

## **Chapter Thirteen**

### **The Preferable Purposeful Future Evolution of Consciousness**

#### **Introduction**

In this chapter I first comprehensively review and summarize the major components and processes of consciousness—which have been examined in depth in previous chapters—and second, grounded in this delineation of components and processes, I provide a detailed description of the preferable purposeful evolutionary direction for each of these features of consciousness.

#### **The Multifaceted Nature of Consciousness**

Human consciousness, and undoubtedly animal consciousness as well, is a complex and multi-faceted reality consisting of many different, although interconnected, processes and components. In this section I identify and describe these various components and processes of consciousness. I also explain some of the key ways in which these distinctive components and processes are interactive and interconnected in consciousness. Pulling together and summarizing the detailed examinations of these various components and processes contained in previous chapter, this section provides an overview of the main features, components, and processes of consciousness.

It is important to keep in mind that all of these features, components, and processes of normal human consciousness are potential areas to be further evolved in the future; in my view our vision of the preferable future evolution of consciousness should be comprehensively multi-faceted, covering all main features, components, and processes of consciousness. As such, this section provides a map of the various areas of human consciousness that can and should be purposefully evolved. This overview will serve as a foundation and outline for the next section where I describe the diverse ways in which I believe consciousness should evolve.

In this overview, I divide the components and processes of consciousness into two basic groups. First, I propose that there are a connected set of conscious processes that are primordial and foundational, which initially evolved in the history of consciousness. These basic processes include perception and proprioception, purposeful behavior, feeling/emotion, and desire/motivation.<sup>1</sup> It seems to me that animals, at the very least, demonstrate all these conscious processes. These fundamental conscious processes though became progressively more informed, enriched, and guided by a more advanced set of conscious processes that emerged later in history.

Second, I propose that in more evolved animal life forms with increasingly complex nervous systems, a set of “higher forms” of consciousness emerged and progressively

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<sup>1</sup> I examined perception and proprioception in Chapters Two, Three, Five, Six, and Seven. I discussed purposeful behavior in Chapters Two and Three. And I discussed emotion and motivation in Chapter Eight.

evolved, which include learning and memory, conceptual abstraction, thinking, imagination, historical/future consciousness, ethical consciousness, and narrative and linguistic consciousness, further empowering the capacities of consciousness.<sup>2</sup> These more evolved forms of consciousness significantly impacted and influenced the primordial forms of consciousness.

With the emergence of more advanced forms of consciousness, the process of the purposeful evolution in both collective and individualized consciousness comes into play. Self-reflective conscious beings, such as humans, actively attempt to purposefully evolve their individuated consciousness across their life-span. Individualized consciousness, especially in humans, manifests a developmental trajectory from infancy to adulthood and a significant component of this development is purposefully directed. Individuated consciousness manifests purposeful evolution. Moreover, individuated conscious human beings have in numerous ways throughout history attempted to purposefully influence and evolve the “collective” consciousness of social and cultural groups.

Highly relevant to understanding the complex conscious capacity for purposeful evolution, there are a set of “normative” forms of consciousness that I list and describe after my review of primordial and advanced forms of consciousness. These normative forms involve contributions from both primordial and advanced types of consciousness. These normative forms of consciousness include values, ethics, character virtues, aesthetics, knowledge, and mental well-being.<sup>3</sup>

After describing the normative forms of consciousness I include in this listing and summary certain noteworthy holistic features of consciousness, including the conscious self and world views/paradigms/philosophies of life.<sup>4</sup>

Next I identify a set of types of consciousness that pertain to interactive relationships between consciousness and its ambient environment. This set includes inter-personal and social consciousness, ecological-naturalistic consciousness, technological consciousness, planetary consciousness, and cosmic consciousness.<sup>5</sup> Both primordial and advanced forms of consciousness contribute to these complex forms of consciousness.

Finally in this list I summarize the conscious nature of enlightenment and the related holistic capacity of wisdom, which integrate together many of the above components and processes of consciousness.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> I discussed learning, memory, abstraction, thinking, and imagination in Chapter Nine. I examined ethical consciousness in Chapter Eleven. Historical and future consciousness is highlighted in Chapters Two and Seven. I should note, though, that learning and memory, at least to some degree and in some fashion, exist in evolutionarily early animal life forms. I discussed learning, memory, abstraction, thinking, and imagination in Chapter Nine. I examined ethical consciousness in Chapter Eleven. Narrative consciousness is discussed in Chapter Seven and Twelve.

<sup>3</sup> I describe in detail these normative forms of consciousness primarily in Chapter Eleven.

<sup>4</sup> See Chapter Twelve.

<sup>5</sup> These forms of consciousness were examined in Chapter Ten.

<sup>6</sup> See Chapter Twelve.

The list of forms and processes of consciousness summarized in this section are:

- Sensory: Perceptual-Proprioceptual Consciousness
- Conscious Purposeful Behavior
- Bodily Feelings and Sensations - Pleasure and Pain
- Emotion
- Motivation
- Learning and Memory
- Habits
- Abstract Conceptualization
- Linguistic and Narrative Consciousness
- Thinking and Imagination
- Insight and Intuition
- Temporal Consciousness - Historical and Future Consciousness
- Normative Consciousness - Values
- Normative Consciousness - Ethics
- Normative Consciousness - Character Virtues
- Normative Consciousness - Aesthetics
- Normative Consciousness - Knowledge
- Normative Consciousness - Psychological Well-Being
- The Conscious Self
- Theories, World Views, Philosophies of Life, and Paradigms
- Interpersonal Consciousness
- Social-Cultural Consciousness
- Technological Consciousness
- Naturalistic-Ecological Consciousness
- Planetary Consciousness
- Cosmic Consciousness
- Enlightenment and Wisdom

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### **Sensory Consciousness: Perception and Proprioception**

To begin, there is *sensory consciousness*, consisting of the reciprocal processes of perception and proprioception. Sensory consciousness is facilitated through an integrative set of perceptual-proprioceptual biological systems, including visual, auditory, tactual, olfactory, gustatory, articular, kinesthetic, and equilibrium systems.

Serving as a fundamental ecological context to our consciousness, perceptual and proprioceptual awareness is continual and ongoing. Although at various times, we may focus our conscious attention on memories, our feelings and emotions, or the content of our thinking, perceptual-proprioceptual awareness is always present serving as a conscious context in which other conscious events and processes are embedded.

*Perceptual consciousness* is our basic multi-faceted sensory awareness—involving multiple senses—of the surrounding environment. Perceptual consciousness is present in animals, as well as in humans. Through perception we are conscious of relative stabilities and transformations, and becoming and passing away within the environment. Perception is the foundational expression of the outer-directed capacity of consciousness; the physical world is manifested within perceptual consciousness; perception consciously connects the perceiver-behaving animal with the environment in which the animal exists. Perceptual consciousness apprehends temporally extended entities and events, rather than a succession of instantaneous present moments, and is invariably contextualized and interpreted in terms of memories and anticipations. Our sense of the future, including our goals, guides our active exploration and perceptual resonance with the world.

Our sensory consciousness also includes the process of *proprioception*, which is our sensory awareness of our physical bodies, including the postural configuration and movements of the physical body. More broadly defined, proprioception includes all aspects of consciousness of our bodies, including its inner states spread across the entire body, both pleasant and unpleasant; as such, headaches, stomach aches, bodily tingles, and felt soreness in the muscles are proprioceptive states of consciousness. I should note, though, that although we can correctly assert that we are conscious of our bodies and its inner states—our proprioceptual awareness—it is also correct to state that we experience our bodies as conscious. We are conscious of the position of our hands, but we also experience our hands as conscious at a tactual-articular-kinesthetic level of awareness. That is, we experience our consciousness as embodied. Proprioception is the foundation of self-awareness and conscious self-identity; at the primordial level the “me” (that is conscious) is my body.

At the sensory level of awareness, perception and proprioception are invariably coupled together. We perceive the environment relative to our bodies and we proprioceive our bodies relative to the environment. As such, at the foundational level of sensory experience, our consciousness is *ecological*, a sensory awareness of the relationship between ourselves and the world. Hence, beginning at the sensory level, consciousness has both “inner-directed” and “outer-directed” dimensions, but these two dimensions are not experienced as ontologically separate and totally distinct realities, but rather are experienced as inextricably related realities. We sense our conscious bodies in a consciously perceived environment.

Perception and proprioception are both strongly influenced by many other diverse forms or processes of consciousness, including emotion and motivation, memory and anticipation, and thought and imagination. Through such influences perception and proprioception are significantly enriched and enhanced as consciousness develops across an individual life-span. There is also significant perceptual and proprioceptual learning in psychological development; conscious life forms as they mature demonstrate increased capacities for enhanced sensory discriminations and sensory resonance to more complex features and events in the environment and bodily states. Perception and proprioception are learned skills and can be purposefully evolved.

## **Conscious Purposeful Behavior**

Aside from perception and proprioception, a third fundamental dimension of consciousness involves our awareness of our *purposeful* or intentional *behavior*. We are aware of our ongoing bodily actions and of consciously directing and guiding such actions. Purposefully directed locomotion, for example, which occurs in many different forms depending on the bodily configuration of the animal, is a ongoing conscious purposeful behavior in most animals. Purposeful behavior, even if very simple and rudimentary, seems clearly evident in animals, as well as humans. Animals and humans do not simply react to features and events in the environment, they consciously initiate and consciously direct their actions.

Also, as discussed earlier, purposeful behavior is consciously linked with perception and proprioception, the latter two processes serving to inform and guide purposeful behavior toward the successful execution of the intended actions. For example, in order to take hold with our hands of an object in the environment, we need to be aware of both the transforming position of our hand and the relative location of the object in the environment that we intend to grab. In order to successfully move my body to a place of protection, I need to perceive the relative location of the place, and proprioceive the ongoing changes in the position of my body relative to the desired environmental location. These reciprocal conscious processes, of sensory and behavioral awareness, need not and frequently do not involve intellectualization or conscious thinking; at an evolutionary level sensory and behavioral consciousness is more fundamental than thinking. Indeed, especially for habitual forms of ecological interaction and behavior, these conscious processes do not even occupy the attentional focus of our awareness. Habitual types of sensory-motor interaction with the environment, such as locomotion, can become relatively unconscious. But reciprocally coordinated sensory-behavioral consciousness is at the foundational level—ubiquitous in its presence—within our normal ongoing experience of reality and ourselves.

All in all, the evolutionary foundation of our consciousness involves an integrated synthesis of perception, proprioception, and experienced purposeful behaviors. The foundations of motivational consciousness and future consciousness can be found in conscious purposeful behavior.

Conscious purposeful behavior, just as perception and proprioception, is significantly influenced by learning throughout the developmental life-span. We develop various “motor skills” as we mature. The capacity for executing complex actions develops as we learn and mature. Indeed, clearly with humans, we purposefully evolve our motor/behavioral skills and abilities through practice and attentional focus. A good part of the developmental evolution of purposeful behaviors in individual humans is influenced by the development of other conscious processes, such as motivation, thinking, and normative values. Our purposeful behavior becomes guided and enriched by motivational goals, plans of action articulated through thinking, and values and ideals. There is an extensive set of principles, ideals, and practices that can be applied to the intentional development of conscious purposeful behavior.<sup>7</sup>

### **Bodily Feelings and Sensations - Pleasure and Pain**

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<sup>7</sup> Lombardo, Future Consciousness, Chapter 12.

Feelings are an ongoing and ubiquitous feature of consciousness. It can be argued that feeling is essential to consciousness; without feelings there is no consciousness.

The term “feeling” can refer to touch and skin sensations. Feelings can refer to bodily sensory proprioceptions. Feelings can refer to experienced bodily states, both localized and diffuse. We can feel stomach aches and feel either relaxed or tense. In general, the term feeling refers to a set of different types of experiences of the body.

Feelings appear to be a continuously present and ubiquitous feature of consciousness. It can be argued that feeling is essential to consciousness; without feelings there is no consciousness. As such, if feelings require a body, then consciousness requires a body in order to be realized.

Pleasure and pain are connected with feelings. Bodily feelings can be pleasurable or painful. We feel pleasure; we feel pain in our bodies. Feelings can possess a “valence;” there are positive feelings (which we are drawn to and attempt to maximize) and negative feelings (which we attempt to avoid or minimize). Consciousness of pleasure and pain clearly seem to exist in animals, as well as humans.

