

# Re-balancing Nature's Inclusional Dance

Dr Louie J N Gardiner



## Marking out the ground I tread

♪ ♦ Everywhere I am, I am. I am everywhere. I am nature. I am not apart from it nor a part within it. The very idea of thinking in 'parts' and 'wholes' is, I suggest, another incarnation of reductionist and linear thinking, revealed in the binary proposition embedded in the notion that we should or could be moving 'from ego' to 'eco' to 'save the planet'. This framing perpetuates the myth that 'human' is outside of planet and can do things to it; can control what happens to it. This belies the reality that we are inextricably enmeshed with all that is planet. In othering planet we miss the point – planet is us. Saving planet is saving ourselves; to save ourselves we need to re-turn to what throws us out of balance: Ourselves, in context; and what we make of ourselves, in context – recognising that what we make of ourselves in context, finds context changing. This is acknowledging the principles of autopoiesis and natural inclusion at play in our natural world. In what follows, I illuminate these principles, showing that a practice of self-centering is neither egotistical nor contrary to eco; rather it is essential to re-balancing the patterns that are carrying us towards schismogenesis (see below).

## Attending to ourselves

♦ To turn our attention away from attending to ourselves and onto that which is outside ourselves, is to do more of what we have been doing for centuries – believing and acting as if we can bend nature to our design. Doing more of what we have been doing (i.e. the excessive emphasis and/or repetition of particular behavioural patterns), ultimately leads to schismogenesis (Bateson, 1972: p. 71-82), i.e. breakdown and self-destruction. What could help us avert the destructive trajectory in which we (humanity) find ourselves? I suggest that we need to change **the way we attend to our interior dynamical realms** to inform what else or more we do beyond the previous skin of our material selves (Gardiner, 2021, PhD pending publication).

♦ My emboldened phrase above may make my suggestion seem complex; really it is simple, though not easy. Why not easy? Because we are called to lay down common constructs/abstractions and cartesian

ways, long enough to re-member inherent ancient wisdom and re-turn to naturally inclusional, sensemaking ways – self-centering ways that attune us to our relational, situated selves.

▶♦ Do we have time to re-balance before cataclysmic planetary breakdown (i.e. self-annihilation)? I have no idea. But here, I offer what is mine to offer... without attachment to what becomes.

## Presence in Action

▶ In this article, I introduce some of what brought the self-centering praxis of Presence in Action (PIA) into being. When practised in community, in context, PIA engenders personal and collective response-ability, i.e. [seeding symmathesic agency](#). My realisation of this entangled relationship helped me comprehend that we cannot remove the intrapersonal from context without compromising the wellbeing of both.

[Click to HEAR](#) 🎵 **Re-membering me**

Music smooths my ragged edges  
cut and hacked by jagged barbs  
that spit from lips untrained and  
unconstrained by misdirected rage.  
She puts me in the villain's dock.  
Her darts that drip with toxic hate  
enchained by pain from kin's mistakes,  
shoot through thin skin and devastate.  
But wait! What she believes she sees  
reflects my own perceptual block.  
I take a breath. I pause for more.  
I see my frame across the floor  
and fall in – Feelings first, afore  
the rush of Fictions opens more,  
to Facts that halt my current shock!  
Upon the mat my weaving spins  
into view what's mine within  
to hold; just long enough to bring  
me home. Re-membering Me begins  
to break the lies that keep us locked.  
This is my way; my place with you –  
to deal with what is mine to heal.

(Gardiner, 2021)

▶🎵 PIA arose through a lifetime of personal sensemaking and professional/relational practice, enriched by academic foraging in third-person domains – the last of which, for seven years, has had me immersed in an unconventional inquiry anchored in systems studies. I mention this because my doctoral contributions – and indeed this article – rest on the **confluencing and communion of first-person (intrapersonal), second-person (interpersonal) and third-person (impersonal) sources of so-called knowledge**. I have come to realise that coherent sensemaking arises through the interrelating between all three; and that for this interrelating to occur at all, there has to be persons engaging with themselves, **reflecting on what they are making of all they encounter**, in their intrapersonal, relational and wider world realms. The philosophy of Natural Inclusionality (Rayner, 2017b, 2020d, 2021) exemplifies the stance I have inhabited.

[Click to HEAR 🎵 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<sup>ii</sup>.

