

## Zero Zone Theory and Futures Studies: Two Ridiculous Ideas?

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Zero Zone theory (ZZ) is a breathtaking attempt by several courageous scholars in Korea to find a way to compare all fundamental aspects of the physical world through a common unit of measurement.

It is often said that you can't compare apples and oranges. Incompatibles are, well, incompatible and incomparable.

But that is not true. We can and do compare them by many common units of measurement:

I might decide to buy apples instead of oranges because apples are cheaper;

Or because apples weigh less in my backpack;

Or because apples contain the kind of vitamins and minerals my body needs;

Or because apples are less acidic.

In other words, if we can find a proper unit of measure we can and do compare apples and oranges.

At the present time, there are seven measures that are called Standard International Units (SI). These began with the establishment of the Metric System after the French Revolution of the late 18th Century as an outcome of the Enlightenment and the attempt to unify and expand knowledge at that time. The seven Base SIs are:

| Thing Measured   | Name of SI | Symbol of SI |
|------------------|------------|--------------|
| Length           | meter      | m            |
| Mass             | kilogram   | kg           |
| Time             | second     | s            |
| Electric current | ampere     | A            |
| Temperature      | kelvin     | K            |
| Amount of thing  | mole       | mol          |
| Light intensity  | candela    | cd           |

There are also several Derived SIs such as:

area = m<sup>2</sup>

volume = m<sup>3</sup>

speed = m/s

and so on.

Some of the Derived SIs have special names such as:

frequency = hertz = Hz

force = newton = N

work = joule = J

But there are many, many process and forces in nature that cannot be compared this way, and even so, there are seven base SIs, and not just one.

Finding one unit that can be used to compare and calculate everything in relationship to everything else is the goal of Zero Zone theory.

If they are able to do so, their accomplishment will rank among the very top in all of science.

But can they do so?

Are they on the right track so far?

These are questions that I am not academically able to answer. I don't know enough physics and math to judge.

Some scientists have already dismissed their ideas as nonsense.

And yet that does not necessarily mean they are nonsense. Almost everything that is "known" about the world today was ridiculed when it was first suggested. The more numerous and vocal the learned detractors, the more powerful many ideas eventually became.

Dator's Second Law of the Futures proudly proclaims that any useful idea about the futures should appear to be ridiculous.

But it is also the case that not every ridiculous idea turns out to be useful, or somehow "correct." Many more end up being permanently ridiculous.

Nonetheless, as Alfred North Whitehead said, it is the duty of the future to be dangerous. It is the duty of futurists to support and provide an audience for those who have "stupid" ideas in the sure expectation that some of them will turn out to be revolutionary truths while others will not.

There is no harm in supporting what turns out to be nonsense, but there is great harm done in squelching something that turns out to be valuable.

An article in *Nature* recently reviewed the work of Lamarck, a person who is usually considered to have been a misguided crackpot. And yet, the authors point out:

"...within the maddening, confusing and repetitive pages of Lamarck's exposition lurk concepts that are central to modern evolutionary thought. Stated in contemporary terminology, they include the ideas that species change through evolutionary time; that evolutionary change is slow and imperceptible; that evolution occurs through adaptation to the environment; that it generally progresses from the simple to the complex, although in a few cases it proceeds in reverse; and that species are related to one another by common descent. Furthermore, Lamarck incorporated into his theory the fact that the world is old, and proposed that the evolutionary process started with 'abiogenesis' – the origin of life from inanimate matter. So how and why has Lamarckism become a shorthand for foolishness?"

"In fact, the amount of scientific rubbish that Lamarck put on paper certainly exceeds the quantity of good science in his scientific oeuvre. In this respect, he is no different from Aristotle, Isaac Newton, Darwin, Albert Einstein, Fred Hoyle or Francis Crick." [Dan Graur, Manolo Gouy, David Wool, "In retrospect: Lamarck's treatise at 200," *Nature*, Vol. 460, August 6, 2009, pp. 688f.]

That is the point: even the greatest geniuses are full of rubbish as well as brilliance. No one sees everything equally clearly.

It is the duty of the *Journal of Futures Studies* to publish from time to time things that may either be world-changers or non-starters.

These Zero Zone papers are examples.

The first paper is by Dr. Dong Bang YANG, the founder of ZZ.

The second is by Dr. Yang, and two colleagues, Dr. Sang Zee LEE and Prof. Mung Hwan OH.

These first two papers explain the basic concepts underlying Zero Zone Theory.

The third paper is by Dr. Kai HONG, a humanist/philosopher and associate of the ZZ group. He suggests the broader relevance of ZZ to society.

The final paper is by Timothy Desmond, an MA graduate in the futures option in the Department of Political Science of the University of Hawaii at Manoa. He is deeply interested in the contemporary importance of Plato's thought and its relationship to the social/spiritual implications of quantum theory. He links ZZ to both of these intellectual streams.

Whatever can be said about the merit of their theory eventually, the people in back of ZZ are magnificent individuals, bold in their creativity and intention, and altogether pleasant and amiable to be with.

I learned about ZZ from Seongwong Park, a PhD student in the Alternative Futures program of the Department of Political Science at the University of Hawaii. He describes how he came to know and support ZZ. But I am very much indebted to Mr. Park for his discovery and encouragement of ZZ.

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