future in the current situation and to identify areas of action in relation to various workers.

For the future as the area of ability, Talleyrans says quoting H.D. Jouvenel: "When the issue becomes impossible, it is evidence that it is too late". We hear decision-makers say: I will do this because I have no choice, if they are honest they would have said: I will do this because I no longer have any choices with premeditation of their saying " things are left neglected" to the extent that the game became tight, as they say in chess. The benefit of anticipation or prospection even if it does not tell us certainty about what will happen tomorrow it tells us about possible

developments when we have means either to change the course of events or if it is too late to prepare for in advance to confront the challenges. Our saying that the future is the area of ability does not mean that we are greatly able to create tomorrow for which we dream. The issue is that we put ourselves in a position of a navigator who should try to anticipate the wind that began to blow, and quickly return back to the port safely at the same time.

For the future as the area of will: the old stoic philosopher Seneca says- as quoted by H.D. Jouvenel: "There is no favorable wind for those who do not know where to go"; so what is the benefit from our attempts to anticipate and explore possible forms of the future if we do not know our part specially where we are going?! Through this sense, the future is

the area of expression of the will, and the area of the expression of a dream sifted by the mind and the area of expression of a project in which many workers are hired to achieve it.

**If the nature of the future is characterized by three characteristics considering it as an area for freedom, ability and will, how can we think about it in a way that makes us already able to prospect its horizons, dimensions and forms?!**

Thinking about the future whether in the areas of science, philosophy or literary and artistic creativity, in my belief, should be outside the duality of cause and effect as this is the way to discover what is new. Our thinking should be outside the area of expectations associated with this duality. This is what was expressed by Ilya Prigogine,

professor at the University Libre de Bruxelles and director of the International Institutes of Physics and Chemistry and holder the Nobel Prize for Chemistry in 1977, when he said<sup>(6)</sup>: " We're going from the world of certainty to the world of possibility so we must discover the narrow path between the inevitability suppressing our freedom and a universe that may be run by coincidences and therefore our minds can't perceive it. The reality associated with Classical Mechanics was like a robot. This position did not improve in Quantum Mechanics so the reality in this context became the guarantee of our analogies. Today, we reached a different concept of reality and perception of a world in the process of construction. This perception puts an end to the traditional progression of sciences.

The solid sciences discussed certainties and we consider them a model for Humanities and ultimate goal. Today, the Humanities such as Economics or Sociology can be based on other models; in a world no longer the world of certainties, so the concept of value should be reconsidered. Indeed, what could the concept of value mean within an inevitable world?! The ancient Greeks left two examples to use: the first is reasonableness of nature or as Whitehead said "Configuring general ideas within the system that should be essential, logical and coherent and according to which all elements of our experience can be interpreted." The second is the democracy based on the supposed human freedom, creative power and responsibility. Undoubtedly, we are still far from completion of these two examples but at least we can from now on

deduce that they are not contrary. The nature is richer, has more surprises and more complex than imagined at the beginning of this century (e.g the Twentieth Century). There is no doubt that we will witness over the next century (Twenty-first Century) emergence of a new concept of reasonableness where mind will not be associated with certainty, nor the probability associated with ignorance. In this context, the power of creativity in nature and humans can represent their place.

So we are approaching, by the testimony of philosophers and scientists, the belief that the freedom of man and possibilities of the nature are limitless. Thus, the thinking that can't realize promises of the future and act accordingly is extinctive thinking because it preferred inactivity to freedom, imitation to creativity, crying on the

ruins to optimism about the future that is overfilled with the promises waiting people who fulfill their rights. But this is conditioned with work, more imagination, keeping a way from the familiar, the ability to break the constraints and overcome the artificial or fake obstacles. Man, if wills, has the ability to launch away from his mind and fancies, across the sciences and his work. The nature and the universe do not prevent human ingenuity, but they are the vital area to prove his abilities and growing his ingenuities infinitely.

### **Third: The Future between Optimism and Pessimism**

On this basis, Eleonora Masini, professor of prospective studies and her book: *Why the prospective studies?*, builds her vision on the relation between prospection and work as she says about the prospection " It is a

commitment to work and will to build the future not to accept it negatively. Ethical values, commitment of human being, undertaking of change, choice and freedom of choice within the scope of work all are essential elements for the prospective studies."

She believes that we are not able to turn our prospective thinking into works, but we can explore two ways to get out of this dilemma. The first is the dialogue between various cultures via place and time. The second is taking into consideration the role of woman and her ability to find solutions toward the future and change. She gave an example of such ability of woman: the role of women in the armed conflicts around the world. In Bosnia, Kosovo, Uganda and Sudan, women came together and

adopted the prospection to choose alternatives to the surrounding society and morally worked - for their children - to anticipate what should be the community. <sup>(8)</sup>

Thus, work toward the future requires a positive dialogue between cultures via place and time. It also requires more understanding of the role of woman in making applicable solutions for a better future for the coming generations.

