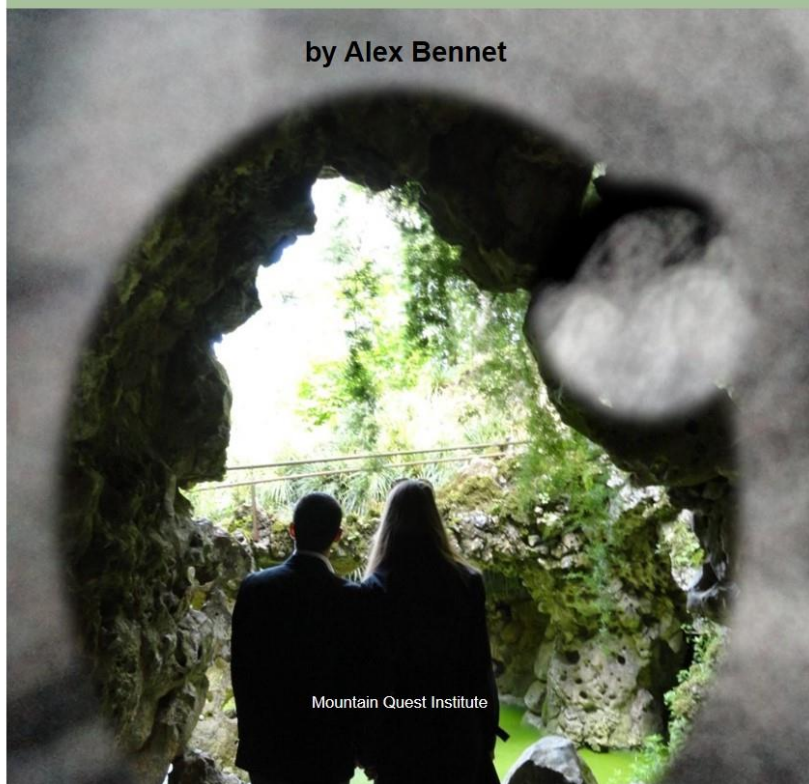# Possibilities
that are YOU!

Volume 7: Living Virtues for Today

by Alex Bennet

Mountain Quest Institute

This is Vol 7 in a series of 22 short books, what we call Conscious Look Books, that are conversational in nature, taking full advantage of the reader's lived experience to share what can sometimes be difficult concepts. We live in a world that is tearing itself apart, where people are out of control and wanting to control others, rebelling from years of real and perceived abuse and suppression of thought. Yet, this chaos offers us as a humanity the opportunity to make a giant leap forward. By opening ourselves to ourselves, we are able to fully explore who we are and who we can become. With that exploration comes a glimmer of hope as we begin to reclaim the power of each and every mind developed by the lived human experience!

These 22 concepts are part of the learning journey of which we are all a part, the Intelligent Social Change Journey (ISCJ). This is a developmental journey of the body, mind and heart, moving from the heaviness of cause-and-effect linear extrapolations, to the fluidity of co-evolving with our environment, to the lightness of breathing our thought and feelings into reality. Grounded in development of our mental faculties, these are phase changes, each building on and expanding previous learning in our movement toward intelligent activity.

These little books share 22 large concepts from the Profundity and Bifurcation of Change (which is written from an academic viewpoint). Each book is independent and includes seven ideas offered for the student of life to help us become the co-creators that we are. These books, available in soft cover from Amazon, support idea exploration, class discussion, other discussion groups or can be used as special occasion gifts.

Possibilities

that are YOU!

Volume 7: Living Virtues for Today

by

Alex Bennet

In this looming age of transparency and disclosure
Truth is wheeling a relentless sword of exposure
Burning away old ideas being left to smolder
*Beauty's no longer **just** in the eye of the beholder*

Growth dependent on a collaborated relief
Goodness no longer expressed by a single belief
With mounting needs of the many so monumental
A world-wide Virtue is becoming transcendental

-Cindy Lee Scott

Preface

This book is for YOU. Regardless of economic success or educational prowess, beyond cultural influences and habitual routines, YOU have been and continue to be a student of life. And since our time in this learning sphere is precious, the challenges and opportunities are both rapid and continuous, always offering new insights. YOU are a verb, not a noun. Forget what you were taught in grammar school!

Now, we live in a world of demanding challenges, where people and systems are rebounding from control, rebelling from eras of real and perceived suppression of thought. With the acceleration of mental development over the past century has come increased awareness of human capacity, with economic success in small bites for many and large bites for the few, and for some coming with an arrogance that says, "Look at me. I'm right, you're wrong, and I'm not listening."

Because of our Economy's focus on the material, economic success begets economic success and the separation of wealth grows larger, flaming the difficulties of surviving in a CUCA world, that is, a world of accelerating change, rising uncertainty, increasing complexity, and the anxiety that comes with these phenomena.

Yet all of this **offers us, as a humanity the opportunity to make a giant leap forward.** By opening ourselves to ourselves, we are able to fully explore who we are. With that exploration comes glimmers of hope as we contemplate the power of each and every mind developed by the lived human experience!

As YOU move through your life of thoughts, feelings and actions—even when you have to repeat things over and over again as part of the experience—YOU are advancing toward the next level of consciousness.

Here's the bottom line. Everything that has been learned and continues to be learned is out there … and as a student of life, YOU have access to it all. So often it is expressed in ways that don't make sense because of the language and media being used. It just isn't presented conversationally, and you don't have a chance to ask questions from your unique point of view.

So, these little books—which we refer to as Conscious Look Books—are specifically focused on sharing key concepts from *The Profundity and Bifurcation of Change* series and **looking at what those concepts mean to YOU**.

These books are conversational in nature, and further conversations are welcome. We invite your thoughts and questions, not guaranteeing answers because there is still so much to learn, but happy to

join in the conversation. Visit Mountain Quest Inn and Retreat Center www.mountainquestinn.com located in the Allegheny Mountains of West Virginia or email alex@mountainquestinstitute.com

As my partner David reminds us: *Run with the future!*

Our gratitude to all those who take this journey with us, and a special thanks to the colleagues, partners, friends, family and visitors who touch our hearts and Mountain Quest in so many ways.

With Love and Light, Alex and David

Contents

Introduction

Virtues, qualities of being morally good, are concepts that when thought about expand consciousness and when acted upon increase intelligent activity. Intelligent activity represents *a state of interaction where intent, purpose, direction, values and expected outcomes are clearly understood and communicated among all parties, reflecting wisdom and achieving a higher truth*.

Virtue and morality are synonymous with other synonyms, which include: goodness, righteousness, integrity, dignity, rectitude, honor, decency, respectability, nobility, worthiness, purity, principles and ethics. In this little book we will first explore the virtues of beauty, goodness and truth which come to us from the philosophers of old.

Physicist Niles MacFlouer refers to virtue as *spirit in form*. But what form does it take? We are going to delve into the concept of good character to explore exactly what that means. But before we start, how about taking a pen and paper in hand and writing down a few bullet points of what good character means to you. That may be the most important thing you do related to this little book. Because, ultimately, your good character is developed by YOU.

If you've done this, now you have a starting point for exploring virtue, and you may be surprised how many of your personal characteristics are virtuous! Okay, we can all get better. But isn't that what life is all about? Learning, growing, expanding?

