CHAPTER 17
OUR INNER ESSENCE

When we explore our needs, we may categorize them as mental constructs because they involve perceptive, rational, and emotional characteristics. We are inclined to define our mind as the repository of our awareness composed by these characteristics. That awareness provides us with a sense of self. Although we identify with our obviously physical aspects to some extent, we reserve a more intimate concept of self to our mental aspects, our inner self. We perceive our mind to be of a nonphysical, higher nature. This distinction is based on the pairing of a momentous deficiency of our mind with a remarkable aptitude. The deficient aspect is our lack of awareness of our mental structures and processes as physiological phenomena. The remarkable aptitude is our mind's ability to manufacture mental representations of our world and to develop these representations in its service into further representations that it can again process. It can thus build and rule an abstracted world. We tend to separate that inner reality and the mystery of its generating mechanisms from outward aspects that may find reflection in our mind. We designate our inner world and its generating mechanisms as our essence, and everything else as exterior matters.

These impressions give rise to the tendency of attributing our body to the outside world. We may recognize our body as a necessary host for our mind and that we must assist it to sustain its host functions. We may view it as a possession to which we may attribute various value. We may regard it as a separate adjunct with its own, automatic functions. We may seek to control our body to implement resolutions of our mind that transcend the body's support functions. Such a viewpoint leads us to distinguish our needs into those that serve our physical requirements and those that attend the purportedly more exalted functions of our mind. Maintaining this differentiation implies a split personality. It prompts us to view part of our personality as being composed of primitive, animal needs that are forced upon us by our support system but are not part of our inner self. It causes us to focus on more advanced, purportedly nonphysical needs that we regard as our true nature. Maintaining this artificial distinction may prompt us to degrade needs at the center of our individual and collective survival and thriving. If we are to be happy, we have to supersede our intuitive but untenable discrimination toward our body. While we can and, for an understanding of our self, must acknowledge and explore our mental functions, we must recognize them as integrated parts of our body. We must extend our emotional mind to encompass all our needs.

Cognizance of our inner self may be obtained by observing and measuring the structures and processes of our personality. To achieve these insights, we have to focus on our personality as an object of exploration. However, in this undertaking, we encounter a problem of circularity. To obtain observations and measurements, we have to be able to observe and to measure aspects that can be distinguished from the mechanism that observes and measures. If there is not such a distinction, if the facility engaged in observation and measurement is to observe and measure itself, the observation and measuring might fail. The facility might not be equipped to turn on itself as an object. That problem seems to apply to our mind. We have very little direct knowledge about the generation of our mental phenomena. We can identify our sensory exposure and the mental results it produces. But we cannot very well turn our senses inward and trace the physiological structures and processes that produce these results. Our mind presents us with results, and we are often left to speculate how it produced them. This may be regarded as an issue of missing sensory facilities. Arguably, that problem could be solved if we find technological assistance. With sufficient sensory impressions about its structures and resulting processes, an information processing device like our mind should be able to process information about itself. Yet our issues go deeper.

A problem of circularity also arises if an information processing device is employed to produce information about how it processes information. Because the investigation about the way we process information is processed by the mechanism that is the subject of our inquiry, the investigation could not follow other processing possibilities than the process we are trying to investigate. If the device and its exploration process are flawed or limited, its self-investigation is subject to the same inadequacies. Therefore, we might be unable to detect our mental flaws and limitations. Here again, we might employ technological assistance. That seems to be a promising prospect, except that engaging machines might not advance us if we or others pass the same mental inadequacies that disqualify us on to them. We might derive use from the processing by other individuals and their technological devices if they do not share the same deficiencies. Such assistance may be impaired by other deficiencies. But these would be easier to determine if we or other sources of assistance would not suffer these deficiencies. Ultimately, we may only be able to trust the adequacy of our or external processing if it stands up to the rigors of scientific proof. While we may refer to such a clarification generally, it may not be sufficiently available for many of our specific endeavors. Further, we may not engage them because we fear interference with our decision mak-

ing or reputation, or unauthorized use of information by others. As a result, we may be detained in our mental processing disabilities. This may render us incapable of investigating or evaluating our mind. Our lack of self-awareness may translate into a lack of self-determination.

But the sweeping scope of such a conclusion does not comport with the way we experience ourselves. We do observe that we possess self-awareness, that we can reflect on our traits, our needs, and their consequences. We detect the ability to distance ourselves sufficiently from aspects of our self to determine their nature and validity in our pursuits. We notice that we can determine what makes us happy and that we can change our mind and ways to comport with these determinations. We sense that we possess some awareness regarding what goes on within our mind. We appear to be able to gain sufficient distance for at least some self-reflection. Still, these instances seem to be imprecise and transitory. The act of capturing, understanding, and describing our personality seems to be surprisingly difficult. Who we are inside mostly appears to us as an intuitive, nebulous notion. It is neither perceptible by us as a detailed image nor as a totality. Our direct exposure to our self does not equal comprehension. Beyond suffering from possible circularity of processing facilities, we seem to lack focus and resolve to know ourselves. These combined deficiencies of self-observation cause us to be largely unconscious of our self. This unconsciousness may prevent a closer understanding of what will make us happy. To gain insight, we have to overcome these obstructions. We might achieve that by applying an indirect empiric method to our personality. While we may not be able to directly sense our mental processes, we can perceive their results. These provide us with evidence that our processing of information might be accurate or deficient because our needs are being fulfilled or fail. We may use these insights to explore the structures and processes that produce these results.

