

Chapter Fifteen

The Third Foundation

*“In order to instigate revolutionary change
we must transform human consciousness.”*

Dr. Ian Malcolm (Jeff Goldblum)
Jurassic World: Dominion

Introduction

In this chapter I first review in a series of sections the major themes and ideas presented in the previous chapters of this book. At the beginning of each section below I provide a succinct summary statement (in *italics*) of key concepts and hypotheses covered in that section. In each section I explain how the the identified key ideas reviewed are essential features of the Third Foundation. Building upon an integration of these ideas, in the second major part of this chapter I describe in more depth and detail the concept of “The Third Foundation.” Synthesizing theory, values, practices, narrative meaning-making, social community, and a way of life, the Third Foundation is a proposed paradigm of consciousness that would facilitate the purposeful future evolution of consciousness.

Contemporary Problems and Challenges and Proposed Solutions

The most effective and realistic approach to constructively addressing our current problems and challenges and creating a positive future is the purposeful evolution of consciousness. This central goal can best be realized through a non-dualist, purposefully guided evolutionary paradigm of consciousness: The Third Foundation.

This first section summarizes the *Introduction* in this book. As discussed in the *Introduction*, humanity faces numerous challenges and problems. Many of these challenges and problems, such as deep social and economic inequality and pervasive social violence and war, are long-standing, stretching back to the beginnings of recorded history. Other problems are more recent, such as accelerative climate change and reduction in biodiversity.

Both in contemporary times and throughout history, numerous and diverse solutions have been put forth to address humanity’s myriad ongoing problems. In current times we are inundated with news and commentaries on all our difficulties and a multitude of proposed ways to effectively address these difficulties. A good part of the overload of information and ideas in our contemporary world consists of a plethora of different viewpoints regarding what are the central problems facing us; different solutions often highlight different key problems, or offer divergent interpretations of our challenges, making for a befuddling array of hypothesized central problems and proposed solutions to our difficulties. (We could propose that this confusing overload of diverse assessments of world affairs is one of our key contemporary problems.)

One key difference of opinion regarding our current problems is whether to view our difficulties as fundamentally physical in nature, such as not enough food, water, and energy for everyone, or degrading environmental conditions, or instead to view our core contemporary problems as deeply psychological and ethical in nature, such as human brutality, arrogance, greed, and self-centeredness. For the former point of view, it is proposed that economic and technological growth will transform human life into a better, if not wondrous reality. For the latter viewpoint, it is proposed that transforming or evolving the human mind and human consciousness is the best and most effective way to create a better world for all of us.

Regarding the latter viewpoint, human recorded history is filled with many different types of philosophies and proposed ways of life that highlight the advancement or evolution of human consciousness as the key to both solving current problems and creating a positive future. Such proposals and associated practices can be found in religion, spiritual and mystical perspectives, secular philosophies, psychology, and social thought. Such proposals emphasizing the development of human consciousness are frequently presented in opposition to physicalist viewpoints regarding the best and most appropriate pathway to a good (or better) future, arguing that the physicalist mindset is actually the central cause of our difficulties.

In general spirit, I agree with the view that both solving our current problems and creating a positive future is to be accomplished through the evolution or advancement of human consciousness. Although there is, in my view, an essential physical dimension to human existence that can not be ignored or discounted, I believe that our focus for the future should be the purposeful evolution of consciousness. In pursuing this preferable pathway we will, it seems to me, transform the very nature of humanity, indeed transcending our current mode of existence. The primary cause of our current problems is us; to solve our problems we need to transform who and what we are at the core level of our consciousness.

One sphere of human thought in which there has been an immense and stimulating diversity of visions on the future transformation and evolution of the human mind and consciousness is science fiction. Contrary to the pervasive stereotype that science fiction is primarily about the future of science and technological advancements, a big part of science fiction, from its very beginnings, has dealt with the possibilities and preferable directions regarding the future of mind and consciousness. The two most powerful and imaginative early science fiction writers, H. G. Wells and Olaf Stapledon, emphasized the central importance of the evolution of mind and consciousness in their fantastical visions of future humanity.¹ But there have been many other noteworthy science fiction writers up through present times that have highlighted in their future narratives the evolution of mind and consciousness. See in Chapter Fourteen an extensive biographical list of novels and stories highlighting the future of consciousness and mind.

As one highly relevant example, one of the most famous science fiction series ever written is Isaac Asimov's *Foundation* novels. The original three books, composing a trilogy, were *Foundation*, *Foundation and Empire*, and *Second Foundation*—all

¹ See especially Wells' *The Shape of Things to Come* (1933) and Stapledon's *Last and First Men* (1931).

published as novels in the early 1950s, but based upon a large set of individual shorter stories written in the 1940s.² Set in the far distant future, the fictional mathematician-scientist Hari Seldon, creates two “Foundations” (communities of individuals) to help guide humanity through a period of civilizational collapse (the disintegration of the Galactic Empire). These foundations hopefully will lead to the emergence of a new, better type of civilization after the interim barbarism has run its course. The “First Foundation” consists primarily of physical scientists, who help to preserve and further develop physical science and technologies; the “Second Foundation,” whose location in the galaxy is a mystery, focuses on psychological science and mental evolution. As progressively revealed in the storyline of the novels, it is the Second Foundation that is most important and central to the emergence of a new type of civilization—a civilization that prioritizes mental capacities and development.

Although I would not accuse Asimov of endorsing some kind of ontological dualism of consciousness and mind versus physical matter—separating these two realms as distinctively different realities—the two Foundations he imagines represent a dualist split between a society that focuses upon the evolution of physical technologies and science and a society that emphasizes the evolution of mind and the capacities of consciousness. Whatever Asimov believed about the nature of reality, such a dualist split in the respective pathways of development for his two Foundations to a great degree mirrors and aligns with the two main approaches to understanding and solving humanity’s current problems that I earlier introduced above.

Although I believe that the most efficacious and realistic approach to constructively addressing our current problems and facilitating humanity’s future development is to focus on the evolution of consciousness, in my view this approach can not be divorced from the ongoing evolution of our physical (including technological) reality. As such, I believe that what is required for a constructive and effective approach to our future is the creation of a “Third Foundation,” which, although emphasizing the future evolution of consciousness, conceptualizes and pursues this trajectory as involving a mutual and integrative evolution of consciousness and physical reality. Consciousness and physical reality should not be separated and divided into two distinct realities in understanding the nature of human existence, and if we are to pursue as our central focus the evolution of consciousness we can not realize this aspiration divorced from understanding how physical evolution fits into the picture. A “Third Foundation” would pursue the future evolution of consciousness integrated and understood together with the physical world and our physical technologies.

I would agree, though, with Asimov on two fundamental points. First, he viewed the two foundations as evolutionary. The two foundations are dynamic and developmental realities that grow and articulate further over time. His envisioned two foundations are

² After the original three novels, Asimov would publish additional novels in the series in subsequent decades, such as *Foundation’s Edge* (1982) and *Foundation and Earth* (1986). For a review of the *Foundation* series see my *Evolution of Science Fiction* video series Module Twelve: *The Golden Age of Science Fiction* - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FgMqF-nNojl&list=PLlvBA8u8-18QzwxllJrzh6OAKVAUYfNmS&index=15&t=170s> and my forthcoming book *Science Fiction: The Evolutionary Mythology of the Future - Volume Four: The Golden Age*.

not static entities. There are no perfect and unchanging human societies; any realistic and preferable society needs to be conceptualized as evolutionary and transformative.

Second, Asimov saw the evolutionary process and trajectory of his envisioned foundations as purposefully directed and guided. Change and development in the two foundations does not just occur willy-nilly and independent of the goals, plans, and purposeful actions of the members of the foundations. The two foundations are a product of ongoing purposeful evolution.

In resonance with these two points, I envision the Third Foundation as evolutionary, transforming and advancing over time—the Third Foundation is open-ended in its ongoing development—and I see this dynamic evolutionary process in the Third Foundation as purposefully directed by its members.³

Moreover, Asimov described his two foundations as consisting of communities of individuals that, in each of the two cases: shared a set of beliefs and values; embraced a unifying vision of the future; pursued a set of common goals; and engaged in various practices in alignment with the foundation's beliefs, values, future vision, and goals. Moreover, each foundation operated within an appropriately created and structured environment in which to best realize their goals, values, and modes of actions. All in all, each foundation encompassed a psycho-social-environmental holistic way of life.

In resonance with Asimov's holistic conception of his two foundations, I envision a Third Foundation along similar lines. I will use the expression "paradigm of consciousness" to refer to such a holistic and integrative conscious way of life, which includes a distinctive set of beliefs and values; goals, visions, and plans of action; practices and purposeful behaviors; and selected and constructed environmental conditions (including technologies) to support (or afford) the particular way of life. A paradigm of consciousness is a holistic conscious framework, adopted and practiced by one or more individuals, for understanding and guiding interaction with reality (however reality is conceived).⁴ The Third Foundation can be described as a paradigm of consciousness, intentionally embraced and practiced by a community of individuals, whose central purpose is to facilitate the future purposeful evolution of consciousness.

In the next sections of this concluding chapter, I review key ideas covered in earlier chapters of this book that form the core beliefs, principles, and practices of the paradigm of consciousness of the Third Foundation.

Evolutionary Taoism

The Third Foundation embraces evolutionary Taoism, an ontology of reality that synthesizes the principles of cosmic evolution and reciprocity. Evolutionary Taoism

³ When Wells and Stapledon envisioned the future evolution of mind and consciousness in *The Shape of Things to Come* and *Last and First Men* they both conceptualized and described the process—at least to a significant extent—as being purposefully directed by humans in their efforts to evolve themselves.

⁴ Based on this definition, physicalism or materialism is a paradigm of consciousness in that it consists of an integrated set of consciously articulated beliefs, values, goals, and purposeful behaviors realized in a resonant appropriately constructed environment.

provides a theoretical framework for understanding the nature of consciousness and the relationship between consciousness and physical reality.

Any paradigm of consciousness contains a theory or set of beliefs—however explicitly and coherently articulated—regarding the nature of reality. This theory or set of beliefs constitutes the “ontology” of the paradigm. Within the mindset of a paradigm of consciousness, there is some type of answer regarding the fundamental features and principles of reality.

Within the Third Foundation the core ontology is “evolutionary Taoism.” This ontology consists of two basic ideas: Cosmic evolution and reciprocity. (See Chapters One and Three respectively for in-depth discussions of each of these two ideas.) Further, in a number of ways, these two ideas can be connected together into an integrative understanding of the nature of reality, as, for example, through the concept of reciprocal evolution. Below, I briefly describe each of these two ideas; explain their relevance to an understanding of the nature and future of consciousness; elucidate some key ways in which these two ideas are connected, thus forming the synthetic whole of “evolutionary Taoism;” and identify some important ways in which evolutionary Taoism informs and inspires the envisioned Third Foundation.

Humanity and human consciousness need to be understood in a cosmic context; consciousness is realized, embedded, and articulated within the universe. Cosmic evolution provides such a cosmic context. Cosmic evolution is the interdisciplinary theory that the universe as a totality—whether physical, mental, or social—from the simplest and smallest of its component parts to the largest and most complex, as well as all its laws, fundamental forces, and constants, is the result and expression of a universally pervasive evolutionary process. Cosmic evolution subsumes and explains the totality of reality. Hence, conscious humans, as part of the universe, exist within this evolutionary reality and are a reflection and (as explained below) further distinctive expression of this dynamic reality.

Since consciousness, whether human or otherwise, is embedded within an evolutionary cosmos, it has an evolutionary history. The collective history of conscious life on the earth and the individual life-span histories of consciousness within distinctive persons are transformational evolutionary realities manifesting an ongoing direction of increasing complexity, and probably other notable directionalities (such as increasing agency, control, uniqueness, and intelligence) as well.

An evolutionary perspective on humanity, consciousness, and our cosmic reality, contradicts various core features of a dualist conception of reality and consciousness. From an evolutionary perspective, consciousness does not exist in some separate ontological realm distinct from the evolving universe, nor does its origin or creation derive from some ontological realm beyond the evolutionary universe. The process of evolution within the universe provides an explanation of the origin, nature, and trajectory of consciousness.

The Third Foundation views human consciousness, encompassing its past, present, and future manifestations, within this fundamental dynamic ontology of cosmic evolution. The Third Foundation views its own reality and its development as *participatory* in this cosmic evolutionary process.

As a second major ontological principle of the Third Foundation, the idea of reciprocity entails that the totality of existence consists of distinct but complementary interdependent realities. Nothing stands alone in the universe. Individuality is real, but it is always coupled with interdependent relationships. The basic features of the idea of reciprocity are accurately captured in the Taoist Yin-Yang. Hence, the Third Foundation embraces main elements of the philosophy of Taoism.

Dualist philosophies treat physical matter and consciousness as incommensurable, oppositional, and independent realities, whereas an ontology of reciprocity conceptualizes physicality and consciousness as distinct, but interdependent realities. Our conscious selves and minds and our ambient physical environment are not a dualism, but rather a reciprocity.

But also, dualist philosophies conceptualize a number of other fundamental features of reality as distinct and (frequently) opposed dimensions, such as order and chaos, stability and change, eternity and time, and individuality and collectivity. In all these other cases, as well, the idea of reciprocity implies that these presumed independent and oppositional features of the cosmos are actually distinct but coupled interdependent realities.