As we focus on living the future, *never has it been more important to develop the virtue of good character*, which directly affects the growth of self and expansion of consciousness. And all the individual expansion each and every one of us achieves contributes to the whole of humanity.

So, let's get started.

Idea 1: The virtues of beauty, goodness and truth are transcendental.

Much, much earlier in human history, philosophers such as Socrates, Plato and Aristotle were exploring and reflecting upon those things which were a crucial part of living a good life. From their great body of thought and feeling, we as a humanity began to expand our understanding of virtue in terms of beauty, goodness and truth.

How did those early philosophers get it right so long ago? The concepts of beauty, goodness and truth are transcendental. In Latin that's *transcendentalia*, meaning having properties of being or Oneness. It is not surprising that these critical human concepts are emerging again into our awareness as we journey toward becoming a global community!

Perhaps the first mention of these virtues in written form can be credited to the Bhagavad Gita (chapter 17, verse 15), describing in an example, "words which are good and beautiful and true." Nonetheless, it is Plato's well-known *Dialogues,* where the concepts appear amidst those high ideas of wisdom and justice, that is most often remembered as introducing beauty, goodness and truth as virtues. For example, in *Phaedrus* (24) Plato talks about the

"ability of the soul to soar up to heaven to behold beauty, wisdom, goodness and the like."

Howard Gardner, a Harvard psychologist who developed the theory of multiple intelligences, a really bright mind, wrote a more recent 2011 book titled *Truth, Beauty, and Goodness Reframed: Educating for the Virtues in the Age of Truthiness and Twitter*.[1] That's a pretty good title for today's world, sort of brings the old Greek philosophers' virtues of truth, beauty and goodness into our context.

Let's take a closer look at each of these.

Truth. Truth is not discovered; it is created. There is not a written set of truths that can be consulted for every situation in which we find ourselves. Who we consult is ourselves, tapping into our beliefs and values, and drawing from the vast amount of experiences and learning that has occurred in our lives.

As knowledge, truth is context-sensitive and situation-dependent. This means that truth is relative to the situation at hand, and we are in the center of that situation as the person who is perceiving that truth. Yet, what may be true in one situation, may not be true in another situation. Even concepts that can provide a higher level of truth than related to a single event are continuously shifting and changing!

Truth is so important to today's world as we face the very real threat of disinformation, misinformation, propaganda and brainwashing. Truth is the subject of one of these Conscious Look Books.

Beauty. Beauty, based on the personal experiences of the individual, means different things to different people. My favorite description of beauty is that used in the 2007 movie *Next*. The hero, played by Nicholas Gage, says: "There's an Italian painter named Carlotti, and he defined beauty. He said it was the summation of the parts working together in such a way that nothing needed to be added, taken away or altered."

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INSIGHT: **Beauty is "the summation of the parts working together in such a way that nothing needed to be added, taken away or altered."**

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Now, to my knowledge, there has never been an Italian painter named Carlotti. Still, these words make sense. Beauty is that special state where something seems, well, perfect, at least from a personal point of view! If it's a sunset we are watching, there's just the right variety and amount of color. If it's music we are listening to, the melody, tonal patterns and rhythm make my heart sing, or my head whirl. If it's that special someone walking

through my life … just use your imagination for that description!

Gardner agrees that beauty is the property of experiences, because any experience can be considered by the individual experiencing it as beautiful. Consider your personal experiences of beauty. Gardner identifies three things that are required to have these experiences. They are (1) it has to be interesting to the individual, (2) there has to be something about it that will be remembered, and (3) it has to *hold* our interest.[2] That pleasurable tingle which is a sign from our emotional system only happens when these three things are present.

Beauty is a multiplier of life experience, and it is transcendent. What that means is that when you are in the experience of beauty—your *personal* beauty—all of your senses are involved. It is a highly positive experience, and there is no room for lower energies to hang around! Truly, beauty is a virtue to the lived experience. We have a whole little book on beauty that you might enjoy reading!

Goodness. The term "virtue" is, itself, the qualities of being morally good. What does it mean to be good? Who determines "goodness" and how is it valued? If goodness as a virtue is being morally good, then what are morals? Maybe that's a good place to start.

Morals are connected to ethics, principles, rules of conduct and attitudes. Wow! Most dictionaries

distinguish them by looking at the difference between "right and wrong" or "good and evil" or "proper and improper." That's the way we often understand things, by juxtaposing (I love that word) opposites. If you understand what something is NOT, then it's easier to understand what something IS.

But I think the University of Texas at Austin does a really good job when they say that "morals are the prevailing standards of behavior that enable people to live cooperatively in groups." Cooperation and collaboration are the highest virtue in our physical focus. We are going to talk about that later, and here it comes up when we are defining goodness! So, in this sense, "standards" would be that which is sanctioned by society as right. There would be a set of expected behaviors which would be defined through culture, religion, family, rule of law, etc.

When you think about goodness from this point of view, just like truth, each person would be consulting themselves to understand what goodness means in a specific situation, tapping into beliefs and values, and drawing from that vast amount of experiences and learning that has occurred while living life.

But maybe we can find more hints about "goodness" by specifically looking at what it means to have "good character."

[Your Thoughts]

Idea 2: The creation of good character is a critical step to expanding the consciousness of humanity.

In the book *The Death of Character*,[3] the author provides a detailed account of how America has lost its older ideas about virtue and character. For example, prior to the Industrial Revolution, Americans honored hard work, self-restraint, and sacrifice for the future and the common good. As we entered the 20th century and people became wealthier, the idea of a self that was centered around preferences and personal fulfillment came to the fore, and the *moral* term "character" was replaced by the *amoral* term "personality."[4]

Further, this shift was seen as a side effect of inclusiveness. For example, as Americans experienced increasing diversity, educators struggled to identify an ever-shrinking set of moral ideas that could be agreed upon. As Jonathan Haidt, a social psychologist who researches morality and moral emotions, explains: "[Inclusiveness] cut children off from the soil of tradition, history, and religion that nourished older concepts of virtue. You can grow vegetables hydroponically, but even then you have to add nutrients to the water. Asking children to grow virtues hydroponically, looking only within themselves for guidance, is like asking each one to

invent a personal language—a pointless and isolating ask if there is no community with whom to speak."[5]

While certainly a price was paid for inclusiveness, Jonathan acknowledges that we have "bought ourselves a more human society, with greater opportunity … for most people."[6] This, of course, refers to demographic diversity, which is about diversity in race, ethnicity, cultural history, sex, sexual orientation, age and handicapped status, the inclusion of previously excluded groups. Conversely, *moral diversity* is what can be described as "anomic," which means *a lack of agreement regarding moral norms and values*.[7] Once this distinction is made, nobody would coherently want moral diversity.[8] Nowhere is this more dramatically demonstrated than in the machinations of the U.S. government following the 2016 elections and continuing throughout the first years of the following Presidency.

A positive example is the youth charter movement originating at the turn of the century. This movement called for cooperation between parents, teachers, religious leaders and coaches in child rearing. Together with the children, these groups come to a shared understanding on obligations and values, with all parties expected to uphold the same high standards of behavior, good character, in all situations.

