

FUTURE GENERATIONS: THEY ARE OUR CONSCIENCE

[Introduction to Tae-Chang Kim and Jim Dator, ed., *Co-Creating a Public Philosophy for Future Generations*. London: Adamantine Press, 1999]

Why We Need Public Philosophies Responsive To the Needs of Future Generations Now?

The need for thinking and acting that is explicitly future-oriented is relatively new. It is sometimes said that some primitive societies, such as that of the Iroquois, may have recognized an obligation to think seven generations into the future when making decisions. This may have been so, but it is also likely that conceptions of the past, present, and future were so much alike in primitive societies that to be mindful of and obedient to the past/present was all one could, or needed, to do in order to be responsible to the future as well. This situation, where the past, present, and future were basically the same, lasted for tens of thousands of years of human experience and have led to the belief that the best way to look forward is to look backward and then to apply what is learned from the past to solve the problems of the present.

The same was also generally true of agricultural, feudal, and other pre-modern societies and their governments, where precedence was important and arguably sufficient for anticipating the challenges of the future. There was more dramatic social change, and hence uncertainty about the future, in these societies than in primitive/traditional ones to be sure, but not enough change, or fast enough change, as to require anything more than knowledge of the past and reason in the present in order to make the best decisions possible in anticipation of the future.

To take the American example, this was the general situation for the Founding Fathers when they created the U.S. federal government. That government was designed to be an institution where a few knowledgeable, reasonable, and responsible men could gather together when the crops were in, and discuss and decide about the one or two novel and important matters that might arise every year or so. No greater exercise in foresight was ever seriously contemplated.

The situation for the modern governments of the 19th and 20th centuries was uniquely different, however. The new idea of (and direct experience with the fruits of) "progress" came to provide a profoundly new dominating vision of the future. Now, the future was expected to be--indeed, was intended to be and was actively caused to be--different from and better than the present or the past. Past, present, and future were no longer expected to be continuous and similar, but discontinuous and qualitatively dissimilar, with the future always being better than the present, just as the present was clearly better than the past.

Many new social institutions--including agencies of governments--had to be created, and the older ones refocused, in order to assure that society could and would move continuously forward towards the better tomorrow. One consequence of this was the tension which emerged in the U. S. between the conservative, constraining written constitution which came to be interpreted largely on the basis of precedence, on the one hand, and the mandates of the various new institutions, on the other hand, which were created in the 19th and 20th Centuries specifically in order to help America grow, progress, and develop without hindrance from the way things used to be. To some extent, this tension between development and tradition (and between the still, cold words

of the written constitution and the hopes, desires, and fears of living flesh and blood) has been the basis of many political struggles in the U.S. from the beginning. However, by the end of World War II, the development paradigm had become dominant as the official image of America's future, and various ways to reinterpret the silent words had been found in order to make it a "Living Constitution" which could permit policies and actions favoring "development" and "progress."

Similar transformations can be found in almost all countries of the world as "development" became the official view of the future of all industrial and industrializing countries. In fact, over the past 50 years, the vision of "development" has been aggressively implanted and actively implemented worldwide by various agencies of the United Nations, and by such important transnational institutions as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, so that no nation, government, corporation, or citizen anywhere in the world is expected to have any view of the future except that which results from the continuing affluence and expanding opportunities of an ever-growing and ever-enriching economy. And every citizen, corporation, government and nation of the world is expected to be an actively contributing part in the creation and operation of that globally expanding economic system.

However, very soon after W. W. II, other orientations towards the future emerged. Among the first was the concept of a "post-industrial society"--a world in which technology, efficiency, and affluence would reach such heights that issues of economics and productivity would recede into the background, and society would have to wrestle with such problems as how equitably and quickly to distribute all of the material abundance which was to be produced without human labor; and what humans would do peacefully with all their leisure time.

But simultaneously, and in stark contrast, "the environmental movement" began to question "development" as a proper basis for anticipating the future. Looming threats of environmental pollution, resource exhaustion, overpopulation, and global change seemed to many people vastly more important than continuing to urge blind economic growth. Fretting over the problems of a world of abundance and leisure was viewed as utter folly. Indeed, it was the unanticipated consequences of continued economic growth itself which caused many people to have such a bleak and fearful view of the future. "Development" was definitely not all it was cracked up to be. So, whatever view one might have of the future--be it bright or dark, prosperous or penurious--more and more people were becoming aware of their obligation to take the needs of future generations into account when making present decisions.

