

Life and Life-Energy Roy Lisker

Chapter 3

(a) Life-Energy and Creativity

The universe revealed to us by science is a space-time-matter continuum. Owing its identification with the trajectory of a light ray, Causation is projected along the forward direction of time. Ruling over all interactions are the universal conservation laws, those of energy, momentum, spin, charge, the so-called observables or invariant magnitudes. Systems acting in obedience to these conservation laws will exhibit determined behavior; this may be stable, weakly stable, unstable or chaotic.

It is the distinctive feature of life-energy - so we maintain - that its action upon the phenomenal world brings about real change. ¹

A living act, a living thought, are alone capable of creating something entirely new.

¹ The statistical indeterminacy of the Quantum Theory is not inconsistent with this viewpoint. What Quantum Theory states is that the exact initial conditions of the dynamics of a system of particles at the atomic level cannot be known. Yet the Schrödinger wave equation which controls the behavior of quantum statistics through time is completely deterministic. The difference is that, instead of computing future states, the Schrödinger equation computes what it is possible to know about them.)

Taken literally this assertion implies that two autonomous living psyches placed in identical circumstances will never respond identically.

This fact is universally acknowledged when dealing with other human beings; it is embodied in all legal principles that respect the sovereignty of the individual and his capacity for independent decision-making. I do not have to read a philosophy treatise to prove to myself that I will never be identical to someone else in all respects. One can readily extend this to an axiom governing all living beings. There are, of course, many research biologists don't want to hear this (save perhaps in defence of their *own* civil rights). Imagine that each electron were to have a will of its own: through the autonomous existence of the objects under investigation the biological sciences become so much more difficult than physics or mathematics!

This assertion of the real existence of human freedom has in fact been the substantive issue of all philosophy since the beginnings of the scientific age; it dominates the thinking of Pascal, Spinoza, Descartes, John Locke, Voltaire, Kant, Nietzsche, down to our own era, that of the

phenomenologists and existentialists. Seen from this perspective, Logical Empiricism comes off as being rather silly. If one can't begin with the reality of human freedom, why bother to begin at all?

Whether (in some sense) life-energy can be quantified, that is to say measured in terms of "amount" or "degree" cannot be answered, yet it also cannot be ignored. The question involves considerations of both quantity and quality, and comes down to the question of whether one can assign a numerical parameter to wisdom, folly, love, hostility and so on. The amount of *potentially free* life-energy is unlimited, but the amount *that is available* is a function of the mental state of the individual. A saint might be described as someone possessing a huge "amount" of unbound or free life-energy, while a deeply psychotic individual would have relatively little. Indeed, in extreme psychosis one finds a near total eclipse of the "moral faculty", that sense faculty that enables us to "know" that some external body is alive.

It is my personal conviction that, even as matter, energy, radiation, space itself are in some sense outside of time because they are

unchanging, so the existence of “life” is not dependent on time, abiding in a dimension unique to itself, outside also of individual conscious minds. In particular it is neither diminished by death nor augmented through birth.

In this opinion I part company with the view that procreation “propagates” or “increases” the amount of living energy in the world. Rather it increases the number of “individuations” of the energy in terms of conscious minds, which is not the same thing. Likewise, biology is not the science of life, but the study of the machines that house the energy of life.

At the same time one recognizes that it is normal for us to speak of animate superabundance or deficiency. We employ metric language when we talk about personal *growth*, fulfillment versus emptiness, *increased* maturity, *great* wisdom, an aura of *vitality*, the *large heart* of a compassionate person and so on. People are *judged*, their “spiritual weight” assessed in terms of the relative quantities of positive living

traits in their character (they in fact defines what is meant by the word "character"),

A Gandhi has *more* "moral courage" than most of us; shallow people have *less* "insight". It is not that they possess more or less intrinsic *unbound* living energy, a meaningless notion. It is in the way one's living energies are invested, that an "amount" of vitality, humanity, intelligence or dignity are attributed to the individual.

