

Wisdom Facing Forward

What It Means to Have Heightened Future Consciousness

By Tom Lombardo

A psychologist explores the ways in which awareness of the future connects with wisdom.

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In recent years, I have explored the nature of future consciousness—its psychological dimensions, its historical evolution, and its future possibilities—as well as ways to enhance future consciousness through education and self-development practices. Meanwhile, I have also explored the nature of wisdom—its connection to the ideals and goals of education, its impact on the quality of life, and its relationship to future consciousness.

I have come to the conclusion that wisdom is the ideal toward which we should aspire as we develop our awareness and understanding of the future. Heightened future consciousness and wisdom go hand in hand.

Everyone possesses some level of awareness of the future, but the capacity can be greatly empowered or enhanced. In formulating an ideal prescription for the development of future consciousness, I discovered a number of parallels between heightened future consciousness and the

descriptions of wisdom by contemporary psychologists and philosophers.

What Is Wisdom?

Wisdom is a complex human capacity open to varying interpretations, but the following definition captures some of its most salient features as understood within contemporary psychological research and philosophical inquiry:

Wisdom is the continually evolving understanding of and fascination with the big picture of life and what is important, ethical, and meaningful; it includes the desire and ability to apply this understanding to enhance the well-being of life, both for oneself and for others.

It's worth noting that wisdom is not a static state, but is ever evolving. One pursues wisdom rather than achieving it. This quality of continual learning is captured in French writer André Gide's dictum, "Believe

those who are seeking the truth; doubt those who find it."

Our definition also reflects wisdom's motivational-emotional components: a fascination with learning about the world and a desire to help others.

Wisdom involves a holistic and integrative understanding of the world around us. Wisdom is not narrow or specialized knowledge but a broad and deep knowledge that is expansive and encompassing. Wisdom sees the forest and not simply the trees. It searches to the horizon and beyond, and identifies what is really significant in life. And by bringing together the inner world of our minds and the outer world that surrounds us, wisdom combines knowledge with practical application. Consequently, wisdom is useful and not just theoretical. Lastly, wisdom has an ethical dimension: It is not simply self-serving, but is applied to the benefit of others.

What Is Future Consciousness?

A simple definition:

Future consciousness is part of our general awareness of time, our consciousness of past, present, and future. It is the human capacity to have thoughts, feelings, and goals about the future. It is the total integrative set of psychological abilities, processes,

"Believe those who are seeking the truth; doubt those who find it."

André Gide



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and experiences that humans use to understand and deal with the future. Future consciousness covers everything in human psychology that pertains to the future.

All of the major dimensions of human psychology, from cognitive and behavioral to emotional and personal, are involved in future consciousness. We imagine and we think about the future; we have feelings and desires regarding it; we act with purpose and goals concerning the future; and we define the nature of who we are with respect to our personal trajectory and self-narrative through time.

Heightened future consciousness includes an expansive sense of time, of past and future linked together; an evolutionary or progressive optimism about the future; an expansive and informed sense of contemporary trends and challenges; creativity, imagination, and curiosity regarding future possibilities; courage and enthusiasm in the face of the adventure and uncertainty of the future; a strong sense of ongoing personal growth and purpose involving long-term, goal-directed thinking and behavior and a future-oriented self-narrative; and a strong element of self-efficacy and self-responsibility in determining one's future.

Note that, in this definition, heightened future consciousness is expansive in scope and has a broad knowledge base (qualities similar to wisdom). Besides the cognitive capacities connected with future consciousness, there are also motivational, emotional, and personal features, just as there are with wisdom. Finally, certain basic character virtues, such as courage, optimism, and self-responsibility, are associated with heightened future consciousness.

An Expansive Consciousness of Reality

Both heightened future consciousness and wisdom are strongly connected to such character virtues as optimism, courage, ongoing personal growth, and an appreciation of uncertainty. They also involve a broad, expansive, and up-to-date understanding of reality.

