

Pro-search Needed into Techno-virtual EGOs

Monika G. Gaede*

Founder of SOuLE Purpose Ecology, Australia

Pro-search¹ is not only useful to imagine future social contexts with the help of scenario planning, but also needed through envisioning the changes in the inner ecology of future human beings. With the rapidly expanding potential of information, nano and biotechnology, humanity as a whole is faced with deeply ethical questions - questions of quality - to make responsible decisions affecting future generations. Who - what kind of egos - will make these decisions about the future quality of life on earth? What quality of perception, values, interpretations, conscious and unconscious assumptions about themselves and the world will they embody?

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* Correspondence: 28 Euroka Street, North Sydney, NSW 2060, Australia.

Email: mgaede@mypostbox.com.au

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In times like ours, where we can hear almost weekly about another brake-through in information, nano and biotechnology, all of us need to wake-up and take notice for our own wellbeing. Deeply ethical questions - *questions of quality* - need to be asked and widely and publicly discussed. We need to talk about how these new technological inventions will affect us as humanity, not only the quality of our global living conditions, but also our deeply neglected inner ecology as humane beings. My intention in this essay is, to highlight the connection between our past-determined dissociated conscious thinking that is based on socially conditioned unconscious ego-identification and the kind of mindset that is now emerging through the development and consumption of these new powerful technologies. Conscious awareness about the essence and quality of life and creation is the antidote and the base of pro-search. Pro-search is active preventative search for a life supporting and ecological sound future that embraces multi-cultural and multi-faceted perceptions of reality, diverse ways of being and knowing. It differs from research into future scenarios for example, by using the existing communication technology to *include* all levels and layers of global citizenship, as we will see further down in one of the possible future scenarios.

Let's Jump into the Picture of a Present Day Scenario

Flickering green numbers appeared on the dark screen of the monitor. The eerie sound of the computer sizzled in the background like an electrical cobweb that separated the room from the outside world, as tinnitus in the ears separates the inner listener from the outer stillness. The air was charged with tension and depleted of oxygen. Another string of tapping sounds rose from the keyboard while the teenage hacker-to-be stared into the flaring square in front of him. He hardly breathed and had lost all sense of time and space, so totally absorbed was he in this exhilarating endeavour. The aim was to break through the firewall of the FBI. He belonged to a group of young upcoming nerds, who made it their business to test the vulnerability of so-called safe global power structures. The world was their oyster. They grinned when they heard the politician's reassurance of a healthy economy, based on the underlying assumption that man is in control of the world. They reckoned that not even the most powerful man in the world has much control any more, when it comes to the new systems like nano, bio and information technology and - of course

- bio and nuclear warfare. And these were only the man-made systems. If you add to that brew the dynamic of the degenerating natural systems like air, water, earth and climate that affect life on earth, then it was blatantly clear that control was gone, if it ever existed. The group entirely agreed in their dark assessment that the future was *NOW!* and best served by hacking into the walls of secrecy that divided the world. It was a bit like piercing into funky family secrets, reckoned TV, as he called himself in cyber space; my parents are so wrapped in running their routines that they are senseless and don't notice the hacking into their own mental software. The singsong of his mobile phone disrupted his focus. "Yeah, Mum?" "Trevor, your father is home now and we can eat in ten minutes. Freshen up a bit and don't forget to put a shirt on, you know how it irritates him when you dress like a scarecrow." "Ok. Mum, I'm coming down." That meant boring interrogations over dinner. What can he tell them? That he is in the process of hacking into the FBI instead of studying for school? School was another boring place that had not much to do with what was really going on in the world. Or can he tell them that he had felt afraid for the first time last weekend at the rap party, when his brain started to scramble and threw-up all these terrifying images? Someone must have sold him corrupted ecstasy or put something else into his drink. These are not things you can talk with the old guard about and what difference would it make anyway? They are living in their own brand of denial about themselves and the world. They too believe that they are in control of their life, what a joke! With a sigh TV pushed back his chair and left the electrical cocoon of cyberspace to throw cold water on his face and activate the sluggish circulation in his pale extremities.

Why Do We Need Pro-search into Human Development?

