CHAPTER 23
SETTING OUR PRIORITIES

When we review our sequences of wishes, we can not only discern hierarchies in terms of lower-ranked wishes being in the service of higher wishes that lead to the fulfillment of ultimate objectives. We can also observe a hierarchy among our needs. There seem to be needs that are more important than others and obtain service from other needs. Then again, upon closer examination, we find that the function of service does not differentiate purportedly higher wishes and needs from those apparently subordinate to them. The simplest of our wishes and needs are often supported by the fulfilment of some of the highest rated wishes and needs. The accomplishments of higher needs may form necessary conditions for the fulfillment of lower-ranked needs. Thus, our survival and possibly our thriving are necessary to fulfill our individual existential needs. Further, our individual existential needs constitute necessary or at least helpful conditions for one another because they all form necessary or helpful conditions for our ability to survive and thrive. The fulfillment of every need serving our individual existence may be conditioned upon the fulfillment of any other need with this shared function. Although this dependence may be most obvious with respect to basic survival needs, the advantages of fulfillment and ramifications of nonfulfillment may position collateral needs as indispensable or helpful as well. More than that, if the fulfillment of certain wishes is required or helpful for fulfilling an existential need, fulfilling them can be a necessary or helpful condition for the fulfillment of every other wish that supports other individual existential needs.

This reciprocal dependence seems to carry on between individual existential needs and existential needs that focus on the continued survival and thriving of our species. These collective existential needs depend essentially on the production and raising of progeny. That undertaking may be primarily guided by fundamental collective survival needs, but it can be improved by additional care under motivations of collateral needs. Further, our individual survival and thriving are usually the foundation for our ability to advance the existence of humankind. For these reasons, all needs that support us individually may be required or helpful for fulfilling our needs that are directed toward the survival and thriving of humankind. We may be less committed to acknowledge reverse requirements or benefits. We may view the present and future survival and thriving of humankind as inconsequential for our individual existence. We are moved to organize the pursuits of our individual needs socially because some of our basic collective survival

needs benefit from such organization and because collective collateral needs necessitate it. Additional organization with others may have become required or helpful because interaction for such purposes unavoidably leads to contact that may cause interferences. Also, the proliferation of humans has created a population density that makes contact and dealing with interferences to our pursuits inevitable. Organization may then serve the purpose of preventing or limiting the damage that contact with other humans might cause. It may become necessary that we organize with other humans to enable the fulfillment of our collective collateral and basic survival needs and to prevent interference. Notwithstanding, we may proclaim that we do not necessarily need other humans to satisfy our individual basic survival needs. Although organizing with other humans may be necessary to secure the survival of our species, it might seem to be a matter of convenience for securing our individual survival functions. We may believe that if organization with other humans was ever necessary to secure individual survival, it would have been necessary when humans were exposed to predation by other species. With most or all such problems resolved, we should be able to survive on our own once we reach adulthood.

Still, we have to concede that cooperation poses a requirement in exigencies in which we are prevented to fend for ourselves. Considering that we all encounter such exigencies at the beginning and likely toward the end of our life, as well as possibly at times during the rest of our life, we cannot justly claim that our basic survival needs are independent from the existence and care by others. In addition, individual collateral needs innately require or benefit from cooperation. Further, we might benefit from cooperation in heightening the effectiveness and efficiency of pursuing our individual needs generally. Reliance on that benefit may cause us to place ourselves or to be placed in situations in which the cooperation of others becomes indispensable. Together, these factors create a setting that may cause the fulfillment of virtually all our individual existential needs to be dependent on the support by other humans. This renders the existence and the thriving of others requisites or at least great advantages. Conversely, failing to pursue our needs in cooperation with others may have significant adverse consequences for our individual existence. We may be excluded from support because that support may be contingent upon reciprocity. In addition, perceived resulting damage to the existence or thriving of others may incur defensive action by them. Accordingly, not only a lack of pursuit of our collective existential needs but also a lack of pursuit of our individual existential needs cooperatively may dramatically reflect on our ability to fulfill our individual existential needs.

These dependences of our individual existence on the existence of other humans might appear to be limited to coexisting individuals. Beyond expressions of a need aimed at securing collective existence, we might consider them as utilities for our individual needs, which we support because they support us. We might assert that our individual needs should not be negatively affected if our species ended with the end of our existence. But that is incorrect because we cannot separate our need for individual survival and thriving from our need for collective survival and thriving. Our failure to satisfy the need to secure the existence of our kind or any of its supporting needs may weigh heavily on us. Our resulting pain is not limited to our collective survival and collective collateral needs. It may further materially detract from the happiness we derive from the fulfillment of needs that secure our individual existence. It may deprive us of an essential purpose and render the continuing support of our individual existence lacking in satisfaction. This may lead us to neglect or cease seeking continuing individual survival or thriving. It may be the reason we endanger or sacrifice our individual existence in support of the existence of others. Our need for individual survival and thriving appears to defer to our need for collective survival and thriving as the highest of our needs. Our individual survival and thriving or at least the satisfaction that we gain from the fulfillment of our individual existential needs may then depend in part on our efforts to advance the existence of our kind.