Note the similarities with the definition of intelligent activity that's in the first paragraph of the Introduction. We all can recognize the need for achieving a shared understanding of moral behavior! It takes more than "rules" and "laws." A shared understanding of moral behavior relies on beliefs and values, with good character at the core of each individual, that which each person can draw on as they navigate life. This was begun some 20 years ago when the Assembly of Religious and Spiritual Leaders signed a declaration, "Towards a Global Ethic."[9] This was *a call for humanity to live a more mature expression of moral life through the transformation of consciousness*. You can read more about this in our little book on *Conscious Compassion.*

It might add value here to share the eight elements this group perceived as "essential" to a Universal spirituality. These are:

(1) An actualized moral capacity and commitment;
(2) Deep nonviolence and reverence for all life;
(3) A sense of interdependence and spiritual solidarity;
(4) Spiritual practice;
(5) Mature self-knowledge;
(6) Simplicity of life;
(7) Compassion and selfless service; and
(8) A witness to justice.

Can you imagine if those were at the very core of each global citizen?

As can be seen, the concept of character is directly related to the growth of self—individuals and their choices and actions—and represents a quality of goodness. So, now we have a definition of good character. It is, "the self-created ability to give to others in thought according to what they need, with the thought containing knowledge as applied to the three lower bodies [the physical, emotional and mental field] that has been synthesized from information."[10] What is clear from this definition is that **character is created**.

Continuing with what has been learned from physicist Niles MacFlouer, from whom our definition of good character was drawn, there are three senses of *self* created as the self grows and expands. The first sense is of *discriminating thought*, the ability to recognize in form and sense their own self, who/what it is and who/what it is not. The second sense is of *discerning thought*, the ability to recognize in form and sense who/what others are and who/what others are not. That idea of discernment keeps coming up over and over again as these little books emerge, so it's pretty important. Creating discerning thought is in preparation for the sharing of knowledge. As Niles describes, "Because the self increases its understanding and prepares to give what is needed for others to give selflessly, it sees some

shared Oneness, or similarity, between itself and the others—it develops discernment and good character."[11]

The third sense is the expansion of Oneness, the ability to recognize the connectedness of all things, thus openly and fully sharing with others all the sense, form, knowledge and consciousness it has created. This is characteristic of the third phase of the Intelligent Social Change Journey that we are all on. THAT is the topic of the BIG books, *The Profundity and Bifurcation of Change,* that all these little books are pulled from! That is also introduced in the little book on *Conscious Compassion*.

We have now entered into the ideas related to a Quantum field. We could think about it this way. "Through a group of selves all creating more of themselves and then giving to each other and to others, a commonality of direction to their thought develops as their choices are synergistically supportive of each other. The result is that the collective selves eventually limit over half of the larger field they think within, in similar or sometimes even the same ways, and thus use the senses of their lifeforms in similar ways to create knowledge and consciousness that is common to all of them."[12] You know, when we relate our knowledge and sharing our thoughts to the idea of a Quantum field, where consciousness is created as energies head the same direction, I can ALMOST

understand this concept of Quantum! We know that sharing knowledge makes everyone smarter and wiser! It's a very small leap to recognize that the creation of good character in each of us is a critical step to expanding the consciousness of humanity.

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INSIGHT: **The creation of good character in the individual is a critical step to expanding the consciousness of humanity.**

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This is consistent with the work of Aristotle, one of those ancient philosophers who had it right! To Aristotle, the virtue of character is a central phenomenon for ethics. He argues that a virtuous person, just in so far as he is morally virtuous, "takes pleasure in and is distressed about the right things in the right ways; a vicious person takes pleasure in and is distressed about the wrong things and in the wrong ways."[13] Notice that I'm putting in a bunch of endnotes. I want to make sure and get the words right on this really deep stuff, and there's no better way to do that than to go to the original sources!

Aristotle describes all this in terms of the noble, fine and beautiful, versus the base, shameful and ugly. He sets up this juxtaposing to help our understanding. Today, I wonder if we need this juxtaposing of the good and bad? I think it's always better to look from the positive side of things; I

really like the *Appreciative Inquiry* approach in pretty much all parts of life. Now, way back when we were just beginning as a race, perhaps it was necessary to use fear and negative stuff to make us behave. But today, do we need that? Have we developed enough mentally to recognize the value of good character for its own sake? I think so, but then, I really believe in humanity, and the power of the human mind/brain. I believe in YOU. Back to Aristotle, here's what he says:

"There are three objects of choice (*tee is tas haireseis*) and three of avoidance: the *kalon* (the noble, fine, beautiful), the advantageous; and the pleasant, and their opposites, the *aischron* (the base, shameful, ugly), the harmful, and the painful. In relation to all these the good person gets things right, while the bad person gets things wrong, but especially in relation to pleasure. For pleasure is shared with the animals, and it is involved in all the objects of choice, since the *kalon* and the advantageous also appear pleasant."[14]

I guess he's sort of warning us, raising our awareness that sometimes two different things may "look" and "feel" the same. So, maybe we DO still need the juxtaposing of good and bad to fully understand something.

Nobility—*doing the best each human can do at a particular point in time*—represents the human being's highest virtue. This provides an excellent

descriptive term for doing our best in a situation that is relative, that is, situation-dependent and context-sensitive. Thus, every person has the capability of acting nobly.

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INSIGHT: **Nobility is doing the best each human can do at a particular point in time. Every person has the capability of acting nobly.**

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The linking of nobility and virtue has occurred throughout the history of humanity. For example, an oil-on-canvas ceiling painted for the Palazzo Manin, in Venice, by Gioanni Battista Tiepolo is entitled "The triumph of Virtue and Nobility Over Ignorance" (circa 1740-50). Virtue and Nobility, female and male, respectively, are vanquishing ignorance. A poppy leaf that is falling through the sky refers to the "sleep of the mind." Bats represent the refusal of ignorance to see the light of knowledge and wisdom.[15] Virtue and Nobility are winning.

In terms of knightly chivalry, nobility conveyed the importance of supporting one's convictions at all times. This was especially important when no one else was watching. Similarly, Aristotle's conception of nobility—tied to goodness and virtue—is quite realistic. Aristotle takes the stance that **political life can be justified only when it is related to some level of human flourishing**

and good character.[16] This is an important learning lesson for those who politically seek to serve.

While we often attach the term "nobility" to aristocrats, people with privilege and rites of birth, the foundational intent is that of *possessing high moral ideals or revealing excellent moral character*.[17] Thus, when associated with knowledge and the actions based on that knowledge, the characteristic of nobility represents good character.

I wonder if empathy, and maybe even compassion, wouldn't be required in order to develop good character? Empathy is objectively trying to experience the inner life of another. Empathy has three different types: (1) a cognitive-based form called perspective-taking, seeing the world through someone else's eyes; (2) personal distress, which is literally feeling another's emotions, caused by "emotional contagion"; and (3) recognition of another's emotional state and feeling which is considered empathic concern. While our responses to others are not always cognitive in nature, as suggested by type (2), clearly type (1) is a choice, and type (3) is a skill set that can be developed. A deeper discussion of empathy is in the Conscious Look Book on *Conscious Compassion*.