Do we really believe that we are in control of our life, or more specifically *who* does believe they are *in control of what* and how far does this control actually go? Are we curious enough about how the current technological "mind-blowing" innovations affect us? And how will they affect future generations? As honourable as it is to learn from the past, in the 21st century the new technical innovations and scientific discoveries are appearing with such a speed that we need matching pro-active research. *Pro-search* could examine, what is in the process of being proposed and constructed, mentally and materially, how it might affect the *quality* of life in its dynamic complex context and what *must be done preventively* to

honour the wellbeing of all life forms on planet earth. Pro-search could ask *questions about quality* like: "Are the values expressed through the construction of this new technology (Chopyak, 2001) for the common good? What are the emerging *qualities of life* in this proposed *techno-worldview*? Does this new-world-in-the-making bring us deeper into relationship with our humane qualities or does it alienate us even more from ourselves and the alive intelligent networks of creation?" Pro-search is especially urgently needed in relation to the new technologies and their affect on our psychological development as human beings. What new brand of ego is in the making? Can we wait until the baby is thrown out with the bath water and we are struck by the realisation that the promises of the high-tech bath received more of our attention than the vulnerable life and soul it was supposed to serve?

From Ego towards Techno-virtual Ego²?

Western psychology generally asserts that the development of ego is necessary to become a *normal functioning* individual with the ability to make choices and decisions and take appropriate actions in life. A self-assured strong ego is in psychological terms a so-called A-personality-type, a rational thinking adult who is strong-willed, competes against others, takes leadership and control over others and life in general (though not necessarily over his own sexual and other bodily drives). "*I think therefore I am*" is a well-known assertion of this kind and the speaker is - of course - a man and a scientist of the 17th century. Descarte's view of the world was revolutionary at the time, as it liberated scientific explorers from the heavy dogma and control of the Church fathers. It is still regarded as fundamentally true by the majority of people. He squeezed the immensity of life into the metaphor of a ticking mechanical clock. "Life as clockwork" turned in the industrial age into the "clockwork of life" and began to dominate and control people in the name of economic progress. We made ourselves into servants to the rhythm of the machine, to fulfil our basic human needs of making a living. Let it be a warning and watch out for collective metaphors and visions, the reality in the making.

Nowadays we hear from young scientists and techno-entrepreneurs that they are about to incorporate life into man-constructed buzzing computerised systems. The future visions of this new brand of explorers are to submerge life and may be even surpass it by constructing a kind of electri-

fied global brain that can *think* beyond the earthly limitations of time, space and human consciousness (Pearce, 2001). Some wizards even play with the idea that these systems may *think* beyond organic human intelligence or even beyond the need for life on earth (Smart, 2001). After all life might be found on Mars or even beyond our solar system, perhaps beyond human limited comprehension. The prophets of the technological revolution are talking about the end of human sickness and human suffering (Pearce, 2001), of aging and possibly the end of death.

Language Reveals Values and Worldviews

But language is a powerful and self-disclosing tool that expresses conscious beliefs and even more reveals unconscious assumptions about oneself and the world. In the example above, *thinking* becomes the definition of *being alive* as a *conscious* human being. The *quality* of thinking, the *quality* of aliveness and the *quality* of human consciousness are not examined and discerned and are obviously seen as less important than the “I”, the ego who does the *thinking*. “I” identify myself with my thinking; “I” *am conscious* of my thoughts, which remind me that I am alive. That is what I am doing right now in formulating my thoughts into written words. But what kind of activity is thinking really, especially the kind of conceptual thinking that generalises subjective sensual experience into abstract human constructions of maps about the world? How does it contrast with the multi-sensual dynamic aliveness of our intelligent *body~mind*³ that is wholistically aware moment by moment, as “living awareness” (Wrycza, 1997), if we are conscious of it or not. Thinking is clearly a dissociated process like taking photos of a lively situation while standing outside of the scene.

