

The Psychology of Future Consciousness: Flourishing in the Flow of Evolution¹

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*"We are nothing else than evolution become conscious of itself."
Julian Huxley*

1. Introduction: Wisdom and the Future

How do we create a good future?

This deceptively simple question is the central challenge of human life, and the central issue motivating the professional study of the future. Most importantly, the question brings to center stage the most empowering and distinctive capacity of the human mind: To identify and purposefully pursue preferable futures. Our minds are uniquely constructed to raise and attempt to answer, in theory and action, this question.

Each of us routinely thinks about this question, in one form or another. However clearly formed and focused in our consciousness, we awake to some mini-version of this question every morning—even if our future horizon extends only to what we want to accomplish for the day. And based on the answers we come up with, as our consciousness rises and blossoms in response to the morning sun, we all set goals, take action, and pursue the good future, however narrowly or vaguely we define it.

Yet beyond the simple issues of the day, creating the good future is the big, deep practical question of life—the central question we ponder and debate within ourselves and among ourselves, across the years and through the decades of our existence on the earth. This is the pivotal challenge we are given as children; this is the question we strive to address as adults; and this is the issue we reflect upon in our senior years—have we succeeded or not in answering the question and achieving the goals that follow from our answers?

Indeed, since the beginnings of recorded human history, innumerable, varied, and often conflicting answers and philosophies of life addressing this question have been created, offered, marketed, and frequently even forced upon human populations across the world. This is the meat and potatoes of world religions, cultural belief systems and values, businesses and governments, political ideologies, grand narratives and theories of the future, and all manner of pop philosophies and psychologies. Whether we fully realize it or not, we are all bombarded everyday, explicitly and subliminally, with answers

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to this big question. What should I do with my life? What is the right or best course of action in the years ahead?

That we live and navigate within a rich engulfing array of answers to the question of the good future makes perfect sense since, as I argue, the core distinctive function and purpose of the conscious human mind is creating visions of good futures and then attempting to realize these visions, as well as communicate our hopes and dreams about tomorrow to others. We are beings that create and share futures. Our minds are perpetually creating visions of the future and comparing them, and we dialogue and debate among ourselves their merits and deficiencies, as we travel through our lives upon the river of time.

Within this arena of discourse—this social sphere of “future consciousness”—the answer I offer to this fundamental human question and concern is:

We create a good future, defined as flourishing in the flow of evolution, through the heightening of holistic future consciousness, which is achieved by developing a core set of character virtues, most notably and centrally wisdom.

Or stated more simply:

Flourishing in the flow of evolution is the good future, and wisdom, the highest expression of future consciousness, is the means to create it.

This proposal applies both to the creation of our own personal futures, as well as to professional futurists or anyone else engaged in helping and guiding others in the creation of a good future.

2. What is Reality?

*“We are moving!”
Teilhard de Chardin*

My starting point is the nature of reality, the set of basic conditions in which humans are situated and in which they will pursue a good future.

Our understanding of the future should be consistent with our best understanding of the dynamics and structure of reality. Our understanding of what is good, which provides a preferential direction for the future, should also be consistent with our best understanding of reality. In particular, our understanding of human reality—including the nature and capacities of consciousness and the human mind—will guide us in determining how humans can best realize a good future. In general, reality sets the context and constraints on how we determine what the good life is, and how we envision and are able to realize a good future. The question of “what is reality?” precedes the question of “what is the good and how can we achieve it?”

With the intent to present a global contemporary perspective, my answer to the nature of reality is informed by two fundamental modes of understanding, which according to Nisbett's (2003) global psychological research, are reflective of Eastern and Western general dispositions of thought. The Eastern mode of thought—viewing reality as a circle—supports the view that reality is reciprocities and interdependencies. The Western mode of thought—viewing reality as a line and hence possessing a direction—supports the view that reality is evolutionary.

“Evolution isn’t what it used to be.”
Walter Truett Anderson

Beginning with the evolutionary perspective, a review of both Eastern and Western theories of reality indicates that in ancient and classical times ultimate reality was predominately viewed as eternal and changeless. Even early modern Western science pursued changeless laws of nature as the key to understanding reality (Lombardo, 2006a).

Yet with ongoing advances in our historical and scientific understanding of nature, and our growing knowledge of the vast expanse of time, the contemporary scientific consensus has emerged that the universe is thoroughly temporal and dynamic, future-directional, evolutionary, creative, and filled with possibilities. The universe has a transformative history, with the second law of thermodynamics defining a physical “arrow of time” toward the future; there has been an ongoing creation of new forms, if not new natural laws; and at the micro-level (at the very least), quantum theory indicates that the future is a set of possibilities rather than a singular deterministic pathway.

Of central significance, evolution, as the fundamental pattern of change, appears pervasive within the universe, encompassing a progressively emergent hierarchy of levels, including the physical-cosmological, chemical, geo-ecological, bio-neurological, psychological, social, and technological. Evolution generates (at the very least) growing complexity across the hierarchy of levels of reality. Evolution, with its directionality of increasing complexity, provides a temporal framework for understanding past, present, and future.

Additionally, evolution appears to be accelerating, with higher, more complex levels of reality in the hierarchal structure exhibiting progressively quicker rates of transformation. As an expression of the ongoing creativity of the universe, new principles of evolutionary change seem to come into play, speeding up the transformative process. *Evolution is evolving* (Fraser, 1978; Davies, 1988; Gell-Mann, 1994; Anderson, 1996; Smolin, 1997; Kurzweil, 1999, 2005; Morowitz, 2002; Chaisson, 2005; Kauffman, 2008; Kelly, 2010; Phipps, 2012).

