

**An Introduction:
*Wisdom, Consciousness, and the Future &
Mind Flight: A Journey into the Future***

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*Wisdom is the highest expression of self-development and future consciousness.
It is the continually evolving understanding of and fascination with the big picture of life,
of what is important, ethical, and meaningful, and the desire and creative capacity
to apply this understanding to enhance the well being of life,
both for oneself and others.**

This summer I published two new books. The first book, *Wisdom, Consciousness, and the Future* (2011a) is a collection of thematically connected essays published during the years 2004 to 2011. The second book, *Mind Flight: A Journey into the Future* (2011b), is a personal and intellectual odyssey that chronicles and weaves together the development of my philosophical and futurist ideas with my life experiences and challenges, running from early adulthood to the present. First I will describe *Wisdom, Consciousness, and the Future*, then *Mind Flight*, and in the final section I will pull the two books together.

The essence of *Wisdom, Consciousness, and the Future* can be captured in a series of basic arguments and theses which sequentially emerge and build upon each other through the successive articles in the book:

Humanity faces a number of significant challenges and problems, including excessive presentism and short-sightedness; chaos, fragmentation, and frenzy in everyday life; nihilism and pessimism about the future; narcissism and egocentric individualism; and a consumerist and materialist philosophy of happiness and success.

Though progress is being made in constructively addressing many of our global problems, the key to a better world in the future is the collective enhancement of future consciousness.

The heightening of future consciousness, aside from more expansive, imaginative, and flexible thinking about the future, centrally involves the strengthening of certain fundamental character virtues, such as self-responsibility, courage, optimism, transcendence, and wisdom.

More broadly, following the virtue-based theories of ethics in Aristotle, Spinoza, and the contemporary psychologist Martin Seligman, psychological well-being, personal fulfillment, and success in life, are a consequence of pursuing and practicing a core set of character virtues. Hence, a better life (which includes both our individual and collective future) is realized through ethical development.

A key virtue for the future, especially regarding the realization of quality education, is wisdom. Frequently, wisdom is identified in spiritual, philosophical, and psychological writings as the highest expression of human self-development. Building on this thesis, I propose that wisdom is the highest expression of future consciousness and the most appropriate central goal for education. Higher education, mirroring many negative trends in popular culture, suffers from a lack of integration, a superficiality and shallowness of understanding and values, an emphasis on gadgetry as opposed to depth, utilitarian and self-centered goals involving economic advancement, and a disconnection between knowledge, action, personal development, and ethical values. Facilitating the growth of wisdom in education would counter-act such negative features within education. Wisdom synthesizes cognitive capacities, such as expansive and informed thinking and creative and practical knowledge, with emotional sensitivity and depth and ethical consciousness. Wisdom unites mind, heart, action, and ethical values.

Although economic and technological developments are important as contributing factors to human progress, the key to a better future is the psychological, social, and ethical evolution of humans. We need to evolve in order to address our contemporary challenges and problems. The quality of the future will centrally depend upon the future quality of human beings.

Many contemporary writers call for a “New Enlightenment”—a new way of thinking for constructively and effectively dealing with our complex, fast-paced world. Such a psycho-social evolution of consciousness should center on the pursuit and practice of a revitalized and future-focused conception of wisdom—one that is global in scope and understanding and gender integrative. It should unite past and future, insight and logic.

A key activity toward realizing virtue and wisdom-based goals in life is the creation of both past and future self-narratives whereby, especially in the latter case, the pursuit of virtue and wisdom provides a guiding light for how to direct and create one’s future.

A virtue and wisdom-based philosophy can be applied to love and marriage, providing a framework for understanding the ongoing evolution of marriage up to the present and a preferable vision of love and marriage in the future.

Building on the work of my two previous books, *The Evolution of Future Consciousness* and *Contemporary Futurist Thought* (2006a, 2006b), I explain in several essays how future consciousness has evolved throughout human history (including pre-historical times) via technological, social, mythological, religious, philosophical, and scientific developments and illustrate how the growth of future consciousness has been pivotal to the evolution of civilization.