Conscious feelings are a key phenomenological feature of both emotion and motivation: different emotions manifest distinctive and different types of bodily feelings, and we have different feeling states for different experienced desires. Pleasure and pain are also associated with emotion and motivation: There are pleasurable versus unpleasant (psychologically painful) emotions, and motivationally, animal and human consciousness appears motivated toward pleasurable experiences (approach motivation) and motivated toward avoiding or escaping from painful experiences.

Both feeling states and experiences of pleasure and pain can be purposefully evolved; we can learn to heighten our sensitivity and awareness of feeling states and can learn to influence, enhancing or diminishing, our experiences of pleasure and pain.

## **Emotion**

Although the knowledge base of our consciousness—of what we know—is grounded in our perceptual-proprioceptual awareness, the energetic core and color of our consciousness is *emotion*. (As Damasio argued, emotion is at the core of our self-awareness; to wit, “I feel, therefore I am.”) Emotion is affective consciousness, including conscious emotions, such as fear/anxiety, anger/hatred, love, disgust, and joy/elation, and appears to not only exist in humans, but to various degrees in animals as well. Often connected with emotional consciousness are the proprioceptual feelings and as noted above the experiences of pleasure and pain; there are emotions that feel more pleasurable and others that are experienced as more distressing and psychologically painful. One can also include under the general category of emotion the complementary and diffuse experiences of stress and calm, and in fact, there are emotions that seem more stressful, such as anger and fear, and others that seem more calming, such as love and contentment.

Emotional consciousness is a complex psycho-physiological Gestalt, including consciousness of bodily states, including states of arousal and proprioceptual sensations; behavioral expressions of emotion; conscious behavioral engagement with the environment; a plethora of physiological correlates (including biochemical states); a

cognitive dimension—the apprehension and interpretation of objects of emotion and arousal states; and an evaluation and valence dimension including pleasure and pain.

Moreover, conscious emotions are frequently experienced in conjunction with our sensory awareness. We have emotional responses to the perceived features of the environment and we have emotional responses to our selves. Emotions, such as awe, wonder, and delight, invariably accompany our aesthetic consciousness and experiences of beauty. Also, emotions often are experienced concurrently with thinking and imagination, both influencing and being influenced by this cognitive processes.

Emotion is also connected to motivation. Emotions can either energize and elevate, or depress and dampen our general state of consciousness; emotions can motivate our conscious behavior. Conscious emotions have an ecological dimension, in that conscious emotions appropriately couple or connect with different important environmental facts and events. Emotions are conscious responses specific to various important meanings and/or values of the environment relevant to an animal's continued existence.

Although emotions can vary in experienced intensity, and at times our consciousness appears devoid of any emotion, in general, emotion is an ongoing and ubiquitous dimension of consciousness that affects most, if not all, other conscious processes from perception and motivated behavior to thinking and imagination.

Regarding the connection between emotion and future consciousness, the emotions of hope and fear are future-directed and future anticipatory; hope is the anticipatory feeling of something positive emerging in the future, whereas fear is the anticipatory feeling of something negative emerging in the future. In a more general vein, emotions (such as hope and love) can empower or disempower (such as in fear and despair) our capacity for future consciousness. Emotion is a key dimension of future consciousness.<sup>8</sup>

## **Motivation**

Just as foundational and ubiquitous within consciousness as emotion, *motivational* consciousness includes the experiences of desires, wants, goals, appetites, and purpose. As noted above, animal and human behavior in general appears purposeful. Motivational consciousness is what energizes, propels, and directs purposeful behavior, as well as purposeful thinking. We have experiences, for example, of hunger, lust, curiosity, greed, and love (love is one among many emotions that motivates), and these conscious states energize and direct our behavior and thinking. Although sometimes our behavior seems aimless and desultory, in general all human and animal behavior is motivated. We can invariably identify a “want” or desire initiating and directing all purposeful behavior. Motivation by its very nature points toward the future; there is a state of affairs in the future, such as consuming food, escaping from danger, or achieving fame and fortune, that is desired or aspired toward. As such, motivation is a key foundational dimension of future consciousness. Motivation can be either hopeful or fearful, approach or avoidance oriented, and optimistic or pessimistic, and frequently mixtures of all these polarities. Also, as proposed earlier in this volume,

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<sup>8</sup> Lombardo, *Future Consciousness*, Chapter 10.

another key motivational polarity is the oppositional drives or dispositions toward stability versus change.

As is also the case with emotion (as described above), motivation is a psycho-physiological Gestalt, involving a desire-feeling dimension; an emotional dimension; a pleasure-pain dimension; a cognitive (which can include thought) dimension; a bodily arousal and proprioceptual dimension; a perceptual dimension; a dimension of goal-directed purposeful behavior; and a valence and value dimension. Motivation can be defined as “The energized and purposeful intent and effort to satisfy wants and desires through the achievement of goals....motivation, as purpose, identifies a future goal or intent, and as an energizing force, propels us toward that goal or intent.” All in all, most behavior and a good deal of the flow of consciousness is motivated and purposeful.

Pulling together the feeling, emotion, and motivation, although consciousness includes cognitive processes, such as perception and abstract thinking, which involve the acquisition, articulation, and use of knowledge, consciousness also has a feeling dimension; consciousness feels, as well as thinks and knows. Experienced emotions and desires are key contributors to the feeling dimension of consciousness. And as numerous psychologists and visionaries have argued, theories of the future evolution of consciousness need to include the feeling-emotion dimension, as well as the intellectual and cognitive dimensions. How can we evolve our emotions and desires? As I have argued in earlier books, our ideas on future consciousness and its future development also need to include the dimensions of emotion and motivation.<sup>9</sup> Our consciousness of the future is powerfully influenced (or colored) by our feelings and desires about the future.

## **Learning and Memory**

As introduced in Chapter Two and further discussed in Chapter Nine, *learning* as a psychological and evolutionary capacity, emerged at least as early as the beginnings of animal life, and probably existed even earlier in complex unicellular life forms.<sup>10</sup> Learning is the acquisition of knowledge and skills through experience and practice, often involving observation (perception and proprioception) and interaction with the environment.

*Memory*, which is a product of learning, is knowledge pertaining to the past, and grounded in learning experiences in the past. The experiences of memories are another major component of consciousness, in particular the cognitive (knowledge) dimension of consciousness. Learning and memory provide the building blocks of historical consciousness, but also provide the knowledge foundation for anticipating (or predicting) the future. We routinely generalize from the past to the future; our memories and our learning strongly color our expectations of the future. As psychological research has powerfully demonstrated, memory and learning can be and usually are highly selective and interpretive. Also, our thoughts and desires about the future often

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<sup>9</sup> Lombardo, *Future Consciousness*, Chapters 10 and 11.

<sup>10</sup> Current unicellular life forms demonstrate the capacity of learning, rather than being locked into just inherited/gene determined behaviors.

influence our memories of the past, with historical and future consciousness forming a reciprocal loop.

The capacities for learning and memory can be purposefully evolved; we can learn to learn better and learn to remember better. The pursuit and achievement of deep learning generates improved learning and memory, and can positively impact various other dimensions of consciousness and their ongoing evolution.

## **Habits**

If one observes the flow of consciousness, it is noteworthy that various integrated wholes of perception-behavior-emotion-thought routinely repeat themselves. Such repetitious conscious “Gestalts” can be viewed as expressions of psychological habits, and as such, these recurrent integrated patterns provide a dimension of stability to our conscious existence. Of course, new thoughts and feelings do repeatedly emerge in consciousness, and at times these new conscious realities evolve into new habits, but the life of a conscious person does contain a cluster of recurrent habitual configurations of experience and conscious behavior. Based on such habitual patterns of consciousness, a person can be described as engaging in relatively stable, distinctive, and multi-faceted ways of life. Ways of life are anchored to—coordinated and interpreted in terms of—habitual configurations of consciousness.

*Habits*, which develop through learning, are relatively stable and repetitious patterns of behavior, thinking, and feeling—we can have habitual patterns of consciousness—and although habits can interfere with growth and psychological change—petrifying the current structure of consciousness—habits can also serve as the foundation for achievement and transformation. Stabilities in consciousness can be a foundation for change.<sup>11</sup>

## **Abstract Conceptualization**

*Abstract conceptualization* emerges out of the learning capacity for stimulus generalization. Abstraction is the capacity to transcend the world of particulars encountered through the senses in the limited here and now and develop general categories of understanding. In abstraction, a conscious being can identify and understand general features of the world, demonstrating such recognition and comprehension in its behavior. Abstractions can and do form within consciousness at higher and higher levels of generality. Our abstract concepts become increasingly more generalized and broader in scope. In essence, humans can abstract on their abstractions, creating ever more broad and encompassing ideas, such as beauty, truth, existence, knowledge, and the good.

With the emergence of abstract concepts in consciousness, perception and behavior becomes guided, organized, and interpreted in terms of a new transcendent level of generalization and integration. We think about what we perceive and selectively interpret and organize our perceptions through abstract conceptualization.

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<sup>11</sup> Lombardo, *Future Consciousness*, Chapter 13.

## **Linguistic and Narrative Consciousness**

*Linguistic consciousness* can be viewed as emerging as an evolutionary outgrowth of the diverse forms of communication, in particular through sound and the auditory sense, observed in animals. But human language involves the utilization of various abstract principles of organizing and articulating sequences of sounds, words, and ideas, and also involves an understanding and use of numerous conceptual abstractions. We speak and write, to a great degree using abstractions. Linguistic consciousness seems to be integral to the articulation of thought; indeed it has been proposed that linguistic consciousness in humans did not initially evolve to serve enhanced communication but to serve as an operational framework for organizing and articulating thinking.

As a holistic cognitive structure within consciousness that provides meaning and understanding for individuals, groups, and cultures, humans are strongly predisposed to make sense out of both themselves and reality as a whole in terms of stories or narratives. A *narrative* is not a constellation of abstract concepts, such as in a scientific theory, but a story describing a temporal sequence of events, anchored to concrete particulars, including unique and memorable characters. Narratives have drama, plot, and action, and take place in environmental settings. At the most general psychosocial level, the story provides the fundamental cognitive framework for human temporal consciousness. We mentally organize time in terms of stories, connecting and weaving stories together, and placing personal stories (personal narratives) in the context of bigger, more encompassing stories (grand narratives).

Narratives are frequent enriching components within ways of life and paradigms of consciousness, providing inspiration, meaning, and dramatic color to these holistic structures of consciousness.

It should be noted though that in so far as narrative consciousness involving story telling through language, it contains abstractions, even if these abstractions are used to describe particular situations, actions, and characters. It should also be noted that narratives can be presented (and understood) through pictures and visual media, without using language. Linguistically articulated narratives can include visual graphics and pictures to enrich the narrative, just as conversely, visually presented storylines can be enriched with language.

## **Thinking and Imagination**

The next two components of consciousness to consider are *thinking* and *imagination*. Both thinking and imagination are psychologically amazing phenomena, since we are able in both cases to consciously transcend the relative immediate here and now of the specific particulars of perception and proprioception, and engage in the mental realms of abstractions, hypotheticals, fictions, possibilities, and even impossibilities. We can consciously transcend the present and our immediate surroundings in both thinking and imagination. We can think about and imagine “what ifs,” and not just what is or has been. It is arguable that the most distinctive and

empowering features of human consciousness are our capacities to think and imagine.<sup>12</sup>

First consider thinking. Thinking is a relatively purposefully directed flowing, linear process within consciousness of sequentially connected ideas, which can and often does include combinations of linguistic articulations, mental images, memories, abstractions, and hypotheticals. We can think about the here and now, creating interpretations and evaluations of what is currently occurring around us, but we can also think about the past and the future, our expansive natural and global reality, the immense cosmic reaches of the universe, the abstractions of mathematics and science, and even the very act of thinking itself. We can, in self-reflection, “think about thinking,” and in the history of human thought we have developed standards and principles of rationality, logic, and good thinking. To various degrees we guide and evaluate our thinking in terms of such standards.