Before moving to the next idea, let's glance (my dad would have said "let's take a gander") at a list of strengths and virtues that might be valid across different cultures. Two psychologists, Christopher

Peterson and Martin Seligman,[18] set out to develop such a list. Six broad virtues appeared consistently on their lists: **wisdom, courage, humanity, justice, temperance and transcendence**. While these are abstract, they serve as a way to organize specific strengths of character, specific ways of displaying, practicing and cultivating the virtues.

Chris and Martin then suggested 24 principle character strengths, each supporting one of the six higher-level virtues. These are: (1) **Wisdom** (curiosity, love of learning, judgment, ingenuity, emotional intelligence and perspective); (2) **Courage** (valor, perseverance and integrity); (3) **Humanity** (kindness and loving); (4) **Justice** (citizenship, fairness and leadership); (5) **Temperance** (self-control, prudence and humility); and (6) **Transcendence** (appreciation of beauty and excellence, gratitude, hope, spirituality, forgiveness, humor and zest). Try to think of any additional strengths you would add to these categories, perhaps strengths that are yours![19]

Of course, the real power of this classification is that it points to "specific means of growth toward widely valued ends without insisting that any one way is mandatory for all people at all times."[20] Thus, this classification schema—with your additions—can serve as a tool for diagnosing diverse strengths and helping people discover paths to good character.
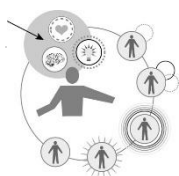
Idea 3: Good character is actionable.

The quality of good character is actionable, that is, matching our actions with our thoughts and feelings such that they create good behaviors between ourselves and others. *Without action, good character would not be discernible*. Physicist Niles MacFlouer pushes that even farther. He says that in our interactional world to identify someone with good character requires a threat to goodness so that the one observed exhibits a strength in character through self-sacrifice.[21] An individual with good character would respond to help; someone lacking good character would show that lack by either taking no action or inhibiting a positive response.

This idea of responsibility as a virtue and its relation to action is not a new one. Arthur Schnitzleer, who started his professional life first as a physician and morphed into a noted Austrian poet and dramatist, is credited with saying that there are only three virtues: objectivity, courage and a sense of responsibility. Objectivity is the ability to move beyond self and look at the larger picture, very much having to do with systems thinking. Courage is about choices made and actions taken in an uncertain environment, a presence of mind. And a sense of responsibility—for ourselves and others—puts us in a place of choice, choosing the way we respond to

the perturbations and opportunities of life, and moving into our roles as co-creators.

Viktor Frankl, who discovered moments of love and beauty of thought in the midst of the horrors of Auschwitz, says that recognition of responsibleness begins with inversion of the question: What is the meaning of life? He contends that "man is not he who poses the question … but he who is *asked* this question; for it is life itself that poses it to him. And man has to answer *to* life by answering *for* life; he has to respond by being responsible; in other words, the response is necessarily a response-in-action."[22]

While this responsibility in terms of action is very much in the NOW, it is both proactive and reactive. Viktor's *Logotherapy*, or existential analysis (a self-analysis of existence), is intended to bring individuals to an awareness of responsibleness through becoming conscious of something spiritual. "For it is only from the viewpoint of man's spirituality, or existentiality, that being human can be described in terms of being responsible."[23] This is the *self becoming conscious of its self.*

Let's pause a moment here. What I think Viktor is saying is that life poses the question ("What is the meaning of life?") to us (as life), and that when we contemplate on that we become aware that WE are responsible for life, for making our

existence what we choose to make it! That is a LOT of responsibility!

Breaking away from this heavy thought, I'm going to throw in a poem here which touches on key elements of the expansion of good character as we journey through life.

Is it spirit? Is it form?
Beauty, goodness and truth.
We *seek* the cloak of virtue
And journey through our youth.

Are you listening? Can you hear?
Is it ringing in your ears?
We *weave* the cloak of virtue
From music of the spheres.

I am aching. I am waking.
I cannot hold it in my hands.
We *wear* the cloak of virtue.
My character expands.

There is beauty. There is balance.
Good character abounds.
We *are* the cloak of virtue.
Morality compounds.

Life of service. Path of Oneness.
We feel compassion grow.
We *share* the cloak of virtue
And consciousness bestow.

How do you create good character? What is the function of the action that shows caring to others? Since each individual is unique, the elements of good character are also going to be unique. We recognize that *character is created* and, referring back to Aristotle, *character is developed through practice*. "Men become builders by building houses, and harpists by playing the harp. Similarly, we grow just by the practice of just actions, self-controlled by exercising our self-control, and courageous by performing acts of courage."[24] Perhaps that is exactly the purpose of experiential learning!

Buddha offered a set of activities called the "Eightfold Noble Path" (there's that "noble" word again!) With practice, these activities would create a person of good character (through right speech, action and livelihood) as well as a mentally disciplined person (through right effort, mindfulness and concentration).

Clearly this early guidance, from both the East and West viewpoints, demonstrates an understanding of the need for practice and repetition. This also demonstrates the need for both explicit and tacit knowledge sharing. "Moral education must also

impart tacit knowledge—skills of social perception and social emotion so finely tuned that one automatically feels the right thing in each situation, knows the right thing to do, and then *wants* to do it. Morality, for the ancients, was a kind of practical wisdom."[25] With such an education, we would no longer be concerned about the issue of inclusivity brought up earlier! Each person would instill within themselves morality as practical wisdom.

Underlying the concept of good character is the element of motive. Motive is not easily recognizable and often hidden, even from the individual who is taking action! However—considering knowledge as the capacity to take effective action, or justified true belief—the result of the action itself in terms of effectiveness can be linked directly back to the choice to take the action. Good motive is when you seek to improve a situation for the betterment of others, so you can measure the value of character of a person by the benefit to others of that person's actions. For example, if the result of action is to control or reduce the freedom of someone else, or to force someone to act negatively, this would be reflective of a negative motive and bad character.

[Your Thoughts]

Idea 4: The core values of an organization (or a society) define their unique character.

The core values of an organization (or a society) define their unique character, who they are and what they strive to become, serving as a common bond of identity. Because of their conceptual level of thought, core values strengthen an organization's capacity to adapt to new challenges, and help determine how knowledge and skills will be used.

Think about an organization you've worked with in the past, or one you work for now. Does that organization have a core value set of which you are aware? If so, do the culture, attitudes and behaviors of management and employees reflect those values?

An organization I worked with over a number of years in the past is Singapore Armed Forces (SAF). One project involved inculcating core values across the service. Since all this material has now been published and presented at various conferences around the world, I'm going to use this experience as a way to further explore the concept of good character. I begin with a quote from then-Commander of the Army Lt. General Desmond Kuek, who stated, "There are three things about a leader that don't and won't change: our sense of Mission, which is our reason for being, our Values,

which define who we are and what we stand for, and the emphasis on our People, which means developing them in mind, body and heart."

The core value set of SAF must be considered as a balanced set for guiding individual's decisions and right course of action. For example, the core value of Professionalism (being competent and knowing your job well so that you are not led down the wrong path) must be balanced with the core value of Ethics so that a job is not just done, but *is the right thing to do*.

The SAF core values[26] begin with **Loyalty to Country**, **Leadership** and **Discipline**. While descriptions of each of the core values certainly include language specific to the mission of the SAF, the concepts underlying these values support the development of good character. The descriptions of core values used below emerged from the leaders, at all levels of the organization, who were living values. *Loyalty to Country* is concerned with protecting all that is cherished: our way of life, homeland, family and national interests.

