

Introduction to Towards a Wise Culture

The purpose of this CD-ROM is to make available four key futures texts, along with some of the supplementary materials that go with them. The four texts are:

Recovering the Future (1988)

The Foresight Principle: Cultural Recovery in the 21st Century (1995)

Futures for the Third Millennium: Enabling the Forward View (1999) and

Futures Beyond Dystopia: Creating Social Foresight (2004).

The motivations for creating this resource are varied. One is that I wanted to make the material available to students and others at a reasonable cost. Another is that some of it is out of print and thus hard to obtain. A further reason is that 2005 marks thirty years since I left Bermuda with my mind in uproar and my heart heavy at the version of 'progress' that I'd seen clearly inscribed on that vulnerable and abused island. Thirty years into a journey of discovery and exploration into human and cultural futures.

In that time I've had the privilege of getting to know some of the true 'greats' of our field; people who themselves have devoted the greater part of their lives to understanding the challenges facing humankind and the many routes that lead away from dystopian futures toward futures worth living in. I shall never forget sitting as a new member of the *Futures* (journal) board at my first WFSF conference in Beijing in 1988. As I looked around the room I saw Magda McHale, Eleonora Masini, Robert Jungk, Michael Marien and others – people whom I'd only known previously from their writing. Walking on the Great Wall of China with Robert Jungk was one of the high points of my life to that point. Another, much later, was meeting Ken Wilber at his home in Boulder, Colorado, and discovering that, yes, he too was a human being – albeit one of the most impressive you're ever likely to meet. Jungk and Wilber are two of the main influences in my professional life and I owe them both a huge debt.

During the early years I read in depth and tried to locate myself in this vast new field. It was confusing and difficult at first. But then I slowly began to discern structures within the field, both horizontal and vertical. By the time I finished my Ph.D. in 1982 I had a beginning 'map' and some ideas about how I wanted to develop my own approach which, following Habermas and the Frankfurt School, I called 'critical futures studies'. Now, many years later, I can see how this step – one that seemed so central at the time – was merely one on a much longer journey. The integral perspective developed by Wilber demonstrated that the foundations of our field are broader and deeper than I'd realised. Of course, one cannot mention 'foundations' in FS without thinking of Wendell Bell and his two-volume opus. It has been a huge pleasure over the years to meet Wendell and his wife Lora-Lee and to get to know them.

The four books presented here track the journey outlined above. *Recovering the Future* sets out some early themes: education, the futures field, cultural criticism and worldview issues. It might be called 'early critical' in its approach and tenor. The same would be true of *The Foresight Principle* which viewed some of these themes through a prism of three elements: foresight, wisdom and cultural transformation. Next, *Futures for the Third Millennium* represents a shift to what might be called a 'late critical' approach in that the themes of the book are both broader and deeper. Finally, *Futures Beyond Dystopia*, demonstrates the 'transcend and include' mantra of integral work generally and can be described as 'early integral'. What this means is that there is still a great deal of work to be done to translate the enormous promise of 'integral futures' into practice.

For me, my futures journey has been intensely personal and deeply meaningful. It is this personal investment of our selves, our life energies and our deep involvement with others of like mind that creates such a powerfully constructive dynamic in FS. It's the sense that wherever we are, and whenever we are, there are always others who are working in their own ways to share the load. This became a reality during the 1990s when I began work on what became known as the *Knowledge Base of Futures Studies* (KBFS). What started as a special issue of *Futures* in 1993 became a three-volume set of books in 1996 and a CD-ROM in 2000. This project, huge as it is, is first and foremost a manifestation of human energy and concern. Its contributors come from every corner of the globe and each voice is different. The organisation that most clearly attempts to knit together this diversity of voices and influences is the World Futures Studies Federation (WFSF). One can go to a Federation conference, sit down at coffee or lunch and find oneself with several people from different cultures and continents. That's when genuine multiculturalism really starts to mean something.

Underlying this collection, therefore, is a journey of discovery. It is partly a personal journey and partly a collective one involving, as I've indicated, many other people. In putting it together I've included a range of materials that serve to contextualise the books themselves and to provide students and interested others with some of the 'extras' that this journey has fashioned and produced. There are several introductory pieces, author reflections, reviews and, as they say, 'more'. Readers may note that some papers seem to appear more than once in this collection. The reason is that, instead of merely including the last version, I have also provided some earlier ones. Close study clearly shows how early ideas mutated, developed, changed course, stayed on course and were embodied in progressively more complex forms. The overview piece by Alex Burns captures this aspect very well. I want to thank him, Jose Ramos and all the others writers of review materials included here.

I'm also grateful to many others for their patience, support and inspiration. I want to thank all those futures colleagues around the world who have become my friends, who have written books, attended conferences, who helped me to see where my efforts succeeded and also where they failed. In particular I want to thank Frank Fisher, Oliver Freeman and Anna Clarkson for their assistance in publishing three of these works. I also want to thank my extended family in general and in particular my eldest son, Rohan, whose expertise has made it possible for this and other FI products to be made available in this form.

Richard Slaughter
Foresight International
Brisbane
February 2005