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▶ I recognised that 'what I was making of my encounters' and the 'ways in which I was making what I was making' mattered, even though for a long while, I had no idea why. Nor did I anticipate what my 'makings' would or could illuminate about the import of my inquiry within my primary discipline, in the Academy, and most crucially for me, in the wider social/global context.

### Knowing expressing itself

▶ As my inquiry unfolded, I found new knowing insistently arising in me and expressing through a range of modalities. I noticed that all of my being was engaging in what I was doing. I coined a new word for these 'ways' that were showing up in and through me: statewaves (Gardiner, 2021, PhD pending publication: Thesis, p. 34-39). In time, I came to realise why these statewaves mattered... they too were showing that **coherent sensemaking needs all of them; and that when one or more are silenced or drowned out by another, non-sense prevails**. I mention them here and signal their presence using their associated icons:

🎵Aesthetic-Poetic; ≈Visual-Kinaesthetic; ♦Intellectual-Theoretic and ▶Navigator-Narrator.

▶ Rather than explaining them, I shall leave you to experience their distinctive natures as they show up in all you find herein. In so doing, I invite you to engage more of your being – more of your noticing, sensing, sensemaking faculties, to see what comes alive in you along the way.

[Click to HEAR](#) ▶ 🎵 **Ahead of the read...**

...take heed, as I invite you to enter into an experience of Attending Responding Becoming by engaging with the strange and familiar in the pages that follow. As you proceed, hold this in mind:

🎵 ♦ No element, whatever form, alone conveys what's held by all.

No wordy tomes do knowledge state, 'til human beings assimilate.

All knowing flows through interchange as Beings engage with what's  
in range.

Such knowing cannot be maintained – for each who learns is always  
changed.

What's been has gone; there's more to come – yet none can know what  
will Become.

I open up, welcome you in. If you respond...our dance begins...

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## Working systemically

▶ ♦ One of the questions catalysing my research was: *how to engage systemically with Self in systemic intervention?* My fascination carried me forth, not least because in the world of systems thinking and practice, most interventions are framed around working with groups with a driving imperative for 'scaling up'. *But what about individuals as complex living systems, in their own right?* I felt concerned that the individual was becoming 'part-itioned' and side-lined. I also had an inkling there was something awry in the way many so-called systemic interventions were positioned, realising that many are entrapped by the mechanistic mindset indicative of linear causality: *if we do this, that and the other, with as much of the 'system' as possible, then we will achieve the 'necessary' systemic change!* The contradiction between accepting the world as complex, ambiguous, unpredictable and volatile, juxtaposition to such thinking, perturbed me. I stepped up to my own challenge: *what would 'become' if I relinquished the dominant cartesian paradigm that infuses academic convention and, instead, attempted to fully embrace and embody 'not knowing' where my research would end up; and de facto, not presuming to know what I could or should do to get to 'somewhere'?* I realised that what was being called of me was, simultaneously, to be the research, be the researcher holding the research, be a participant in the research, and be an instrument of it. To attend to this complexity, I believed I needed to fine-tune the instrument that is me, to better comprehend what moved the Being that is me to do what I was (repeatedly) doing, not all of which was helpful!

[Click to HEAR](#) 🎵 **Particular Abyss**

Whether we gaze out through heavens to the stars

or drive our eyes into the Particular

abyss for answers of the universe; do

we not simply perceive what we are apt to  
see? Patterns of imagination? Defined  
manifestations made so by eyes and minds  
that cannot not craft worlds of explanation?  
Is 'all in all' our most profound delusion?

Perhaps, matter and matters of scale are nought  
but orderly illusions made real by thought;  
by those who meddle in realms beyond their Selves  
in search of truth which lies in etheric shelves?  
What consummate distraction by magician  
minds who avert our gaze by reaching out and  
out; and down and down, to what? For what? Where is  
THE place these searching souls don't dare to quiz?

As jet black nights fuel our fears, deluded minds  
with unrelenting pace, drive us wild with blind  
demands to play the tunes; so devilish hands  
can pull our puppet strings and command our dance.  
Those veiled rampant powers that yank our clanking chains  
have us trip and choke and burdened by our shame,  
for what we did and did not do. Shocked. Bemused.  
Caught by fear of blame. Bewildered and confused

that once again – to make the change, we fail.  
So on, on and on we chase horizon's tail -  
to catch the holy grail of hidden truths.  
And so the mirage beckons; teases sleuths  
who'll be seduced by promises of fame  
and grandeur. Make your name! Court worldly acclaim!  
Or choose the Noble Quest: Risk ruthless enmity  
over fame or vapid anonymity?

