

Review: The Origin of Life Patterns—in the Natural Inclusion of Space in Flux

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Abstract

Inclusionality

The space between defines the place of immateriality.
The thing you see is no such thing, as no such thing can be.
That which we see in time in space is concentrating energy
that flows in form in place through space, informing receptivity.
For space imbues; embraces all without exclusivity.
This grace-ful flow is nature's way, it's called inclusionality.

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This review stands as a metalogue (Bateson 1972:12) of Alan Rayner's principle of Natural Inclusion. As such, it not only offers a reflective commentary of the book but includes a reflexive account of what has been evoked and invoked in me, on my reading of it.

Keywords Metalogue · Natural inclusion · Unnatural exclusion · Inclusionality · Abstraction · State-waves · Bateson · Flow-form · Receptive space · Informative presence · Responsive energy · Flux

Reflexive Review

As a doctoral candidate undertaking a trans-disciplinary inquiry into what it means to work systemically with individuals, I have covered quite some territory. My first year was

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challenging, not least because what I was reading in my academic realms did not appear to sit with my experience of living, working and playing with the folk around me. So much in the literature pointed to reductionism and linear thinking. This seemed at odds with the paradigm in which I was operating. In the late 1990s, I found myself drawn to the insights and principles arising from complexity and system sciences as, on the face of it, they seemed more attuned to my experience of reality. On re-entering the academy in 2014, I saw that academics in these new disciplines appeared not to be challenging nor re-defining the conventions that constrained them. Academic expectations, it seems, still proscribe a form and process which is recognisably derived from traditional (so-called objective) scientific experimentation (Popper 1934 (1959)). Even disciplines that do not sit in this space find themselves trapped by what a good academic paper or doctoral thesis looks like. I wanted to run for the hills—an urge that abated when, finally, I began to find voices from the edges who offered hope.

Bateson (1972; 1979; Bateson and Bateson 1987) was my first guideline. He introduced me to the notion of metalogue. This struck a deep resonance, and yet, there was something else I was groping for—a way that would enable me to articulate *content* in a *form* and *process* that was internally coherent. I was reaching for a metalogically coherent way to convey what was calling to be expressed through me. I found nothing in the literature that could help me, and instead crafted my own term: state-wave. Once I landed this as a concept, my thesis writing began to flow, matching my research process: a dance, interweaving ways of being, becoming, sensing, co-creating, sharing. Thus, I and my research flow onto the page in four different state-waves: *Intellectual-Theoretic*; *Aesthetic-Poetic*; *Visual-Kinaesthetic*; *Navigator-Narrator* (Gardiner, pending PhD completion). My *Aesthetic-Poetic* is most strongly in evidence in this paper. I introduce her thus:

[she] plays her part through personal poetry and prose; introduces word tapestries that weave narratives, musings, paradoxes and insights. I surrender myself to engaging in her non-rational, literary forms, which are variously reflective, reflexive,¹ personal, emotional, lyrical and metaphorical. When she shows up, you may get a sense of the river being wide, spacious; its flow slow, gentle, rhythmic - giving space to what is calling to be revealed; or in contrast, wild, tumultuous, chaotic, messy. She speaks up when there is something needing expression or a tension needing to be released, which cannot easily be conveyed through other state-waves (Gardiner, PhD pending).

I thought I was alone—and then I came across my second guide-line: Alan Rayner using the term ‘flow-form’ and setting out his ideas on ‘inclusionality’—Natural Inclusion. I was so excited. Finally, it seemed I had come across someone who was using something akin to ‘state-wave’. He wrote of receptive space and responsive energy which chimed with my experience in life and in my writing process. I knew I had to talk to him. Our first connection was for me, like finding a kindred-spirit. We resonated on so many levels, such as our relationship with darkness (Rayner 2017b:18–19)—experiencing it as a safe, restorative, regenerative space and not a fear-filled place where monsters of the imagination hide; and the notion of life being a dance, a dynamical, eternal state of flow (Rayner 2017b:80–84). It is unsurprising to me—given these connections and resonances—that my *Aesthetic-Poetic* was the first to attune to Alan’s principle of Natural Inclusion which he first expressed as ‘inclusionality’. My *Aesthetic-Poetic* grasped the gestalt and gifted me this synthesis of his proposition:

¹ The distinctions I make: ‘reflective’: past-oriented; and ‘self-reflexive’: present-to-immediate-future-oriented

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I voraciously read Alan's thinking on Natural Inclusion in previous articles (Rayner 2003, 2004; Rayner and Jarvilehto 2008; Shakunle and Rayner 2009; Rayner 2011, 2017a, b) and this, his most recent book. I did not always cognitively comprehend his forays into mathematics and physics, yet I sensed how deeply my embodied knowing seemed to 'get it'. He was helping me to express my living reality infinitely more coherently.

In *The Origin of Life Patterns*, Alan shares personally about his early experiences which so shaped his thinking and being in the world. To my astonishment, I found more synchronicities and deep resonances: we are both children born of Africa—our first contact with the earth being African soil; both being uprooted in formative years and translocated to an alien land (UK) whose cultural context did not match what we had already come to know. This dissonance served as an affront and a seemingly interminable constraint to life. Like Alan, I had a troubled start in the UK that set me apart from my peers. This set the scene for my life thereafter—trying to make sense of life and find my way to be a part of it. I found his willingness to share personally—which he does at the outset—a compelling and inviting way to open me up to what was to come. In this way, he demonstrates that even through static phrases on a page, we are in relationship. He is a real human being living a life, crafting these words, sharing his thoughts and I am there receiving and now writing about what has come to and through me. Beyond the simple words and the content they convey, we are a living expression of what this book is about: the flow of responsive energy into and between receptive space in place.