This type of effect where the pain over the lack of fulfillment for one need affects the satisfaction over the fulfillment of another is not unique to the affiliation between individual and collective existential needs. It is possible and likely to happen among any emotional traits. The happiness we may derive from the fulfillment of any of our needs may be counteracted by pain over the nonfulfillment of other needs. This effect may advance to a point where we derive less or no satisfaction from the fulfillment of certain or all remaining needs and cease or restrict their pursuit. It might seem that we may experience a transfer of pain because we fear that with the lack of fulfillment of one need, we may lose a basis for fulfilling another need. Although this phenomenon of communion seems to be incongruent with our experience that our needs generate differentiated types of emotions, it comports with the concept of the overarching purpose of survival and thriving. Since all existential needs serve that purpose, the total of pain and pleasure regarding our existential needs reflects the state of our battle for individual and collective survival and thriving. Even if there should be no corresponding principal needs as separate pain-pleasure mechanisms, the awareness of mutuality and the motivational reaction among exis-

tential needs constitutes such principal needs. This allows us to experience fear and pain in a general, transferable manner. The reciprocity among our existential needs makes damage or threat to any existential need constitute damage or threat to any other existential need. Similarly, pleasurable experiences in the pursuit of existential needs may have positive influences on other existential needs. Accomplishments may balance pain about the deprivation of other existential needs and give us hope that we might succeed in resolving current deprivations.

The mechanism by which we may not be able to obtain or enjoy the fulfillment of one need at all or as much without the fulfillment of another need may cause negative disturbances to have extensive consequences. However, the mutual dependence may also have beneficial effects on our overall happiness. It places additional pressure on us to fulfill all our individual and collective existential needs. The system of mutual dependence of traits that causes this mechanism seems to extend beyond existential matters that are anchored in common genetic traits to include many other traits. The extension of the mechanism to general acquired aspects of needs would seem unproblematic because it makes us react to ubiquitous environmental conditions. Yet the extension to our specific genetic and acquired emotional traits may be a problem. It allows these traits to burden the entirety of our emotions and hold them captive to their demands. It is conceivable that specific emotional traits could fulfill existential support functions with regard to common traits. It is also conceivable that they might provide the foundations for novel functions in support of individual or collective survival and thriving. Where they do not reach an existential level of importance, they might still render the pursuit of other constructive needs more successful and thereby enhance our level of happiness. On the other hand, specific needs might be nuisances and sources of frustration that interfere with the fulfillment of their underlying common needs, the fulfillment of further common needs, the fulfillment of one another, or their own satisfaction. Even absent particular interference, they might claim resources without providing adequate compensating benefits for themselves or benefits that could match uses of these resources in the pursuit of other needs. The deleterious potential of specific needs poses the question whether the increment of happiness we might gain from their pursuit and achievement is worth the problems they may cause in their own pursuit or for the pursuit of other needs.

Assessing the value of a specific trait requires the consideration whether our overall happiness is improved by following its demands. We may inquire how happy we could be if we did not have the specific need or if it were modified or suppressed. We might inspect whether

the redirection of resources from its uses to the pursuit of other needs would advance our happiness more. These are valid questions if other humans can exist without such needs or with different versions, states of control, or attributions of resources regarding them. That our happiness might be possible and might even improve with such modulations might not be obvious to us. To judge whether a specific need is beneficial and how beneficial it is, we must become aware of the overall pain and pleasure that we incur from its pursuit. We may apply this measure to all our needs, including our common needs. Overall, these needs appear to be constructive because they have caused or allowed our individual and collective survival so far. Still, some common needs might counteract the benefits provided by other needs, we individually or as a species might have succeeded in spite of them and not because of them, we might be on a negative trajectory, or we might face challenges in which they become dangerous. Common traits may have served us well in the past but may have become anachronisms. With a change of internal or external circumstances, they might impede our overall happiness and individual or collective survival and thriving.

If a need causes us pain or curtails our happiness, we might not be restricted to choosing the lesser evil of suffering the consequences of its pursuit or its nonpursuit. To reduce or to eliminate our pain, we might try to adjust or to eliminate a need. We would seem to have the best chances to succeed if such need was acquired. We might be able to change, reduce, or abolish what was acquired by altering, removing, or supplementing its determinative structures. We might accomplish this by direct intervention in our physiology or by acquiring countervailing experiences. If the offending trait arises from a genetic condition, we might address the structures generated according to genetic coding. Such an intervention may follow similar techniques as the direct physiological correction of acquired features, or it might necessitate deeper intrusions that address the fundamental nature of genetic sourcing. We might have to change or block genetic coding directly to affect the continuing generation of a genetic trait. If an adjustment of traits is possible, we may not limit our interventions to the preclusion or reduction of damaging influences. We may change damaging traits to obtain a net gain of happiness from them, make neutral traits productive, and enhance traits that already serve our happiness. Only if traits cannot be manipulated to enhance their benefit and if their current benefits do not warrant maintaining them might we consider to eliminate them. Short of modification or elimination, we may attempt to compel traits into compliance or otherwise suppress them. Yet that may cause significant enduring pain and cost. We might therefore ap-

ply such techniques only if modification and elimination are impossible, would not yield overall better results for our happiness, or if they require temporary assistance until they succeed. None of these procedures may be without cost or risk. To find out whether any of these alternatives are practicable, which is best, and to determine whether the benefits are worth the cost and risk, we will have to engage in a cost-benefit assessment of nonpursuit, elimination, and changing traits.