Since the growth of future consciousness has been critical to our evolution and because our contemporary challenges require its further development, education should revolve around education on the future (or futures education). This hypothesis aligns with the previous point that education should pivot on the modeling and facilitating of the growth of wisdom, since wisdom is identified as the highest expression of future

consciousness. There are numerous educational techniques and approaches to heightening future consciousness (or wisdom), as well as various avenues for integrating wisdom and the future into a general college curriculum.

Innumerable lines of evidence indicate that humans live in an evolutionary universe and that human nature (biologically, psychologically, and socially) is not a constant but is transformative. With numerous factors, such as science, technology, education, society, and environmental changes, contributing to this ongoing transformation, we will continue to evolve in the future. Because humans are self-conscious, self-evaluative beings who attempt to guide and direct their own development through various means—a clear fact of history—humans will use scientific knowledge, technological advances, philosophical and ethical principles, and spiritual and educational practices to purposefully evolve themselves further in the future. As a general corollary principle, we grow or we die; there is no standing still; there is no sustainability.

The central trajectory of future human psychological evolution is toward ever-increasing cosmic consciousness, in the sense of an expanding awareness and understanding of space and time and a growing appreciation of our place within the universe. (This includes evolving dimensions of global and ecological consciousness.) Both wisdom and heightened future consciousness fall within this general trajectory; wisdom, in fact, can be seen as cosmically expansive and ethically informed thinking tied to action.

Key to both our ongoing psychological evolution and our educational development is the pursuit and enhancement of character virtues. A relatively comprehensive set of central character virtues can be identified that support academic excellence and achievement—as well as personal and professional success. These virtues include: the belief in and pursuit of excellence; self-responsibility; the love of learning and thinking; honesty and integrity; justice and fairness; courage, openness, and the creative spirit; discipline and commitment; optimism and the aspiration toward growth; balance and holistic personal development; and, of course, wisdom, which synthesizes many of these other virtues.

An integrative-interdisciplinary, psychologically holistic, wisdom-based, and future-focused educational curriculum and program can (and perhaps should) serve as the undergraduate foundation for a college education and the pursuit of any and all disciplinary degrees. A set of integrative educational goals can be identified and described, including the heightening of future consciousness, ethical character development, expansiveness of consciousness (including global, cultural, historical, and ecological parameters), scientific and technological understanding, and communication and writing skills. This curriculum would assess for deep learning, critical thinking, personal and practical application, and overall self-development.

Building on such a curriculum, a central educational goal should be the cultivation of “wise cyborgs.” Humans have reciprocally co-evolved with technologies; we are inextricably inter-connected with our technologies. In essence, we are, and always have been, cyborgs—a functional synthesis of the biological and the technological. Many, if not all of the challenges facing us today, require a further evolution of humans,

enhanced or augmented with “mental technologies.” (Mental technologies are all those technologies that support, facilitate, or enhance any and all psychological functions.) Yet, this ongoing bio-technological integration should serve the ends or goals of wisdom, virtue, and ethical principles. A wise cyborg is someone who creates and/or uses technologies to serve the goals and values of wisdom. Presently, technologies (based on trends and values in popular culture) often serve shallow or even unethical ends. There is even evidence that contemporary technologies may produce psychologically and cognitively detrimental effects. This is a central challenge for the future—to bring technological evolution and utilization more in line with wise, virtuous, and psychologically elevating ends.

In order to better understand the nature of future consciousness, wisdom, and enlightenment, it is critical that we understand more deeply the nature of consciousness as such. Building on the principle of reciprocal evolution, both mind and consciousness have evolved in an interactive, interdependent fashion with our physical world and environment (which includes our technologies); consciousness is ecological and supported within a cosmological context. Our sense of self (individually and collectively) has emerged within such an ecological-cosmological context as well. We are children of the universe, and intelligence has evolved through stages, supported by the informational structure and integrative, creative processes of the cosmos. The temporal structure of consciousness reveals a transformative flow, always grounded in the past, and always pointing or opening up into the future. There is no absolute present independent of past or future. Consciousness as it continues to evolve, both within individuals and within collective networks, can be seen as the means by which the universe is coming to know itself.