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▶ This poem, arriving at the very outset of my doctoral journey, shows 🎵Aesthetic-Poetic grasping what was beyond my 💎Intellectual-Theoretic reach. *Particular Abyss* proved to be a prescient anchor for all that was to become – and in more ways than the words it contains, and the meaning(s) it conveys. I did not intend to use poetic form, yet 🎵Aesthetic-Poetic repeatedly took charge. I did not set out to deploy visual, audio and animated formats, yet ≈Visual-Kinaesthetic drew me aside to scribble, create and extend my multi-media capabilities. I found myself admitting<sup>iii</sup> rather than censoring all that was coming through me. I gave myself permission to follow what showed up, trusting that ‘something’ would be revealed to me along the way. In this article I do not share all my ‘becomings’. Instead, I focus on that which seems most relevant to the ‘ego to eco’ theme: a way to attend to our internal processing, situated as we always are, in a relational and wider-world context. Amongst an incrementally growing group of practitioners engaging together as a community in practice, this has come to be known as the praxis of Presence in Action (PIA).

### Ego in eco

▶ ♦ In my poem ‘*Re-remembering me*’ I refer to a framework called the P6 Constellation, the representation which found its first instantiation in the form of a bespoke circular rug, upon which I invited people to walk as they talked.



Figure 1: Louie walking the mat (Photo Heshani Sothiraj-Eddleston, 2017)

▶ This is the central artefact that enabled the praxis of PIA, over innumerable iterations year upon year, to reveal itself to those of us 'having a go'. Within a, now extant, community-in-practice, it has become an accepted way of working systemically with individuals. It is an approach we learn, first by being hosted and supportively witnessed by others; and later, with practice, finding ourselves able to 'host' ourselves a) reflectively (looking back on challenging situations), and increasingly b) reflexively, attending to what arises in the here-and-now. This recognised praxis, came to be what it is – not because 'I decided' to make 'something' – but because I followed the invitation from others to share what I was noticing and drawing upon, as I worked with them. Our emerging dance evolved through this relational context that wove back and forth between our own personal processing, professional practice and our lives more generally. PIA came to be dynamically alive in us **before** we recognised it as a dynamical, patterned inquiry that, eventually, we were able to name.

◆ Engaging in PIA, releases us from being caught in and by our own habituated, sometimes destructive patterns of thinking and doing. It invites us to illuminate what is current in all that is present in the here-and-now situation; opening us up to ourselves and bringing us back into relationship, moment-to-moment, day-to-day, interaction-by-interaction. PIA is profoundly contextual and relational yet it relies on each of us centering in on ourselves, in context:

“the self-centering<sup>iv</sup> (reflective-reflexive, receptive-responsive) capacity of individuals to attend to what is present and current, in place in space in time”

(Gardiner, 2021, PhD pending publication: Chapter-Five-as-Appendix, p.301; Gardiner & Wilson, 2019).

◆ Self-centering, in this description, is neither selfish nor self-centered. My deliberate use of the active present participle, verb form, avoiding judgmental adjectives, acknowledges our dynamic reality: that we are always somewhere, and always moving – not separated by space but imbued, embraced and influenced by it. Everywhere we are, we are being~doing Beings. The principle of Natural Inclusion and primal animation<sup>v</sup> (Sheets-Johnstone, 1999, 2009, 2016a, 2016b) both acknowledge that 'moving' is the foundational indication of our living.

◆ Engaging in this self-centering praxis of PIA has us extending the scope and focus of our acuity (within and beyond our material selves), giving rise to ever-increasing agility, fluency and artistry in our lives. It illuminates and frees us from self-perpetuating delusions and non-conscious reactivity that perceptually and emotionally separate us, first from ourselves, and then de facto from others and the wider natural world in/of which, we are inextricably entangled. In attending to whatever is going on within us, we find ourselves increasingly able to re-engage with greater awareness of how we are impacting and impacted by all that is within and beyond us. [PIA seeds in us](#), the potential for ≈ [Symmathesic Agency<sup>vi</sup>](#):

“the **meta-conscious capacity** to engage in mutual contextual learning through self-centering interaction, in place in space in time”

(Gardiner, 2021, PhD pending publication: Glossary)

▶ ♦ In sum, PIA re-attunes us to being individually and relationally in and of nature, rather than apart from it. Symmathesis<sup>vii</sup> Agency becomes possible when individuals in community, attend to themselves, bringing into awareness and being released from, that which (non-consciously and often destructively) plays out through them.