Even if we should succeed in ordering and reforming our traits and their pursuits for the greatest benefit of our happiness, we would have solved only a part of our problem regarding the maximization of our happiness. Other issues arise in the implementation of our traits. Individual conditions beyond our traits as well as environmental circumstances may impose limits and obstacles for the supply of means. Moreover, our needs are not equally acute at all times. We experience differences in their satisfaction status because they have different objectives and may call for different means. Other differences may arise from our inability to apply our efforts equally at the same time or because the pursuit of different needs may require different intensities of involvement. Advancing our happiness in this setting requires that we gain an understanding of the relative urgency among our needs and how we can allocate our efforts in meeting their demands to create an overall maximum of satisfaction. It would seem that we could rely on the natural functions of our traits to inform us of the relative urgency of needs. Our traits mandate the urgency of their fulfillment through impulses that emerge from their position between pain and pleasure. The relative urgency of these impulses gives rise to a hierarchy of objectives and their subordinated wishes. In addition, it motivates us to organize our activities into a strategy that can fulfill our needs within their time requirements. Presented with practical possibilities of pursuit by our instincts or considerations, our needs set by their urgency a hierarchy and a schedule of appropriate approaches for their pursuit. Beyond that, our needs impress us concerning the relative priority we should give to the pursuit of different needs on a more principled level. Such an evaluation is founded on the relative importance of the fulfillment of a need for individual or collective survival and thriving.

A prioritization among our needs does not often express itself as a pursuit of one need to the exclusion of all others at the time. We may implement priorities while we also try to pursue other needs that are not priorities. The dependence of needs on the fulfillment of other needs necessitates that we do not totally neglect these needs. Further, pursuits of different needs may have to happen contemporaneously to prevent them from falling into a deep deprivation and causing disrup-

tive pain. Still, we may keep a habit of principal and situational prioritizations. These preferences may be reflected in the attribution of resources among separate pursuits. They may also be expressed in our manner of pursuit of composite strategies involving several interested traits. Preferences may arise from the claim by each participating trait about what will sufficiently advance its need and the reaction by other traits. A claim for resources may be in part determined by considerations of utility in meeting the objective of a need and by possible demands that arise from battling other traits. Traits may insist on a time frame for reaching or maintaining fulfillment and that certain qualitative or quantitative increments of advancement occur in compliance with their schedule. These parameters then interact with the availability of resources. Difficulties in the provision of resources result in demands for their exclusive or relative concentration on preferred needs. That may cause the attribution of resources as well as their generation techniques to be in conflict with the requirements of other needs.

To bring some orientation into the demands of different emotional traits, we may distinguish traits that exclusively focus on an ultimate step of fulfillment from those that carry transitory core wishes. We may designate needs and emotional traits to be object-oriented if they regard intermediate steps as means that derive their value solely from their utility for an ultimate objective. Those that attribute intrinsic value to intermediate steps beyond an ulterior utility may be called process-oriented. Such a distinction may seem useful in assessing the flexibility of a trait with regard to its manner of pursuit. Yet it may not have a clear bearing on the pleasure we may be able to derive from an intermediate step. Process-oriented needs do not appear to be unique in producing pleasure from the progression of a pursuit. While object-oriented needs derive a significant segment of pleasure from the final act of achievement, there appear to be no needs that gain satisfaction exclusively from the last step in a sequence of wishes. They appear to derive at least some satisfaction over the course of the pursuit. Even a mere utilitarian step may cause satisfaction because it delivers an approximation toward the final objective. This approximation may cause an emotional anticipation of the ultimate pleasure that is experienced with ultimate fulfillment. The value attached to intermediary steps assures that the reward for reaching an intermediary stage is not entirely deferred to an ulterior purpose in object-oriented pursuits. Our utilitarian advancement toward ultimate core wishes seems to convey similar installments of pleasure as the reaching of transitory core wishes in a process-oriented pursuit. Moreover, even utilitarian advancement is tied to intermediary core objectives. Even if we consider the fulfill-

ment of intermediate steps to be mere means that derive their value solely from their utility toward an ultimate end, we must be adamant concerning the utility of such means. Although object-oriented needs may offer some latitude regarding strategies, they have to concentrate on fulfilling intermediary stages that can achieve their ultimate objective. This requires that they formulate and fulfill nonnegotiable functional core wishes for the sequences leading up to ultimate fulfillment. That such core wishes would be defined by a range or would only be defined as we select a particular sequence from a range seems to make little difference in our required commitment. Further, our propensity to maximize the fulfillment of needs tends to tie the procedural marks that object-oriented pursuits must fulfill to similarly stringent criteria as the fulfillment of process-oriented traits. The only difference seems to be that object-oriented needs lack intrinsic value in their intermediary steps. Then again, proposing that process-oriented traits distinguish themselves because they possess intermediary steps with intrinsic value that persists regardless of utility appears absurd. These steps represent either partial fulfillment of a single pursuit or the partial or complete fulfillment of another trait in a consolidated pursuit.

We may therefore dismiss a separation of our needs or underlying emotional traits according to an appearance of a different orientation toward process or objectives. All emotional traits appear to aspire to a level of ultimate fulfillment as their objective. All our emotional traits seem to long for fulfillment that does not end. Nevertheless, our contentment about the fulfillment of needs appears to depend on our preceding experience of pain or at least the anticipation of pain and the experience of a movement in reality or at least in our mind out of these conditions toward pleasure. Because we require movement, the fulfillment of a need may only give us satisfaction for a short time although we would like pleasure to last. After satisfaction, there appears to be nowhere to go to obtain more happiness. It seems necessary that we suffer a deterioration of our happiness into deprivation before we can enjoy happiness again. Still, some of our needs appear to be different in their movement in that they do not seek a culminating conclusion of a pursuit after a dramatic ascent. Instead, they derive satisfaction from maintenance after reaching a level of satisfaction. We seem to be able to differentiate our emotional traits depending on whether they are characterized by oscillations between deprivation and fulfillment or whether they are characterized by adhering to certain standards without waiting for or permitting lapses. We might designate this preference for level performance as process-orientation and call needs that are given to recurrent campaigns of ascension object-oriented.