Having said this, I don't want to leave the impression that I've given my approval to the sort of amateur pseudo-science one finds in some of the less credible (shall we say "more incredible"?) forms of research in psychology and sociology, as exemplified by the frivolous experiments advertised on college bulletin boards, inviting the participation of undergraduates as a way of picking up a few sorely needed dollars!

Figuring prominently among such masquerades of seeming science are the "symptom charts" of the DSM manuals of the American Psychiatry Association, from which one can *compute* a numerical code

for every mental condition! That the intent of the DSM compendia has always been to reduce the subtlety and complexity of the living experience to a banal mechanism , is apparent even in the introductory pages of the most recent version the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual - IV -R (Text Revision; American Psychiatry Association; 2000) . In them it is explained that these diagnostic codes are designed for the keeping of medical records from which psychiatrists can calculate the amount of money to charge for treatment.

Quote: "The use of diagnostic codes is fundamental to medical record keeping... "

" ... in the United States the use of these codes has been mandated by the Health Care Financing Administration for purposes of reimbursement under the Medicaid System. " (Pg. 1, DSM IV-R)

A double reductionism:

(1) Emotional states to Statistics, followed by:

(2) Statistics to Money. Although the record of a patient's

"dysfunctions" may persist long after he has passed on, yet one can

never hope to be able to reconstitute the psyche from the codes. The missing element is the principal thesis of this essay: *that a living psyche, in all its fullness, can neither be constructed nor reconstructed through physical and mechanical means.*

Evidence for the existence of a primal intuition of the creativity inherent in the life-force can be discerned from the belief, universally present, that it is possible for a state of love to exist between human beings.

Unfortunately, the word "love" is so overloaded with denotations and connotations, that it has become essentially useless as a scientific term. Love can, and has, been used to signify everything and its opposite. Yet one can uncover an identifiable reality behind its superficial, fatuous or hypocritical employment, referring as it does to a real universally present phenomenon. The only way to deal with this is to use it as a technical term *specific to the concerns of this essay*, and perhaps inappropriate elsewhere.

We therefore define *love* as : the emotional accompanying the intuition of the existence of a living energy or life force in some external entity, or in oneself perceived externally, or, temporarily, in some inanimate object which appears to have living qualities.

The qualities attributed to love must be carefully distinguished from those of closely related emotional states such as "passion", "obsession", "attachment", "involvement", "enthusiasm", "fanaticism", "egotism", "self-love", "appetite", "infatuation" . All these states share important features with the true loving state. To an unreflecting mind it might appear that they are equivalent.

"Love" may be glorified as that magical quantity, so very cheap yet somehow unattainable, described in popular songs as something one can buy and sell in a shopping mall. Day in and day out "love" is used by politicians, propagandists, news broadcasters and militarists to justify murder, prostitution, violence , war crimes. It can justify the junkie's craving for heroin, the uncontrollable urges of the child molester. The phrase "love of country", or flag, or creed, or race, has

been chanted by millions of people to justify anything at all. Insane mothers have argued in court that "love" obliged them to murder their own children. Soldiers acting from "love of country" can throw babies from the roofs of buildings, or force prisoners to dig trenches into which they are pushed, doused with gasoline, and set on fire. Yet even when employed improperly the word "love" is used to describe a positive feeling towards others.

There is the mystic's love of God; the scholar's love of learning, the doctor's compassion for his/her patients, the teacher's for his/her students, an artist for the products of his/her skill and craft. How are we to extract the common entity hidden beneath these diverse and apparently contradictory representations?

Free versus Bound Life-Energy

The objects towards which "love" is the perceived emotional response fall into two grand categories: those in which life-energy is in a "free" state, and those for which life-energy is in a "bound" state.

There is the love that liberates, and the love that holds its subject in bondage.