▶ ♦ Now, is it really possible to invoke this meta-conscious capacity by focusing on ourselves? Let me tease out from an entangled mass, a single trace-line of what carried me to this realisation! To reiterate: what has arisen, is a fusion of dedicated, diligent intrapersonal, inter-personal and impersonal inquiry undertaken by me [using all of my Being](#) (i.e. re-incorporating subjective empiricism in systemic intervention theory and practice). To be [coherent](#) with this re-incorporating philosophical stance, I am called to write predominantly in first-person – using myself as the instrument expressing new knowing arising in me, as the researcher/practitioner engaged.

### **Self-centering is NOT self-centred**

▶ I am but one individual. I have done stuff. I have written stuff. I have played and worked; lost and gained; loved and learned; struggled and overcome my own mental health challenges. I have striven to make change happen in communities, organisations, teams, relationships. And for many years, I was non-consciously<sup>viii</sup> trapped in a grand delusion until I stepped back to reflect on my and our present and past reality:

“While the earth keeps spinning, we as human beings find ourselves flailing and roiling in self-made messes that threaten not only our own extinction but the potential destruction of a planet that sustains all of life as we know it. We have separated ourselves from ‘it’; and elevated our species to a god-like status under the mistaken illusion that we are grand masters who control the world. How can this be possible when most of us can barely control what happens in our own lives and relationships?”

(Gardiner, 2019: p.1)

▶ In every presumptive external intervention I undertook, I failed at ‘God’s’ game; yet succeeded in changing the only thing I can – though not because I set out to do it! Reflecting on myself and my failed attempts at changing ‘others/organisations/communities’, I found myself changing. Now, I have been told by many that they’ve benefitted from what I did with them. For a long while, I accepted their flattery, inflating my ego, believing that it was me who was making the difference. But the more I explored my own interior dynamical processing, contemporaneously with other lenses drawn from natural, systems, complexity and cognitive sciences, the more I came to recognise the limitations of my assumed power to effect (desired) change in/of others. In particular, I found resonance with the theory of autopoiesis (Froese & Stewart, 2012; Maturana, 1975; Maturana & Poerksen, 2004; Maturana & Varela, 1980, 1987; Varela et al., 1974; Varela, 1992) – which suggests that, whilst an external realm may shift in some way, it is living entities that determine the nature of any change they undergo, by what they make (interiorly) of that external shifting terrain. Similarly, terrain shifts in its own way, in accordance with what it encounters. Living beings and niche co-evolve in nonlinear fashion.



As living beings, we learn/change by what we do with what we encounter, and not because some omnipotent presence makes us change in ways they think would be good for us! Yes someone can push us across the floor or physically harm us using brute strength, but transformational (state) change is determined from within, not by forces beyond us. I experienced profound relief, when I finally realised that I cannot change anyone. Beyond physical force where Newton's laws do actually apply, I cannot make others think, feel, do, learn just because I want them to. To put this in the context of this exchange with you, dear Reader: I write what I write; but what you make of what I write, will arise because of all that is in you which will determine how you engage with what I offer on the page, i.e. your current meaning-making patterns and perceptual filters will have you look for what is familiar/different, evoking ease/discomfort or resonance/resistance within you, ultimately determining what you do with what I offer. If you are unaware of what you are (not) noticing, you are more likely to be caught in your own perceptual filtering, rather than curious and open to what is unfamiliar.

▶ 🎵 When I was a little girl living in Lusaka, Zambia I loved reading adventure stories for girls – books my mother bought me for Christmas each year. I remember thinking:

“When I grow up I want to be the heroine!”

▶ 🎵 I wanted to be the one who would save the day, save others, save the world! When I let in what I witness playing out across the world today, that little girl with her dreams of being the saviour, returns to me in full magnitude.

▶ 🎵 Through my childhood and on into my adult life, this drama played me over and over again... until, after years and years of recycling introspection, I began to recognise that my wanting to “save you and the world” was not really about you or the world. I discovered previously inaccessible, deeply rooted emotional drivers based on fragments of experience woven into patterns of imagined narratives – fictions presented as if they were irrefutable, factual accounts of my childhood. My repeating behaviours revealed to me how desperate I was to prove that I was worth having around... because, if I could do that, then I would protect myself from what I was holding as FACTS but which were actually beliefs that “I was ALL wrong” and that “everyone I loved left me behind and never came back”. I had come to believe that if I proved my worth, then all those people would stay! None of this was an objective reality – although there is a kind of illogical logic at play that is grounded in some of the facts<sup>ix</sup> of my early life as a colonial child born and living in Africa.