When we are thinking *about* life, we absorb information that crystallises into factual knowledge accessible to our conscious mind, which is estimated to comprise between 1 % and 10% (Jensen, 1994) of our whole sensual body~mind. That means that about 90 to 99% of our actual body~mind functions unconsciously. The conscious flickers in our mind called thoughts could not run, even less control our whole aliveness. Although our ego likes to believe that it is in control, it is as much in control of life’s processes, as the photographer, who takes a picture of the living scene with the camera as his tool. It is human consciousness that is looking at the surface of awareness that permeates life.

How Do Human Consciousness and Human Awareness Differ?

We need to draw distinctions here between human consciousness and essential awareness. Consciousness is often used to mean people's view of the world, the collection of assumptions, attitudes, knowledge and beliefs we express through our language and our lifestyles. Human consciousness develops in a process of *thinking about* as a dissociated process of interpreting one's perceptions from outside in, like taking life in as an image or inhalation. Awareness on the other hand is the process of *actual personal experience* from inside out like an exhalation, which lets go of thinking to be present with what *is in essence*.

Awareness emerges through our deep unconscious body~mind processes as sensual *k-now-ing*⁴ of intuitive guidance, bridging the gap between unconscious and conscious processes. Intuition is perceived through intelligent energetic body~mind processes that emerge through our senses into awareness and from there are constructed into conscious conceptualisation. The more we are able to connect and harmonise the two, expanding and deepening awareness and consciousness, the more we will develop a deeper relating to ourselves and life as a whole. Like deep aware breathing, conscious~awareness is able to melt, integrate and transcend rigid, distorted, defensive boundaries of the ego, the individual identification with surface images of omnipotent fantasies and ideas. To illustrate to you the flow of conscious~awareness imagine the following:

Waking-up gently without any rush in the morning, you *become aware* of your slowly awakening senses, *re-mem-bering* that you are in your body. Memory clings to the trail of time from past to future, so you find your-self in familiar three-dimensional space.

Finally you *become conscious* and might even remember your dream. If you are a lucid dreamer, you might remember that you had been aware of yourself in the dream. Our subjective conscious~awareness reaches deep into the mostly unconscious sphere of sleep and dreams and is able to re-member meaningful personal learning that emerged from a deeper intuitive intelligence. In my experience, conscious~awareness is a dynamic circular process from inside out and outside in, a pulsating energetic process of expanding and contracting intelligence. Integration of aware~consciousness makes heartfelt intuitive wisdom possible (Wade, 1996), the deep *k-now-ing* in the heart, that is *qualitatively different* from rational logical thinking and factual knowledge.

Unfortunately it is not conscious~awareness and human heartfelt wisdom that is enhanced by man-made virtual reality. Our senses are flooded, which the conscious part of our mind tries to process, to be able to hang on to the illusion of control through categorising and generalising. It is a

matter of *quantity* management. Awareness on the other hand is a state of body~mind that expands from inside out in the presence of the moment, to find deep sensual meaning, to experience the essence of life. It is a matter of experiencing *quality of being*. When we are dissociated from our organic sensual being by technology for long periods of time, we are in danger to lose our appreciation and reverence for life. A possible consequence might be that we condition ourselves with *techno-virtual* language, a fitting mindset and worldview, into a *techno-virtual* ego that constructs frightfully alienated visions of the future like Kurzweil (2001) and other techno-prophets. If you are looking for examples, I recommend to read the very enlightening article 'How Deep is Blue? The Present Future of AI' by Jill Neimark (2001), the Contributing Editor of Science & Spirit. The following discussion about artificial intelligence (AI) in the ABC program *After Shock* might stand as an illustration of language, values, and assumptions and future visions.

Artificial Intelligence Expressed in Language, Values and Worldview

In the ABC program *After Shock: Virtual Reality* (28 June 2001), AI experts discussed the predicted developments in virtual reality in the near future. A much more powerful, much faster Internet II is in development in the U. S.A., which will make it possible to have three-dimensional experiences in cyberspace. "Why would you want to do that?" inquired the moderator. The answer came immediately: "We do it because we can! We can't really think of the consequences of the technology before we are there. We will discover them as we go along. Everything possible in the real world can be experienced in virtual reality in the near future and we can make up our own realities. It will change the way we see the world." The hope of this new generation of techno-entrepreneurs is that techno-virtual reality will become so compelling and intense, that people do not want to leave it and adopt it as their preferred reality. Used first as a technological niche - may be enhanced by drugs - to retreat from actual reality, it might become eventually the commonly held view of what it means being alive on earth, the dominant techno-virtual worldview. "People feel isolated in the real world. It's ugly, it rains," explained another, "You will be able to try on [literally with the help of an electrical body suit] different personae and see yourself in another person and act out your fantasies in cyberspace." Another one added: "We need to crack consciousness to construct true artificial intelligence, we haven't been able to do that yet."