Discovering the features of the future starts from the dialogue; dialogue between the human being, between cultures, between religions, even between human being and nature, between human beings and their Creator...etc. The dialogue remains the most prominent feature and characteristic of what we can call the language of the future "new

humanity"; in which - as one of its supporters- Father Giuseppe Skatolen Professor at Pontifical Institute for Arabic and Islamic Studies in Rome - <sup>(9)</sup> says: people becomes open for each other with a great deal of respect and understanding. Universal religions are required to provide positive examples for our present humanity and cooperate in order to guide the process of globalization in its current form to true humanization for all mankind. There is no doubt in his belief that a responsible and honest dialogue between various cultures and universal religions represents one of the most important major challenges of our present time, and perhaps for our future time. The dialogue in our present time has no value unless we make through it a better future

for all humanity and make it more humane.

The dialogue on the future does not mean that it will be a bed of roses. Full of great hopes, on the contrary, the reading of some people to the future carries much of mystery and anxiety and perhaps pessimism; future is - as Edgarmuran <sup>(10)</sup>, famous French sociologist in the twentieth century, says there is no a specific way leads us to it, nor a locomotive carry us to the happy tomorrow; in his opinion, the myth of progress as a historical necessity has died; Everything that had seemed a definite engine for progress and necessarily useful like science, technology, economy and industry became flagrant contradictions today. Resonant promises for happy future became in a deplorable state today. History is not approaching us like

a great river or like a glacier, but approaches in deviation like a cancer; there is a slight deviation in the beginning, when this deviation becomes strong, it may make a tendency that, if developed, may become a global tendency.

This is what happened with respect to major religious thoughts such as Christianity and Islam and to major non-religious thoughts. Socialism originated in some small marginal groups, and capitalism was in its beginning a narrow local phenomenon even a strange and unusual phenomenon spread in the heart of the disparate discipline-feudal societies. Like the biological determinism, the historical development witnessed unexpected initially collective inactivity for several times; for example Egypt and Roman Empire, but the historical

development witnessed also inner explosions such as those occurred in the Soviet Union. The unexpected nature of the development becomes obvious in marginal creative explosions but they were able to highlight their richness and fertility over time. The most telling example of this issue is the small ancient Athens in the fifth century BC in which the so-called democracy and the so-called Religion-separate philosophy were founded for the first time!.. The only certainty –as assured by Moran - for the human race is death. However, he himself is not completely sure with respect to timing and his picture.

On the contrary with this pessimistic tone, the authors of "The History of the Future" prophesy that by the Half Millennium, man will live in the era of confidence in the whole

world, which is much like the world of utopia. It is the century which witnesses the robot, similar to human, which will be in the service of human kind, a century that you can get in the train from the central station in New York to Bombay and arrives in 52 minutes<sup>(11)</sup>. In this century, humans will find themselves riding the high wave accompanied with superpower in all areas of life. Perhaps, the most distinctive feature of this century is human beings possession of the spirit power making them masters of the earth and the owners of their spiritual future. They will have new ways of life to enable them choosing alternatives to life on this earth, to go to other planets on the moon or may be on Mars, it's time to go to the second earth that is to say traveling and living in other planets. It is the time of

airports not roads in which airports will be full of all types of vehicles without crowding or traffic and without accidents. It's time to jump over the time and barriers, the end of the trip may be not death but waiting for another life. It's time to live in a circle of good<sup>(12)</sup>.

Reaching the 27<sup>th</sup> century, the human will live in their view the "Age of Miracles"; where this century will be the amazing scientific changes' century that astound the human to the extent of mixing the fantasy with reality and reality with fantasy, as what all that cannot be imagined by man of welfare means and life refreshment will become a reality and what will happen of changes and scientific developments may go beyond the human imagination and exceed even his illusions. The human in this century will be more youthful

constantly due to having ready and young spare parts in order to replace any member that becomes old or diseased in his body<sup>(13)</sup>. In addition, the human in this century will be addicted to live in a world of mass imagination and illusions that can be achieved once be wished.

Nevertheless, if we go beyond that and break the time barrier to the end of the third millennium, we will find that the remaining inhabitants of the earth at that time will look back at us and burst into laughter of this long-distance of time; as we would seem in their opinion as a very strange and amusing people because of the struggle that we have done, the disputes that happened between us, our way of life that we took it seriously and depending on what's going on inside our minds. They will contemplate from the

philosophical scientific perspective through which the science and religion combined in one wide mind and with a spiritual character. Those people who will remain alive on the earth in this remote time will be characterized by peace and meditation and they may be less than five hundred million people lived in cities in a state of dispersion and disintegration except for some areas of a centralized administration that will be consisted of a government which regulate the world, but the rest inhabitants will live inside commercial villages that spread over the different parts of land and water.

