

Life and Life-Energy

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Chapter 3

(a) Life-Energy and Creativity

In the modern scientific perspective the physical universe is a space-time-matter continuum in which causation is linked to the forward direction of time. Isolated dynamical systems with identical initial conditions will behave identically throughout time. ¹ Systems subject to the conservation laws of will exhibit behavior that is stable or unstable, determined, random or chaotic. The principles that give coherence or rationality to this natural order are those of energy transformation.

When, as is done in General Relativity, Time is treated as a geometric dimension akin to distance, one rediscovers a version of the doctrine of Parmenides, that all physical change is illusory. In theory, once the initial positions and momenta of massive particles are known, all world-lines into the future may be minutely predicted by applying the force laws to this collection of data.

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

¹The 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*. However *if they could be known* the predictability of their future world-line would inevitably follow.

Furthermore, the Schrödinger wave equation which controls the behavior of quantum statistics through time is also completely deterministic: its values over all of time and space can be computed in theory from its behavior in the neighborhood of any instant. Its very form is a generalization of the classical Hamilton-Lagrange equation for computing the future states of conservative mechanical systems. The difference is that, instead of computing future states, the Schrödinger equation computes what it is possible to know about them.

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change. A living act, a living thought are alone capable, of creating something entirely new. Taken literally this carries the implication that two autonomous living psyches placed in identical circumstances will *not* behave identically at all corresponding future times. This is equivalent to the positing of the reality of human freedom, which has been the deep preoccupation all philosophy since the beginnings of the scientific age, from John Locke and Voltaire, down to the phenomenologists and Existentialism.

Whether in some sense life-energy can be quantified, or can be described in terms of "amount" or "degree" is one of those questions that can be neither answered nor ignored. Even as matter, energy, radiation, space itself are conserved quantities, unchanging through time. so does the life force also abides outside of time, a dimension unique to itself. Though to our apprehension, its presence may be feeble (as in confrontation with indifference or hostility) or intense (as in relation to close family or friends) it abides outside individual consciousness, being neither diminished by death nor augmented through birth.

At the same time it is customary to speak of a super-abundance or deficiency of the living nature. One employs the metric language of "more", "less", "an unusual amount", or "serious lack" when speaking about *personal growth, fulfillment, maturity, enlightenment, wisdom, vitality, insight, compassion* and other things of a similar nature . People are judged in terms of "how much" of these one finds in their character; (indeed they

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form the definition of what we mean when using the word 'character') .

Some people are wiser than others, some more energetic . A Gandhi has *more* 'moral courage' than most of us; 'shallow' people have *less* 'insight' . It is through the manner in which one's spiritual energies are invested that an 'amount' of vitality, humanity or living presence is assigned to the individual. It may even be possible to investigate such phenomena scientifically.

This being said I do not want to go on record as having given my approval to the sort of amateur pseudo-science one finds in some areas of psychology and sociology, as exemplified by the frivolous experiments advertised to undergraduates on university bulletin boards as a way of picking up a few sorely needed dollars.

Prominent among such masquerades of seeming science figure 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 materialism, 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 the diagnostic codes are designed for the keeping of medical records from which psychiatrists can calculate the amount of money to charge for treatment. Quote :

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"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)

Money and statistics in other words. Although the permanent record of a patient's catalogue of "dysfunctions" may persist long after he has passed on, (a facsimile or frail remnant of his mental state) ; 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 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. The word as supercharged as *love* must be used with caution: it can, and has been used to signify everything and its opposite. At the same time the word itself points to an identifiable reality behind its superficial, fatuous or hypocritical employment, referring as it does to a real phenomenon universally present. One is thus therefore under an obligation to free it from its many extraneous and misleading connotations.

The attributes of love must be carefully distinguished from those or similar or related emotional states such as "passion",

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"obsession", "attachment", "involvement", "enthusiasm", "fanaticism", "egotism", "self-love" and "infatuation". All these states share important features with the true loving state, and to an unreflecting mind it might appear that they are equivalent.

"Love" may be advertised 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 attitude towards other living beings (even if, as in most situations in which it is misrepresented, a very narrow and select class of such.) 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?

One distinguishes the two great categories of emotional response to which the word "love" is applied, through the situations in which life-energy is in a "free" state, or in a "bound" state. *There is the love that liberates, and love that holds its subject in bondage* . The "love" that binds its possessor to a slavish dependence on its object is born of insufficiency; it resembles the craving of the drug addict, who endures great suffering if his needs are not met, who prepared to commit violence or even murder in their service .

In this regard there is something peculiarly annoying in 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!", all of which express a craving that has nothing to do with the well-being of its object and is rightly perceived by her or him as a threat rather than something one ought to encourage.

As has been so well expressed by the Christian apostle Paul, "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. It is a manifestation of the action of life energy in a state of freedom rather than bondage.

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.