Turning to the question of how evolution and reciprocity can be connected together into an integrated theory of reality that I refer to as “evolutionary Taoism,” a key starting point is Richard Nisbett’s theory on Eastern versus Western modes of thinking.⁵ (Discussed in Chapter Three.) Nisbett proposed that Eastern thinking conceptualizes reality as a circle, whereas Western thinking conceptualizes reality as a line. The Eastern perspective, in conceptualizing reality as a circle, highlights the principle of balance or equilibrium, whereas the Western perspective, conceptualizing reality as a line, highlights directionality and linearity. These two modes of thinking entail two different theories of time: In the first case, time is cyclical or a circle, whereas in the latter case, time is viewed as linear, heading in some direction. I proposed that the circular view of reality and time aligns with the principle of reciprocity, whereas the linear view of reality and time aligns with the principle of evolution. In agreement with Nisbett, I have argued that it would be highly desirable to find a way to realize a culturally and globally balanced mode of thinking about reality that would integrate the circular and linear modes of thinking, hence, in my theoretical language, integrating the principles of reciprocity and evolution.⁶

I’ve proposed the principle of reciprocal evolution as one key way to integrate evolution and reciprocity in understanding reality. If reality is composed of entities and processes that form reciprocities, then reciprocal realities in the cosmos interactively co-evolve. The principle of reciprocal evolution can be applied to numerous fundamental features of reality, and in particular human reality. Key illustrations of this basic pattern of reciprocal transformation include: Consciousness and physical reality reciprocally evolve; interactive open systems in nature reciprocally evolve; life and the earth reciprocally evolve; interdependent life forms in an ecosystem reciprocally evolve; individuals and social organizations, in which those individuals exist, reciprocally

⁵ Nisbett, Richard *The Geography of Thought*, 2003.

⁶ Lombardo, *Future Consciousness*, 2017, pp. 23-25.

evolve; and humanity and technology reciprocally evolve. In general, within a cosmos made up out of reciprocities, these reciprocities interactively co-evolve.

An illuminating perspective that brings together evolution and reciprocity can be found in J. T. Fraser's theory of the evolution of time and the idea that directional evolution and entropy form a reciprocity. (See Chapters One and Three in this volume.) Fraser's theory proposes that order and chaos form a necessary coupling in the make-up of the universe, and the evolution of the universe (and time in the universe) can be described as an ongoing progressive iteration of this fundamental Yin-Yang or opposition of order and chaos realizing greater and greater levels of complexity. Order and chaos—as the fundamental reciprocity in Fraser's theory of the cosmos—progressively evolve in tandem with each other, without any ultimate resolution—existence is forever a Yin-Yang. As a similar theory in scientific cosmology, it has been proposed that the dual processes of evolution toward increasing order and complexity, and entropy toward increasing cosmic disorder (or chaos) are coupled together, evolution generating entropy, and entropy fueling the evolutionary process. Evolution toward greater order occurs locally, whereas entropy toward increasing chaos occurs holistically. In resonance with Fraser's theory, in a cosmology postulating the interconnected processes of evolution and entropy, the directionalities of increasing order and increasing chaos form an interdependent reciprocity.

Evolutionary Taoism understands the cosmos as a necessary coupling or reciprocity of order and chaos, and evolution and entropy, with an overall directionality toward increasing complexity, at least in local regions of the universe, with a counterbalancing of increasing entropy (and chaos) within ambient surroundings. As one significant implication of this point of view, there can be no final or perfect order within the cosmos or within human affairs, in that chaos and entropy accompanies any increasing realization of more complex order. At the human level, there is no perfect utopia or perfect human being. Moreover, any evolutionary trajectory, whether purposefully guided or not, is always coupled with chaotic elements and consequences: Evolution is not a smooth sailing process.

In summary, as a general thesis expressed within this section: Evolutionary Taoism conceptualizes reality (including consciousness and human reality) as a cosmically pervasive evolutionary process embedded in and structured by a reality of reciprocities. The development of a Third Foundation will occur within and reflect in its own internal dynamics and organization, such a dynamic, interactive, and unsettled cosmic reality.

Purposeful Evolution and Heightened Holistic Future Consciousness

The Third Foundation sees its efforts as an expression of purposeful evolution, an intentional participatory contribution to cosmic evolution. The Third Foundation emphasizes heightened future consciousness as essential to wise purposeful evolution. Purposeful evolution and heightened future consciousness provide two central guiding principles for understanding how to conceptualize and facilitate the preferable future evolution of consciousness.

In this section I describe two connected ideas—purposeful evolution and holistic future consciousness—explaining their relationship, and spelling out how these ideas are integral to the philosophy and practices of the Third Foundation. (See especially Chapter Two for a more detailed discussion of these two concepts and how the two ideas are connected.)

To begin, evolution is not a single process. As the universe has evolved in complexity realizing increasingly intricate levels of reality, the process of evolution has evolved. New levels of reality bring with them new levels and types of change and evolution.

When we come to the level of human reality (and to a degree at least in animal existence) a new, more advanced form of evolution has been realized. This “evolution of evolution,” transcending biological evolution through natural selection, is purposeful evolution. Purposeful evolution is the process of directing change and evolution through conscious purpose or intention, which involves the identification of future goals based on values (or ideals) and purposefully directed behavior, based on these values, to achieve the associated goals. When humans engage in purposeful goal-directed behavior with the intent to change or modify reality (either pertaining to themselves or their environment), they are engaging in purposeful evolution.

Purposeful evolution is an evolved expression of cosmic evolution; a new step in the ongoing process of evolution of evolution in the cosmos. Purposeful evolution can involve the use of technologies to modify either humans/other life forms, or the surrounding environment, but technology (and the technological modification of a biological body) is not essential to purposeful evolution. What is essential to the process is conscious intention or purpose with an eye on the future to modify reality and direct change. Although purpose may not be involved in either the formation of the universe or its initial development,⁷ conscious purpose enters into the evolutionary development of the universe (and humanity) with the emergence of conscious selves that manifest purpose in their intentionally guided interactions with the world (or themselves). As such, although humans can be seen as a result of cosmic evolution, we become *active participants* and architects (however competent we might be) in the ongoing evolutionary process through conscious purpose guiding our behavior.

To a great extent, the creation and ongoing development of human civilization, including our technologies, as well as our individual conscious development, is a consequence of purposeful evolution.⁸ But both these processes are not smooth sailing. Accidents, unexpected events, and unintended consequences all enter into these processes affecting the ongoing development of both societies and individuals. One could say that “chaos” necessarily impacts all the schemes of mice and men. Moreover, even assuming that we engage in purposeful evolution, it does not follow that our efforts, collectively and individually, always achieve success; the history of humanity and the history of individual lives are both filled with numerous types of failures, blunders, and mistakes. Deficiencies in knowledge greatly hamper and disrupt

⁷ I do not think that there was any purpose in the formation of the universe, or its initial evolution, since “purpose” is an advanced conscious capacity involving awareness of the future and the conscious identification of desirable states, abilities that required a period of evolution preceding them.

⁸ See Lombardo, *The Evolution of Future Consciousness*, 2008.

our individual and collective purposeful activities. All in all, efforts at purposeful evolution involve adventure, risk, and uncertainty. (Analogously, biological evolution through natural selection is filled with maladaptations, death, and extinction.) Purposeful evolution is trial and error. Still, even granting these various unsettling and contingent factors, the overall thrust of collective and individual evolution in humanity is greatly impacted, orchestrated, and facilitated by human efforts at purposeful evolution.

We should note as an important feature of purposeful evolution that consciously selected and pursued intentional change invariably involves values and ideals embraced by humans in determining the preferred direction of change. Humans select and direct their behavior toward the realization of their values, whatever those values may be. In this regard, if we consider the purposeful future evolution of consciousness, it follows that the goals and aspirations we identify as preferable directions for the evolution of our consciousness depend upon what values and ideals we embrace as defining what is desirable or preferable for our consciousness.

Given the above points, the Third Foundation can be described as a purposefully created and purposefully evolving reality existing within and as an evolved expression of an evolutionary cosmos, in which the central aspiration of the Third Foundation is, as best as can be determined and realized, to purposefully facilitate the future evolution of consciousness. This purposefully directed process of the evolution of consciousness through the Third Foundation embodies a set of values and ideals that identify the preferable direction for the future evolution of consciousness. In so far as the Third Foundation is a purposefully evolving reality, its values and ideals will purposefully evolve as well.

Purposeful evolution requires future consciousness. As discussed at length earlier in Chapter Two of this book, as well as in numerous other earlier publications of mine, such as *Wisdom, Consciousness, and the Future* (2011) and *Future Consciousness* (2017), future consciousness is the total set of mental processes and modes of experience humans utilize in approaching, understanding, and creating the future. Purposeful evolution involves the capacity to consciously imagine and conceptualize goals and aspirations—future states of affair—and to articulate, plan, and execute purposeful courses of action—to be carried out in the future—intended to realize these goals and aspirations. As such, purposeful evolution requires consciously identified preferable states of the future and purposeful behaviors enacted to achieve these future ends. In sum, purposeful evolution requires consciousness of desirable futures and consciousness of intended future actions—frequently involving planning and strategy—directed toward these desirable futures. Without future consciousness, purposeful evolution would not be possible.

Future consciousness is a centrally important capacity within the total multi-faceted spectrum of all dimensions of consciousness. Particularly, future consciousness is part of temporal consciousness, which includes consciousness of the past, present, and future, and conscious connections among these temporal spheres. I have proposed that future consciousness is the most distinctive and highly empowering ability of human consciousness. The purposeful creation and evolution of human civilization has been empowered, indeed made possible, by future consciousness.

Future consciousness, though, is a psychological capacity that comes in degrees. Animals, to various levels, appear to demonstrate both purposeful behavior and future consciousness. Humans, likewise, manifest individual variability in their level of development of future consciousness, along a variety of parameters, although almost all humans demonstrate some capacity for future consciousness, being able to identify goals for the future (however short-term) and imagine and execute purposeful behavior (however simple) to realize these goals.

Moreover, future consciousness is a psychologically holistic capacity, involving emotional, motivational, imaginative, thinking, ethical, social, and personal components. We have emotions (such as hope and fear), motives (conscious goals and aspirations), images and visions (both negative and positive) about the future, and we engage in thinking about the future (considering possibilities, evaluating our goals, and planning out our actions). Our ethics and values are integral to our future consciousness in determining our goals and ideal visions of the future. Our social and cultural environments affect our feelings and thoughts about the future. The personality and character of our conscious selves strongly influences our consciousness of the future, and we all articulate, to some degree, future narratives and ideal images of our future self. All these diverse but interconnected psychological features of our holistic future consciousness have an impact on our efforts to engage in purposeful evolution.

As I explain and illustrate at length in earlier publications, all the various dimensions of holistic future consciousness can be heightened or strengthened. My central thesis in these earlier writings was that heightening future consciousness would have a powerful positive impact on all spheres of human life, and in particular how well we are able to realize a good future for ourselves. Since purposeful evolution is realized through future consciousness, it would stand to reason that heightening our holistic future consciousness would empower us in our efforts toward purposeful evolution for all aspects of human existence, pertaining to both our consciousness and our physical reality.

As such, since the goal of the Third Foundation is to facilitate purposeful evolution, particularly of consciousness, a central goal of the Third Foundation should be the heightening of future consciousness, both in its members and in the world at large. To be precise, the Third Foundation should pursue the heightening of our consciousness of the future—our future consciousness—as an essential capacity for facilitating the evolution of consciousness in the future.

As a core thesis summarizing this section, humans participate within and guide cosmic evolution through the evolved capacity—an evolution in evolution—to engage in purposeful evolution illuminated and empowered by holistic future consciousness. A central goal of the Third Foundation is the heightening of this holistic, multi-faceted conscious capacity.

A Theory of Consciousness

The Third Foundation bases its normative vision of the preferable future evolution of consciousness on an ecological-evolutionary (Evolutionary Taoist) theory of consciousness. In disagreement with materialist, idealist, dualist, and panpsychism

theories of consciousness, the Third Foundation views consciousness and the physical universe as interdependent realities in reciprocal evolution.

In this extensive section of this chapter, summarizing the content of a number of earlier chapters in this book, I outline a theory of consciousness. As integral to its paradigm of consciousness, the Third Foundation contains a theory of consciousness. I propose the following theory as providing this essential component in the general mindset and informed practices of the Third Foundation.

To start, if we are to think about and envision the future evolution of consciousness, and, in particular, the preferable future evolution of consciousness, we should note that any view we develop regarding the future of consciousness and its preferable evolution assumes some theory or view (however explicitly defined) regarding the nature of consciousness. Any view about the future of any feature of reality assumes within it a theory or view about the nature of that reality. And moreover, any view on the preferable future direction of some reality—a normative or prescriptive view—also assumes some view on the nature of that reality. We extrapolate or predict what will or may occur in the future based upon what we think presently exists—the nature of the current reality. We prescribe what we believe “ought to be” based on some view of “what is.” In general, ontologies are assumed in either thinking about the future of some reality, or proposing an ethical and normative direction for some reality. (See Chapter Four.)

In line with the above points, in the history of thought, all theories about either the possibilities or probabilities of the future of consciousness assumed theories about the nature of consciousness, and similarly all theories about the preferable future direction of consciousness also assumed theories about the nature of consciousness.

To gain an informed perspective on the nature of consciousness, and its possible and preferable directions for the future, it is valuable, if not necessary, to review basic theories that have been developed in history regarding the nature of consciousness. In Chapter Four of this volume, I present an extensive review of theories of the nature of consciousness and discuss both major themes and major issues and disagreements within the broad array of different theories of consciousness I describe in that chapter. Many of these theories on the nature of consciousness also explicitly propose theories of either the future of consciousness, or the preferable future of consciousness.

In articulating my theory of consciousness, beginning in Chapter Five and continuing in subsequent chapters, I draw upon various ideas found among the theories reviewed in Chapter Four. But also, in developing my theory I identify a set of basic disagreements and differences in point of view between my theory and selected other theories reviewed in Chapter Four. The theory I propose both agrees with and/or draws upon some of theories reviewed, and disagrees with and opposes other theories reviewed. Generally, I disagree with reductive materialist (physicalist), idealist, dualist, supernatural, and panpsychism theories of consciousness, and agree with and/or draw upon at least some features of evolutionary, emergence, relational, embodiment, developmental, and intentionality theories of consciousness.

As with any other approach to the future of consciousness, the Third Foundation needs to be grounded in a theory of the nature of consciousness, which provides an ontological foundation (what is) for articulating a vision (what should be) of the

preferable future evolution of consciousness. The theory of consciousness I propose is intended to provide this ontological foundation upon which to build an approach to the preferred future of consciousness.