Other nerds talk about “up-loading”, meaning the transfer of human consciousness to some other medium, for example by slicing the brain and copying it into a computer to create a three dimensional image of the brain. Is this the post-modern version to make man or at least his consciousness immortal? The body, in which nano technology will be implanted, is referred to as “meat space”, which brings up the image of butchering and triggers feelings of disgust not only for vegetarians. What attitudes and values are expressed in the language of this new technology? Are these new mindsets the kind of egos we like to bestow with decision making power over our future and the quality of life on earth?

How Might Techno-virtual Reality Affect Our Humanity?

Techno-language and the emerging techno-worldview challenge our assumptions that organic humanity is the icing on the cake of evolution and superior to man-constructed technology. The techno-pioneers are even looking for the in the machine (Kurzweil, 2000), a central neglected ingredience of being humane. James Huchingson (2001, online list, Pt.3) asserts in his recent book about computers and theology that “*computers are machines with souls consisting of long strings of 0's and 1's in a magnetic medium, and wills made of software programs.*” What are the values, attitudes and assumptions underlying this statement? What are the qualities of what is called “soul” in this context? What kind of worldview arises out of the belief that computers have souls? I call it an emerging *techno-virtual systems worldview* where human soul is projected into man-made machines and far removed from sensuality, heartfelt love and essence.

It is important to remember that techno-virtual reality is man-made. It is cyber-space with a particular type of cyber-time that sucks the participant into itself like a black hole. It does that very much like a gambling machine that sucks in the addict and lets him forget his responsibilities and relationships to other living beings in human time.

I believe that it is this compulsive, addictive, character that can produce techno-virtual egos. My definition of a techno-virtual ego is a conditioned ego that is degrees further alienated from its essence - the soul qualities - through identification with ‘superman’ images and activities in cyber space. They are life-consuming activities in chat rooms, lifelike games, cyber sex, paedophile pornography, gambling, playing the stock market and other adrenalin fired transactions on the Internet. Some researchers warn that kids addicted to solitary computer games lose or do

not learn in the first place, the social abilities needed to develop intimate face-to-face relationships. Especially if the parents are not able to respond to their children due to time pressures, lack of self-awareness or communication and conflict resolution skills (Cornelius & Faire, 1989). Warlike cyber games teach youngsters to shoot on cyber people as a reflex, a way to train soldiers to dissolve the psychological barriers to kill a fellow human being. As his-story shows, it is possible to become so dissociated from human soul that one becomes unable to connect with heart qualities like empathy and compassion. Do we want to encourage the next generation in this direction?

I wonder what can be expected from adrenalin flushed thinkers whose heart qualities like humility, care-fullness and wisdom seem to be absent? Just in case you wonder why I situate these qualities at the heart level, let me say that in my experience the heart centre serves as the mediator between gut and head. Our gut harbours foundational human needs and basic feelings and the head generates global ideas, ideals and visions. The heart centre negotiates between the two to produce congruent behaviour and integrated decisions, aware of the wellbeing of the whole. The wisdom of the heart (Thich Nhat Hanh, 1988) has a very different quality than knowledge and factual information. Data are even further dissociated and dispersed from the central essential humane soul qualities.

The more our ego identification is distant or even alienated from these central heart qualities, the less we are able to be in touch with all of our body (Murphy, 1993) and to perceive and experience the wholistical unfolding of interdependent life processes. What we don't perceive, we can't take into our decision-making processes; they become piecemeal and construct further problems. What does it mean for life on earth if we are to develop a generation of leaders not only with big egos but with techno-virtual egos? What *quality* of perception, values, interpretations, conscious and unconscious assumptions about themselves and the world will techno-virtual egos embody?