Those communities will manage their life in a smart and coherent way with the Mother Earth, depend on the agricultural land to provide their own food and rely on themselves dependently towards the resources and

technology; as they will get the power and energy from the wind, air, water or rock. For their religious aspect, it will be completely a personal matter and the inhabitants in cities will not exceed two or three thousand people in each region despite the existence of the continuous social interactions between them. However, money will not be existed; as the requirements needed by individuals will be provided without greediness, avidity, or eagerness, so all the pressures and disturbances that prevailed the individuals' lives in the 20<sup>th</sup> century will have been completely disappeared. The people's common interest will prevail between them with love and they will innovate a system that works to help the growth for all individuals based on the high degree of awareness between

them. This may seem to the 20<sup>th</sup> century's mentality like the Utopia, but at that time it'll be a reality; so the human mind will reach a degree of awareness, through the self-love, in which the wars, political conflicts, and famines will normally disappear<sup>(14)</sup>.

By the year of 2990, a control machine will be consisted that its mission is to track events and write down some notes and observations about the changes and effects which occur to the extent that if there is any crime or an action against the nature is taken in any part of the world, the rest inhabitants of this planet will know that and will be informed of everything that happens to them and around them. This machine may be called Morpho Meter, thanks to it all people will become in contact for detecting any negative effects in order to be

controlled and manageable as appropriate.

As for the individuals' life inside their dwellings, there'll be big silent rooms in each home. Each family consisted of two members will occupy their apartment that will be of a high roof, with a natural heating system and surrounded of all its sides by the pure moist air, as well as the bed will become very light and flexible. For the entertainment system, all the artificial entertainment means will be disappeared totally as people will depend on enjoying life simply based on their personal feelings and contact with others and with nature in all its elements; as the harmony between the human and all what is natural will come back. In addition, they will return to the natural order of life between day and light to begin the work at the

crack of dawn and sleep shortly after dusk.

The family life will be opened and each individual will respect the others' privacy without cautious behaviors. The familiarity between individuals affiliated to the communities will be strong in the living life. However, the sexual intimacy will be confined to the husbands and wives based on correlations between them.

If we ask about the government mechanism, the government inside the administrative centers will be overlapped in all matters through the public and popular referendum. The government will be elected by the public vote and its central committee will be appointed through the Rota System. Each oligarchy governing group will step down after one year or may be after a period of its

governance. Those who will be in charge of this position will arrive to it through carrying out tests and exams in order to find out the capacities. At that time there will not be any kind of the governmental drama and there will not be also what is called the politics<sup>(15)</sup>.

Of course, this utopian rosy picture imagined by the two authors of "History of the Future" about the future, especially at the end of the millennium originates from their reading of the scientific developments that will occur within the coming years of the current millennium and its consequent human awareness which enables them to discover, by themselves and through the previous generations suffering, the perfect picture of the life fit to the human beings as there will not be neither fighting nor wars, but only

enjoying the normal peaceful life benefited from the successive scientific discoveries which made their life is a full of luxury life.

However, these prophecies have been founded, in fact, on the duality of the cause and effect that suspect us on it from the outset as a viable way to predict the future because the major question is: May not these impressive scientific discoveries lead to the destruction of the human and elimination of its natural, clean and fit environment?! May not these discoveries lead to reach the conflict between human beings to its end by killing each other under the slogan of the excellence and exploitation of the science power?! May not we imagine that these innovative inventions and what will be innovated, especially in the field of the robots and the development of its abilities, can get

out of control, whereupon attack the human and destroy all their lives?!

This question and more reveal that the future – despite all prophecies – is still subject to the divination and prediction!! Thus, it is remain subject to all the possibilities. There is no doubt that it includes what is a good utopian and what is bad leading to the elimination of the humanity and even all the human life. Therefore, there is no need to predict the goodness of the future and the human should be cautious always of any achieved scientific progress because as it is good, it also may hold the evil seeds!!

**Notes & References:**

1- Keys to the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, collective work under the management of Jerome Bundy, the Arabic translation has been done by a group of translators under the supervision of Beit Al-Hikma in Tunisia and UNESCO, Carthage, 2003.

See also: Michio Kaku, Visions of the future - How Science Will Revolutionize the 21st Century, translated by Saad El Din Kharfan, Alam Al Maarifa Series (270) in Kuwait, 2001.

2- History of The Future: Sidd Murray, Peter Lorie, Pyrmid Books, London, 1989.

3- al-Mu'jam al-Wajeez, issued by the Academy of the Arabic Language in Cairo, the General Organization for Government Printing Offices, edition of 2010, P. 544.

4- Ibid, P. 598.

5- Keys to the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, previously mentioned, pp. 43 - 46.

6- Ibid, pp. 38 – 39.

7- Ibid, pp. 61 - 62.

8- Ibid.

9-Giuseppe Scattolin: Spirituality in Interreligious Dialogue, General Egyptian Book Organization in Cairo, 2013, P. 113.

10-Edgar Morin: an article entitled Keys to the 21<sup>st</sup>

Century, above mentioned,  
pp. 91 - 99.

11- History of Future,  
pp. 102 – 103.

12- Ibid, pp. 108 – 125.

13- Ibid, pp. 156 – 158.

14- Ibid, pp. 189 – 190.

15- Ibid, p. 191.

\*\*\*\*