Following from the principles of reciprocity and cosmic evolution I propose an evolutionary-ecological (Evolutionary Taoist) theory of consciousness. Discussed in Chapters Two, Three, Five and Six, key foundational ideas and hypotheses in this theory, based on physics, ecology, biology, and phenomenology, include:

- Consciousness is an evolutionary phenomenon, having emerged and progressively evolved in complexity and power within an evolutionary cosmos. Consciousness is not a foundational feature (or reality) nor ontological given within the cosmos, such as proposed by idealism and in forms of dualism and panpsychism.
- Consciousness and its emergence require a complexly structured, hierarchal/nested, and dynamic universe involving physical, ecological, and biological conditions, which support its existence and help to configure its basic form. Consciousness did not manifest itself, or evolve in a vacuum; consciousness is embedded within a dynamic and structurally complex physical-eco-biological universe.
- Embedded within this multi-level complex cosmic reality, consciousness emerges in localized and individuated open systems, which interact with and depend upon their surrounding environment. In that a fundamental feature of life (living open systems) is interactive engagement with the environment, a strong case can be made that consciousness requires life. The principle of reciprocity is essential in understanding the nature of consciousness, in that open systems are distinct and individuated realities that require interaction (interdependency) with their surrounding to maintain their individuated distinctiveness.
- Although anchored to individuated open systems, consciousness is an ecological reality in that it requires (and is built upon) interactive and interdependent features of (relationships within) complex ecosystems.
- The basic form of interaction between animated and conscious biological life forms with complex nervous systems and a highly structured and dynamic surrounding environment is reciprocal loops of interactivity, rather than unidirectional causal sequences.
- Given the above points, consciousness requires embodiment. Open systems, and in particular living open systems, are complex and dynamic physical systems, and exist within a complex physical ambience necessary for their existence. As such, the idea (proposed in various theories, such as idealism and supernaturalism) of disembodied consciousness is ontologically impossible. (My own personal consciousness clearly appears embodied; the consciousness of others clearly appears embodied to me as well.)
- Consciousness at the fundamental level of perception and proprioception appears to directly interface with and apprehend both the surrounding physical environment and the physical-biological conditions of its embodiment (its body). Following from a direct realist theory, consciousness is not ontologically cut-off, or separated from physical reality, as postulated in some forms of dualism.

- Embodied conscious beings purposefully impact through bodily action the surrounding physical environment, and through thought and other conscious processes influence and direct their own consciousness and its further development.
- Regarding the last two points, it is more accurate to describe consciousness, in its fundamental emergent form, as an active and engaging complex relationship between an embodied conscious being and its surrounding environment, and the apprehension of this relationship, rather than some kind of inner and separate reality divorced from the physical world.
- Consciousness is relatively personified, in that there are integrative (relatively articulated) conscious selves who are the coordinative centers and agents of consciousness and purposeful behavior. Within fundamental sensory-behavioral consciousness there is a necessary component of self-consciousness, in that perceptual-proprioceptual consciousness contains a reciprocal apprehension of the embodied individual conscious being and its surrounding environment and their relationship. In that the fundamental and necessary conditions of consciousness involve an ecological and reciprocal reality of conscious beings embedded within and interactive with a surrounding physical environment, basic perceptual-proprioceptual consciousness mirrors in its basic structure this reciprocal relationship.
- Through consciousness we are aware of other (personified) conscious beings, and consciously and purposefully interface and interact with such conscious beings. We can be conscious of the consciousness (or conscious selves) of others.
- Summarizing the above basic points, consciousness is an evolving, embodied, personalized revelatory relational engagement with reality (including physical reality), that also self-reflectively apprehends and engages with its own individuated conscious nature. We can describe individualized embodied personalized conscious beings as existing in a reciprocal relationship with their surrounding environment, both influencing and being influenced by the surrounding environment.

* * *

There are a number of additional important points regarding my proposed ecological-evolutionary (evolutionary Taoist) theory of the nature of consciousness.

I see consciousness as *multi-faceted*. There are many different phenomenal components and processes of consciousness, including perception and proprioception (sensing the body), conscious purposeful behavior, feeling and emotion, motivation and desire, memory (generated through learning) and abstraction, imagination and thinking, ethical and normative consciousness, social and technological consciousness, ecological and cosmic consciousness (consciousness of nature and the universe), and self-consciousness (a conscious self). I describe in detail these components and processes in Chapters Two, Three, Eight, Nine, Ten, Eleven, and Twelve and summarize these detailed descriptions in the first part of Chapter Thirteen.

Having summarized certain key points regarding perception, proprioception, and purposeful behavior in the above first part of this section, in the remainder of this section I summarize important features about other components and processes in the multi-faceted make-up consciousness.

Emotion and motivation (discussed in Chapter Eight) both involve a feeling dimension, and both emotion and motivation involve types of relationships conscious beings have with their environment. In emotion, we have various types of feelings about the environment, both pleasant and positive, and unpleasant and negative; in motivation we have various desires regarding objects and features of the environment, both pleasant-approach oriented and unpleasant-avoidance oriented. In so far as the experience of feelings necessarily involves having a conscious body, both emotion and motivation require a conscious body. Also, motivational states of desire are frequently accompanied by emotional feelings, and in fact, various emotional feelings, such as fear, anger, and love, can be motivational states in and of themselves. It seems to me that both emotional feelings and motivational desires are primordial conscious states (along with perception, proprioception, and purposeful behavior), but in both cases additionally show evolutionary development across progressively more complex life forms—enriching and expanding—and show individual development across individual life-spans, especially notable in human development.

Another key feature of emotion and motivation is that both are complex psychophysiological Gestalts—especially so in adult human consciousness—involving bodily states and feelings (including pleasure and pain), perceptual and behavioral components, thinking and cognitive factors, and values and ideals. As illustrated with this last point, I view the multi-faceted array of conscious capacities and phenomena as interactive, in which the various conscious processes influence each other in numerous ways, in essence forming complex conscious *Gestalts* in the flow of experience. As one key example, thought, emotion, and motivation are interactive, impacting each other.

As one final point, it is important that we recognize and sufficiently appreciate the emotional-motivational dimension of consciousness so as not to over-intellectualize the reality of consciousness; there is a core feeling dimension of consciousness which powerfully colors and influences the flow and content of consciousness and purposeful behavior. If we are to realistically consider the future evolution of consciousness we need to give sufficient importance to the emotional-motivational components of consciousness.

* * *

Also of special note regarding the multi-faceted nature of consciousness, human consciousness (and perhaps to various degrees in animal consciousness as well) has the capacity, through a number of conscious processes, to *transcend* the limiting constraints of the relative egocentric here and now, as revealed through perceptual and proprioceptual consciousness. (See Chapter Nine.) Through (conceptual) abstraction, memory, anticipation, imagination, thinking, and normative/prescriptive consciousness—as the most significant examples—conscious humans can: form general abstract ideas; consciously access the past and envision the future; create images of realities that do not presently exist in the surrounding environment; arrange and manipulate sequences of ideas (often abstract and linguistically symbolized) and images; consciously articulate hypothetical and fictitious realities; and conceptualize and imagine what should be, rather than just what is. Although in my view, consciousness

emerges in the fundamental processes of perception, proprioception, behavior, feeling, and desire, all of which involve basic forms of engagement with the relative here and now of ourselves embedded within an existing environment, consciousness has evolved such that, as conscious beings, we can transcend these constraints and parameters, expanding our awareness to include abstract categories; what was and what will be; the fictitious and hypothetical; what should be, rather than just what is; and organize and direct such conscious elements into complex sequences of thinking and intricate cognitive structures. It should be noted, though, that these transcendent capacities of consciousness are utilized a great deal of the time to more effectively engage with, understand, and direct our current perceptual reality. Through such transcendent capacities we become more empowered in dealing with the current and localized reality immediately around us.

* * *

In my view, a highly important feature of consciousness—especially human consciousness—is its *normative* or prescriptive dimension. Specifically regarding humans, we have developed theories, standards, values, and ideals regarding how different processes of consciousness and types of behavior *should or ought to be* executed and evaluated. Identifying excellence (and its converse, deficiency or failure) in any aspect of consciousness or form of behavior involves a normative perspective on consciousness and behavior.

Of special relevance to the normative dimension of the Third Foundation and its associated paradigm of consciousness are: The theory and practice of “critical thinking” as a normative approach to describing how to think well; ethics and morality as normative modes of consciousness, which identify types of behavior and states of consciousness that are good and admirable/laudable, as opposed to evil, immoral, or unethical; normative concepts of mental wellness or mental health which involve ideals and values defining preferable states of consciousness, personal flourishing, and behavior; aesthetics consciousness regarding the capacity to appreciate beauty and the capacity to create beauty; and epistemology, which is concerned with the nature of knowledge, the best practices for realizing (or at least progressively approaching) knowledge, and how to best evaluate knowledge claims. There are many other normative modes of consciousness, encompassing any form of behavior or consciousness for which ideals of performance and achievement can be articulated. At the very least, though, the Third Foundation embraces and pursues normative modes of consciousness pertaining to thinking (See Chapter Nine); ethics, aesthetics, and the acquisition of knowledge (See Chapter Eleven); and mental health (See Chapter Twelve).

I should note that, in so far as the Third Foundation pursues the preferable future evolution of consciousness, there is a normative component in its thinking and action—its paradigm of consciousness—for any dimension of consciousness for which a *preferable* evolutionary direction can be described and pursued. Values and ideals are involved in all aspects of consciousness for which we identify a preferable evolutionary direction. A central issue in normative thinking in the Third Foundation—an issue which applies to any form of normative consciousness—is identifying and justifying what are

the values and ideals defining preferable states and directions in consciousness. It is important to note that any identified normative or preferable direction for the future of consciousness should be grounded in an accurate and illuminating understanding of the complex nature of consciousness; the postulated preferable future evolution of consciousness (and associated values and ideals) needs to be realistic.

In so far as normative consciousness is a dimension of consciousness as a whole, and the Third Foundation conceptualizes consciousness as an evolutionary reality, then it stands to reason that our normative consciousness within the Third Foundation should be seen as evolutionary as well. The ethics, aesthetics, epistemology, and thinking and mental health ideals embraced and practiced in the Third Foundation are evolutionary and transformative. In general, the totality of identified preferable directions for the future of consciousness need to be seen as evolutionary and transformative; our notions of preferable directions for consciousness will evolve over time. There is no set of absolute or final ideals and values for consciousness and its evolution.

* * *

I also proposed in earlier chapters that consciousness is a *holistic* reality, with certain pervasive and integrative properties, usually involving many of the above cited conscious capacities and phenomena. (See Chapter Twelve.)

On key holistic feature of consciousness is its *temporal* nature and *temporal understanding* of reality. (See Chapter Seven.) The content of consciousness—of perceptions, feelings, memories, and thoughts, etc.—transforms over time. There is a temporal structure and flow to consciousness. This temporal flow contains conscious features or elements that stay relatively persistent or stable over time, such as the continuing sense of our body, but other features that both predictably or unpredictably change; for example, new thoughts and memories routinely “pop” into consciousness and then disappear, to be replaced by other thoughts and memories. At times the flow of consciousness can manifest a direction or trajectory, as when we sequentially think out a plan, work on solving a problem, or sequentially execute a multi-step complex behavior. We may coordinate and organize our thoughts over long periods of time to realize our long term goals. Other times the flow of consciousness manifests little if any directionality, with thoughts and memories jumping about from one point of attention to another, without any apparent rhyme or reason.

Not only is there a temporal flow of consciousness, but conscious animals, particularly humans, retain at least some memories of this temporal flow, acquiring a sense of the past, and based on such memories, learn to anticipate the content and direction of the flow, acquiring a conscious sense of the future. Both memories of the past and anticipations of the future inform and guide our experiences and actions in the present. The conscious flowing present is interpreted in terms of ideas and experiences pertaining to the past and to expectations of the future. The trajectory of ongoing purposeful evolution within an individual flow of consciousness is guided by both an understanding (memories) of the past and aspirations and expectations about the future. Emerging out memories and learning, coupled with and enhanced by

thinking and other conscious processes, we develop both historical and future consciousness.

Also enriching human temporal consciousness—of our understanding of the temporal flow of events—conscious humans have developed theories of history, time, and the future (See Chapters One, Two, and Seven). Such abstract theories and conceptualizations bring increasing meaning and perceived order to human reality. Such abstractions are also intimately connected with the development of conscious *narratives*, both of the past and anticipated/preferred future, and pertaining to both personal and grand narratives. We connect our theories of time with narratives of the passage of time.

All in all, temporal consciousness—our consciousness of time including our consciousness of the past, present, and future and perceived connections among these temporal realities—is a basic holistic feature of consciousness. As discussed in Chapter Two, our consciousness of the future—our future consciousness—is essential to the purposeful evolution of consciousness, indeed, the purposeful evolution of anything.

Connected with the temporality of consciousness is its *evolutionary* nature; consciousness evolves across time (See Chapters Two and Seven). Not only has consciousness emerged as a result of the evolution of a complex hierarchical and nested physical-ecological-biological structure in the universe, but consciousness itself, in various important respects, manifests an evolutionary trajectory.

As one key example of the evolutionary trajectory to consciousness, I proposed that there are a connected set of conscious processes that are primordial and foundational, which initially evolved in its history. These basic processes include perception and proprioception, purposeful behavior, feeling/emotion, and desire/motivation. These fundamental conscious processes became progressively more informed and enriched and guided by both learning/memory and anticipation (past and future consciousness). But when we come to more evolved animal life forms with increasingly complex nervous systems, a set of “higher forms” of consciousness emerged and progressively evolved, which include abstraction, thinking, imagination, and linguistic consciousness, further empowering the capacities of consciousness.

As a second important example of the evolutionary trajectory of consciousness, I proposed that for conscious beings empowered with advanced levels of consciousness, such as thought and historical and future consciousness, the process of the purposeful evolution of 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.

Within developmental theories of consciousness it is hypothesized that the content and capacities of consciousness transform and evolve along various trajectories, such as thinking becoming more abstract and self-reflective, or the conscious self becoming more articulated and autonomous. Of particular relevance to the concept of purposeful evolution, the trajectory of individuated consciousness to some degree is guided by conscious purpose or intention to realize more advanced and desirable levels of

functioning and achievement. In this case, the development of consciousness over time is purposefully directed toward desired goals. Conscious beings, to different degrees, purposefully transform and evolve their consciousness.

