

The γ - Principle of Natural Inclusion

From Competition versus Cooperation to Heartfelt Relay

By Alan Rayner



'Stitching in Time' (Oil painting on board by Alan Rayner, 2020)

For millennia, human thought and culture has been dominated by two alternative ways of relating to one another and other life forms: competition and cooperation. Moreover, these two alternatives have themselves been perceived to be in competition with one another as diametric opposites: to cooperate is perceived to limit individual freedom, whereas to be independent is to preclude cooperation. Consequently these alternatives reside at the root of much psychological, social and environmental conflict, which adversely affects our ability simply to live, love and be loved as we naturally are and can be.

For much of my life I have questioned the validity of this way of thinking and whether it truly represents the way we naturally are as living human beings in the world as it naturally is, full of life. Quite honestly it didn't and doesn't relate to how I feel in my heart, and I have wanted to understand why this is and whether there is another way of perceiving life that makes my heart warm rather than recoil.

It gradually dawned on me that adversarial thought can be traced back through recorded human history at least as far as ancient Greece, where it emerged in the 'atomism' of Democritus and Aristotle's divisive Laws of Contradiction and the Excluded Middle. Underlying these Laws is the following premise:-

'Tangible matter is entirely separate from intangible space'

This premise is known as 'dualism'. It arises from the 'objective' or 'third person' habit of perceiving a material body exclusively from outside-inwards as a 3-dimensional solid object frozen in a snapshot of space and time and with no awareness of its interior space or dynamics. The existence of the body is hence considered to begin and end definitively at its surface. Matter and space are regarded as mutually exclusive - 'something' that exists physically and can be quantified in discrete numerical units, and 'nothing', which doesn't.

Dualism is at the root of the 'Cartesian Split' between 'Matter' and 'Mind' and is culturally institutionalized in objective scientific method, mathematical abstraction, linguistic definition, theological exclusion, governmental control and educational authority. It is the foundation of the binary logic of '1' (numerical presence) or '0' (numerical absence) upon which digital computing relies. In treating a numerical figure as *independent* from its environment (as per Einstein's contention that 'the environment is everything that isn't me'), it also underlies the idea that any 'one' must either 'compete' or 'cooperate' with any other one. The possibility for any kind of relationship in which *both* individual distinction *and* collective togetherness exist co-creatively is excluded from consideration.

The alternative, 'non-dual' or 'unitary' view of reality that is often expressed in favour of co-operation is, by contrast, based on this premise:-

'All is one continuous whole'

The corollary that no *actual* distinction exists between material presence and absence – and hence that any perceived distinction is illusory – arises from a form of subjective or 'first person' awareness from inside-outwards. This awareness 'sees through and beyond' surface appearances to the continuous 'oneness' of all existence. It is often gained through meditative concentration and can give rise to a belief that 'self' or 'ego' does not or should not exist.

Which of these premises makes most sense of your actual life experience? Do they relate to how you feel in your heart? How do they influence your perception of 'right' and 'wrong', 'true' and 'false'? Do you recognise how each contradicts the other as 'false' or 'wrong' in a different way?

Is there any way in which each could be recognised to be true in one way, yet false in another way? Can their apparent contradiction be reconciled by a more comprehensive and heartfelt view that accepts the truths of both while rejecting their respective falsehoods?

I both think and feel that the answer is yes! There is a third way of perceiving reality that co-creatively combines the truths of both binary and unitary conceptions into a comprehensive understanding of how Nature actually works. This can be traced within and applied equally well to scientific findings, engineering, psychotherapy, spiritual wisdom traditions, democratic governance, need-oriented business, philosophy and, not least, the arts – in other words all aspects of human endeavour.

I think this third way is not only possible but urgently needed. One way it could be appreciated is through what I call here the γ - principle of natural inclusion. Gamma (γ) is the third letter of the

Greek alphabet and can hence be thought of numerically as the creative coming together of alpha and beta (1 and 2; individual and coupled) ways of being, just as the symbol itself visually displays. Moreover this coming together is both fluidly dynamical and open-ended, like the 'stitching in time' symbolized in my painting (above), which depicts the flow of growth, maturation, degeneration and regeneration through the seasons in natural communities. Here the inflows and outflows from locally embodied loops of life represent a continuous reconfiguration or *relay from each into other*, not a stand-still monopoly or confrontation. This corresponds with the *pulse* and *circulation* of life-blood out from and into our responsive γ receptive human hearts. Life is perceived in a *heartfelt* way as a *gift of natural energy flow*, to be *received, sustained* and *passed on*, all in good time.