Wisdom cannot be grounded in outmoded ideas or beliefs. This is not to discount past ideas, but rather to acknowledge that, because wisdom is an evolving process involving learning and transformation, it is always about absorbing new and emerging ideas. The knowledge base of wisdom must reflect our best understanding of today's realities. The

same could be said regarding heightened future consciousness: To be attuned to the future requires us to be aware of the ever moving wave of new theories, new technologies, and emerging social and humanistic issues. Two key ideas in our contemporary understanding of reality are *holism* and *evolution*.

Wisdom attempts to see the big picture of things—the integrated wholeness of reality—rather than simply seeing many things or a narrow slice of reality. Instead, wisdom sees how everything is interconnected and recognizes what is basic and fundamental.

Likewise, heightened future consciousness requires a comprehensive understanding of contemporary trends and challenges facing humanity—seeing the big picture of ongoing developments in the world and the problems facing us.

Understanding the world in dynamic evolutionary terms means seeing reality as transformative as it moves from the past to the present and then, potentially, into the future. Modern evolutionary science and history reveal change, progression, and advancement in complexity, both in nature as a whole and in human civilization in particular.

Evolutionary theory also brings with it an expansive and holistic

temporal consciousness—a big picture of time and of patterns of change. Wisdom grasps this basic point. Likewise, for the futurist, understanding contemporary trends means seeing patterns of change that originate in the past and move into the future.

In summary, a dynamic and holistic picture of time is essential to both wisdom and heightened future consciousness. To see the whole and to see evolutionary change across time implies that neither wisdom nor future consciousness is narrowly locked into the immediate here and now. Like future consciousness, wisdom stretches outward in space and time and then tries to pull everything together.

Comparing Wisdom and Future Consciousness

When we compare the nature of wisdom and the nature of future consciousness, there may appear to be a difference in emphasis regarding temporal awareness. Wisdom brings the lessons of the past to the problems and challenges of today and tomorrow; heightened future consciousness sees patterns across



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“Great discoveries and improvements invariably involve the cooperation of many minds. I may be given credit for having blazed the trail, but when I look at the subsequent developments I feel the credit is due to others rather than to myself.”

Alexander Graham Bell

time and extrapolates from past and present into the future. This difference in emphasis is modest. Though it may not seem immediately apparent, future consciousness requires an understanding of the past—its patterns of change, its trends and developments across time—in order to extrapolate from past and present into the future.

At a psychological level, memory and anticipation are intimately connected as basic mental capacities; we cannot think ahead without a sense of the past. In fact, within normal consciousness, past, present, and future are not psychologically distinct realities; they interconnect and interpenetrate.

Furthermore, from the perspective of wisdom, our goals, our challenges, and our problems—those things that

practical wisdom is supposed to be about—all have reference to the future. What do we want to achieve? What obstacles or difficulties must we overcome? The pragmatics of life—the application of knowledge to practical ends—is always about the future, about realizing goals and solving problems. So wisdom is grounded in experience and learning from the past, but at a practical level it invariably deals with the future: How does one develop the most effective solutions to problems and achieve the best life for oneself and others? Hence, practical wisdom is really efficacious future consciousness. It is coming up with the best possible ways to create the best possible future; it is about competence in determining and creating preferable futures.

The Virtues of Humility and Openness

Contemporary researchers on wisdom have identified certain distinguishing character virtues of wise people. Among these qualities are humility and openness: Wisdom is neither arrogant nor certain but rather a tempered balance of knowledge and doubt or uncertainty. With respect to the future, there is always an element of possibility, as well as novelty or creativity. It seems contradictory to assert that the person possesses heightened future consciousness and yet believes that he or she knows exactly what is going to happen in the future.

Heightened future consciousness brings with it a degree of openness, a sense of possibilities rather than certainties, and enthusiasm for the adventures and surprises that lie ahead. A sense of possibility is flexible and expansive; a sense of certainty is rigid and narrow. Fear of adventure circumscribes and limits our consciousness—it closes the mind off from learning and growth and from the future.

Wise people are wise because they are open to learning and to growing. Heightened future consciousness has this same quality of embracing the adventure of the future. Fear of things that are different and unexpected destroys both wisdom and



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“Judgment comes from experience, and experience comes from bad judgment.”

Simon Bolivar



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“The empires of the future are the empires of the mind.”