Human history, embedded in this cosmic evolutionary reality, shows an accelerative growth in change leading up to contemporary times. There is a clear transformational rush to human existence, with multiple interactive developmental trends along multiple

dimensions, including the biological, psychological, social, and technological (Gleick, 1999). Humans are “riding the wave of” and participating in accelerative evolution.

Although the term “human” might suggest some static, determinate, and singular reality, history and science reveal that the human mind, embedded within a dynamic evolutionary universe, is not a constant but rather evolutionary (Lombardo, 2011, 2014).

There is both a developmental trend across the individual life span and a collective evolutionary trend in which consciousness expands away from the relative egocentric here and now toward increasing interpersonal, global, and cosmic awareness, and toward a heightening of historical and future consciousness, in which the acquisition of knowledge through learning (generating a growing body of historical knowledge) informs and serves greater anticipation and understanding of the future. Human consciousness has been expanding in space and time (Lombardo, 2006a).

As other significant transformative trends, there is an ongoing integration of the bio-psycho-social and the technological. Humans are cyborgs, defined as a functional synthesis of the bio-psycho-social and the technological, and we seem to be progressively moving toward increasing bio-technological integration. Through the emergence and functional integration of new technologies, there is an ongoing extension and amplification of both mind and body and overall human capacities (Clark, 2003, 2008; Kelly, 2010; Lombardo, 2011).

Overall, reflecting similar features within the universe as a whole, individual human consciousness and our collective historical psychological reality are thoroughly temporal and dynamic, future-directional, evolutionary, creative, and filled with possibilities, with the additional feature of being purposeful, whereby change, informed by the ongoing progressive acquisition of new knowledge, is intentionally guided and directed toward future goals or ends.

Humans envision and engage in the purposeful evolution of their minds and ways of life (within and across generations), a process we see at work in religion and spirituality, philosophy and psychology, the physical and biological sciences, social politics and government, and science fiction (Lombardo, 2014).

This emergent purposeful and informed evolutionary process within the human mind exemplifies an evolution of evolution. Personal consciousness develops across the individual lifespan, guided by the goals, visions, and values of the individual (as well as influential others), while on a larger scale, our collective beliefs, values, and ways of life transform across historical time through purposeful and informed directional guidance. Collectively there is a decidedly pluralistic, ongoing debate and dialogue regarding preferable ideals to inform and guide humanity. Through such informed and purposeful guidance of change, involving multiple competing perspectives—an evolution in evolution at both the individual and collective levels—there is an acceleration of evolution and change. The pluralistic ambience of different beliefs and values not only fuels and further empowers the creative process in nature, but provides an arena of

possibilities and choices for both the individual mind and the collective consciousness of humanity (Lombardo, 2011).

Future directionality is especially significant within the dynamic nature of individual consciousness. Individual consciousness exhibits an experienced directionality of flow from the present (out of the past) into the future—there is an experiential arrow of time toward the future within consciousness. Furthermore, our directional experience of time is past/present/future integrative—that is, placed within a cognitive context—whereby our flowing conscious present is always contextualized by a remembered past (memory and learning) and an anticipated future. This contextualizing process is built into the functionality of our brains.

Also, purpose, which manifests itself, as noted above, in individual and collective human evolution, is in fact an essential feature of almost all conscious behavior. Motivated behavior is invariably purposeful, where some goal serves as the directional guidance for the behavior. Goals are intended future states, and hence motivated behavior (and thinking and imagination) is future directional. In general, human consciousness flows and grows with an eye on and trajectory toward the future, facilitating and further evolving the evolutionary process (Lombardo, 2011). Within human reality, the flow into the future is purposefully guided.

“The basic understanding that life on this planet constitutes an interconnected system must be considered to be one of the great discoveries of science, perhaps as profound as the discovery of natural selection.” Lee Smolin

As a second major point regarding reality—symbolically represented by the circle—in contemporary times we have realized that we live in a universe of interdependent realities; nothing stands or moves alone. We are all held together in our relationships with each other, forming an interdependent whole. We see this general feature at the physical and cosmological levels, but also environmentally, socially, psychologically, and technologically. The term I use to refer to this ubiquitous fact of complementarities and interdependencies is “reciprocity” (Lombardo, 1987).

One paradigm example of reciprocity within nature is the pervasive reality of open systems throughout the universe, in which not only are the constituents of nature “open” to interaction and influence from each other, through the exchange of matter and energy, but this interactivity is essential for their continued existence and integrity. Nothing defines itself alone. (Goerner, 1994, 1999; Sahtouris, 2000).

The open system concept is especially applicable to all life on the earth. The diverse population of living forms on the earth structures the overall dynamics of the earth as a holistic system, and vice versa. Ecosystems are the holistic results of the interaction of their living parts (the multiplicity of inhabiting life forms) set in the interactive context of the surrounding physical environment (Lovelock, 1979, 1988; Sahtouris, 2000; Chaisson, 2005).

At the human level, there are numerous reciprocal interactive relationships between human civilization and the natural environment of the earth; human civilization derives its sustenance from the environment and in numerous ways impacts and controls the environment. Further, there is a network of reciprocities among individuals within society, with each of us dependent upon others for our very existence, our complex ways of life, and our sense of personal identity.