For the “love that holds its subject in bondage”, we must find a new term. Any one of these will do: attachment, infatuation, dependency. We will use the word “attachment”. Attachment binds its victim to a slavish dependence on its object. It is born from a sense of personal insufficiency; in extreme cases it may resemble the craving of a drug addict, enduring great suffering when his needs are not met, who is prepared to commit violence or even murder in its service.

One becomes irritated by the monotonous lyrics of popular songs which adumbrate the general theme of “*I need you! I can't live without you!*”, “*Honey! I need you so bad!*” as if “love” were to be understood as a desperate, potentially violent dependency on another person, which can only be gratified if that person submits to demands, which may range from the harmless to the extremely destructive. These blatant expressions of self-centered craving have nothing to do with the well-

II

being of their object, and would be rightly perceived by her or him as a threat rather than something to be encouraged.

As has been so well expressed by the 1st century philosopher, Paul, (equally responsible with Jesus Christ for most of what we call Christianity): ² "Love seeketh not her own."

The love that liberates is based on sufficiency, not on need, thrives on cooperation not dependence, does not seek to impose burdens of guilt, arrogance or possession.

True love is a reflection of the action of life energy in a state of freedom.

We emphasize the point *that the living energy involved in both conditions states is identical.* "Passion", "love" and "passionate love" describe much the same phenomenon at the level of individual consciousness, although Hitler's passion for murder is not to be confused with Gandhi's passionate commitment to non-violence.

² Quote, Wikipedia: "Paul's influence on Christian thinking arguably has been more significant than any other New Testament author"

Life-energy in a condition of bondage is debased to a material state. This notion, central to the hypotheses that will be elaborated in this and other chapters in this book, is difficult to grasp and, unless it is carefully stated, may appear absurd. Its meaning, however, is very simple: when the energy that goes into free or intentional action is activated, its results appear as spontaneous, above the determinism of systems operating in the material or mechanical world. When life-energy is bound up in fixations to unresolved personal conflicts, it must become debased to find its outlets in physical reality, and therefore must act through conservative, entropic, or impulsive cycles of material energy.

The psyche shackled to an unconscious fetter cannot act freely. In its bound state the individual actions directed by conscious volition and sensation work within one or more of the basic cycles of energy transformation of the physical universe.

These cycles of transformation are: Potential to Potential, Kinetic to Kinetic, Potential to Kinetic. There is a naturalness in the manner in

which this connection is established: energy transformation is a temporal process homologous in all ways to the adjustment cycle of Being, non-Being, Death, Becoming and Rebirth. In the absence of all sensation and awareness it would not be possible to make a distinction between adjustment (the process of psychic transformation) and physical change (energy transformation). Sensation and consciousness themselves will be trapped within a psyche whose energies are bound.

Because of this acute suffering will be elicited at each stage of the adjustment process as depicted in the previous chapters. Traditionally these stages are associated with the somatic metaphors of disease, old age and death. The 3 cycles of energy transformation underlie the 3 powerful states of emotion from which all others are constructed:

Anxiety , the psychic equivalent of the Potential to Kinetic cycle, underlies passion, desire, the search for present gratification *Anger* , the psychic equivalent of the Kinetic to Kinetic (reactive) cycle, underlies ambition, envy, vengeance, but also self preservation, maintenance of the status quo, and all things associate with things achieved or gratified in

the future. *Depression*, the psychic equivalent of the Potential to Potential cycle, underlies grief, melancholy, withdrawal, nostalgia or reflections on things past and lost, fantasy and dreams.

In the celebrated chapter on "Power" in John Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, he makes the distinction between "power" as a capacity to act in a certain way, and "power" as a capacity to receive this action. Gold can be melted by fire. Therefore gold possesses the power of being meltable, while fire possesses the active power of being able to melt. Melting itself will not occur unless fire and gold are brought together. In our scheme being presented above, gold is the "potential" power, fire the "kinetic" power, while "melting" is the "potential-kinetic" interaction which occurs when they are brought together. Through the Einstein relationship $E=mc^2$, mass itself may be thought of as a form of potential or stored energy. Indeed it is the inertial properties of matter which come to mind in any description of the inert mental resistance one observes in depressed or melancholic persons. Energy exchanges which reflect John Locke's analysis of power

are to be found in the burning of coal to boil water to produce electricity, the hydrogen-helium cycle in the sun and the carbon-nitrogen cycle that unites all creatures and life forms on planet Earth.