Although we may refer to us as an undifferentiated singularity, a review of our needs makes us recognize that our personality is not a homogeneous unit. It is a conglomerate of separately conceived mental traits whose correlation produces who we are. That our personality may be constituted of distinct components does not seem to make our task of defining our personality easier. Another part of the difficulty in developing an understanding of ourselves is that so many of the ingredients and the mechanisms in us have come about without our involvement and outside our control. Some of our mental traits appear to be preordained by our nature as humans. They appear to be hardwired into our physiology by common genetic tradition. They may also be due to ubiquitous external physiological influences that bear on

all humans manifestly or by perception. We may refer to these mental traits as common mental traits or common traits. They represent the basic mental dispositions in all humans in pursuit of shared existential needs. They are part of a broader commonality of dispositions that includes other, more tangible shared physiological dispositions. Another part of us may be determined by intangible and tangible dispositions that are not common to all humans. These encompass conditions that are caused by genetic mutation in fewer than all of us as well as dispositions that are produced by nongenetic physical influences that affect less than all humans. Such nongenetic causes include particular nutrition, biological, chemical, radiological, traumatic, and other physical exposure or sensory impressions during and subsequent to our development. These nongenetic causes may hamper our development pursuant to original genetic code or with the functioning of the resulting physiology upon its establishment. We may designate any genetic and nongenetic dispositions that affect less than all humans specific dispositions. Specific dispositions of mental traits may be designated specific mental traits or specific traits. While it might be possible that specific dispositions could be formed as separate phenomena, they regularly appear to occur as variations of common dispositions that render aspects of them specific. Understanding common and specific dispositions necessitates awareness that our environment defines part of our physiological essence more directly than through reactive genetic programming. Nongenetic physical influences may directly affect genetic physiological structures and processes. They may further influence the potential that genetic dispositions provide and thus create nongenetic physiological dispositions. In a departure from the relative predictability of genetic conditions and of general environmental conditions that directly and indirectly affect our body, our existential functions seem to be heavily exposed to specific direct environmental influences. But such an exposure appears to be eclipsed by indirect specific environmental influences that filter through our perceptions and impact our rational and emotional processing. Our immersion in sensory signals as well as our capacity and necessity to acquire, store, interrelate, and react to information create a potential of impressionability that offers countless opportunities for our environment to influence us.

All environmental effects on us, regardless of whether they consist of direct interferences or indirect, sensory influences share the attribute of not being genetically preordained in us unless they occur in execution of our genetic instructions. To the extent such effects constitute lasting phenomena, we may call them acquired dispositions in distinction from genetic dispositions. Our genetic and acquired dispo-

sitions form all aspects, all particularities of our body. Describing all of these dispositions would mean to pronounce the entirety of our substance and of our functions. We may discern genetic dispositions that form our mind as genetic mental traits or genetic traits and acquired dispositions that form our mind as acquired mental traits or acquired traits. The relative permanence of our mental traits makes it plausible that they relate to somewhat stable physiological structures. Regarding genetic mental traits, that is also indicated by their close connection to physiological functions and the regularity of their occurrence. A physical representation of environmentally influenced constituents of our mental traits is indicated by the physical nature of sensory impressions of objects and events and their representational processing by our mind. Yet, for much of humanity's history, the confirmation of mental processes as physiological phenomena was impossible because it involves identification and tracking of complex causal connections by technological means. Only as science reveals the physical functions of our mind can we overcome the intuitive assumption cast upon us by the secretive character of our mind that it is nonphysical. Someday we may succeed in completely tracing and revealing mental functions. To comprehend them fully, we have to ascertain physiological mechanisms as their foundations. We are becoming acquainted that a genetically initiated and administered infrastructure makes perceptions, rational thoughts, and emotional responses possible. We also know that direct physical influences can damage or support our mind's potential. It further seems that sensory impressions and the work undertaken by our mind on them contribute to the construction and alteration of our mental physiology. But to understand our mind more fully, we have to comprehend the functions of the physiological language or languages constituting perceptions, rational thoughts, and emotions in its structures and processes. All our mind perceives, considers, recalls, knows, feels, or derives appears to be symbolized by code. Through it, mental structures seem to be formed, function, and communicate.

Although we do not have immediate access to the physiological processes and formations that our perceptions, rational thoughts, and emotions create in our mind, we register them by our resulting mental capacity. There appear to exist physical structures and mechanisms in our mind that have the ability to register, store, and process our perceptions, rational thoughts, and emotions. In addition, such structures and mechanisms carry the capability to communicate perceptions, rational thoughts, and emotions without being expended in such a process. They appear to have the capacity to generate code that travels in our body with their messages. Some of these messages may be direc-

tions targeted at nonmental parts of our body that translate the code into physiological reactions, including the positioning of aspects with sensory facilities to obtain perceptive signals. Other messages are focused on facilities of our mind that register, store, and process them further. The content of this code originates from physical objects and events outside or within our body that impress upon receptors of our senses. When we initially perceive an object or event, the code generated by that perception consists of that object or event itself or physical emissions or refractions from it that are detected and processed by our nervous system. That system seems to contain mechanisms that may translate our initial impressions into traveling code. This code is relayed to rational and emotional facilities that enable our mind to process the initial sensory and possibly transformed messages. These facilities may keep the code in the received format or translate it. They may by themselves or in correlation with one another analyze information into its components and properties, and compare, categorize, store, or recall it. They may correlate and rearrange information and its components into new composites. There seem to be communications within rational facilities and within emotional facilities that enable such functions. All of these communications may be regarded as the sending and perception of participating facilities of the same general type. Moreover, rationally processed information may be sent by rational facilities and perceived by emotional facilities and emotionally processed information may be sent by emotional facilities and perceived by rational facilities. The complexity and variety of communication streams indicate the close coordination among our rational and emotional facilities. Such a coordination only appears to be possible if they share a common code or have the ability to translate one another's code and a similar ability to register originally processed perceptive information. Understanding our mind may only be fundamentally possible if we understand its parts by the code they send and receive, the content of that code, and the factors affecting that code.

