

Natural Inclusion

Four Paintings Depicting the 'Each in the Otherness' of Life

By Alan Rayner

At the 'Little Gallery', Bathford Community Café

November 12th – end December 2011

ACCOMPANYING NOTES

Introduction

Since childhood, I have drawn inspiration from the natural world and attempted to express my enthusiasm for its variety of form and colour in paintings. In adult life, I carried this enthusiasm into my work as a natural scientist and university teacher. I never saw good reason to separate my 'scientific side' from my 'artistic side', feeling that they could only enrich each other rather than clash. But I did notice that what my intuitive side was telling me about life is mostly ignored, if not disputed by modern analytical thought and method. My unconscious need to heal this rift, and what I now see as its terrible cost to humanity, became evident in my paintings during the 1970s, long before I became conscious of it in my scientific work. I acquired a colourful, technically unrefined, symbolic style in order to depict imaginary scenes that would come into my mind 'out of the blue'. An example is shown below (I had no awareness then of what is now known about the division of the human brain into an 'analytical' left hemisphere and an 'intuitive' right hemisphere, bridged together by a bundle of nerve fibres called the 'corpus callosum').



'Willowy Bridge' (Oil painting on board by Alan Rayner, 1974). *The chasm between the left and right worlds of hawkish (with 'tunnel vision') and serene (with 'all-round' vision) natures is conjoined by a bridge that brings each into the mutual influence of the other, allowing soulful passage into the 'open' through the veil in their midst. The bridge is in danger of being cut into opposing sides by a shaft of sunlight*

During the last decade or so, my increasingly conscious sense of obligation to 'heal the rift' has resulted in my effort to develop a new philosophy of empathy with the natural world and our human place within it. I call this philosophy 'natural inclusionality', and I like to think that it could help us all to escape from a needlessly hostile and unsustainable way of life, based on falsely cutting 'one' away from 'other', in order to live more caringly and co-creatively, with a deeper understanding of our true identity and natural neighbourhood. According to this understanding, we *inhabit* nature as 'flow-forms' in a limitless pool of

space, each in the others' influence, not as objects and subjects isolated by and cut apart from space.

The four paintings shown in this little exhibition and described below each depict this understanding of 'natural inclusion' in a different way. Two of them were prepared in conjunction with a poem. I have increasingly found myself writing poetry as a way of bridging what we can see analytically and describe verbally with what we can feel intuitively but cannot articulate in straightforward language.

“HOLDING OPENNESS”



(Oil painting on canvas by Alan Rayner, 2005). *Light as a dynamic inclusion of darkness continually brings an endless diversity of flow-form to Life.*

Holding Openness

*You ask me who you are
To tell a story you can live your life by
A tail that has some point
That you can see
So that you no longer
Have to feel so pointless
Because what you see is what you get
If you don't get the meaning of my silence
Because you ain't seen nothing yet*

*You ask me for illumination
To cast upon your sauce of doubt
Regarding what your life is all about
To find a reason for existence
That separates the wrong
From righteous answer
In order to cast absence out
To some blue yonder
Where what you see is what you get
But you don't get the meaning of my darkness
Because you ain't seen nothing yet*

*You look around the desolation
Of a world your mined strips bare
You ask of me in desperation
How on Earth am I to care?
I whisper to stop telling stories
In abstract words and symbols
About a solid block of land out there
In which you make yourself a declaration
Of independence from thin air
Where what you see is what you get
When you don't get the meaning of my present absence
Because you ain't seen nothing yet*

*You ask of me with painful yearning
To resolve your conflicts born of dislocation
From the context of an other world out where
Your soul can wonder freely
In the presence of no heir
Where what you see is what you get
When you don't get the meaning of my absent presence
Because you ain't seen nothing yet*

*You ask me deeply and sincerely
Where on Earth can you find healing
Of the yawning gap between emotion
And the logic setting time apart from motion*

*In a space caught in a trap
Where what you see is what you get*

*And in a thrice your mind is reeling
Aware at last of your reflection
In a place that finds connection
Where your inside becomes your outside
Through a lacy curtain lining
Of fire, light upon the water*

*Now your longing for solution
Resides within and beyond your grasp
As the solvent for your solute
Dissolves the illusion of your past
And present future*

*Now your heart begins to thunder
Bursting hopeful with affection
Of living light for loving darkness
Because you ain't felt no thing yet*

