

# FUTURES TIMES

**JOURNAL**  
2010 / VOLUME 4

## Contents

|  |    |
|--|----|
| NZ Futures Trust Board<br>Chairperson's Report<br>.....                          | 2  |
| <i>Mike Gould (Past Chair)</i>   |    |
| A Conflict-Ridden<br>Future Very Likely<br>.....                                 | 4  |
| <i>Petrus Simons, PhD</i>  |    |
| James Duncan<br>Futures Prize 2010<br>.....                                      | 7  |
| <i>Yvonne Curtis</i>   |    |
| Biodegradable Circulars<br>.....   | 7  |
| <i>Breanna Ward</i>  |    |
| A brief summary of<br>Richard Slaughter's paper<br>Beyond the Threshold<br>..... | 10 |
| <i>Yvonne Curtis</i>   |    |
| Welcome to four new<br>NZFT Board members<br>.....                               | 11 |
| Future Watch .....   | 12 |

## OUR FUTURE

*Depends on individual  
and community values  
and actions*

# BEYOND THE THRESHOLD

## *Using Climate Change Literature to Support Climate Change Response*

(Journal of Integral Theory and Practice, 4(4), 2009, pp. 27–46)

Yvonne Curtis

Richard Slaughter explores how Integral Theory can be used to clarify issues and find new kinds of motivation that will be needed to resolve the global climate change crisis. By analysing a sample of recent climate change literature, he identifies what each has to offer to the larger picture, and using integral methods suggests some factors that appear to be missing. He also explores how the patterns that emerge can lead to responses that have not yet been clearly identified.

He uses three tools of Integral Theory.

**The Four Quadrants** – these are based on the work of Ken Wilber and are defined by the x-axis (left to right) being the range of an individual's inner being to the external environment, and the y-axis (bottom to top) ranging from our concerns as collective beings to individual beings. For this analysis, Slaughter says:

Each may be thought of as a "window" on reality that provides access to four irreducible domains. These are:

1. Upper Left (UL)—the unique interior world of each individual
2. Upper Right (UR)—the exterior world of human action and behaviour
3. Lower Left (LL)—the interior worlds of cultures, languages, institutions, etc.
4. Lower Right (LR)—the familiar exterior physical world we inhabit.

**Four Levels of Complexity** – these are based on understanding that humans tend to move through various stages of complexity in the way they approach the world. Slaughter uses four: Pre-conventional, Conventional, Post-conventional and Integral, and indicates how each appears to affect attitudes to climate change. At one pole is "Pre-conventional" which is characterized by an instinct for survival and self-protection. Here climate change is problematic and unlikely to receive serious attention. At the other is "Integral." Individuals accept and value contributions from all other perspectives and seek to work sympathetically across boundaries, disciplines, and cultures. The latter embraces "an ecology of appreciative action," and is open to the development of new ways of knowing and being. Human systems are nested within their appropriate natural contexts where intrinsic value prevails over use value.

---

### SIX VALUE LEVELS DISCLOSE DIFFERENT OPERATIONAL POSSIBILITIES

---

From the many different lines of development within an Integral approach, Slaughter has chosen to focus on the values line, which is one of the most significant lines that affect human responses to climate change. He uses Wilber's attitude spectrum which is summarised as follows:

- Red — egocentric and exploitative
- Amber — absolutist and

authoritarian

- Orange — multiplistic and strategic
- Green — relativistic and consensual
- Teal — systemic and integral
- Turquoise — holistic and ecological.

For each there is a description related to climate change consistent with the values stated, for example, selfish survival of a few (Red) and an understanding of the complexity of the situation which leads to a holistic endeavour to find a "new world order" which may cope better than the old (Turquoise).