The code by which our mind functions, the physiological structures built or influenced by this code, and the processes in which such structures engage are physical objects or events of a distinct character. Their presence and interaction do no longer rely on the original triggering objects or events. Original impressions from objects and events have become translated and incorporated into separate physiological structures in our body. These constitute or comprise abstractions that may have been derived from the physical sources of an original sensory impression. But they now appear to have obtained a different, separate existence. The mechanisms of our mind that work with this code

may communicate with other mechanisms of our mind independently from the initial causes and from their immediate physical impact. The translated, analyzed, or synthesized nature of this code is a representation of original causes. Our mind generates symbols of them, their components, their properties, the properties of their components, and the correlations of these factors. These symbols form building blocks of, as well as instructions for the actions and interactions of, our mental traits. Our mind uses the symbols of abstracted code and their correlations to build an inner world that appears to have the capacity of functioning separately from the outside world. Upon their establishment, abstracted mechanisms of our mind and their interactions may constitute originating sources or triggers for further rational and emotional emissions, refractions, and combinations that may be reflected in perceptive impressions. They can cause or participate in the creation of mental derivatives that have their own physiological presence. These derivatives may be the basis for further derivatives. By the processing of representations in our mind, we may arrive at concepts that we can carry into the world by physical implementation through our body and technical assistance. As external physical objects and events receive reflection in the internal physical structures and processes of our mind, internal physical objects and events also find reflection in external structures and processes. Apparently, two physical worlds internal and external to our mind exist parallel to each other but find reflection in each other. This reveals their qualities that we initially perceive as real and representational as aspects of one physical world.

Arguably, the mutuality between the inner and outer provinces should lead to a unification of these spheres through human activity and development. Yet it may produce idiosyncrasies and differences in the ways we react to and we shape our environment. As particular environmental influences create or shape physiological structures in our mind, the facilities of our mind may grow to be sufficiently dissimilar from those of other individuals to give rise to noticeable differences in perceptive, rational, and emotional processing. We may develop a disparate sensitivity to information, different ways of thinking and feeling, specific acquired traits that distinguish our personality from other individuals' personalities. The development of acquired traits may interact or exist parallel with variances in genetic dispositions that may also significantly individualize our mind. Specific acquired and specific genetic traits may interrelate differently with one another and with common environmental and genetic conditions. Both types of differences may direct us toward particularized experiences. However, the development of acquired idiosyncrasies appears to distinguish itself in

that it may be assisted by a particularly intense self-reinforcing mechanism. In as far as experiences shape the structures of our mind, these structures are likely to process our environment consistent with these experiences. Our mind becomes particularly receptive to experiences in conformance with these structures. Moreover, it will act and react in our environment according to the impressions that our experiences engender. We may try to convert our environment in reflection of our experiences regardless of whether these form traits. If we succeed with that undertaking, the particularized structures of our mind will gain support by the circumstances we create. We may construe similar self-reinforcing phenomena for specific genetic aspects of our mind. Particularized genetic traits may shape our acquisition of information and our shaping of our environment and thus provide a mechanism for a circular reinforcing pattern for the original specific genetic traits. But these effects are generational and are therefore much more attenuated compared to acquired circular reinforcement. Self-reinforcement may also occur regarding common genetic and environmental traits. Only, this might be less noticeable because of their constancy and ubiquitous nature. Beyond self-reinforcement, we may discover that all four types of acquired and genetic traits can influence one another.

All these varieties of possible interaction make it hard to trace traits to their origins. In the case of common traits, their refined and harmonious nature might render such a tracing largely irrelevant. We have more interest in specific traits because these form our idiosyncrasies. Here, we may be successful distinguishing overt physiological particularities that were caused by manifest physical influences or that can be traced to particular genetic instructions. Finding clarity about the establishment of specific personality traits may pose a substantially greater problem. Even where self-reinforcing or crossover mechanisms are not the primary driving source for the establishment of such a trait, we have often trouble tracing it to its origins. Both specific genetic and acquired traits often give our perceptive, rational, and emotional attributes a largely unconscious imprint. It is not difficult to understand the reasons genetic mental traits are enigmatic. They became part of us without participation by our mind. We found them preexisting as an unreflected, natural part of us. Acquired mental dispositions differ because we acquired them during our existence. Some of them may stand out because they were incurred willfully, imposed against our will, or were acquired under particularly perceptible or traumatic momentous circumstances. Yet many, if not most of them, were acquired without our awareness in small increments over time. This may give them a subliminal, unreflected, and even unconscious quality.

Many of our experiences may leave structures in our mind that can be reversed or adjusted by additional experiences with a range of efforts. We may even be able to overcome some genetic structures this way. However, if fledgling structures are reinforced by additional experiences, self-reinforcement, and crossover backing, they can become acquired traits that approximate genetic traits in durability. Some acquired traits pertain to perceptive or rational attitudes. Others pertain to the emotional sourcing of our needs. Although acquired emotional traits are originated differently, they appear to follow the same pain-pleasure mechanism as genetic traits to motivate us. Mechanisms that were acquired rather than built by our genes might differ in the depth of their entrenchment. Nevertheless, motivational forces they generate can be similar to those inherent in genetically sourced needs. The similarity of their motivational mechanisms empowers them to attach themselves effortlessly to our genetic traits and other acquired traits. Acquired needs assume a co-defining function in what we want, and our idea of happiness shifts to include them. We are not happy unless these nonoriginal needs are contented as well. Our ideal of happiness includes the fulfillment of all our needs regardless of whether they are genetic or acquired, and we usually do not distinguish accordingly.

