

The Future Evolution of Consciousness

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Introduction

The Centrality, Wonder, and Mystery of Consciousness

Consciousness is at the core of human existence. We live our lives in the radiant illumination of our consciousness. To awaken to the world and to ourselves is to become conscious. Consciousness is the medium through which all that is meaningful to us is revealed, known, and understood. Our personal identity, as we apprehend it, is a reality of consciousness; we appear to ourselves as conscious selves.

Moreover, we create, shape, and direct the evolution of both ourselves and the world around us through our consciously structured thoughts, goals, plans, emotions, desires, and behaviors. We make and remake the world and ourselves through our conscious intentions and our purposeful actions. All our theories of reality and all our conceptualized solutions and approaches to the challenges of life are creations of our consciousness. *The limits of our consciousness are the limits of our world.*¹

All in all, the existence of consciousness—especially our individual consciousness—is an amazing and wondrous reality. We may be in awe over the vast extent and intricacy of the universe, indeed over the sheer brute fact of existence, but it is even more astonishing that each of us is aware and knows of this universe and can contemplate, wonder over, and attempt to understand its existence. Reality may be extraordinary, but that we can know of reality is even more astounding.

Our own personal conscious existence seems distinctively incredible and mystifying. Each of us has an experience of an “I” (or a “me”) that exists at the center of our consciousness, and this “I” —this “me”—is conscious of its own existence and its own consciousness. What is this “I” that we all possess?

Throughout human history, the origin and nature of consciousness has been one of the great philosophical mysteries. It has been a topic of great perplexity and debate. Equally each of our own personal conscious selves—that can consciously can reflect upon and ponder its own existence—has likewise been a great puzzle and wonder. What is the origin and nature of the conscious “I”? What am I and why do I exist?

There is a great wonder and mystery at the core of our existence.

Theories of Consciousness

It is not surprising that throughout history there have been many and often contradictory theories regarding the nature and origin of consciousness. Equally so, there have been many different theories of the nature of the conscious self. Although

¹ The modern philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein famously stated that “The limits of our language are the limits of our world.” But our consciousness, and hence our world, extends way beyond what we verbally express.

the phenomena of consciousness and our own individual conscious selves are so intimate and central to our existence, we can not seem to agree upon the origin, cause, and nature of these core realities of our existence. In fact, a review of contemporary books, essays, and online sources—inspired by diverse scientific, philosophical, mystical, or religious-spiritual ideas—reveals an immense, ever increasing assortment of theories and solutions to the nature of consciousness and the conscious self. Answers abound. The debates continue and grow more complex in subtlety and nuance. The mysteries and perplexities of consciousness persist in contemporary times.

Having, over the decades, studied and both taught and written about a wide array of past and current theories of consciousness² I have been enlightened and inspired in numerous ways by the great thinkers, past and present, on the nature and origin of consciousness. I have become more conscious of my own consciousness through the conscious thoughts of other explorers on this fascinating topic. The consciousness of others illuminates our own consciousness. Although there are still puzzles and questions regarding consciousness, there is much to be learned and pondered over in the writings of other investigators of consciousness.

Yet, I have found these answers to the mysteries of consciousness and the conscious self unsatisfactory in a number of ways. Of special note, I've found theories, past and present, explaining the relationship between consciousness and the physical world especially problematic. We are conscious beings with physical bodies existing in a physical world. And we know and experience this physical world and our physical bodies through consciousness. How is this possible? I do not think that we have convincing answers to such questions.

One of the central goals of this book is to present a theory of consciousness and the conscious self and the relationship between consciousness and the physical world and our physical bodies. This theory is informed and inspired by a number of other thinkers and writers on these topics, but in some ways the theory I present is unique and runs counter to longstanding ideas on the nature of consciousness.

The Future Evolution of Consciousness

This book, though, is about more than just the nature of consciousness. As a second main purpose of the book, I am going to present a conceptual framework for understanding the *future evolution of consciousness* as well. How might consciousness evolve in the future? What can we, as humans, do to facilitate and guide this process? What would be preferable directions to take in evolving consciousness?