Leadership mandates the highest character, competency and authenticity from leaders at all levels. Leading by example and inspiring, motivating and developing people are foundational. Other phrases include: visioning, transforming and planning, teamwork and teambuilding, choices and good judgment, handling new paradigms, flexibility

and adaptability. *Discipline* includes personal mastery, mental stamina, courage, inner strength and physical toughness. As can be seen, these aspects of the core values can easily be extrapolated over to any country or organization, and *have very much to do with character and service to others*.

The remaining SAF core values provide specific examples related to good character. These are **Professionalism**, **Fighting Spirit**, **Ethics** and **Care for Soldiers**. *Professionalism*—knowing our roles and responsibilities and *giving the best in all that we do*—requires a systems perspective, creating new ideas and solving problems through innovation, the use of networking and the *sharing of ideas* [knowledge]. Isn't "doing the best in all that we do" our definition of what is to be noble? I think so. Other descriptive language for the core value of Professionalism includes: open communications, continuously striving for excellence, creativity, learning, and meeting challenges.

Fighting Spirit involves courage, tenacity and resilience to do what is right. It engages the hearts, minds and bodies with conviction, whether facing fear and uncertainty or everyday mundane tasks, pressing on and never giving up.

Ethics represents the personal and professional integrity that promotes wholeness and soundness. In the context of the military, ethics is shown through exemplary conduct and willingness to **take**

responsibility and be accountable for our actions. It concerns the *moral will* to do what is right even at personal costs, being honest and accurate, having integrity in dealings with others and not misusing position or power against others for selfish gains. It entails respect for all others regardless of their background and culture. Key words and phrases include: honesty, truth, integrity, selflessness, taking responsibility, accountability for actions, doing what is right, trustworthiness, moral will, and uprightness of character.

Care for Soldiers embodies genuine care and concern in the well-being of others, supporting physical, emotional and mental fitness and health. Key words and phrases include: respect, dignity, safety, welfare, moral responsibility, personal touch, morale, well-being, using heart, coaching, training, armed with knowledge, sharing knowledge, building confidence and cohesion, and showing and acting with empathy.

Wow! Isn't it amazing that so many of these descriptive words from the leaders themselves reflect the words that we've been using to help understand *good character*?

This doesn't mean that everyone is *living* those core values. Potentially more prominent in a Defense organization, rationalizations, faulty beliefs and unclear thinking can erode core values and our sense of right and wrong. This can even lead to

compromised standards and unethical or despicable acts of cruelty in war. However, connecting core values to patterns of past actions can serve as a guide for future actions. One of the ways the SAF does this is through storytelling.

Story has the potential to communicate understanding, values and guidelines. Stories teach us how to live, how to act, and provide the context for future directions. IN the military setting, a variety of story forms exist naturally, including scenarios, the articulation of possible future states constructed within the imaginative limits of working groups, and anecdotes, brief sequences captured in the field or arising form brainstorming sessions that provide awareness of alternatives. Anecdotes are often used as planning tools for possible future situations.[27]

Here's an example of the power of storytelling in reinforcing desired good character. This one has to do with the core value of Leadership (leading by example and authenticity) and Professionalism (knowledge).

He was the commander of a ship, but he looked so young that people tended to think he was quite young, and therefore quite junior. One day he was in PT attire running along the wharf when a ship was coming alongside to berth. The coxswain on the ship eyed him and shouted, "Hey you, could you come help?" Smiling, the commander caught the rope thrown to him as the ship came alongside. As the

coxswain waved in thanks his face froze in surprise. This "young man" was the commander of a ship! Embarrassed, the coxswain stuttered, "Sorry, Sir, I didn't realize …" The smiling commander waved away his words, "I was happy to serve." No doubt the commander was secretly pleased to be shown to look so youthful.

Here's an exercise for developing a good character action set.

* * * * *

EXERCISE: *Developing a*

Good Character Action Set

This tool is designed to raise awareness and aid in understanding our own character and the character of those around us. We will use the descriptive phrases and words included in the core value set referenced above.

STEP (1): Slowly reread the descriptions, including key words and phrases as provided, of the SAF Core Value set (as introduced in the paragraphs above this tool). Reflect on each descriptive phrase/word, *asking the following question*: (a) Do I consider this an important aspect of good character? [If so, highlight that phrase/word.] *Then ask yourself these questions and listen to your answers*: (b) Is this an aspect that is a part of my thoughts, feelings, and actions? (c) Do I recognize and respect this aspect in

the behavior of others? (d) What is an example of an action that conveys this concept?

STEP (2): Prepare a chart with the highlighted aspects in the left column (a), and a column for the responses to each of the three additional questions: (b), (c) and (d). Review the aspects listed in column (a) where "yes" appears in columns (b) and (c), *and* where you provided an example in column (d). These reflect aspects that through life you have developed as part of your good character. These aspects now comprise your current Good Character Action Set (GCAS).

STEP (3): Now go back and look at those aspects where (b) and (c) disagree and/or you were unable to come up with an example in column (d). These reflect aspects that you think/feel are important but are not yet embedded in your action set, or easily recognized in the actions of others. The good news is that now these have been brought into your awareness. Now let your unconscious go to work. In the morning as you start your day, review one aspect in this grouping and make a mental note to try and identify an example of that aspect in action in another person. This may take several days. If so, remind yourself of the aspect each morning, and keep looking. When you come up with an example, then reflect whether that is a behavior you would choose to add as part of your GCAS. Remember, you are individuated and have choice. The aspects you

choose to embed as part of your GCAS will have their own personal flavor/approach in service to others consistent with the purpose and meaning you have identified as your direction in life.

STEP (4): In steps (1) through (3) above, we used an initial core value set to focus on good character and stimulate the bisociation of conceptual ideas and actions (examples). This is the way we search for truth. Through experiencing and learning, open yourself to identifying behaviors that you think/feel reflect good character and then search for the underlying concepts that support your thought/feelings. In this way, continue to raise your awareness of your character and the character of others, and to expand your GCAS.

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Idea 5: New values are emerging as a whole new generation moves into the workforce.

The young decision-makers moving up in today's organizations—members of the now age of disclosure, ever-growing world-conscious generation—are Internet savvy, and engage heavily in social media. The term Net Generation is often used to describe the group of decision-makers growing up with the Internet and who began to enter the workforce around the turn of the century. We live in unprecedented technologically-advanced times. "Yet new information technology merely reflects the field of intelligence that is growing upon the earth. It does not cause it."[28]

Let's not forget that there has been no breakthrough in technology that wasn't someone's thought first! Then, that thought had to be made explicit, described in some way that could be communicated. The creative thought came first, followed by effective application (combining creativity and knowledge) to create a tangible innovation. Action follows thought; and action changes the world!

Of significant significance to a discussion of the new decision-makers and values are the characteristics of how the Net Generation engages

the world, and *this is a generation that **does** engage*. "They organize themselves, publish themselves, inform themselves and share with their friends—without waiting for an authority to instruct them,"[29] howbeit an underlying patter of this need for immediacy is an impatience with business models and processes of the preceding generation.[30] This generation can also be described as optimistic and determined, and they like public activism.[31] In this regard, they are both high-performance and high maintenance,[32] and more likely to "rock the boat" than any prior generation.[33] Note I used a lot of endnotes; these are for your reference should you want to read more about this topic.