Various advocates for governmental foresight have created, or attempted to create, new processes or institutions within existing systems of democratic government in different parts of the world. These include long-range planning departments, futures commissions, requirements that legislatures conduct future-impact statements on proposed legislation, environmental protection agencies, offices of technology assessment, and the like. Examples of these are discussed elsewhere in this volume.

Nonetheless, I have reluctantly concluded that none of these efforts to make democratic governments more future-oriented are sufficient. Indeed, I believe that it is necessary to question whether or not there is something about the

current structure of democratic government itself which positively hinders rather than aids future-oriented decision making. Given the potential risks to future humanity for not thinking about the future adequately, and the sweep of liberal democracy (and its equally future-blind handmaiden, "free market capitalism") in the world today, I believe that this hypothesis must be examined seriously and openly.

For more than twenty-five years I have consulted in the U. S. and overseas with legislatures, legislators, municipal councils, governors, mayors, public administrators at all levels, state and national judiciaries, professional organizations that serve various public agencies, and many more. I have also worked with numerous public interest organizations, non-profit organizations, and small and large businesses, worldwide.

In all of these groups, there have always been many people who are very concerned about the future, and sincerely desirous of acting responsibly towards future generations. Unfortunately, most of these well-meaning people can not sustain their good intentions. They can not follow through on their various commitments to future-oriented acts and policies because, it seems, the pressures and needs of the present always overwhelm their concern about the future. That is, the very structure of the institutions they find themselves in always seems to give much more weight to the present than it does to the future, and they can not successfully override those structural impediments, no matter how much they might want to do so.

This growing awareness deeply disturbs me. I have always been an advocate for "more" democracy. For example, I have long favored the use of initiative, referenda, and recall at national as well as state and local levels in the U. S. I have also collaborated with Ted Becker and Christa Slaton in some of their exciting experiments with electronic direct democracy, discussed elsewhere in this book. What is wrong with the United States, I have always believed without question, is that it does not have enough democracy, especially at the national level. In fact, no country in the world has achieved sufficient democracy. Democracy is a form of government still to be striven for everywhere.

At the same time, while I remain a tireless worker and advocate for more democracy, I have become increasingly aware that simply "more democracy" alone, without other changes also accompanying it, does not solve all of the problems which concern me. While "more democracy" means that disenfranchised or marginal people in the present might be able to have their needs properly attended to, "more democracy", even "more direct democracy" as presently proposed, does not also necessarily result in public thought and action more clearly oriented to the needs of future generations, I have observed. Indeed, more of what is often currently called "democracy" seems to result in less future-orientation. Thus "more democracy plus something else" is needed, I have concluded.

Moreover, I was perplexed to find some time ago that, of all the public and private groups I work with, only one--American state judiciaries--seems to have a sustained interest in the future [1]. This was a disturbing observation because I had been trained to believe that judges were elitist, conservative, precedent-oriented, judicially-restrained, and focused only on the case and controversy at hand and the law relevant to it. But for a variety of reasons, I have finally concluded that there are specific reasons why some judges, in certain judiciaries, are in fact slightly but significantly more interested in the future than are members of other branches of government in the U.S. My

conclusion is that there is a set of reinforcing structural reasons (and not personal virtues or faults of judges or politicians themselves) why this is the case. It is not only a question of what people want to do about the future; it is also a question of what organizational structures permit, or facilitate, or make difficult that is central.

It must be understood that I did not come to this conclusion because I feel undemocratic institutions are superior to democratic ones. Plainly to the contrary, most dictatorships and totalitarian regimes have an utterly dismal record on such long-range issues as environmental protection. It is not clear however, that they are as fiscally-irresponsible to the needs of future generations as most democracies seem to be. In any event, I hope that I will be able to discover that in fact some democracies are able to be more future-oriented than others, and why that is so, while also determining if some nondemocratic features (for example, a monarchy? [2]) which give society a way of thinking about and fulfilling its responsibilities to posterity, might somehow be reinvented for modern democratic purposes.

What is "More Democracy"?

Democracy is a very slippery concept to define. It has drawn the attention of numerous authors. My concern about the relationship between "democracy" and "future-oriented government" focuses primarily on only one specific characteristic of democracy. When I say "the more democratic a polity is, the less future-oriented it becomes," I take "more democratic" to mean "enabling more access by citizens to policy making, and more ability by citizens to influence, if not directly make and implement, policy decisions." My meaning of "democracy" is thus more in line with the literature on public participation in political processes than it is with broader, more inclusive definitions of democracy.

