

# Satiric Prognostication: A Comparative Empirical Analysis of Accuracy

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## Abstract

Psychic predictions of the future have proven to be less than potent when subjected to the rigors of empirical scrutiny. This study assesses the scientific veracity of satirism as a fortune-telling method, using a need-driven psychic assessment protocol.

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## Introduction

The gift of divination has long been thought of as a mystic trait bestowed upon fringe members of society, usually rising from the gypsy strata (Morten, 1992). Over the past twenty years, however, standard psychic procedures have been called into question and subsequently disproved through scientific experimentation. No longer do logical, science-minded people trust in Tarot cards, palmistry or tea leaf orientation for visions of the future. Yet the value of knowing the direction of the future cannot be denied. The potential sighting of future plagues, economic downturns and social trends would be invaluable for politicians, marketers, and fashion designers alike.

One area of futurism which has shown potential for predicting forthcoming events is satirism. Satirism is the process of applying comedic principals to possible futures, and devising reasonable, if not occasionally hilarious, results. Satirism is the most recent of the predictive arts, and as

such has not yet been subjected to the rigors of empirical evaluation. So in the pursuit of clear, reliable fortune-telling science, the application of comedic foreshadowing, or satirism, will herein be assessed through rigorous scientific experimentation.

## Method

The downfall of most empirical assessments of futurism is the lack of context and potential impact on participants' lives. Standard scientific tests of futurism involve prediction of playing card sequences and randomly generated dice rolls that have no direct bearing on anyone's future. There is a strand of futurism that claims that "need drives prediction towards permanent eventualities" (Cozmo, 1998). The element of necessity is a key variable to be controlled, in order to quiet any criticism of the scientific evaluation of satirism as a method of divination. To this end, a randomly selected male test subject from a "marriage enrichment" couples' therapy group was used to compare

the predictive power of one prominent comedian and satirist, one astrologist, and one Lucky 8-Ball. Gary, the test subject, was permitted to spend fifteen minutes with each futurist to determine his impending health, economic, and romantic outlooks. He was instructed to provide each futurist with only his real name and date of birth, along with relevant questions and a gentle shake if required.

All future-predictions took place in a smoke-filled room with red ambient lighting and gentle salsa music playing, the standard environment employed to control all variables in common divination studies (Malach, 1978). All sessions were audio recorded and recordings were transcribed for analysis purposes. Segments of these transcripts have been provided below.

Seven months after the meetings, Gary was interviewed to assess the accuracy of each futurist’s prediction.

**Results**

Due to the varied nature of each divination protocol, the results are recorded as conversations and summarized in table 1.

**Future Predictions According to an Astrologist**

*Astrologist:* What is your date of birth, Gary?

*Gary:* You know my name?

*Astrologist:* You signed a form and put your name on it.

*Gary:* Oh. I was born on March 27, 1968.

*Astrologist:* An Aries.

*Gary:* Yes.

*Astrologist:* What would you like to know?

*Gary:* How healthy will I be in the future?

*Astrologist:* The majority of the planets are in the top of your sixth astrological house, indicating that your health will be a main issue for you over then next several months. You will focus on losing weight and avoiding high-fat foods.

*Gary:* Does that mean I’ll be healthy?

*Astrologist:* Since Mercury rises coinciding with your moon nodes, you will think you are less healthy than you are.

*Gary:* So I’ll be healthy?

*Astrologist:* Sure.

*Gary:* Will I be financially secure?

*Astrologist:* Pluto is found in your sixth house, so it is certain that you will

**Table 1.** Predictions of Various Futurists Regarding Test Subject’s Health, Finances and Romance

	Health	Finances	Romance
<i>Astrologist</i>	Favourable	Favourable	Favourable
<i>Lucky 8-Ball</i>	Favourable	Somewhat favourable	Somewhat favourable
<i>Satirist</i>	Negative	Negative	Negative

have financial strength in your future.

Gary: That's good. So, then what does my love-life hold?

Astrologist: Your water signs seem to conflict with Mars, which indicates that you will invest a lot of your feelings into your emotions.

Gary: So that means...

Astrologist: You'll be very emotionally involved over the next few weeks, but it will work out for you in the end.

Gary: I can handle that.

### Future Predictions According to a Lucky 8-Ball (L8B)

Gary: Will I be healthy in the future?

L8B: Most likely.

Gary: Will I be wealthy in the future?

L8B: Better not to tell you now.

Gary: Why not?

L8B: Concentrate and ask again.

Gary: Will I be able to afford the things I want in the future?

L8B: My sources say no.

Gary: Will I be able to afford some of the things I want in the future?

L8B: As I see it, yes.

Gary: Okay, will I be lucky in love in the future?

L8B: Signs point to yes.

Gary: Will my wife stay with me?

L8B: Most likely.

Gary: Will my wife find out about my affair with Mindy?

L8B: Reply hazy, try again.

Gary: Will my wife find out about my affair with Mindy?

L8B: Don't count on it.

Gary: Cool.

### Future Predictions According to a Satirist

Satirist: So, how are you all doing?

Gary: (Cheering).

Satirist: Thanks folks. I saw this guy in the lobby before the show, and I have to tell you, he was large. And when I say large, I mean enlarged prostate large. The guy was bursting at the seams. I know a heart attack when I see one, and this guy will need a weather balloon for his next angioplasty.

Gary: Where is everyone? Am I the only one here?

Satirist: Seriously folks, someone needs to stop this guy before his wife leaves him. I mean, I'd sue the man for half his supper.

Gary: I'm just big boned.

Satirist: If he could cut back on his portions, maybe he could afford to do something nice every now and then. You know, like let someone else lick the gravy off his plate.

Gary: You suck (leaves).

### Follow Up

Seven months after Gary's divinations, a post-prediction follow-up analysis indicated that he had developed an irregular heartbeat and been divorced by his wife because of his infidelity. Communications with Gary's lawyer also indicated that he had lost half of his assets in the divorce, and that he would be needing to move into low-income housing in order to pay a hefty monthly alimony settlement. Given the grim nature of Gary's future, it can be concluded that the predictions of the satirist aligned most closely with his realized future.

## Discussion

Given the limited quality of the satire used in this experiment, satirism, or the application of comedic principles to predict future events, appears to be a valid method of divination, in comparison with standard predictive arts. Further correlation studies need to be conducted to determine if the quality of satire is directly proportional to the quality of prediction. Satirical prediction invites opportunists of all sorts to benefit from foretold events. It isn't difficult to envision comedy bars and street performers branching their already lucrative talents into futurism. Certainly the opportunity for profiteering from knowledge gained from this new found skill will send reverberations through the world's stock markets and gambling institutions. It doesn't require a wicked sense of humour to envision the impact of a snide remark removing the factor of chance from lottery ticket buying or investment banking.

This research also opens the door for investigation into computer-generated predictions of the future using satirical logic to evaluate forthcoming events. However, a cautionary note must be voiced, as such software would run the risk of becoming obsolete if the topic being satirized were to become relatively unfunny (Janzen, 1986).

## References

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