Winston Churchill

future consciousness.

There is an openness of consciousness in both wisdom and heightened future consciousness, so a person with this capacity can see and embrace the mysterious and unknown.

The Uses of Wisdom and Future Consciousness

Wisdom is not simply broad and expansive theoretical knowledge; it includes the capacity to apply that theoretical knowledge to practical purposes. Wisdom allows us to make better informed choices, be forewarned regarding potential dangers, and take advantage of emerging trends. Thinking about the future is, arguably, the most practical thing we can do, since we are going to spend the rest of our lives in the future. Surely, it is better to be prepared for the future than to naively walk into it blindly. Wisdom and heightened future consciousness have a strong practical dimension.

Wisdom necessarily involves good thinking skills. (It is oxymoronic to talk about a “thoughtless wise person”!) In reality, wise people think constantly about life and its

problems and do so very effectively. The principles of critical thinking, such as clarity, precision, relevance, breadth, and depth, are essential aspects of wisdom, and these thinking skills are equally important in heightened future consciousness.

These critical thinking skills need to be balanced by Eastern theories of wisdom that stress insight and intuition as essential qualities of wisdom. I would describe insight or intuition as the capacity to understand something in a holistic and immediate fashion; to perceive the meaning of a fact or idea as a totality, all at once. Linear thinking, conversely, is reaching an understanding of something in logical steps.

Following a balanced model of cognition (synthesizing Eastern and Western emphases), a wise person ideally shows a solid integration of linear rational thought and intuitive insight. Wisdom brings to bear on life the full gamut of cognitive capacities. In describing heightened future consciousness, the same point can be made.

Although logic and rationality are important cognitive strengths, heightened future consciousness must possess a good dose of creativity and imagination. Future consciousness involves thinking about possibilities—being able to imagine many different possibilities and not just one or two. Future consciousness also involves flexibility and openness to the future. Wisdom is also noted for its creative dimension: Wise people can find solutions to practical problems that stymie most people because wise people can think outside of the mind-sets that limit the thinking of other people.

Both wisdom and heightened future consciousness exhibit enhanced problem-solving abilities. To face the future honestly and openly is to realize that there are innumerable difficulties confronting us, individually and collectively. Life is an unavoidable challenge, and so is the future. An unwillingness to acknowledge or address problems is a classic way to try to avoid the future—it is also a classic form of foolishness, the antithesis of wisdom.

Decision making is another significant cognitive capacity connected

with wise people. Wisdom includes the ability to make good decisions in difficult situations; it is being able to make thoughtful decisions and act in situations where others may become paralyzed or react impulsively. Similarly with heightened future consciousness, a person must make decisions in order to realize future goals and to initiate purposeful behavior; indecisiveness is a classic way to attempt to avoid the future.

The Importance of Hope

Neither wisdom nor future consciousness can be adequately understood apart from emotion and desire. The future is *felt*; it is not just thought



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“To know that we know what we know, and to know that we do not know what we do not know, that is true knowledge.”

Nicholas Copernicus

or imagined. A purely cognitive or intellectual description of either wisdom or future consciousness is not only empty, but also psychologically unrealistic. A person’s emotional state can greatly amplify or severely reduce his or her cognitive capacities.



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“Real wealth is ideas plus energy.”

R. Buckminster Fuller

Hope and fear are two of the most basic human emotions, and both pertain to the future. With hope there is an anticipation of something positive, and with fear there is an anticipation of something negative. Fear serves important psychological functions, such as triggering caution in the face of danger, but if a person's consciousness is ruled by fear, his or her life is severely constrained. Anticipating nothing but negative possibilities inhibits both thought and action, generates pessimism, and effectively shuts down future consciousness.

Hope, on the other hand, fosters optimism, courage, and enhanced thinking and imagination. Consequently, a sense of hope for the future is an essential element of heightened future consciousness. We are literally able to think better if we are hopeful rather than fearful.

As has been frequently pointed out, optimism and pessimism are both self-fulfilling prophecies. If we wish to realize a positive future, we need to be hopeful and optimistic. Likewise, to enhance future consciousness in others, we need to help them develop hope.