The needs that appear to be most object-oriented and find most satisfaction with reaching the culmination of a sequence are some of our basic individual and collective survival needs. The object-oriented character of such needs arises from biological requirements that must be fulfilled to enable our existence. Still, in spite of their maintenance aspects, we generate satisfaction regarding some of these needs from overcoming a deviation from their existential requirements. The process-oriented aspect of satisfaction appears to be particularly strong in our pursuit of collateral needs. This may be so because they largely focus on constant, nurturing conditions whose objective is to maintain and ameliorate a stable setting for our basic pursuits. Moreover, our specific needs may seem predominantly process-oriented because they often affect the manner in which we pursue our common needs. But these distinctions become less relevant and object-oriented needs reveal themselves as ultimately process-oriented when we view them in context. Object-oriented pursuits may fulfill functions whose constant maintenance is not required and might even form an impediment. Yet all our needs that support our ultimate objectives of individual or collective survival and thriving are fundamentally process-oriented. Our principal needs of survival and thriving attain satisfaction from the resulting continuing progression of survival and thriving. Further, fulfilling our ultimate objectives necessitates continuing care to maintain a constant or recurrent supply of the means and their application that keep us and our species alive and thriving. Needs that carry us from a state of deprivation to an end point of fulfillment only represent segments in a reiterating movement of advancement and subsidence that compensates for fluctuations in our body or the existence of our species through individuals. Hence, the entirety of our supporting needs and ultimate objectives can be characterized as process-oriented.

While we may declare the process of our individual and collective survival and thriving to be our ultimate, combined objective, that objective seems to be defined by its support functions. Although ultimate needs prescribe a procedural character for supporting needs, we gain our awareness and appreciation of survival and thriving through awareness and appreciation of these subordinated functions. Our substantive model of individual and collective survival and thriving is defined by experiences of our existential needs. Our needs then seem to form a closed system that merges processes and objectives. A distinction between process-oriented and object-oriented pursuits therefore does not seem helpful. Notwithstanding, the thought processes revealing this insight are useful because they make us realize that the integration of our needs requires all our choices to be complementary.

In defining our needs, we must distinguish nonfungible means without regard to whether they stem from emotionally ordained core wishes or from technically required functional core wishes. Nonfungibility imposes criteria that affect our ability to arrange our pursuits. It eliminates our choices in certain respects if we want to avoid suffering essential damage to the fulfillment of our needs. Nonfungible aspects of our pursuits demand that their requirements be met to fulfill a particular need. Fungible aspects are open to pursuing fulfillment by different means. Fungibility appears to presuppose that there exist several manners of pursuit that are equally adept to advance the fulfillment of a need. Such conditions are rare. Differences in competence among alternatives may prevent them from becoming interchangeable in the strict sense. However, we might expand the definition of fungibility to include pursuits that, while they may be less capable than others, remain capable of fulfilling a need within acceptable margins. To the extent selections of means violate these margins, fungible pursuits become nonfungible. In the interaction of needs, the fungibility of their strategies forms a serious concern. Their imposition of parameters on the pursuit of other needs may threaten to restrict, impede, or block such pursuits. Their mutual impositions and our management of them greatly determine what we are willing and not willing to undertake to obtain happiness. This process establishes our ethics. We may only be willing to violate their command if the pain resulting from adhering to them exceeds the pain from bending or ignoring their requirements.

Among common emotional traits, nonfungibility or a narrowed fungibility may be presumed to be of existential importance. We may impute to genetic selection that it has over time worked in ways that have harmonized common traits toward the best advancement of our principal needs. Even common acquired needs appear to carry a high probability of compatibility. Their development seems to largely supplement common genetic traits to the extent general opportunities or threats have not yet found reflection in genetic programming. Given longer periods of common conditions, common acquired traits would appear to have been honed by genetic traits and one another. Particularly if humans are exposed to general conditions for generations, they are likely to formulate common acquired traits that have proved their utility in securing individual and collective survival and thriving and are therefore harmonized. Although these presumptions may be disproved, they propose to us a usable operational model. A fundamental conflict appears more likely between common and specific and among specific needs. Specific traits may lack the harmonizing formative aspects of a codevelopment or auxiliary development of common traits.

They may not share the assisting function regarding our ultimate objectives that engenders reconciliation among common traits, nor may they reach the existential importance of common traits. Their particularities were shaped by particular environmental influences and genetic deviations that are not parts of a proven system that is represented by an interaction among more established factors. This creates a much higher potential that specific needs would be positioned in fundamental conflict with common needs or with other specific needs.

We may then presume that common emotional traits generally assist us to avoid pain. Thus, compliance with them may not be legitimately questioned unless we can discover evidence of their incompatibility with our overall interests. However, such a presumption is not sound among specific aspects. By narrowing the parameters or ordaining a specific manner of pursuit, nonfungible wishes that are issued by specific traits operate at much higher risk of restricting, impeding, or blocking essential or advantageous pursuits for securing our individual or collective survival and thriving. Such nonfungible wishes tend to elevate our systemic exposure to damage and pain. Even if single traits do not impose requirements that significantly encumber our pursuits, their cumulative requirements may render a reconciliation problematic if multiple emotional traits are interested in the same pursuit. The complexities multiply and the likelihood of identifying commonly acceptable strategies declines as additional needs participate. There may still be a congruence of acceptable strategies among several participating needs. Nevertheless, few if any participating needs might be able to attain ideal assistance or an approximation from the combined pursuit with the possible exception of traits that offer the least fungibility. Our pursuits are at risk of being dictated by traits that are the most restrictive, at least if a nonfungible aspect can fit itself within acceptable boundaries of other interested needs. Acting against a nonfungible value may arouse an intensity of unhappiness that may be difficult to overcome by the increased service of a chosen avenue for other needs. To be overruled, a nonfungible aspect may have to pose demands that are irreconcilable with the pursuit of needs that matter more for our happiness. Nonfungible selections may decrease the utility of a pursuit so much and for so many needs that our resulting dissatisfaction exceeds the dissatisfaction from failing to fulfill a nonfungible demand. In that case, we may sacrifice a nonfungible wish or sequence of wishes at least temporarily until the means of pursuit or the relative weight of pain from nonpursuit changes. Similarly, we may select some emotional traits under the exclusion of other traits until conditions change if ranges of acceptability among traits do not offer common ground.