The principle of reciprocity suggests that we only realize our psychological distinctiveness in the context of our surrounding environment—natural, social, and technological. If we were to take away our gadgets and tools, our fellow humans, and the life-supporting earth, quite literally our bodies and minds would evaporate into the void. The conscious self is ecological, embedded in the the surrounding world (Gibson, 1979; Lombardo, 1987, 2011). And reciprocally, the varied contributions, good and bad, of individuals shape not only society, culturally and technologically, but also nature, in its overall form, functionality, and future direction.

Focusing on human consciousness, the nature of consciousness and its relationship with the physical world is one of the great philosophical and scientific puzzles (Blackmore, 2004). Although the overwhelming bulk of evidence indicates that consciousness is dependent upon a physical embodiment (including the body and the brain), it is not at all clear how this can be, since consciousness appears so qualitatively different from physical matter. How does an electro-chemical event in the brain create a thought, perception, or feeling? (Koch, 2012; Nagel, 2012; Tononi, 2012) Conversely, the physical world, as both perceived and conceptualized, is revealed and understood through consciousness. Though it seems to make no sense to say that the physical world is literally created by consciousness, it is clear that the physical world, as perceived, understood, and engaged with, requires consciousness. The meaningful world is the result of behavioral selection and manipulation and psychological interpretation. (Lombardo, 2011).

What I propose is that the conscious self—with its capacities for thinking, feeling, and perceiving, and embodied and manifested through behavior within a biological body—forms a reciprocity with the ambient physical environment. At the level of consciousness, this reciprocity is manifested through the dual poles of awareness of self and of the world—the proprioceptual and perceptual poles of experience. The conscious self and the environment are interactive and interdependent; we make sense out of each relative to the other. Encompassing reciprocal realities means not only that our human identity is inextricably bound up with our relationships with the world, but also that we always contribute into and have influence over the environment in which we find ourselves (Lombardo, 2014).

Bringing together these two key features of reality, we must now ask: What is the connection between evolution and reciprocity? One important connection is reciprocal evolution. The cosmos as a whole, and among its varied parts, evolves interactively; new individual entities emerge in connection with other entities, and continue to develop as interdependent collectives. Life forms within ecosystems are co-dependent and

interactively evolving. Predators and prey interactively evolve, each provoking ongoing adaptive changes in the other.

Reciprocal evolution means that we are all participating, with diverse effects upon each other, in the evolutionary process. To quote Chardin, “We are moving.” (Phipps, 2012). Synthesizing East and West, we need to think about reality like “evolutionary Taoists”—the circle of interdependency coupled with the directional line. Reality is a collective motion. The circle of interdependency and the line of evolutionary progression synthesize in the pluralistic interactive dynamism of the world.

In summary, humans are evolutionary beings that exist within and are interactive with an evolutionary universe. Further, because we are embedded in a creative and evolutionary universe filled with possibilities, indeed helping to create it, we are participatory in this dynamic reality and responsible to some degree for the future flow of events. What is real is that we are moving, within our own personal consciousness, our collective psycho-social reality, and within the world at large.

3. What is the Good?

*To flourish: “to grow well ...to do well, to prosper, to thrive,
and to be highly productive.”*

Ethics is the study and practice of what is good, what is moral, and what is best. Ethics could also be described as the study of what we should most value (Thiroux and Krasemann, 2009). Within human history there are many competing theories of the good, such as absolutist versus rationalist, universal versus relativist, egocentric versus social, and hedonism of the present versus consequentialist (Lombardo, 2011).

Ethical theories though, however conceptualized, always assume some theory of reality and human nature. Although not necessarily attempting to derive an “ought” (what we should value and what we should do) from an “is” (what the facts of human existence are), ethical theories invariably present their prescriptions in the context of ideas regarding the nature of humans and reality. It would be nonsensical to present an ethical theory that had no relevance to the reality of the human condition, or that did not take into account the most central features of human existence.

One popular approach to ethics, which clearly depends upon an understanding of human reality, is that the good is connected with well-being, the good presumably leading to or being grounded in well-being. It has been argued that the good can be empirically determined through identifying what either leads to or constitutes well-being, where well-being is viewed as a factual set of conditions that can be empirically discovered and described (Harris, 2010).

Well-being, though, is a complex issue, and throughout history there have been numerous theories of well-being. Well-being, at the very least, has been connected with mental and physical health; spiritual enlightenment; freedom and self-expression; social

community; communion with nature; economic prosperity; education; gender equality; and environmental health (Hämäläinen and Michaelson, 2014; Ryff and Singer, 2005; *Quality of Life Index*, 2015). Given that these biological, psychological, social, and environmental factors reciprocally interact, well-being necessarily involves our connections and relationships with other humans and nature as a whole. Hence, any viable theory of the good that is grounded in well-being needs to be holistic and integrative.

But if nature, including human reality, is dynamic and evolutionary, then well-being also needs to be conceptualized in dynamic and evolutionary terms. Expanding on Martin Seligman's (2011) psychological concept of "flourishing," I propose that "to flourish in the flow of evolution" provides a dynamic, future-directional, holistic concept of well-being and "the good" that aligns with a dynamic and interactive vision of reality. We are dynamic and evolutionary beings existing within and interactive with a dynamic and evolutionary universe. To flourish within this evolutionary flow best captures well-being within such a dynamic reality.

Building on the work of Seligman and other positive psychologists (Keyes, 2002; Keyes and Haidt, 2003; Haidt, 2006), I propose the following qualities as central to "flourishing in the flow of evolution." This list incorporates the features of dynamism, growth, self-determination, interactivity with and embeddedness within the world, creativity, and the holistic features of the human mind and the conscious self.