The ripple-like spread of a fungal fairy ring through a sward of grass, for example, combines successive phases of expansion from a growth front, absorption of nutrients from decaying plant remains in soil, uplifting of mushrooms to produce and release spores, and redistribution of nutrients from degenerating old growth to serve the regeneration of the growth front. The process manifests outwardly as a ring of dark grass fertilised by the underground activity of the fungus. If any stage in the cycle is omitted, the process stalls. But it can continue for decades, even centuries to produce rings up to hundreds of metres in diameter. In such ways death feeds life and sorrow releases joy, not the other way around!

This flow of receiving, sustaining and passing on is at the heart of the ecological and evolutionary philosophy of 'natural inclusion' that I have been pioneering for the last 20 years. [NB by 'pioneering', I mean intentionally entering unexplored territory and developing and preparing the way for others, with others' help, as distinct from reiterating prior work by others or staking an egoistic claim]

Awareness of natural inclusion arouses deep feelings of joy, passion and compassion in my heart. Indeed I would go so far as to say that this awareness *needs primarily to be heartfelt as a soft, warm, dark, receptive love of life before it can be fully understood and appreciated intellectually*. Intellect alone tends to preclude awareness of natural inclusion due to the predominance of dualistic thought, which isolates reason from emotion.

The occurrence of natural inclusion can, correspondingly, be inferred simply and readily from everyday heartfelt experience of what limits and what allows our bodily movements. No special knowledge, intelligence or technology is required and virtually all of us are probably aware of this in a heartfelt way as children, only then to be distracted by our exposure to culturally entrenched dual or non-dual conceptions of reality.

Natural inclusion can be described and understood in many ways, but in ecological and evolutionary terms it is most fundamentally the mutual inclusion of void spatial stillness and energetic motion in varied receptive γ responsive relationship in all tangible natural phenomena. It is hence a fundamental natural principle that enables us to understand *the evolution of reality as a varied and variable expression of energy flow around and between local receptive centres of space*.

Correspondingly, there are three fundamental aspects of natural inclusion that I regard as vital to recognise in order to have a comprehensive philosophical understanding (which I call 'natural inclusionality', as distinct from 'abstract rationality') of the process:-

1. Natural bodily boundaries are *intrinsically dynamic*, not fixed statically in place. i.e. they are dynamically informed and sustained by continuous energy flow and disappear if the latter ceases.
2. Natural void space is a continuous intangible (i.e. frictionless) presence that simultaneously *invites* energy flow both inwardly (towards and around zero) and outwardly (towards infinity).

Hence:-

3. All material bodies, from sub-atomic to galactic, are mutual inclusions of void space and energetic motion in receptive γ responsive relationship. These bodies, as dynamic local configurations of omnipresent space, can both associate with one another into couples or collectives with reduced surface:volume ratios and dissociate into individual identities with increased surface exposure, depending on energetic context and relative flux.

Whereas these principles can be traced within many avenues of thought and feeling, too many for me to mention specifically here, I have been hard-pushed to find any that comprehensively, explicitly and unambiguously recognise all three – even though some do come very close. Neither have any of my companion researchers, despite extensive enquiries. This may be because the tendency to retain some adherence to dualism or non-dualism is very strong. The closest philosophical approach I feel we have encountered is that of phenomenology, and indeed I would be happy to describe natural inclusionality as a natural phenomenology based upon the receptive γ responsive relationship between space and energetic flux.

So why is this of such fundamental importance to the way we live our lives as they naturally are in the world as it naturally is? In a nutshell, I think it comes down to no less than how we regard or disregard the relationship between life and love.

What truly motivates us – the natural inclusion of life in love and love in life

Objectivistic views of reality give rise to the Newtonian conception that the movement of material bodies is driven or dragged by mechanical force situated *outside* the object in question. A ball driven upwards by being *kicked* is dragged back to Earth by *gravity*. It doesn't move of its own accord – i.e. it has no inner motivation or internal agency.

This notion, when applied to life forms results in a forceful, command & control view of management and leadership, in which it is assumed that the individual needs to be compelled to work by external push or pull because it has no source of *internal inspiration* that will induce it to do so. Sadly, many of us have experienced the associated 'top-down', hierarchical attitude of mind all-too painfully. Many are the times when I have heard fellow educators say of a failing student that they 'need a kick up the backside'!

Even the most hard-line objectivist will, however, be hard pushed to deny that there is a literally *vital* difference between the behaviour of life forms, not least human beings, and that of dead bodies and machines. Only dead fish go with the flow, as the saying goes. Live fish swim. This difference implies that some kind of *self-motivation* does exist within life forms. But where and how does this self-motivation arise?