Conscious~Awareness about the Essence of Life and Creation

To "crack" human consciousness, it would be necessary to explore not just the physical brain and its complexity of functions - the biochemical receiver that makes our human conscious~awareness possible - but the very source of what we can perceive, the essential reality of creation. Creation's intelligent energy is the essence our limited human consciousness virtually often fails to recognise, because it is socially conditioned

into identifying with its ego instead with its own essence as soul-centred being. When we forget that our human consciousness in its natural bio-psycho-social setting is itself limited, as we can witness by noticing the language and behaviour of people with different worldviews (Beck & Cowan, 1996), then we might start to value our human systems more than organic life itself. How can man-constructed artificial intelligence, which is the product of an alienated perception of and relationship to life, hold its promise to create a more attractive world for us? How can it surpass human potential and consciousness (Rheingold, 1998) that we have just begun to attend to and are far from understanding fully?

Mystics in east and west all through the millennia have experienced *essential reality* (Almaas, 1998), the intelligent dynamic force of creation, and have questioned our human perception, identification and attachment to the appearance of manifested life. Our obsession with constructing toys, tools, weapons, machines and now technological systems to keep up the illusion of man's potence and control over the world, has reached a degree of madness that is clearly expressed in UN statistics (1988) about the state of the world. Modern man has created an overwhelming capacity for nuclear and biological destruction in the attempt to feed the economy and to keep power and control over exploitable resources. Global citizens need to question insistently leaders and decision-makers about their visions for the world. We need to insist on being included in the discussions about new inventions and ask: "Who profits and who pays for the consequences?"

Fran Peavey (2001:21) writes in her Strategic Questioning Manual, "*Individuals and societies have discrete and hidden views of how change happens. . . . The strategies they are willing to use to create change in their lives, institutions and communities, will predominantly come from their "change view"*. If the leaders, who dominate global decision making, subscribe to a "change view" based on the belief in exclusive economic and technological progress, then what does that mean for humane futures (Petersen, 2001) on the planet earth? How will technological and economical progress help us to develop more meaningful and truly democratic relationships (Levine, 2001) with ourselves our families and our societies? What can we do collectively to make informed decisions about new inventions like genetic engineering and human cloning (Stolberg, 2001)? How can we cooperate to influence what happens in a privately owned world (Gates, 2000)? How can we prepare our children to not forgo their relating with their own soul essence? How can we take time to reflect on what is truly important for us, to dream-up a humane future that is centred and grounded in the

qualities of essence and soul, to develop together a soul purpose ecology that reaches beyond economy?

Let's Be Positive: Envisioning a Culture of Peace⁵

Trevor looked into the beaming little face of his baby daughter that was gurgling pure joy into the world, tickled by Dad's funny sounds blown onto her exposed round brown belly. "How is it possible that such a small human being like you, can expand so much enchanting energy," he smiled, "you are a pure delight of joy! Makes me wonder though, what happens that we end up as these astute adults that take themselves far too seriously?" He just had finished changing her nappies and she was ready to be passed on to her Mum, who was dozing to soft music in the adjoining room, ready to offer her full tender breasts for a good morning feed. Gently he spooned up his muscular body behind the two of them as a pillow of support, feeling the warmth of Jenny's nursing body, and looking over her shoulder into their daughter's rosy face. The transparent blue eyes seemed to be looking straight into the depth of his soul, clear and full of silence now, while the little round mouth was suckling with a fervour and intensity that reminded him of his own passion for life. With a sigh Trevor allowed himself to let go totally. This was bliss, nothing else was needed, just being with life as it is right now.

Trevor's thoughts were tracing back to a time when he was that little and his own father, Mark, tried his best to nurture this new life. It had not been easy for Mark because his father was one of those who left his imprint on his son through physical and emotional absence. Trevor had a soft spot for Grandpa though who had called himself TV in his youth, because he had felt so electrified by the exuberant new technologies at the beginning of the new millennium. He might have been an awkward inadequate father, but as a grandpa he had finally taken time, to learn from his grandson's soulful relating to life and so had re-joined the human race. He had been deeply disappointed by the new technologies, which had not fulfilled their promises. What came to mind was the fashionable brand name of a computerised biochemical electronic creche "*AI-Babe*", that had promised happy quiet babies, while both parents could attend to their careers.