I am going to look at the relatively short-term evolution of our own personal consciousness. How each of us can in practical ways evolve our personal consciousness during our lives? I'm also going to look at the collective evolution of

² There are a variety of previous publications in which I presented, as my ideas evolved over time, my thoughts on the nature of consciousness and its possible and preferable evolution in the future. In particular, there are discussions on these connected topics in my book *Mind Flight*, pp. 419-424, 651-654, and 745-752, and a number of essays in my books *Wisdom, Consciousness, and the Future*, pp. 190-212, 260-279, and 379-434, and *Essays on the Future of Psychology and Consciousness*, pp. 122-166, 215-244, 286-296, and 327-336.

consciousness for human society as a whole, and even consider the future of non-human forms of consciousness, technological and biological. Aside from the short-term future, I'll also consider the long-term evolution of consciousness at a planetary and even cosmic level. Informed by various science fiction visions I'll consider the future evolution of consciousness in the universe.

Understanding how we *can* and, moreover, how we *should* evolve consciousness, including our personal consciousness, is intimately connected with understanding the nature of consciousness. Any valid approach to evolving consciousness needs to be informed and inspired by a credible and illuminating understanding of *what* we are attempting to evolve. Knowledge is power, as ignorance is impotence, and any efficacious approach to evolving consciousness requires understanding the nature of consciousness.

Hence, the two main goals of this book—presenting a theory of the nature of consciousness and a vision of the future evolution of consciousness—are intimately connected together. The latter is grounded in the former.

As stated above, I've taught and written on the nature of consciousness for a number of decades. Additionally, I've published and given numerous presentations and workshops on the future evolution of consciousness, often focusing on the personal and practical issue of how each of us can heighten and develop our individual consciousness in our lives. My collected writings and many videos on these important topics can be accessed on my website, the *Center for Future Consciousness* (hereafter *CFC*).³ This book is a synthesis and further development of my previous work on the nature of consciousness, its preferable future evolution, and the necessary and purposeful role we can play, both individually and collectively, in facilitating this process.

The Challenge of the Future and the Solution of Conscious Evolution

Why should we be concerned over the nature and future evolution of consciousness? Why should we aspire toward the evolution of our own personal consciousness?

To begin to answer these questions, I am going to set a dramatic context: The “blooming, buzzing” agitation and confusion of current human reality. We live in a dizzying and tumultuous world of a multitude of anxiety-producing problems and existential crises and a multitude of competing answers and solutions to these challenges and conundrums. In contemporary times, a vast and diverse array of viewpoints regarding humanity's problematic current state of affairs—what's going right and what's going wrong—and our prospects for a good future engulf and bombard our consciousness, attempting to influence and persuade us. Many different theories are proposed and broadcasted across myriad communication channels concerning the key challenges and problems in our world, and what are the most desirable and effective pathways and solutions forward into the future. Our conscious minds are on information and ideological overload regarding both the central questions and best answers to the core problems of human life.

³ All of my online videos, most of my published articles, and links to all my books can be found on the *CFC* website: <https://www.centerforfutureconsciousness.com/>.

This cacophony of philosophies and approaches, I would argue, is an expression of humanity's ongoing debate and struggle over our future. As Virginia Postrel stated, "The central question of our time is what to do about the future. And that question creates a deep divide." What is the best path forward toward creating a good future? What should be our priorities? What are the main problems that need to be addressed and hopefully solved? How do we solve them? And what are the central goals we should be reaching toward?

Since ancient times, humanity has argued over and fought numerous wars⁴, both ideologically and militarily, over what are the best answers to such questions. There have been and continue to be multiple competing perspectives on these issues, which revolve around how to navigate and guide humanity into a positive and preferable future. That's what all the noise and ruckus is (and has been) about: the best way forward into future. Given our current tenuous state of global affairs, politically and environmentally, the question is even repeatedly raised and debated over whether humanity has any viable future, good or bad, at all?⁵

In this contentious global arena of multitudinous assessments of current human reality and myriad answers for a positive future, one frequently voiced view—expressed in many different forms—is that the major cause for our current problems is failings or deficiencies in human consciousness, and the critical pathway for creating a positive future is to heighten and evolve human consciousness. If consciousness is at the core of human reality than it stands to reason that the solutions to our problems exist within the evolution of our consciousness. Although many different key terms and concepts are emphasized to express this general viewpoint, such as realizing greater "enlightenment," "wisdom," and "self-awareness;" enhancing our "collective intelligence," "reflective thinking," and "global understanding;" or achieving "heightened spirituality"⁶ and "ethical evolution," all these views cluster around the general idea that our consciousness (or conscious minds) needs to be sharpened, deepened, advanced, and expanded.