Alan's book is tiny—barely 100 pages and yet its import is, in my view, mighty. Through pictures, poetry, and first, second and third person exchange, he takes us on a journey through nature's places and spaces to help us see what he sees, to enable us to know what he has come to know. His life's learning is synthesised into something profoundly simply yet groundbreaking. He dismantles the fallacies that support man's propensities for abstracting life from life and brings us back to what is before, within and around us, and to what IS us. He opens a radically new way to see, understand and engage with life as it is, operating on what, arguably, is its most basic principle:

for any form to come into being, there have to be at least two basic kinds of presence in Nature: a motionless, *receptive* presence (i.e. a form-receiving presence analogous to empty canvas) and an *intrinsically* mobile, *informative* presence (i.e. a form-giving presence, analogous to fluid paint)... Moreover these two kinds of presence must *include each other*.... In the most fundamental and universal sense, applicable literally to everywhere, these two natural presences are experienced in the feeling of emptiness

² Inclusionality: Alan Rayner (2003, 2004) first used this term to illuminate nature's patterning which, he says, is in direct contrast to Darwinian thinking. It also challenges assumptions that pervade mathematics and physics. Alan now uses the term 'Natural Inclusion'.

that we call ‘space’... and enlivening flux that we call ‘energy’. Energy paints the variety of the natural world on an intangible canvas of receptive space (Rayner 2017b:25)

In his very conceptualisation of Natural Inclusion as the “mutual inclusion of receptive space and informative flux” (Rayner 2017a, b:26) where...

energy and space combine into local material bodies as flow-forms... ‘energised beings’ whose association, disassociation and exchanges of energy with and from one another is the source of evolutionary variety across all scales of natural organisation, including biological organisation ... (Rayner 2017b:26)

...Alan is challenging the very ground on which mathematics, physics and natural sciences are founded. How? Because he shows that we cannot abstract space from ourselves (we, who are ‘matter’ created by concentrating energy flows in place in space), any more than we can abstract ourselves from space: “for space imbues; embraces all without exclusivity” (Gardiner, poem above)! As soon as we let this in—everything begins to change. Not least, the realisation that there really is ‘no outside’ and that we all are truly in and of the universal hole—receptive space.

This book and its insights are made possible by Rayner’s evident extensive knowledge of the natural world and his willingness to go where others might not dare to tread. The dominions of so-called rational sciences are held in such high regard by those who claim their bases of knowledge as absolute truths. This illusory net, which is invisible to most, reaches into all aspects of our thinking. It affects how we talk and seeps into our daily lives—in what we do, and how we do it. To enter that dominion and then presume to challenge the very ground its existence depends upon, could be seen as an act of daring or outright stupidity. To me it is an act of bold service by one who sees what most of us have yet to come to see; it is a gift we did not ask for and did not know we needed.

He re-defines ‘natural science’ which thus far has been shaped by Darwin’s (1861) assertions of ‘natural selection’. Perhaps this now would be more aptly described as ‘unnatural exclusion’? Rayner shows us the myriad and universal ways in which nature’s principle repeatedly reveals itself to be one of Natural Inclusion. This is it. Simple. Elegant. Undeniable. And if that were not enough, Rayner extends his exploration into psycho-social realms of self-identity, beliefs, conflicts and more. In so doing, he illuminates the ensuing tragedies and traumas that manifest while ever we hold on to a belief that unnatural exclusion is nature’s way. It is not.

Through his book, Rayner is equipping us to return to what is natural, beyond abstraction. If we risk following where he leads, we might well find ourselves returning joyfully to life’s universal, eternal flow.

Beyond Abstraction

Beyond abstraction:

lies the surge that spills and moves this One to act;
tips the urge that moves then stills the tears that trace
in rivulets across the face that can’t resist
the myth that certainty exists.

Beyond abstraction –

Lies. The calculating mind that drives us to distraction –
full of shards and knives that pierce and slice

all sense of what is whole and true and meant, to bits
that have no rhythm, rhyme nor consequence.

Beyond abstraction
lies a life in raw kaleidoscopic specks
that float and shift in patterned drifts, adrift
in senseless seas of wretched fear that this
is all there is, beyond our mental mortal rifts.

Beyond abstraction?
Lies? Or simply fictions told of lives, for want
of meaning more than facts and feelings tell? We claim
as truths our ways are best - as proof of life and worth
beyond the bones and skin of immaterial selves!

Beyond abstraction,
Bliss behaves the one who puts in place
her rational grip beside each part, so all can
move and sway in co-created patterned play -
such artistry between, is Symmathesic Agency.

Beyond abstraction:
Bliss becomes, when finally, we see what is, is not.

Beyond abstraction:
Bliss belies the lie that change comes on command.

Beyond abstraction:
Bliss beholds - as tension tips – the dance as it unfolds.

Beyond abstraction:
Bliss befalls - when flow begins to flow between receptive holes.

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