

THOUGHTS ABOUT THE FUTURE

"If we do not learn from history, we shall be compelled to relive it. But if we do not change the future, we are compelled to endure it. And that could be worse."

-Alvin Toffler-

"You do not think about the future, you cannot have one." -John Galsworthy-

"I like the dreams of the future and the role of change in human history." -Thomas Jefferson-

"The future is a moving target"

-Ad by IBM-

"The future ain't what it used to be."

-Arthur C. Clarke-

"It is in the future that we shall spend the rest of our lives." -Anonymous-

"When all is lost, the future remains." -Christian Bovee-

"The future is not in facts; it is in questions, in dreams, in feelings."

-Anne Cheatham-

"The future is a perpetual obstacle to human advancement; custom is the enemy." -John Stuart Mill-

"You are today where your thoughts have brought you - you will be tomorrow where your thoughts take you."

-James Allen

"The future is not someplace we are going to, but one we are creating." -John Sclaur-

"Change is the law of life, and those who look only to the past or present are certain to miss the future."

-John F. Kennedy-

"The future may surprise you, but it will not dumbfound you."

-Kenneth Boulding-

"We must cease to be mere spectators in our ongoing history and participate with determination in moulding the future."

-Olaf Helmer-

"We cannot alter the past. At current speeds, the present becomes the past even as we set hand to it. At such speeds, our options for today are drastically narrowed. Only tomorrow can be dealt with."

-Man...An Endangered Species-

"Not one of us is without the power to contribute to the making of the future. Not one of us is free from responsibility for making the future." -Oliver Reiser-

ABC's of the Future:

Awareness

Becoming

Choices

We can study possible futures and choose the one we want.

-Anonymous-

"Human beings do not have genuine freedom to make choices. Our destiny is not determined for us; we determine it for ourselves." -Arnold Toynbee-

"Our moral responsibility is not to stop the future but to shape it...and try to ease the trauma of transition."

-Alvin Toffler-

"If we don't change our direction, we are going to end up where we are headed."

-Anonymous-

"There is nothing like dreams to create the future."

-Victor Hugo-

"The future most of us grew up with was the one that was supposed to be the past only more so."

-Stephen Budiansky-

"Of course, there can be no foresight of the future if one refuses to look at the present."

-Bertrand de Jouvenel-

FUTURE VIEW

By Edward Cornish

Responsibility for the Future

Thoughts from yesterday guide us toward tomorrow.

More than 2,000 years ago, Caecilius Statius, a Roman slave who became famous as a playwright, observed, "We plant trees to benefit another generation." His remark is as apt today as it was when he made it and shows how thinkers of the past can still teach us something about the future.

George Bernard Shaw, for instance, made an even more perceptive remark than Caecilius. "We are made wise," said Shaw, "not by the recollection of our past, but by the responsibility for our future."

This responsibility begins when we recognize that we ourselves create our future—that the future is not something imposed upon us by fate or other forces beyond our control. We ourselves build the future both through what we do and what we do not do. Once we recognize our power over the future, we inevitably begin to anticipate the consequences of what we do and to do those things that will improve our future; in short, we begin to act wisely.

And our own responsibility for the future bears the promise of a better future world, because, as C.P. Snow, the novelist and philosopher, once remarked: "The sense of the future is behind all good policies. Unless we have it, we can give nothing, either wise or decent to the world." And our obligations must be more to the future than the past: As scientist Jonas Salk said, "Our greatest responsibility is to be good ancestors."

Here are some other thoughts from the past on our responsibility for the future:

"There was a time in my young life when I was struggling with the question, 'What is morality?' I came to the conclusion that morality is what a future generation would ask us to do if they were here to ask us. I believe that the voice of future generations is a morally critical voice today, because a lot of things we are thinking about today have their implications for the future generations."

—C. West Churchman (1913-), philosopher of systems and planning

"I hold that man is in the right who is most closely in league with the future."

—Henrik Ibsen (1828-1906), dramatist

"Change is inevitable. Change for the better is a full-time job."

—Adlai Stevenson (1900-1965), statesman

"The vast possibilities of our great future will become realities only if we make ourselves responsible for that future."

—Gifford Pinchot (1865-1946), conservationist

"Despite the cynicism that seems to hang over us like a dark cloud, we must accept the reality that unless we respect the rights of the next generation, we will be utter failures in our own."

—Norman Cousins (1912-1990), magazine editor

"We can only pay our debt to the past by putting the future in debt to ourselves."

—John Buchan (Baron Tweedsmuir) (1875-1940), author

"To a large extent, the future lies before us like a vast wilderness of unexplored reality. The God who created and sustained the evolving universe through eons of progress and development has not placed our generation at the tag end of the creative process. God has placed us at a new beginning. We are here for the future."

—Sir John Templeton (1912-), financial analyst

"Destiny is not a matter of chance; it is a matter of choice. It is not a thing to be waited for; it is a thing to be achieved."

—William Jennings Bryan (1860-1925), political leader

"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has."

—Margaret Mead (1901-1978), cultural anthropologist

"And do not let yourselves be discouraged or embittered by the smallness of the success that you are likely to achieve in trying to make life better. You certainly would not be able, in a single generation, to create an earthly paradise. Who could expect that? But, if you make life ever so little better, you will have done splendidly, and your lives will have been worthwhile."

—Arnold Toynbee (1889-1975), historian

About the Author

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