Creativity is also a cosmological phenomenon; evolution is creative and pervasive across all levels of complexity within the universe. A set of common principles can be identified which captures the creative process in both physical-biological nature and psycho-social-technological evolution. These principles include: the weaving together of order and chaos, of synthesis and destruction; Gestalt jumps in integration; and irreducible novelty and unpredictability. Continued creativity within human society is essential for our future—for our flourishing—and heightened future consciousness and its supreme expression in wisdom exhibit numerous creative features. Again, we grow or we die.

This is the essence of *Wisdom, Consciousness, and the Future*.

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Why search for wisdom and enlightenment? The pursuit of wisdom and enlightenment is critically important to living the good life—to realizing what is best in us, to giving meaning and purpose to our existence. Wisdom and enlightenment bring quality to life.

*Wisdom answers the question of how to live;
enlightenment answers the question of what to live for.**

The above set of hypotheses on character virtues, wisdom, and future consciousness, articulated in *Wisdom, Consciousness, and the Future*, took form, as I described it, “in the Heraclitian fire of personal experience.” *Mind Flight* describes this “Heraclitian fire”—the personal experiences in my life journey that formed the raw data and energy that fueled and enlivened my ongoing philosophical and futurist pursuits. But *Mind Flight* is not just a personal memoir. For one thing, I summarize in successive chapters many of the key theoretical arguments made in the articles contained in *Wisdom, Consciousness, and the Future*. Yet further, the intellectual scope of *Mind Flight* is much broader as well.

At 802 pages, *Mind Flight* is a big book. Spread across the twelve chapters, aside from discussions on wisdom, future consciousness, and virtue, the reader will find:

- A relatively comprehensive review of Western philosophy, beginning with the ancient Greeks—Parmenides, Heraclitus, Empedocles, Plato, and Aristotle; then examining at length the early moderns—Spinoza, Leibnitz, Berkeley, Hegel, and Descartes; and running up to twentieth-century thinkers—Wittgenstein, Sartre, Feyerabend, Lakatos, Kuhn, Pirsig, and Popper—a review and discussion that covers the classic philosophical questions on reality, knowledge, the nature of progress, free will and determinism, ethics and the good life, enlightenment, mind, self, and consciousness, and the ideal society. My thinking on the future has been strongly influenced by my life-long study of philosophy.
- An extensive ongoing discussion of the Taoist philosophy of the Yin-Yang—a pivotal theme within the entire book—as well as commentaries on other Eastern ideas contained in Buddhism and Hinduism. Further, *Mind Flight*, especially in the second half of the book, and grounded in the psychological studies of Richard Nisbett, compares and pulls together Eastern and Western philosophical ideas and modes of thinking.
- An expansive treatment of the theory of evolution, including both biological and ecological themes (covering Darwin, Gould, Lovelock, and Sahtouris, among others), as well as cosmological evolutionary themes from contemporary science (covering Smolin, Adams and Laughlin, Tipler, Kurzweil, and Gell-Mann), all set in the context of J.T. Fraser’s theory of the evolutionary nature of time. The cosmological theory of evolution is fundamental to the philosophical and scientific framework expounded in the book.
- A fairly thorough treatment of psychology, running from Freud and early behaviorist and personality theorists (such as Jung, Rogers, Miller, Skinner, and Maslow) to the contemporary ideas of Seligman, Zimbardo, Damasio, and Csikszentmihalyi—all of which is discussed within the context of mental well-being, psychological distress, and madness. An especially in-depth examination of J.J. Gibson’s ecological psychology is included, in which the concept of reciprocity is first introduced and then later integrated with both Fraser’s theory of reality and time and the Taoist Yin-

Yang. This psychological content provides a foundation for my emerging discussions on the nature of future consciousness and personal self-development.

