

Reviewed items: *The Evolution of Future Consciousness* and; *Contemporary Futurist Thought*.

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In this review I outline Thomas Lombardo's two related volumes *The Evolution of Future Consciousness* (hereafter *Evolution*) and *Contemporary Futurist Thought* (hereafter *Contemporary*). I will delineate the major contents of the texts and evaluate them in terms of their potential value to futurists and the general public. I will also make some commentary on several issues within the volumes. Most notably I will refer to the ways of knowing that Lombardo sees as comprising his concept of "future consciousness". This is in line with a particular focus of my own research which I have called "integrated intelligence" (Anthony 2005a; b; 2006).

The Evolution of Future Consciousness

This text is "about the human capacity to be conscious of the future, to create ideas, goals, and plans about the future, to think about these mental creations and use them in directing one's actions and one's life" (*Evolution*: 2). In the first part of the volume Lombardo takes us through "The Psychology and Value of Future Consciousness." He covers such themes as the perceptual awareness of time, emotion, motivation and future consciousness; the cognitive basis of future consciousness; and philosophy, cosmic consciousness and the future. Lombardo argues that the capacity to think about the future has represented an evolutionary leap in human consciousness, and is something that separates humans from the animals.

Lombardo defines future consciousness as "the total integrative set of psychological abilities, processes, and experiences humans use in understanding and dealing with the future (*Evolution*: 6). For Lombardo the "higher-order cognitive abilities" include planning, problem solving, critical thinking skills and "integrative understanding" (*Evolution*: 68). However he also includes intuitive and emotive cognitive processes, holistic insight and "aesthetic and spiritual" factors (*Evolution*: 44). Further, he sees creativity, wisdom, planning and action, philosophical understanding, and cosmic consciousness as part of the entire process. (*Evolution*: 40-41).

For Lombardo, ideal future consciousness involves a balance between the empirical and rationalist, reason and imagination (*Evolution*: 40). His future consciousness incorporates a moral dimension, something that David Loye has long emphasised the importance of in futures and evolutionary thinking (Loye 2004). Lombardo is willing to assess multiple levels of human development - from mainstream evolutionary processes to psychological well-being and ultimately "transformation and transcendence" (*Evolution*: 70).

There are numerous benefits associated with the development of future consciousness, argues Lombardo. These include the enrichment of critical thinking skills, enhanced philosophical understanding, and even the facilitation of cosmic consciousness. To this he adds the expansion of mental and behavioral freedom; management of depression, apathy and fear; enhanced meaning, purpose and hope, courage and wisdom; and the facilitation of the ability to adapt in the rapidly changing world (*Evolution*: 68). Finally, the development of future consciousness:

...helps us understand the grand and interactive scheme of things. Future consciousness connects us to our world and all of humanity, present and future generations included, both cognitively and ethically.

Future consciousness transforms us philosophically and spiritually (evolution p.70).

The tools he cites to enhance future consciousness include processes such as the challenging of existing beliefs about the future and one's ability to influence it; brainstorming alternative visions and beliefs about the future; clarifying and assessing life plans and goals; challenging the self-concept; learning about history and long-term trends; enhancing optimism; and learning the techniques for enhancing thinking skills, visualisation and imagination, and creativity (*Evolution*: 69). I note that in terms of the application of ways of knowing, Lombardo here restricts himself to primarily critical/rational cognitive processes.

I believe that this is perfectly appropriate for the critical/rational cognitive processes which currently dominate western science and education. However if Lombardo's ideal of incorporating holistic thinking is to pass from ideal to practical reality, I believe that mystical/spiritual cognitive processes have to be employed as well. Meditative, shamanistic and altered states of consciousness are commonly seen to be an important part of the facilitation of the more holistic and intuitive ways of knowing (Braud 1998: 64, 76; 2003: xx-xxi; Grof 2000).

As a researcher interested in different ways of knowing, especially the intuitive, I noted that in *Evolution* Lombardo frequently associates present-minded thinking with regressive human tendencies such as selfishness, immediate survival needs, disconnection, and lower stages of evolutionary development. He bases this angle most notably on Anthony Reading's theory of perception, and also the ideas of John Stewart. However in my view this reflects a peculiarly western patriarchal relationship with time. In the Buddhist tradition it is the quieting of the mind into the present moment which is often depicted

as being necessary for the increased perceptions of cosmic unity and awareness of the psychic realms (Jacobson 1997; Wallace 2003). In this sense Lombardo's thesis might benefit from the addition of Wilber's (2000) distinction between "prerational" and "transrational" levels of consciousness. My own concept of integrated intelligence, which incorporates many of the cognitive processes inherent in Lombardo's future consciousness, includes the concept of "receptivity" as being beneficial in gaining genuine access to transrational and holistic perceptual capacities. Receptivity involves a quieting of the mind to optimise access to the deeper psyche, and in theory, to transpersonal information (Anthony 2005).