It seems that becoming aware of our mental traits requires us to emerge from an attitude of passivity. We did not choose our perceptive, rational, or emotional substances or processes. We did not select our personality to produce a maximum of happiness and did not work backward from that ambition to assemble the necessary mental traits. What happened was quite the reverse. We were given mental traits or components of such traits by inheritance and developed other aspects by exposure to our environment. Our person, our physiological identity, including its mental aspects, was formed by genetic and environmental circumstances, not by us. As science advances, perceptive mechanisms seem most easily explained as physical phenomena. Further, we may find relatively direct access to rational structures and processes. This may appear hardly surprising considering that our rational mental constructs are specific or general reflections of obviously physical objects and events in the physiological devices of our mind. The emotional expanses of our mind appear to be considerably more mysterious and challenging to reveal. Their irrational nature removes them from an understanding of them as direct symbolic representations of the outside world. Their apparent failure to follow logic complicates the identification of their physiological foundations and a rational explanation of their sources and functions. We should be confident that such encumbrances will be lifted as we scientifically dissect

our emotional structures and processes into their physiological components because these have to follow the same underlying substances and principles as any other matters we explore. But even if we could explain our mental phenomena in rational terms as representations of physiological phenomena, that understanding may not give us insight into how the acquired portions of mental traits came about.

Short of a full exploration of the genetic sources of our mind, part of the difficulty in deciphering the sources of our mind lies in the absence of a clear differentiation between acquired and genetic traits. Our mental traits have generally grown organically with and into one another during our development. Acquired mental traits may have become so integrated into our mind that they may be indistinguishable from our genetic mental traits. The differences in the accrual and underlying physiology between genetic and acquired mental traits make a distinction between them important to find suitable tools for their suppression, advancement, modeling, or removal. Another reason we might want to identify the genetic and acquired aspects of our mind is that they carry a difference of presumption regarding their legitimacy.

Our common genetic dispositions likely were delivered to us in a selection process favoring attributes that advance or are necessary for our individual or collective survival and thriving. Then again, it is possible that we all might be carrying some common dispositions that historically have been, have become, or are becoming liabilities. They might be misdevelopments or remnants of past requirements, of precursor stages that have lost their utility and might even have become damaging. That may seem particularly possible considering the apparently recent development of our mind. That development and its implications for the development of genetic traits and even more for the development of human technology and living conditions may engender dissonances with more fundamental genetic instincts. Still, an assertion that common genetic mental traits are damaging requires positive proof against an overwhelming presumption of utility. We might carry a similar assumption regarding common acquired mental traits. If all humans are impressed in the same way by a ubiquitous environmental factor, its forming influence may reflect a necessary or helpful constituent for human survival and thriving. Our common reaction to our environment might constitute an important supplement that can contain, channel, support, or improve our genetic traits. But it is also conceivable that all humans would succumb to the same deleterious general acquired trait. Our favorable presumption might be disproved again. That we are uniformly subjected to a genetic or acquired disposition does not routinely make a disposition helpful or necessary.

Our presumptions may be different in dealing with specific genetic and acquired dispositions. Here, the presumption appears to be warranted that such dispositions are not required for our survival or wellbeing, at least if other humans can survive and thrive in their absence. However, they may correspond to special or new general environmental challenges, or constitute an enhancement for our capacity to survive and thrive by modulating common dispositions even if circumstances remain the same. The challenges a genetic mutation can address might not be immediately recognizable. They might only become clear after extended periods. Past beneficial mutations are likely to have been first confined to one or few individuals and to then have proliferated through the favored propagation of individuals with superior properties. Such mutations may initially appear incomplete or inapplicable in addressing present or potential future conditions. Hence, we cannot validly presume that specific genetic dispositions, including specific mental traits, are useless for human survival or wellbeing.

It may appear that we can make a better case for a negative presumption when it comes to specific acquired dispositions. Their introduced sourcing and unique character create an intrinsic risk that they would interfere negatively with the program of our genetic and common acquired dispositions. Specific acquired dispositions may be the haphazard result of activities and of circumstances that were not particularly focused on us. In that case, it would be coincidental if they happened to benefit us. An even clearer negative presumption can be made when specific acquired dispositions are installed in us with the intended function of manipulating us to serve someone else. Their installation may not be primarily concerned with our happiness, not be concerned with our happiness, or may even require that our happiness be damaged. Even if external influences are exerted in an effort to advance our needs, they continue to carry the possibility that they might not serve our happiness. But these factors do not categorically override the possible benefits of specific acquired dispositions. Specific environmental challenges may occur faster than specific genetic dispositions can adjust to them. Even if a challenge is common for humanity and calls for a response in the form of a general acquired disposition, that challenge may originate with a limited range and a response may begin with a specific acquired disposition before it expands and eventually grows to be common. Apart from that, specific acquired dispositions might act parallel to general acquired dispositions and contain, channel, support, or improve instructions provided by specific genetic dispositions. For these reasons, we cannot well presume that specific acquired dispositions are useless for human survival or wellbeing.

We may determine that, although we can establish some valid presumptions in favor of general dispositions, the character of our dispositions, including of our mental traits, as genetic, acquired, specific, or common does not clearly resolve whether they constitute constructive factors in our quest for happiness. Nor does it seem right to categorically contend that acquired dispositions are superior or inferior to genetic conditioning. We will have to consider every disposition on its own merits to determine whether it promotes our happiness, whether we would prefer to keep it untouched, modify it, or transcend it. This determination requires the review of each disposition on its merit and its systematic investigation in correlation with all other dispositions. To make a competent decision, we must identify our dispositions and must comprehend their composition, their reasons for existence, their functions, and their consequences. That might be relatively uncomplicated when we consider more obvious physical dispositions. Our mental traits promise to be more of a challenge because we cannot as easily grasp and separate their nature and functions. We may compare our mind to a manufacturing facility for highly processed products. These products give us only limited information about their ingredients and the stations of their manufacturing process. Examining a product may permit us to identify some ingredients and processes that were used and to refer to its manufacturing in general terms. Yet the more complex a product is the more we have to observe how every manufacturing stage contributes to the product or its components to comprehend how the result comes about. That understanding is also essential if we want to modify the product or improve the production process.

