

New Views of Time, Space, Consciousness...

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE INSTITUTE FOR THE STUDY OF THE HUMAN FUTURE

Free Issue

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"Humanity is designed
for total success in
Universe."

- R. Buckminster Fuller

UP FRONT

Too much thinking about the human future is geared to fear and guilt. These feelings are not usually the best spur to sensible action, the kind of action which takes a fair degree of morale. TRAJECTORIES will suggest some different attitudes, some new approaches which you may find more liberating to your personal energies. Unrelenting optimism can be a drag, but shallow pessimism can be even more unrealistic.

Across the desk of this tiny Institute passes an abundance of information about prospects for the human future. Not only the prophecies of doom with which everyone is more or less familiar, but much lively and thought-provoking material from current work in the physical sciences, the social sciences and the study of the phenomena of consciousness. There's a lot more happening of potential importance to our future than either the regular media or the academic world is prepared to deal with at this point.

We plan to share glimpses of all this with you and refer you to sources where you can find out more....

As long as there have been people there has doubtless been speculation about the future. From Plato on we have a tradition of utopian and dystopian writings about the possibilities of the human future. Contemporary futurism, however, is something different. As an emerging field, as a discipline in itself, it is hardly more than twenty years old. Its tools, its methodologies, range all the way from the artistic and conjectural through to the rigorous use of computer-based extrapolation techniques, prestigious think-tanks and other sophisticated and expensive devices.

Our main strategy here at the Institute for the Study of the Human Future (ISHF) is simply the collection and dissemination of information so that more people can be better informed and take part in decision-making about the future. We feel also that however controversial they may be, the positive scenarios developing have at least as much right to be publicized as the negative ones. Your editor has personal reservations about various of the scenarios that will be presented in these pages. But she also has hopes.

The concept of scenario needs to be understood. A scenario is not a prediction to be believed or disbelieved. It is an imaginative construct, the implications of which are to be considered, evaluated, taken into consideration when thinking about or planning for the future. The best ones, of course, are based on probabilities, on actual work being done in the present. Suspending quick judgement long enough to consider alternate scenarios for the future of humanity can be a potent antidote to what has been called future shock. Some people find futurism pretty shocking anyway. But stranger predictions than you may find in these pages have already come to pass. "Someday, man may fly to the moon!"

As to future shock itself, the malady that did so well for Mr. Toffler, it may be a largely iatrogenic disease. (Learned that word from a book on stuttering, and saw it recently in an amusing article on how marriage is being destroyed by the many experts on it. At any rate, the term refers to a disease caused by its

diagnosis.) Taking the long view back over the ages, we belong to a marvellously adaptable, problem-solving order of life. An insoluble problem has probably been incorrectly stated.

This may sound glib in the face of the many problems and the amount of suffering in the world. It is not meant to be. But there is at least a possibility that the problems may not exist as stated. There may well be unexamined and invalid assumptions underlying their current formulations, factors like the difference between closed systems and open systems thinking. Part of the work of ISHF is such re-examination.

In fact the Great Debate that seems to be shaping up in futurist circles, and which may soon affect the rest of society, is the difference between the open systems and the closed systems approach to the solution to human dilemmas; the difference between the zero sum and the non zero sum game (the winner/loser vs. winner/winner script.) Are we living in a closed ecological system of drastically diminishing returns, more and more humans competing for ever less and less with the inevitable consequences of ecocide or nuclear holocaust? Or is earth's biosphere which we presently inhabit in fact only part of an open system of vast, of limitless resources? Can we actually tap into this infinite potential?

Physicist J. Peter Vajk thinks so. Rather than considering ourselves hedged in by limitations on all sides, he says, "the greater wisdom is to remove barriers in our basic world views... The world in which we live is no more closed than the Earth is flat." There will be a review of Vajk's new book, Doomsday Has Been Cancelled in the next issue of TRAJECTORIES.

Astronaut Russell Schweikert puts the question, "Are we acting out some inexorable apocalyptic logic shaped by the structure of nature leading to doom and extinction? Or is there a future of diverse and humane possibilities which we created by shaping our attitudes, our tools and our actions in affirmative directions?"

Fashion note...Could the gloom and droop look be going out of style? Is the terminal problem industry in big trouble? Probably not. But there are signs of restlessness on the creative front: "I don't have much time for the notion that life is black, absurd, futile, especially when it becomes synonymous with intellectual chic." This was said recently by British novelist John Fowles, author of The Magus, The French Lieutenant's Woman, etc., not exactly your average Pollyanna.