* * *

Again regarding holistic features of consciousness, aside from the fact that consciousness has an organized temporal flow, this entire flow of consciousness is experienced as belonging to a (relatively) singular⁹ and unique conscious *self*. (See Chapter Twelve.) The conscious self is experienced as situated within the surrounding environment and localized in the biological body; the conscious self emerges (and is grounded) in proprioception and is experienced as embodied. Also, the conscious self is experienced as the conscious agent that initiates and engages in the various conscious processes: The conscious self is experienced as doing the perceiving, behaving, feeling, remembering, thinking, desiring, planning, and anticipating within a conscious being. The conscious self is experienced as the coordinator and director of consciousness and behavior.

Although the conscious self is experienced as a unique and personalized reality, the conscious self evolves and develops throughout the lifespan, and frequently is the focus of the purposeful evolution of consciousness, in which the conscious self, as a self-reflective (self-aware) agent, initiates and pursues activities to transform and evolve its own personality, character, and make-up. As such, to a degree, the conscious self is a self-creative and self-transforming reality.

Facilitated through the processes of memory and anticipation, the conscious self defines and interprets its distinctive personhood, and anticipates and directs its future development through *self-narratives*, articulating both a narrative of itself through the past up to the present, and a narrative of its (desired) future.

* * *

Another significant holistic feature of consciousness, described earlier, is what I refer to as a “*paradigm of consciousness*.”¹⁰ (See Chapter Twelve.) A paradigm of consciousness is a relatively integrated conscious way of life, involving: a set of connected beliefs and theories informing the paradigm; a characteristic set of behaviors and modes of interaction with the environment, informed by these beliefs and theories; a set of connected values and goals, which define the purposes, preferences, and aspirations directing the behavior; invariably a set of characteristic emotions and motives associated with the beliefs, values, and modes of action; and frequently an associated, often selected or constructed, environmental ambience in which the paradigm is practiced and/or acted upon.

⁹ Human conscious individuals can experience and manifest multiple conscious selves (multiple personalities), and can also experience their conscious selves as confused, disorganized, or ambiguous.

¹⁰ I base my interpretation of the concept of a paradigm in large part on Thomas Kuhn’s view of paradigms as described in his book *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*.

A paradigm of consciousness usually includes both memories/historical consciousness and anticipations/goals/future consciousness. A paradigm contains answers within it to such questions as: How did the paradigm originate and develop? What is the purpose of practicing and living the paradigm? A paradigm of consciousness can be embraced and practiced by one individual or by a group of individuals.

All in all, a paradigm of consciousness is a psychological and ecological integrative Gestalt of consciousness, pulling together thoughts, emotions, goals, values, behavior, and supportive environment, and giving advocates and practitioners of the paradigm meaning and purpose in their lives. As noted earlier, the Third Foundation is a paradigm of consciousness.

* * *

Another important holistic feature of consciousness identified in my evolutionary Taoist theory of consciousness is *character virtues*. (See Chapter Twelve.) Virtues are esteemed character traits that embody excellence and positive values across the varied aspects of human consciousness and behavior. Virtues are character traits, in so far as they are relatively constant dispositions of consciousness and behavior that are manifested across situational or environmental variability. A virtue is an expression of both a desire and a habit; possessing a virtue means that it is a constancy or habit of thought and behavior, and moreover, the individual possessing the virtue desires to express the virtue. A character virtue is psychologically holistic integrating components of thought, desire, emotion, value, and behavior. "Values become virtues when they are internalized as enduring character traits." In essence, character virtues are a form of normative consciousness expressed within the overall conscious character (or personality) and behavior of an individual.¹¹

Character virtues are an important concept in the Third Foundation paradigm of consciousness because: The Third Foundation aspires toward the purposeful future evolution of consciousness; this evolutionary direction is intended to cover all features of the multi-faceted nature of consciousness, inclusive of normative consciousness, and especially highlighting holistic features of consciousness, which integrate the multi-faceted array of conscious abilities and phenomena; and character virtues are holistic conscious realities that are normative (or preferable) and frequently ethical in nature, thus providing an integrative, holistic, and normative focus for the future evolution of consciousness. Just as I have described the heightening of future consciousness as involving the development of a key set of character virtues,¹² more broadly the preferable future evolution of consciousness can be described as the ongoing development of a set of character virtues.

One key character virtue to aspire toward in the future evolution of consciousness is wisdom. (See Chapter Twelve.) Wisdom integrates multiple conscious processes and modes of behavior and pulls together many character virtues, such as honesty, the

¹¹ Lombardo, 2017, pp. 182-183.

¹² Lombardo, 2017, pp. 212-248.

pursuit of knowledge and good thinking, ethical pragmatism, realistic hope and practical optimism, and concern for others (both human and other life forms). Wisdom has an ethical and normative dimension, has a self-reflective nature, engages complex self-reflective thought, and takes a cosmic perspective on reality (see further discussion below). Indeed the pursuit of wisdom has great relevance to the further evolution of our technological consciousness; we should aspire toward becoming “wise cyborgs.” Pulling together two holistic dimensions of consciousness, it is conscious selves that are wise (or not wise). In essence, wisdom, as an integrative and personalized character virtue, provides a center of focus and guiding light for the preferable future evolution of consciousness and our conscious selves.¹³

* * *

To complete this overview of my ecological-evolutionary (evolutionary Taoist) theory of the nature and main features of consciousness, there are a collective set of modes of consciousness that pertain to relationships between individualized consciousness and a set of basic features of the surrounding environment. This set of modes of consciousness includes: Interpersonal consciousness, social-cultural consciousness, environmental consciousness of nature, technological consciousness, planetary consciousness, and cosmic consciousness. (See Chapter Ten.) Manifestations of different types of reciprocity occur in these different modes of consciousness. Moreover, all these modes of consciousness are dynamic and evolutionary phenomena, progressively developing at both the individual level across the lifespan and at the collective level, transforming and evolving through human history.

Interpersonal consciousness is individualized consciousness of other individual conscious selves, and various forms of conscious interaction with other individualized conscious selves. Through ongoing interaction between conscious selves, conscious selves reciprocally develop and evolve, in which conscious selves both influence and are influenced by other conscious selves. This mode of consciousness includes romantic and erotic relationships, parental and family relationships, friendships and partnerships/collaborations, leadership and follower relationships, and competitive/adversarial versus cooperative/collaborative relationships between conscious selves. In general, it appears that individual human conscious selves require interpersonal conscious interaction in order to fully develop through the lifespan. Just as the conscious self fundamentally requires an ambient environment in order to realize its existence, for humans, a social environment of other human conscious selves is necessary for the individual conscious self to be fully realized.

Regarding *social-cultural consciousness*, individual human conscious selves are aware of belonging to social groups, and individual selves identify with groups, with the group providing key values, norms, and beliefs assimilated by individual group members. Reciprocity, though, applies again: Although individual conscious human selves exist within groups and societies and are powerfully influenced by such social realities, individuals impact and influence groups and societies. Different types of societies, for example participatory versus dictatorial societies, both foster and are

¹³ See Lombardo, 2017, Chapter Eighteen, for an extensive discussion of wisdom.

supported by different types of individual conscious selves; for example, participatory societies support proactive individuals versus authoritarian societies support passive conscious selves. In general, individual conscious selves and groups/societies reciprocally evolve.¹⁴

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, evolving and developing 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 conscious ways of life. Due to the degree of “isolation” from nature generated by modern technologically enveloped societies, contemporary individual conscious selves are to various degrees oblivious to the natural environment, including the immense plethora of other living forms, which supports their existence. This lack of awareness and appreciation of the natural environment is a clear deficiency in consciousness, since human life depends upon nature. *Environmental 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.¹⁵

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 impacts and transforms the environment. Technological visions of preferred futures hypothesize that technological evolution will benefit all aspects of human life and human consciousness. But the effects of technologies, both pertaining to our psychology and our environment can be detrimental as well as positive, and often a combination of the two. As a second tier level of purposeful future-directed technological creation and implementation, technologies are developed and used to coordinate and facilitate the operation of other technologies.

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 and the technological. I define a “cyborg” as a functional synthesis of the bio-

¹⁴ See Lombardo, 2017, pp. 305-328 for a discussion of interpersonal and social consciousness and its connection with future consciousness.

¹⁵ See Lombardo, 2017, pp. 341-348 for a discussion consciousness of nature as it pertains to future consciousness.

psychological 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.

The environment of modern humans is to a great degree technologically infused and managed. Nature and our relationship with nature is significantly orchestrated through technology. Competently operating and living within a technologically enhanced environment requires the development of various conscious skills and resonant ways of life. Part of our cyborg nature is being able to interface with and competently manage our interactions with a technologically infused environment.

As technologies are purposefully evolved, human consciousness and human ways of life are affected and transformed, thus affecting the further creation, modification, and operation of technologies. Hence technology and human consciousness reciprocally evolve.

The issue has been debated throughout modern history whether humans control technology, or technology controls humans; or perhaps it is some kind of collaborative relationship. As cyborgs we exist in a reciprocal relationship with our technologies, and the question arises over who or what is controlling this relationship.

Another central issue is whether technologies, if continuing to evolve in complexity, will realize consciousness. There are ongoing efforts to simulate all aspects of human consciousness and human behavior in technological devices. Both fear and hope are provoked in thinking about and imagining this future possibility. A good deal of science fiction has explored this future possibility and our emotional reactions to future “conscious machines.”¹⁶

Although the Third Foundation has as its central goal the future evolution of consciousness, the Third Foundation acknowledges the essential role technology has played (and undoubtedly will continue to play) in the evolution of human consciousness and human ways of life. The key question for the Third Foundation is how technological developments facilitate (or don’t facilitate) the evolution of consciousness. In the Third Foundation technology is a means to an end.

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 reality involving human societies (and cultures), a complex and ubiquitous interactive web of life forms, geo-meteorological processes and conditions, 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, in so far humans are embedded in and have evolved within a planetary reality.

¹⁶ See Lombardo, 2017, pp. 328-341 for a discussion of technology and future consciousness.

Finally, *cosmic consciousness* is the most expansive and encompassing mode of 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 can take the form of 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.

It seems to me that most, if not all humans, have some level of cosmic consciousness. Frequently in individuals their cosmic consciousness is greatly informed and influenced by religious mindsets (paradigms of consciousness). Yet, also, cosmic consciousness in individuals may be based upon scientific theories of the universe, the earth, and humanity. Abstract secular philosophies are another source of inspiration for an individual’s cosmic consciousness. A good portion of science fiction literature deals with cosmic-level scenarios and often generates cosmic consciousness in its readers.

As fundamental to its paradigm of consciousness, the Third Foundation embraces a theory of the universe and humanity’s place within it—a cosmic consciousness framework—that greatly influences its self-identity and purposeful future evolution. Within the Third Foundation, the universe is viewed as a cosmic evolutionary reality; humanity and consciousness are seen as embedded in this evolutionary reality; and the overarching goal of the Third Foundation is to participate within and purposefully facilitate the evolution of the cosmos through the purposeful evolution of consciousness. This basic cosmic evolutionary mindset subsumes social, ecological, technological, and planetary dimensions of human existence.

* * *

In summary, for this last section: Any approach to the future of consciousness is based on a theory of the nature of consciousness; the evolutionary-ecological (evolutionary Taoist) theory of consciousness within the Third Foundation proposes that consciousness is cosmically emergent, evolutionary, and individually developmental; further, consciousness is embedded within, supported by, reciprocally interactive with, and revelatory of the surrounding physical environment; moreover, consciousness is embodied, locally individuated, personified, and self-reflective; also, consciousness is both multi-faceted and holistic-integrative; holistic features of consciousness include a coordinative self, paradigms of consciousness, character virtues, and a normative dimension; also human consciousness has a temporal form and possesses temporal apprehension, and through historical and future consciousness and abstraction, thought, and imagination can transcend the here and now. Regarding key types of reciprocal relationships with the surrounding environment, human consciousness involves interpersonal, social-cultural, environmental-naturalistic, technological, global-planetary, and cosmic dimensions.

Preferable and Purposeful Future Evolution of Consciousness

The Third Foundation vision of the preferable future evolution of consciousness is comprehensive in scope covering the multi-faceted and holistic-integrative nature of consciousness, including perceptual and proprioceptual abilities; emotion and motivation; thought, imagination, and knowledge; temporal consciousness; normative consciousness, including ethics, aesthetics, and values; character virtues and wisdom; the conscious self; and social, technological, environmental-planetary, and cosmic consciousness.

Encompassing the above spheres of consciousness, and providing a detailed preferable trajectory for the future evolution of consciousness, the Third Foundation identifies extensive sets of both ideals for the preferable evolution of consciousness, both individually and collectively, and aligned oppositional weaknesses/failings in contemporary human consciousness. These sets are conceptualized as evolutionary and open to ongoing revision and further development.

The opening thesis in this book is two-fold: The various major problems and challenges facing contemporary global humanity are due to deficiencies and weaknesses in human consciousness, and that by heightening and evolving human consciousness, thus diminishing or eliminating these deficiencies and weaknesses in human consciousness, we can eradicate or significantly diminish our current problems and challenges, as well as creating a positive future. The central goal of the Third Foundation is consequently two-fold: to eliminate or diminish weakness and failings in human consciousness, and to enhance and evolve human consciousness relative to a normative set of ideals, with the intention to significantly improve the current conditions of human existence, and as an ongoing evolutionary trajectory, create a progressively improving future. Based on an analysis of current failings and a thoughtful articulation of ideals of consciousness, the purpose of the Third Foundation is the preferable future evolution of consciousness.

As an analytical approach to describing in more detail the overarching goals of the Third Foundation, I have compiled extensive lists of: current weaknesses and failings in consciousness, which I hypothesize are the basic causes of our problems, and ideals and aspirations of consciousness, which I hypothesize will constructively address our problems and create a positive future. In considering the preferable evolutionary development of consciousness, we can either think in terms of eradicating weaknesses and failings, or realizing ideals and positive aspirations. To use a medical-psychotherapeutic metaphor, the first perspective aligns with the elimination of a disease or malady, whereas the second approach aligns with the realization of health and well-being. The two created lists are organized as oppositional pairs. We can imagine our preferable future evolution of consciousness as a set of trajectories moving away from specific weaknesses and failings toward opposing specific ideals, in many cases moving from vices toward opposing virtues. (See Chapter Thirteen in this volume for complete and detailed paired lists of deficiencies and ideals of consciousness.)