For purely objectivistic thought this is a huge and ultimately insoluble conundrum because an object that depends on some kind of external motive force to move it simply cannot move itself! Given the predominance of objectivistic thought resulting from dualism, however, this hasn't prevented people from trying to imagine or discover some kind of internal mechanism in charge of operations – a central controller, administrator, administration or process that governs the individual material elements – atoms, cells, organs, individuals etc – that comprise the life form.

So, what form might this forceful internal mechanism take? Who, or what is 'boss'. A wide variety of possibilities have been considered.

Maybe it is some kind of invisible ‘little man’ or ‘homunculus’ within the man. Maybe it is a brain telling the body what to do, or maybe it is a ‘selfish gene’ asserting its right to be selectively preserved at others’ cost. Maybe it is some kind of internal government or ‘parliament’.

But the objective objection to such internal agencies remains the same:- who or what is managing the manager? It’s a good question and it has inspired some significant efforts to circumvent the issue.

One approach that has gathered momentum over recent decades suggests that living systems, as gatherings of what may be huge numbers of individual elements, organise themselves as variably coherent wholes. This kind of explanation falls under the general heading of what have been called ‘complex system’ and ‘self-organisation’ theories.

Complex system theories have been greatly assisted by advances in computing technology. This enables coexisting individual and collective dynamic tendencies to be modelled mathematically using non-linear equations, and compared with observed behaviour patterns. And there is no doubt that the theoretical modelling can correspond remarkably closely with what is observed, as well as what might be expected from the γ - principle.

While close correspondence between theoretical model and actual observation cannot, in itself, account for *why* this correspondence exists, it does at least go some way towards showing that in reality individuality and collective coherence are *not* the mutually exclusive polarities that binary (‘either/or’) logic presupposes. Nor are they indistinguishable or illusory, as unitary ‘all-is-oneness’ insists. Rather, they are co-creative tendencies from which a vast variety of natural patterns of behaviour arise.

When we do carefully question *why* the correspondence between model and reality exists, however, we begin to recognise the shortcomings of purely objectivistic explanations. This is because the modelling itself makes a variety of assumptions that are inconsistent with objective assumptions. For example, intrinsic movement, cyclicity, spontaneity and heterogeneity are all vital ingredients of the models.

While it is valid to suggest that patterns of variably coordinated behaviour can arise spontaneously from these qualities, the question of how and whence all these qualities arise cannot be answered if it is assumed that an object can only be moved by external force and is by default static (as per Newton’s Law that an object continues in its state of rest or uniform straight line motion unless acted upon by a force). And while it is often suggested that the answer resides in quantum mechanics, if one thing is clear from the findings of quantum mechanics, this is that they cannot be understood objectively.

Notice now that objectivistic theories of reality are all deliberately or unwittingly ‘emotion-free’, due to their reliance on third person perception alone and associated disregard of subjective (first person) perception. They have nothing to say about and do not recognise how it *feels* to inhabit a living body, why it feels that way or where the internal source or *inspiration for* movement resides. They all comply with Charles Darwin’s dictum:-

“a scientific man ought to have no wishes, no affections – a mere heart of stone”

So, we might ask, how would subjective perception account for the behaviour of life-forms? The answer is implicit in Darwin’s statement. Motivation is emotional. It arises from a feeling of

internal need or desire that *induces* energetic responsiveness. So where might such need or desire arise?

Have you ever felt hungry or thirsty? How would you explain such feelings to an objective observer interested only in what moves you from outside? Tricky? But you might find more understanding if you were to describe to a compassionate fellow human being what you experience subjectively as a painful sense of inner hollowness - a 'presence of absence' - needing to be satiated if you are to thrive.

Hunger and thirst are examples of sources of inner motivation that induce responsive inward flow and outward movement from and towards sources of food and water (and hence energy). And we channel that flow both instinctively and through learning from experience and those in our neighbourhood with whom we form receptive γ responsive relationships.

Moreover, hunger and thirst are not the only inner motivations that we human beings have if we are to thrive and enjoy life. Humans need more than bread and water alone. We seek out sources of clothing, housing, material goods, entertainment, interest, companionship, beauty and so on. And we seek love in the form of soul mates and sexual partners, without whom in the latter case we cannot procreate. All these motivations spring from a *receptive* sense of *intangible lack*, a 'presence of absence' - which needs to be satiated. But if we either ignore or deny the existence of our own and others' dynamic bodily boundaries this receptivity can become transformed into greed or passivity.

Now consider what happens if we combine the heartfelt subjective view and the discerning objective view in mutually inclusive dynamic relationship, not either/or confrontation. What do we get?

We get the γ - principle of the natural inclusion of life in love and love in life!

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For further reading, see:- <https://medium.com/@admrayner/the-new-natural-evolutionary-science-philosophy-of-inclusive-flow-natural-inclusionality-3ecd19ad7657>