More notes and quotes... Since nostalgia isn't what it used to be, as the saying goes, we might as well look on up ahead a bit. How does gravity grab you? And what if it didn't? "Gravity control. Is it possible? We think so.... But it will be a long time... One day, however, the human race (or whomever the human race has evolved into by then) will control gravity as easily as our little children now control the power forces of lightning with the flick of a wall switch or the turning of a channel dial. Zap..." This was said in a recent issue of OMNI by an appropriately named futurist, Dr. R.L. Foreward, senior scientist at the Hughes Research Laboratories.

Why TRAJECTORIES? As anyone knows, the word trajectories refers to arcs, or paths of moving bodies or particles through space. Less familiar is its related verb: *traject*: "to transmit light or color". The hope is that we can light up some possible, even probable future landscapes in such a way that people can begin to explore their reactions to them, their feelings about them, their readiness for them.

Brace yourself now for glimpses of some of the wilder shores of future travel by this issues" Featured Futurist, Robert Anton Wilson, book reviewer for OMNI, author of the Illuminatus trilogy, Cosmic Trigger, and a virtually steady stream of articles on scientific thinking and its philosophical implications.

COSMIC IMMORTALS?

by Robert Anton Wilson

SYNERGY: the behaviors of whole systems which cannot logically be predicted from the behaviors of the individual elements alone, before they are organized into a whole system. To apprehend synergy in advance of the appearance of the whole system requires intuition.

--paraphrased from various lectures of Buckminster Fuller

The linear, piece-by-piece approach of left-hemisphere digital thinking cannot perceive a future Gestalt before it appears. Right-hemisphere, holistic modes of apprehension are necessary to the creation of synergetic Future Studies.

Home computers will be as common as TV sets before the 1980s are over... Automated factories are coming, however bitterly unions may opposed them or however much our horse-and-buggy government (committed to the Calvinist philosophy of "full employment") may dread them... The Guaranteed Annual Income -- or something like it -- will become inescapable as cybernation advances... A reputable physicist, Dr. Jack Sarfatti, has filed a patent disclosure revealing that he is working on a faster-than-light information-transfer system. (This does not contradict Special Relativity, Sarfatti says, because information systems are not bound by the laws of energy systems.)... Other physicists talk of unleashing the zero-point energy implied in quantum equations. If this energy can be tapped, it will make all existing technology obsolete, because zero-point energy can yield from one cubic centimeter of vacuum enough power to keep all the machines on earth running for several billion years.

Cloning...O'Neill space cities...life-extension researchers expect a major breakthrough within a decade...transplants...artificial sight for the blind expected by the 1990's...chemicals to accelerate your brain in any way you can imagine...more Third World liberation movements...the Hunger Project...the cyronic philosophy of "freeze-wait-reanimate" as a passport to immortality...pregnancy outside the womb....

The emerging breakthroughs of the next 10-20 years cannot be understood by any specialist, trained to gaze down his or her own alley of tunnel-vision and see only the possible future of his or her own tiny specialty. The Generalist, the person with a little knowledge of many fields and special training in the art of synergetic intuition, is the only one who can navigate on the probability waves of Futurology. Trying to think at once of clones and cybernated factories, space cities and the abolition of poverty, home computers and possible immortality, is beyond the capacities of the analytical left brain. The holistic, intuitive right brain can see -- in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye -- what the emerging Gestalt must be.

Indeed, a synergetic and intuitive mind perceived the Gestalt two hundred years ago when Benjamin Franklin said...Future science will make immortal humans...Two thousand years ago when St. John wrote, "There will be a new heaven and a new earth"...Five thousand years ago...because Egyptian mummification rituals may yet pay off; already we can think of cloning an ancient Egyptian from one cell in the mummy. The future will find ways, through some science of statistical neurogenetics, to recreate the brain imprints (memories, including self-awareness) of that mummified person and re-imprinting them upon the clone's brain so that the person mummified may indeed walk among us as in the old movies. Does that sound like science-fiction? Imagine re-reading it after 20 years more research in how the personality is coded into the brain, after 40 years, after 400....

20,000 years ago our ancestors danced in rituals to the stars and buried their dead with heads painted red facing the East, because their intuitive, synergetic right-brain visionaries knew even then that our future was in space and our potentiality was for immortality.

The left hemisphere can only apprehend a Gestalt after it appears. I take no pride in my capacity to see our evolution from terrestrial

mortals to cosmic immortals when I remember those who saw it, gnawing raw meat around paleolithic camp-fires.