In addition to inherent causes of our emotional traits, our personal capabilities and the availability of external means may constrain our choices. We may find that such practical circumstances are more easily adjusted than our traits to forestall a narrowing of choices and even to increase our choices. We may succeed in altering our circumstances or to locate or fashion new circumstances that offer more maneuvering room. The insufficiency of resources may include quantitative and qualitative aspects. With sufficient resources in both of these aspects, we can surmount any practical obstacle unless it represents a matter of absolute or of personal impossibility. Yet we rarely appear to have appropriate qualities or quantities of resources at our disposal to pursue and fulfill all our needs or aspects of needs that are responsive to improvement by them. The potential for conflict among needs due to an insufficiency of resources appears to be a widespread reason for competition and a lack of accordance among our needs even if they in principle could harmonize and assist one another. We may attempt to compensate the effects of scarcity by excluding other individuals from access to resources or depriving them of resources they possess. Only, that does not establish a lasting solution to our problem because they are likely to defend against our offense or may adopt similar strategies against us. Similarly, the exclusion or exploitation of other aspects of our environment without consideration of the consequences may subject us to repercussions. To improve our happiness in a situation of insufficiency, we have to therefore arrange our pursuits until we succeed in producing or finding an environment of harmonious plentitude.

Managing our resources in an environment of scarcity may require that we curb or cease at least some pursuits to allocate resources to the pursuit of other needs. A conflict is bound to arise because each of our needs will endeavor to influence us to attribute as much of our resources to its pursuit and to other pursuits as it considers necessary or helpful to maximize its fulfillment. If we miss the resources to satisfy such demands by all needs, conceding to the demands of one need may leave less to satisfy other needs. By satisfying some needs, we may have to disadvantage and frustrate other needs. The threat of deprivation may cause emotional traits to not only claim that they are worthy of an allocation of resources to them. They may also propose that other traits vying for these resources are not or less worthy. Such claims may be of a situational character based on the state of relative fulfillment of needs. But we may also encounter more fundamental, principled claims of relative worth among our needs. Emotional traits may try to exclude other traits from funding and demand the redirection of resources to them or to traits that benefit them. They may further call

for the elimination or suppression of other traits. That attitude toward traits may indicate that the targeted traits are detrimental. Constructive traits may not acknowledge that such traits are necessary or helpful for them and declare resources spent on such traits as waste. They may assert that other traits inflict damage on them or the pursuits of other useful traits. They may also assert that other traits are not constructive enough or entirely fail to use their constructive potential. In that case, emotional traits may concede the right of other traits to exist and to pursue their fulfillment because the fulfillment of these other traits may or could contribute to their pursuit or the basis for their existence. While they may thus agree to the attribution of resources to such traits, they may only concede a minimum or reduced level of resources to sustain that support function. They may advocate that resources beyond that level could be better used in their own support or in support of needs they view to be more important for their own fulfillment. They may demand the curtailment or the cessation of funding for such traits until they adjust. They may press for the modification of such traits to render them more conducive. They may demand the attribution of resources to such traits to be conditioned upon their enduring of such alterations. Where resources do not suffice to secure a necessary minimum for all the traits that are acknowledged to be or have the potential to be constructive, demands for resources may become again exclusionary. Emotional traits may demand that the funding of certain other traits be deferred to address more pressing needs.

Such demands for the curtailment or the complete denial of resources to other emotional traits as well as calls for their modification, suppression, or elimination may be signs of healthy regulation efforts that coincide with our interest in our individual and collective survival and thriving. But there is also a significant chance that they might not be well-founded. They may be due to detrimental emotional attitudes or deficiencies in our perception or thinking. Traits that are not a part of the mutual support system of our traits may place demands that interfere with our beneficial traits to make room for themselves, or they might fight with one another to dominate beneficial traits. The detrimental quality of emotional attitudes in these actions may be difficult to detect. That constructive emotional traits would urge us to dedicate means to them and to pursue strategies in their favor is to be expected and necessary. Such demands validly establish and operate our council of traits. Thus, we may not initially know whether demands for priority are in our interest. Only as we consider attitudes and demands of traits regarding one another and as traits agree or disagree in evaluations do we become adept in separating illegitimate traits or aspects.