Numerous types of dysfunctions and weaknesses in current human consciousness have been identified that, to various degrees, it is argued, create or contribute to our contemporary troubles, such as self-centered egocentric thinking; short-sightedness and lack of foresight; impulsiveness and thoughtlessness; dogmatism and closed-mindedness; greed, gluttony, and selfishness; hatred, paranoia, and lack of empathy; authoritarian mindsets and practices; elitism and discrimination; rigidity and inflexibility in thinking; superstitious and delusional mindsets; excessive stress, fear, and anxiety;

⁴ One can argue that all wars have been fought over what is the preferable direction for the future.

⁵ Extensive reviews of "theories and paradigms of the future," which invariably include assessments of the present and our current problems, and visions of preferable futures, can be found in my book, Lombardo, *Contemporary Futurist Thought*, Chapter Four, and in my online video, Lombardo "Contemporary Trends and Theories and Paradigms of the Future."

⁶ My experience has been that when expressions such as "spirit," "soul," or "spirituality" are used—often denoting some immaterial or non-physical reality—what is meant by such terms invariably pertains to some quality or feature of consciousness.

pessimism and depression; and numerous forms of immoral and unethical mentality and behavior.

Even for those serious planetary problems, such as: climate change and pollution; loss of natural ecosystems and species diversity; lack of fresh water and basic medical services; militaristic war and physical violence, destruction, and carnage; and poverty and the unequal distribution of wealth and resources, which have a clear physical dimension to them, the argument is that these “physical” problems have arisen due to failings and flaws in our thinking, attitudes, emotions, values, and conscious goals and purposeful actions. The problems and failings of human consciousness have numerous deleterious physical effects on the world and the physical parameters of human existence.

The above assessment of the human condition and how the failings of human consciousness centrally contribute to our deep world problems is not a new idea. Throughout recorded human history, across all cultures, there have been many religious-spiritual, philosophical, psychological, and social-political schools of thought that have emphasized this general point of view regarding how to solve the challenges of human life. Calls for the enhancement, deepening, and expansion of our capacities of consciousness in response to the woes of the world have been voiced since the beginnings of recorded history.⁷

Further, throughout history advocates for the further development of human consciousness have created innumerable and often highly effective practices to enhance the capacities of human consciousness. Humans have been striving to evolve their consciousness for millennia, and at least to some degree—to be described below—have succeeded in such endeavors. Given though the unsettling and disheartening state of current human affairs and multiple looming crises, and the continued calls for the evolution of human consciousness, advocates for this point of view clearly believe that there is still considerable room for the further improvement and growth in our capacities of consciousness.

The future evolution of consciousness is not just an important goal that we should aspire toward at a collective level to better address our global challenges and problems; it is a goal that many sages and writers have contended has great value and relevance at a personal level for each of us individually. Throughout history, advocates for the heightening of consciousness have particularly emphasized its critical value at a personal level. To lead a positive life and realize the best level of personal existence possible, both Eastern and Western and ancient and modern sages have argued that heightening personal awareness and achieving conscious well-being and wisdom is the key to a good life and achieving a positive future at an individual level. And even though many people seem to think and act as if they believe the primary causes of their personal problems and unhappiness are external and physical factors, advocates for the personal evolution of consciousness have long contended that the central cause of individual distress is not the external world, but the inner workings and failings of individual consciousness. All in all, the evolution of consciousness is just as important for our individual lives, as it is for our collective existence and future.

⁷ See, for example, Lombardo, *The Evolution of Future Consciousness*, Chapters 3 and 4.