“LANDED STRANDED”



A reflection upon the evolutionary inversion from **aquatic** to **terrestrial life**

I used to be
Within the Sea
An identity
Of You and Me
Submerged
In Commonality
Of Sounding
Between Airy Heights
And Bottom Depths
Waving Correspondence
Through Inseparable Togetherness
Of Content with Context

But, Now,
Dry

Abstracted
Space comes between Us
A separating distance
An unbecoming Outside
Alienating Forms
As Fixtures
Stranded in Isolation
Entities
Non-identities
Conflicting
Oblivious of Our Belonging
Together

Oxygen
Now, moving Fast
Not Languidly
Tans our Hides
Protecting Our Inner Space
Against its own
Consuming Presence
Supporting Combustion
Burning Us Out

But all this sealing
Removes Our Feeling
Setting Our Content
At Odds with Our Context
So that we push
Against the Pull
With Backs to Front
Itching to Relieve
Unbearable Friction

And So Now
Just Let's Go
And, with Loving Fear
Dive into the Clear
And Swim Where it's Cool
To be In With the Pool
Together

“I’M MIGRATION”



(Oil painting on canvas by Alan Rayner, 1999). *Implicit in the outward forms of migrant birds and animals are travellers' tales of flights and treks, of arrivals, departures and time in motion. The migrants bring with them a cultural heritage that enriches the lives of residents. In its long journey, an English Swallow, dark from above, light from below, swallows landscape. Its travail begins in the elemental South African solar heat that is transformed by photosynthesis into Protea flowers. The heat generates a propelling force that carries the bird over veld, above water-seeking springboks, across deserted sand dunes and dark-light realms of fluttering hoopoes until green-topped, white cliffs signal arrival time before May begins to bloom. Speedwell urges onwards; forget-me-not reminds of home; cowslips reflect the strengthening warmth of rising sun, and terns join in aerobic arrival celebrations. But where is the welcome for human immigrants? Nothing reinforces cancerous invasive potential more strongly than the alienation of the new arrival, one way or the other.*

“HONEYSUCKLE SHARING CIRCLE”



‘Honeysuckle Sharing Circle’ (Oil painting on canvas by Alan Rayner, 2003). *The painting is centred around a candelabra of honeysuckle blooms. Each bloom is unique in its own sweet way and at a different stage of development - some unopened, some freshly bursting, others yellowing. The blooms face outwards in a representation of combined receptivity and responsiveness towards an inward facing fringe of other flowers, interleaved with grasses: white rockrose; red campion; orange hawkweed; yellow-wort; green hellebore; bluebell; a mystery plant (actually an artistically licensed version of woad, original source of indigotine); violet. The stalk of the honeysuckle winds spirally outwards and then back inwards and downwards to its self origin, creating a pool of reflection, black in the middle and transforming through shades of blue to silver around its outside. When no thing*

comes between, then no thing pools together a diversity of inner self with outer self-domains, waving correspondence through complementary relationship of one with another, embodying light with shadow across the spectrum of possibilities in common space.

Alan Rayner – A Brief Biography

Alan Rayner was born in Nairobi, Kenya in 1950. He obtained BA and PhD degrees in Natural Sciences at King's College, Cambridge and was a Reader in Biology at the University of Bath from 1985 - 2011. As an enthusiastic biological scientist, ecological philosopher, visual artist, poet and essayist, Alan has published over 160 academic papers, articles and book chapters, 7 formal academic books, 8 internet-downloadable books and over 40 internet-downloadable essays. He was President of the British Mycological Society in 1998 and has been a BP Venture Research Fellow and a Miller Visiting Research Professor at the University of California, Berkeley. He became a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts in 2010. He has held numerous research grants and contracts, contributed to a variety of science- and art-based TV and radio broadcasts and presented many seminars and conference papers as well as convening several international conferences and symposia. The latter include a pioneering Science-Art event, 'The Language of Water', which, in 2001, resulted in an acclaimed BBC Radio 4 series, 'Water Story', and in 2006 and 2007 'Unhooked Thinking I and II', two landmark conferences changing our perceptions of addiction. Since spring 2000, Alan has been pioneering 'natural inclusionality', a new philosophy and fluid boundary logic of self-identity and ecological and evolutionary diversity and sustainability.

Further information and downloadable publications can be found at <http://www.spanglefish.com/exploringnaturalinclusion>.