Let's dig a bit deeper and explore the values that underlie these behaviors. The research project "The Net Generation: A Strategic Investigation," which involved interviewing 9,442 young people, resulting in the publication of the book *Grown Up Digital*, is used as a foundational information resource.

Emerging Values

The personal values of a decision-maker which are also likely to represent generational values, can exercise tremendous influence over his/her decisions regarding how to solve a problem and take the best action in a situation. German sociologist Karl Mannheim forwards that a person's thoughts, feelings and behaviors, including their values, are

shaped by the generation to which a person belongs.[34] I agree.

Values begin as principles, rules or standards considered good behavior.[35] As these principles are repeatedly expressed (acted upon) by a person or across an organization, they become embedded behaviors, both considered the norm and expected.[36] For example, the principles of freedom, equality, human dignity, tolerance, and the celebration of diversity have a long and storied history in the United States.[37] Although today these are recognized as values core to democracy, there is still disagreement among the political infrastructure when translating them into action.

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INSIGHT: **Values begin as principles, rules or standards considered good behavior. As they are acted upon they become embedded behaviors, both considered the norm and expected.**

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Recognizing the new social knowledge paradigm—which supports the creation, leveraging and application of knowledge—the core and operational values linked to this generation of decision-makers include *integrity, empathy, transparency, participation, collaboration, contribution, learning and creativity*.[38] We'll talk briefly about each of these.

The foundational value of **integrity** is defined as "steadfast adherence to a strict moral or ethical code."[39] An organization or person of integrity is *whole*, aligns words and actions, keeps commitment, does the right thing, and is fair when dealing with others. From the perspective of the Net Generation: "Integrity is the foundation of the new enterprise. In North America, Net Geners define integrity as being honest, considerate, and transparent. They expect employers to be this way, and live by their commitment. Young people respond well to management integrity and quickly become engaged."[40]

Without integrity, ethical standards and excellence lack practical meaning. The sometimes-hidden idea underlying integrity is consistency and steadfast adherence, producing an authenticity that is in concert with accepted moral standards of an organization or a culture. Thus, while integrity may be a fundamental value, the way it is understood and expressed may be different across organizations, or around the world. Nonetheless, because of its consistency within the context in which it is expressed, integrity is a powerful conveyor of trust among decision-makers, and between an organization and its stakeholders.

The second foundational value is **empathy**, which we talked about in Idea 2. When coupled with integrity, empathy can help create a credible

relationship, company and product/service from the perspective of all key stakeholders. It builds the foundation not just for collaboration and participation, but for true fraternity, reciprocity and integration. Integrity and empathy provide the pre-conditions for the effectiveness of other more operational values by creating trust and mutual respect, and providing a non-judgmental environment, all of which form the basis of communication through shared understanding. Empathy and integrity are not mutually independent.

The concept of **transparency**, described as an operational value, is defined as "easily seen through or detected and free from guile; candid or open."[41] Again, we see a level of interdependency emerging. Empathy and integrity facilitate transparency by fostering trust, while transparency, in turn, reinforces trust. Unless transparency is balanced by empathy and integrity, it could foster misunderstanding and a breakdown in trust and relationships rather than supporting them! True transparency "must make the processes, underlying assumptions, and political presuppositions (including supporting research) of policy explicit and subject to criticism."[42] Beyond sharing documents on websites, transparency extends to openly sharing ideas, feelings, personal viewpoints, and different knowledge, with the responsibility to ensure some level of understanding and meaning that makes information actionable in a changing, uncertain and complex environment.

Participation as an operational value is a keystone for the Net Generation, who reach out and creatively engage ideas and people around the world. This participation extends to political engagement and community service. "Signs indicate that Millennials are civic-minded, politically engaged, and hold values long associated with progressives, such as concern about economic inequalities … and a strong belief in government."[43] In the area of community service, according to a 2006 report for the Corporation for National and Community Service, teens 16 to 19 years of age were spending twice as much time volunteering as in 1989.[44] The generation that were teenagers in 2006 are rapidly becoming the key decision-makers in organizations.

In the area of the economy, "There is a new age of participation emerging in the economy … the Net Generation … is driving the democratization of information content."[45] This is exactly the intent of the Open Government directive issued in December 2009 by the U.S. President.

Collaboration means "to work together, especially in a joint intellectual effort."[46] In the current environment, the meaning of collaboration has extended from relatively intact internal groups at the team, unit, or company level to a fluid, changing interdependent network of diverse contributors across the internal and external environments. A decision-maker has a new type of peer network, one

that moves from autonomy to interdependent, from deference to dialogue, and from a primary focus on doing a job well to a focus on contribution to collective purposes.[47] In this peer network, alignment around such values as collaboration, transparency and contribution make it possible for people to work together in environments that are open, changing and diverse. Collaboration is a core value embraced by the Net Geners, involving engagement and participation.

There are two more of these. Are you still with me? You really don't need to read every word; most likely you know what these words mean. But scan them all, because what is fascinating is that THESE are what are important to our upcoming generation of primary decision-makers in our organizations!

As an operational value, **learning** is integrally related to the ability to contribute. Learning means receiving, understanding, thinking critically and learning how to adapt and apply knowledge quickly in new and unfamiliar situations. The learning of the Net Geners is unique. Learning in social settings locates learning "not in the head or outside it, but in the relationship between the person and the world, which for human beings is a social person in a social world."[48] The Net Geners are learning together, in groups and communities, through continuous interactions around the world. This new mode of learning is just-in-time, interactive, collaborative,

fun, engaging, taps multiple senses (multi-media) and fosters discovery.

Learning affects every other value, offering a way of practicing and applying each of the values in every aspect of work life including interactions with peers, customers, vendors, how work gets done, and how success is measured. Clearly, this learning is collaborative. "It goes without saying that collaborative learning, with its emphasis on mindfulness, attunement to others, nonjudgmental interactions, acknowledgement of each person's unique contributions, and recognition of the importance of deep participation and a shared sense of meaning coming out of embedded relationship, can't help but foster greater empathic engagement."[49]

Here's the last one. **Creativity** is the ability to perceive new relationships and new possibilities, see things from a different frame of reference, or realize new ways of understanding/having insight or portraying something. Innovation means the creation of new ideas and the transformation of those ideas into useful applications. Thus, the combination of creativity and contribution as operational values brings about innovation! A creative environment is fueled by the values of integrity, empathy, transparency, collaboration, learning and contribution, which foster trust and a spirit of collaborative success.

 And a few last thoughts. The values and abilities characterizing the Net Generation help support sustainability in a changing, uncertain and increasingly complex environment, and no doubt *that environment is contributing to the development of those abilities*. Today, there is access to unlimited information, and each of us intuitively knowns that using that information effectively (knowledge) is the key to success.

 Flooded by new thoughts and ideas, this generation surfs information, rarely focusing on a specific domain of knowledge long enough to acquire deep knowledge, and *the extent of their awareness determines their range of mobility*. The Net Generation operates at the edge of human thought, a place where insights find their way into expression. In other words, there is already *a level of co-evolving that can be observed in the Net Generation*. As the environment continues to change, so do and are decision-maker capabilities and capacities to ensure flexibility, quick response, resilience, robustness and continuous learning, all of which contribute to sustainability.