Wise people are hopeful as well. They believe that there are potential

positive outcomes for life's challenges and act with a sense of self-efficacy in solving practical problems. They feel neither helpless nor hopeless.

Responsibility for Our Own Future

Responsibility for ourselves and others and its connection with hope leads us to the topic of how character virtues connect with wisdom and heightened future consciousness.

Self-responsibility is a key character virtue that is necessary for heightened future consciousness. Self-responsibility means that we feel responsible (at least to a significant degree) for our own future and we also feel that we have the required self-efficacy—the ability to realize our goals. Cultivating self-responsibility generates hope (positive feelings about the future), optimism, and an expansive, rich consciousness of the future; the reverse mind-set generates helplessness, depression, and a closed and limited sense of the future.

Self-responsibility stimulates human effort and mobilizes our energies. Without this character virtue, there is little effort, little purpose, little tenacity, and little discipline in life. Instead, the motivation supporting future consciousness—the determination and follow-through required for the realization of goals—simply collapses.

Hence, heightened future consciousness provides an emotional base of hope and optimism plus a motivational component of determination and purpose aimed at realizing one's goals.

The virtues of courage and love are also intimately tied to the emotional and motivational dimensions of heightened future consciousness and wisdom. Courage is needed to face one's fears, including fear of the future, about which we can know so little. Love is also needed to bring energy to life. Without love for something, what is the point of thinking about the future or of aspiring toward anything? A love of life and of others provides guidance for wisdom, because love involves the emotional-motivational qualities of curiosity and wonder, empathy for

others, an exhilaration in learning and thinking, and a generalized sense of happiness and well-being connected with the exercise and pursuit of wisdom.

Heightened future consciousness also includes curiosity and wonder—at least with respect to the future—and in general is associated with psychological well-being.

Character Virtues and Future Consciousness

The development of character virtues is key to the enhancement of future consciousness. To be sure, heightened future consciousness involves cognitive features, such as a broad understanding of past, present, and future; good imagination and thinking skills; and the capacity to apply knowledge to practical challenges and problems. But in addition, there is an ethical and character dimension that supports, structures, fuels, and gives direction to these cognitive capacities.

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“Change is the law of life. And those who look only to the past or the present are certain to miss the future.”

John F. Kennedy

Benjamin Franklin's Future Consciousness

No one in history exhibited the virtues of future consciousness and wisdom more perfectly than Benjamin Franklin.

"Gifted with foresight—indeed a kind of seer—he made remarkably few bad decisions, although often faced with momentous choices," reported Kenneth Silverman of New York University in a recent introduction to Franklin's famed autobiography.

Literary critic Jonathan Yardley of the *Washington Post* concurs: Franklin, says Yardley, was *preternaturally* wise! His astute judgment enabled him to succeed at almost everything he undertook—business, journalism, science, invention, diplomacy, and politics. He also sought obsessively to elevate the wisdom of others by offering astute advice to readers of his popular publication *Poor Richard's Almanack*. His pithy maxims—often in rhyme, such as "Early to bed, early to rise, makes a man healthy, wealthy, and wise"—remain popular to this day. Just two years ago, a single copy sold for more than half a million dollars.

As for future consciousness, Franklin's talents as a futurist appear most clearly in a 1780 letter to Joseph Priestley, the discoverer of oxygen.

"The rapid progress true science now makes occasions my regretting sometimes that I was born so soon," Franklin wrote. "It is impossible to imagine the height to which may be carried, in a thousand years, the power of man over matter.

"We may perhaps learn to deprive large masses of their gravity, and give them absolute levity, for the sake of easy transport. Agriculture may diminish its labor and double its produce; all diseases may by sure means be prevented or cured, not excepting even that of old age, and our lives lengthened at pleasure even beyond the antediluvian standard. O that moral

science were in a fair way of improvement that men would cease to be wolves to one another, and that human beings would at length learn what they now improperly call humanity."

Franklin's notion that people would one day be able to "deprive large masses of their gravity" has not come to pass in the literal sense, though there continues to be speculation about antigravity machines. On the other hand, airplanes and spacecraft have enabled humans to overcome the effects of gravity, so Franklin might be said to have been right in the main.