- Numerous forays into the question of the existence of God, the power of prayer and the ways in which God connects (or doesn't connect) with science, the theory of evolution, and madness and mental health. The Egyptian-Christian archetype of death and resurrection is an especially important theme examined in this context.
- Repeated—and often psychologically jolting—deliberations on the nature of and necessary connection between good and evil. The reciprocity of good and evil and the manner in which it connects to personal development and social evolution is a big theme in the latter part of the book.
- A historical and philosophical examination of science fiction—its special value and strength—and an argument for why it is the mythology of the future. The classics of Wells and Stapledon, as well as more recent works of contemporary writers, such as Simmons, Vinge, Stross, and Baxter, are described—giving the future a dramatic, concrete, and mind-boggling realism. The ideas on science fiction throughout the book often dovetail with discussions on the study of the future, cosmology, evolution, technology, human evolution, good and evil, and God. I especially ponder the significance of the science fiction movies *2001* and *A Clockwork Orange*.
- Though there are several articles in *Wisdom, Consciousness, and the Future* on education, *Mind Flight* not only summarizes ideas from these articles but includes a considerable amount of additional discussion on the present state of education and preferable directions for the future. Education is a big theme in *Mind Flight*: What is the value of academic knowledge? What is involved in quality teaching? What are the challenges in realizing a quality educational experience? How does education connect with psychological well-being?
- Drawing together ideas from psychology, philosophy, education, and spiritual/religious traditions, another central theme in *Mind Flight* is personal growth and transformation. Though informed by numerous theoretical ideas, this theme is especially anchored to personal experiences—the challenges, disasters, and achievements—recounted in the book. In a sense, the entire book, including the dramatic climax, revolves around the issue of personal transformation—how one creates a positive and uplifting new life and new sense of self for the future.
- Several comprehensive and progressively evolving overviews of the study of the future are included, covering the future of science, technology (including biotech, computers, and robots), ecology and the environment, space travel and colonization, the global society and urbanization, love and marriage, education, culture, psychology, and spirituality. Included are especially in-depth treatments of the future of science, technology, ecology, and space travel, as well as the future of human psychology. Many contemporary futurist thinkers are discussed, including Hubbard, Anderson, Kurzweil, Bell, Henderson, and Kelly. These overviews of futurist thought

form a central element in the second half of the book, building upon the philosophical and scientific ideas covered in the first half of the book. Further, the futures overviews serve as a foundation for articulating a preferable and positive vision of the future described at length in the latter chapters. Key themes within this preferable vision include the cultivation of wisdom, character virtues, heightened future consciousness, ethical and psychological evolution, and an evolutionary, cosmological, and optimistic mindset.

- Aside from my ongoing pursuit of wisdom and enlightenment and a positive vision of the future, another central quest recounted in the book is finding or realizing true love. There is much in *Mind Flight* on the nature of love—including the ecstasy, frustration, excitement, adventure, intimacy, eros, and pain associated with it. (See below)

Bear in mind, however, that all of these theoretical and philosophical expositions are interwoven with a personal narrative. As a student and then a teacher, therapist, writer, and speaker who delved into all of these topics, I was learning and thinking it all out on the battleground of life. As a flesh and blood person, I was especially affected by the challenges of love and the realities of good and evil. Providing just a sample of settings and experiences, the personal narrative within the book includes:

- The fist-fighting, weight-lifting culture of blue collar urban life in the 1960s.
- The emergence of the Hippies and plenty of sex, and drugs, and rock 'n' roll.
- Getting enraptured with Pink Floyd, The Velvet Underground, *2001, A Clockwork Orange*, Sibelius, and Beethoven while I was intensely studying psychology and philosophy.
- Chasing a mythical, fictitious redhead through time in a time machine, becoming lost in Borges' "The Library of Babel," and throwing away a 2000-page book in a dumpster.
- Riding Greyhound buses with other vagabonds back and forth across the country and living with a hundred sharks and a thousand monsters in an apartment in Denver.
- Sensory isolation tanks, detox centers, and life in a large mental hospital for the seriously mentally ill, where I met the Second Coming who turned out to be a woman being pursued by the agents of the Devil.
- Losing everything and mentally falling apart on the open road—in the wild West—going to confession (as a professed atheist) for thirty days straight with a fundamentalist minister, talking to God via shooting stars in the sky, and pulling it all together again because I took the advice of Clarke Gable.

- Three wives, three divorces, and four marriages. Many tarantulas and many children, some of the latter of whom disappeared along the way and later were rediscovered.
- Finding Spinoza's grave in the rain, pilfering some sacred pebbles—which now sit in my study—and getting evicted from the Lincoln Memorial.
- Seriously contemplating suicide.
- After becoming infected by psychopathic evil, and being inspired by a universe-hopping Neanderthal man, obsessively desiring to totally pulverize another human being.
- Contemplating—indeed being mesmerized by—a red headed naked lady who now lives in my library.