[Your Thoughts]
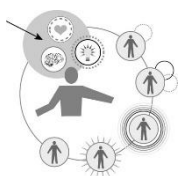
Idea 6: The highest virtues of our physical, mental, emotional and spiritual fields.

On and off in this little book, you've heard the idea of physical, mental and emotional fields. In other books, sometimes these are talked about as "planes" or "bodies," or just as focus points, and there are probably lots of other ways to refer to them. These are energy fields. As my physicist partner says over and over again, so now it's stuck in my head, everything is energy and patterns of energy.

When we talk about the highest virtues of these fields, we are looking for what is the best characteristic in terms of "good character" when referring to the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual nature of ourselves.

From the physical focal point, there can be no doubt that the highest virtues are **cooperation and collaboration**. Actually, pretty much any concepts starting with "co" would be supportive of our growth. They denote the recognition that we are not alone on this journey toward intelligent activity. We are social beings; and the way we learn is through experiential learning, which is about living in and with our environment. We now recognize that an individual cannot evolve or expand without interaction with others.

So, in addition to cooperation and collaboration, some of those other "co" words would include co-creating, co-evolving, co-service and community.

Figure 1. *The journey toward intelligent activity is a journey of "co-ing".*

As you have probably realized, all of these "co" words actually require cooperation and collaboration to succeed! That's why we describe those as the highest virtue in the physical focus. However, we didn't always realize this!

Darwin realized this too late to stop his already-created meme—"survival of the fittest"—from spreading. However, he DID publish in his

book *The Descent of Man*, that "Those communities which included the greatest number of the most sympathetic members would flourish best and rear the greatest number of offspring."[50] Thus began the recognition that "cooperation and unity, rather than survival of the fittest, are the keys to the success of a species."[51] In fact, cooperation was identified as the *key factor* in evolution and survival![52]

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INSIGHT: **Cooperation was identified as the key factor in evolution and survival!**

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Both cooperation and collaboration could be defined as the process where two or more people and/or organizations work together towards achieving mutually beneficial goals and objectives. Collaboration denotes closer alignment of the parties involved. This is the co-creation of value through open sharing, the leveraging of existing resources and creating new insights through the bisociation of ideas. [Note the relationship of all those "co" words.]

As our human mental faculties developed and expanded, recognition of the power of cooperation and collaboration did not immediately translate into our organizational models, which were largely based on control, whether this was via blood lines, religion

or classes. Max Weber's bureaucratic model called for imperative control, which was management power over workers based on a hierarchy of relationships. I'll throw a table in here so you can see what I mean.

Focus on controlling physical activities		
Control via Blood Lines	**Control via Religion**	**Control via Class Separation**
629-649 A.D. Reign of Taizong (Golden Age of Chinese Imperial History)	**1200 A.D.** Pontificate of Innocent III (Height of power of Roman Catholic church)	**Circa 1900 A.D.** Implementation of Max Weber's Bureaucratic Model
Value of learning and knowledge recognized and used to expand the imperial family's influence throughout bureaucracy. Instituted System of state schools and colleges reserved for children of the imperial family and those of highest imperial officials. Highest positions in government went to those who passed literacy exams.	Religious beliefs and rituals serving as the framework and justification for authority. Supervised religious, social and political life in the west. Centralized administration and tapped church's financial resources, taxing and putting under papal protection bishops, monasteries, convents and churches. Codified Canon Law.	Imperative control (management power over workers through legal, ownership and charismatic legitimacy). Hierarchical structure, clear division of labor, rule and process orientation, impersonal administration, rewards based on merit, decisions and rules in writing, Knowledge linked to power; secrecy increased superiority and power.

Table 1. *The historic role of control*.

The rise of Knowledge Management, riding on the tail of the quality movement, brought management attention to the importance of knowledge as a strategic asset. Since knowledge is created by people, this led to a refocusing on people and new ways, such as communities of practice and

social media, to ensure the flow of knowledge *among* people, improving decision-making at all levels of the organization and expanding the opportunity for creativity.

Learning and knowledge cannot be ordered to occur; they must be nurtured, providing the internal environment (meditation, mindfulness, safety, rewards and recognition) and external environment (stimulation, trusted others, exposure) such that it will emerge. The combination of creativity and collaboration create a *collaborative entanglement* that erases cause and effect relationships. Collaborative entanglement is the dynamic mixing, analyzing, discussing, perceiving, interpreting and living knowledge from different perspectives. It works across people very much like your human brain works within you!

Now, from our mental focal point, **the highest virtue has to be truth**. We as humans are always seeking higher truths. That probably sounded strange for some of you who are of the mindset that truth is stationary. It is not. Everything changes. And truth, which is relative, is situation-dependent and context-sensitive as well. Truth was included in Idea 1 and we go into detail in one of these Conscious Look Books named *Truth in Context*.

As humans, we are reminded that while things are relative in time in the physical reality in which we live, we are all on the path searching for higher truths. "The more truth you know, the more truth you are, the more of the past you can understand and the more of the future you can comprehend."[53] The search for truth is essential for co-creating the future.

The highest virtue from our emotional focal point is love, which has everything to do with deepening our connections to others. We are on a developmental journey, which I describe as our Intelligent Social Change Journey. This has three phases, each of which expands from the previous one. We start with learning cause-and-effect relationships. If you study, you get a good grade. If you break the law, you pay the consequences. As we learn from these experiences, we begin to recognize patterns, and we are no longer reliant on the past. Through higher conceptual thinking (putting the patterns together) we can co-evolve, taking patterns from the past and extrapolating them into expected future events, which enables us to make better decisions in the NOW.

In order to co-evolve, we need to better understand our self (physical capabilities, emotional intelligence, mental development, spiritual values) AND we need to better understand others. This

requires a deeper connection. Perhaps we've always had sympathy for others, but now this deepens to an empathy. And, as we interact more and more with others, ever recognizing connections among ourselves and others and realizing we're part of a larger ecosystem, this empathy expands into compassion. And so, we move along the journey toward unconditional love, what is best described with the Greek term agápē.
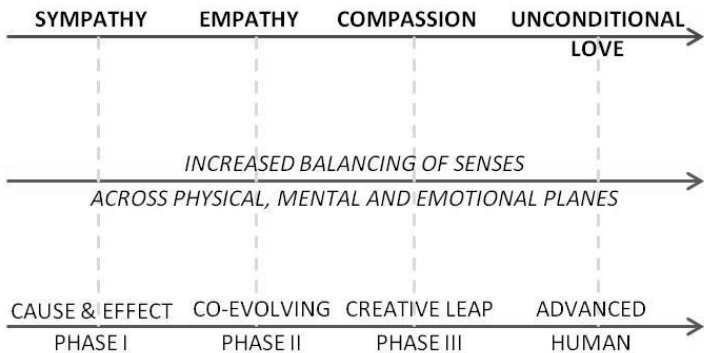
Figure 2. *From sympathy to unconditional love: a continuum with an increasing depth of connection*.