Citizens can influence policy making in many ways. One is through the traditional vehicle of voting for representatives who in turn make policy decisions. This is often thought to be the major indicator of "democracy," and is the focus of most discussions, especially in the popular press, of whether a polity is "democratic" or not. Thus for many people, becoming "more democratic" often means "enlarging the franchise"--removing barriers of race, gender, literacy, property-owning and the like--so as to enable more and more citizens of a polity to be able to vote for their representatives.

However, there are other indicators of political participation--and, hence, of "more democracy". One is for citizens to be able to vote on referenda or initiatives, and thus directly indicate their preferences for various policy options in those instances. Another is for citizens to participate on juries, which can also be an important kind of direct democracy. Similarly, guidelines for citizen participation in public administration and policy implementation are also proliferating. Indeed, citizen participation in administrative and judicial decision-making is often overlooked by direct democracy advocates who tend to focus only on legislative-like policy making.

A third avenue of citizen participation is through their formal and informal interactions with government personnel with the goal of influencing decisions for which personnel are responsible. This can mean contacting a representative personally via letter, telephone, fax, email or in person. However, there is a vast literature about "interest group politics" which shows how various organizations (business, labor, religious, and other special-interest

groups) which themselves say they represent the interests of citizens, gain access to decision makers or implementers and try to influence policy through lobbying for or against specific legislation or implementation, make legitimate financial contributions directly or indirectly to elected representatives, or often simply bribe officials to vote or act as the lobbyist wishes.

Indeed, when I say "the more democratic a polity becomes, the less future-oriented it becomes" what I often am actually referring to is not the increased power of individual citizens through voting, initiative, referenda, letter writing, and the like, but rather the greater influence by organized interest groups--so-called "pressure groups" or "political action committees" (PACs) (which also say they represent various interests and individuals in society) to influence political decision makers and administrators.

I am concerned mainly with that feature of "democracy" which allows certain well-financed groups to have greater access and influence to political decision makers and implementers than can ordinary individuals or un-organized interests, thus resulting in public policy made, not on the basis of the commonweal, but of that of many fragmented, but powerful, narrow interests.

Most importantly of all, in a democracy dominated by interest group politics, who speaks for the future? While various silenced voices of the present might finally be heard as democracy expands, is it not the case that, in the raucous cacophony of present interests, the voice of the future gets fainter and fainter?

What Are Public Philosophies Responsive to the Needs of Future Generations?

It is very important to understand that my concern about future-oriented public philosophy and behavior is not whether governments set certain policies to create some specific future or other. Nor does it involve considerations of advanced technologies and other notions about the future drawn from science fiction and popular culture. Rather, my interest in future-oriented public philosophy and behavior is in establishing institutions and processes which are specifically intended to determine policies that have the goal of benefiting future generations while either similarly benefiting present generations, or even deferring the benefits of the present in favor of the future.

An excellent example of such a process is found in the changes made in the rules of the American national House of Representatives in 1974 which required all standing committees of the House "on a continuing basis undertake futures research and forecasting on matters within the jurisdiction of that committee." The committee report explaining the intent of this provision stated "...these legislative units would have the additional responsibility of identifying and assessing conditions and trends that might require future legislative action. More specifically, this would provide a locus for the systematic, long-range, and integrated study of our principal future national problems.... In this way, it is hoped, the House may become more responsive to national needs, anticipating problems before they become crises" [3]. Unfortunately, this rule has seldom if ever been evoked, and standing committees rarely if ever approach the level of foresight the rule intended.

Another example of a process intended to result in more future-oriented

political policies and behavior happened in 1983 when then Representative (and now Vice President) Albert Gore, Jr., and Newt Gingrich, now Speaker of the House, introduced legislation to establish an office which would provide the American government with a "national foresight capability." This bill was not enacted into law.

During the 1970s, a Secretariat for the Future existed within the Office of the Prime Minister of the Swedish national government, providing an impressive amount of information about the future into the formal political process. The Secretariat became a private think-tank during the 1980s [**]

Thus, future-oriented political philosophies and processes are given meaning not through specific policies about the future *per se*, but through certain perspectives, institutions, and actions intended to bring the interests of future generations into the decision making and implementation of the present. Future-oriented actions also include those made by governments and citizens which attempt seriously to assess the potential impacts of proposed policies on future generations *before* the policies are made or implemented.