In chapter two of *Evolution*, Lombardo outlines his thesis that the development of future consciousness has its roots in evolutionary processes, especially survival needs. Lombardo traces the evolution of humankind via an analysis of anthropological evidence. Moreover, he then indicates that future consciousness has reached such a point that it is now accelerating the process of evolution.

In chapter three of *Evolution* Lombardo examines the role of myth, religion and philosophy in the development of future consciousness. He begins with an analysis of the role of the ancient Greeks in the development of Christianity. As Richard Tarnas (2000) points out so lucidly, the Greeks were as much mystics as overt rationalists - even Aristotle and Socrates held mystical conceptions which underpinned their ideals (Anthony 2006). Similarly, Lombardo finds Plato, Aristotle, Heraclitus and the ancient Greeks in general held both rationalist and mystical tendencies (*Evolution*: 185). Indeed he then argues - largely following the arguments of Shlain - that this dual thinking has continued throughout the history of Western civilisation till the current day. (1)

Lombardo - in accordance with Jung, Levi Strauss and Campbell - believes that myth draws upon archetypal cognition, and has had seminal influence upon the development of human cognition. He believes that greater religious figures such as Jesus, Buddha and Mohammad "presumably made contact with some deep or ultimate reality - something spiritual or divine - that provided enlightenment and a sense of direction" (*Evolution*: 154). Religious revelations were "presumably communicated from spirits and Gods" (*Evolution*: 166). He also argues that pagan religions were cultures where "humans and deities were all part of the interconnected and interwoven reality" (*Evolution*: 160). Once again we see Lombardo finding a valid role for holistic thinking. Thus Lombardo finds that the human "thirst for divine immanence" (*Evolution*: 169) has significantly shaped human history and consciousness. The Axial Age (700-400BC) which produced the Buddha, Lao Tzu, Confucius and Zoroaster, was crucial. However after this time, an increased sense of self-determination amongst humankind saw a decline in spiritual revelation.

Ultimately Lombardo sees the interplay of these polarities in the development of human history - with their divergent cognitive modes - within a Taoist perspective. They are interdependent aspects of a whole and "dynamically interwoven in theory, debate, and ways of life" (*Evolution*: 251). Religious and mystical thinking drew meaning and purpose, and helped explain reality and cosmos. They provided stories, visions and philosophies, including the nature of past, present and future (*Evolution*: 257).

Finally, in chapter four Lombardo examines "science, enlightenment, progress and evolution", describing the multifaceted development of secular and scientific thought in the modern west about time and the future. Again Lombardo takes us through a series of arguments with minimal personal analysis, relating various initiation points of modernism beginning from the twelfth century Renaissance. He also

cites the rise of inventiveness, the triumph over authoritarianism, the rediscovery of Aristotle and individualism (*Evolution*: 270).

The well-covered ground of the scientific revolution follows. Lombardo finds the development of induction and empirical science was crucial to the development of future consciousness, being key in the development of experimentation (*Evolution*: 293). The emergence of the machine metaphor encouraged the idea that nature could be manipulated and controlled. The result was the concept of mechanistic causation, and lawful determinism emerged (*Evolution*: 301). He concludes his coverage of the scientific revolution and the Renaissance by arguing that the effect was to undermine religious and magical thinking, and establish scientific thought.

Next, Lombardo examines the role of Darwin and the influence of the general idea and then the theory of evolution - and natural selection in particular. As Lombardo argues: "evolution became an all embracing theory which explained the entire history of humanity and provided a conceptual framework for understanding the future of humankind" (*Evolution* 402). Darwin's thesis was assimilated into a scientific and naturalistic model, and the role of God was pushed further out of the picture (*Evolution*, 402).

As is typical of the text, when Lombardo finally comes to his conclusions he is at his most engaging. Yet the wait is often long. Thus I would advise readers to begin *Evolution* by first reading the twelve-page conclusion at the end of the text. It helps make sense of the entire book. I also feel that Lombardo's text would benefit from more regular summarising of the argument, to assist the reader to develop a map of where he is going. The lack of diagrams is another weakness. Another point is that although the text permits a reasonable inclusion of non-western thought, it is overtly focused upon western thinkers and philosophers.