Using this values perspectives, Slaughter concludes that for many people climate changes is still viewed as a rather distant prospect that they view with a mixture of concern and suspicion. On the other hand the response of the authors (see Table) of the 14 books chosen from the climate change literature suggest a much more concerned and considered view that explore options and ways of taking action. He has chosen examples that he "felt had something useful to say about climate change and global warming." He wanted the analysis to be both "appreciative and critical", to lead to insights that would be accepted by many people and which in turn could lead to more effective responses.

Slaughter's first broad analysis identifies three characteristics of each of the publications: the purpose, the domains included (identifying

various concerns about climate change) and the main contributions within each work to the “bigger picture”. For example, in the case of Diamond’s (2005) book “Collapse,” the brief summary he provides is:

*Places current dilemmas in a long-term context. Identifies reasons for bad social choices. Reasons for hope.*

The books are placed into five broad thematic groups defined by

the range of their concerns. These are classified as; Historical context; Reportage; Diagnosis; Strategies and Innovations; and Calls to action. The table below shows how the works are distributed in these groups:

| Historical Context, Reportage, and Diagnosis | Diagnosis, Strategies and Innovations | Diagnosis, Strategies and Innovations, Calls to Action | Historical Context, Reportage, Diagnosis, Strategies and Innovations, and Calls to Action | Reportage            |
|--|---------------------------------------|--|---|----------------------|
| Jared Diamond (1998, 2005)                   | Lester Brown (2008)                   | David Spratt and Philip Sutton (2009)                  | Tim Flannery (2008)   | Stephan Faris (2009) |
| Clive Hamilton (2007)                        | Mark Lynas (2008)                     | George Monbiot (2006)                                  | Alastair McIntosh (2008)  |                      |
| James Lovelock (2006)                        | Donella Meadows and colleagues (2005) | Graeme Taylor (2008)                                   |   |                      |
| W. L Steffen and colleagues (2004)           | Linda Starke (ed) (2008)              |  |   |                      |

Viewing these publications through the four quadrant framework suggests that ten of them mainly address LL and LR issues, while two appear to focus mainly in the LL. One is focused on the LR and only one (McIntosh) explicitly encompasses all four quadrants. This concentration of most of the material in the (LL and LR) collective hemisphere highlights the way that individual responses to climate change (i.e. their UL and UR inner states and interactions with the wider environment) have been widely overlooked. Each of these aspects of reality must be addressed equally if we are to cope with the complexity of the issues raised by climate change. In other words most of the solutions and responses suggested in the literature overlook the fact that in the real world, particularly in western societies, it is upper hemisphere (individual) factors that invisibly but profoundly affect societal responses to crises. Values assessments further clarify the nature of human responses. In this context they appear to range from red to teal but there was little clear evidence of turquoise values. Slaughter interprets the significance of more advanced values (and stages

of development more generally) as a “pull” factor that can help draw us toward new and renewed motives. This is how global service, interspecies equity, and obligations to future generations could become mainstream commitments.

Of the four levels of complexity, most of the writers appeared to be working from the post-conventional level and, in so doing, able to challenge accepted norms and underlying myths. In some cases they also propose alternatives. Slaughter asks three key questions.

- First, how quickly can significant numbers of people be assisted both to cross the threshold from conventional to post-conventional operations and access higher order values?
- Second, how can those already accessing these stages themselves move on?
- Third, how can the full functionality of options within each perspective be more fully explored and expressed?

Such questions need to be much more widely considered along with the more common focus on the

role of technological innovation in responding to climate change.

The third section of the study summaries the results of the survey and considers some possible changes that would better equip humanity to create a sustainable, liveable future. The four-quadrant domain framework is used, but he reminds readers that these issues involve all of them.

#### DOMAIN OF EXPERIENCE (UL)

Slaughter concludes that:

*...it is in the UL quadrant that the sources and many of the solutions to global problems can be found. The basic reason for this is that, as was suggested above in relation to complexity of cognition and the evolution of values, interior human development leads to increased capacity, breadth, and originality. Conversely, it is in the outworking of limited perspectives and restricted values that we find various pathologies writ large upon the world. So it is these interior realities, long overlooked, that should command greater attention and be brought into balance with the more usual focus on exterior realities.*

We need to widen our individual horizons and recognise that those who have achieved a wider view need to share this with others in ways that are meaningful to the listener rather than the speaker.