The Physicalist Approach to Human Reality and its Challenges

But just as it seems obvious that humans are conscious beings with conscious selves, it appears just as self-evident that humans are physical beings. Humans have complex physical-biological bodies and our bodies have numerous physical needs that must be addressed in order for us to consciously stay alive and continue to exist. Moreover, humans exist within a physical world that contains a variety of physical resources and affordances integral and necessary for our existence and the satisfaction of our bodily needs. We move about and interact with this physical world through our physical bodies. We live in a physical world and our ways of life intimately require this physical world. Further, we appear to others, as they appear to us, as possessing physical bodies, as “embodied” beings. Our physical bodies are a relatively persistent and central presence within our lives.⁸ All in all, we clearly appear to ourselves as “physical beings” living in a physical world that is essential to our continued existence.

In addition, humans using the behavioral manipulative skills of their bodies have created an immense and intricate array of physical instruments, technologies, and complex physical structures—utilizing the physical resources and materials of our world—that both empower us and tremendously enrich and enhance our existence in numerous ways. Our physical technologies and constructions are used by us in innumerable ways to satisfy our desires and needs, realize our goals, and create a supporting ambience in which to live. Modern humans exist within an exceedingly complex network of physical and technological systems of our creation, and in myriad ways this physical-technological reality is absolutely essential to support our current ways of life in the contemporary world.

Especially over the last few centuries, the creation and introduction into human society of new physical technologies has dramatically and repeatedly contributed to the improvement of the human condition. Many longstanding problems and challenges of the past, such as pervasive hunger and disease, have been significantly ameliorated through the creative evolution of physical technologies. Indeed, a great deal of modern progress in improving the human condition has been realized by using the ever-increasing knowledge of the physical sciences and its technological applications to modify and manipulate our physical existence. Indeed, we also use an ever-growing assortment of physical technologies, informed by the medical and pharmacological sciences, to benefit the physical-biological states of our bodies.

All in all, it makes great sense to argue that human existence is a complex physical reality and many of our current problems, challenges, and needs can be described as physical in nature, and require physical and technological solutions. I’ll refer to this general understanding of human reality and constructive approaches toward the improvement of the human condition as a *physicalist* philosophy of human existence and our preferable future. Both in human history and in contemporary times, physicalist views of the human condition have proposed that the major psycho-social problems and forms of mental distress experienced by humanity would be eradicated (or significantly

⁸ In cases of deep thought and meditation the sense of our body—of having a body—may momentarily disappear, but by and large, through our everyday life, our physical bodies are a stable and central presence.

reduced) if the physical environment were sufficiently improved for everyone. Just as advocates for the evolution of consciousness argue that physical problems are due to problems in consciousness, conversely, physicalists have argued that psychosocial problems (or problems of consciousness) have physical causes and physical remedies.

The Mental and the Physical

As a reflection of these two different perspectives on the nature of human existence, one emphasizing the centrality of consciousness and one emphasizing the physical nature of human reality, a fundamental disagreement and tension in approaches to life has emerged in history between philosophies that emphasize “mind, consciousness, and spirit” and those philosophies that emphasize a physicalist perspective on the human condition. In current debates there are many who advocate for a physicalist perspective on human life and physical solutions to addressing human problems and challenges and creating a positive future, emphasizing technological, economic, and environmental remedies, and a second cluster of voices who emphasize consciousness in understanding human reality and the preferable pathway toward a positive future, highlighting psychological, ethical, and spiritual approaches to solving contemporary challenges.

One can, though, take the view that both consciousness and physical reality are equally significant and essential in understanding human reality and the challenges of life. Humans are a combination of both the “mental” and the “physical.” Yet, in the history of philosophy and science, and to a significant degree in everyday thinking, it has been the prevalent, if not dominant view to see the reality of consciousness and reality of the physical realm as qualitatively different and distinct spheres of existence. Consciousness is viewed as inherently different than physical reality. Our physical-biological bodies (inclusive of our brains) are different than our conscious minds and selves. Hence, even if we view both the mental and the physical as essential features of human existence, the common perspective on these two dimensions is to view human reality as a duality of incommensurable forms of existence. This popular view of two separate and distinctive realms of human existence has often been described as philosophical “*dualism*.”