If emotional traits or features of them stand in the way of our objective to maximize our happiness, we may have to suppress, modify, or eliminate them. However, we may not have the ability to undertake these tasks or may not be capable of accomplishing them entirely. Even to the extent we have gained the necessary ability, addressing detrimental traits may not be a matter of mere determination. It may involve protracted processes of potentially strenuous pursuit. We may therefore have to maximize our happiness under the temporary or the permanent interference of detrimental traits or detrimental aspects of traits. Still, even under such aggravated circumstances, we can maximize our happiness within our capabilities. To the extent we do not succeed or have not yet succeeded in suppressing, modifying, or eliminating detrimental traits or aspects of traits, these will continue to participate in our council of traits. We may deem ourselves obliged to continually fight them to keep their influence to a minimum. Then again, it may not be prudent to entirely reject them because this might increase their power due to their rising pain from deprivation. To minimize their virulence, we may include them into arrangements among our needs but grant them only as much participation and support as is necessary to keep them contained until we find a better solution.

Our arrangements gain in complexity because emotional traits are infrequently entirely detrimental or constructive. Accordingly, our adjustment efforts may be largely directed at the remediation of detrimental aspects of traits. To optimize our happiness, we must fight to diminish, neutralize, or reverse detrimental aspects of traits regardless of whether these traits overall are mostly detrimental or constructive. To overcome detrimental traits or aspects, we must categorize them as a state of deprivation and their suppression, modification, or elimination as positive objectives. We must let the pain caused by detrimental traits or aspects inspire us to position constructive counterpoints with the status of a trait. As long as we cannot completely ban detrimental traits or aspects of traits, we have to include them in our list of wishes because they continue to assert their influence and motivate us in our council of traits. We may call constructive traits and detrimental traits that we must accommodate participating traits because they are members in our council of traits. To express our wishes to modify participating detrimental traits, we must state together with them temporary and possibly permanent curative sequences. Arriving at such curative sequences seems to involve a process in which we collect the opinions of other participating traits. The proposals from all participating traits will direct us toward actions we may have to take to countermand injurious effects or to increase the constructive effects of deficient traits.

These wishes blend with demands of support and protection for other traits due to their beneficial nature. These positions contribute much to reconcile our traits. They point us toward a combined ideal that reflects an overall best result. Nevertheless, the emotional preference by each trait for its objectives, subjective positions, and incongruences is likely to remain. We still must find a system by which we can rationally organize the positions of our traits to their best overall result.

A requirement of such organization seems to be the accommodation of differences in the importance of traits. This requirement appears to be subject to boundaries because participating traits may influence our overall satisfaction. Since our overall happiness is assembled from diverse constituents in the fulfillment of diverse functions, we may miss unique facets if particular constructive needs are not satisfied. We cannot compensate among the different types of happiness our needs ordain. Nor would such compensation be useful because it might interfere with activities that are necessary for individual or collective survival or thriving. To achieve and preserve maximum happiness and forestall harm to our individual and collective existence, we must try to attribute our resources to provide meaningful pursuit and fulfillment for all constructive needs. We might even have to attribute resources to detrimental needs to keep their damaging potential contained. But this insight alone is not likely to make us handle all needs with equal attention. We would be most interested in securing objectives that we deem will generate the most happiness for us or whose nonfulfillment threatens us most. Such an approach is reasonable under situations of scarce resources. If we lack or might lack external resources or personal capacity to pursue the fulfillment of all our needs contemporaneously, we give the most attention to needs that are most essential for our individual and collective survival and thriving. Other obvious reasons would be differences in the fulfillment status among needs, different challenges for their pursuit, and different lead times. Only, all these other causes for preferences appear to be of a technical character and do not reflect a principal value judgment. Although our preferences may fluctuate situationally, the frequently chronic insufficiency of external resources and our personal limitations may compel us to inquire into the relative value of pursuits on a more fundamental level to lay out strategies that maximize our chances for survival and thriving. It seems that, where circumstances force us, we give preference to the fulfillment of some of our needs or aspects of needs over the fulfillment of other needs. But there may also be reasons based on the function of our traits that determine their priority. We then face the question under what criteria we determine our preferences.

A principal gradation among our traits can be discovered if we proceed in tandem increments of review that weigh the importance of each need in relation to each other need. To undertake that task, we would assemble all our emotional traits in a representative list of our needs that designates them in a short description of their ultimate objective. Where specific traits modulate common traits, we must state them separately. In consideration of each binary combination of needs from the resulting list, we would determine for each tandem the need whose fulfillment we would rather forgo if we had to make a selection. We would enter the less essential below the more important need. As we sort through these pairs of needs, a hierarchy among them emerges. It may become clearly visible when we assemble the binary determinations into a list that shows them as successive levels. The number of combinations and the task of bringing our choices into a hierarchic sequence might overwhelm us. It might be easier to assign numbered preferences to the entries in our list of needs. After we have assigned numbers, we rewrite this list in the sequence of that numbering. We review that revised list and ask ourselves whether it properly reflects the hierarchy of our priorities. If it does not, we assign numbers again and prepare again a list in sequence of the numbers we have assigned. We may have to repeat this process several times before we arrive at a list of priorities that reflects the fundamental hierarchy of our needs.