Recent discussions about why we need to be aware of our obligations to future generations fall into four general categories: fairness, maintaining options, quality of life, and humility.

The "fairness" obligation concerns not imposing risks on future generations that present generations would also not accept. For example, MacLean states that "levels of risk to which future generations will be subjected will be no greater than those of present persons" [4]. Risks can include those of premature "death owing to environmental or other preventable catastrophes" [5] or other significant threats to the quality of life. "Fairness" also implies "consent." According to Schrader-Frechette, "until or unless a risk imposition receives the consent of those who are its potential victims, it cannot be justified"[6]. Future generations can offer no such consent, so ways need to be invented and created which attempt to include the interests, and consent, of future generations in all current decisions which will impact them.

The "maintaining options" obligation entails giving to our posterity future worlds that are as free of human-made constraints as possible. In other words, there is a need to prevent environmental and other catastrophes "that would restrict the future of the human race by cutting off certain possible futures" [7]. By cutting off many futures, the ability of future societies to grow and mature is reduced [8] as is the freedom for people to "reason about means and ends and evaluate preferences, to match desires and beliefs and then act" [9]. Frankenfeld [10] argues that current generations owe posterity a world as simple, controllable, and affordable as possible. Brown's "Principle of Conservation of Options" holds that "each generation should conserve the diversity of the natural and cultural resource base so that it does not unduly restrict options available to future generations..." [11].

The "quality-of-life" obligation refers to ensuring that future generations enjoy all the most important aspects of life. From an international survey, Tough distilled the following quality-of-life obligations to future generations: peace and security, a healthy environment, a small risk of preventable catastrophe, stable governments, conservation of knowledge, a good life for children, and opportunities for living [12]. DesJardings' three quality-of-life obligations to future generations are development of

alternative energy sources, conservation of energy resources, and a reasonable chance of happiness [13]. Economic concerns relating to quality-of-work and increasing standards of living could be added to this list, in addition to other variables that are found important by the world's diversity of cultures.

Bell believes that "humility" should inhibit humanity from creating obligations to future generations. In his words, "humble ignorance ought to lead present generations to act with prudence toward the well-being of future generations." In addition, he states that "there is a prima facie obligation of present generations to ensure that important business is not left unfinished"

National governments make numerous decisions that bear on such obligations, either positively or negatively. Decisions within the sphere of the interest of obligations to future generations include environmental and energy policies, science and space programs, agriculture, land use, infrastructure, and education--indeed, almost everything. A future-oriented government might make decisions that support sustainability, species protection, ecosystem protection, reduction of pollutants into the environment, and conservation of non-renewable resources, with concomitant focus on using renewable resources.

On the other hand, other people might argue, on the basis of their own sustained and serious assessment of the future, that these specific policies are not necessary; that, for some good reason or other derived from their conclusions about the needs of future generations, it is not necessary to protect species or the ecosystem, reduce pollutants, or conserve non-renewable resources. Others might argue that these things are indeed important, but might recommend different ways for achieving them--for example, not by passing laws requiring them, but by creating economic incentives which encourage others to work in their favor out of their own self interest.

Again, my point is that "future-oriented public philosophy and behavior" does not imply an argument for or against specific policies towards the future, but rather is a way of assuring that the needs of future generations are specifically taken into account whatever policies are made in all areas.

Thus, for example, if before passing any legislation, a legislative body were required systematically to assess the needs of future generations and to determine what impact the proposed legislation might have upon them, and if the legislative body follows through seriously on this requirement, then this would be a strong indicator of the existence of a future-oriented public philosophy. If a legislature did not acknowledge it had an obligation to assess the interests of future generations; did not create processes which attempted to assess those needs and to feed that information effectively into all decision making processes (or was able to ignore such an obligation with impunity), this would be a clear indicator of a lack of future-orientation, especially if representatives of present generations were allowed to voice their opinions about the legislation under consideration in the absence of testimony from advocates for future generations.

It is also important to realize that the idea of a public philosophy responsive to the needs of future generations is not the property of one political ideology and not others. It is not something that "liberals" favor but "conservatives" avoid, or that Greens do while Republicans eschew.