Agriculture has improved far more than Franklin dared to hope. During his time, about 90% of the U.S. population worked on farms; today, the efficiency of agriculture has improved so astoundingly in the past two centuries that only about 5% or less of the population is now devoted to agriculture.

Diseases that caused terrible suffering in Franklin's day have largely disappeared or can be treated effectively. As a result, people today now live far healthier and longer lives. The dream of immortality remains unrealized, but scientists are getting closer and closer to a fundamental understanding of senescence; once that is achieved, effective antiaging treatments may allow humans to live more or less indefinitely, barring misadventures.

As Franklin feared, people have not ceased to treat each other abominably. Since his day, man's inhumanity to man has led to poison gas, atomic bombings, and death camps. Still, there

has been considerable progress toward a more humane society. Slavery was a generally accepted institution in 1780, but today it has been abolished in most nations.

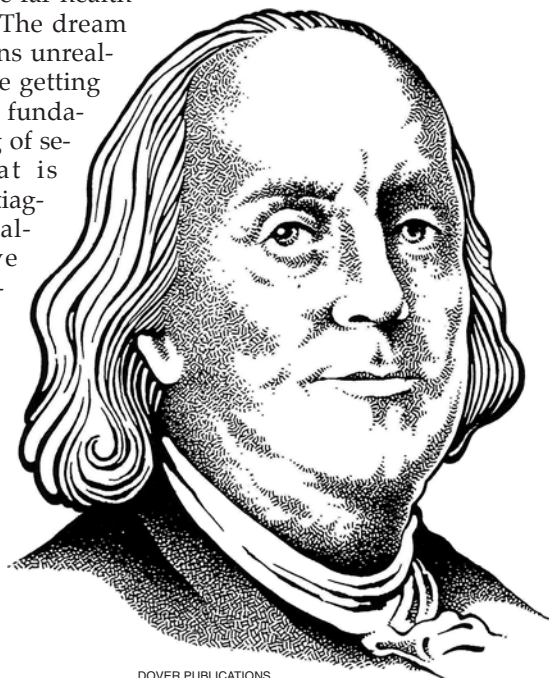
On a personal note, I learned several of Franklin's adages early in life, and when I was a little boy one of them enabled me to win a dispute with the proprietor of a candy store.

The proprietor had given me a penny less in change than I felt I was due, so I protested.

"It's only a penny," the proprietor assured me.

"A penny saved is a penny earned!" I chirped, whereupon the proprietor immediately conceded defeat and surrendered the penny. Franklin had won the day for me.

In later life, however, I decided that Franklin's adage was not quite right: A penny saved is actually worth more than a penny earned because the government taxes savings, not earnings. As Franklin said, "Nothing is certain but death and taxes." —Edward Cornish



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Integrative Thinking and the Future

When author Tom Lombardo became the chair of the psychology and philosophy departments at Rio Salado College in Tempe, Arizona, he was put in charge of Integrative Studies, the capstone course for the associate degree.

Integrative Studies could focus on whatever theme he chose, “as long as the theme somehow pulled together the breadth of undergraduate courses, especially sciences and humanities.”

But Lombardo couldn’t decide on a theme until one day when he was at a grocery store.

“As I was waiting in line I started browsing through the paperback bookstand in check-out and noticed that Alvin Toffler, author of the highly popular book *Future Shock*, which I had read back in the 1970s, had a new book out called *Power-shift*. In a flash it hit me! Why not do the Integrative Studies course on the future? Most if not all of the main areas of study in an undergraduate college program could be addressed and synthesized in the context of the future. Creating a course on the future would be an interesting and challenging endeavor, and of great value for students. Shouldn’t we all try to think and understand the future? So I charged into the subject and constructed a course on the future.”

Lombardo’s experience illustrates the very principles of applied wisdom, or heightened future consciousness: to think holistically and be open to ideas and optimistic about the future, imaginative in developing goals, and responsible in taking action.

—Edward Cornish

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A virtue is a value that is *lived*. For example, the value of truth, if practiced, leads to honesty and integrity as character virtues, and the value of freedom and self-determination leads to self-responsibility as a character virtue.