Instead these kind of technologies had contributed to the further meltdown of the nuclear family system into fierce gender bio-warfare⁶ and undermined and endangered the communal local support networks

to nearly non-existent. On a global level the mistaken dominance of economic, techno-virtual values were set above values of wellbeing for all of life and the need of alive social ecological relationships. The ideas of TV's generation to create superior human beings through superiority of technological and scientific know-how had been badly shattered when foundational relationships broke down en masse in actual 'earthly' reality. His grandfather's generation was called later on the *Sewerage Generation*, mused Trevor, because so much shit floated to the surface, until most of the lies and oppressive disempowering myths were dissolved.

Fortunately, women all over the world finally had enough and put a halt to all kinds of destructive power games by organising local civil disobedience groups, resisting all community destroying schemes that did not show reverence for human potential and life in general. The new *Women & Partners* movement used the most advanced technology to serve grassroots democracy and step by step created a civil society that embraced true diversity and offered real choices, backed up by responsibility and accountability. It had been a long haul but slowly it dawned in human consciousness that the most valuable resources are human creativity and cooperation, that flow out of intimate relating to one's essence of being humane. That was the time when Mark searched for his own father and introduced his grandson Trevor to him. Father and son grew closer over time by establishing together the most up-to-date electronic community centre under the watchful eyes of the women's networks in charge.

It was the beginning of a growing effort of humankind to reconcile and mend the hurt and broken trust between generations, genders, races, cultures and religions, to transform ourselves and our abused and abusive environments from inside out. My father's *Compost Generation* evolved finally into the *Seedling Generation* I'm glad to be part of, sighed Trevor, and mine was the first generation that was raised in the hope of a soul-centred existence on earth. It is an ongoing process but now there is growing transparency and awareness that our essential joy, care and truth of being alive as humane beings, is at the heart of the paradox of creation. The heart of paradox embraces the life-death dynamic of seemingly opposing manifestations and keeps them centred and grounded in love of creation. No one knows that one as well as women do. One slogan from the beginning of the Women & Partners movement said: "Others are (M)others who create, give birth, sustain, raise and transform life." Or another one, Trevor liked best was saying: "Men labour ideas, (M)others labour life, which one do you want to trust for creating a sustainable future?"

Trevor stroked gently the velvet cheek of their slumbering baby daughter, obviously deeply satisfied on all levels of her being. Jenny stirred and pressed her soft warm body against his living support. Life was full of simple silent, deeply satisfying pleasures. She would rise in a moment and go to their interactive station to connect to their electronic community centre to update and communicate her views for the next meeting of the world's government. She had discussed the issues comprehensively with Trevor, their extended family and the community networks they were involved in. The rest could be expressed through the electronic networks. There was plenty of time for reflection and consensus building, life unfolded leisurely and organically like a flower. Nobody felt the need any more to rush towards death and destruction, because most people had experienced the deep nurturing satisfaction that arises out of awareness of the immense love and soulful support each moment provided, easily and effortlessly. It is the magic in the flow of living, of being present and giving generously to each other and to life.

Notes

1. Pro-search is the process of envisioning ecological sound, life supporting future possibilities, using diverse ways of knowing inner and outer realities in their dynamic wholistic context.
2. I use the term "techno-virtual" as distinct from "virtual", the essential force of creation. The Macquarie Dictionary ([1981] 1988:1903) defines "virtual as 1. Being such in power, force, or effect, although not actually or expressly such . . . 3. *Archaic*, having virtue or inherent power to produce effects." Techno-virtual ego is ego conditioning through technology that is even further alienated from soul-centred aliveness than ego.
3. I will use (~) as in body-mind when I want to indicate their wholistic interdependence.
4. Being kinaesthetically present to what is in the *NOW* of the present moment inside and outside.
5. Elise Boulding (2000) introduced *Visioning* as a process to dream-up peaceful futures.
6. Open civil conflict between the genders about the techno-manipulation of embryonic life.

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