Whether one favors a strictly "free market," laissez faire, or libertarian approach, or whether one prefers a totally centrally-planned economy and society, futures studies is still needed. Sensitivity to the needs of future generations is not something "socialists" do but "capitalists" do not, or vice versa.

The way future orientation is operationalized might vary with different ideologies, but the need for foresight extends to every political system. For example, under libertarian assumptions, if each private economic entity engages in and/or uses foresight, then that will aggregate, via the invisible hand, to the closest approximation possible of future-orientation for the commonweal. "Governmental foresight" *per se* is neither necessary, nor desirable.

On the (slightly more visible) other hand, under "maximum privatization" or "that government is best which governs least" assumptions, governmental agencies might buy and use future-oriented information offered for sale by many competing private providers.

However, if one assumes that a more proactive system of public decisionmaking which seeks to intervene and act on behalf of the common good is desirable, then each governmental unit might either engage in foresight for itself or have ready access to information about the future produced by one or more other governmental units. All such governmentally-produced futures research should also be available freely to all citizens. Nonetheless, each governmental unit and individual citizen should also have the opportunity to buy privately-produced futures information as well

Moreover, some privately-funded futures research could also be proprietary, and kept secret.

Finally, according to certain totalitarian assumptions, the government might have a monopoly on all futures research, requiring all units of society, including economic sectors, to use information provided by the government alone. All private (or foreign) futures studies would be forbidden.

Many years ago, when I had come initially to the conclusion that currently-existing legislatures were not able to exercise their responsibilities to future generations fairly and consistently, I made the following simple-minded proposal:

"I would like to see the creation of a Fourth Branch of Government for Hawaii which will be responsible for two separate but interrelated tasks: (1) to engage in a continuous examination of preferred futures, and to develop social goals for Hawaii which can then be used by the Legislature, Executive, and Judiciary to evaluate proposed legislation and executive/judicial acts in accordance to their agreement with these goals; (2) To further engage in the examination and public discussion of alternative futures; that is, to serve as a public, legitimate, required watchtower and early warning system for the future.

"Without going into too many specific details, let me just indicate one or two possible operational characteristics of this Fourth Branch. I suggest that half of its members be chosen by the criteria and methods used for the Hawaii House of Representatives, and half of them be

chosen by lot from the list of registered voters (actually, I believe all political figures should be chosen by lot, as jurors are, but that is a different matter!). Their term of office should be the same as that of the Hawaii Senate, unless there is a vote of no-confidence against them, in which case the elected half would have to run in a special election on the issue for which the confidence vote had been called, and the other half chosen by lot again.

"A vote of no-confidence could occur as follows: if the governor vetoes a bill of the Legislature or act of the Fourth Branch, which the Fourth Branch then decides to override; or the Legislature rejects an act of the Fourth Branch which the Fourth Branch wishes to override; or the Courts declare unconstitutional or otherwise invalid an act of the Fourth Branch which the Fourth Branch wishes to override, then the Fourth Branch will dissolve and have a new elective/lot-drawing process.

"As you can see, my proposal is indeed a very modest one, and I am only sketching it here for your discussion and revision. My goal is to establish a mechanism within the existing constitutional framework which enables politicians and bureaucrats to continue being responsible to their present constituencies, and which relieves them of the obligation of being responsible to the future, by establishing a coequal and formal branch of government which is responsible only to the future (and to the present concerns, fears, dreams, etc., about the future) and which has no need to be overly concerned about the present or past grievances and injustices, as our present political figures must" [15].

Cheryl D. Soon, Executive Director of the Oahu Metropolitan Planning Organization, offered a pointed critique of my proposal at that time which is also well worth reading and contemplating. And I of course stated then, and restate now, that something much more creative and less conventional than a "Fourth Branch of Government" is truly preferable to my proposal--something which could fit snugly into the Enlightened Democracy which Christa Slaton and Ted Becker suggest elsewhere in this volume.

And indeed, it is fortunate that we have in the remainder of this volume, many more sensible but inspiring suggestions and examples than this hoary one of mine [16].

The Organization of This Book.

The remainder of this volume is divided into five sections. The first contains six articles which try to answer the question, "Who are 'future generations' and what are public philosophies responsive to the needs of future generations?"

The first question is by no means easy to answer. Many people think of their own children and grandchildren--or at least of their own biological descendants--when they think of "future generations." But this may not be the best meaning of this term. Being mindful of and helping provide for the needs of your own descendants is relatively easy--though not exactly duck soup either, as the children of parents with maxed out credit cards, one hundred year mortgages, and other malingering debts well know.