Yet, in the history of philosophy and science, many writers have attempted to find a way to theoretically integrate the realms of consciousness and the physical world into a understandable and coherent whole, rejecting the dualist split of the conscious mind and physical matter. In philosophy, such integrative visions have often been described as attempts to “solve the mind-body problem.”⁹ Are consciousness and the physical world as separate, different, and incommensurable as we commonly suppose? Have theories that emphasized the evolution of consciousness versus those that emphasized

⁹ The “mind-body problem” is the puzzle of how a conscious mind is connected with a biological-physical body (including a physical brain). The broader question though is the “mind-matter problem.” How is consciousness (inclusive of conscious minds) connected with physical reality (inclusive of our physical bodies and brains and the physical environment). See Lombardo, *The Reciprocity of Perceiver and Environment*, Chapter 1.

physical progress set up a false dichotomy, in fact, an ideological dualism of the mental and the physical?

In reviewing theories of the future—which invariably include both assessments of the present, as well as predictions and aspirations for the future—there are indeed also many theories that attempt to be integrative and holistic in scope, covering both the conscious realm (including psychology, ethics, and spirituality) and the physical realm (including technology, economics, and the environment) in thinking about the future.¹⁰ Just as with general theories of reality attempting to integrate the realms of consciousness and the physical world, this weaving together of the conscious and physical realms of human existence in theories of the future can take many forms. All in all, there are various theories of human reality, as well as theories of the future, that attempt to synthesize consciousness and physicalist perspectives.

Consciousness may be the medium in which all that is meaningful in human existence is manifested, understood, and orchestrated, and at our core we appear to be conscious beings, but it seems to me that we need to better understand how our physical existence is connected to our consciousness, and what does this intimate relationship entail regarding our future and preferable pathway forward in the evolution of consciousness and human society. In my view any credible view of human reality and the future needs to integrate “mind and matter.” Although, as noted above, many theories have attempted to integrate the conscious mind and physical matter into a coherent whole, I believe such theories can be significantly improved upon. In the coming pages I outline a theory of the nature of consciousness and its potential and preferable future evolution that I believe better explains and pulls together the physical and conscious dimensions of our existence.

The Plan and Structure of the Book

To provide a big picture perspective and orientation to the content of the book, the following is an overview of the main ideas and topics covered in this book.

The general thesis of this book is that the future evolution of consciousness is not only probable, but also a highly desirable pathway to emphasize and pursue in our efforts to create a positive future, both for humanity as a collective whole and for each of us individually within our lives.

As outlined in the *Table of Contents*, this book is divided into thirteen chapters.

The first three chapters examine a set of fundamental principles and concepts that I believe are essential to understanding the nature of consciousness and the future evolution of consciousness.

¹⁰ See Lombardo *Contemporary Futurist Thought*, Chapter 4, and my online video “Contemporary Trends and Theories and Paradigms of the Future”: https://www.centerforfutureconsciousness.com/cont_trends_video.htm.

- The first foundational principle is *cosmic evolution*. The universe as a totality is evolutionary. Humans exist within this evolutionary reality and are a reflection and further distinctive expression of this dynamic reality. Consciousness is embedded within this evolutionary cosmos. Our human collective history and our individual lives are transformational evolutionary realities. An evolutionary perspective undercuts various features of a dualist conception of the universe, human reality, and consciousness.
- Humans throughout history have actively and routinely engaged in the *purposeful evolution* of both themselves and the surrounding physical environment. Guided by our goals and values we have intentionally directed the process of change in both ourselves and the world. This distinctive and empowering capacity of purposeful evolution—an evolved expression of cosmic evolution—has driven the development of both human civilization and our personal lives. If we are to properly understand our potential future evolution, we need to conceptualize it as a purposefully driven process.
- We need a philosophy of reality and humanity that provides a clear alternative to dualistic philosophies that treat physical matter and consciousness as incommensurable and oppositional realities. The idea of *reciprocity*—of distinct but complementary interdependent realities—provides such an alternative theory of reality. Our conscious selves and minds and our ambient physical environment are not a dualism, but rather a reciprocity.
- The concept of *reciprocal evolution* provides a framework for understanding the co-evolution of consciousness and the physical world; consciousness and physical matter co-evolve interdependently. The concept of reciprocal evolution, in particular, provides a way to conceptualize the evolving relationship between humans (and consciousness) and technology, as well as the evolving relationship of individual consciousness and collective society.
- As I have argued in numerous previous publications¹¹, *future consciousness* is the most distinctive and highly empowering ability of human consciousness. Future consciousness makes purposeful evolution possible; future consciousness guides purposeful evolution. Future consciousness is the total set of mental processes and modes of experience humans utilize in approaching, understanding, and creating the future. Almost all humans possess future consciousness, but this capacity comes in various degrees. The further *heightening of future consciousness* in humans, as such, is a preferable future for humanity and the evolution of consciousness, since the enhancement of future consciousness will amplify our capacity for purposeful evolution. As such, as a guiding capacity it will amplify our abilities to evolve our consciousness in general. The way to evolve our consciousness is through the use and further development of our capacity for future consciousness.