A good portion of our conscious thinking is articulated in language, involving “inner speech” and “inner-dialogue,” but we can also think using images, and we can “think out loud,” presenting our thoughts, as they are being created, to others. We can think out loud to ourselves. Indeed, two or more people can consciously think together, in a process of mutual exchange, collaboration, and/or debate. Of special note, thinking frequently serves as a guidance system for both perception and behavior; our thinking strongly influences what we perceptually attend to. Through thinking, involving the conscious formulation of plans, values, and goals, we guide and direct our behavior. This exposition, that I am presently creating is a product or expression, and an ongoing self-reflective shaping of my thinking. There have been many different theories of the nature of thinking and its powers, but it is clear that a significant portion of our ongoing conscious states involves a steady flow of thinking.

Imagination is having (or creating) perceptual-like conscious images (including visual, auditory, tactual, and olfactory images) without the need for any presently existing perceptual reality or physical stimulation provoking these images. We can imagine what is not present in the here and now; of particular note, we can imagine the future. Although a good deal of our conscious imagery is derived from perceptual experiences, imagination is able to invent and to some degree transcend the particulars of our perceptual experiences. Imagination (as well as thinking) notably comes into play during the creation of fiction, art, and music. The capacity for expansive and flexible imagination varies significantly among humans; imagination, like thinking, is a skill that can be cultivated and developed and defines the possibility space and cognitive freedom of the human mind. A highly developed imagination is critical to *creativity* in many spheres of human endeavor.

Although imagination (as well as thinking) is frequently experienced as an active and volitional creation, both images and thoughts can also be experienced as intrusive and outside our control; images and thoughts can seem as if they just “pop” into our consciousness.

Thinking and imagination are interactive with other forms of consciousness. Within the normal flow of our consciousness we are almost continuously thinking and imagining, often in response to what we are perceiving. We interpret what we perceive

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<sup>12</sup> See Chapter Nine this volume and Lombardo, *Future Consciousness*, Chapter 15.

through our thinking and imagination. Moreover, our thinking and imagination also frequently serves as a process for articulating and at times revising our motives and goals; at least to some degree, through thinking we develop and articulate our values, ethics, and ideals. As such, thinking and imagining also structure our motivational states and values and guide and direct our purposeful behavior. Although not all motivational consciousness possesses a thinking component, frequently it does. Often what we desire is a result of what we think.

Further, as an integral and regular part of our thinking and imagination, we experience various memories that inform and structure our thinking. We may, of course, at times simply engage in free flowing recollections of the past, but even then, such experienced memories invariably provoke various thoughts and sequences of thoughts. Memories, thoughts, and images weave together in the flow of consciousness.

Although emotion and feeling is often contrasted with thought (ideas and reasoning), emotion and thought frequently interweave together in our consciousness. What we feel affects what we think and what we think affects what we feel. Indeed, emotion and thought are routinely simply different features of the same conscious states. Of course, at times we may experience emotions without any apparent concurrent conscious thoughts, and conversely experience series of thoughts without any apparent emotional accompaniment, yet it seems to me that introspectively it appears that the bulk of the flow of consciousness is a series of integrated thought-emotions/feelings.

### **Insight and Intuition**

Often contrasted with the sequential process of thinking, the experience of *insight* or some similarly described process of holistic conscious understanding is frequently listed as a major component of consciousness. Treating insight and *intuition* as basically the same process, we often, if not frequently, experience sudden and holistic apprehensions regarding features of reality or schemes of ideas we are pondering. Instead of arriving at conclusions and beliefs through the step by step and piecemeal (sequential-analytic) process of thinking, in insight or intuition the whole experienced understanding of some reality or constellation of ideas appears in consciousness all at once. If thinking, in so far as it is verbalized sequences of states of consciousness has an auditory quality—a “talking to oneself”—then insight and intuition frequently have a visual quality, in so far as “seeing” the whole reality all at once. The insight/holistic versus sequential/analytic forms of consciousness has been proposed as a basic contrast between Eastern and Western modes of understanding, as well as right hemispheric brain versus left hemispheric brain modes of consciousness. Still the contrast between sequential thinking and instantaneous insight is a relative one. Thinking can be integrative or synthetic, as well as analytical, and one can have a connected series of insights, one following on the next, which is, in essence, a form thinking as well. In fact, what we experience as thinking is usually an ongoing mixture of sequential thoughts and insights. Insightful or holistic states of consciousness has been postulated as an essential feature in creative thinking and understanding.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Lombardo, *Future Consciousness*, Chapter Sixteen.

## Temporal Consciousness: Historical and Future Consciousness

A key holistic feature of consciousness is its temporal reality, and our awareness and understanding of this experiential temporal reality, as well as the general temporal structure of the world and the universe.

The content of consciousness—of perceptions, feelings, memories, and thoughts, etc.—transforms over time. There is a temporal structure and flow to consciousness. We experience a psychological arrow of time, with the flow of events moving away from the past into the present and toward the future. Our experience of time divides into a three-fold distinction between past, present, and future, but this three-fold experiential separation is not absolute and totally clear-cut.

As described at length earlier, our conscious present is contextualized by both memory (experiences about the past) and anticipation (thoughts and images about the future). What we experience within the conscious flow is informed and structured by both historical and future consciousness. We understand the present relative to our learning and memories of the past and our expectations of what may come in subsequent moments of our lives. Hence, as part of the integrative and holistic reality of consciousness, we are perpetually framing and interpreting our experiences in an expanded temporal perspective—of past and future—that transcends and envelops the present. The temporal reach and framework of consciousness extends into the past and the future.

The narrative feature of consciousness embodies a temporal dimension and temporal sequence, connecting together events of the past with both present circumstances and potential future realities.

Human consciousness has created general theories of the nature and structure of time, including both linear and circular theories. Such theories have provided general frameworks for understanding both the past and the future and the flow of time.

*Historical and future consciousness* are connected together in human experience. We anticipate the future based on our understanding of the past (our historical consciousness.) Our historical consciousness has significantly expanded and enriched through our evolutionary history, thus informing and further empowering our future consciousness.<sup>14</sup>

Future consciousness and its evolutionary development has been described in great detail throughout this book, and I have published an entire book plus numerous articles on this topic. I have proposed that future consciousness—which is an holistic form of consciousness, involving emotion, motivation, thought, imagination, and other conscious processes—is the most distinctively empowering mode of human consciousness. Future consciousness makes purposeful evolution possible. A central dimension in a vision of the preferable future evolution of consciousness is the enhancement of future consciousness.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> See Chapter Seven in this volume.

<sup>15</sup> Lombardo, *Future Consciousness and Wisdom, Consciousness and the Future*. See also Chapter Two in this volume.

*Foresight* and *anticipation* are sub-sets of future consciousness. Imagining (or envisioning) the future is generally referred to as foresight, although the term “foresight” usually entails both imagination and thinking about the future. The capacity to anticipate (or expect or predict) the future, which is continuously being exercised in human consciousness, also involves both thinking and imagination.

### **Normative Consciousness: Values**

At least regarding human consciousness, another key holistic feature of experience is the relatively connected collection of various ideals, values, and ethical-moral principles that form the basis for guiding and evaluating our conscious states and behavior. Humans purposefully direct their behavior and states of consciousness, and the *values* and *ideals* we embrace provide the preferable (or desirable) directions and goals within our lives.

As a pervasive and basic feature of human existence, human consciousness contains a *normative* dimension—of values and ideals—a sense of what is best and what should or ought to be. When we perceive, feel, and think we routinely engage in normative evaluation, judging ourselves, others, and reality in general in terms of values and ideals.

Everyone has values. Values are the principles, ideals, or standards that people use to direct their behavior; values are what people strive to realize in their lives. Further, values are the standards we use in making judgments about what is important in life and what is right or wrong in human behavior. We judge ourselves and others in terms of our values. Our values identify what is preferable and desirable for us.

Values and ideals as normative features of human consciousness are a big part of our motivational consciousness; we frequently purposefully think and behave in ways to exercise and/or achieve our values and ideals. Humans have developed and continue to evolve values and ideals for all spheres of human life, from environmental, political, and social practices to religious, personal, and epistemological dimensions of our existence. When we consider the future purposeful evolution of humanity, a central and essential issue is what ideals and values should we aspire toward in the future? Our values and ideals define what we believe is the preferable direction for our conscious evolution.<sup>16</sup>

### **Normative Consciousness: Ethics**

One centrally important form of normative consciousness is ethical consciousness. *Ethics* can be defined as the study and practice of what is good, what is moral, and what is best. In everyday life, ethics is an ongoing issue, for we are repeatedly making decisions based upon what we determine to be the best thing to do in normal life activities. Throughout human history many different theories of ethics have been developed, attempting to articulate what is best or good, why it is best or good, and

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<sup>16</sup> See, “Ethical Character Development and Personal and Academic Excellence” in Lombardo, *Wisdom, Consciousness, and the Future*, pp. 280-338, for an in-depth discussion of values, ideals, and ethics.

how we should live our lives in accordance with the ethical values proposed in the theory. Different theories highlight different conscious processes, such as thinking, emotion, and interpersonal-social awareness, in articulating preferred ethical values and practices; different cultures highlight different values. Ethical theories and ethical consciousness are often associated with various perspectives on human well-being, the assumption being that what is ethically good is what generates human well-being.

Visions of the preferable future of humanity and human consciousness may or may not highlight the ethical dimension of human life and human experience, but it seems to me that the preferable future evolution of our ethical consciousness is an absolutely central concern in thinking out of preferable and purposeful future evolution of consciousness. Ethical consciousness is a big part of wisdom.<sup>17</sup>

### **Normative Consciousness: Character Virtues**

One type of ethical theory, found in both Eastern and Western history, is the virtue theory of ethics.

*Virtues* are holistic and integrative capacities of consciousness involving (habits of) behavior, personality disposition, self-identity, thought, values, and desire. Virtues are character traits, relatively constant dispositions of consciousness and behavior, which are manifested across situational or environmental variability. As a character trait, a virtue is an expression of both a desire and a habit.

Virtues are understood as esteemed character traits that embody excellence and positive values across the varied aspects of human consciousness and behavior. Different cultures have identified different character traits as the most esteemed and laudable, but there is also a good deal of overlap among these different cultural perspectives.

The concept of character virtues provides a general framework for understanding the normative ethical dimension of consciousness; character virtues provide a way to delineate and describe what it means to be ethical. The character virtue theory provides a conceptual framework for personifying ethics, in that character virtues are psychological features of individuated conscious human beings.<sup>18</sup> The theory of character virtues has been applied to normative theories of good thinking and theories of psychological well-being and mental health.

### **Normative Consciousness: Aesthetics**

Humans experience beauty. Humans have both *aesthetic* and *artistic* consciousness. We are conscious of beauty, in relative degrees of realization, in both nature and human artifacts and works of art, in the latter case, a sense of beauty guiding the creation of the art and artifacts. Beauty, like ethics, is a normative dimension of consciousness; we experience and judge the aesthetics of a reality in terms of what we believe is more or less beautiful, often involving standards of excellence. Consciousness of beauty can

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<sup>17</sup> See Chapter Eleven this volume.

<sup>18</sup> See Chapter Twelve this volume.

also be intuitive and insightful without any conscious deliberation; we can intuitively perceive the beauty of things, whether of flowers or symphonies. The experience of beauty frequently involves a synthesis of perceptual, emotional, and thinking elements and processes. It could be argued that the experience of beauty is psychologically nourishing and elevating, and an essential feature of human happiness and well-being. Any viable and comprehensive approach to the future evolution of consciousness needs to include an evolving aesthetic consciousness and sense of beauty.<sup>19</sup>

### **Normative Consciousness: Knowledge**

*Knowledge* comes in many forms, from perceptual and behavioral knowledge to abstract and theoretical knowledge. Humans possess a huge number and variety of beliefs that they think make up the content of their knowledge about life, the universe, and everything. Knowledge can, in part, be described as beliefs, or states of understanding that correctly identify actual states of affair in reality. False beliefs and hallucinations are not, by this description, states of knowledge. But there is also practical knowledge, which refers to the capacity to competently execute some type of action or behavior.

Given the above description of knowledge, it is evident that knowledge is a normative concept. What criteria do we use in determining whether a belief (or theory) constitutes knowledge, instead of false or mistaken beliefs? Knowledge claims require evaluation for determining their credibility and validity.

Within the history of human thought numerous theories have developed regarding how best to gain knowledge and what criteria should be used in evaluating knowledge claims. *Epistemology*, as a branch of philosophy, is the study of the nature of knowledge, how best to acquire it, and how best to assess our beliefs and knowledge claims about reality. Epistemology is a normative discipline in that principles and ideals for knowledge acquisition and the evaluation of beliefs is integral to its nature and practice.