DEFINITIONS AND DEMARCATIONS

DISSOCIATION OF IDEAS: A term introduced by the French philosopher, Remy de Gormount, based on the Pavlovian discovery that the brain usually works in conditioned or habitual associations. To become more conscious and intelligent, de Gormount proposes, examine all your habitual associations and try negating them. E.g., if you think of technology as bad, try thinking of what parts of technology are good; if you think of technology as good, try thinking of the parts that are bad; etc. Other dissociations follow:

WEALTH, ILLTH AND MONEY: Wealth is best conceived as all changes in the "natural" (pre-human) environment that are to the benefit of humanity and other life-forms. Illth, a term coined by John Ruskin, can then be conceived as all changes in the environment that are detrimental to humanity and/or to life itself. (Weaponry, then, should be defined as illth, not wealth.) Money is neither wealth nor illth but merely tickets for the transfer of wealth and illth. Proof: if all the money disappeared overnight, our standard of living would not change; the Treasury would merely print more money. But if all the real wealth and illth -- all the industrial plant, energy, natural resources and "real capital" generally -- were to disappear, we would be plunged back into the Stone Ages and no issue of currency would improve the situation.

THE POWER ELITE: a term that should always be understood as "me and my friends." To define a Power Elite any other way is to create a Loser Script, in the terminology of Transactional Analysis; which is a fine rationalization for masochism but no way to get anything done.

TECHNOLOGY: All the wealth and illth in the world; everything created by people and not present when humanity evolved from apehood.

IDEAS: The source of all technology -- all wealth and illth. There seems to be four chief sources of ideas: mechanical association a la Pavlov; logic; experiment; and intuition. Distinguish the values and limits of each mode: Mechanical association is simple, quick and necessary for survival (e.g., stove: hot: hurt: don't touch stove). Logic can determine if a system of ideas/associations is self-consistent. Experiment can determine if ideas are always true, sometimes true, or always false (e.g., stove: not hot: no hurt: can touch cold stove.) Intuition alone can generate new ideas -- new wealth and illth -- new technology. Mechanical association can be totally arbitrary and false (e.g., race prejudice). Logic cannot determine if a self-consistent system is also consistent with experience. Experiment is aimless unless guided by logic and/or intuition. Intuition can be totally wrong if not checked by logic and experiment.

HUMAN BRAIN: The source of ideas -- of wealth and illth -- of all the environment not created before humanity. A multi-purpose computer employing mechanical associations, logic, experiment and intuition. Has been shown capable of all sorts of tricks from chess to Beethoven's Ninth, from delusions and hallucinations to General Relativity, from racism, sexism and genocide to love, ecstasy and genius.

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY: Those arts devoted to creating wealth and illth; the arts, namely, that are checked by logic and experiment to determine that they will yield a specific change in the world.

NOTE

Ideas and informational points raised by the foregoing will be examined in more detail in subsequent issues.

CHANGE OF PACE DEPT.

"Considering these things, the person of character remains balanced on the pivot of the unchanging and has faith...harmonizes these energies without losing personal direction, stands firm in the middle of what whirls without leaning on anything either to one side or the other. The energy of such a person is admirably rectificative."

These words of Confucius recorded nearly 2500 years ago are probably good for at least another 2500 years. By that time, things may settle down. Then again, perhaps not....

COMING UP

In the future (where else?) TRAJECTORIES will be publishing bibliographical material on the future, of which there is an increasing amount.

We will also be listing periodicals and future-oriented organizations you may want to know about if you don't already. There is a growing community of people from all walks of life, both here and abroad, who want to study, envision and help to shape the human future. This trend has been called the move toward anticipatory democracy, which ISHF certainly endorses.

In addition, there will be Book Reviews, Featured Futurists and Letters to the Editor. Feel free to write to ISHF your views and personal perspective on material in TRAJECTORIES! Send to the ISHF address given below.

DEGREE CREDITS

For those interested in degree credits for Future Studies, a program is shaping up through which it will be possible to earn credits for Future Studies toward state-approved degrees -- A.A., B.A., M.A. and Ph.D. We will have more details on this for you shortly. For subscribers to TRAJECTORIES there will be a Special Supplement on this degree program coming out this spring. Tuition is moderate - \$1200 per year. (Special cases considered.)

CONTRIBUTIONS AND SUBSCRIPTIONS

ISHF, the Institute for the Study of the Human Future, was incorporated in 1978 as a non-profit educational organization. All contributions are tax deductible.

Any contribution over \$6.00 brings you a year's subscription to TRAJECTORIES. The "over" goes toward extending our research capacity and increasing the number of people we can reach.

Even in the short months of our official existence we have found many people reaching out toward us, as a way of linking up with what's happening on the future front and with others who share their interests.

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