- Directional holistic growth
- Accomplishment and achievement
- Deep purpose and meaning in life
- Self-creation and self-determination
- Transcendence (social, natural, & cosmic)
- Emotionally positive conscious states
- Cognitively expanding conscious states
- Creativity, novelty, and adventure
- The experience of beauty; exhilaration in the senses and sensual
- Psychological vitality; enthusiasm & zest for life; play
- Appropriate balance of peace & rejuvenation
- Active engagement and contribution, impact, and mastery with respect to the world
- Mutually beneficial social functioning and relationships
- Physical health and physical vitality
- Supportive, beneficial environmental conditions, which are in states of flourishing

Happiness, which has often been identified as the highest good, can be understood as the conscious state associated with flourishing. Also, in line with Seligman and positive psychology, flourishing and long term authentic happiness are accomplishments; such states don't just happen or happen to us, they are achieved through effort (Seligman, 2002; Haidt, 2006; Rubin, 2009). Seligman describes this view of happiness and

flourishing as “an active agency theory.” Hence, well being and the good are accomplishments.

Flourishing can be applied as an ideal to both individuals and social collectives; societies, cultures, or humanity as a whole may flourish or flounder. A flourishing society defines what is a good society. Moreover, since either individuals or societies exist interactively in states of reciprocal evolution with their environments, flourishing can also be applied as an ideal to human-environmental systems.

What facilitates flourishing, as defined above, in the flow of evolution? What do we need to develop to realize well-being in a purposeful, future-directional, and evolutionary human reality? My proposed answer is heightened future consciousness, which defines distinctive excellence in human functioning, and can be described in terms of a selective set of character virtues.

4. Future Consciousness

*“It is not the fruits of past success but the living in and for the future
in which human intelligence proves itself.
Friedrich von Hayek*

Holistic future consciousness is a multifaceted normal human ability, defined as the total integrative set of psychological processes and modes of experience and behavior involved in our consciousness of the future. It includes our hopes and fears; our planning and our goals; our visions of the future; the stories we tell ourselves about the future; and our purposeful behaviors intended to create desired futures. Our psychological processes and states of perception and purposeful behavior; emotion and motivation; learning, memory, and understanding; anticipation, thinking, and planning; intuition and imagination; self-identity; and social interaction are all involved in our experience and creation of the future. (Lombardo, 2011).

All humans necessarily possess, as integral to their overall psychological functioning, some level of holistic future consciousness. Without holistic future consciousness a person would be aimless, lost, mentally deficient, passive, and reactive. The person would not seem intelligent or even human. Yet holistic future consciousness significantly varies in level of development among individuals and groups, and can be strengthened or enhanced.

To appreciate the critical importance of holistic future consciousness in human life, consider the following:

Future consciousness has a deep bio-psycho-social history within the evolution of mind and consciousness. Our sense of the future did not simply emerge fully formed in modern times, but can be traced back to ancient and prehistoric times, preceding even the appearance of the human species (Lombardo, 2006a). Agency and purpose can be traced back to much simpler forms of animate life (Kauffman, 2008; Damasio, 2010)

Still, it is the distinctive and significant growth of future consciousness in humans that drove the evolution of human civilization, being integrally involved in the evolution of bonding, coupling, and child rearing; hunting and gathering; instruments and technology; graphic art; trading and negotiation; agriculture; habitation and urbanization; war and conquest; religion; ethics and law; and science. In all these cases, anticipation and foresight, thinking and planning, informed purposeful behavior, and goal setting were involved (Lombardo, 2006a).

Given the long evolutionary history of future consciousness in humans, and its holistic nature, it is not surprising that diverse modes of its expression have emerged. Beginning with primordial motivational and anticipatory consciousness—stemming from basic hopes and fears—we find the successive emergence of the following forms of future consciousness: mythical and narrative; mystical; intuitive; graphic/artistic; rational; abstract and theoretical; and quantitative. We also find numerous distinctive theories, paradigms, and grand narratives of the future arising out of this diversity of expression, beginning in the deep past and continuing to evolve in contemporary human reality. Among these modes of expression and different perspectives of the future there is both ongoing competition and integration. (As noted earlier, purposeful human evolution at the collective level involves numerous ideas and ideals in interaction.) Overall, there is an ongoing evolution of future consciousness within the human sphere, pluralistic and interactive, and psychological and social (Lombardo, 2006b).

All told, holistic future consciousness is the key empowering dimension of the conscious human mind:

- It is responsible for the purposeful and ongoing evolution of human civilization and the human mind.
- It drives the individual development of consciousness, self, and mind across the individual life span.
- And, pointing toward the future, it should be the pivotal driving force in the future evolution of consciousness. Our future survival and ongoing evolution (our vitality and longevity) is contingent on the further *purposeful* evolution of future consciousness.

Holistic future consciousness constitutes the key evolution of evolution to emerge in the ongoing history of humanity. It is an evolution of evolution because both our ongoing collective history and our individual life span streams of consciousness are brought under *informed, self-reflective, evaluative, ethical, visionary, and purposeful guidance* through holistic future consciousness. This intentional and thoughtful empowering of evolutionary directionality and development encompasses, coordinates, and drives our psychological, social-cultural, biological, technological, and ecological advancements. Holistic future consciousness makes possible purposeful evolution within human reality.

Since holistic future consciousness captures the distinctive essence of the evolutionary, purposeful, and future-directional nature of the human mind and human reality,

excellence within this fundamental set of capacities defines what is good or best within humans. What facilitates and maximizes flourishing in the flow of evolution is the heightening of holistic future consciousness.

