



Conscious Evolution:

Taking Personal Development to Higher Levels



Chris Thomson and David Lorimer

Are we still evolving? Or has human evolution stopped? There is much to suggest that we are still evolving. Indeed, we may have a long way to go. We are probably still evolving physically, and we are almost certainly evolving in other ways too

Although it often seems otherwise, as we lurch from crisis to crisis, there are good reasons for thinking that, as a species, we continue to evolve in three important respects: (i) in consciousness and understanding; (ii) in ability and capacity; and (iii) in character and maturity.

Evidence that we are still evolving can be seen in the huge, and growing, world of personal development. It is huge, because it applies to so many aspects of our lives, and it takes so many forms. At one end of a very wide spectrum it could simply be doing what you can to stay in good physical shape, by eating wisely and exercising regularly. On the other hand, it might consist in some kind of spiritual renewal, in which you completely reassess your way of being, your life's purpose, your relationships and your fundamental beliefs. One thing is clear – personal development is very popular. At least in the circles in which we move, it is rare to come across someone these days who is not engaged, in one way or another, in trying to improve himself or herself.

It may be helpful to boil down personal development to its bare essentials. We think it fairly safe to say that it normally includes one or more of the following:

- a. Growing in consciousness and understanding
 - b. Growing in ability and capacity
 - c. Growing in character and maturity
- a. You are growing in consciousness and understanding when you are more aware of what is happening around and you and the world in general, and when you are more aware of what is going on inside you. It also means that you may understand better why things are the way they are, and why people behave the way they do. To be clear, this is not so much about growth in knowledge, but more about growth in wisdom and life understanding.
 - b. You are growing in ability and capacity when you learn to do new things, such as a new language (Dutch in David's case and Spanish in Chris's) or a new skill; when you can now do things that you did not do before, perhaps because you were afraid to do them or because you felt they were beyond your capacity; and when you do the same things as before, but you now do them more effectively and efficiently.

- c. You are growing in character and maturity when you are better able to cope with the vagaries that life brings your way; when you are more emotionally intelligent; when you are more ethical and truthful, especially to yourself; when you are calmer and more content; and when you are kinder and more tolerant. This growth is not only of the mind and will, but also of the heart in terms of compassion.

This does not claim to be a comprehensive summary. Our intention here is simply to draw attention to what we believe to be the three main categories of personal development, because this is relevant to what we are about to say.

It is surely no accident that these three strands of personal development coincide with the three ways in which we seem to be evolving as a species. What seems to be happening is that large numbers of people, by engaging in their personal development, are, in effect, influencing the shape and pace of their own evolution. It hardly needs stating that, since this is taking place on a very large scale, it is surely a major factor in the evolution of humanity as a whole.

In addition to what is now a worldwide movement of personal development, a small but significant number of people are trying to take things to higher levels in a variety of ways. They are trying to achieve higher levels of consciousness and understanding, much greater character and maturity, and much more ability and capacity. Sometimes, their achievements would be considered "paranormal". We suggest that they are paranormal in one sense only – they are not widespread. That said, these higher levels of consciousness, character, and ability are perfectly natural, and available to anyone willing to put in the time and work to achieve them. What follows is designed simply to give you a sense of what we are talking about.

Higher levels of consciousness and understanding can mean being able to perceive things that most people do not see, such as the non-physical ("spiritual") aspects of the world and ourselves. It can mean the ability to see across great distances in space or time, without the aid of technology (e.g. telepathy or precognition). And it can mean being able to "read" people (diagnosing their condition and the deeper causes of any problems) just by looking at them or by thinking about them. These abilities are seen not only in psychics, but they also emerge naturally as 'siddhis' when a person reaches a certain degree of spiritual maturity (for example, Sri Yukteswar (the guru of Yogananda), Peter Deunov and St Padre Pio).

Higher levels of ability and capacity can mean being able to heal people simply by focusing attention and energy on them, wherever they happen to be. It can also mean being able to manifest things or influence events, just with the power of your being. The masters cited above could also do this, suggesting that these are natural extensions of our normal abilities (although being psychic does not necessarily equate with being spiritually advanced).

Higher levels of character and maturity can mean having the emotional strength and courage to get through challenges and difficulties that most people would never get through. In this sense it can mean growth through adversity, but also the exceptional development of moral virtues such as kindness and compassion, as well as so-called performance virtues like resilience and determination.

This integrated process of achieving much higher levels of consciousness, character and ability has in the past been called “esoteric training”. It took place in “esoteric schools” that were situated in Egypt, Greece, India, Tibet, the Andes, and elsewhere. Only a very few people were admitted, which is why we use the term “esoteric”, which means “for the few”. The graduates of these schools came out with greatly raised levels of consciousness, ability and character, and many went out into the world, as “initiates”, to help society in some way. Essential to their training was the personal realisation that they were more than their bodies and that death was not the end of consciousness.

These schools were, in effect, “accelerated learning institutes”, because they greatly accelerated the personal development (or evolution) of students, to the point at which their abilities would be considered by the modern world to be paranormal. (Dean Radin makes just this point in relation to the Yoga Sutras in his latest book *Supernormal*) We suggest that a good term for the process of going well beyond the normal parameters of personal development might be “conscious evolution”. In fact, we have given this title, Conscious Evolution, to a new project that has as its main aims:

- To explore and demonstrate how personal development can be taken to the higher levels achieved in esoteric training
- To build on the esoteric trainings of the past and present, and to construct a new training that will be in the modern idiom and that will take account of the many advances in knowledge and understanding over the past few centuries
- To make good use of technology (such as online courses and webinars) to make this training “exoteric” – i.e. available to the many

We suspect the time is right for this, for several compelling reasons:

- We know and understand so much more these days. Although not everyone has detailed specialist knowledge, the general level of knowledge today is far greater than it has ever been. This much wider, deeper knowledge base is, we believe, a necessary building block for more advanced personal development
- We seem to be going through a protracted consciousness revolution, which is opening up new vistas and perspectives. This, in turn, is making people much more open to new beliefs and possibilities, about the world and themselves. This greater openness is also essential to higher levels of personal growth
- A lot of people are actively engaged in their personal and spiritual development, and are probably ready and willing to take things to higher levels, for their own development, but also for the common good.

If the thoughts in this article strike a chord with you, then do let us have your thoughts and examples of conscious evolution in practice. Christhomson1000@gmail.com and dl@scimednet.org

Chris Thomson is speaking at the Annual Meeting in July.

“That man is richest whose pleasures are cheapest”

Henry David Thoreau