But it is very difficult--indeed, perhaps impossible--for humans to care

sufficiently for the unborn they will never see, never know, and who are not their own descendants. And yet that is precisely what the term "future generations" may need to signify: not our descendants; not even others' children who we can come to see and know, but people we will never know, and who can never thank us for caring for them, or bring us to task for failing to do so.

And that is the nub of the problem. All ethics is fundamentally based on reciprocity--you should do good to others so that they will also do good unto you. You should not mistreat others who can, and might, mistreat you. This reciprocal basis of ethics is a big enough problem in a world where someone in Omaha can influence the lives of people in Timbuktu, while the people in Timbuktu can not show the Omahans how they feel about it. How much graver if we can impact the lives of future generations which are helpless to tell us what that means to them.

As Faith Popcorn is quoted as saying, "the present is the future getting back at us." It is true that we are currently living largely under the influence of what people did or did not do in regard to their future, our present. And we might either be pleased or displeased with what they did or did not do. But we can neither thank them nor chastise them--nor cause them to act differently on our behalf. We are forced to deal now with their actions then. So also are our future generations hopelessly dependent on our concerns and actions on their behalf. Moreover, our current ability to predetermine the quality of life of future generations has never been as great as it is now--though it will be greater still tomorrow.

But by "future generations" do we mean "all human generations for all time to come?" Surely different future generations will have different, and perhaps competing, if not actually mutually-exclusive, needs and desires. Can we assess and respond fairly to them all? Or should we restrict our concerns for, say, the next 100 years, and be mindful only of the unborn generations who will live in the 21st Century?

And is our obligation only, or primarily, to future humans? Do we have any obligation to the life around humans, out of which humanity emerged, and upon which humanity is dependent, or at the very least, over which humanity has enormous powers of life and death?

To some extent, these issues are discussed by all the authors in this book, but they are the particular focus of the essays by Walt Anderson, Fred Riggs, Takeshi Sasaki, Martha Garrett, Jordi Serra and Kjell Dahle in Section one. Section two contains five essays which describe actual experiences with trying to create future-oriented governmental processes. Alexander Tomov and Barry O. Jones are elected leaders from Bulgaria and Australia, respectively, who have labored long and hard in the vineyard of governmental foresight. Clem Bezold is one of the most respected futures consultants with extensive experience trying to help governments (as well as businesses and nongovernmental organizations) become more future-oriented, while Ted Becker and Christa Slaton are long-time pioneers in the creation of forms of direct democracy which also result in future-oriented policies. Finally, Xinning Song reports on future-oriented philosophy and practices in China from both an historical, contemporary, and futuristic perspective.

Section three contains four articles which address some of the major

theoretical concerns about future generations and future-oriented public philosophy written by Sohail Inayatullah, Ian Lowe, Lars Ingelstam and Rich Somerville, while section four has five articles which offer "inspiring new designs", in considerable detail, for what public philosophies and actions responsive to the needs of future generations might look like at different levels and from different assumptions. These are by George Kent, Wendy Schultz, Ira Rohter, Bruce Tonn and Devin Nordberg.

The volume concludes with a final summative and evaluative essay by Tae-Chang Kim, one of the founders and leaders of the future generations movement.

Representatives of Future Generations.

At the closing of the Honolulu symposium, each participant was asked to name their very own representative of future generations. These representatives have the task of themselves convening a meeting in Honolulu--if there is such a place--in 2026, and evaluating our efforts in 1996. Did we make a difference?

Is the world more mindful of the needs of future generations in 2026 than it was in 1996, and is that in part a consequence of our labors in 1996? It is also hoped that our representatives will then appoint their own representatives of future generations, who will continue the evaluation endlessly into the future. I urge you, dear reader, to identify your own personal representative of the future and ask her or him to evaluate the impact of your life on future generations, say, 30 years after you have died, and then 100 years, and maybe 500 years hence. Did you live your life so as to make this world truly a better place? Or did your life worsen that of those who came after you. Or did you just make no difference whatsoever.

This fear of condemnation and hope for personal praise from posterity may be the only way to make us care enough about future generations to do our very best on their behalf. It may be one effective way of the future getting back at us.

"Future generations: they are our conscience" [17].

FOOTNOTES:

My deep thanks to Bruce Tonn and Vincent Pollard for their contribution to certain key parts of this paper.