Just as with ethical consciousness, in which we attempt to determine what is good and best in states of consciousness and behavior, epistemic consciousness is a normative form of consciousness as well in which standards and ideals are applied to both how to best acquire knowledge and how best to evaluate our beliefs.

Humans develop conceptual-theoretical frameworks for making sense of the world and themselves. Reality is interpreted and understood in terms of such conceptual-theoretical frameworks of understanding, but such frameworks are inherently perspectival and relative to a mental point of view. Yet motivated by numerous psychological factors, we ideally search for deeper, increasingly more veridical ways to understand ourselves and the world.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Lombardo, *Future Consciousness*, pp. 632-639.

<sup>20</sup> It clearly seems to be the case that humans, in various circumstances, also resist digging deeper into understanding the nature of reality, defending and protecting their current beliefs and mindset against the possibility of revision and change.

## **Normative Consciousness: Psychological Well-Being**

*Psychological well-being* (or mental health) is a holistic concept, incorporating many basic conscious components and processes, such as emotion, motivation, thinking, purposeful behavior, and self-identity. Psychological well-being is also a normative concept, involving various criteria, standards, or ideals of psychological functioning and states of consciousness for distinguishing between psychological well-being and psychological disorders and problems. There are many different specifically identified psychological disorders, from phobias and anxiety disorders to emotional/mood disorders and thought/psychotic disorders, but in most cases the conscious effects of psychological well-being versus psychological disorder permeate across multiple dimensions of consciousness impacting the entire Gestalt of experience and behavior.

There have been numerous theories of both psychological well-being and psychological disorders, of the nature of each and what are the primary causes of each. Although theories and approaches to psychological disorders have received the greatest amount of public attention, such as Freud's views, there is a diverse and huge body of work addressing the nature and causes of psychological well-being. Maslow, Rogers, and positive psychologists have all articulated extensive in-depth visions of psychological well-being, including psychological flourishing. As noted in this volume, the various theories of character virtues—as normative ethical visions—have frequently proposed that psychological well-being is intimately connected with living a life strongly influenced by heightened character virtues.

Any viable and comprehensive approach to the preferable future evolution of consciousness needs to highlight the central importance of purposefully evolving our psychological well-being. Many of the proposed weaknesses and failings in contemporary human consciousness are, in fact, deficiencies in psychological well-being.

## **The Conscious Self**

Another key feature of consciousness is the ongoing experience of a *self* within the flow of consciousness. I earlier stated that human consciousness is experienced and manifested as personified. Human consciousness appears intrinsically tied to a unique person or self that possesses consciousness. I also proposed that the experience and reality of the self begins in our proprioceptual awareness of the body. The “me,” to begin with, is the “me” of my body, as situated and configured within the ambience of the world. Moreover, our experience is that it is the conscious self that perceives, purposefully behaves, feels, desires, thinks, and imagines; the self is the experienced agent and center of all the major processes in consciousness. The conscious self is experienced and manifested as both the source and the directing force of consciousness. The conscious self is the experienced integration of our multi-faceted consciousness.

Although the self begins at a sensory-proprioceptual level, with the ongoing accumulation of memories and the emergence of thought and imagination, the self enriches and expands. Our experience of our self goes beyond basic bodily awareness. With an increasing sense of temporal continuity and personal history, the

self evolves into a thinker and a self-aware participant in a collective of other conscious selves.

All humans possess a conscious sense of self (of self-awareness) and exhibit the capacity, to various degrees, to reflect upon and guide the ongoing development of their conscious self-identity, even to the point of fundamental self-transcendence (breaking out of the current constraints of the existing self-identity). Humans can and routinely do self-reflect, self-evaluate, and attempt to improve upon who they are; humans attempt to various degrees to self-consciously and self-directionally self-evolve. The conscious self guides and directs, self-reflectively, its future. All in all, the self evolves as a bootstrap phenomenon, creating and recreating its own identity.

As explained in depth in previous sections, the experience and understanding of our self, beginning at the proprioceptual level, is framed ecologically. We are aware of our self in relationship to the environment in which we exist. Although the self is experienced at the center of consciousness, it is a relational (or relative) center set in the context of our awareness of the world. We experience our self as engaging with and realizing its purposes and goals in the context of the environment.

A key feature of conscious self-identity is the *personal narrative*. We conceptualize and understand ourselves in terms of personal narratives. Layered upon and transcending proprioceptual self-identity, humans drawing upon memories, and utilizing the powers of thinking and imagination, create stories about themselves and who they are. Indeed, in the ongoing flow of consciousness, there is regular self-narration regarding our current experiences, our reactions to events, and our purposeful actions and the goals we are attempting to realize. As self-conscious commentators on the experience of our lives, we narrate, to various degrees, what is happening to us and what it means. Our experience of our self is powerfully informed and enriched through our personal narratives. Our sense of our past self—who we were—and of our future self—who we may become—is conceptualized and imagined in terms of past and future personal narratives.

Given the evolutionary (or developmental) nature of the self and self-awareness, the conscious self should not be seen as some absolutely stable reality throughout a person's life. Rather the self is a combination of both stability and change. We experience both continuity and transformation in who we are. (In fact, our bodies are likewise a combination of both stability/continuity and change/transformation.) Indeed, depending on the person, and the particular issues and challenges confronting them, we engage in both efforts to preserve and protect our self-identity and to transform and change it. As noted above, humans, in general, regarding all spheres of their existence, demonstrate the complementary motives toward stability and change in their lives.

Central to the preferable purposeful future evolution of consciousness is the further heightening and strengthening of the conscious self.

## **Theories, World Views, Philosophies of Life, and Paradigms**

Humans organize concepts into theories, providing interpretive and integrative descriptions and explanations of the world and of themselves. A *theory* is a set of integrated concepts providing a framework for understanding, describing, and explaining dimensions or features of experienced reality. Theories provide organized

meaning. Theories identify general principles and deep patterns within reality. As integrated sets of connected concepts, theories guide our perceptual and behavioral engagement with the world.

A *world view* is the most general and encompassing theoretical framework in a person's consciousness, providing a set of ideas (concepts and beliefs) for making sense of and explaining the world and the universe as a whole. A world view hypothesizes deep universal principles, laws, and patterns of reality. A world view is a person's big picture of reality. World views are usually associated with *grand narratives*, the latter providing a storyline which explains how the "world," as it is understood within the world view, came to be the way it is, and often where the "world" is heading in the future. The cognitive expanse of a person's consciousness can be ascertained through their world view, which defines the limits of their conscious world.

The concept of a *philosophy of life* refers to a set of general beliefs and values a person embraces and attempts to live by that provides understanding, meaning, and purpose for the person. A philosophy of life contains both ideas/beliefs to explain reality and practices/behaviors (or practical principles) aligned with those ideas/beliefs. A person's philosophy of life is invariably connected with a person's world view, the former a broader concept than the latter.

A *paradigm* is a psychologically more encompassing concept than a theory, world view, or philosophy of life. Not only do humans possess ideas and beliefs about the world, and values as well (their normative consciousness), they live their lives—a set of characteristic behaviors—in accordance with such ideas, values, and beliefs, and interact with and interpret the world through them; different paradigms, in fact, are associated with different environmental (including technological and social) conditions. This totality of these connected factors is a paradigm.

A *paradigm of consciousness* is a psychological and ecological integrative Gestalt of consciousness, pulling together thoughts, emotions, goals, values, behaviors, and supportive environmental factors. A paradigm of consciousness provides its advocates and practitioners of the paradigm with meaning and purpose in their lives.

The theories of reality and the world view and philosophy of life that a person embraces may be clearly articulated or vague and ill-formed, or often somewhere in between; a person may subscribe to beliefs and values that are consistent with each other or contradictory. Theories, world views, and philosophies may or may not transform and evolve throughout a person's conscious life, although some level of developmental change for all these conscious frameworks of understanding undoubtedly occurs within all conscious humans throughout their lives. A person can operate in more than one paradigm of consciousness for different spheres of their life, for example, between professional and personal spheres.

All these integrative forms of consciousness significantly influence the overall content and flow of experience; as such, it seems to me that a key determining factor in the future evolution of consciousness is a significant evolutionary transformation in these integrative conscious realities. Our theories, world views, philosophies, and paradigms of consciousness need to evolve.

## **Interpersonal Consciousness**

We are not only conscious of our selves and the physical environment around us, but we are conscious of other conscious selves. Indeed we are conscious of the consciousness of others. Humans (but I would include other animals as well) engage in conscious resonance and interaction with each other. I would describe this conscious reality as *interpersonal consciousness*, and it can include both experiences of mutual understanding and mutual affection, and mutual antagonism and dislike. A good part of our waking life as humans involves complex episodes of interpersonal consciousness between our self and numerous and varied other conscious selves. Interpersonal consciousness is one key way in which the reality of consciousness reaches out into the environment and interfaces with it. Social theorists have argued that given the intense and necessary period of extended socialization in the development of human consciousness, our individuated conscious self only emerges if there is sustained and intimate social interaction. I would say there is an essential reciprocity between the conscious self and interpersonal consciousness; each drives the development of the other. Given that many of our current human problems and challenges revolve around difficulties and failings at an interpersonal level, it would stand to reason that one extremely important preferable direction for our future evolution is the further evolution of our interpersonal consciousness.

### **Social-Cultural Consciousness**

It is a common argument that humanity needs to evolve its *collective consciousness*. The vast bulk of humanity exists—that is carries on its characteristic ways of life—within social groups and societies. Undoubtedly, without the complex social reality in which, as individuals, we are embedded, we would not be able to realize the individual psychological development we have achieved. We are social creatures, and within any social group, large or small, there are characteristic ways of behaving and thinking and characteristic sets of values and ideals for that group. We belong to and psychologically reflect the culture (or cultures) of the social group(s) in which we live. But it seems to me that groups do not possess consciousness; individuals possess consciousness. In interpersonal interaction and resonance I believe it is correct to say that a (partially) unified and integrative state of consciousness can be realized, but for a group, even one that exhibits common mindsets and behaviors among its members, consciousness resides in the individual members.<sup>21</sup>

Still, if we are to consider the future evolution of consciousness, then clearly the similar and common mindsets and types of behavior across members of different groups are an area to consider in speculating on the preferable evolution of human consciousness. What characteristic patterns of consciousness among different current social groups need to evolve? What theories, world views, philosophies, and paradigms shared among members of a social group should transform and evolve? As often suggested, current (and past) human consciousness as manifested in the

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<sup>21</sup> It is quite conceivable that with highly sophisticated technological connections between individual humans—perhaps hooked into the brains and nervous systems—we could realize an integrated collective consciousness among the individuals connected through the technology.

collective behavior of groups is too divisive, oppositional, and aggressive without there being much of a sense of a unified collective human reality.

Regarding the social reality of human consciousness, it is quite evident that humans at an individual level of consciousness possess a deep and complex awareness of living within social groups and organizations, with characteristic norms and values, and interacting with other conscious individuals as integral features of their conscious existence. As individuals we are highly conscious of the beliefs, values, norms, and philosophies of life of the social groups to which we belong; indeed, we have beliefs regarding the collective mindsets and forms of behavior of other groups besides our own. In this sense, we all possess *social consciousness*, which indeed is another important sphere of consciousness to consider in thinking about the future evolution of consciousness.

### **Technological Consciousness**

Technological consciousness involves all those features of consciousness concerned with creating, understanding, operating, and interacting with technologies. Human technological consciousness has been evolving throughout history and in all probability will continue to evolve in the future.

Technology is a creation of future consciousness and purposeful evolution, in so far as technologies are created to achieve or facilitate some intentional effect (a future goal) in the environment or ourselves. Technology both enhances various conscious capacities, including behaviors and modes of perception and cognition, and impacts and transforms both the social and natural environment. Contemporary human consciousness exists and functions within a highly technologically transformed environment.

Technological consciousness is an integral and essential dimension of human consciousness. Since the development of the earliest tools, humans have been evolving as an ever more complex functional synthesis of the biological-psychological-social and the technological. As noted above, technologies are frequently developed to enhance basic human abilities and a significant portion of our interactions with the world and other humans is technologically mediated. Humans are evolving conscious cyborgs.