5. The Character Virtues of Heightened Future Consciousness

“Happiness is not the reward of virtue, but virtue itself.”
Spinoza

What defines excellence in heightened future consciousness is a distinctive set of character virtues.

Consider the concept of virtue itself: One influential approach to ethics is the virtue theory of the good (Thiroux and Krasemann, 2009). The good life is leading the virtuous life. Virtues are defined as esteemed character traits which embody excellence and positive values across the varied aspects of human consciousness and behavior. Virtues are positive values psychologically internalized and lived, whereby the good merges with desire and habit. The truly virtuous person both desires to be virtuous and habitually acts in virtuous ways. Frequently identified human virtues include honesty, courage, wisdom, and compassion. A common argument in virtue theory is that virtues are the foundation of happiness, success, and excellence in all spheres of life.

Following similar arguments in Aristotle, Confucius, Spinoza, and Seligman, and in line with a similar point made above regarding happiness and flourishing, virtues are personal accomplishments; they are realized through effort, practice, and achievement based on the belief in and aspiration and practice toward excellence.

Within positive psychology, character virtues are described as character strengths, and psychologists such as Seligman have argued (2002, 2011), that these character strengths can be both empirically measured and in various ways enhanced (Snyder and Lopez, 2005).

So how does this connect with our evolutionary trajectory? Because humans are participatory and purposeful in our own personal development and ongoing collective evolution, we are responsible for the conscious guidance of our personal lives and our ongoing further evolution. We are influential and anticipatory agents within the dynamic reality in which we find ourselves. Pursuing a life of virtue realizes this existential self-responsibility within an ethical framework.

Such a pursuit of virtue is integral to holistic future consciousness. For it is through the practice and strengthening of a particular set of virtues that excellence in future consciousness is achieved, and its power heightened.

What is the connection between flourishing and the development and practice of the character virtues of heightened future consciousness? Since the good is realized in an evolutionary reality, to be good involves guiding the evolutionary direction—the flow—

toward increased flourishing. The good is not something static. Our primary moral imperative is to flourish and contribute to the flourishing of others and to purposefully guide our future evolution to realize greater flourishing. We unleash our conscious power and make our conscious choice to fulfill this evolutionary imperative through the ongoing purposeful development and exercise of the character virtues of heightened future consciousness.

The specific set of character virtues of heightened future consciousness that facilitate flourishing include (Lombardo, 2011):

- Self-awareness, self-control, and self-responsibility (an empowered self narrative)
- Realistic idealism (the belief and pursuit of excellence)
- Self-growth (a progressive self narrative)
- The skill and love of learning (including honesty, wonder, curiosity, humility, and the quest for truth and understanding)
- The skill and love of thinking and multiple modes of understanding (self-reflectivity and the virtues of good thinking)
- Expansive temporal consciousness (a rich and thoughtful integration of history and the future—imaginative and visionary foresight—an evolved grand narrative)
- Cosmic consciousness (including awe, ecological and global consciousness, a sense of reciprocity, justice, and transcendence)
- Hope, courage, and optimism
- Love (including gratitude, passionate appreciation, and compassion)
- Deep purpose and tenacity (including discipline and commitment)
- Ethical pragmatism (practical wisdom—knowledge and ethics in action)
- Creativity and the adventuresome spirit
- Balance and temperance (the integration of values and virtues)

In the following sections I highlight some of the above virtues, explaining why each is important in flourishing and the creation of a good future.

6. Self-Awareness, Self-Control, and Self-Responsibility

“The evolution of man is the evolution of consciousness and ‘consciousness’ cannot evolve unconsciously. The evolution of man is an evolution of his will, and ‘will’ cannot evolve involuntarily. The evolution of man is the evolution of his power of doing, and ‘doing’ cannot be the result of things which ‘happen’.”

George Gurdjieff

Self-awareness comes in degrees and requires ongoing self-reflection; we are not automatically transparent to ourselves. Self-control comes through self-awareness since we can't control what we do not understand. The desire to understand ourselves better is, in fact, usually motivated by the desire to better control ourselves (Baumeister and Tierney, 2011). Taking self-responsibility for our character and behavior is grounded in the realization that we have potential control over our conscious minds and actions.

Self-responsibility is the cardinal virtue of heightened future consciousness, since the realization of any virtue is a purposeful accomplishment of the individual, which presupposes self-responsibility. In developing any virtue the individual must believe in and act upon the conviction that character is a consequence of individual actions and efforts and consequently can be enhanced. Virtues require that individuals see themselves as responsible for who they are. Self-responsibility empowers the individual toward self-transformation and development.

At its core heightened future consciousness requires that individuals take responsibility for their future, which includes their own personal development. Such a mindset is psychologically elevating and empowering, while the reverse is a victim mindset and psychologically depressing.

The capacity for self-reflective self-control is realized through the development of will power, a variable psychological capacity that can be strengthened through disciplined practice and increasing psychologically informed self-knowledge (Baumeister and Tierney, 2011).

The conscious self exists in a reciprocal relationship with the world, and is participatory in the creation of the environment in which the self exists. Self-control and self-responsibility are exercised in the context of a selectively guided and constructed environment. There is no absolute “given” environment; we need to take responsibility for the present and future world in which we live, for we contribute to its creation.

In summary, some of the main features of this first virtue are:

A deep, accurate, and growing understanding of oneself; the capacity to honestly self-reflect upon and assess one’s conscious states and general personality traits; self-control, whereby one has the capacity to direct both consciousness and behavior toward desired ends; recognizing and acknowledging oneself as the agent of one’s conscious states, behavior, and life situation; and seeing the power within oneself to change oneself or one’s life situation; the opposite of perceived helplessness.