The bottom line of the graphic below refers to the phases of the Intelligent Social Change Journey. You can read more about that in the BIG book *The Profundity and Bifurcation of Change* that all these little books draw from.

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| SYMPATHY | EMPATHY | COMPASSION | UNCONDITIONAL LOVE |

INCREASED BALANCING OF SENSES
ACROSS PHYSICAL, MENTAL AND EMOTIONAL PLANES

| CAUSE & EFFECT | CO-EVOLVING | CREATIVE LEAP | ADVANCED HUMAN |
| PHASE I | PHASE II | PHASE III | |

I guess a good take-away from this too short conversation on a very deep and important subject is that if you are feeling and acting on empathy or, even better, compassion, then you are on track in this amazing journey of life!

We have one more focal point to bring in here, and that is intuition. From that focal point, **the highest virtue is beauty**. Beauty is transcendent, a short-cut to expanding our consciousness. This is because when we are in the experience of beauty—which is personal—all of our senses are fully engaged and there's no room for anything else! Beauty was also a part of Idea 1, and is the subject of a separate Conscious Look Book.

Idea 7: People are not created equal.

So far, we've looked at good character from a general viewpoint, noting the importance of individuation (developing yourself) in terms of difference, but not addressing it in terms of capability. With apologies to U.S. historical documents (where the intent was focused on equal rights), *all people are not created equal*. Nor would we want them to be!

Equal is, quite simply, the same in number, amount, degree, rank or quality; not changing, the same for each person.[54] As we now know, people are verbs, not nouns, and, whether reflecting from the viewpoint of the physical, emotional or mental fields, changing every instant of our lives! In the context of this conversation, this might mean that it is quite easy for some people to achieve aspects of good character without thought or feeling or effort, sort of on automatic. This is acting. From this viewpoint there is little, if any, growth and expansion.

This "acting" may connect back to motive, with some underlying need to "appear" a person of good character but without the element of goodness, or the focus of giving others what they need. Or, this may have very much to do with capacity and capability. *Each person carries the responsibility for acting*

with good character to the best of their ability, coming up with the best ideas and actions for the circumstances. And since good character is a choice and can be developed, this is a LARGE responsibility. However, each individual has developed different levels of physical, mental and emotional sense that can be brought to bear in different situations. So, this development will be different for every person. Doing the BEST you can means just that. With better-developed senses comes greater responsibility; greater capability brings with it the opportunity for greater caring.

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INSIGHT: **Each person carries the responsibility for acting with good character to the best of their ability. And since good character is a choice and can be developed, this is a LARGE responsibility!**

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Reflecting on past actions can help you discover your level of capability. For example, *ask*: In a similar situation, what am I capable of doing? Could I have done more? Could I do more now? The individual who regularly reflects on his values is likely to channel behaviors in that direction. What we think about and reflect upon is what we become, and what we project into the future.

While the focus has been on developing good character in ourselves, by now we recognize that as

social beings in continuous interaction with each other, our thoughts and actions are permeable, affecting others even as they affect us. As we attempt to discover the truth about our own capability and live that truth, this is a good reason to associate with people who have good character!

It is important not to compare ourselves to others—nor to judge others. Yet, observing and reflecting on other's actions can help us build an understanding of who we choose to be, and, using discernment and discrimination, who we choose not to be. Conversely, there is the recognition—and the responsibility that comes with that recognition—that others may emulate our behaviors. This offers the opportunity for greater service as a group, learning and growing through interacting with others who have different capabilities.

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INSIGHT: **There is the recognition—and the responsibility that comes with that recognition—that others may emulate our behaviors.**

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I guess we could say that creating good character is really a process of changing ourselves into becoming more and more capable of being caring to others, acting in ways that others need such that goodness is created between them and still others. This moves into the conceptual nature of

higher mental thought, laying the groundwork for understanding patterns of goodness and expanding our consciousness as we deepen our connections to others.

[Your Thoughts]

What does this mean to me?

It's time to ask: What does all this have to do with me? How can all this make a difference in my experience of life, in my job, in my relationships?

Let's pull out a few highlights to reflect upon. Then, ask yourself: *How can I take advantage of this knowing to create a more virtuous life and add more virtue to the world?*

- Beauty, goodness and truth are foundational aspects of your personal journey.
- The creation of good character is a critical step to expanding your consciousness and the larger consciousness of humanity.
- Your actions begin with your thought. Think good thoughts and act on them.
- The core values of an organization define their unique character, who they are and what they strive to become, serving as a common bond of identity. Are your core values consistent with those of your organization?
- Are you able to learn from the younger generation of decision-makers as values shift in response to the changing times?

Cooperation and collaboration are the highest virtues in the physical focus. Do you nurture and engage these in your life?

Each person carries the responsibility for acting with good character to the best of their ability. And since good character is a choice and can be developed, this is a LARGE responsibility!

Through choice and action, we are ever expanding the good character that we are.

Thank you for making a difference in this world!

This volume of **Conscious Look Books** builds conversationally on the ideas presented in *The Profundity and Bifurcation of Change Part IV: Creating the Future*, largely presented in Chapter 34: "Virtues for Living the Future" and Part IV: Creating the Future, Chapter 22, "Learning Points Along the Path." Co-authors of the original text include David Bennet, Arthur Shelley, Theresa Bullard, John Lewis and Donna Panucci. Full references are available in the original text, which is published by MQIPress, Frost, WV (2017). All five parts are available as an eBook at www.amazon.com

We have also pulled for the section on values in the new generation from "Values as knowledge: A new frame of reference for a new generation of knowledge workers" in *On the Horizon* Vol. 18 No. 3 (2010), 255-265 by Joyce Avedisian and Alex Bennet, and *Decision-Making in The New Reality: Complexity, Knowledge and Knowing* (2013) by Alex Bennet and David Bennet.

Endnotes

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[4] See Haidt, J. (2006). *The Happiness Hypothesis: Finding Modern Truth in Ancient Wisdom*. New York: Basic Books.

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[8] See Haidt, J. (2006).

[9] See Beversluis, J. (Ed.) (1993). "The Declaration of a Global Ethic," signed by 143 respected leaders from the world's major faiths at the 1993 Parliament of the World's Religions held in Chicago, IL on September 4, 1993. Retrieved November 2016 from http://www.religioustolerance.org/parliame.htm

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[13] Quoted from Cooper, J.M. (1999). *Reason and Emotion: Essays on Ancient Moral Psychology and Ethical Theory*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 264.

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The Volumes in
Possibilities that are YOU!

All Things in Balance

The Art of Thought Adjusting

Associative Patterning and Attracting

Beyond Action

The Bifurcation

Connections as Patterns

Conscious Compassion

The Creative Leap

The Emerging Self

The Emoting Guidance System

Engaging Forces

The ERC's of Intuition

Grounding

The Humanness of Humility

Intention and Attention

Knowing

Living Virtues for Today

Me as Co-Creator

Seeking Wisdom

Staying on the Path

Transcendent Beauty

Truth in Context

Virtues, qualities of being morally good, are concepts that when thought about expand consciousness and when acted upon increase intelligent activity. As we move into an uncertain future, never has it been more important to develop the virtue of good character. Each person carries the responsibility for acting with good character to the best of their ability. And since good character is a choice and can be developed, this is a LARGE responsibility!