---

#### DOMAIN OF BEHAVIOR (UR)

---

Slaughter notes a: "...consistent disconnect between innovations, strategies, and calls to action on the one hand and the actual modalities of personal action that are available on the other. The view is widespread that the problems are not only "out there" but they are also "beyond me". This disconnect is now being addressed by some of the latest initiatives such as the "transition towns" movement which seeks to drive change at grassroots community level where group actions are undertaken by willing volunteers who have themselves developed and supported the action.

---

#### DOMAIN OF SOCIETIES AND CULTURES (LL)

---

Although much of the analysed material is focused on the LL and LR quadrants Slaughter sees that there is still scope for an integral approach to clarify and refine the most likely effective path to useful responses to climate change. Some of the examples he uses to support this include:

- Although much has been reported about climate "tipping points" there little has been written about social "tipping points" that could support the attitudinal changes needed.
- Social values could be changed so that the motivation of the advertising industry could shift from promoting unproductive consumerism to a more holistic and discerning promotion of sustainability. This would include products that are of more lasting value which do not unduly impoverish the available

resources for future generations.

Another of the greatest omissions in the climate change literature according to Slaughter is the "shadow side" of human nature and how it operates in social contexts. An obvious example of this is the "shadow economy" or black market which operates in ways and areas that are unacceptable to the majority of society. There is also a "shadow" response to climate change issues which will be a hindrance to constructive action. While some have an optimistic view that social movements are addressing these issues a concern is raised that it may already be too late to avert some of the disasters that we can see before us.

---

#### DOMAIN OF SYSTEMS (LR)

---

This is the domain that presently receives the most attention and resources and is seen as the "whole picture". In terms of climate change it is commonly believed that humanity has the technological capability to overcome any obstacle to human advancement through unrestrained growth of population, satisfying the increasing material demands of many and continuing to utilise the resources of the world (even the universe) without limit. But this narrow view must be expanded to take in the limitations and realities of the other quadrants if there is to be a sound basis for future planning.

---

#### DISCUSSION

---

Slaughter is encouraged by the present literature in that it does show that humanity is coming to a more holistic understanding and exploring a broader range of options that will better equip us to deal with future crises. He acknowledges that the task falls squarely on the rich as only they have the freedom and resources to make the necessary changes. Will they do so? Only time will tell.

He also indicates, that in his opinion, the universities have a leading role in the search for solutions and that so far they have "remained remarkably passive". He cites the example of IPCC (International Panel on Climate Change) as one model of interdisciplinary cooperation. The Integral perspective makes it clear why we need to move beyond external views (dominated by science and technology) to include the interior aspects of people and of societies. Such one-sided approaches do not deal convincingly with the issues confronting humanity.

*The future of our children and their world depends not only on reducing our reliance on fossil fuels, de-carbonising the economy and having it "tell the ecological truth," vital as these are. It also depends on encouraging us all to see the sources of global problems within ourselves and our social contexts. It is perhaps this step that has the greatest potential to take us "beyond the threshold" toward greater clarity of purpose, broader social support, and enhanced functional capacity at every level.*

In conclusion Slaughter suggests that while many of us may be ready to act to address the global climate crisis, many may be uncertain how to move forward, with whom to travel and toward what ends. He suggests that we need depth understanding of not only the nature of the external problem, but also of ourselves. We're in the early stages of a global emergency and need all the clarity we can muster to deal with this unprecedented civilisational challenge.

---

Richard Slaughter's latest book is *The Biggest Wake Up Call in History*. It will shortly be published in an eBook format. Further details can be found at:

<http://www.richardslaughter.com.au>