By stating the underlying motivations for our ranking decisions, we gain further insight regarding the nature of our emotional traits, the impulses they send, and their relative strength. We must therefore consider why they appear in this particular hierarchy. We have to explain why we place more value on the pursuit of one need than another. The resulting list of our priorities provides a basis for considering whether we should rearrange our priorities and what the consequences of such changes might be. If we have to deviate from our principal statement of preferences to reflect our interests in particular circumstances, our confrontation with stated preferences stimulates our consideration of the reasons that claim to warrant a deviation. The preparation of a list of priorities might thus create added clarity for our pursuits. But it can only form the beginning in our efforts to channel our pursuits into the most rewarding directions. The competition among our needs continues to challenge us with difficult choices because we remain charged with satisfying as many of them as we can. Contrary to the propositions of the basic inquiry pattern from which we derive our list of priorities, it may not be advisable to pursue our needs in an alternative and exclusionary fashion. Such a manner of pursuit might only represent how we would pursue our happiness if we had insuffi-

cient resources to satisfy all needs under our consideration at a time. It seems to be particularly astute in dealing with emergencies because they may command us to focus on securing what matters most to us. In case of an existential emergency where individual or collective survival is imminently imperiled or where our capacity to fulfill existential needs is imminently threatened to sustain irreversible damage, we may have to concentrate on pursuits addressing these threats until the danger is neutralized or attenuated. The prioritization of our most essential needs may induce us to suspend lower-ranked pursuits temporarily. An exigency strategy of prioritization may regularly characterize our pursuits in an environment of extreme scarcity. We may rarely or never have enough resources to fulfill more than a limited number of the most essential existential needs. Even if we ache from the nonfulfillment of other needs, we may not have sufficient resources to allow their fulfillment, forcing us to choose between survival and thriving. However, since all existential needs may be necessary to optimize our survival, and thriving may be a function that bolsters our chances of individual and collective survival, this may not be a choice that we can maintain indefinitely without incurring existential injury beyond our dissatisfaction about the nonfulfillment of collateral needs.

Once we emerge from an emergency mode, static indications of preference stand to damage us more than they benefit us. They would oblige us to ignore deficiencies that might eventually become existential threats or at least needs whose nonfulfillment might cause us significant pain. Such considerations may move us to revise our concept of priorities. Instead of holding on to a static list of priorities, we may shift our preferences to emotional traits that impress us with the most urgency at the time. We might refer to our list of fundamental priorities as a starting position that we adjust accordingly. It might still appear that we would fare best overall if we concentrated our efforts, in descending order of contributions, on needs that bring the most happiness. But our ranking of priorities is likely to change. As needs of a higher priority become satisfied in selective pursuits, they lose urgency and thus priority. This endows needs whose fulfillment previously seemed less important with more importance and ranking by default. If we keep catering to higher-ranking wishes without addressing lower-ranking wishes in a meaningful manner and needs of a lower priority remain unsatisfied, their mounting deprivation renders them more urgent and elevates their priority in a flexible system. Fundamentally, the pain of their dissatisfaction may be inherently lower than the pain we would feel over the deprivation of another need. However, the ascending and descending traffic of needs as a result of their fulfillment

status brings significant movement into our priority rankings. The urgency of fundamentally lower-rated needs may eventually trump the privileged status of fundamentally higher-ranking objectives that have been satisfied. As these are fulfilled, they retreat to lower levels of situational priority until their relative deprivation warrants a resurgence. Needs that remain unfulfilled will make their way up the list while fulfilled entries will descend in their priority of fulfillment activities. This type of circulatory prioritization among our needs may appear to be a reasonable approach in conditions of scarcity and unpredictability. It forces us to concentrate on needs whose deficiencies induce the most pain and whose fulfillment gives us the greatest satisfaction. It focuses our attention on pursuits of needs that signal the highest threat to our principal needs for individual and collective survival and thriving.

In some of us, the proper circulation of priorities among needs may not come about. Some of our emotional traits may habitually assert themselves with such urgency that they drive us to narrow the selection of our priorities in an erroneously perceived or an artificial exigency. Such a setting is easy to imagine in the context of detrimental needs that must manipulate us to prevail. They may escape our efforts to keep them contained by giving them limited allocations. But even constructive needs may endeavor to dominate our activities. Their assertion of habitual exigency can occur in two ways. If needs are chronically difficult or impossible to fulfill, we may chronically set our priorities on those needs as most urgent and neglect other needs. We may continue to hold them in a position of priority and prevent them from giving way to needs whose deprivation or pain from deprivation does not reach their status. In addition, certain emotional traits may resist circulatory prioritization although their needs are fulfilled by all sensible measures. Such resistance may occur because of fear. We may be arrested in a mode of producing means for the fulfillment of particular needs for fear that we might not be able to satisfy them in the future. Such a fear is frequently based on memories or indirect impressions of painful events in which we were or would not be able to fulfill certain needs. Even if these needs are now fulfilled, we are capable of fulfilling them, and their fulfillment is not endangered, our fear may linger. It may prevent us from finding satisfaction of a need in spite of the presence and future guarantee of secure satisfaction. No amount, quality, or security of means may be able to satisfy some needs. The resulting habitual overassertion of needs can stop, impede, or skew a system of circulatory prioritization to where other needs are routinely underfulfilled or unfulfilled. Some needs may never or rarely come to play, or they may not even be allowed to properly develop and impress us.

Their suppression is likely to prompt efforts to free themselves from the constriction by arrested priorities. The frustration over their denial is bound to rise and accumulate. The struggle between arrested priorities and suppressed emotional traits may cause continuing inner conflict and damage to our happiness. If arrested priorities succeed in dominating lower priorities, maintaining their priority against continuing opposition may require significant efforts that weaken their pursuit. Similarly, suppressed needs expend resources on unrewarded efforts. Short of engaging in direct conflict, dominating needs may apply strategies calculated to distract suppressed needs or suppressed needs may attempt to divert themselves. This may result in our unawareness of suppression or of its causes. These ploys and their lapses may cause contrivances that induce additional disharmony among needs. Arrested priorities may encourage such releases because they may preclude suppressed needs from recognizing the illegitimacy of their suppression or from acting upon that insight. Even if obstructed needs should be able to break through and to assert themselves in their true desires, such expressions might be of short duration before suppression mechanisms subdue them again. This unhappy state might only be resolved if the obstruction by ruling needs is dissolved and the system of circulatory prioritization is permitted to function properly. But our council of traits may not be able to intervene successfully. Arrested priorities may individually or in an alliance be so strong that they may dominate suppressed needs even if these unite in their opposition. Arrested priorities may also manage to influence other emotional traits to consider their domination constructive or to regard the suppression of other needs as lesser harm. The ensuing control may convert our council of traits into an instrument of oppression. The resulting institutionalized obstruction of our circulatory prioritization precludes us from existing consistent with the harmonized entirety of our personality.