7. Hope and Optimism: Emotional and Motivational Virtues

*“Since man is above all future-making, he is,
above all, a swarm of hopes and fears.”
Ortega y Gasset*

Emotion is a foundational feature of future consciousness. Hope is the primary positive anticipatory emotion, whereas fear is the primary negative anticipatory emotion. Hope generates approach behavior, happiness, and enthusiasm, whereas fear about the future generates despair and depression (Reading, 2004; Snyder, Rand, and Sigmon, 2005).

Following from Fredrickson's (2005, 2009) "Broaden and Build Theory," positive emotions (such as hope and love) produce more expansive, sensitive, creative, and transformational conscious states. In essence, cognitive abilities, inclusive of future-oriented capacities, are enhanced through positive emotions.

A hopeful emotional state concerning the future generates optimism; a fearful emotional state generates pessimism. Optimists are more confident, persistent, and meet challenges in life better. They show higher subjective well-being, experience fewer negative feelings when facing problems, are "approach coping" (as opposed to avoidance coping), and in general are more reality focused than pessimists. Optimism and pessimism generate self-fulfilling prophecy effects (Seligman, 1998; Carver and Scheier, 2005).

Negative emotional states and frustration and disappointment, as normal psychological occurrences, can play a contributing role in the development of heightened future consciousness, if such events are assimilated as learning experiences and do not overpower the general psychological character of the individual. Deeper, more sustained, and realistic hope and optimism build out of learning from trauma, deprivation, and struggle (Seligman, 2011).

Overall, hope and optimism are virtues requiring courage and sustained cognitive and behavioral effort. As a cultivated set of connected virtues, positive emotions, such as hope, are the energizing core of heightened future consciousness.

Some of the main features of these virtues are: Enthusiasm and positive emotional vitality about the future; the capacity to see positive possibilities for the future and actions or strategies for realizing these possibilities; the belief in and pursuit of constructive actions that solve or address problems and challenges; optimism about the future—the belief that life can improve; the opposite of pessimism and nihilism; the capacity to pursue goals in the face of uncertainty (about the future), potential fallibility, fear, and struggle and disappointment; and having inspiring and informed (realistic) self and grand narratives.

8. Tenacity and Deep Purpose

*"This is how the whole scheme of things works.
All good things are difficult to achieve; and bad things are very easy to get."
Confucius*

Tenacity and deep purpose in life are key motivational virtues in heightened future consciousness, empowering us with a sustained, long-term sense of direction with respect to the future.

Tenacity (also referred to as "grit") is high self-discipline with passionate persistence in the face of adversity. Tenacity is empowered by passion for a goal or purpose and is strengthened through practice in pursuing and realizing progressively longer term goals.

Tenacity is more important than talent in predicting success; tenacity amplifies talent and skill, since the latter qualities increase as a consequence of committed practice (Seligman, 2011).

Deep purpose drives tenacity. Deep purpose is an overarching life direction, an expansive motivational temporal consciousness. According to Zimbardo (2008), deep purpose seems necessary for authentic long term happiness. Deep purpose frequently involves the quality of transcendence, having a life cause that transcends individual concerns. Deep purpose involves connecting our personal future self-narrative with our grand narrative about the future of humanity, nature, and the cosmos. Our envisioned individual future pathway contributes to and finds meaning within our grand narrative.

Summarizing the main features of these virtues: They reflect purpose in life as opposed to apathy. They are grounded in the act of commitment; cultivated through sustained discipline and persistence in the face of adversity; and motivated and anchored to long-term goals (extended motivational future consciousness). They demonstrate overarching intentionality and directionality in one's life and ideal future self-narrative—the higher good creating transcendence in one's personal life.

9. Expansive Temporal Consciousness and Cosmic Consciousness

“To see through the eyes of eternity.”
Spinoza

Two of the fundamental cognitive virtues, expansive temporal consciousness and cosmic consciousness, are states of evolving enlightenment and understanding fueled by the practiced virtues of love of learning and thinking and motivated by awe, wonder, and curiosity. Both virtues involve pursuing the big picture of reality in time and space, of going beyond consciousness of the local and relative immediate here and now. Both virtues involve integrative understanding and deep learning, whereby learning is synthesized and connected with oneself.

Expansive temporal consciousness is broad and informed temporal knowledge of human and natural history; an informed and rich understanding of the trends and possibilities of the future; a capacity to synthesize knowledge of the past with the possibilities of the future—to apply the past to the future; an informed and inspiring grand narrative of humanity, nature, and the cosmos; and the capacity to deeply connect one's self-narrative with one's grand narrative. Expansive temporal consciousness is the opposite of presentism—the inclination or motivation to focus on the present.

Cosmic consciousness builds out of a sense of connection with humanity, nature, and the universe. Coupled together with expansive temporal consciousness, it reflects a motivated acquisition of “big picture” knowledge; a sense of the universe and one's place within it; is the opposite of localism and egocentrism; includes both global and ecological awareness; sees the connection and interdependency of all things; and

embraces a consequent moral sense of reciprocity and justice (in opposition to self-centeredness).

10. Temperance and Balance

*“The Tao that can be described is not the eternal Tao.
The name that can be spoken is not the eternal Name.”
Lao Tzu*

The principles of the “Golden Mean” and the “Middle Way” have been central ethical directives in both Eastern and Western philosophies. Of special note, balance and reciprocity are key ideas in the Taoist Yin-Yang vision of life. And in the West, as an illustrative example, Aristotle proposed that all human virtues are balanced integrations of oppositional traits, whereby vice is going to either extreme on any bipolar dispositional continuum (Marinoff, 2007).

