

# Future-Shaping: Consciously Choosing a Better World

by John Renesch

2007 © John Renesch  
for *World Futures* journal

*The future has just arrived - substantially ahead of schedule.* These words are framed and mounted on my bookshelf, where I can see them every day. They remind me that we are creating our future, moment by moment, day by day, week by week, and that each choice we make “now” has an effect on the future “later on.” Even decisions not to do something are still choices that will affect the future our descendants will inherit.

How many of us would intentionally create a world fraught with so much conflict, pain and suffering as we see today? How many of us want a world where there is so much war, starvation, violence and dishonesty? No one ever says, “I wish the world were nastier” or “I wish there were more children dying from malnutrition.” What hope is there that the future will be better than what appears to be unfolding without our taking action based on more conscious choices?

If we all want a better world, why do we have the one we live in? What’s our explanation for why people are starving when there’s enough food for everyone on Earth? Why do so many people claim to want world peace yet we resort to war so readily? Why do we claim to want one thing yet so easily tolerate circumstances which will bring about the exact opposite? Why do we condone actions that lead us to a clearly unwanted future? If we want a better future, it is going to take a more conscious approach following Einstein’s advice that we need to think differently if we really want to solve our problems.

## **We All Have Impact**

“Future shaping” is my phrase for describing how we all contribute to the future, even if only standing by while others say and do things we don’t like. You cannot be a living human being without having *some* influence on the future. Some may have a huge influence on what our collective future will look like while others may make a less noticeable contribution. But we all have *some* influence – good or bad – on how the future turns out. This means, in the larger sense, we are all “future shapers” – people who play a role in how the world will be tomorrow, the next day and in coming generations.

Since we are all complicit in this causal process, and cannot avoid it even if we try, why don’t we give some conscious thought to what we want rather than passively sitting around while an unwanted future reveals itself? Why don’t we stop pretending that what we are doing now has no impact on the future? Why don’t we accept responsibility for moving the world closer to the way we would like it rather than living our “lives of quiet desperation” - resigned to the inevitable, wallowing in our powerlessness to do anything?

## **Changing Our Minds**

We may not realize it but holding on to the belief we don’t have the ability to change the future requires more effort than it would take to simply give it up. The human family has shown that it can change anything with enough collective will, as long as we believe we can.

The question is “Do we have the collective will to consciously take on our role as architects of the future of humanity?” Each of us must answer this question for ourselves. So the question

becomes “Do I have the will to work for the kind of future I would like to see?” This is a personal inquiry that requires each of us to listen to what our soul tells us.

What kind of legacy do you wish to leave? What kind of world do you want your children and grandchildren to inherit? What role are you called to take on in creating that kind of world? Do you feel this kind of life is the optimum fulfillment of your destiny? Do you think we humans have fully evolved and that this is the ultimate culmination of the human experience? Or do you have even the remotest sense of a higher calling for our species – some destiny calling us which we have not yet fathomed much less achieved?

These questions are particularly poignant for those who consider themselves to be futurists. Whether you make a living conjuring up predictions or planning possible scenarios, where do you distinguish between simply projecting off the past and being drawn by an envisioned future? Are you merely connecting dots based on history and current trends or are you allowing a vision for a better future to influence your thinking?

### **Taking a Proactive Role**

I choose to spend my energies envisioning what futures we can create collectively and helping to shape them. As a result of the inspiration I've received from the above stand-takers, I'm more interested in participating in the creative process than in predicting. I've never felt comfortable spending time guessing about how current trends will play out in the future. It feels passive, without having any creative role in how it turns out.

This is how I came up with the term “future-shaping” – the idea that millions of people could be making individual positive contributions toward a sustainable future that will benefit all of humankind while moving us all closer to fulfilling our destiny as a species with a more fully evolved consciousness.

The physical world is the product of our collective actions. Our actions are the result of our collective consciousness. Nineteenth Century philosopher William James wrote, “Of all the creatures of earth, only human beings can change their patterns. Man alone is the architect of his destiny...Human beings, by changing the inner attitudes of their minds, can change the outer aspects of their lives.”

Why settle for whatever happens to unfold and leave our future to chance? Why be content to be simply good guessers? We humans are blessed with consciousness – a power to create what we dare to dream about, to collaborate and intentionally set in motion the forces that will result in a different kind of future than the one for which we appear to be headed. We can choose our future. We can consciously evolve.

Wouldn't it be preferable to see a world in which conflicts are resolved without violence, all people have their basic needs met, the environment is sustained so it continues to nurture life and people recognize that we are all connected and act accordingly? I do not see this as a pipedream. We have the ability to start creating such a future now! So why not do it?

To achieve this, we need to think differently about the future, following Einstein's advice that we cannot solve our problems with the same consciousness we used in creating them and understanding James' point about our unique ability to create our reality. This doesn't mean to start thinking about different things but to think from a new place in our consciousness. Part of this new consciousness involves the recognition that we are dealing with an incredibly complex global system where everything is connected to everything else, and where everyone is connected to everyone else. Thinking systemically about how we want to see change happen is absolutely essential.

Clearly, different people have different ideas about what makes an ideal future. These differences have been at the core of many conflicts and the source of so much misery in the world. However, there are a few qualities we can agree upon – qualities that all healthy, mature and well-intended citizens of the world would want for the future of all humanity.

Another piece of the solution is building a new consensus – a society of “stand-takers” who will not settle for a resigned attitude about what the future holds. It is time to stop settling for incremental consolations that won’t make much difference in the long term and start aiming for and devising large scale transformations – really big change, beyond anything we have ever witnessed in human history. After all, we are at a fulcrum point in human evolution. We have the ability and the power to consciously evolve as a species for the first time in history!

The question now is: Do we have the will? Individually and collectively, will we step into the fullness of our humanity? Will we mature and become co-creators with life, bringing all our creativity and awareness, all our intelligence and compassion, to bear on our problems?

I answer “yes” and invite anyone reading this who would like to see a better world shaping up on the time horizon, anyone who can take a stand to work toward this vision, to join me as a global future-shaper. I invite you to embrace a bold vision for a better world and then to act with the spiritual chutzpah consistent with bringing forth your vision.

## **Getting Started**

There’s no shortage of places to begin. Every system we have created seems to be in some stage of collapse, with bureaucracy and organizational dysfunction rampant in our society. There are plenty of places needing a fresh injection of consciousness and responsible action.

Look for the fire in your belly – be it excitement or rage - and go to work where that fire leads you. Should you find, distressing as it may be, that the first place to work is within - on your own intolerance, resignation, unconsciousness or lack of compassion - then start there like so many of us have done. This “inner work” is the foundation for all that you have to contribute. It impacts all the rest of us. Become clear and you will be able to work on the things outside yourself.

Vision and courage are both necessary: Not only must we dare to dream the dreams for a better world, we must also rally the willingness and guts to risk our butts in service to those dreams. This is what it means to be a conscious leader - shaping our future and helping to achieve the next level of human evolution.

\*\*\*\*\*

## **About the Author**

John Renesch is a San Francisco-based businessman-turned-futurist and author. In the 1990s, he has published a dozen progressive business anthologies on subjects such as consciousness and work, intuition and leadership (see [www.Renesch.com](http://www.Renesch.com) for titles and summaries). His latest book is [\*Getting to the Better Future: A Matter of Conscious Choosing\*](#). John is also an international keynote speaker having addressed audiences in Asia, Europe, South America, Australia as well as the U.S. He publishes a free monthly newsletter – *FutureShapers Monthly* - and can be reached at [John@Renesch.com](mailto:John@Renesch.com).