Nonetheless I like the way that Lombardo permits an overview of the various strands within the development of future consciousness, and is not preoccupied with one school of thought. Thus we see a strong overview of mainstream enlightenment thinking, as well as Romanticism of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The concept of "future consciousness" has much value, in that it balances a range of cognitive modes - both "rational" and intuitive."

Contemporary Futurist Thought

In *Contemporary* Lombardo begins at the point where he leaves off in *Evolution* - the dawn of the modern era. Here in successive chapters he covers "Science fiction as the mythology of the future", "futures studies", "modern times and the contemporary transformation" and "theories and paradigms of the future". I found this to be a more engaging volume than the first. More of Lombardo's passion for the subject matter shines through.

In chapter one Lombardo begins with an examination of science fiction. It is here that Lombardo is at his best as a writer, with his solid knowledge and great enthusiasm for the subject matter being very apparent. Anyone wishing to gain an overview of science fiction and its representations of the future would do well to look here. Lombardo takes us through the greats of yesteryear, starting right from Moore's *Utopia* (1516), Bacon's *The New Atlantis* (1626) and including Mary Shelley, Jules Verne, H.G. Wells. He then moves into the era after the 1920s, when the term "science fiction" came into popular use. Here we see a host of writers covered by Lombardo: from Olaf Stapledon, Thomas Huxley, and George Orwell, and then onto Isaac Asimov, Robert Heinlein, Arthur C. Clarke, Greg Bear, Philip K. Dick and many others. Lombardo also discusses science fiction films - from *Metropolis* (1926) and *Flash Gordon* right up to *Star Wars* and *The Matrix* trilogy.

A small point of contention for me occurs where Lombardo cites science fiction writer Joe Halderman, who suggests that *The Matrix* does not qualify as genuine science fiction because it invokes magic, mysticism and undeveloped scientific ideas. The latter finds that it is more about special effects than thoughtful and intelligent scientific ideas (*Contemporary*: 76). However Lombardo misses the opportunity to point out that such a critique is in itself a construct of a particularly western scientific perspective. A consideration of other science which has been more inspired by eastern concepts and indigenous perspectives might suggest that the Matrix draws upon the "science" implicit in mystical perception: that the world is *maya* or illusion (Capra, 2000), and that consciousness fields entrap humanity and individuals within certain levels of consciousness (Bradley 2004; Hawkins 2002).

An arguably more significant issue is where Lombardo states that science fiction "engages all the fundamental capacities of the human mind; it generates holistic future consciousness... it integrates the secular-rationalist and mythological-Romantic approaches to the future" (*Contemporary*: 6, 97). Yet I believe it is debatable whether science fiction can facilitate the kind of holistic thinking that Lombardo refers to as an integral part of future consciousness. An intellectual and imaginative exploration of the concept does not necessarily facilitate the actual experience. However there is no doubt, as Lombardo points out, that science fiction brings holistic thinking into popular consciousness and imagination.

In chapter two Lombardo examines "the other main contemporary thread of futuristic thinking", namely futures studies (*Contemporary*: 109). He begins with a fairly narrow provisional definition of futures studies as: "an empirical and scientifically based approach to understanding the future" (*Contemporary*: 109). He then lists the world's leading futures organisations and publications. Such topics as the controversy over what to call the discipline, to the key research

methods are covered. I find it heartening that he makes the key distinction between tools which emerged from the philosophy of the Enlightenment (e.g. rational and empirical methodology, critical theory and description, and prescriptive proposals) and more intuitive and speculative methods. He points out that while science fiction tends to incorporate a good measure of both, futures studies tends to be dominated by the former. While the scientific approaches help facilitate unity in futures studies, they are also delimiting, and tend to ignore important aspects of "human reality" (*Contemporary*: 133). Here I am in complete agreement with him.

This leads Lombardo into the futures thinking of Richard Slaughter, whose concept of integral futures is indebted to Ken Wilber's Four-Quadrant model (Anthony 2006). Here we see Lombardo concurring with Slaughter's insistence on the importance of honoring both inner and outer aspects of reality - the empirical and intuitive, and especially the need for wisdom. He argues that the linear models of change are "fundamentally stupid" (*Contemporary*: 159). At this point Lombardo brings forth a discussion of the influence on futures thinking of chaos and systems theories and quantum theory.