In creating these lists, my intention is to be comprehensive in scope, covering all the major dimensions of consciousness. I have grouped the opposing pairs of deficiencies and ideals in terms of the following general categories:

- 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

A number of basic points should be made about the coupled lists of deficiencies and ideals:

The lists are intended to be comprehensive, covering all the major features and processes of consciousness. Visions of the future evolution of consciousness are often limited and selective, highlighting only certain components of consciousness. Such visions are unrealistic, since consciousness is a holistic and interactive reality, and evolution in any dimension of consciousness will undoubtedly impact other dimensions. Limited visions of consciousness generate lop-sided and biased visions of the future of consciousness, and can actually foster more problems in the future. Such visions are not wise. In thinking about the most realistic and efficacious approach to the preferable future evolution of consciousness it is essential that our understanding of consciousness, upon which future ideal visions are created, be holistic and multi-faceted covering the total breath of consciousness.

It is unrealistic to suppose that any individual in our contemporary world, including participants in the Third Foundation, could competently work on the total array of items in these lists within any manageable period of time. Different individuals will probably identify different items that seem particularly relevant and important for their own personal development. It is quite understandable and reasonable to focus upon those items that seem most valuable and significant in one's own personal evolution.

But in considering humanity as a whole, or just participants in the Third Foundation, and conceptualizing the evolution of consciousness as a long term process, all the items on the list can be effectively addressed. The lists provide both direction for individuals within individual life-spans, and long term direction for the Third Foundation and collective humanity. The mass effect of individual progressive journeys—focusing upon different problems and goals—will be to collectively generate progress in rectifying the total array of deficiencies and realizing the total array of ideals in human consciousness. I do think that the collective membership of the Third Foundation and

humanity as a whole—especially as extending into the long term future—can and should address all the items on the lists.

The items in either the list of failings, or the list of ideals are in numerous ways interconnected. Progress on one item will generate progress in other items. Since consciousness is a holistic interactive 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.

It is not the intent in presenting these deficiencies and ideals to argue for some uniform ideal human, or form of consciousness. I see diversity within human consciousness as ideally increasing rather than diminishing in the future. There are numerous features of contemporary human existence that enforce (or reinforce) conformity, and dampen unique individuality. I see our current level of conscious evolution as suffocating and repressing the range of individuated conscious beings. The ideals presented below should have the effect of amplifying diversity of consciousness. We can argue that 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 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.

Finally, since I conceptualize efforts, such as the Third Foundation, that aspire toward the future evolution of consciousness as *preferably* evolving paradigms of consciousness, the list of deficiencies and ideals provided should continue to evolve. As a normative paradigm of consciousness, the ideals of the Third Foundation should evolve in the future.

* * *

To provide a highly compressed description of the preferable evolutionary trajectory of consciousness, distilled from the extensive and categorized lists of opposing deficiencies and ideals, consciousness should evolve: from a static vision of reality resistant to change and purposeful evolution toward a mindset that embraces an evolutionary vision of reality and pursues purposeful evolution; from materialist (techno-dependent), dualist, and idealist philosophies toward a reciprocal understanding of consciousness and physical reality; and from repetitious, chaotic, and non-reflective consciousness toward a more creative, focused, and self-reflective consciousness.

Also, consciousness should evolve from a narrow (egocentric) me-here-now presentist perspective toward a spatial-temporal expansive consciousness; from

perceptual inattentiveness to perceptual attentiveness; from diminished to enhanced bodily consciousness and well-being; from negative (depressed, fearful, and angered) and repressed emotionality toward positive and enriched emotionality; from short-term and apathetic motivation and purpose to long-term and heightened motivation and deep purpose; from an anti-intellectual and dogmatic/absolutist mindset and disinterest in learning, thinking, and the pursuit of knowledge to self-reflective and principled open-mindedness, and the passionate love and pursuit of learning and thinking; and from surface learning to deep learning and the desire for wisdom and enlightenment.

Other trajectories include moving from ethical entrenchment, ethical minimization, and a lack of concern in character virtues toward ethical evolution and centrally valuing ethics and the pursuit of virtue; from a disempowering sense of self (and a negative self-narrative) coupled with a sense of helplessness and diminished self-responsibility and self-efficacy toward enhanced self-awareness, self-responsibility, and self-efficacy (self-empowerment) associated with a positive self-narrative; from a self-centered toward a contributory sense of self; and from distressful, painful, and floundering dysfunctional consciousness toward psychological well-being, flourishing, and evolutionary happiness.

Moreover, our consciousness should move from socially disconnected, diminished, and uncaring interpersonal consciousness toward enhanced levels of caring, concern, and empathy; from a diminished capacity for cooperation and collaboration coupled with authoritarian-submissive interpersonal relationships toward partnership consciousness; from a lack of concern and consequent lack of action for social justice, fairness, and equality toward concern and efforts to realize social justice, fairness, and equality; from non-participation and lack of interest in collective efforts to benefit humanity as a whole toward participation and interest in efforts to benefit humanity as a whole; and from a lack of participation and interest in realizing a positive grand narrative for humanity toward interest and participation in a positive grand narrative.

As one final set of trajectories, consciousness should evolve from minimal interest and understanding of our natural environment and our reciprocal relationship with it toward enhanced understanding and appreciation of our reciprocal relationship with nature; from a lack of concern with our planetary reality—a local, isolationist, egocentric mindset—toward understanding, concern, and action regarding the evolution of our planetary reality; from technological development impervious to its impact on individual consciousness and collective human well-being toward purposeful technological development guided by values and ideals pertaining to the preferable evolution of consciousness; from foolish cyborgs toward wise cyborgs; from shallow, narrow, and outdated cosmic consciousness toward deep, expansive, and up-to-date cosmic consciousness; and from psychological imbalances in holistic consciousness and a lack of the capacity for wisdom toward the pursuit of balance and an enhanced and progressively developing capacity for wisdom.

In conclusion, grounded in an evolutionary Taoist theory of the nature of consciousness, the preferable purposeful evolution of consciousness should be a comprehensive and multi-faceted normative directive with an integrative focus on the ongoing development of a wise consciously expansive participatory self.

Science Fiction Narrative as the Engaging Credible Transcendent

The Third Foundation is informed and inspired by a narrative of its creation, development, and future that is modeled on science fiction narrative. Science fiction narratives, which include a great diversity of points of view and can be accurately described as the “mythology of the future,” provide engaging, credible, and transcendent visions covering the future of everything. Cosmic in scope, fantastical in speculative content, and provoking awe and wonder, science fiction narratives are highly relevant to thinking about the future of consciousness.

In this section I describe the central role and significance of science fiction narrative in informing and inspiring the Third Foundation. Key topics addressed include: the psycho-social importance of the narrative; science fiction as the mythology (or mythic narratives) of the future; science fiction as holistic future consciousness; in covering the future of everything, science fiction has great relevance to the future of consciousness; science fiction narratives provide frameworks of understanding and meaning and direction for the Third Foundation; and in many key respects the basic narrative of the Third Foundation is a science fiction narrative.

Humans critically depend upon narratives to inform and inspire them. Human consciousness is particularly disposed toward resonating with stories, as a way to make sense of (their) reality and provide ideals and direction for their lives. At the individual level, narratives holistically engage all the main features of consciousness, including thought, imagination, emotion, value, and self-identity. (Recall the point that as individuals we engage in self-narration in defining who we are and what we are doing in life.) At the collective level, shared grand narratives seem an essential part of all cultures, societies, and social movements. Humans, both individually and collectively, are informed, empowered, and guided by narratives.

Hence, it seems to me that the Third Foundation requires, as a central driving force and framework of understanding, a narrative giving it purpose and meaning. Such a narrative would holistically engage all major dimensions of consciousness, including cognition, emotion-motivation, purposeful action, and social awareness. This narrative would serve to motivate and energize participants in the Third Foundation and provide a dramatized explanation of what the Third Foundation is all about and where it is heading. The narrative would include both an inspiring description of the creation of the Third Foundation and an empowering vision of its future directionality. It would be a narrative embraced and further evolved by a community of socially interactive participants.

I propose that such a narrative should take the form of science fiction, providing a scientifically and philosophically credible story (or cluster of related stories) that is evolutionary in framework, cosmic in scope, and transcendent in its aspiration. In order to explain my rationale for this thesis I need to describe certain basic features of science fiction.

The place to begin an examination of science fiction is with myth. Ancient myths, many of which are still embraced in contemporary times, provided humanity with inspiring narratives that were fantastical in imagination, cosmic in scope, and provided both individuals and societies with both purpose and meaning in life. Other key

qualities of myth include personification, archetypal themes, awe and wonder, immersive participation, moral-ethical directives or lessons, and totems and icons.¹⁷ All in all, mythic narratives holistically engaged all the major dimensions of human consciousness.

As I've explained at length in other publications, science fiction, as a narrative form, embodies all the same psychological and social features of ancient myth, with the important qualification that the view of reality in science fiction is primarily informed by contemporary science and contemporary thought, giving it more credibility than ancient myths, which were grounded in archaic theories of reality and human existence. As with ancient myths, science fiction narratives delve into the fantastical, cosmic, and wondrous; holistically stimulate emotion, thought, and imagination; and inspire, motivate, and provide personal meaning in life. Science fiction, though, realizes and achieves all these qualities in a credible contemporary framework of understanding.¹⁸

As such, I have proposed that science fiction can be viewed as the “mythology of the future.” As with ancient mythic narrative, science fiction engages holistic consciousness within a cosmic, fantastical, and transcendent perspective. Moreover, science fiction emphasizes the future (possibilities and probabilities) with its numerous narrative visions of the future. Yet, science fiction generates a more credible form of myth creation for our future, since it is grounded in contemporary thinking and standards, rather than archaic ones.

Hence, with science fiction we have a mode of future consciousness that is frequently cosmic in scope, psychologically holistic, and reflective of contemporary philosophy and science. As such, the stories of science fiction can and should inform and guide us in the creation of the future, which of course would include the purposeful evolution of consciousness. In the Third Foundation, science fiction can and should serve as a credible and psychologically engaging form of futures speculation and narrative creation to facilitate the ongoing evolution of consciousness.

As a few additional points about science fiction, I should highlight that science fiction is both realistic (or realistically credible) and transcendent, synthesizing these two qualities. Science fiction is based upon our best current understanding of reality—often a big picture cosmic view—and yet, grounded in this realism, science fiction attempts to extrapolate and imagine plausible possibilities, reaching toward the transcendent and the cosmic, and distinctly beyond the here and now.

Regarding the realism of science fiction, Arthur C. Clarke stated, “science fiction is escape into reality... It's a fiction which...concern[s] itself with real issues: the origin of man; our future. In fact I can't think of any form of literature which is more concerned with real issues, reality.” And more recently, from another science fiction writer, Kim Stanley Robinson, “Science fiction is the realism of our time.”

¹⁷ See Lombardo, *Science Fiction, Volume One*, pp. 57-60 for an extensive list of the key qualities of myth.

¹⁸ Science fiction narratives can include in their themes and story lines ancient mythic narratives and concepts, but the overarching framework of understanding reality is contemporary science and philosophy. See Lombardo, *Science Fiction, Volume One, Chapter Two*.

Also, I should note—a view I have also argued for in numerous previous publications—that science fiction throughout its history has greatly contributed to the holistic evolution of future consciousness. Because science fiction involves personalized narratives that stimulate all aspects of consciousness, it is able to stimulate and enhance all the psychological components of future consciousness, from thought and imagination to emotion, motivation, and values. Since its modern beginnings in the writings of Jules Verne and H.G. Wells, science fiction has stimulated and informed the imagination and thinking of humanity and provoked powerful emotional responses regarding the possibilities, good and bad, about the future.

This enhancement of holistic future consciousness is comprehensive in scope. Science fiction addresses all dimensions of the future and not just the future of science and technology. Science fiction is about the *future of everything*, and heightens our future consciousness regarding all aspects of the future. Many of the different areas of speculation about the future, including society, culture, and the environment (see below), have great relevance to the future of consciousness.

Science fiction also offers a *diversity* of narrative perspectives on the future. It is an arena of speculation, explored by numerous writers with different philosophies, styles, and points of view, which consciously delves into the numerous possibilities of the future, including a multitude of both preferable and undesirable futures. Because of this rich diversity of perspectives, science fiction expands our (future) consciousness regarding the possibilities of the future. If the Third Foundation aspires toward expansive consciousness, the ongoing evolution of the Third Foundation should include the open and thoughtful consideration of diverse visions of the future that have been articulated within the history of science fiction.

All in all, if we are to envision an informed and inspiring narrative for the future evolution of consciousness, such a narrative would have all the main qualities and strengths of a *science fiction narrative*. As such, the narrative for the Third Foundation should be a science fiction narrative. As key qualities that mirror basic features of science fiction, the narrative of the Third Foundation:

- Is informed by a credible contemporary scientific-philosophical understanding of humanity, consciousness, nature, and the cosmos
- Describes the ongoing quest for and realization of the transcendent to more evolved levels of conscious reality
- Includes elements of the fantastical and mind-boggling
- Is both dramatic and inspiring
- Includes a significant role for numerous participatory characters
- Identifies dramatic challenges and problems as integral to its narrative, both in provoking its creation and accompanying (often interfering with) its realization
- Includes chaos and unpredictability in the development of the Third Foundation
- Describes the evolution of the Third Foundation as occurring in the context of and interaction with other social forces and paradigms of consciousness
- Anticipates illuminating new insights and discoveries
- Anticipates significant critical events in its evolution
- Anticipates evolutionary transformations in its own development

- Is informed and inspired by an in-depth understanding of the diversity of science fiction narratives about the future

To illustrate a number of the above points, recall that Asimov's First and Second Foundations both embraced a narrative explaining their origin and purpose. The all-encompassing narrative within the *Foundation* trilogy, formulated by Hari Seldon, was that civilization is collapsing into barbarism and the journey toward a new higher form of civilization can be speeded up through the formation of two Foundations—grounded in the principles and predictions of psychohistory—which will preserve and further develop human knowledge, both in the physical and mental spheres. The over-arching narrative in the *Foundation* trilogy—a science fiction saga—is that the future is a challenge, and a journey through the darkness, with the promise of a better reality out ahead, if we adhere to certain principles and pursue certain goals. Indeed, in the storyline of the trilogy, adding more drama to the tale, an element of chaos—the sociopathic “Mule”—further exacerbates the difficulties encountered on the journey through the darkness toward the light. The protagonists in the trilogy embrace Seldon's narrative and in the storyline attempt to follow that narrative as the preferred pathway toward a positive future; indeed the drama in the trilogy is the ongoing struggle, with various encountered obstacles, to follow Seldon's narrative to its promised conclusion. The *Foundation* trilogy provides a clear example of how a science fiction story can provide a future-focused, inspiring and dramatic, and holistically engaging narrative describing the ongoing evolution of humanity.