We can see technology as either beneficial or destructive to human consciousness and its further evolution. Perhaps we view our contemporary emphasis on technological development as the key to a positive future as misguided if not counter-productive. But based on a philosophy of reciprocity between consciousness and physical reality, it seems to me that technological evolution and the evolution of human consciousness are intimately connected together. As such, even if we wish to place the emphasis on the evolution of consciousness as of central importance in creating a positive future—the view expressed in this book—we need to incorporate technological evolution and our relationship with technology into the picture. How can technology be guided to serve the evolution of consciousness? What type of technological consciousness will best serve humanity, life, and the earth at large in the future?

### **Naturalistic-Ecological Consciousness**

Human conscious selves, to various degrees, are conscious of and interactive with their natural environments. Both individual conscious selves and social groups and societies exist within a natural environment, having evolved and developed within nature. Indeed, various basic conditions of nature are necessarily coupled with the emergence and development of both individuals and human groups and societies, providing resources and affordances for our conscious ways of life.

Yet due to the level of “isolation” from nature generated by modern technologically supported societies—we are walled away—contemporary individual conscious selves are to various degrees relatively oblivious to the natural environment, including the immense plethora of other living forms, which supports our existence. To various degrees we do not sufficiently appreciate our interdependency with the natural world. Our naturalistic-ecological consciousness is impoverished. Collectively, a good portion of humanity manifests a high level of egocentric consciousness concerning the natural environment in which we exist. Indeed a number of the most serious problems facing contemporary humanity are due to a significant deficiency in understanding and appreciating the importance of nature and the environment in supporting human existence.

In response to such deficiencies in naturalistic consciousness—in mindset, values, and behavior—environmental ethics has emerged as a powerful voice in contemporary philosophy and culture. We need to evolve an enhanced ethical consciousness regarding our understanding and interactions with the environment.

*Naturalistic-ecological consciousness* can conceptualize nature as either a relatively stable reality, or a transforming evolving reality, or some combination of the two perspectives. The truth is that nature is not an entirely stable reality, but over time transforms and evolves. Consequently, the dynamic interactive relationship between human society and nature, and human consciousness of nature, have been and will continue into the future to be transforming realities. In my view, an informed and credible naturalistic-ecological consciousness needs to be evolutionary in its understanding of nature.

## **Planetary Consciousness**

Planetary consciousness is a complex, and in various ways, integrative mode of consciousness, drawing together our social, naturalistic/ecological, and technological consciousness. Our planet is an integrative and dynamic reality involving human societies (and cultures), a complex and ubiquitous interactive web of life forms, geometerological processes and natural conditions on the earth, and an intricate technological system embedded within this multi-faceted reality.

Planetary consciousness encompasses: our understanding (and beliefs) regarding all these dimensions of our existence and their interactive relationship with each other; our values and normative visions regarding our future planetary reality; and any conscious behaviors directed toward influencing our planetary reality. Part of our planetary consciousness consists of our historical consciousness of the evolution of the planet, encompassing all the above dimensions. Planetary consciousness is part of our “big

picture” understanding of human existence—our world view—in so far humans are embedded in and have evolved within a planetary reality.

An argument, which goes back at least as far as the philosophical writings of H.G. Wells, is that due to nationalist and cultural divisions in our social consciousness and modes of behavior, humanity as a whole has not been able to evolve a unified planetary consciousness. We have not been able to collectively unite in an appreciation that we all exist on the same planet and planetary level concerns are at least as important, if not more so, than our national, cultural, and local concerns. In so far as we are all on the same planet—our home and common environment—we are all in it together in creating a positive future.

### **Cosmic Consciousness**

*Cosmic consciousness* is the most expansive and encompassing framework of understanding within consciousness. Cosmic consciousness includes our beliefs and understanding of the entirety of the universe (or existence), and beliefs and theories we hold regarding our place (individually and species-wide) in the universe. Cosmic consciousness strongly affects our sense of self-identity and purpose in life. Cosmic consciousness is often informed by cosmic narratives—stories which describe the origin, purpose, meaning, and future developmental direction of the universe. Cosmic narratives often have strong dramatic features, influencing human emotion. Cosmic consciousness is the asymptote of “big picture” thinking, often provoking such emotions as awe and wonder.

As I proposed in the opening chapter, consciousness needs to be understood within the cosmic big picture of reality. That is, a credible and realistic vision of consciousness requires a credible and realistic cosmic consciousness. How does consciousness fit into the universe? Answers to this question are part of our general cosmic consciousness. In the first three chapters I outlined a theory of the cosmos—an evolutionary Taoist vision—that I proposed as a credible and realistic framework to inform and inspire our cosmic consciousness.

Mythologies, religions, philosophies, and scientific theories throughout history have informed our cosmic consciousness, providing answers to the big questions of existence. More recently, science fiction, as a mode of speculative narrative literature, has offered a variety of different perspectives that have contributed to the further evolution of our cosmic consciousness.

In so far as I see our current problems as fundamentally a result of deficiencies and weaknesses in consciousness, and I see our current collective state of consciousness as strongly influenced by our big picture thinking on reality—our cosmic consciousness—it seems to me that our cosmic consciousness is a key sphere of consciousness to purposefully evolve in the future.

### **Enlightenment and Wisdom**

*Enlightenment* is a state of consciousness that has been a central aspiration in many philosophies, religions, and forms of spirituality. It is an envisioned higher state of consciousness that many sages, in their own personal self-evolution, have aspired

toward. Collective enlightenment has been proposed as a key ideal that humanity should realize in our future purposeful evolution. Enlightenment has been described and understood as an immersion into or a realization of a cosmic level of consciousness, of a apprehension of or identification with a pervasive universal consciousness. (See the previous review of theories of consciousness.) Although the term “enlightenment” has frequently been used to refer to an absolute state of experience or knowledge (comprehending the universe or existence as a whole), I view enlightenment as a deeply moving holistic insight (or intuition), encompassing some expansive territory or important sphere of reality, of which a person can have many such experiences throughout their lives. Since I view evolution, and in particular, the evolution of knowledge, as open-ended and indeterminately incomplete, there can be no asymptote to enlightenment. We can never truly and totally comprehend the whole of existence. Still, it is important to pursue enlightenment (in some sense) as an evolutionary trajectory in life.<sup>22</sup>

*Wisdom* is a holistic character virtue involving the integration of numerous conscious processes—cognitive, affective, motivational, and normative. I see the experience of enlightenment as an important step in the development of wisdom. I see the holistic capacity and character virtue of wisdom as the highest expression of future consciousness and the central ideal to aspire toward in the purposeful future evolution of consciousness.

I describe wisdom as the highest expression of self-development and involving an expansive synthesis of temporal consciousness. It is the personally internalized, continually evolving understanding of and fascination with both the big-picture and personal dimensions of life, and what is ethical (or good), and the desire and creative capacity to apply this understanding to enhance the well-being of life, both for oneself and others.

Wisdom is a credible and compelling ideal regarding the preferable evolution of consciousness because:

- Wisdom integrates epistemic normative consciousness and ethical normative consciousness—it unites knowledge and ethics.
- Wisdom is ecological, integrating knowledge and ethics with action and impact on the world.
- Wisdom is essential to holistic psychological well-being.
- Wisdom integrates knowledge and the intellect with emotion and motivational goals.
- Wisdom integrates historical and future consciousness.
- Wisdom is self-reflective, facilitating transcendence of consciousness.
- Wisdom is the means of self-development and the goal of self-development. The pursuit of wisdom facilitates the development of a wise self.
- Wisdom provides a pathway for guiding the development of technology.
- Wisdom provides a credible central goal of education in the future.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> See Chapter Twelve this volume and Lombardo, *Future Consciousness*, pp. 537-544.

<sup>23</sup> See Chapter Twelve this volume and Lombardo, *Future Consciousness*, Chapter Eighteen.

## **A Conceptual Framework of Polarities for Understanding the Preferable Evolution of Consciousness**

In considering the diverse ways in which the multi-faceted nature of consciousness should preferably evolve, there are (at the very least) two different, but complementary ways to come at the issue: We can consider the contemporary failings, weaknesses, and areas in need of significant improvement in consciousness, and define our preferable evolutionary trajectory as either minimizing or eliminating these deficits of consciousness; or we can identify a set of positive ideals and enhanced capacities in the preferable evolution of consciousness, providing a set of positive goals toward which we should strive to realize in our evolutionary trajectory. The first approach is analogous to negative motivation—we move/are motivated toward the elimination (or reduction) of some state—whereas the second approach is analogous to positive motivation—we move/are motivated toward the achievement (or enhancement) of some desirable state. Both perspectives have value in thinking about the preferable evolution of consciousness.

I include below compilations identifying both a set of deficiencies and failings and a set of positive goals and aspirations. To a great degree the two lists align as a matched series of oppositional pairs, in each case a deficit having an opposing ideal. Still, though, the two lists, as just noted, correspond with two different mindsets on how to consciously approach the preferable future: Do we see the ideal future as the elimination of problems, or do we view the ideal future as aspiring toward and approaching a positive state? As stated above, I think both perspectives have value. But using a medical-psychotherapeutic metaphor, the first perspective aligns with the elimination of disease or malady, whereas the second mindset aligns with the realization of health and well-being.

All in all, in thinking out and acting upon preferable directions for the future it is valuable (motivationally and cognitively) to keep both perspectives simultaneously in mind: As such we define a *preferable trajectory* from the present into the preferable future as moving from point A (present failings) to point B (future strengths). We should concurrently keep in mind what we are attempting to move away from and what are we attempting to move toward.

To recall, one of my central theses introduced early in the book was that it is our failings and weaknesses in consciousness that are centrally responsible for our contemporary problems and challenges in the world at large, whether they be physical-environmental or psycho-social problems. Hence, the list of deficiencies and failings provides an identification of what I propose are the central causes of our contemporary problems and challenges, and the list of positive future ideals identifies what I think are the key solutions to our current difficulties.

Also, to note, although I provide in the subsequent final chapter an outline of the preferable future narrative and paradigm of consciousness of the Third Foundation, the two lists provided below, contribute analytical richness and detail to the visioning narrative and paradigm of the Third Foundation. The two lists identify on one hand the flaws and weaknesses in consciousness that the Third Foundation should attempt to counter-act and eliminate, and on the other hand, regarding the positive list, the set of ideals for the preferable evolution of consciousness provide specific goals that the

Third Foundation should aspire toward realizing in its own community and paradigm of consciousness and the population at large.

Each of the two sets (of the negative and positive) can be grouped into an identical array of general categories. These general categories are:

- General Philosophy (Paradigm of Consciousness) of Life and Existence
- Holistic Qualities of Consciousness
- Sensory-Perceptual-Proprioceptual Consciousness
- Emotion and Motivation
- Cognition (Learning, Memory, Conceptualization, Imagination, Thinking, Insight, Knowledge, and Theories/World Views)
- Normative Consciousness: Values and Ethical and Aesthetic Consciousness
- The Self
- Conscious Well-Being and Mental Health
- Interpersonal and Social Consciousness
- Technological Consciousness
- Environmental-Naturalistic and Planetary Consciousness
- Cosmic Consciousness and Wisdom

As a prelude to presenting these two lists, I should note that each list is very detailed and extensive. This wide and intricate array of deficiencies and ideals is a reflection of the complexity of consciousness and the multi-faceted scope of processes and capacities within consciousness. Within the intricate territory of our conscious reality there are numerous facets and features that can and should be evolved and improved upon. My intent in creating such expansive lists of weaknesses and ideals is to provide a sufficiently comprehensive and nuanced overview to do justice to the broad and rich topic of evolving our consciousness. The extensive lists provide a huge and diverse set of opportunities for action and progress.

Given the need for sufficient time and attention to effectively address individual failings or realize notable improvement toward the different conscious ideals, it is unrealistic to suppose that any individual (in our contemporary world) could competently work on the total array of items in these lists within any manageable period of time. In reviewing through the lists (whether of failings or ideals), different readers will probably find different items that seem particularly relevant and important for their own personal development. Different readers will probably identify different failings and different ideals that especially resonate with their own personal assessments or aspirations. It is quite understandable and reasonable to focus upon those items that seem most valuable and significant in one's own personal evolution.