Our investigation concerning the utility of mental traits is additionally challenged because we have to account for perceptive, rational, and emotional traits although they act as integrated aspects of our mind. Distinguishing perceptive traits seems to be relatively straightforward. The processes of reception of objects or events or their emissions or of refractions from other objects and events, their translation, and the transport of impressions by our nervous system appear to be distinct from other mental traits. This phenomenon is clearly based in physiology and therefore physical. However, the distinction of perceptive traits blurs when we connect them with the rational or emotional aspects of our mind. We may consider the interaction among rational aspects of our mind as separate. Still, at least in part, it consists of the emission or refraction of rational concepts that are subsequently perceived by other rational facilities. The sole difference seems to be that these concepts may not require translation and may involve different code than the reception, transport, and registration of exterior signals.

A similar claim can be made concerning the interaction among emotional aspects. Further, perceptive functions appear to connect the rational and emotional sections of our mind. The emotions we rationally register as well as the constructs and processes we rationally build to which emotional traits react all seem to have perceptive involvement. The initial transmission by perceptive processes and their involvement in the interaction among rational and emotional aspects make it possible that perceptive traits would influence these aspects. Because all our mental processes can be defined in terms of communication, perceptive mechanisms are aspects of rational and emotional traits without which these cannot be conceptualized. Such traits are extensively formed and influenced by perceptive facilities because they must rely on these in their internal and correlative functions that entail the receipt of code. Conversely, perceptive facilities stand to be influenced by rational and emotional aspects because these give rise to perceptive impressions. Hence, perceptive traits may be difficult to separate from rational and emotional traits in wholly internal mental processes.

The problems regarding the distinction of our perceptive facilities do not abate with the involvement of perceptions from the world beyond our mind. Here, the physical features of perception appear to govern. Our perceptive facilities receive whatever falls within their detection range, translate this information into transportable code, and forward that code to other parts of our mind through the nervous system. These signals appear to be responsible for building large parts of our rational and emotional mind. We are not solely influenced by external influences that are transmitted. Perceptive traits may influence our rational and emotional traits as well since they are the messengers through which our outside influences must pass. They constitute a filter, conversion, and relay system that transforms received information even at its best. However, we can also distinguish a reverse influence. The processing by rational and emotional aspects of our mind may alter the information received through perceptive facilities. This change may be automatic by a translation into code that these traits can process. But it may be more targeted in many of their functions. Rational and emotional traits evaluate everything we perceive according to how it might correlate with already established notions. They judge how it fits into our pursuits or what adversities it might present. Rational or emotional traits may interpret what they receive from the viewpoint of their already established structures. Depending on the capacity or motivation connected to such structures, they may filter, alter, suppress, or block information. While these processes may succeed a transmission of external information, rational or emotional mechanisms might

be able to interfere in perceptive processes. They might instruct perceptive facilities about modes or details of registration, translation, or transportation of information. Further, our rational or our emotional mind might direct our body to prevent our sensory facilities from receiving information that contradicts our rational or emotional settings even if perceptive facilities remain unbiased and properly functioning within their capacities. Consequently, mutual influences between our perceptive and other mental facilities seem to be conceivable throughout the range of internal and external perceptive functions.

Mutual influences also seem to exist between our rational and emotional traits. Although we appear to be able to distinguish rational and emotional traits as concepts, they do not arise separately. We cannot undertake thoughts without feeling about them in a certain way. Nor can we preclude rational consideration of emotional phenomena as factual events. That may be partly based on similarities in their processing when they relate, categorize, store, and retrieve perceived representations of objects and events. Further, emotional functions overlap with rational functions because emotional traits use rational traits to solve emotional tasks. Close collaboration by rational traits appears to be essential to afford our emotional traits capabilities of pursuit in excess of those ordained by their instinctive programming. While our rational traits then present themselves as adjuncts, as instruments of our emotional traits, we can also observe that rational phenomena deliver much of the interpretive information from which emotions arise or by which they are shaped. Consequently, distinguishing emotional traits from rational traits seems to be difficult in some respects.

The division of our mental functions into the activities of perceptive, rational, and emotional traits appears to be an oversimplification. Although such a model serves to typify the prominent character of mental phenomena, its categorizations cannot be regarded as categorical separations between perceptive, rational, and emotional functions. The reciprocal dependences and influences among mental traits suggest that we must explore all of these aspects together if we want to understand our mind. Still, we will not fully comprehend its functions without taking note of the hierarchy among perceptive, rational, and emotional aspects of our mind that places emotional traits on top, followed by rational traits, and finally perceptive traits as instruments that serve both of the higher categories. Nor will we be able to change our mind without developing strategies that take this hierarchy into consideration. All our wishes and all our efforts to improve our happiness as a practical matter will have to contend with the governance of our mind by needs. They will encounter needs as motivators, adminis-

trators, and judges of our conduct and as gatekeepers to the functions of our perceptive and rational facilities. Moreover, all our activities in exploring and changing our mental traits would be governed by our needs and the mandates they impose on us. Our needs arrange for the incentives, objectives, and decision-making for all our activities. If we want to improve our happiness, we must find the key to unlock them. Against this task, improving our practical powers through perceptive and rational traits seems eminently solvable and almost mundane.