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Life-energy in a condition of bondage is debased to a material state. There is more than mere analogy involved in this statement: 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 3 basic cycles of conservative 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 the psyche whose energies are in bondage. Because of this acute suffering will be elicited at each stage of the adjustment process as depicted in the previous chapters. In the history of philosophy, literature and religion 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:

<i>Present</i>	<i>Anxiety</i>	<i>Disease</i>	<i>Being</i>	<i>Potential- Kinetic</i>
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<i>Future</i>	<i>Anger</i>	<i>Death</i>	<i>Non-Being</i>	<i>Kinetic- Kinetic</i>
<i>Past</i>	<i>Depression</i>	<i>Old Age</i>	<i>Becoming</i>	<i>Potential- Potential</i>

Table 1

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.

CYCLE	ATTACHMENT	EMOTION
<i>Kinetic</i>	<i>Ego</i>	<i>Anger</i>
<i>Potential</i>	<i>Dependency</i>	<i>Depression</i>
<i>Potential-Kinetic</i>	<i>Appetite</i>	<i>Anxiety</i>

Table 2

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.

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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.

Although Anxiety may be thought of in terms of the coupling of Anger and Depression to produce "panic" (flight/fight instability as described by Catastrophe Theory) it is the

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fundamental state of emotional discomfort 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, anti-depressants, 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 must have an implicit understanding of this perspective.

Depression in the form of *melancholy* induces 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 describe 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 horror story 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)

For a mind fixated on future terrors the "past" receives little attention; it may be considered over and done with. The pure state of the anxious mind does not preoccupy itself overmuch with the consequences of past actions. Like every narrowly directed mental state the anxious mind is fixed upon the sole objective of

numbing painful worries over an unstable future through immersion in present gratification.

The flow chart for the Anxious Process is therefore:

Anxiety

Past	Present	Future
<i>Dispassionate</i>	<i>Pleasurable</i>	<i>Painful</i>

The for the mind obsessed by anger is radically different . Anger is the automatic reaction to an external threat, and is always seen by the angry person, (though not always by his victim), as justified by self-defense. On the psychological level this will be converted into the presentiment of some challenge to one's self-image, whether through pride, vanity or some cherished image of oneself. A life built around anger brings in its train such things as denial, elaborate cover-ups, ambition, ruthlessness, vengefulness and indifference to the suffering of others.

As stated previously, the apprehension of one's self-image always comes from its external reflection, in the same way that one's face is only indirectly visible in a mirror. One's *self* is to a large extent, only a reflection of what is already past and gone. Thus, even as the *Anxious Mind* is tormented by worry about the *future* , so the *Hostile Mind* is obsessed with protecting itself through reflection on *past* injury. This relates not at all to the justice or injustice of that injury: a deserved rebuke is often far more painful than one that is completely unmerited.

From the obsession with past wrongs there arises the ambition to vindicate oneself through vanquishing the assailant at some future time, or the lust for power. Thus, even as anxiety seeks diversion and gratification in the present, so the hating mind is *future-directed* in its search for gratification.

Present circumstances fall away, become matters of indifference. The hating mind has as little use for compassion as does the anxious mind for conscience. They distract from the main issue of the mental life, which is to numb the contemplation of painful realities: future disasters for the anxious mind, potential vulnerabilities for the mind obsessed by fear.

The flow chart for the Angry Process is therefore:

Anger

Past	Present	Future
<i>Painful</i>	<i>Dispassionate</i>	<i>Pleasurable</i>

Finally we consider the mourning or grieving state. We have all experienced grief, the incurable longing for what is lost, the death of a loved one, the failure to achieve a goal or ambition, alienation from one's community or one's family, the loss of abilities, faculties, skills. Like anger it is a response to an immediate or present suffering that is unavoidable. However in the case of anger the affront is being made to the "ego" or self-image ("wounded vanity"), whereas in the case of grief it is directed upon the loss of the external attachment from which the sense of self is derived.

To a grieving heart, revenge is pointless, as no amount of retribution can bring back what is dead. One's only refuge therefore lies in escape: escape into the past, into dreams, into a world of the imagination.

The flow chart for the Depressive Process is therefore:

Depression

Past	Present	Future
<i>Pleasurable</i>	<i>Painful</i>	<i>Dispassionate</i>

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

	Past	Present	Future
Anxiety	Dispassion: Thought without Affect Instability	Pleasure Desire Appetite	Suffering Terror Worry
Depression	Pleasure Fantasy Dreams	Suffering Despair Grief	Dispassion Paralysis

Anger	Suffering Guilt Denial	Dispassion Blindness False Pride	Pleasure Power Ambition Vindication
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Table 3
Psychic States and Temporal Phases

All 3 states are transformations of the fundamentally present-directed anxious state. Life has no option but to be lived in the present. ²

The 3 states do not abide in a vacuum but are contingently linked. Each is the cause of the other. What brings about the emergence of anxiety, and its fixing in 3 states, will be discussed in the following chapters.

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²In an interesting treatise "Modern Science and Zeno's Paradoxes" (Wesleyan University Press 1967) by the philosopher of science Adolf Grünbaum, the argument is presented that a philosophically acceptable definition of the "now moment" *requires* the presences of a sentient mind.