Even as the depressive state invokes the metaphors of inertial , so the anxious state may be thought of as "thermal", involving as it does continual transformations from one state to another coupled to events in the external environment. The third state, that of the mind captive to anger, reactive in nature is akin to the build up and release of pressure, kinetic action, or "kinematics".

The three underlying emotional states therefore are analogous in many ways to Inertia, Heat and Force. Anxiety is the fundamental state of spiritual unrest, of which the other two are the extremes: grief feeds on itself to persist in grieving, anger feeds on itself to intensify anger. All 3 are cyclic in nature, cycles of Death and Rebirth of consciousness shackled to an underlying inanimate substrate.

There is a tendency in us to judge these affective conditions as primarily negative, however such a narrow interpretation is to be

discouraged. Despite the gigantic promotional campaigns that are mounted to extend the markets for psychiatric drugs, antidepressants, tranquilizers, Librium, Xanax, Zoloft, Valium and so on, the emotions they promise to inhibit (if in fact they do so: see *Elliot S. Valenstein, Blaming The Brain ; Simon and Schuster 1998*) are neither positive nor negative. They become negative only when they fall into feedback cycles which take them out of the control of the individual's will and capacity for self-command. All emotional states are positive when there is a creative outlet for them. Anyone engaged in the creative and performing arts knows this. In the form of *melancholy*, depression may induce a pleasant state of mind associated with sad music, autumnal weather, long meditations, calm seascapes and so on. If pushed too far however it may become "nostalgia" or "homesickness" (which in the 19th century was frequently credited with causing suicides.)

At the far end one finds deep and prolonged grief, which one might be interpreted in terms of the Rebirth Mechanism as the refusal to be born anew. Anger, recast as 'righteous anger', is praised by

political causes of all persuasions, right and left. It isn't possible to find fault with the sudden rush of anger that occurs from witnessing the outrageous behavior of politicians, militarists or gangsters. Yet anger unchecked may provoke a rash decision to act violently. Deliberation eliminates this course of action in the majority of situations. For a Gandhian advocate of non-violence this is almost always the case.

In the same way anxiety , fear, even terror can be stimulating and in the right context exhilarating, as when we engage in athletics, adventures or long journeys, read a thriller, or merely immerse ourselves in an ice-cold shower to wake up. Note how the shock felt by the hapless victims of "Candid Camera" turns to exhilaration and laughter when they learn the source of it. (We realize of course the program only displays footage in which these reactions are present!)

Anxiety or Terror, Melancholy or Grief, Anger or Hatred, lie at the roots of all the emotional states to which we submit under the compulsion of external events. Others, such as shame, guilt, worry, panic, distraction, enthusiasm, etc. arise from them, like the colors

derivable from the 3 primaries of green, red and yellow, in structural combinations and relationships. At the most fundamental level these 3 primary states can be understood as translations along the axis of time of that mixture of fear and hope we designate as anxiety. One is afraid of the consequences of a past deed, of a present suffering, of a future reckoning. On a positive note, one hopes for the future, rejoices in the present, finds tranquil satisfaction in the past through contemplation.