Nisbett’s (2003) studies in the “geography of thought” highlight the importance of cognitive balance, whereby the wise person pursuing heightened future consciousness develops and practices both rational-analytic and intuitive-holistic modes of understanding.

Relative to the virtues of temperance and balance (Seligman, 2002), fanaticism is a vice and cognitive deficiency. In life challenges and decision making, it is frequently necessary to balance and integrate various values to make the best decision. Temperance and balance, as the “Yin-Yang of Wisdom,” involves the integrative expansion of decisional consciousness, bringing to the forefront the importance of thoughtful and reflective deliberation on multiple values and points of view in guiding the future.

Key dimensions of balance and temperance within heightened future consciousness include: the intellect balanced and integrated with emotion; logic balanced with intuition; self-concern balanced with concern for others; humility, flexibility, and openness balanced with conviction and determination; gratitude and contentment balanced with desire; risk and change balanced with security and stability; and the balance of order and chaos in life.

11. The Self-Narrative and Grand Narrative

*“People often say that this or that person has not yet found himself. But the self is not something that one finds. It is something that one creates.”
Thomas Szasz*

Many of the above virtues are intimately connected with the development and implementation of empowering self- and grand-narratives. Working on the narratives we tell ourselves about ourselves and about the world is a key psychological strategy for developing the character virtues of heightened future consciousness.

The narrative has great psychological centrality and power in the human mind; humans are natural story tellers. Narratives generate a sense of identity, temporal coherence, meaning, and purpose in life for both individuals and groups. Changing narratives is a powerful catalyst for generating psychological or social change (Polak, 1973; Damasio, 1999; Wilson, 2011).

The self is a dynamic, temporal (past- and future-contextualized), self-reflective, creative, and purposeful, future-directional reality. The self emerges and transforms within the narrative flow of consciousness (Damasio, 2010).

Individuals articulate both self- and grand-narratives, about both the past and the future, with degrees of clarity, coherence, positivity, and vision. These narratives are created and to varying degrees continually recreated in the future-directional flow of consciousness. Both self-understanding and self-empowerment are facilitated through the conscious effort to articulate and reflect upon these narratives.

Narratives can be rewritten, illustrating the self-creative capacity of the conscious mind. Of special value, ideal self- and grand-narratives of the future can be rewritten and reintegrated, in which the ideals of character virtues and flourishing in the future can become central values. This self-conscious recreation facilitates the development of heightened future consciousness and flourishing in the future.

Viewing the self as the responsible architect of the future, we should see ourselves as evolution self-conscious, purposeful, and evolving. We self-create ourselves through the ongoing future-directional, self-reflective self narrative we tell ourselves about ourselves within the context of the grand narrative we tell ourselves about the world.

12. Wisdom

*“Believe those who are seeking the truth;
doubt those who find it.”
Andre Gide*

Wisdom, I propose, is the synthesis of the virtues of heightened future consciousness. Wisdom provides a psychologically holistic, action-oriented, and ethical way in which to conceptualize heightened future consciousness; wisdom is what best facilitates the pursuit and creation of a good future. Wisdom is the overarching virtue and highest expression of heightened future consciousness.

Though the study of wisdom has a long history, embracing diverse perspectives, both Eastern and Western, as well as classical and modern (Macdonald, 1996, 2004; Sternberg, 1990; Sternberg and Jordan, 2005), from these varied points of view the following definition can be synthesized:

Wisdom is the personally internalized, continually evolving understanding of and fascination with both the big picture and personal dimensions of life, and what is ethical, and the desire and creative capacity to apply this understanding to enhance the well-being of life, both for oneself and others.

Though wisdom is commonly associated with past traditions and the repository of knowledge distilled by the past, wisdom as defined above has a future, purposeful focus. It centrally involves that capacity to create a good future. Moreover it is evolutionary, open, and growing by definition (Lombardo, 2011).

Also, although wisdom is frequently viewed as a cognitive virtue, it is holistic, containing personal, emotional, motivational, social, and ethical qualities, encompassing the full breadth of heightened holistic future consciousness.

Adopting a “wisdom narrative” of both the past and the future is the key to flourishing in the flow of evolution. A wisdom narrative describes life as a learning experience, one in pursuit of virtue, often involving struggles and setbacks, with consequent emerging enlightenment and deeper capacities of life transformation.

Aside from providing an encapsulating concept for understanding heightened future consciousness, wisdom can be viewed as a guiding light for happiness and the good life; self-development; the preferable future evolution of the human mind; and the preferable central goal of education (Lombardo, 2011).

- Historically, wisdom has been seen as the key to happiness and the good life. In contrast, there are clear limitations to rationalistic/cognitive, technological, materialistic/economic, social/political, and environmental visions in achieving the good life. The key to the good life exists within our own holistic psychological development, as the architects of our reality, integrating the personal, social, and environmental.
- Wisdom has been frequently seen as the highest expression of self-development, across philosophical, spiritual, and psychological modes of inquiry. Indeed, as the highest expression of future consciousness, which is the distinctive human capacity and strength, wisdom is clearly what best drives and sets the standards for the evolution of personal consciousness.
- In our future collective evolutionary direction, we require a vision that is holistic, ethical, self-empowering, and self-evolving; this is wisdom. We also require a futurist vision that taps into our most distinctive evolutionary strength: our capacity for informed purposeful self-evolution. Moreover, our world problems and challenges (including our contemporary “Mega-Crisis”) are primarily ethical, psychological, social, and character related (Halal and Marien, 2011). We should envision an “Age of Wisdom” as our ideal future grand narrative to empower us in our future evolution.