How does all of this—the domains of study, the theories, and the personal experiences—fit together? What is the overall thrust of the book? To summarize, *Mind Flight* chronicles the quest for a wise and enlightened vision of the future set in the context of the muck and mire—sound and fury—of life. Building on philosophical, psychological, scientific, and ethical ideas developed throughout the book, this positive and inspiring vision is laid out within the last few chapters.

What is the main theoretical argument of *Mind Flight*? Mind and consciousness, wisdom and enlightenment, love and virtue, and God and the cosmos evolve in the Yin-Yang—order and chaos—good and evil—death and resurrection—of life.

But as a reviewer of an early draft of this book commented, *Mind Flight* is a love story—both in the co-creative writing partnership out of which it emerged and in the dramatic substance of its narrative. *Mind Flight* was written together with my wife Jeanne Lombardo, and a big part of the second half of the book is indeed our love story. Our meeting, our love affair, and our marriage, as described in the book, has been a fiery and evolutionary synthesis of the Dionysian and the Apollonian—of eros and passion and reason and the intellect. A coupling of such forces necessarily involves conflict, however, and love must frequently muster its forces against serious threats. A central drama in the latter part of *Mind Flight* is emblematic of the universal struggle of love—and light—against those who would destroy it. Indeed, it was through passing through and prevailing against a very dark and ugly experience that the inspiration for writing this book arose. As I state in the book, in a true Yin-Yang fashion, “out of the darkness comes the light.”

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...just as each of us looks outward into space and time, extending ourselves, the universe as a totality is unfinished as well, reaching forever forward in the evolutionary process. Contrary to Spinoza, the universe is not complete; it is an unfinished

*symphony. Hence, each individual consciousness indeed mirrors this basic form of the whole, of going beyond itself, of flow and evolution, of self-transcendence—to lesser or greater degrees.
In the beginning was the mystery.
And life is a detective story.**

Mind Flight provides the big picture—the broad philosophical and personal context of thinking and experience—out of which the essays collected in *Wisdom, Consciousness, and the Future* grew. Most of the essays in the latter book were created while Jeanne and I were writing—through multiple and ever longer drafts—the body of *Mind Flight*.

I didn't realize though that I had a second book—the collection of essays—until we had almost completed the final draft of *Mind Flight*. It hit me one day in a flash that I should publish the essays as a book to accompany and complement *Mind Flight*. The essays lay out in a systematic and well-developed form my theories on future consciousness, character virtues, wisdom, creativity, and psychological evolution—themes I ponder and debate in *Mind Flight* in the context of life, the universe, and everything else. If *Mind Flight* recollects, free-associates, and explores, *Wisdom, Consciousness, and the Future* focuses and systematically argues.

Yet, in both cases, the quest is for enlightenment and an understanding of the nature of wisdom and of how to pursue and cultivate it. Additionally, in both books, I am searching for an uplifting, informed, and impassioned vision of the future. And one mustn't forget love—another common theme within the books—the energy that makes the world go round, the force that pulls existence up by its own bootstraps.

Finally, the dramatic theme of the journey—indeed the “unending journey” and the “never-ending story”—also unites the books. Knowledge and wisdom are journeys rather than destinations; there is no absolute enlightenment. Both works, in fact, conclude with unresolved challenges, unanswered intellectual puzzles, and hopes and promises for the future. Existence keeps flowing; new thoughts keep rising to the surface; it never stops. As Fraser taught me years ago, such is the nature of evolution and time.

*It is the deepest perplexities that bring to mind the greatest enlightenment—the most profound questions and states of puzzlement that are the most revealing insights.
The question is the answer...**

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References and Notes

* Excerpt quotations in *italics* are all taken from *Mind Flight*.

The Evolution of Future Consciousness. Bloomington, IN: Author House, 2006a.

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Summary Book Descriptions, Reviews, and Purchase Information and Links for all four books can be found on the *Center for Future Consciousness* website at: http://www.centerforfutureconsciousness.com/book_info.htm