Still my vision is that in considering humanity as an immense collective whole (or plurality) and conceptualizing the evolution of consciousness as a long term process, all the items on the list can be effectively addressed by the collective of humanity over the long run. The lists provide both direction for individuals within individual life-spans and direction for humanity collectively in the long term. The mass effect of individual progressive journeys—focusing upon different problems and goals—will be to collectively generate progress in the total array of deficiencies to rectify and ideals to be realized within human consciousness. I do think that humanity as a whole—

especially as extending into the long term future—can and should address all the items on both lists, progressively rectifying all the failings and realizing all the ideals.

The items within either the list of failings or the list of ideals are in numerous ways interconnected. Progress on one item will generate progress on other items. Since consciousness is a holistic reality, with innumerable interdependencies among different capacities and processes, evolving one facet will ripple out, affecting various other features of consciousness. This interactivity of progress applies both to individual conscious evolution and collective conscious evolution. Of particular note, although individuals are undoubtedly constrained in realistic time and energy to address the huge array of items on these lists, due to the holistic interconnections of conscious realities, individuals will probably find that features of their consciousness evolve without directly addressing these features due to efforts they make in other spheres of their conscious evolution.

Another key point to bring up before presenting the lists is that it is neither the intent nor the expectation in presenting these weaknesses and ideals to argue for or attempt to facilitate some uniform ideal human or form of consciousness. As a preferable direction for the future, I see the diversity of human (and other types of) consciousness increasing rather than diminishing. Although there are numerous features of human existence that enforce (or reinforce) conformity, the overall evolutionary trend I believe should be toward greater individuality. In fact, I see our current level of conscious evolution, with all its failings and weaknesses, as suffocating and repressing the range of individuated conscious human beings. The ideals presented below should have the effect of amplifying diversity of consciousness. In my view, increasing diversity in consciousness is a preferable evolutionary trajectory allowing for more creative and imaginative expressions of consciousness, thus enhancing the power of evolvability in consciousness.

All in all, it makes sense to me that the community of the Third Foundation, as a social force of individuals dedicated to the purposeful evolution of consciousness, will generate and embrace an evolving diversity of individuated conscious beings to maximize its evolutionary impact, as well as in creating the most consciously stimulating reality for its participants.

One final point about the lists is that it is almost certainly the case that various readers, upon examining the weaknesses and ideals I propose below, will think of other items not included in my compilations that they believe are very important and should also be included. I am open to suggested additions; the lists are evolutionary and not static.

## **Present Weaknesses and Future Ideals of Consciousness**

For each successive dimension of consciousness identified below, first the proposed weaknesses are described and then the proposed ideals are described.

### **General Philosophy (Paradigm of Consciousness) of Life and Existence**

#### **Weaknesses**

- A world view and philosophy of understanding reality, including human reality, as stable and set, rather than transformative and evolutionary - belief in the stability of nature - fear of change - rejecting the theory of cosmic evolution - paradigm of consciousness that emphasizes and values the stability (or even regression) of human consciousness and human existence in general
- A resistance to (if not rejection of) purposeful evolution - lack of desire, if not defensive opposition, to evolve consciousness coupled with an inability and lack of know-how for evolving consciousness - belief in the value of the status quo - belief that humanity either is unable to transform, or should not attempt to transform reality and/or human nature (the “Frankenstein fear”) - lack of acknowledgement of purposeful evolution in the history of humanity - resistance/rejection of the pursuit of evolvability
- Predominance of regressive and/or stability motivation over growth and evolution
  - Tradition-bound beliefs and thinking - resistance to transformation and progress in human learning/understanding/consciousness
- Materialism - gadgets and material well-being predominantly (or exclusively) valued over conscious development and psychological well-being (materialism as the explanation and solution to life) - techno-optimism (technology will solve all of life’s challenges/problems)
  - Techno-dependency - allowing for/surrendering to the increasing control of consciousness/life through physical technology
  - Minimization of the value of the evolution of consciousness and the conscious self
- Idealism - Devaluing, if not rejecting the physical (and often temporal) reality of human existence - belief (with consequent behaviors) in a non-physical absolute transcendent essence of human existence - belief in a non-temporal non-physical transcendent origin of existence
- Dualism - The belief that there exist two independent and qualitatively different spheres of reality: Spirit or consciousness versus physical reality

## **Ideals**

- Although acknowledging the reality and significance of stability in the cosmos and human existence, a world view and philosophy of understanding reality and nature, including human reality, as evolutionary - embracing the reality and value of change - embracing the theory of cosmic evolution
- Although acknowledging and valuing tradition and a level of stability in life, the belief in and the pursuit of the purposeful evolution of the physical/natural environment, human reality, and consciousness - understanding the centrality of purposeful evolution in the history of humanity - desire and capacity to evolve consciousness - a paradigm of consciousness that embraces the purposeful and preferable evolution of consciousness
  - The pursuit of evolving the capacity for evolvability
- Although acknowledging stability motivation in human psychology, embracing growth motivation in life
  - Valuing tradition but building upon it rather than being locked into it

- A rejection of absolute materialism/physicalism - consciousness and human existence in general is not reducible (or simply derivative from) from physical reality
- The belief that the physical temporal realm is fundamentally real and not derivative from some transcendent/spiritual/conscious higher plane of existence - a rejection of idealism
- An over-arching philosophy that consciousness and human nature is necessarily and intimately connected with the natural physical-temporal universe - a rejection of ontological dualism
- A philosophy of reciprocity of consciousness and physical reality
  - While prioritizing the evolution of consciousness, the pursuit of the reciprocal evolution of consciousness and physical reality (inclusive of technology and the environment)
- Synthesizing evolution and reciprocity, embracing “evolutionary Taoism” as a philosophy and paradigm of consciousness

## **Holistic Qualities of Consciousness**

### **Weaknesses**

- Pronounced psychological imbalances and deficiencies in the holistic evolution of consciousness leading to destructive/non-constructive effects in conscious functioning and psychological well-being and flourishing
- Repetitious and habitual highly stable streams of consciousness, often dominating the flow of consciousness, which at times are experienced as psychologically unpleasant with the individual feeling unable to change or modify
- A limited range and complexity in the content and processes of consciousness without any notable increasing richness or complexity over time
- Minimal level of self-reflective consciousness reflecting an inability and/or unwillingness to consciously reflect upon the content or processes of one’s consciousness
- Chaotic consciousness involving muddle-headed and confused/confusing streams of consciousness
  - Fragmented and jumbled consciousness with a lack of integration and coherence
  - The inability to purposefully organize and focus one’s consciousness
- A petrification at traditional or standard developmental levels of consciousness across the individual lifespan with a lack of any new stages in the evolution of individual consciousness
- A narrow consciousness of perspective limited to the relative me-here-now, associated with diminished ecological/naturalistic, planetary, and cosmic consciousness
  - Egocentricity (self-centeredness and self-absorption) in consciousness that predominately focuses on the self and concerns and beliefs of the individual self
  - Irresponsible individualism, which involves states of consciousness and associated actions which disregard the ecological impact and the social impact on others in favor of individual rights and self-interests

- Excessive and/or defensive pride and vanity regarding the self and self-interests, overriding other values such as truth, justice, equality, cooperation and even one's own personal growth
- Excessive emphasis and idealization on the past to the exclusion of the future—a “good old days”/regression mentality with a diminished capacity and appreciation of future consciousness
- Presentism
  - Short-term narrow focus and emphasis on the present to the exclusion of the past and future
  - Quick fix short-term solutions to contemporary problems and challenges
  - Diminished long-term sustained attention and long-term pursuits involving a diminished capacity for tenacity and persistence (see also motivation below)
  - Minimal or diminished extended and focused connected sequences of thoughts
  - Short-term impulsivity
- The pre-dominate experience of non-creative and non-constructive consciousness associated with the experiences of floundering and pointlessness in life and a lack of “flow” and flourishing (see conscious well-being below)

## **Ideals**

- An enhanced capacity to pursue and realize the holistic evolution of consciousness - the pursuit and progressive realization of the virtue of balance
  - The capacity (related to self-control) to flexibly shift between different modes and states of consciousness
- The regular experience of transforming and evolving streams of consciousness, often experienced as under volitional and creative control, and often associated with psychologically pleasant and elevating emotions
- An overall expanded richness, range, and complexity in the content and processes of consciousness
- The motivated pursuit and realization of an increasingly enhanced self-reflective consciousness
  - An enhanced consciousness of consciousness
- The enhancement of the capacity for and purposeful realization of focused and integrative consciousness, enveloping and coordinating increasing complexity in the content of consciousness
- The expansion and further articulation of the development of consciousness and developmental stages of consciousness across the lifespan of an individual
- The ongoing evolution of expansive consciousness (all-everywhere-everywhen), which progressively moves away from a dominating egocentric (me-here-now) consciousness to incorporate higher levels of ecological/naturalistic, planetary, and cosmic consciousness
  - Note: Cosmic consciousness involves both consciousness of cosmos and consciousness of the self in the context of the cosmos
- Responsible individualism, which involves conceptualizing and evaluating individual states of consciousness and actions and conscious interests in the context of social, naturalistic/ecological, and cosmic realities and values

- An appropriate balance between self-concern and self-respect, and other values and other spheres of reality (for example, other individuals and the environment)
- Pursuit and realization of an expansive temporal consciousness of both the past and future and an increasing capacity to integrate historical and future consciousness
- Although acknowledging the value of participation in and attentiveness to the present and the value of historical consciousness, placing the central emphasis in consciousness the pursuit and development of heightened future consciousness
- The capacity for and regular execution of temporally extended sequences of thinking and temporally extended pursuits—the capacities of tenacity and persistence—the opposite of impulsivity and short-term focus
- The regular experience of creative and constructive consciousness, often involving the experiences of “flow” and flourishing (see conscious well-being below)

### **Sensory Perceptual-Proprioceptual Consciousness**

#### **Weaknesses**

- A significant level of flighty, disinterested, sketchy, and superficial attention within perceptual consciousness - deficient perceptual competence and diminished (impoverished) perceptual consciousness
- Lack of being consciously attuned to the body - impoverished bodily consciousness
- Negative affective proprioceptual state of body consciousness - lack of a conscious state of bodily well-being generating an overall sense of diminished conscious vitality
- Minimal ability to consciously control bodily states

#### **Ideals**

- The exercised capacity to attentively perceptually explore and apprehend the rich complexity of the environment - enhanced perceptual attentiveness, acuity, comprehension, and sensitivity
- The evolution of new sensory modes of perceptual consciousness
- Enhanced conscious sensitivity to bodily states - enhanced bodily consciousness
- Supporting an overall enhanced state of conscious vitality, a positive conscious state of bodily well-being, health, and vitality
- Enhanced capacity to consciously control bodily states
- The evolution and expansion of bodily consciousness and conscious bodily control through purposeful enhancements of the body

### **Emotion and Motivation**

#### **Weaknesses**

- Excessive negative emotional consciousness

- Excessive depression and despair with incapacitating feelings of hopelessness and helplessness
- Excessive states of dissatisfaction and disappointment with life — being prone to be drawn into negative assessments and feelings about life
- Stressful/agitated/anxious consciousness with excessive anxiety and worry
- Excessive fearful consciousness involving constrictive, defensive, and avoidance consciousness
- Excessive hateful and vengeful consciousness - violent-prone aggressive consciousness - motivational consciousness being dominated by anger, revenge, and hatred - the disposition and/or habit of consciously engaging the “dark side”
- The inability to evolve through negative emotionality - being stuck within or being obsessed with negative and unpleasant emotional states
- Emotionally repressive and emotionally impoverished consciousness - diminished conscious emotionality - diminished ability to feel - cold, hard, and flat consciousness - disinclination to attend to and gain increased awareness of emotional states
- Apathy, nihilism, and a floundering state of being - sense of personal stagnation - boredom - minimal sense of purpose in life
- Excessive pessimistic and an avoidant state of emotional-motivational consciousness
- Short-term motivational goals and deficient capacity for self-discipline and tenacity in pursuing long-term goals
- A lack or diminished sense of life purpose or deep purpose - a weakly articulated ideal personal narrative
- A motivational focus on primitive expressions of Maslow’s lower survival needs, rather than higher growth motives of self-actualization and benefitting humanity, nature, and the cosmos
- Consumerism and consumption as a way of life and paradigm for well-being (the affliction of “affluenza”)
  - Gluttony and greed - excessive consumption and the pursuit of excessive wealth relative to others
- To routinely go to extremes in life and conscious activities - a lack of (controlled) balance in life and consciousness
- Motivational stagnation — the same central goals and desires persist throughout life (in human consciousness and behavior) without further development or evolution