Anxiety is most acute in the extreme form of worry over an unknown, unknowable and unpredictable future. The anxious person seeks relief through immersion in the pursuit of immediate appetites. He seeks to block out the painful knowledge that serious injury, suffering and death are always possible in the immediate, near or distant future. All of us live in a permanent state of dread. No-one has expressed this better than Blaise Pascal:

" But on future consideration, when, after finding the cause of all our ills, I have sought to discover the reason of it, I have found that there is one very good reason, namely, the natural poverty of our feeble and mortal condition, so miserable that nothing can comfort us when we

think about it closely ..." " ... When we imagine a king attended with every pleasure he can feel, if he be without diversion, and be left to consider and reflect on what he is, he will necessarily fall into forebodings of dangers, of revolutions which may happen, and , finally, of death and inevitable disease, so that if he be without what is called diversion, he is unhappy, and more unhappy than the least of his subjects who plays and diverts himself ..." (Pensées, # 139 , Modern Library 1941, trans. W.F. Trotter)

To the worrying mind fixated on terrors that may potentially arise in the future, the "past" is put aside. Anxiety in its pure state does not preoccupy itself overmuch with the consequences of past actions, nor does it tend to indulge overmuch in fantasies and daydreams. The sole objective of the anxious mind is to numb painful worries over an unstable future through a quasi-total immersion in present gratification: vices, drugs, adventures, addictions.

The flow chart for the Anxious Process is therefore:

Anxiety

Past	Present	Future
Indifference Impatience Weak Conscience	A wild indulgence in instant gratification	A jungle of fears, doubts, premonitions, superstitions, terrors

2. **Anger:** The flow chart of the mind consumed by anger, across the three phases of temporal transformation is radically different. One may even define Anger as *counter-anxiety*, that is to say, *a reaction born of fear against one's natural tendencies to anxiety*. It is the spontaneous a reaction to the perception of an external threat to one's ego defenses. At the same time, it is interpreted as a lose of self-control justified by self-defense.

A life built around anger finds its natural outlet in ambition, that is to say, *it is future directed*. In terms of the Rebirth Mechanism, one may interpret it as the active intention of forcing rebirth to a pre-determined agenda Its hallmarks are delayed gratification, denial, self-

deception, cover-ups, ruthlessness, vengefulness and indifference to the suffering of others.

Even as he/she seeks fulfillment through some future situation, so the hostile personality is obsessed with protecting itself through reflections on *past* injuries. This has nothing to do with the justice or injustice of those injuries: to a proud nature, a deserved rebuke may far more painful than one that is entirely unmerited. From an obsession with past wrongs arises the wish to vindicate oneself through a talionic balancing of wrongs. Yet it goes beyond a mere eye-for-eye application of the "law of talion": vengeance is deemed incomplete unless it inflicts *more* harm on the enemy than the injuries received. Anger is a *passion*, and passions are notoriously incapable of being satisfied by any amount of indulgence. Thus, a "balanced" or "dispassionate" vengeance is self-contradictory, although most legal systems seem to be based on some such principle.

Thus, even as anxiety seeks diversion and gratification in the present, so the hating mind is future-directed in its goals and ambitions.

Present circumstances become matters of indifference. The *hating* mind has as little use for *compassion* as does the *anxious* mind for *conscience*.

These are interpreted as distractions from the main purpose of life, as drains upon inadequate personal resources or energies. The main objective of the sick or suffering mind is to *numb* the contemplation of painful realities: the anxious mind seeks relief from worries about future disasters; the hostile mind seeks redress from perceived slights, past, present or latent.

The flow chart for the mental processes of defensive hostility is therefore:

Anger

Past	Present	Future
A direct assault on the self-image, perceived as challenge to one's dignity or identity.	Alienation from the external world, reducing one's capacity to emphasize or sympathize with others	Action in the service of pride: reshaping one's world in the direction of reassertion of being:

3. Depression:

Finally we consider the mourning or grieving state, the incurable longing for what is lost, from the death of a loved one, or the failure to achieve a goal or ambition, rejection by one's community or family, the erosion of abilities, faculties or skills, the bite of poverty, the loneliness and isolation of exile.

Like anger, depression is a response triggered by some immediate suffering, some assault on the psyche or person. The angry person suffers from wounded vanity, the grieving person suffers from the loss of an external attachment, a loved person, disappointment, failure, or heartbreak. Revenge becomes pointless, as no amount of retribution can bring back what is dead and gone. Therefore refuge lies in escape: into fantasies, into dreams, delusions, into a world of the imagination.