One of the qualities of a Third Foundation narrative, which aligns with the developmental history of science fiction narratives, is that the Third Foundation draws upon the immense and diverse array of science fiction stories (and cinema) for informative and inspiring ideas in its creation and development. In creating new science fiction narratives, science fiction authors have frequently drawn upon ideas and themes in previous science fiction stories. Science fiction is a cumulative process, self-reflectively building upon its own history. As an informed science fiction narrative, the Third Foundation narrative similarly develops, building upon previous science fiction stories and novels.

To review some key dimensions of the future explored in science fiction that have great relevance to the future of consciousness and the evolution of the Third Foundation, first there are a great number of science fiction novels and stories that specifically focus on the future evolution of mind and consciousness. (See Chapter Fourteen for an extensive list of novels and stories and specific themes and topics addressed in this area of science fiction.)

Additionally, there are numerous writings that delve into the social, ecological-environment, and planetary dimensions of the future that are relevant to the future of consciousness. Regarding social consciousness of the future, as mentioned earlier, within the history of science fiction numerous tales of future human societies, utopian and dystopian, and corresponding transformations in human consciousness have been articulated. A few illustrative examples were cited, including the books of H. G. Wells. But there is a huge array of science fiction novels and stories on future human societies (and new modes of social consciousness), often involving complex mixtures of utopian (preferable) and dystopian (undesirable) realities and diverse forms of social

consciousness. Also, science fiction has frequently addressed civilizational, environmental, and planetary transformations in the future and how humans and human society would consciously transform in response to such changes. (Again see Chapter Fourteen for an extensive list of novels and stories in this area.)

Science fiction has also provided cosmic perspectives on humanity and the future, and such narratives also are relevant to thinking about the future of consciousness. When Hari Seldon envisioned the future of human civilization, his sphere of consciousness enveloped the entire galaxy. Indeed, science fiction is notorious for all its speculative adventures set in the vast reaches of outer space, extending from our solar system to our galaxy to the totality of our universe, and even to possible other universes (inclusive of the hypothetical multi-verse). Throughout its history, one central feature of science fiction has been that through its numerous imaginary journeys into outer space it has stimulated and expanded our cosmic consciousness. Within science fiction, in diverse ways, humanity has been repeatedly and frequently viewed within the context of the vast spatial universe in which we exist. Frequently, highly scientifically-informed speculations on other worlds, alien life forms and ecologies, other civilizations, the challenges of exploration and human settlement, and the intricate and dynamic structures and energetic patterns of the universe, have all been topics addressed in science fiction. (See Chapter Fourteen for novels and stories on space travel and cosmic themes.)

Although science fiction narratives about journeys into outer space may, on first glance, seem far-out and not germane to the human condition or the nature of consciousness, the opposite is actually the case. Expanding our horizons beyond human existence on the earth counter-acts our cognitive disposition to think in human-centric terms. Should we view the big issues and questions of life from the limiting perspective of the human condition and an exclusively human mindset? Should we conceptualize humanity as the center of the universe, or the apex of cosmic creation? Taking a cosmic perspective, such as provided through science fiction narratives about outer space, places humanity in a more realistic and humbling position relative to the grand scheme of things. Indeed, we can not even accurately perceive and understand the true nature of humanity unless we stand back from our localized and circumscribed existence on the earth and view ourselves in the context of the whole of which we are a part. Cosmic consciousness is necessary in order to realistically see ourselves, and outer space science fiction adventures in narrative form take us out into the universe in order to have a more expansive perspective on ourselves.

One topic, frequently associated with science fiction, is the future of technology, and the impact of new emergent technologies on future human life. Although future technological evolution can be viewed as providing great benefits for the future of humanity—a beacon of hope—the ongoing future development of technologies has also been viewed as something to fear. There has been the longstanding fear, at least since Shelley's *Frankenstein*, but more effectively stated later in the nineteenth century in Butler's *Erewhon*, that we could lose control of our invented technologies, and our technologies could overpower us, indeed perhaps eliminating us.

I should though note, as a distinct possibility, frequently addressed in science fiction, that if we evolve technologies that realize consciousness and we arrive at the conclusion that such technological entities can achieve levels of consciousness,

inclusive of the ethical, emotional, and personal at least, that transcend the levels achieved in our current (or future) biological bodies, then it would make sense as a conscious decision to continue our pursuit of the evolution of consciousness within technological or bio-tech hybrid bodies. (See Chapter Fourteen for a sample of science fiction novels and stories dealing with the future of technology, and in particular, how the future evolution of technology could impact, both positively or negatively, the evolution of humanity and consciousness.)

All in all, science fiction provides a wealth of relevant spheres of speculation that address the future of consciousness, including stories dealing directly with the topic, and stories concerned with the future of society, the environment and ecology, biology, outer space exploration and alien contact, and technology, and how all these different spheres would impact the future of consciousness.

In summary, the central thesis of this section is that science fiction in its narrative form, as the “mythology of the future,” provides a vast, diverse, and comprehensive resource, and an exemplary model of the psycho-socially engaging and credible transcendent mode of inquiry in considering the future evolution of consciousness. The evolving narrative of the Third Foundation is modeled on, and informed and inspired by this resource of ideas.

The Third Foundation Narrative

The Third Foundation narrative is a realistic ideal future grand narrative that provides an inspiring and empowering collective framework for the creation and execution of realistic ideal future personal narratives among the Foundation’s members. Both the grand and associated personal narratives of the Third Foundation should ideally be wisdom narratives about the future.

The Third Foundation narrative incorporates in its storyline: drama and adventure; uncertainty and risk; problems, challenges, and dangers; evolutionary ups and downs; interactivity with the world and other paradigms of consciousness; the essential contributions of individuals; anticipated long term trajectories and accomplishments of the Foundation’s endeavors; the fantastical and the cosmic; and the evolutionary transcendence of current humanity and the evolutionary self-transcendence of the Third Foundation.

Building upon the central idea proposed in the previous section that the narrative of the Third Foundation should be conceptualized as a science fiction narrative, in this section I describe a number of additional main features of the futures narrative of the Third Foundation.

The core dramatic theme of the futures narrative of the Third Foundation is: As a constructive response to the challenges and problems facing contemporary humanity, the Foundation will actively and purposefully facilitate the future evolution of consciousness, and in so doing will have a pronounced positive impact on both individual human existence and collective humanity, as well as on the overall planetary conditions on the earth, and ultimately the future evolution of (humanity in) the cosmos.

As a starting point in this section let's review the concepts of a personal narrative and a grand narrative (See Chapter Twelve):

A *personal narrative* is the story individual humans develop describing their personal lives, past, present, and/or future. An individual's personal narrative provides a relatively integrated description and explanation of the ongoing pathway and direction of their life, giving their life a sense of meaning and purpose. A personal narrative usually includes key memorable episodes in a person's life and important influential people. Personal narratives contain both relatively stable and transformative dimensions; new key experiences and insights are recurrently added to currently existing personal narratives. Personal narratives enrich and evolve through people's lives. Personal narratives, aside from having a cognitive dimension, are filled with drama and emotion. Personal narratives possess core thematic features; for example: "I have struggled through life;" "My life has been wonderful and I have been very fortunate;" "I have achieved success in life;" or "I have been a victim of circumstances, or a failure in life."

A *grand narrative* is the story individual humans and groups of humans embrace that describes the development of the society/culture in which they live; human existence and civilization as a whole; the earth; and the universe. Grand narratives explain the overall ongoing pathway and direction of cultures, societies, the planet, and the cosmos, providing a sense of grand purpose and meaning for individuals. Grand narratives also frequently identify key events and famous people that have significantly impacted the overall course of events. Also, just like personal narratives, there is a dimension of drama and emotion within grand narratives. Finally, just as in personal narratives, grand narratives have general thematic features; for example, "Humanity, and indeed existence as a whole, has been guided and directed by some kind of transcendent power;" "Human civilization is an inspiring collective achievement;" "Human civilization throughout its history has been showing steady progress along multiple dimensions;" "Human civilization has generated ecological and environmental disaster on a global scale;" and "Life is idiotic, full of sound and fury, and signifying nothing."

Personal and grand narratives to various degrees are connected within a person's consciousness. People understand their individual lives—their personal narrative—in the context of the grand narrative they believe in and embrace. An individual's grand narratives gives meaning to their personal narratives and provides inspiration, purpose, and direction for their individual lives. Their grand narratives describe the "whole," in which individuals are an active "part" of and participate within. A person can view their individual lives (as depicted in their personal narratives) as contributory to the grand narrative of their culture or society, but individuals can also see their individual lives at odds with the grand narrative they believe accurately describes the trajectory of their culture, society, or human civilization as a whole; a person can view their culture or human civilization as destructive or inhibitory regarding realizing their individual happiness or success.

Another important distinction is between *real* and *ideal narratives*. In the former case, the narrative describes (as best as can be understood by the individual or group) the actual storyline and main themes of their individual lives or the history of the society,

planet, or the cosmos. In the latter case, the narrative describes the ideal or preferable storyline and main themes of the individual or group looking toward the future.

Of particular note, we can distinguish between a *realistic future narrative* and an *ideal future narrative*. The former describes what a person or group realistically expects—often based on past events—to happen in the future; the latter describes what a person or group would hope and prefer to happen in the future. Within science fiction, utopias are examples of ideal future narratives, whereas envisioned future dystopias are often presented as realistically based extrapolations of current negative trends and developments in human society.

The concepts of the real and the ideal can be synthesized in the idea of a *realistic ideal future narrative*, in which the ideals envisioned are based upon an accurate understanding of human reality and conditions at large. (Recall my point that a credible and convincing ideal vision pertaining to any feature of reality should be based on a correct understanding of that reality.)

One other important type of narrative to identify is the *wisdom narrative*. A wisdom narrative is a story that depicts individuals or groups either actively seeking wisdom as a central goal in life, or gaining wisdom as a consequence of events and challenges encountered in life. In my book *Future Consciousness* I hypothesize that the ideal future narrative for both individual humans and collective human societies should be wisdom narratives; as individuals and as groups we should pursue wisdom as the overarching goal for the future.¹⁹

Although it may appear counter-intuitive, many great science fiction novels (and stories) about the future take the form of wisdom narratives, in which individuals or groups pursue and/or gain wisdom through the ongoing drama and adventures described in the science fiction narrative. Stapledon's *Last and First Men*, *Star Maker*, and *Sirius*; Wells' *The World Set Free*, *Men Like Gods*, and *The Shape of Things to Come*; Asimov's *Foundation* Trilogy; Heinlein's *The Past through Tomorrow*; Card's *Ender's Saga*; Stephenson's *The Diamond Age*; and Robinson's *The Ministry of the Future*, among many other science fiction novels, are all wisdom narratives.

I bring this last point up because I see the futures narrative of the Third Foundation as both science fiction in its basic form and as a wisdom narrative, in which participants in the Third Foundation seek wisdom as a central goal for the future, and acquire wisdom—an intentional process requiring thoughtful reflection—in the purposeful evolution of the Third Foundation. As an ideal future narrative the Third Foundation actively pursues the development of wisdom and becomes increasingly more wise, individually and collectively, in this pursuit. The narrative of the Third Foundation is science fiction in form because the Third Foundation conceptualizes its development as the active pursuit of the “credible transcendent”—in particular the transcendence of current human consciousness—and almost certainly involving the realization of new fantastical realities set within a cosmic context. Moreover, this futures narrative has a mythic form manifesting those distinctive qualities of myth I identified in the previous chapter (See Chapter Fourteen).

¹⁹ See Lombardo, 2017, pp. 737-741 for a detailed discussion of the concept of a wisdom narrative.

Keeping in mind the set of science fiction qualities of the Third Foundation narrative, and informed by the above discussion on the nature of narratives, I propose the following set of additional features of the Third Foundation narrative, some of which further elaborate on its science fiction qualities as described above and/or in Chapter Fourteen.

- The narrative conceptualizes the evolution of the Third Foundation as a contingent adventure, involving uncertainty, surprises, and discoveries. (Realistically, all journeys into the future contain an element of uncertainty.) Moreover, reflecting on a characteristic type of story found in science fiction, the future saga of the Third Foundation should be seen as an “extraordinary adventure or journey,” containing an element of the fantastical and wondrous in what is encountered, discovered, and/or achieved in its developmental journey.
- The narrative describes the evolution of the Third Foundation within a cosmic context. How is the Third Foundation an evolved expression of the cosmos? How does the Third Foundation contribute to the evolution of the cosmos? How does the Third Foundation facilitate the evolution of cosmic consciousness? How is the Third Foundation informed and inspired by a cosmic perspective?
- The narrative identifies as a core aspiration and area of pursuit of the Third Foundation the transcendence of current qualities or features of human consciousness. Indeed, as its preferable future narrative, the Third Foundation works toward and realizes the transcendence of current humanity. (Current humanity is a point on an ongoing evolutionary journey, rather than some final realized state of being; hence, transcendence is a recurrent and normal phenomenon in the previous history of humanity.)
- Also as integral to its preferable evolutionary development, the Third Foundation should view its future as involving self-transcendence. The narrative of the Third Foundation should transform and evolve in conjunction with the Third Foundation remaking itself. Connecting this point with the history of science fiction narratives, the main themes and forms of expression in science fiction have evolved and transformed over time. A science fiction narrative possessing vitality and life would be transformative in content and themes.
- As with any influential individual or collective narrative, the preferable Third Foundation future narrative should be motivationally inspiring and emotionally engaging. Its narrative should stimulate human emotion and human desire. The narrative should not be just an abstract intellectualized document. The dramatic dimension, including the meeting of challenges and difficulties, is part of this motivational-emotional aspect of the Third Foundation narrative.
- The Third Foundation’s ideal future grand narrative is psychologically holistic and comprehensive in scope, envisioning evolutionary development across all major dimensions of consciousness, from perception-proprioception to emotion, motivation, thinking, imagination, self-identity, and interpersonal-social consciousness. The evolution of consciousness is seen as a multi-faceted trajectory within the Third Foundation.
- Moreover, the ideal future grand narrative of the Third Foundation is ecologically integrative in scope, describing transformations in the physical-natural environment,

technological systems, social norms and forms of social interaction and organization, and cosmic outreach accompanying the evolution of consciousness facilitated through the Third Foundation. In essence, the Third Foundation narrative will describe a transforming world that will reciprocally evolve in conjunction with the evolution of consciousness.