When we approach our emotional traits as a subject of inquiry, we observe that they communicate through impulses. Our emotional mind registers these, together with the preceding awareness of deficiencies, as needs and to which the rest of our body reacts with action. To comprehend our emotional traits and their functions, we must explore these impulses. To the extent emotional impulses originate from common emotional traits, they inform us, together with a sense of deficiency, whether we meet our existential needs and they motivate us to satisfy these needs. We should discover what makes us happy if we surrender to our impulses. This conclusion would be justified if all our impulses were constructive for our happiness. Then again, chances are that we possess impulses that are not aligned with our overall happiness. Such impulses may represent what we want at a certain point in time. They do represent needs. Yet, even if following such an impulse may give us immediate satisfaction, our pursuit may cause damage in the fulfillment of other legitimate needs that exceeds its benefits. We may acknowledge that such a risk might be created by incompatible idiosyncratic needs. However, existential needs may give rise to detrimental impulses as well. They may harm us because they are preprogrammed responses with the mission to commandeer our mind in the interest of their issuing traits. Because impulses only address the concerns of needs that issue them, they might produce unbalanced results with regard to our other needs. Accordingly, following all our impulses, and even the impulses of needs we have found to be constructive, indiscriminately may lead to unintended unhappy consequences. We cannot trust our impulses. Following them would render us liable to skip from one command to another and would disable our pursuit of an overall reconciled strategy of happiness. While they might use our critical thinking to execute their commands, their motivations threaten to bypass reflective services. Left unchecked, impulses function like short circuits that preoccupy and determine our judgment led by their spontaneous concerns. If we abide by them without considering their merit, we desert control over our circumstances. We suspend the possibility of a considered judgment about what will make us happy.

Apparently then, we cannot rely on our emotional mind and its impulses if we desire to develop a plan to maintain and improve our happiness. Our considerations may lead us to the conclusion that we need a comprehensive system in which all our mental traits, but particularly our emotional impulses are being considered and are being given their most appropriate function in the advancement of our happiness. In that system, our impulses can only be first indicators in the formulation of wishes in promotion of our happiness. By generating the insight that following an impulse would be detrimental, we should be able to formulate a countervailing wish that neutralizes, adjusts, or at least weakens such an impulse. Our considerations may be complex because we have to determine how a particular impulse and its consequences comport with an overall regime for our happiness. To undertake the necessary consideration, we must prepare. It would place us at a severe disadvantage if we had to delay our reflection until an emotional trait presented us with an impulse. Usually, an impulse is sent when we are in present apprehension of a deficiency. At that point, we may not have the luxury of considering the qualities of impulses. We may be under pressure to enter a momentary resolution according to their demands and, because of our anxiety, may be in danger of making a wrong or less than optimized decision. It would create a stressful existence if we were blindsided by our impulses until they confronted us and compelled us to decide. Reviewing preceding similar impulses, our reactions to them, and their consequences allows us to generally predetermine how we want to deal with a particular type of impulse.

A supervisory capacity over our impulses is not a novel position for us to take. We are already exercising this capacity to some extent. We have the distinct impression that we are more than the sum of our traits. We possess strong indications that our mind contains a switchboard-like mechanism where we attempt to exercise discretion among our emotional traits, where we reflect whether and how we bring an impulse to bear and where we determine our behavior as one to optimize our overall happiness. This authority may be poorly developed. It may be fraught with errors and shortcomings. Still, it appears to constitute a capability that might enable us to maximize our happiness if it is sufficiently developed. That we can take the position of our overall happiness and not allow ourselves to be driven by individual emotional traits suggests that our decisional core structure is independent from any one individual emotional trait. An obvious candidate for this leadership position would appear to be our rational mind. Our rational mind seems to be the only aspect of our mind that is capable of reflecting on and therefore distancing itself from our mind. Our power

to reason and explore facts appears to be able to relatively easily overcome factual assertions or rational thought sequences or patterns that have hardened into rational traits. All that would seem to be required is proving them to be incorrect. We may regard the apparent reticence of rational traits against such enlightenment to be sponsored in large part by emotional traits that have an interest in maintaining conforming rational structures or processes. A similar argument can be made regarding perceptive traits. Rational reflection should be able to lead us to optimized perception practices if it were not for the reticence of emotional traits. We may think that we can overcome this opposition and that we can maximize our happiness if we follow reason, and the factual proof to which it attaches, as the supreme organizational principle over our emotional traits. Our rational mind seems to be uniquely equipped to investigate, assess, coordinate, and if needed, find ways to restrict, modify, and possibly eliminate traits in favor of a solution that maximizes the overall fulfillment of our constructive needs. Our service to this purpose would have us account for and determine the objectives, requirements, and urgencies of our needs and all available resources for their pursuit. We would also determine the consequences of their pursuit for one another's fulfillment. We would develop and adjust means and strategies in line with principles of efficiency and effectiveness in the service of maximizing our individual and collective survival and thriving. These directorial functions of our rational mind would have to be permanent to be effective because emotional traits display ceaseless determination to make us follow their demands and display considerable resourcefulness to sway us in their favor.

The overall optimization of our happiness through the consideration of all our traits might then appear to be a consummately rational function. But closer examination establishes that the leadership of these functions is reserved to our emotional mind because our rational mind is fundamentally unable of generating any type of motivation to engage it in optimizing our conditions. Our principal needs to secure our individual and collective survival and thriving appear to instruct and back the arbitration function of our rational mind. We become emotionally attached to the effectiveness and efficiency gains of rational methods in the arrangement of our needs and develop corresponding wishes. The comprehensive direction by our principal needs seems to be in charge of liberating us from following the programs of subordinated needs when they do not attend to these principal needs. Still, a presumption that principal needs exist and that they constitute separately organized, controlling phenomena appears to derive from a functional oversimplification that does not accurately reflect reality.

Rather, it seems that our principal needs represent composites of all needs that appear to serve them. The regularly interwoven character of multiple needs in our pursuits gives us an indication for this proposition. We rarely find traits operating distinctly in the planning and execution of strategies. To survive and thrive, we may not possess the luxury of pursuing each single need separately. We may regularly have to combine the pursuit of several needs. Even if we could afford to dedicate our efforts fully to one pursuit at a time without existential danger, other needs may demand that we pursue our tasks without violating or disadvantaging their objectives or that we advance their objectives contemporaneously. This places us under a requirement to select compromised courses of action that support multiple needs or are at least mindful of them. It would appear then that many of our pursuits are directed by a committee of emotional traits. We cannot presume that all participating emotional traits would necessarily cooperate for the joint purpose of producing a product with a particular intermediate or ultimate quality. Rather, each emotional trait appears to be only interested in a product to the extent it serves that trait's satisfaction. Our emotional traits may cooperate to the extent their interests are aligned, or they may agitate against one another where this is not the case. The push and pull between positions of pain and pleasure for every need propel and draw our planning and implementation into different directions with possibly dissimilar intensities. This may regularly shape our wishes and activities into composite strategies.

