

THE FUTURE(S)

**INSTITUTE ROYAL DES ETUDES
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WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO EXPLORE/STUDY/IMAGINE/ANTICIPATE THE FUTURE?

OUR SURVIVAL MAY DEPEND ON IT

THE FUTURE IS THE SPACE WHERE WE WILL LIVE THE REST OF OUR LIVES

EVERY ACTION IS FUTURE ORIENTED

OUR LIFE IS AN ACTIVITY DIRECTED TO WHAT WILL HAPPEN. THE MEANING OF THE PRESENT OR THE PAST ONLY BECOMES CLEAR ONLY IN RELATION TO THEIR FUTURE. HUMAN LIFE IS “FUTURING”, AND IT’S DETERMINED TO A GREAT EXTENT BY THAT WHICH STILL HAS NOT HAPPENED.

José Ortega y Gasset, *What philosophy is*

FORESEEING IS THE ORIGIN AND THE MEANS OF ALL ENTERPRISES, BIG OR SMALL

Paul Valéry

**WHO HAS A VISION OF THE FUTURE,
CONTROLS PART OF THE PRESENT**

Johan Galtung & Robert Jungk, *Mankind 2000*, 1971

**OUR SOCIETY IS THE MOST FUTURE ORIENTED SOCIETY
THAT HAS EVER EXISTED (Anthony Giddens), BECAUSE
IT NO LONGER HAS A SENSE OF CONTROL OVER THE
FUTURE.**

**IF WE ARE NOT CAPABLE OF IMAGINING OUR FUTURES,
SOMEONE ELSE WILL IMAGINE THEN FOR HIS OWN
BENEFIT.**

**THE FUTURE WILL BE DIFFERENT FROM THE
PRESENT. IT WILL LIKELY INCLUDE UNEXPECTED
OUTCOMES.**

**“...THE FUTURE IS A NAKED CHILD,
AND AS A CONSEQUENCE,
VAIN AND UNPREDICTABLE;
WHEN YOU LESS EXPECT IT,
HE PLACES A ROSE IN YOUR EAR,
OR PISSES ON YOUR BOLD HEAD.”**

*Mario Benedetti, *Inperfect future**

THE **PAST** IS THE REALM OF MEMORIES

THE **PRESENT** IS THE REALM OF ACTIONS

THE **FUTURE** IS THE REALM OF DREAMS,
EXPECTATIONS, PROJECTS, DESIRES, FEARS,
ALTERNATIVES

ACTION WITHOUT A VISION, IS IMPROVISATION.

Alice: I DON'T KNOW WHICH WAY TO GO

The cat: TYHAT DEPENDS ON WHERE YOU ARE GOING

Alicia: THE THING IS THAT I DON'T KNOW WHERE I AM GOING!

El Gato: THEN IT DOES'NT MATTER WHICH WAY YOU CHOOSE!

Lewis Carroll, *Looking through the mirror* 1872

VISION WITHOUT ACTION, IS ONLY A DREAM.

“WALKER, THERE IS NO ROAD. YOU MAKE THE ROAD BY WALKING.”

Antonio Machado

**OUR FUTURES ARE RISKY BECAUSE OUR SOCIETIES
ACTIVELY TRY TO BREAK WITH THE PAST AND
CONQUER THE FUTURE.**

**THE RISKS ARE GREATER WHEN WE DO NOT EXERCISE
OUR CAPACITY TO ANTICIPATE.**

**WHAT IS KNOWLEDGE IF IT DOES NOT
INCLUDE **THE FUTURE?****

**A MERE REPORT OF THE RELATIONS
OBSERVED IN THE PAST CAN NOT BE
CALLED KNOWLEDGE.**

Hans Reichenbach

TIME COMPRESSION.

- **Everything seems to happen at great speed.**
- **The evolution of things seems to have accelerated.**
- **We live in “real time”; We want immediate retribution, satisfaction.**
- **New technologies mature and diffuse faster.**
- **What acceptable yesterday, today is doubtful.**
- **We are submerged in a succession of revolutions of all sorts, with no time to catch our breath..**
- **As time passes we have less time. Time is being compressed..**
- **Before we can solve a crisis we have another on top. We have little space/time to think/analyze,**

OUR CRISIS ARE SPEED CRISIS. THE ONLY SENSIBLE ANSWER IS TO TRY TO ANTICIPATE CHANGE, NOT AS A PREDICTIONS, BUT AS CONJECTURES.