- As part of any realistic narrative for the future, the Third Foundation future narrative needs to describe the evolution of the Third Foundation as filled with “ups and downs,” and oscillations forward and backward. This feature of the narrative incorporates an essential realistic dimension—evolution is not smooth sailing—in its depiction of the evolution of the Third Foundation. On a related point, also realistic in its perspective, the narrative describes the evolution of the Third Foundation as filled with trial and error. Again, this feature of the Third Foundation narrative connects with its overall dramatic dimension.
- In so far as the Third Foundation aspires and works toward the preferable evolution of consciousness, its narrative is normative. How should we purposefully work toward the evolution of consciousness, and what fundamental ideals of consciousness should we aspire toward? This is part of the narrative. Along these lines, the preferable narrative acknowledges that the ethics, aesthetics, epistemology, and ideals of well-being of the Third Foundation, all normative forms of consciousness, should evolve in the future. These normative components of the Third Foundation are evolutionary, rather than static or absolute. In general, the preferable narrative describes the values and aspired character virtues of the Third Foundation as transformative and evolutionary.
- As part of any realistic narrative regarding the future of any human endeavor, the future evolution of the Third Foundation should be seen as involving numerous challenges, problems, and even dangers brought about by human opposition to its realization. To express and work upon any idea or paradigm of consciousness that is at odds with current thinking and modes of consciousness will predictably provoke various levels of opposition and counter-reaction, often destructive in their intent. Throughout history, significant portions of humanity have reacted negatively and protectively against various types of changes in human reality, rather than embracing them. Humans battle over the future and repeatedly attempt to preserve the past. Part of the predictable “ups and downs” of the evolution of the Third Foundation will involve such counter-reactions to its paradigm of consciousness. (Science fiction narratives on the future evolution of humanity and human consciousness include numerous stories describing violent and repressive forms of opposition to the emergence of new forms of humanity and consciousness; see, for example, Wells’ *Food of the Gods* and *Men Like Gods*, Stapledon’s *Odd John*, and Bear’s *Darwin’s Radio* and *Darwin’s Children*.)
- Expanding upon the previous point, the development of the Third Foundation is described, at least in its early evolution, as occurring within the existing planetary and social conditions of humanity. The Third Foundation will not—indeed probably should not—evolve within an environmental and social vacuum. This realistic context for the growth of the Third Foundation will be interactive, involving efforts to proactively influence the surrounding world and the Third Foundation being

influenced or affected by this world. Such interactions will almost certainly be both collaborative/cooperative and competitive/oppositional.

- As one key feature pertaining to the above last two points, the future narrative of the Third Foundation needs to address how the Third Foundation will interact with the diversity of other mindsets and paradigms that also focus on the future of consciousness. In particular, how will (or should) the Third Foundation respond to viewpoints with which it disagrees at fundamental ontological, ethical, and epistemological levels?
- Another realistically based feature of the narrative of the Third Foundation is that given the challenges facing the evolution of the Third Foundation, the necessary ups and downs in its future development, and the unavoidable dimension of unpredictability in future reality, the narrative of the Third Foundation should conceptualize its development as a long-term process. Humans show great resistance to change and current social, political, and commercial institutions are highly entrenched and unwilling to relinquish their power and influence. The problems with humanity and human consciousness have deep foundations and causes. We should expect that any significant change in human consciousness will require an extended period of time, and involve many steps along the way. (Deep enlightenment or profound wisdom does not come in a flash.) Excellence is a long distance run.
- Although at one level the future narrative of the Third Foundation is a grand narrative, describing the beliefs, ideals, and efforts of a social collective, the Third Foundation is composed of individuals. These individuals have their own personal future narratives. These individuals will also have their own unique personal versions of grand narratives informing and inspiring each of them. How will the personal and grand narratives embraced by individuals align with the grand collective narrative of the Third Foundation? How will individuals conceptualize their personal futures in the context of the grand narrative of the Third Foundation. As part of a preferable future grand narrative for the Third Foundation, its individual members will be seen as contributing to the overall development of the Third Foundation, and as reciprocally individually benefitting in their own personal development by their involvement in the Third Foundation.
- Bringing in the concept of wisdom, I have identified wisdom as an integrative ideal for the future evolution of consciousness. Wisdom can serve as a central developmental aspiration in both ideal personal and grand narratives for the future. The Third Foundation as a whole should aspire toward the development of collective wisdom, in essence, aspiring toward becoming a “wise society.” Correspondingly, individuals in the Third Foundation should include as central within their ideal personal narratives becoming wise persons (inclusive of becoming “wise cyborgs”). The pursuit of wisdom unites the aspirations of the Third Foundation as a whole with the aspirations of its individual participants. (It would be impossible to have a wise society without wise individuals, and reciprocally, a wise society greatly benefits the development of wise individuals within it.)²⁰

²⁰ Wise individuals can emerge in foolish and ignorant societies.

In summary and conclusion, in this last section I described a set of key qualities of a realistically grounded and cosmically inspired ideal grand narrative of the Third Foundation:

The story of the Third Foundation is a science fiction narrative involving a dramatic and emotionally engaging envisioning of the progressive realization of the credible transcendent of future conscious evolution set in a cosmic context. Emerging as a constructive response to the problems and challenges facing current humanity, this imagined journey of adventure and discovery will be filled with challenges and setbacks, including numerous forms of opposition from existing paradigms of consciousness. The overall aspired trajectory of this long-term process and saga is the purposeful preferable evolution of consciousness, which will involve the collective participation and contributions of many individual members of the Third Foundation. The Third Foundation will evolve within the ambience of our current world and necessarily actively engage with existing human society in an effort to transform it. As an integrative and holistic ideal for the evolution of consciousness, members of the Third Foundation will embrace personal wisdom narratives, and as essential to the Third Foundation grand narrative, collaboratively work toward the creation a wise human society.

The Third Foundation Paradigm of Consciousness, Community, and Way of Life

Informed and inspired by its grand narrative, the Third Foundation is a paradigm of consciousness, which includes: Interconnected beliefs (theories) and values; an emotional-motivation dimension; a way of life and characteristic modes of behavior; and a resonant environment, often involving technologies and a population of individuals, to support the realization (or living) of the paradigm.

The Third Foundation is also an action-oriented community of individuals. A community is the preferable way to realize efficacious change in human existence, providing its members with a sense of belongingness, constructive collaborative opportunities, and enhanced individual empowerment. The Third Foundation community pursues the ideals of preferable evolution of consciousness in its own members and attempts to facilitate such ideal changes in the population at large. In resonance with its evolutionary ideals, the Third Foundation community includes a central educational component, emphasizing the love of learning (the acquisition of knowledge) and the development of wisdom as an overarching goal. The Third Foundation community strives toward increasing diversity and individuality and emphasizes active participation/contribution and self-responsibility among its members. All in all, the Third Foundation community synthesizes knowing and doing in its activities and pursuits.

The Third Foundation community is an envisioned evolutionary utopia, which while arising within current human reality aspires toward purposefully evolving consciousness and transforming contemporary humanity and the world.

The Third Foundation community engages in a rich and complex way of life reflective of its general philosophy and values.

In this section of this chapter I describe why an action-oriented Third Foundation community and paradigm of consciousness is essential for the successful realization of the futures narrative of the Third Foundation. I also describe why the Third Foundation is a utopian vision, and pulling together and illustrating a great many themes throughout the book, I outline a number of key features of the Third Foundation as a way of life.

To recall I defined a paradigm of consciousness as a relatively integrated conscious way of life, involving a set of connected beliefs and theories; a set of behaviors and modes of interaction with the environment; a set of connected values and goals; an associated narrative; and a (frequently constructed) environmental ambience (including technologies) in which the paradigm is lived and practiced. All in all, a paradigm of consciousness is a psychological and ecological integrative Gestalt of consciousness, giving practitioners of the paradigm direction, meaning, and purpose in their lives.

Given this definition, the Third Foundation is a paradigm of consciousness. Evolutionary Taoism provides the fundamental theoretical framework (theories and beliefs) that informs the paradigm and the associated narrative of the Third Foundation (described in the previous section).

The realization and practice of a paradigm of consciousness requires *participants*, who organize and direct their ways of life informed and inspired by the paradigm. The Third Foundation, as a paradigm of consciousness, needs participants for its realization. As noted earlier, participants in the Third Foundation practice its paradigm of consciousness in order to purposefully facilitate the evolution of consciousness in themselves, and influence the evolution of consciousness in humanity at large.

Since a central hypothesis of the Third Foundation is that major problems in human life are significantly a result of collective and pervasive deficiencies in human consciousness, participants in the Third Foundation are highly motivated to instigate evolutionary change in consciousness in humanity as a whole. As such, the Third Foundation is a paradigm of consciousness purposefully directed toward transforming not only the consciousness of its members, but the collective state of consciousness of individuals living their lives outside of the paradigm.

Consequently, the Third Foundation is not simply a contemplative paradigm of consciousness, focused upon understanding consciousness and its preferable evolution, but an *action-oriented way of life* that includes plans, strategies, practices, and purposeful behaviors focused on progressively realizing the paradigm's central goal of facilitating the further evolution of consciousness. The Third Foundation is a mode of doing, as well as a mode of understanding. Thought and values are connected with purposeful and motivated action.

Although at times within human history, single individuals through their innovative ideas and inventions, or their actions have had a significant impact on the evolution of humanity, it seems to me that the most realistic and effective approach to purposeful collective change involves *communities* of individuals who share beliefs, values, goals, and ways of life, and interactively collaborate to realize the identified aspirations of the group. Hence, the real-world actualization of the Third Foundation will critically involve the development of a community, in which individual members work together to achieve the various goals of the Third Foundation. The Third Foundation should be a

social and participatory reality involving the contributions of many individuals working in a collaborative fashion. The Third Foundation should evolve as an action-oriented community.

One central value and function of a Third Foundation community is that such a community provides interpersonal support, reinforcement, and reciprocal feedback for the individual members of the Foundation. Although individuals in pursuit of personal evolution require a certain amount of solitary time and self-reflection, interpersonal interaction significantly contributes to the growth of individuals; indeed interpersonal and social interaction is necessary for the full flourishing of individuals. If individuals have common or resonant goals, they can provide each other with encouragement, new insights, and critical and relevant feedback. Moreover, a resonant community of individuals provides a sense of belongingness for its members.

In the previous review of preferable ideals for the future evolution of consciousness, one major set of ideals pertained to social consciousness, which included as a subset interpersonal consciousness. A Third Foundation community provides a “testing ground” for the pursuit and practice of this array of ideals of consciousness. In so far as one should attempt to practice what one preaches, the Third Foundation community—a psycho-social reality—should model itself on the interpersonal and social ideals for the preferable future evolution of consciousness identified by the Third Foundation. Individuals in the community should aspire toward those ideals in their social interactions with each other.

In fact, as a general point regarding the Third Foundation community, the community models itself on and aspires to live by the ideals of the preferable purposeful evolution of consciousness articulated in its vision. The ideals presented in the previous chapter for humanity as a whole are the same ideals the Third Foundation aspires toward in its own existence as a community, applying both to its individual members and the group as a whole. The community practices evolutionary Taoism; the community sees itself as a purposefully evolving social reality dedicated to the reciprocal evolution of consciousness among its members.

Yet, even though the Third Foundation members identify with a shared set of ideals—a set of ideals that are necessarily evolutionary and not absolutely set—the members of the Third Foundation community are a diverse set of individuals; indeed this is an ideal for the community. A diversity of perspectives and a diversity of types of characters and personalities serves the ongoing evolution of the community. (Human diversity facilitates creativity and growth.) It seems to me that the ideal human community would facilitate and foster the greatest breath of distinct individuals, and as such, the Third Foundation community aspires toward enhanced diversity among its members.

This is not to say that all types of individuals would be members of the Third Foundation community; given the Foundation’s ideals of consciousness, many types of individuals (e.g., egocentric, psychopathic, closed-minded, stasis-minded, materialistic, and authoritarian personalities) would not resonate with or be able to actively contribute to the practices and way of life of the Third Foundation community.

But it seems to me—as a hypothesis—that an ideal human community, such as aspired toward in the Third Foundation, embodies principles and a framework of consciousness that would facilitate the growth of an increasing diversity of distinctive

individuals and personalities. It seems to me that current forms of human society—even presumably democratic and individualistic ones—do not support or generate high levels of human diversity, and to great degrees squash and repress human individuality.

The members of a community need not all be physically located in the same place. Asimov's First Foundation was located on a single planet, but his envisioned Second Foundation did not have a single location. The key to the realization of a community involves resonant ways of life, communication and the sharing and discussion of ideas, and coordinated actions among its members. All of these features of a community can be realized without its members having a single physical location. The community of the Third Foundation can be physically spread across the globe. For a number of reasons this physically distributed form of the Third Foundation community may be preferable to a single geographical location, at least during the early period of its development.