¹¹ See, for example, Lombardo, *The Evolution of Future Consciousness and Future Consciousness: The Path to Purposeful Evolution*.

Building on these basic concepts introduced in the first three chapters, the next chapter (Chapter Four) presents a comprehensive theory of the nature of *consciousness*. Consciousness is a multifaceted reality. To understand the full breath of all the diverse ways in which consciousness could evolve in the future, in this chapter I outline a *holistic* description of the main features, components, and processes of consciousness, including perceptual, emotional, motivational, cognitive, individual, interpersonal, and social dimensions. One key feature of this chapter is describing in some depth a non-dualist theory of consciousness and physical reality.

The next three chapters (Chapter Five through Seven) delve into the many facets and dimensions of *individual consciousness* in the future, such as perception and bodily awareness; purpose, self-determination, and intention; emotion, desire, values, and motivation; thought, knowledge, and imagination; pleasure and aesthetics; and the self and personal identity. I examine the possibilities and preferable directions for the future evolution of each of these main features of individual consciousness. These chapters are especially relevant to how each of us individually can best facilitate the future evolution of our personal consciousness.

As a key distinction to note in considering the future evolution of consciousness, both individual and collective, we could ask how do we *realistically* envision consciousness evolving in the future, or how do we think consciousness should *preferably* evolve in the future. In these chapters I address both these questions. Additionally, we could draw a distinction between what is possible in the future and what is preferable. Both these questions are also considered. Finally, it seems to me that various, often conflicting theories of consciousness and its preferable evolution will influence the future evolution of consciousness. The contentious nature and ongoing debates over the future will continue. In the coming chapters, I will consider alternative evolutionary visions and compare them with my own views on the preferable evolution of consciousness.

Chapters Eight through Ten focus on *trans-individual, interpersonal, and collective dimensions of consciousness* in the future, including the relationship of consciousness and technology; the relationship of consciousness and nature; interpersonal consciousness; and the collective consciousness of culture, society, and civilization. I should note though that—in my mind—the individual and trans-individual dimensions of consciousness exist in a state of interdependency or reciprocity, and hence will reciprocally evolve in the future. Hence, although I have created separate chapters for the future of individual and trans-individual consciousness, I consider throughout these chapters how these two dimensions of consciousness could co-evolve.

In my writings I have identified the holistic character virtue of *wisdom* and its further development as a credible and inspirational over-arching goal to pursue in our purposeful evolution.¹² Pulling together ideas from the previous chapters on the individual, technological, ecological, and social dimensions of the future of consciousness, in Chapter Eleven I propose that our preferable focus in the evolution in consciousness should be to purposefully strive for increasing wisdom; that is, toward cultivating a wise consciousness. Wisdom, which in classical times has been frequently identified as the highest state of human consciousness, is in my mind an appropriate

¹² See, for example, Lombardo, *Wisdom, Consciousness, and the Future*.

and inspiring holistic goal for the future evolution of consciousness. In this chapter on wisdom, I outline my theory of wisdom. I describe wisdom in an evolutionary and future-oriented framework. I discuss how wisdom provides an over-arching ideal for understanding the evolution of ethics and knowledge in human consciousness. I connect this vision of wisdom to heightened future consciousness, the future of education, the emergence of wise cyborgs, the pursuit of a wise society, and the personal evolution of consciousness in the immediate future. A key idea examined in this chapter is the *wisdom narrative*, a psychologically empowering approach for facilitating the evolution of consciousness in each of us individually and society as a whole.