Depression

Past	Present	Future
Seeking refuge in dreams, nostalgia for a golden age, fantasy, recollection	The suffering of mourning and grieving. Fixed ideas and obsessions may develop, with long past very painful scenes and scenarios being replayed indefinitely	Dispassionate indifference amounting to neglect. Extreme depression can lead to neglect of basic hygiene, cleanliness, or concern for security

This analysis of the 3 primary emotional states are gathered together in:

Table: The Internal-External Coupling

<i>Attitudes Towards</i>	<i>Things Past</i>	<i>Things Present</i>	<i>Things Future</i>
Anxiety	Neutral <i>Weak conscience or sense of guilt</i> <i>Sense of being worthless</i>	Pleasant <i>Hedonism</i> <i>Emotionalism</i> <i>Exaggeration</i>	Painful <i>Worry</i> <i>Hypochondria</i> <i>Terror</i>
Depression	Pleasant <i>Dreams</i> <i>Fantasies</i> <i>Nostalgia</i> <i>Lives in make- believe</i>	Painful <i>Despair</i> <i>Melancholy</i> <i>Withdrawal</i>	Neutral <i>Improvvidence</i> <i>Indifference</i> <i>Neglect</i> <i>Sense of Helplessness</i>

Anger	Painful	Neutral	Pleasant
	<i>Recrimination</i>	<i>Sees world in black and white.</i>	<i>Ambition</i>
	<i>Denial</i>		<i>Energy</i>
	<i>Defensiveness</i>	<i>Failure of empathy</i>	<i>Pragmatism</i>
	<i>Inferiority Complex</i>	<i>Ego-centricity</i>	

Appendix:

Analysis of the living instant of time

"Time present and time past

Are both perhaps present in time future

And time future contained in time past

If all time is eternally present

What might have been is an abstraction

Remaining a perpetual possibility

Only in a world of speculation

What might have been and what has been

Point to one end, which is always present."

-TS Eliot, "Burnt Norton"

The scientific depiction of time, as a linear progression from the past through the present to the future is not so much incorrect as inadequate. Properly interpreted, time is a projection of the temporal flow onto one of its dimensions, which we call the present, or "Now".

Thus, the instant, the "now moment" can be decomposed in terms of experience (observation, perception) into the mental categories of past, present and future. Each of these dimensions is autonomous by virtue of the way that it relates to our image of the world and our understanding of it.

The "present instant ", the "now", the "moment" is a threefold combination of coming into being, existence, and passing out of being. These function like 3 windows looking out into the world, and structure the 3 categories of emotional and mental attitudes described in the above table

The important point that I want to make is that the "now" (call it the "greater present", or "full present" if you like), is actually a projection of the fullness of Past, Present and Future onto the Present!

In other words, the "single dimension" of the physically "present" time, decomposes to the "three dimensions", of experienced time.

In our minds, at any given instant, all 3 categories are immediately present. This phenomenon is perhaps more apparent at the level of emotion than of abstract thought, for all the emotions, however spontaneously they may appear to arise, are imbued with a particular temporal coloration: guilt, grief, remorse, nostalgia draw from the past; the emotions of the present are mixed up with physical sensations of pleasure and pain, such things as "happiness", "anger", "desire", "shame"; the emotions tied to the future are, of course, anxiety, fear, hope, anticipation, and so on.

All of these are felt together in the immediacy of a present moment, in that temporal manifold we call "the instantaneous now". Note that this "instant" cannot be a mathematical "point" without substance. Like

any other physical magnitude, time has substance, and substances cannot be vanishingly small. What we call an "instant of experience" must contain at least enough "substance" to represent the sensation of transience or change. Experiencing time means to experience the sensation of time; and this requires a non-vanishing amount of time!

Life has no option but to be lived in the present. What brings about the emergence of anxiety, and its fixing in 3 states, will be discussed in the following chapters.

#####