Even if we experience no obstructions to circulatory prioritization, such a system itself carries shortcomings that may interfere with the level of happiness we can accomplish. If we only choose to pursue objectives that bring us the most happiness at a given point in time, we will necessarily neglect wishes that bring us less happiness. We will continue this until these wishes ascend in their ranking to where their pursuit brings us more happiness than the pursuit of other wishes. Being thus driven by the needs that happen to be the most urgent at the time may not be the best approach. Such a system prompts us to take action only when a need escalates to a sufficient level of deprivation to surpass other needs. The emergence of new priorities may cause us to cut the pursuit of current priorities short of their fulfillment potential.

We may engage in haphazard efforts seeking short-term fixes to whatever need pushes us most at the moment. The initiation of a pursuit that was previously neglected or abandoned may confront us with logistical problems that may be difficult to master. The circulatory transition among our priorities may place us in a situation where the pursuit of every objective takes on the character of an unprepared effort that may quickly develop into a crisis. Once the elevated ranking of a need indicates its urgency, our options for pursuit may be limited by the shortness of time we are given to effect fulfillment, the resources we have immediately available, and our lack of preparation. Many avenues of pursuit that might have been available if we had begun our pursuit earlier may be forestalled at the time a need becomes a priority. Even if a particular sequence of means is possible, it may now take a considerably higher effort and a greater expenditure of resources to accomplish or preserve happiness. Our available choices may present us with more risk. The benefits attainable with the remaining choices may not be as copious or particularized. The potentially reduced efficiency and effectiveness of such a manner of pursuit may cause us to be less prosperous in the pursuit of our priorities. This, together with the resulting reduction of our resources, might persuade us to further concentrate our efforts on the most pressing priorities and might reduce the group of priorities we can service at a time. Even if we could meet requirements, the intensified strain to attain objectives and the elevated level of urgency by our needs might take an emotional toll.

It becomes clear then that this system of focusing our efforts on those needs that happen to be pressuring us most at a given time cannot maximize our happiness. Dropping our static preferences and letting our emotional traits battle for preference pursuant to their urgency is not conducive to our happiness, let alone to maximizing it. Such a system still involves differentiations in the pursuit of our needs that produce ineffectiveness, inefficiency, and thus unhappiness. Additionally, our constrained focus on our most urgent pursuits without concern for other needs at the time may damage needs with lower priority not only by depriving them of pursuit but also by actively damaging their interests. Such a manner of pursuit is not even in the interest of needs that are pursued preferentially because they might become victims of unscrupulous pursuits by other needs as well when their priority fades. Damaging the pursuit of other needs may further cause repercussions because negatively affected needs may behave defensively to maintain their pursuits. More than that, the exclusive prioritization of needs necessarily carries a defect of ineffectiveness and inefficiency for prioritized needs because it weakens a system on which they must

rely. Exclusive preferences might be advisable if we consider the relationship between constructive and detrimental traits that we must accommodate until they can be more permanently addressed. But even there, a compromise might be more in our interest than a rigorously alternative selection if that keeps detrimental traits at minimum levels of disturbance. Even more, an exclusionary strategy has to fail in the realm of constructive traits because they are bound in a relationship of mutual benefit. Constructive traits that conflict with one another are interdependent in the results they generate. Damaging the pursuit of other needs may damage resources on which the damaging need must rely in the future. Hence, regularly permitting more pressing needs to proceed unaffected by the requirements of less important needs cannot maximize our happiness. Such a system encourages and does not control pursuits that counteract their utility for some needs with unjustifiable injury to the pursuit of other needs. We must institute more advanced arrangements that reconcile our needs in the best interest of our overall happiness. This is unlikely if we maintain an attachment to ideal pursuits for every need. The inflexibility of what we regard to be ideal sequences or our closest experiences or imaginations of them is not likely to harmonize with the pursuits of other needs because these ideals may have been authored as if we had no other needs. Allowing every need to act out its ideal pursuits without consideration of other needs is bound to create conflicts that counteract our happiness. The sum of our ideal pursuits does not represent ideal happiness.

Accordingly, once we have separated our wishes into sequences that exclusively serve the fulfillment of a single need and refined them into pursuits that serve them best, our next task will be to congregate these single plans into a comprehensive strategy that adjusts them to their greatest combined effect. To arrive at such a strategy, we have to explore how our preferences should be expressed in the coexistence of all our emotional traits and their demands. To improve our happiness, we have to address the sustained pain that arises when we neglect the satisfaction of some needs and do not plan for the timely fulfillment of all our needs. We can only control such pain if we give each need sufficient attention and resources to remedy and prevent its deprivation. Our capacity to undertake this might be limited by our personal dispositions, skill, and external circumstances. Nevertheless, if we cease to concentrate our efforts on selected needs to the exclusion of others and approach the fulfillment of our needs more evenhandedly, we can improve our situation. The next chapter explores how we may devise a comprehensive plan that includes the management of all our needs so that their totality produces an overall optimum of fulfillment.