Correspondence

A message from the past for the future

In 1993, as part of *Nature*'s series of 'Hypotheses' articles, astronomer J. Richard Gott III proposed that, assuming the Copernican principle – no observer of the Universe is special – a random observer is likely to encounter an object during the mid-95% window of the object's lifetime. The length of time for which something has been observable in the past is thus a rough measure of how long it is likely to be observable for in the future (R. J. Gott III *Nature* **363**, 315–319; 1993).

Nearly a year later, a correspondent wrote in applying Gott's analysis to Gott's own paper, estimating that the appearance of the Correspondence implied there was a 95% probability that the paper would still be being read in 30.6 years' time (G. Hewlett *Nature* **368**, 697; 1994). I replied that if I had a Correspondence published in 30 years' time, in 2024, then following Gott's calculations, this would considerably extend the period of appreciation of Gott's work (J. Cowie *Nature* **369**, 194; 1994) – by more than a millennium, I now calculate.

This is that Correspondence. Alas, I shall not be around in 1,230 years' time to write again.

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