**Definitions**

There are some important concepts to be defined first, which I provisionally do as follows:

* **Aliveness -** the quality of animation[[1]](#footnote-0) shared by all entities before they die.
* **Beings** - separate sapient life-forms. Normally unique but not in every case.
* **Code** - the information containing rules or algorithms used to transfer operating information and instructions necessary to create new life
* **Culture** - potentially transferable behaviours, ideas, information and values of beings persisting outside of any code
* **Entities -** separate non-sapient life forms within a species. Normally unique but not in every case.
* **Life** - all entities that have some ability to adapt to their environment and that are normally capable of variation in code as between each entity. They will normally be capable of reproduction or replication but not in every case.
* **Life-forms** - all entities and beings.
* **Genus** - a number of species that have relatively recent common ancestry or high degree of similar common code and that usually continue to share more common characteristics than exists normally between different species
* **Negative Capability** - the value of humility, doubt and acceptance of a degree of irreducible uncertainty, including by way of redundancy and variation in code as an evolutionary strategy and in any strategy for assessing or seeking to obtain Utility Optimal outcomes
* **Sapience** - the ability of sentient entities to think, the capacity for intelligence, the potential ability to acquire wisdom and self-consciousness / self-reflection.
* **Sentience** - the ability of entities to feel things and/ or perceive things.
* **Species** - the largest class of entities that are capable of carrying and transferring (alone or interacting with other members of the same class) the necessary code needed for the genesis of new entities based substantially on that code. The code of a species is normally not fully interoperable with that of another species.
* **Utility Optimal** - any decision or action that *in principle* results in a greater payoff (including reduction in harm or risk of harm) for the greatest number of affected life-forms and usually in a greater aggregate (in sum) payoff - even if it leads to a reduced payoff for one or more affected life-forms.
* **Wisdom -** the capacity of a being to reflect on its own knowledge and experience to make better decisions or gain more valuable insights about the deeper nature of things. Any practice of beings that incorporates Negative Capability as a core element is a manifestation of Wisdom.

Perhaps on the sapience-wisdom spectrum we can add, at the more advanced end, the following:

* to be able to be part of a culture and a transferor of that culture
* to be able to look beyond immediate form or appearance and consider the underlying structure or nature of matter, things, relationships or events

It is obvious, yet necessary to state, that the different qualities of Sentience, Sapience and Wisdom are not binary qualities. It will always be a question of degree within the defined spectrum. This understanding, and suitable principles of equivalence, are also necessary to avoid discrimination between Beings and Speciesism.

1. *In ancient Greek times this was known as the ‘pneuma’ i.e. breath of life. Sometimes this was translated as spirit or soul.*. [↑](#footnote-ref-0)