The final chapter (Chapter Twelve) serves as both a summary and a concluding exercise in speculative imagination into the far future. The chapter highlights the significance of *science fiction* narratives in thinking about the future evolution of consciousness and the place of consciousness in the cosmos. As one of the unique features of the philosophical approach expressed in the writings and teaching of the *Center for Future Consciousness*, the concepts of “cosmic and purposeful evolution,” “future consciousness,” and “wisdom” are woven together with the fantastical realities and speculative ideas of science fiction.¹³ As a *narrative* and *mythic* mode of holistic future consciousness, personally engaging both thoughts and emotions about the future, science fiction can be defined as scientifically informed and inspired stories about the possibilities of the future, as well as alternate realities. Science fiction also frequently reflects and critiques contemporary trends and key social issues. Contrary to the common stereotype, science fiction deals with more than just the future of science and technology, but repeatedly through its history has deeply delved into the future of consciousness and the human mind, and as such provides a wealth of illuminating and inspiring narratives on this topic. Especially so, science fiction facilitates a big picture cosmic perspective on humanity and consciousness; through science fiction we can consider the potential transcendence of human consciousness to some more advanced level of mentality and experience. All in all, science fiction addresses the *future of everything*. One could plausibly argue that the future evolution of consciousness can be understood as an ever-evolving diverse array of science fiction narratives.

Concluding Opening Thoughts

*“The human species can, if it wishes, transcend itself - not just sporadically,
an individual here in one way, an individual there in another way,
but in its entirety, as humanity.”*

Julian Huxley

Humanity faces many problems and challenges, and there is a huge array of different assessments and solutions for constructively addressing our contemporary issues,

¹³ See, for example, Lombardo, *Science Fiction: The Evolutionary Mythology of the Future*, Volumes 1, 2, and 3, and *The Evolution of Science Fiction* webinar series: <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLIvBA8u8-18QzwxllJrzh6OAKVAUYfNmS> .

offering various pathways forward into a positive future. Our collective consciousness, in fact, is inundated with different perspectives and philosophies competing for our attention and support.

Among the host of theories proposed are many which advocate for the further development of our technologies, economic wealth, and improvements in our physical environment. A second cluster of views proposes that the solution to our difficulties requires the evolution of consciousness. These two general perspectives can be (and often are) seen as expressing competing and opposing philosophies.

The view presented in this book emphasizes the central importance of pursuing the evolution of consciousness as the way to constructively address the problems of today and create a positive future. But as introduced in these opening pages, this vision of a preferable future, which emphasizes the evolution of consciousness, needs to be framed in an integrative fashion that *rejects the oppositional dualism of consciousness and the physical world* and explains the intimate connection between the conscious and physical realms and their future reciprocal evolution.

In the opening chapters of this book I describe a set of core concepts that provides a general theoretical framework for understanding the nature and future evolution of consciousness and how the evolutionary development of consciousness connects together with the evolution of the cosmos. After these opening chapters I present a general theory of the nature consciousness.

In the middle chapters I examine all the major dimensions of consciousness and their potential and preferable future evolution, with a large variety of specific applications for the personal evolution of our consciousness in our own current lives.

In the latter chapters, I describe the virtue of wisdom and explain how wisdom provides a credible and inspiring ideal for the holistic future evolution of consciousness. I also explain how science fiction stimulates and expands our consciousness of the future, empowering the ongoing evolution of consciousness.

The hypothesis that we can and should evolve our consciousness can be an unsettling and anxiety provoking proposition—a threat to our personal identity, stability, and security—but it is also a view of the future of human existence that offers great promise and opportunity for a reality better than today. If we can significantly evolve our consciousness, we can both constructively address the problems and challenges of today and realize new heights in the future development of human reality.

The pathway for the advancement and even *transcendence* of humanity—a hopeful future expressed by Julian Huxley in the quote above—is to be found in the intentional and wise evolution of our consciousness.

As stated on the *CFC* website,

“Our mission is to advance the purposeful evolution of humanity through the heightening of future consciousness and wisdom, and the inspirational, mythic, and cosmic power of science fiction.”

This book is an expression of this stated mission that specifically focuses on the future evolution of consciousness.