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A Holistic Approach

Integral Futures: What This Is and How to Employ the Theory

synopsis of the September 2004 WFS Washington DC luncheon with Professor Richard Alan Slaughter; summarized by Natalie Ambrose

On September 30th, noted futurist Professor Richard Alan Slaughter presented a noontime lecture on **Integral Futures Theory**, a new more holistic approach to environmental scanning and to achieving strategic foresight. The event was co-sponsored by the WFS US National Capital Region Chapter and the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars in downtown Washington DC.

Dr. Slaughter is professor of Foresight Studies at Swinburne (Australia) University of Technology as well as Director of the consulting firm Foresight International located in Brisbane. He is a leading developer and advocate of the Integral Futures method, and his personal and professional mission is “to understand, teach and in cooperation with many others, achieve strategic social foresight capacity” on a global scale.

Integral Futures Theory provides a new meta-perspective for creating and then organizing knowledge in order to understand emerging issues in greater depth. It provides four windows onto reality – the inner and outer (subjective and objective) factors, the individual and the collective. Using a four-quadrant model, it encompasses these four different perspectives – self and consciousness (I), brain and organism (it), culture and worldview (we), social system and environment (its). So, important questions get asked such as: “In considering the future, how can we consider individuals and collectives? How can we differentiate and consider the external physical and social environment and the interior, psychological and spiritual reality in futures work?” Unlike traditional environmental scanning, an integral approach also considers the non-empirical world of intuition and interpretation. Much of the foundational thinking behind Integral Futures Theory is based on the work of Ken Wilbur, a provocative author and philosopher on topics such as global consciousness and spirituality as well as a master at synthesizing knowledge.

Slaughter also briefly discussed two other new techniques – **Causal Layered Analysis (CLA)** and **Transformative Cycles**. Both help to circumvent the tendency for most new ideas/innovations to get rejected before ever coming to fruition because of society’s and people’s aversion to risk. CLA, pioneered by futurist Sohail Inayatullah, provides a way of looking both more broadly and in depth (meta)

at the various layers of an issue and helps to unearth deeper insights. Transformative Cycles (or T-cycles), used by futurist Hazel Henderson, incorporate a process of identifying the problem or breakdown, then developing new ideas/proposals, dealing with conflict using negotiation, and then selecting an approach and giving it legitimacy.

To learn more:

Integral Scenario Development: Introducing an AQAL Root Questions Method, by Chris C Stewart, 2003.

<http://207.44.196.94/~wilber/pdf/stewart2.pdf>

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<http://www.swin.edu.au/afi/welcome.htm>

Integral Futures: A New Model for Futures Enquiry and Practice

http://www.foresightinternational.com.au/07resources/Integral_Futures.pdf

K. Wilber, 'An integral theory of consciousness', *Journal of Consciousness Studies*, vol.4, no.1, pp.71-92, 1997. Online at <http://www.imprint.co.uk/Wilber.htm>. See also <http://wilber.shambhala.com> and <http://www.integralworld.net> for other sources.