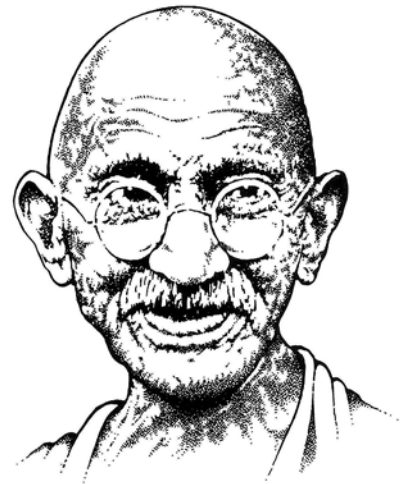
Philosophers, as well as psychologists, have argued that the good life—a life of happiness, meaning, purpose, and mental health—is realized through the development of key character virtues, such as courage, honesty, love and compassion, and, notably, wisdom.

Creating a positive and evolving future for oneself and for others entails a key set of character virtues. The ones that I have most frequently listed are self-responsibility, discipline and commitment, transcendence, courage, hope and optimism, love, temperance/balance, and wisdom.

Each of these virtues contributes to an enhanced understanding of the future and/or an enhanced capacity for creating a positive future. For example, since the future is to a degree uncertain, courage is necessary in order to face future possibilities and act on goals. Without courage, one becomes cognitively and behaviorally paralyzed in the past or present. Without self-responsibility, one sees oneself as a victim and incapable of influencing the future. Without hope and optimism, one becomes depressed, which is basically a failure of future consciousness. Without transcendence, one cannot identify with anything beyond oneself and will not contribute to the future betterment of humanity. A holistic and socially conscious conception of heightened future consciousness involves the desire and capacity to contribute to the future benefit of hu-

“The universe is transformation; our life is what our thoughts make it.”

Marcus Aurelius



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“The difference between what we do and what we are capable of doing would suffice to solve most of the world’s problems.”

Mohandas K. Gandhi

manity and not just oneself.

Multiple Virtues Needed for Wisdom

Throughout history, wisdom has been seen as one of the most important human virtues—a character trait that synthesizes a number of qualities that support the capacity to make intelligent and informed ethical decisions about the future. Furthermore, wisdom requires a variety of other character virtues in order to be realized.

Wisdom requires the virtue of honesty and the value of truth if one is to seek knowledge and learn about life. Wisdom requires courage, for, as many contemporary wisdom researchers have pointed out, the wise person recognizes his or her own fallibility and the irreducible element of uncertainty in life. Action is an essential part of wisdom—informed and thoughtful action in the face of humility and uncertainty. Wisdom also requires love and compassion, for wisdom seeks holistic benefits



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“If we are to achieve a richer culture, rich in contrasting values, we must recognize the whole gamut of human potentialities, and so weave a less arbitrary social fabric, one in which each diverse human gift will find a fitting place.”

Margaret Mead

rather than simply self-serving ends.

Hence, an important connecting link between wisdom and heightened future consciousness is the dimension of virtue—of ethical character traits that give strength and a positive quality to both wisdom and heightened future consciousness.

Effect on Personality

Heightened future consciousness impacts an individual’s total personality or character. People are in fact transformed by an enhanced awareness of the future. The sense of self is broadened and strengthened, as is the optimistic visualization of goals and purpose and direction of one’s life. A feeling of freedom (self-empowerment) and a sense of possibilities for oneself emerge. Though the individual is connected into the

self-narrative of his or her life, a sense of transcendence beyond the past and present develops.

Wisdom, too, is associated with heightened self-awareness and self-reflection, the capacity for self-transcendence and the widening out from the egocentric, and a sense of connection with other people, nature, society, and the cosmos. The wise person is able to see himself or herself in the context of the whole. The journey of the self is defined in the context of the journey of the whole.

Wise people have an overall sense of purpose and direction in life—a future focus—and this quality lines up with one of the central defining qualities of mental health. In fact, two of the six most important qualities of mental health are (1) purpose and direction and (2) a sense of ongoing growth. Two other important qualities of mental health connect with self-responsibility and self-efficacy: environmental mastery and control, and a sense of autonomy or being able to make decisions. Hence, at least four of the personality traits associated with mental health are also associated with wisdom and heightened future consciousness.