This last point brings into this exposition the role and significance of physical technologies in the Third Foundation, since a physically distributed community requires various technologies to afford communication and coordination among its members. As I have repeatedly argued, the Third Foundation is not anti-technological. Technology is an integral part of human existence; humans are conscious cyborgs. In the Third Foundation technology is viewed and used as an instrument that facilitates the evolution of consciousness and in so doing has an intended beneficial effect on the human condition and the planet at large. Among other functions, technology is used in the Third Foundation to facilitate communication and collaboration among physically distributed members.²¹

Another key point about a Third Foundation community is that it is intentionally a group participatory way of life. Individuals within the community are expected to actively participate in the community, contributing ideas, distinctive voices, and purposeful actions into the way of life of the Foundation. The Third Foundation is not a top-down organization, but a social collective in which all members have a say, indeed, a responsibility to contribute into the whole. This point does not imply that leadership roles would not arise in the Third Foundation, but rather that all individuals contribute into the development of the Third Foundation. At the very least, three important responsibilities and spheres of personal empowerment for all individuals in the Third Foundation are: to actively pursue their own conscious development; contribute ideas and input into the overall evolution of the Third Foundation; and play an active role in efforts to influence humanity at large.

The *participatory* dimension to the Third Foundation underscores the Third Foundation ideal that individuals and groups of individuals should view themselves as the architects and creators of their existential reality. Humans should take responsibility for their own evolution, both individually and collectively. Within current mindsets and ways of life in contemporary human reality a huge portion of the population turns over responsibility for determining their beliefs and values and guiding their lives to some

²¹ It's worth noting that some science fiction writers, such as Olaf Stapledon, envisioned communication and collaboration among distant individuals as being facilitated by psychic powers, such as telepathy. In *Star Maker*, galactic and cosmic communities and integrated minds emerge and are united together through psychic telepathic resonance.

kind of real or imagined authority figure. (As Erich Fromm stated humans frequently attempt to “escape from freedom.”) Many humans embrace authoritarian ethics and philosophies connected with key figureheads, messiahs, and personified deities, who presumably authenticate and determine the correct pathway in life. Contrariwise, the members of the Third Foundation see themselves as individually and collectively responsible for determining the best pathway in life.

Having brought up on a number of occasions the two important practices and modes of action of Foundation members in pursuing their personal evolution in consciousness, and impacting the collective evolution of consciousness across all humanity, it seems to me that one key feature of the Third Foundation, which would facilitate both these goals, is an educational component. One can envision this educational component within the Third Foundation as analogous to a school, college, or university. This educational component of the Third Foundation serves both to educate members and to educate humanity at large regarding the main ideas, values, and practices of the Third Foundation.

Such an educational component not only serves the function of education, but also, coupled and synthesized with this function, it should support ongoing research and inquiry. Just as a college or university both educates and conducts research, the educational component of the Third Foundation engages in both activities, but united and balanced together. The research and inquiry dimension turns the educational program into a self-reflective and actively evolving initiative adding new ideas and insights into its corpus of knowledge that it is presenting to participants.

The educational component of the Third Foundation is critically important within the operation and evolution of the Foundation. As identified in the Third Foundation vision of the preferable future evolution of consciousness, the love of learning and the active pursuit of knowledge are key features of human consciousness that should be significantly enhanced. Unless these desired features of human consciousness are embraced by individuals (both within or outside of the Third Foundation), the overall thrust and aspirations of the Third Foundation will not be effectively realized. One of the essential features of wisdom is the love of learning and thinking, and if wisdom is the central integrative ideal of consciousness to be realized in the Third Foundation, then the Third Foundation can not progress toward this central ideal without its members embracing the love of learning and the pursuit of knowledge. Also, if an evolutionary framework is central to the mindset of the Third Foundation, in contrast to a static, closed, and absolutist mindset about reality and humanity, ongoing learning and the acquisition of knowledge (enriching and transforming consciousness) is essential to the realization of the Third Foundation.

Another important point to bring up about the Third Foundation community is that its ongoing development is going to occur in the context of a surrounding set of physical, environmental, and social conditions. Realistically, I do not see the Third Foundation evolving in isolation from such conditions. Its evolution will take place within the ecological whole of human and planetary reality. Perhaps the Third Foundation community can progressively realize a relatively self-sufficient existence outside of existing human societies, but for the foreseeable future the Third Foundation community is embedded within and in ways dependent upon the very psycho-social reality it intends to transform and eventually transcend. My argument would be that

these current conditions would dramatically change with a collective shift in consciousness brought about by the Third Foundation. All in all, although contained within and dependent upon current social-ecological conditions in its initial development, because the intent of the Third Foundation is to actively reach out into the world of humans and transform its current dominant paradigms of consciousness, the eventual result will be to transform the current conditions supporting its existence. The Third Foundation will bootstrap itself out of its womb.

Arguments have been made that an innovative human community or society can not be realized unless the new social collective isolates itself from current human communities and society, such as on a remote island, or even away from the earth in outer space or on another planet. Or as Wells believed, the creation of a new social system must occur at a pervasive global level with all of humanity collectively participating in its development. All these types of proposals can be found in different science fiction novels. (See my references to science fiction utopias and dystopias in Chapter Fourteen.) It may be the case that at some point in the future the ongoing development of the Third Foundation may involve one or the other of these scenarios, but it seems to me that as an ethical starting point, we should not abandon hope that the totality of humanity across the globe can be transformed. It is a central goal of the Third Foundation and its associated community to actively attempt to positively transform the current planetary reality of humanity—the reality in which we currently exist.

Given the various points made in this last section regarding the Third Foundation community, it should be apparent that the vision presented constitutes a *utopia*—an ideal society to aspire toward and progressively create. This utopian vision is not intended to be some hypothesized “perfect state.” A core feature of the Third Foundation and its community is that it is a self-consciously evolving, transforming, and self-transcending reality; the concept of a static and completely perfected state of consciousness and human existence is anathema to the philosophy of the Third Foundation. (Evolution is a core ideal of the Third Foundation.) Still, as with all envisioned utopias, it is essential to identify ideals—even if contingent and open to revision—that articulate preferred trajectories and goals for humankind. Ideals provide direction for purposeful evolution, and I believe it is a core ethical imperative to attempt to evolve toward ideals. Utopias are normative societies, informed and structured by ideals, and the Third Foundation is a normative paradigm of consciousness, articulated through a set of ideals, which are practiced and progressively realized within its community. The Third Foundation is a utopian vision.

One key belief supporting the creation and attempted realization of this envisioned utopia—the Third Foundation community—is that a preferable trajectory for the future evolution of consciousness will not just simply happen or emerge. A concerted and collective effort needs to be exerted by humans to achieve a desirable pathway in our future evolution. As noted above, one central value in the Third Foundation vision is self-responsibility; we are responsible for our future. As I stated in my previously published essay on creativity, we are all participating in the ongoing act of creation. (Subtlety modified, we are all participating in the ongoing act of evolution.) The Third Foundation and its associated community embraces this core value of self-responsibility; it is a philosophical and action-oriented social effort to self-responsibly

and proactively facilitate the purposeful preferable evolution of consciousness both within the members of the community and the world at large.

* * *

As one final point regarding the Third Foundation, which pulls together and further develops the ideas expressed above that the Third Foundation is a paradigm of consciousness, an action-oriented community, and an envisioned utopian society, we should hypothetically describe the way of life of members (the community) of the Third Foundation. My opening hypothesis in this book is that humanity faces numerous problems and these problems can be constructively addressed through the focused purposeful evolution of consciousness. As it stands now, current human societies taken collectively have generated problems for themselves due to deficiencies and weaknesses in consciousness. Our ways of life and paradigms of consciousness, as supported by current societies, reflect such deficiencies and weaknesses in consciousness. But if we evolve our consciousness, how would our ways of life change?

The Third Foundation will evolve a different way of life. In order to progressively move toward an envisioned utopian reality, the Third Foundation community needs to create a distinctive way of life involving a complex set of connected features that support the existence, flourishing, and evolution of its members. Based on its philosophical principles and ideals—as described throughout this book—how are community members going to live, and in particular, live differently than current collective humanity?

We should note at the onset, that all the below features of the Third Foundation way of life involve evolutionary transformations in human consciousness.

- Based on embracing cosmic evolution as a general explanation of reality and pursuing *purposeful evolution* as a distinctive and advanced expression of this general perspective on reality, members of the Third Foundation will devote considerable time and attention to intentionally and thoughtfully evolving nature, human society (including technology), and individual humans (with a focus on individual consciousness). No aspect of reality will be viewed or treated as absolutely stable or static; everything will be seen as open to further evolution. Facilitating purposeful evolution and transformation, members of the Third Foundation will work toward the enhancement of creativity and imagination and the heightening of future consciousness within themselves.
- Based on self-consciously embracing the principle of *reciprocity*, members of the Third Foundation will always consider how their efforts to evolve any feature of reality will impact other interdependent realities and reciprocally feedback on their efforts. Members of the Third Foundation will consciously stay attuned to reciprocal interactions among themselves and reciprocal relationships with their surrounding environment. Members will think in terms of reciprocities—will see the world through the “eyes of reciprocity.”
- Since the existence and ongoing evolution of the Third Foundation requires various resources (for living) drawn from and/or created from the surrounding *environment*

(food, water, energy, construction materials, etc.) the Third Foundation works toward a society that thoughtfully considers how its interactions with the surrounding environment impact the environment in the short and long term. In so far as the Third Foundation depends upon a complex environment for its existence and development, members of the Foundation will consciously act to benefit the environment—to treat it well—in interacting with it.

- Reflective of increasing awareness and appreciation of the complexity and diversity of life on the earth, new higher forms of mutually beneficial collaboration will develop between humanity and *other forms of life* on the earth. Relative to current affairs, the Third Foundation way of life will be more intermeshed with other life forms.
- Based on the thoughtful acknowledgement and appreciation of *balance* in life—such as between stability and change or action and rest—efforts at purposeful evolution will be paced and modulated. There will be a modulated *rhythm* to change. Members of the Third Foundation will engage in the enjoyment and appreciation of present reality, as well as attempting to improve upon it; indeed the latter can not be wisely realized without participating in the former.
- Also in line with the principle of holistic balance, members of the Third Foundation will pursue *holistic well-being* in their life styles, which will include as a central value the conscientious pursuit of physical-biological well-being and health. In that the body is the well-spring of consciousness, the health and vitality of the *body* is seen as integral to the evolution of consciousness, both intellectually and emotionally.
- Members of the Third Foundation embrace a highly *thoughtful, self-reflective, and epistemically conscientious* way of life, in which *intelligence, the diligent pursuit of knowledge, and all the various higher cognitive capacities* are highly valued and socially reinforced.
- As a further expression of holistic balance in consciousness, life in the Third Foundation will embrace those ideals highlighted in “*Romanticist*” philosophy, including art, creativity, the sensory and sensuality, resonance with nature, and a rich emotional consciousness, balancing such spheres of experience with the cognitive and intellectual. (See beauty below.)
- Based on evolving an *expanded temporal* consciousness, efforts at purposeful evolution will always take into account both short and long term effects of purposeful actions and always take into account lessons to be learned from history and the past. Members of the Third Foundation will live within an expanded temporal consciousness, involving both heightened historical consciousness and heightened future consciousness. Expansive temporal consciousness, though, will be balanced with attentive engagement with and appreciation of the present.
- The Third Foundation will be infused with an ever-evolving *technological* dimension. This technological dimension will be purposefully evolved to benefit humanity, specifically human well-being and human consciousness, as well as, benefit planetary conditions and forms of life on the earth. Members of the Third Foundation will embrace their cyborg nature, reflected upon and guided in its evolution by wisdom and heightened consciousness. It is quite conceivable that collaborative, mutually beneficial relationships between humans and robotic beings will emerge that far exceed current levels. Ethics and wisdom will though guide all these evolutionary developments.

- As noted earlier, a central component of the Third Foundation is its *educational-research* sphere. Members of the Third Foundation actively and enthusiastically engage in both educational learning and ongoing research on a regular basis. The individual and collective evolution of knowledge is a key aspect and ideal of life in the Third Foundation. Key areas of educational emphasis, beginning in early childhood, are the development of character virtues, deep learning, and wisdom.
- The purposeful evolution of all spheres of life in the Third Foundation will be thoughtfully guided by an evolving set of ethical principles and practices. *Ethics* is at the core of guiding change in the Third Foundation. To support a strong ethical mindset and mode of behavior in members of the Third Foundation, the development of strong character virtues (see above) is emphasized in education.
- Third Foundation members are actively involved in generating a rich and evolving literature that facilitates the ongoing evolution of consciousness. A good part of this creative literary activity will involve *science fiction* (and related speculative forms of literature)—both positive and negative—for informing and expanding human imagination and thoughtful reflection on the future. Science fiction is an essential part of the educational activities and artistic endeavors of the Third Foundation.
- Based on a set of core interpersonal and social ideals (identified in Chapter Thirteen), members of the Third Foundation will aspire toward an increasing *just* and *egalitarian* collective way of life and will aspire toward a caring and mutually supportive attitude and mode of behavior toward each other.
- Everyone in the Third Foundation will be strongly encouraged to contribute to the ongoing evolution of the Third Foundation—the Third Foundation is a *participatory* reality—but in acknowledging again the principle of balance in life, members will engage in both individual pursuits and interests, and other activities geared toward benefiting the whole. Members of the Third Foundation pursue a balance and integration between their individuality and their social-collective existence, recognizing that the individual and society form an interdependent, mutually enhancing reciprocity.
- As one critically important way in which the evolution of consciousness and conscious well-being is pursued within the Third Foundation, a significant feature of the Third Foundation way of life will be the creation and appreciation of *beauty*, along all the diverse forms of artistic expression and manifestations in nature and the cosmos.
- A recurrent question members of the Third Foundation will ask themselves on a daily basis is how well they are living a *wisdom narrative* in their lives. A related question members will regularly address in coordinating their efforts is whether the community and/or society is realizing a wise grand narrative.
- Members of the Third Foundation experience a deep sense of *awe*, *wonder*, *humility*, and *mystery* regarding their personal existence and the vast and astonishing existence of the cosmos. They see their individuated conscious realities and selves as profoundly “miraculous.” They look toward the universe as an enveloping and expansive ambience offering indeterminable new revelations and opportunities for further evolution. The mundane is even a source of bedazzlement. Celebratory activities will revolve around appreciation of such wondrous aspects of reality.

Enlightenment and peak experiences are a common occurrence among members of the Third Foundation.