In this section Lombardo also overviews the arguments of various futurists, including Frank Cornish, Michael Marien, Wendell Bell and Alvin Toffler. He then traces the history of futures studies from the development of key groups in the 1960s such as the Club of Rome and The World Futures Society, and he examines the influence of the development of government think tanks.

In a discussion of "the contemporary transformation", Lombardo argues that society is in transition, and he outlines some of the different opinions about where it is all going. He cites James Gleick on accelerated change, Hazel Henderson's systems thinking, and Walter Truett Anderson's take on connected globalisation. There is nothing

terribly new here - with phases like "intensifying uncertainty", "speeding up change" "increasing connection" recurring. However there is a good coverage of thinkers currently discussing these matters.

In chapter three, Lombardo addresses the major events, trends and issues of the twentieth century, as well as visions of the futures and their impact. Here he examines the influence of Freud and Heidegger; the world wars; the rise of communism, existentialism and postmodernism; the sexual revolution; democratic and individualistic capitalism; feminism; and the increasing power of science. Lombardo then traces the emergence of hippies, the human potential movement and the New Age.

In a long final chapter, Lombardo broadly outlines a range of theories and paradigms of the future. He points out that theories of the future are often connected with stories. Again, he emphasises that we are in the middle of a fundamental world transformation, with all these theories competing for their place. There are a variety of kinds of theories outlined here - including those that highlight time and change, science and technology, ecology and nature, and spirituality and integrative theories amongst others. At this point the text becomes rather encyclopedic in nature. The previous categories become headings, with further sub-headings within those. The text again becomes more descriptive than analytical. Nonetheless there is a treasure trove of futures theories and theorists described here.

Lombardo has really done his homework here. He traverses history, theology, biology, evolutionary theory, anthropology, physics and systems theories, alternative science, computer science, globalisation, pluralism and diversity, postmodernism, individualism and democracy, fundamentalism and new ageism. For those with an interest in holistic thinking and integral futures, Lombardo presents a good overview of many ideas and thinkers in this last chapter under "integrative

theories." These include Ken Wilber, Eamon Kelly, Walter Truett Anderson, Rick Smyre, and Copthorne MacDonald.

Finally, Lombardo draws it all together in his conclusion, where he presents a mostly optimistic view of humankind's future. An evolutionary model of change is what is required, he writes. Yet he moves beyond a purely biological model, suggesting a representation of evolution which pertains to the broader features of "the cosmos as a whole, as well as human history and the ongoing transformation of our species" (*Contemporary*: 396).

Lombardo emphasises the power and importance of both science and holistic thinking for the further development of humankind.

Human evolution will involve technological augmentation, biological enhancements, psychological and mental transformations, and ethical and spiritual developments (*Contemporary*: 401).

He sees humanity and technology forming "a reciprocity" (*Contemporary*: 399), with humans and technology co-evolving. This extrapolation develops from his perception that the internet represents a "global nervous system" (*Contemporary*: 399). A best-case scenario is that the world "will be transformed into a highly fluid, intelligent, and flexible medium for evolution and creation" (*Contemporary*: 399). Yet true to his argument throughout the two volumes, he finds the future "is not just advances in technology - the human mind, human values, and the human spirit must also be brought into the equation in predicting the future" (*Contemporary*: 399-400). For evolution is also "a spiritual quest" (*Contemporary*: 401).

Value for futurists

These two Lombardo volumes may well serve as an effective reference encyclopedia of futurist thought. There is however one very disappointing caveat. There are no indexes in either volume. Locating specific data upon further readings of the texts may be frustrating for researchers.

Despite being impressed by Lombardo's depth, I found the books' encyclopedic nature frustrating at times. One is often left wondering just where Lombardo stands in his assessment of these vast mindscapes of thought and literature, because oftentimes description dominates analysis. One often has to wait till the very end of some long chapters before one discovers what Lombardo thinks of the material he is amassing. I feel Lombardo would have done better with more regular brief summations or overviews of his argument, especially in *Evolution*.

Conclusion

My reading is that Lombardo is more of a compiler than an analyst himself. There are no groundbreaking theories or insights here. Nonetheless these are broad and meticulous works of scholarship. Overall the second text is more engaging and adds more to our understanding of futures. The first volume, although invaluable as coverage of the development of contemporary thinking about the future, often covers well-worn ground. Yet for those new to futures studies, or those who want a greater overview of the various dimensions of futures, these books are a sound investment.

Notes:

1. Elsewhere I have argued similarly (Anthony 2006).

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