## **Ideals**

- Enhanced positive emotionality, including strong and recurrent experiences of love, joy/happiness, hope, gratitude, and enthusiasm/zest for life
  - Pronounced and recurrent feelings of realistic hope and optimism with associated feelings with self-empowerment (self-efficacy)
  - The practiced capacity to appreciate the positive features of life - realistic gratitude and satisfaction with life
  - Increased conscious capacity to volitionally realize clarity and calm in consciousness
  - The practiced capacity to confront fears and the courage and ability not to be incapacitated or consciously dominated by fear - approach consciousness

- The practiced capacity to be cognizant of feelings of anger and vengeance and the conscious ability to not be consciously dominated by feelings of anger, vengeance, and violence
- Capacity to acknowledge and journey and evolve through negative emotionality
- Appreciation (valuing) the emotional dimension of consciousness - being consciously open to emotions - the evolutionary enrichment of emotional consciousness
- Enhanced motivational consciousness - increased desire and capacity to embrace and realize goals - approach motivation - a strong sense of flourishing and purpose in life - effective goal achievement
- Enhancement of realistic hope and optimism versus fear, pessimism, and depression - approach state of motivational consciousness
- Enhanced self-discipline and tenacity/persistence in motivation in the pursuit of long-term goals
- A strong sense of deep purpose and life direction with an empowering and highly articulated ideal future self narrative
- Without disregarding or minimizing the importance of Maslow's lower survival needs, the focused pursuit of self-actualization, social, and cosmic goals, including ethical and aesthetic goals as central to motivational consciousness
- To focus on achievement, rather than purchasing, as the pathway to happiness and meaning and purpose in life
- As a general thoughtfully actualized principle for (organizing) life, to pursue balance in life and conscious activities - to pursue and live the Tao - "everything in moderation, including moderation" - a balance of rest and activity in life
- Motivational evolution - the development across the life-span of new central goals, desires, and ideals of consciousness and behavior

## **Knowledge and Cognition**

### **Weaknesses**

- Imbalanced cognitive functioning emphasizing either rational-linear-analytic-sequential thinking or intuitive-insightful-holistic thinking - to emphasize the "word" or the "image" to the exclusion of the other
- A cognitive bias toward conceptualizing and thinking about reality in simplistic, monistic, either/or, and/or dualistic frameworks of understanding
- Anti-intellectualism, anti-thought, and the devaluing of knowledge - anti-science, anti-reflective philosophy, and anti-rationality
  - Minimization of the value of higher cognition (thinking & imagination) & self-reflective thought
- Minimization of the value of the pursuit of knowledge and education - minimal desire for learning - knowledge/learning as only having extrinsic value - commodification of education (as a purchasable product and a means to an end)
  - Minimal awe and wonder
  - "Opinionism" (the primacy of the right to personal opinion over the conscientious pursuit and respect for researched and diligently ascertained truth as best as currently understood)

- An impoverished knowledge base - superficial and sketchy knowledge - a static knowledge base
- Dishonesty and deceit - diminishing or disregarding the value of truth relative to other goals and values (power, wealth, and status)
- Excessive and arrogant confidence in beliefs
  - Dogmatism and close-mindedness (a mindset of refusing to be open to ideas different from one's beliefs)
  - Rigid thinking - the inability and unwillingness to deviate (creatively) from accustomed patterns of thinking
  - Absolutist thinking — the inability and/or unwillingness to acknowledge errors and mistakes, or even the possibility of errors and mistakes in one's thinking and beliefs - inability and/or unwillingness to acknowledge the contingency of human beliefs - conflation of the subjective with the objective
- A knowledge base of surface learning and superficial memory - the lack of a deep integration of learning into one's consciousness and conscious identity
- Excessive subjectivism, relativism, and non-committal consciousness - the inability or unwillingness to comparatively evaluate and make decisions on the relative merit of points of view - rejection of the aspiration toward and the ideal of the objective
- Disregard, disinterest, and de-valuing of the love and skill of thinking - impoverished thinking skills - a disinclination to think and evaluate one's thinking
- Simplistic thinking - excessive black-and-white, either-or thinking - disregard of complexity and nuance
  - Superficial or shallow thinking - often connected with surface and superficial learning
  - A significant deficiency or inability to think at high levels of abstraction
  - A significant deficiency in integrating beliefs and ideas - the inability to coordinate multiple ideas in consciousness
  - Simple absolutist extremist answers and perspectives to the issues and challenges of life
- Close-mindedness and rigidity of belief - dogmatism - the inability and/or unwillingness to consider and evaluate multiple points of view
- Diminished creativity and imagination - a highly limited conscious "possibility space" - resistance to conscious adventure and play
- A lack of understanding and inability to articulate a thoughtful epistemology about knowledge acquisition and the evaluation of knowledge claims - weakness in applying epistemological principles to one's beliefs and knowledge claims
- The disregard and/or disinclination to pursue enlightenment or wisdom

## **Ideals**

- To value and pursue the enhancement of integrative cognition and intelligence, synthesizing analytical-rational-linear and holistic-insightful-intuitive modes of understanding and thinking - to cognitively integrate and balance the "word" and the "image"

- An enhanced cognitive capacity to comprehend reality in terms of reciprocities and complex interdependencies - to appreciate the logic of “both/and” - to think of reality in terms of the Yin-Yang
- To embrace as central values/virtues in life the pursuit of knowledge and the importance of intelligence, rationality, and the capacity for thinking - enhanced understanding and appreciation of philosophical consciousness
- The love of knowledge and the love and skill of learning and knowledge acquisition - the pursuit of honesty and the conscientious pursuit and respect for truth - valuing the pursuit of education
  - Valuing the conscientious pursuit of truth over personal opinion and belief
  - Enhanced capacity for awe and wonder
  - (The pursuit of) An enhanced knowledge base
- An evolving rather than static repository of knowledge
- An enhanced capacity for flexible and/or creative thinking — the ability to break out of accustomed ways of thinking
- A thoughtful balance of realistic confidence and realistic humility
- The pursuit of deep learning and the enhancement of integrative knowledge, integrative memory capacities, and the integration of learning and knowledge into one’s conscious identity
- An increasing capacity to be able and willing to comparatively evaluate different points of view and make thoughtful decisions on the relative merit of points of view - “Self-Reflective thinking” - the aspiration toward and the ideal of the objective
- The enhancement of the love and skill of thinking
  - The pursuit and development of critical thinking, reflective thinking, dialectical thinking, and intuitive/insightful thinking
- Enhanced abstract, complexity, and integrative understanding and states of consciousness - to effectively coordinate and consider multiple ideas in consciousness
- A thoughtful and critical caution regarding simple, absolute, and extremist answers and points of view - an appreciation of the complexity of life
- The enhancement of principled open-mindedness - an enhanced capacity for flexibility in thought and imagination - opposite of dogmatism - an increased capacity to consider and evaluate multiple points of view
- The enhancement of creativity and imagination - an expansive and evolving conscious possibility space - enhanced capacity for conscious adventure and play
- The ongoing evolution of a thoughtful and consciously articulated epistemology for knowledge acquisition and the evaluation of knowledge claims
- The appreciation and pursuit of enlightenment - the motivated pursuit and progressive achievement of deeper and more comprehensive knowledge and understanding of reality, including both conscious and physical spheres of existence - the motivated pursuit and development of wisdom (see also wisdom below)

## **Values and Ethical and Aesthetic Consciousness**

### **Weaknesses**

- An impoverished and limited understanding and appreciation of beauty - beauty is not a core concern or value in life, either in creating it and/or searching it out and recognizing/reveling in it in life
- Minimization of importance of ethics and morality relative to other concerns and values (such as wealth, consumption, power, self-aggrandizement, and social status) - ethics is not a core feature in one's vision of a preferable future
- Ethical/moral entrenchment and stagnation - no concern or effort to evolve ethically in either ethical principles or behavior - static authoritarian ethics
- Ethics and aesthetics a reflection/expression of outmoded conceptions of human reality - ethics and aesthetics is entirely grounded in the past
- Stagnation in conceptions and principles of beauty
- Monetization of life values (money as god) - wealth as central and/or exclusive value in life
- Principles and modes of behavior regarding ethics and beauty based on simple impoverished states of consciousness (tradition/inertia, local customs, authority, pleasure, and pride) - the lack of thoughtful ethics and aesthetics
- Ethical beliefs and practices that are not grounded in a realistic understanding of human reality or grounded in realistic conceptions of holistic well-being

## **Ideals**

- Seeing beauty as a central and essential value in life
- Enhanced creation of and participation in beauty in life - enhanced aesthetic and artistic consciousness
- Ethics and morality is seen as an essential concern in evaluating and guiding consciousness and purposeful behavior - ethics is viewed as a core feature in one's vision of a preferable future
- The active ongoing pursuit of ethical and character virtue development - central value of enhanced/evolving ethical consciousness in life
- The pursuit of ethical and aesthetic evolution — the development of new central ethical principles and ideals - the evolution of ideals of beauty
- Ethics and aesthetics are viewed as expressions of a transforming and evolving human reality
- The pursuit of ethical and aesthetic evolution based rich and holistic states of consciousness - knowledge and appreciation of diverse cultural concepts on ethics and aesthetics - the pursuit of thoughtful ethics and aesthetics involving reflective and critical thinking
- Ethical beliefs and practices that are grounded in a realistic understanding of human reality and are based upon a realistic understanding of holistic well-being

## **The Self**

## **Weaknesses**

- Reflective of a general lack of desire and capacity to evolve consciousness, both a resistance to and an inability to evolve one's conscious self leading to stagnation in the evolution of the self
- A disempowering self-narrative (both realistic and ideal) that creates stagnation if not regression in the conscious self
- Diminished/minimal self-awareness and self-understanding
- The experienced inability and resulting frustration to self-consciously guide or control the flow of consciousness
- Minimal self-worth and self-confidence - a diminished and/or disempowered self-identity
- Unrealistic, excessive, and defensive pride, vanity, and self-confidence - a lack of realistic humility - unrealistic grandiosity and/or paranoia
- A minimal sense of self-efficacy and a dominant sense of helplessness in controlling/directing the flow and content of consciousness and life in general
- A minimal sense of autonomy, self-determination, and the capacity for decision-making
  - Reactive rather than proactive self-initiated actions and thoughts
- A mindset of irresponsibility (not taking personal responsibility for past, present, or future well-being - a strong sense of victimization) - a conscious mindset of external locus of control
  - Habitual blaming of others for one's problems and misfortunes
- Absolute individualism - the mindset/belief in absolute distinctiveness and separateness of the self
- Absolute environmentalism and communalism/conformism - the belief that the self is a total creation/effect of the world - a subservience of the self to society and/or the group
- A disposition to excessively engage in competitive (win-lose) individualism defining personal identity and self-worth excessively in terms of (benefits to) the singular self
- Embracing a "messiah" mode of consciousness in believing that a singular self (which could be oneself or another singular person) can/will solve the problems of life and lead to perfection and/or evolution

## **Ideals**

- Reflective of the desire and capacity to evolve consciousness, the focused aspiration and progressive achievement of evolving one's conscious self
- An empowering self-narrative (both realistic and ideal) that informs and facilitates the future evolution of the self, in particular a flourishing and wise self
- Increasing self-awareness and understanding of the conscious self
- Based on achievement and a thoughtful and honest self-assessment, the achievement and ongoing evolution of realistic self-worth and self-confidence - a realistic balance of confidence and humility
- Pursuit and realization of enhanced self-conscious control of consciousness - the experience of being in relative control of one's consciousness
- An enhanced realistic sense of self-efficacy - a belief in the capacity to impact and guide the conditions of (one's) life

- Enhanced sense of autonomy, self-determination, and capacity for decision-making - a proactive rather than reactive consciousness
- A strong and evolving sense of self-responsibility for life and the future and an enhanced sense of internal locus of control - an enhanced understanding and associated practices and actions reflective of the insight that the quality and nature of one's life is significantly self-created
- A balanced and realistic understanding of the reciprocity (distinctiveness and interdependency) of the conscious self and the environment and the cosmos - an enhanced awareness of the reciprocity of self and the environment, opposing both passive conformism and absolute individualism
- An increased actualized capacity and desire to engage in cooperative (win-win) individualism rather than exclusively in competitive (win-lose) individualism - to define personal identity and self-worth to a significant degree in terms of contributions to the whole (other humans/society, life-forms, the natural environment, and the cosmos)
- Transcending a "messiah" mentality and consciousness, embracing rather the principle that evolution and a good future involves the pluralistic contribution of multiple selves (including oneself)