- If education is to serve individual self-development and preferable human evolution as a whole, then wisdom education makes the most sense (Lombardo, 2011).

13. Exemplars of Wisdom: The Wisdom Narrative

*"Probably the most powerful work of imagination every written."
Arthur C. Clarke*

Science fiction creates narratives of the future and, tapping into all the fundamental dimensions of the human mind, can stimulate and enhance holistic future consciousness (Lombardo, 2006b, 2015). In many cases, science fiction has provided wisdom narratives that explore humanity's potential future mental and social evolution.

As an exemplar case, Olaf Stapledon, in his novels *Last and First Men* (1930) and *Star Maker* (1937), created grand futures narratives that were supremely visionary, encompassing the totality of the universe in both space and time, and realizing both cosmic consciousness and expansive temporal consciousness. The novels set humanity and intelligence throughout the universe in a cosmic evolutionary context.

Stapledon highlighted future mental and social evolution, envisioning purposefully evolving conscious minds pursuing individual, communal, philosophical, cosmic, and aesthetic values. He described conscious minds striving toward progressive, ever transcending visions of preferable futures within the context of challenges and setbacks within reality.

Hence, his novels are wisdom narratives involving repeated struggles and learning. One observes deep purpose in the participants within these narratives, reflecting that of Stapledon himself, who wishes to enlighten and inspire his readers through his stories.

There is, indeed, a dovetailing of science fiction and futures studies within these novels, which contain numerous extrapolative plausibilities, visionary possibilities, and hypothetical future challenges and disasters, all set within ongoing philosophical reflection and assessment. Stapledon thoughtfully considers through his evolutionary narratives how intelligence and civilization could potentially realize greater heights of development and achievement.

Moreover, we can view Stapledon as an exemplary personal synthesis of intellect, imagination, ethics, aesthetics, and compassion. As a writer, he pulls together in his literary creations all these dimensions of human consciousness. We also get the clear sense that in reading his novels we are engaging a deeply ingrained mode of consciousness within the writer; there is authenticity in the voice and thinking. The power and credibility of the futurist visions within his books derive from a person who attempted to integrate into his being and outlook on life the values and dimensions of consciousness displayed within the text. All his life, Stapledon strove to purposefully evolve himself as a writer, teacher, philosopher, utopian activist, and ethical human being (Crossley, 1994). Within Stapledon, the philosophical is intimately connected with

the personal. Those who would teach or consult on the future would do well to follow the example of Stapledon, internalizing and manifesting in their own character and behavior the knowledge they hope to communicate—the way to pursue a good future. Futurists need to pursue wisdom within their own lives—to walk the talk—and teach to wisdom in their efforts to help others realize a good future.

Stapledon also illustrates, with his personally internalized, cosmic perspective on mental evolution, an important three-part connection of individual psychological development, collective mental evolution, and cosmic evolution. Our psychology of the future (how we approach the future) needs to be informed and inspired by our visions of the future of psychology (how we envision our ideal future collective evolution). In turn, the future of psychology needs to be informed and inspired by our best understanding of the future of the cosmos. Within the theory presented in this article, heightened future consciousness or wisdom at a personal level should be informed and inspired by both visions of the future human evolution and the future of the cosmos. Our ideal future self-narrative should be connected to our ideal future grand-narrative for humanity, which in turn should be grounded in our ideal future grand-narrative for the cosmos.

In conclusion, the life of the self and the future life of the human mind should be set in the context of the life of the cosmos, and the life of the cosmos is evolution. Purposefully evolving our consciousness means being informed and inspired by cosmic evolution and serving the process of cosmic evolution. This is a pivotal insight behind the realization of a preferable future and the good life for each of us individually and humanity as a whole. Although this may seem a rather ethereal and impractical position to take on life, it is actually the most realistically grounded and self-empowering paradigm of life to embrace. Every other ethical position is to varying degrees unrealistic.

14. Summary

*“If you want to awaken all of humanity, then awaken all of yourself.
If you want to eliminate the suffering in the world,
then eliminate all that is dark and negative in yourself.
Truly, the greatest gift you have to give
is that of your own self-transformation.”
Lao Tzu*

The principles of evolution and reciprocity provide a basic framework for understanding both our physical and psycho-social reality. The self-conscious human mind exists in an interdependent and interactive relationship with the environment. Moreover, the human mind is an evolutionary reality, showing both historical-collective evolution, and directional evolutionary change through the individual life-span. Humans engage in informed and purposeful evolution, an evolution of evolution, and this process is directed through holistic future consciousness, our most distinctive and empowering psychological capacity. Flourishing within the flow of evolution provides a dynamic and holistic vision of well being and the good resonant with our distinctive evolutionary

reality. Flourishing (and human happiness) is best realized through the development and exercise of a set of character virtues defining excellence in holistic future consciousness. Heightened future consciousness, realized through the synthesis of these character virtues, is wisdom. The articulation and pursuit of a wisdom narrative facilitates both our individual and collective purposeful self-evolution. We all should personally aspire toward living an ideal future narrative informed and guided by wisdom. With an eye on the future, the most realistic, wise, ethical, and empowering mode of consciousness is viewing ourselves as participating in cosmic evolution and responsible for our self-evolution.

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