[1] Jim Dator, "The dancing judicial Zen masters: How many judges does it take to see the future?" *Technological Forecasting & Social Change*, Vol. 46, No. 1, 1994, pp. 59-70.

[2] John Poast, "The future of constitutional monarchy: The North American model 2030 A. D." *The Manoa Journal of Fried and Half-Fried Ideas (about the future....)*. February 1997, pp. 12-32.

[3] Clem Bezold, ed., *Anticipatory Democracy*. New York: Random House, 1978, p. 123.

[4] D. MacLean, "Introduction" in D. Bodde and T. Cochran, eds., *Conflicting Views on a Neutrality Criterion for Radioactive Waste Management*. College Park: University of Maryland, Center for Philosophy and Public Policy, 1981, p. 3.

[5] Bruce Tonn, "Philosophical aspects of 500-year planning, Environment and Planning A". Vol. 20, 1988, p. 1512.

[6] Kristin Shrader-Frechette, "Ethical dilemmas and radioactive waste,"

Environmental Ethics , Vol. 13, No. 4, 1991, p. 339.

[7] Bruce Tonn, "500-year planning: A speculative provocation," *Journal of the American Planning Association* , Vol. 52, No. 2, Spring 1986, p. 186.

[8] Martin Golding, "Obligations to future generations," in Ernest Partridge, ed., *Responsibilities to future generations* . Buffalo: Prometheus Books, 1981.

13

[9] John Gilroy, "Public policy and environmental risk: Political theory, human agency, and the imprisoned rider," *Environmental Ethics* , Vol. 14, No. 3, 1992, p. 228.

[10] Philip Frankenfeld, "Simple gifts, complex environmental hazards, and the responsibility to leave a controllable world," *Futures* , Vol. 25, No. 1, January/February 1993.

[11] Edith Weiss, "In fairness to future generations," *Environment* . Vol. 32, No. 3, 1990, pp. 7-11.

[12] Allen Tough, "What future generations need from us," *Futures* , Vol. 25, No. 10, December 1993.

[13] Joseph DesJardins, *Environmental ethics: An introduction to environmental philosophy* . Belmont, California: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1993.

[14] Wendell Bell, "Why should we care about future generations?" in Howard Didsbury, ed., *The years ahead: Perils, problems, and promises* . Bethesda, Maryland: World Future Society, 1993.

[15] Jim Dator, "Responding to the Future," in Dorothy Douthit, ed., *Planning the good life for Hawaii: Values, conflicts and trade-offs* . Honolulu: Hawaii Committee for the Humanities, 1981, p. 66f.

[16] There are also excellent examples of designs for new political institutions and processes which are oriented towards identifying and fulfilling our obligations towards future generations in the volumes preceding this one. For example, see Takeshi Sasaki, "The responsibilities of politics for future generations," Alexandre Timoshenko, "Future generations: A lawyer's viewpoint," Christopher Stone, "Should we establish a guardian to speak for future generations?" Nicholas Albery, "Imaginative ideas and projects for creating future guardians and islands of hope," and Richard Slaughter, "How institutions of foresight protect future generations," all found in *Creating a new history for future generations* , cited in first paragraph of this essay.

[17] From the videotape, "A message from future generations," produced by the Future Generations Alliance Foundation, 1994.

And consider these statements as well: "Democracy has no forefathers, it looks to no posterity, it is swallowed up in the present and thinks of nothing but itself." John Quincy Adams (quoted in Charles Morris, *The AARP: America's most powerful lobby and the clash of generations* . Random House, 1996, p. 207).

Similar sentiments were expressed by Thomas Jefferson and the German theologian, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, as quoted by Timothy Penny and Steven Schier, *Payment Due. A nation in debt, a generation in trouble* . Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1996, Chapters One and Five:

"The question whether one generation has the right to bind another by a deficit it imposes is a question of such consequence as to place it among the fundamental principles of our government. We should consider ourselves unauthorized to saddle posterity with our debts and morally bound to pay for them ourselves." Thomas Jefferson

No man can, by natural right, oblige...the persons who succeed him...to the debt contracted by him. For if he could, he might, during his own life, eat up

the usufruct of the lands for several generations to come, and then the lands would belong to the dead and not the living." Thomas Jefferson

"The ultimate test of a moral society is the world it leaves to its children."
Dietrich Bonhoeffer