TO STUDY THE FUTURE(S)?

FORTUNE-TELLER?



DEFINITELY NO!

STUDYING THE FUTURE IS NOT ABOUT:

PREDICTING (Announcing something that will certainly happen)

DIVINATION (Discovering the occult future by means of spells)

OMENS (Predicting the future using the songs or flight of birds, the guts of animals, and similar observations)

FORECASTING (Knowing the future on the basis of certain indications)

PROPHECIES (Announcing future things based on a supernatural gift)

**FUTURES STUDIES ARE NOT ABOUT GUESSING
HOW THE FUTURE WILL BE (WE CAN'T;**

**THEY ARE ABOUT MAKING REASONABLE
CONJECTURES ABOUT HOW IT COULD BE.**

**...IN ORDER TO CHANGE THE DECISION MAKING PROCESSES ,
MAKING THEM MORE FLEXIBLE, BETTER INFORMED, WITH
GREATER CAPACITY OF ADAPTATION, MORE CONFIDENT.**

PURPOSE:

- ❖ **TO EXPLORE AS SERIOUSLY AND RIGOROUS AS POSSIBLE THE POSSIBLE AND DESIRABLE FUTURES.**
- ❖ **TO ANTICIPATE CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES;**
- ❖ **TO ILLUMINATE THE FUTURE AND/OR THE ISSUES WHICH HAVE AN IMPORTANT IMPACT UPON THE FUTURE.**
- ❖ **TO BETTER PREPARE OURSELVES TO FACE THE FUTURE;**
- ❖ **TO HELP US BUILD A BETTER FUTURE.**
- ❖ **TO BETTER INFORM POLICY MAKING (directly or indirectly)**

**WHAT CAN WE KNOW ABOUT THE
FUTURE?**

VERY LITTLE!

BUT THAT LITTLE IS PRECIOUS.

Kenneth Boulding

**ALL OUR KNOWLEDGE IS ABOUT
THE PAST,**

BUT

**ALL OUR DECISIONS ARE ABOUT
THE FUTURE.**

Ian Wilson

**INTEREST IS IN PARTICULAR ABOUT COLLECTIVE FUTURES AND
LONG TERM FUTURES.**

TO MAKE USEFUL CONJECTURES ABOUT THE FUTURE ONE REQUIRES:

IN PLATO'S TERMS:

***LOGISTIKON*: RATIONAL PROCESSES**

***NOUS*: INTUITION/IMAGINATION.**

IN NEUROLOGICAL TERMS:

THE TWO BRAIN HEMISPHERES:

***LEFT*: THE INTELECT; ANALYTICAL AND OBJECTIVE THINKING**

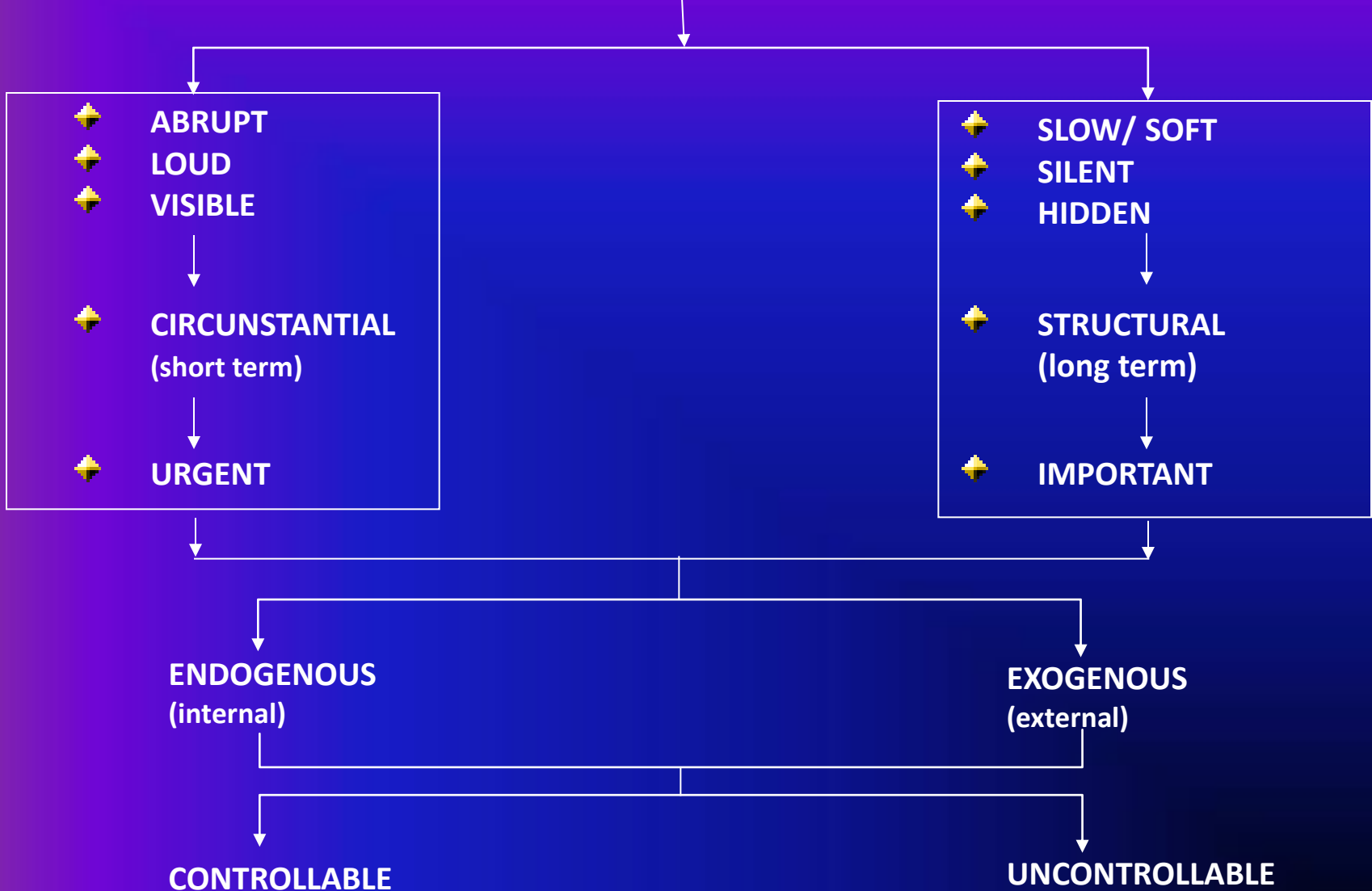
***RIGHT*: INTUITION; IMAGINATION; PASION; SUBJECTIVE,
DIVERGENT THINKING.**

TO STUDY THE FUTURE IS TO STUDY POSSIBLE CHANGES.
IF NOTHING CHANGES, OR COULD CHANGE, THINKING
ABOUT THE FUTURES WOULD BE WORTHLESS.

**BUT IF THINGS CHANGE OR MAY CHANGE AND THEY TAKE
US BY SURPRISE, OR IF THEY ARE POISED TO CHANGE IN AN
UNDESIRABLE DIRECTION, WOULD IT NOT BE WORTH
THINKING ABOUT THE FUTURE (ANTICIPATING POSSIBLE
AND/OR DESIRABLE CHANGES)?**

**FUTURES STUDIES ARE INTERESTED IN THE FUTURE
BECAUSE IT CAN BE DIFFERENT FROM THE PRESENT; THEY
TRY TO BETTER UNDERSTAND POSSIBLE CHANGES AND
THEIR CONSEQUENCES.**

CHANGES / TRANSITIONS



The Tsunamis of Change

Jim Dator



**HELL IS THE TRUTH
SEEN TOO LATE.**

Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679)

**TODAY, “TOO LATE” IS
NOT ANTICIPATING IT.**

**THINKING ABOUT OUR FUTURES
IS A LIBERATING EXERCISE.
NOT DOING IT, IS ACCEPTING
THE TYRANNY OF THE PAST AND
ABANDONING US TO OUR FATE.**

THANK YOU!