Multilateral interests and participations by emotional traits in our pursuits threaten to render an arrangement among our emotional traits a complicated undertaking. Guidance by multiple needs can materially restrict the maneuvering space for our pursuits. That maneuvering space may already be scarce or nonexistent because of several types of internal limitations that may be inherent or attach to a need. Emotional traits might not only issue impulses for ultimate objectives but also regarding our choices of means for the pursuit of such ultimate objectives. We appear to be emotionally invested not only to fill the differential between pain and pleasure of a need but also to fill it in a particular manner. Such requirements may be rooted in common existential needs and in idiosyncratic particularizations. Idiosyncrasies may additionally narrow our ultimate objectives for a need. These restrictions are exposed to further limitations of external circumstances in which our needs must find fulfillment. The resulting requirements may not leave much flexibility for an optimized or even adequate pursuit. Each need may therefore assert itself and fight for the accommodation of its requirements at every juncture. The urging of a variety of

needs and the pain we would suffer if we ignored that urging require us to compromise and sacrifice efficiency and effectiveness in the pursuit of needs for the sake of gaining efficiency and effectiveness in the pursuit of other needs. We may curtail our pursuit of one objective so that we can better achieve another objective. Conducted sensibly, this coordination among interested needs can minimize our overall exposure to pain and maximize our overall yield of pleasure. But succeeding in this enterprise appears to remain difficult. It is characteristically likely in a compromise that needs will not be able to insist on manners of pursuit that fully satisfy their requirements. However, the arrangements strategies we can make available may not even fall within a range of lesser, still functional strategies for some interested needs or they may only be fulfillable at a relative overall disadvantage. Moreover, the reconciliation of a multitude of needs that vie for satisfaction is not limited to an abstract and static plan. It must relate and adjust to the specific internal and practical circumstances of our pursuits as they vary. These practical concerns add to the complexity of our considerations during a plan's conception, and might also encumber us at any step of its implementation if there are deviations from the plan.

Depending on the subject matter we pursue and our fulfillment status, participation in this guidance system might be limited to less than all of our emotional traits. Still, the diversity of needs participating in a decisional process and pursuit may exceed the array of needs that may be directly affected by a decision. Even if a suggested pursuit does not touch upon the direct interests of an emotional trait, a proposed pursuit might involve resources or the pursuit of another need may have attenuated consequences in which it is interested. Thus, although an emotional trait might not actively participate in a pursuit with the objective of its contemporary fulfillment, it may weigh in to preserve or advance its present or future status. We may call the overarching mechanism by which our emotional traits interact with one another our council of traits or our conscience. It is the administrative mechanism of our mental traits that organizes our personality as more than the sum of its traits. The activity of our council of traits suggests that its independent authority is not formed by our rational capacity but that it arises from the correlation of our emotional traits and their impulses. Hence, it seems to confirm our impression that we are being governed by our emotional traits. Yet, in spite of being guided by the motivations of our emotional traits, the council is a forum in which all our mental traits can obtain representation. A council of traits might function solely based on the interaction of perceptive and emotional traits if the reconciliation of emotional traits is settled or automated

by instinct. But rational information may allow us to further customize and improve our responses to challenges and opportunities. Many of our rational traits are indispensable for rendering our mental traits conscious by investigating, determining, categorizing, recording, and tracking them and their consequences. They can derive insights that provide factual orientation. They can provide rational considerations of relevant circumstances to prepare considerations by our emotional traits. They may even provide the factual recognitions and deductions that lead us to cast our reactions into an acquired emotional trait or influence the formation or the adjustment of such a trait. Our rational traits might then have great power in our council of traits. They may assist its functions with correct reflections and correlations or damage it by infusing our decisions with erroneous or incomplete notions. Regardless of whether they are engaged by our emotional mind or spontaneously process based on sensory impressions, they may present an independent result. Nevertheless, because our rational mind does not have its own motivations and is incapable of forming its own impulses, it does not have a stake in the contest among our needs. Therefore, our rational mind is not a supreme authority that rules and judges our traits, impulses, and personality. Rather, it constitutes a mere utility. Our perceptive traits take a similar posture. They are vitally important for enabling factually accurate judgments, and they carry a significant informational function with regard to acquired emotional traits. However, they have no motivation of their own and do not try to convince us. That motivation is uniquely reserved to our emotional traits.

Through its impulses, every emotional trait causes our mind to take its viewpoint temporarily. Assuming the positions of all our emotional traits in relation to the demands and implications of a particular emotional trait permits us to engage in a well-rounded review, argument, and possibly negotiation among our emotional traits. Reflective awareness of our emotional traits requires their distinction from us as the observing entity. Our rational mind naturally possesses that quality because it is limited to rational interpretations. This makes our rational mind an effective factual counselor. But the necessary motivation for that advice to be prepared and argued arises from the differing viewpoints of emotional traits. We can step outside our emotional traits, albeit only at the price of identifying with and being biased by other emotional traits. Yet the distance that is generated by the combined viewpoints of every emotional trait with respect to every other emotional trait gives us the ability to comprehend our needs and settle their pursuit in correlation with one another. The comparative review by our emotional traits is more than a mere jostling of impulses.