### **Conscious Well-Being/Mental Health**

#### **Weaknesses**

- Multi-faceted psychological distress/suffering/dysfunction in human consciousness, including from previous categories reviewed above, excessive depression, fear, stress/anxiety, anger/hatred, floundering/stagnation, defensiveness to reality, and negative self-worth and self-efficacy
- Psycho-social destructive/pain-inducing modes of consciousness, including from categories above and below, psychopathic consciousness (lack of moral consciousness), excessive hostility, and excessive revenge/retaliatory/violent/sadistic/masochistic states of consciousness
- Static visions of conscious well-being and conscious distress/dysfunction

#### **Ideals**

- Holistic psychological well-being (well-becoming) - the pursuit and realization of psychological flourishing and happiness (would include positive/elevating emotional-motivational consciousness, creative-constructive consciousness, heightened cognitive/imaginative capacities, ethical/aesthetic consciousness, and other positive psychological qualities identified above in previous categories)
- The ongoing evolution of standards/principles of mental/conscious dysfunction/distress and conscious well-being — a transforming evolving vision of mental health

### **Interpersonal and Social Consciousness**

## Weaknesses

- A minimal desire and capacity to contribute to the whole (nature, community, society, and cosmos) - connected to a self-centered mode of consciousness and sphere of concern - a minimal engagement with and contribution to the whole
- A minimal sense of belongingness with humanity - a strong sense of isolation, social disconnectedness, and loneliness
- Minimal or deficient levels of conscious caring and concern for others, reflective of egocentricity and self-centeredness
  - A lack of the capacity for and realization of interpersonal love and affection
- A lack/minimal level of empathy and sympathy - an inability or unwillingness to appreciate (cognitively and emotionally) other perspectives and life experiences
- Deficient interpersonal capacity for intimacy and close friendships
  - Minimal/impooverished romantic and sexual consciousness and experiences
- Failures and weaknesses in parental/parenting consciousness (including abuse, neglect, and competence)
  - Failure to facilitate in a child's development the capacity for realizing holistic well-being and competence in purposeful evolution - in general to minimize the central importance of the development of consciousness in children
- Diminished conscious desire or capacity to engage in cooperation and collaboration (including weaknesses, such as passive submission, domination of others, or indifference to working together with others)
  - Inability to form partnerships
- Failures and weaknesses in leadership consciousness, including unwise, self-centered, uncaring, uninspiring, and tyrannical modes of leadership consciousness
- Authoritarian and tyrannical consciousness - the conscious and intentional subjugation of human consciousness and behavior that suppresses individual self-determination
  - Realizing power and self-identity in life through domination - domination social consciousness
- One-sided—as opposed to reciprocal—conscious interpersonal relations
- Lack of a central conscious concern for justice, fairness, and equality, often associated with self-centered, grandiose, authoritarian, unsympathetic/non-empathic, and domination modes of consciousness
- Sexist, racist, ethnic, and nationalistic superiority/prejudicial consciousness - lack of a sense of the unity and togetherness of humanity
- Paranoia/conspiracy thinking and a highly defensive (often aggressive) distrustful paradigm of consciousness in interacting with others
- Excessive hatred, prejudice, cruelty, envy, and violent behavior toward perceived adversaries and different types of humans
  - Revenge/retaliatory consciousness
- Lack of collective conscious participation in a wisdom-based ideal grand narrative for the future of humanity and the world
- Conscious recoil, revulsion, and inability to understand and constructively engage with (if the possibility is realized) alien consciousness and intelligence

## **Ideals**

- An enhancement of the desire and capacity to contribute to the whole (nature, community, society, and the cosmos) - a consequent enhanced level of engagement with and contribution to the whole
- An enhanced conscious sense of belongingness and connectedness to humanity
- An enhanced desire and skill to contribute to the well-being of others - an enhanced level of “caring consciousness” - an enhanced level of interpersonal love and affection with others
- An enhanced capacity to adopt and (cognitively and emotionally) empathize/ sympathize with other points of view and personal experiences
- Enhanced interpersonal consciousness - an enhanced capacity for intimacy and friendship
  - The enhancement of sexual and romantic consciousness and experiences
- The enhancement of parental/parenting consciousness and competence
  - Enhancement of the capacity to facilitate in a child’s development the capacity for realizing holistic well-being and competence in their purposeful evolution - in general to emphasize the central importance of the development of consciousness in children
- Enhanced conscious capacity and desire to cooperate and collaborate (opposite of submission or domination)
  - The pursuit and enhancement of partnership social consciousness
- Enhancement of leadership consciousness, involving a wise and inspiring mode of leadership
- Egalitarian consciousness that thoughtfully supports self-determination in others
- Enhanced understanding of and capacity for interpersonal reciprocity
- The enhancement of a conscious focus upon justice, fairness, and equality and increasing actions which contribute toward these social ideals
- Enhanced sense of unity, equality, and togetherness with humanity
- Principled disposition and purposeful effort toward trust among humans
- Enhanced capacity to realistically understand and thoughtfully and constructively address and minimize hatred, prejudice, cruelty, envy, and violent desires toward others - understanding and transcending the “dark side” of social human consciousness
- Enhanced collective and purposeful conscious participation in a wisdom-based ideal grand narrative for the future of humanity and the world
- An enhanced capacity to understand and constructively engage with (if the possibility is realized) alien consciousness and intelligence - a litmus case regarding the breath and expanse, along multiple dimensions, of human consciousness

## **Technological Consciousness**

## **Weaknesses**

- Technological development is not guided by wisdom-based conscious evolution - unwise and destructive technological control of consciousness - “foolish cyborgs” (a functional synthesis of technology and foolish and non-productive/self-destructive mindsets and behaviors) - technological development and consciousness is guided and motivated by unethical values
- Notable negative current effects of technology on human consciousness and behavior:
  - Excessive techno-media immersion and addiction
  - Conscious withdrawal from the surrounding immediate environment
  - Reduced in-person interpersonal interaction and in-person interpersonal skills and virtues
  - Flighty short-term attention and mental fragmentation
  - Motivational and emotional consciousness significantly reflective of and structured by short-term gratification (immediate rewards) without conscious/behavioral effort being required
  - Off-loading conscious abilities into technological support systems - increasing dependency on technology for the competent expression of conscious abilities
  - Within social media the excessive focus on the other (and the opinions of others) to the exclusion of self-awareness, solitude, and introspection
- Antagonism toward and a lack of appreciation of the essential role of technology in the evolution of human nature, human life, and human consciousness
- As a reflection of antagonism to the purposeful evolution of humanity and consciousness, resistance to technological (including biotechnological) augmentation of consciousness (reflective of the “Frankenstein” mythic fear)

## **Ideals**

- The enhanced capacity and practice of the purposeful and wise evolution of technological augmentations of consciousness - evolving as “wise cyborgs” (a functional synthesis of technology and wise consciousness) - conscious ethical control over development and use of technologies - ideals of pertaining to the evolution of consciousness guide technological creation and evolution
- Consciously enhanced technological practices:
  - Improved balance between techno-immersed consciousness and focusing upon/interacting with immediate perceptual environment
  - Increasing interpersonal interaction and the enhancement of interpersonal skills
  - Using technologies to support sustained attention, long-term projects and goals, and the integration of conscious states and concerns - using technologies that do not dampen the capacity for long-term effort
  - Using technologies to enhance and constructively support the evolution of consciousness and conscious capacities
  - Improved balance between assessing the views of others through technologies and spending sufficient time in solitary self-reflective consciousness
- A balanced appreciation of the role of technology in human life and human consciousness - a balanced appreciation of the positive potential contributions of

technology to the purposeful evolution of humanity, the environment/the planet, and human consciousness

- The evolution of new modes of consciousness and types of experience through diverse forms of technological augmentation, including biotechnological enhancements
- The purposeful collaborative co-evolution of biological and technological intelligence and (potential forms of) consciousness

### **Environmental-Naturalistic and Planetary Consciousness**

#### **Weaknesses**

- Viewing humanity (inclusive of hi-tech modern human society) as separate and distinct from the natural environment and the planet
- Viewing the natural environment and the planet as static realities
- Excessively short-term environmental concerns and goals - excessively short-term considerations regarding the impact of human society on the environment - general lack of ecological/environmental future consciousness
- The anthropocentric elevation of humanity over other life forms and the natural environment - failure to perceive or understand the inherent value of other life forms, ecological systems, and the planet
- Minimal consciousness and concern regarding nature, the environment and planetary conditions and the importance and value of nature, the environment, and planetary conditions - minimal knowledge of nature, the environment, and planetary conditions
- Disregard and/or disrespect of non-human biological life and forms of consciousness and the disinterest and inability to collaborate in mutually beneficial ways with non-human biological forms of consciousness
- The inability and/or resistance of different interest groups to understand and appreciate their common holistic planetary reality - the inability and/or lack of interest in collectively and collaboratively working toward constructive planetary goals
- Rigid and restrictive conscious capacity to constructively engage in unusual and diverse environments (beyond a narrow accustomed range of environmental conditions)

#### **Ideals**

- Viewing humanity (inclusive of hi-tech modern society) as interactive and interdependent with the natural environment and the planet (the principle of reciprocity)
- Viewing the natural environment and the planet as dynamic and evolving realities (the principle of evolution)
- A thoughtful balance of short-term and long-term environmental concerns and goals - enhanced consciousness on long-term considerations regarding the impact of human society on the environment - heightened ecological/environmental future consciousness

- Understanding that humanity is part of nature (rather than above it) and understanding and appreciating the inherent value of other life forms, the diverse ecosystems of the earth, and the planet as a whole
- Enhanced consciousness and concern regarding nature, the environment and planetary conditions and the importance and value of nature, the environment, and planetary conditions - enhanced knowledge of nature, the environment, and planetary conditions
- Enhanced understanding and appreciation of non-human biological life and forms of consciousness
- The enhanced ability and associated practices of purposeful collaborative co-evolution of human consciousness with non-human biological life and forms of consciousness
- The enhanced capacity to understand and appreciate the common holistic planetary reality of all diverse human groups - the enhanced ability and desire to collectively and collaboratively work toward constructive planetary goals

### **Cosmic Consciousness and Wisdom**

#### **Weaknesses**

- An undeveloped and/or archaic and static understanding of the cosmos - an undeveloped cosmic grand narrative
- An undeveloped and/or archaic and static conception of one's place in the cosmos - an impoverished conscious connection between one's personal narrative and one's cosmic/grand narrative
- An underdeveloped and/or archaic and static conception of humanity and our living planet within the context of the cosmos
- A lack of wisdom, defined as some significant combination of foolishness, thoughtlessness, impulsiveness, oppositional ignorance, chaotic and limited consciousness, unethical character and values, useless/destructive/counter-productive actions, narrow consciousness, and a stagnant non-evolutionary consciousness
  - A lack of concern with evolving wisdom (wisdom as not an important value or goal in life); a lack of concern with thinking well, learning deeply, and conscious self-reflection
  - An ideal future narrative that works against and/or disregards the evolution of wisdom
  - Wisdom is not the central goal of education
  - Humanity does not aspire toward or centrally value a wise society

#### **Ideals**

- An enhanced and informed understanding of the cosmos - an articulated cosmic grand narrative

- An enhanced and empowering understanding of one's place in the cosmos - an articulated conscious connection between one's personal narrative and one's cosmic/grand narrative
- An enhanced and articulated and inspiring conception of humanity and our living planet within the context of the cosmos
- The heightening and evolution of (the holistic character virtue of) wisdom - enhanced integrative evolution of the character virtues of consciousness
  - The love and pursuit of improved thinking, deeper learning, and enhanced self-reflection
  - An ideal future narrative centered around the purposeful and conscious pursuit, development, and expression of wisdom - a wisdom narrative informing and guiding one's future life and the future of one's consciousness
  - Wisdom emerges as the central goal of education
  - Humanity aspires toward and sees the central value of a wise society