Summarizing the Qualities of Wisdom

At the cognitive and consciousness levels, wisdom includes an integrative and expansive capacity to see the big picture, global and cosmic, and understand the connectedness of things. There is temporal expansiveness—an ever evolving synthesis of past and future and a capacity to see the long-term consequences of things. Yet, wisdom is also a highly developed practical ability, applying general knowledge to concrete problems and challenges in life.

Wisdom combines excellent thinking skills with other modes of understanding, such as insight or intuition. Wisdom is open to the world and multiple points of view. It is informed by contemporary scientific theory. It is a self-stimulating, dynamic, evolving, and contingent system of knowledge, driven by questions, uncertainty, hope, and a passion for learning and thinking.

At a motivational-emotional level, wisdom involves curiosity, wonder, and a hopeful and optimistic engagement with reality; compassion and empathy for others; and a sense of happiness or well-being associated with the pursuit and use of wisdom.

At the virtue and ethical level, wisdom involves the application of knowledge, guided by values and ethics, to realize well-being both for oneself and for others. Wisdom is supported by other virtues, such as courage, honesty and integrity, fair-mindedness, compassion for others, humility, optimism, and reverence for life. Wisdom is ethical thinking.



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“Knowledge of what is possible is the beginning of happiness.”

George Santayana

Finally, at the personal or character level, wisdom involves a synthesis of heart and mind. There is a sense of connection between the self and other people, human society as a whole, nature, and the cosmos. Wisdom implies exceptional self-awareness and the capacity for self-reflection; there is self-transcendence and an ongoing movement away from the egocentric.

On a majority of these points, a strong case can be made that these psychological features should be in-

cluded in a definition of heightened future consciousness as well. Wisdom is an appropriate and inspiring ideal to which one should aspire in the holistic development of future consciousness.

To summarize, I believe that heightened future consciousness aligns with wisdom in the following ways:

1. Both are psychologically holistic capacities.

2. Both involve a fundamental set of character virtues that define and facilitate excellence in all the major psychological dimensions.

3. Both are connected with psychological well-being; an optimistic, hopeful, and constructive attitude; and a self-efficacious and self-responsible belief in the capacity to create positive outcomes in life.

4. Both involve an open, evolutionary, and expansive consciousness of reality and time.

A New Enlightenment?

Our understanding of both the events of the past and the possibilities of the future is constantly improving. This trend in human knowl-

edge and psychology mirrors a more encompassing trend in the evolution of life. With human sentience expanding in both space and time, we would expect that future consciousness should also expand in the future.

Many philosophers and futurists anticipate a significant jump in the collective mental functioning of humanity in the relatively near future. Some writers have described this new surge as a collective enlightenment. This leap forward in our understanding of both our past and our future could be seen as an adaptive response to dealing more effectively with our increasingly complex and fast-paced world. Alternatively, it could be seen as an expression of the predictable upward beat of human evolution. Perhaps it is both. A third possibility, not incompatible with the first two, is that accelerative technological growth is pulling humanity to a new level of mental functioning. Technological augmentation and modification will transform us.

Whatever the causes of a new enlightenment, I believe that heightened future consciousness will be a core feature of it, which means that—

given my theory of future consciousness—wisdom will be at the core as well.

If we are to consider what qualities need to be enhanced to constitute a real step forward in human evolution, then the combination of qualities embodied in wisdom (or heightened future consciousness) clearly provides an appropriate ideal and evolutionary direction. I intentionally place together the notions of the ideal and evolution, since human evolution in the future will increasingly be guided purposefully by human ideals. □



About the Author

Tom Lombardo is the author of *The Evolution of Future Consciousness and Contemporary Futurist Thought* (both AuthorHouse, 2008). He is director of the Center for Future Consciousness

(www.centerforfutureconsciousness.com) and retired faculty chair of psychology and philosophy at Rio Salado College in Tempe, Arizona. E-mail tlombardo1@cox.net.

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