It can inform us of our perceptions and our rational insights regarding participating circumstances, risks, requirements, possible alternatives, effectiveness, efficiency, and the ramifications of pursuits for involved and further needs. The composite of these informed emotional viewpoints can present us with a comprehensive picture of the interests of our emotional traits. The sum of their positions produces an approximation of objectivity because it positions perceptions, rational arguments, and emotional reactions in context with one another. This interchange of vantage points also seems to create the best opportunity to minimize any blind spots in our self-investigation. By stating their position relative to one another and negotiating or refusing to negotiate with other emotional traits, our emotional traits make us aware of the facets of our self. To the extent there are differences, they might not only expose one another in this process. Their biased engagement of rational arguments and procedures of proof might be able to question and engender consideration of rational and perceptive traits and views as well. Such critical treatment seems often necessary because emotional traits tend to sway perceptive and rational traits to provide factual justification for their stance. They may use that justification to defend their position relative to other emotional traits or to motivate them to cooperate. Even without such intent, perceptive and rational traits regularly form settled adjuncts to emotional traits because of the interest by needs in securing their fulfillment. Our mental traits may then be regarded as integrated spheres of influence under the control of emotional traits. This integration may prevent or impede the consideration of perceptive evidence or of rational arguments that are incompatible with an emotional stance. Emotional traits might unwisely promote such strategies even if it damages our overall happiness or their own objectives. Rational and perceptive traits that have become attached to emotional traits may only be changed upon permission by such emotional traits or upon compulsion by other emotional traits.

The process engaged by our council of traits may lead our emotional traits to arrive at the same result as rational arrangements if we gave them the directive of maximizing our individual and collective survival and thriving. Superficially, that may be the impression we derive from the workings of our council of traits as an entirety. However, the imposition of that purpose and any deviation from it seem to be the prerogative of our emotional traits and to result from their reflection and relation of one another's objectives to their own objective. If we wish to secure our happiness, we must find a resolution among our emotional traits. Provided that we can get all our needs to participate, our council of traits can help us in that resolution. It allows us to de-

termine whether we want to follow an emotional, rational, or perceptive trait based on the council's consideration whether such an act increases or decreases our overall happiness. Accordingly, we may view our council of traits not only as a mechanism by which we can reach full self-awareness but also fulfill our need for self-determination.

Some of our existential needs or some aspects of them might be products of common acquired traits. Yet the apparent presence of existential needs in the past of human development when the minds of our ancestors were not able to acquire traits would indicate that they are genetically based. Even if we cannot find direct evidence for such a presence, we might support such a conclusion by finding similar existential needs in species that are not able to develop common acquired emotional traits. Some existential needs may also be due to the higher genetic development of humans. Until we identify the genetic basis of existential needs, we might not know this for certain. Either way, our common emotional traits seem to have found a relatively stable mode of coexistence to the extent they are part of an established, integrated system of relationships that has been refined through eons of development. That process has not demarcated our general emotional traits in absolute harmony. Even common needs may engage in competition with one another. Depending on their satisfaction status, our common needs may clamor for our attention to motivate us to give them preference in fulfillment over other needs. Arguably, competition among traditional common needs remains necessary because it informs us of the relative urgency of deficiencies and permits us to focus our efforts where they are most needed. The relationship of our general emotional traits may benefit from optimization efforts that organize our pursuits beyond topical preferences they indicate. Reconciling the competition of existential claims may place fairly complex coordination demands on us because all participating needs are relevant to our individual or collective survival and thriving. But the beneficial character of traditionally participating needs, or at least of the resulting system in which they balance one another, carries a presumption of benefit.

This presumption does not exist with regard to specific genetic and specific acquired traits. The particularized sourcing of these idiosyncratic needs and the varying objectives of such needs make conflict among them and with existential needs likely. Their introduction into a system of general instructions heightens the risk of a conflicted personality without a consistent concept of happiness. The persistence of such nonharmonized needs and the impulses they issue makes it likely that we will continually suffer conflict. Specific emotional traits may be necessary or helpful to provide fulfillment for our existential needs.

To the extent their accommodation can create a higher overall level of happiness, including them into reconciliation might be a sensible undertaking even if they are difficult to accommodate. But the potentially uncoordinated character of specific emotional traits and the resulting conflict they cause threaten to negatively affect our overall happiness. Instead of the dynamics of our traditional existential needs that attend a constructive purpose, the participation of specific emotional traits may be convoluted, contradictory, and ineffective. It may be incompetent of producing coherent, optimized, or even adequate results for securing our individual and collective survival and thriving. Growing specific genetic and specific acquired needs threaten to overstrain the traditional reconciliation mechanism among common needs. The diversity and details of their extraneous demands may hinder its functioning. Curtailing frivolous and damaging specific needs requires that we expand our consideration and our management of these needs and their adjuncts in perceptive and rational traits. We may augment our happiness significantly by gaining the ability to curb, modify, or eliminate specific mental traits that hamper our happiness or do not adequately advance it, or to create beneficial specific mental traits.

This prospect of having to take active control of our happiness places us in a situation where we have to understand, define, and possibly redefine the details of our happiness. We cannot reach happiness simply by promoting indiscriminate fulfillment for all our needs. Not all our needs can be trusted to assist our existential objectives and to contribute to a harmonious entirety. Rather, we must cultivate the aptitude to comprehend the correlations among our needs so we can determine how we can achieve the most happiness for ourselves. The arguments among our emotional traits within our council of traits may assist us in determining which correlations among them and their adjuncts constitute the best advancement of our happiness overall. The dynamics of this determination are likely to be fluid in many respects. Depending on the fulfillment status of needs and their environmental conditions, they may try to urge us into obedient conduct with different resolve and backing. Yet, beyond gauging the relevance of immediate impulses and considerations, we have to consider what will serve our long-term individual and collective objectives. To produce such a reconciliation, our emotional traits have to find expression without restraints and comprehensively debate and persuade, compromise with, or possibly compel one another. To accomplish this, we must develop a thorough understanding of our emotional traits, their requirements, consequences, and backing by perceptive and rational traits. The next chapter addresses the foundations for such an understanding.