▶ ♦ My meaning-making was non-conscious. I did not engage in a rational, linear thinking process that led to decisions which I then choice-fully enacted. To suggest we human beings process like this is a myth that, some say, took root in the time of Descartes; and it has been promulgated in the name of so-called ‘good’ science ever since!

▶ ♦ The insights I have since gained through understanding complex living systems have helped me appreciate the nonlinear, self-organising dynamics that play out, not only between individuals but within each of us – me and you included. The framework of the **P6 Constellation** within the context of the praxis of PIA,

along with its accompanying **Acuity Practice** helps us explore this interior realm in a manner consistent with this complexity thinking paradigm. I call this consistency [metallogic coherence](#) (Gardiner, 2021, PhD pending publication): i.e. where the form/framework/metaphor (NB. I introduce the neologism 'metaphorm') used in an intervention, the nature of the practice/process(ing) and the paradigm and principles enforming<sup>x</sup> them are mutually consistent with each other. Put simply, undertaking research about complexity but doing it by applying mechanistic protocols founded on principles of linear causality, would not be metallogically coherent. What we actually do and the structure of metaphorm we deploy reveal the embedded assumptions driving us. Our words often do not match what we claim or espouse. My research laid bare this dissonance and the concept of metallogic coherence illuminates with such simple clarity, why so many transformational change projects fail: because despite the words and concepts used, the actual processes, methods and approaches deployed remain squarely constrained by non-conscious mechanistic assumptions, i.e. that complex change can be engineered or built by humans.

### **Beyond dualist delusions**

▶♦ What is happening within each of us in the context of our relationships and wider world, is simultaneously way more complex and way more simple than the Cartesian delusion, i.e. that reductionism and cause-effect thinking can augment man's abilities to bend nature to his will. Yet, on the face of it, when we look around at our cityscapes and landscapes, human impact suggests otherwise. What we see belies the imperceptible nonlinear causal consequences running beneath the surface; until such time as unanticipated effects begin to seep and break through uncontrollably. To release ourselves from the Cartesian constructs, we need to engage differently from the inside out. I dedicate the rest of this article to a way of exploring and illuminating this interior realm – Presence in Action.

♦ Let's start with how the Cartesian illusion sets us up for the consequences of the binary game: bad/good; wrong/right; ugly/beautiful; lose/win; friend/foe; and how easily we may be drawn into pursuing the 'true, good and beautiful'. Elevating positive psychology and championing approaches such as Appreciative Inquiry, all too easily, can have us slide into rejecting anything we judge as false, bad and ugly. These binary propositions are the fruits of simplistic meaning-making. For example, some people believe Donald Trump is a good and [trustworthy](#) individual because they AGREE with him and what he says and does. The same is true about Boris Johnson with regard to the Brexit debate in the UK. And yet, who says any of us has the right to be the arbiter of what and who is good, fair, just and right? This is tricky territory, made more so, when we present such notions as if they are absolutes – Facts or Truths that are irrefutable, when in actuality they are not. They are meanings people are making about situations, events, people etc. Some people may make the same meanings. Equally, different people make different meanings about those same situations, people, events; and some people make the same meanings about different situations, people, events.

▶♦ Now I am not advocating an 'anything goes' mentality that will have us all fall into the black hole that is fake news - where just because you utter something somehow means it's true! Far from it. I am saying that we gloriously messy, muddled, emotion-fueled, meaning-making, relational beings can develop and leverage

our capacities to be more **metalogically coherent in and with ourselves and our world**. We are living in a world which seems to be straining to maintain its coherence amidst the reverberating consequences of our actions. I am making a case for recognising that we ARE nature and that when we act in ways that are not coherent with being nature, we harm ourselves first... and this ripples out into all that is beyond our enmeshed, entangled, being-doing bodies. If we remain blind to our own agency and impact – we separate ourselves and turn our attention onto others, blaming them for all that we judge as wrong, bad, ugly, irresponsible etc. In separating ourselves we imply that they did the bad things and we – (who **never** would do what they have done!) are the righteous victims. This seemingly gets us off the hook, because it means it is they – not us – who have to put right the wrongs. If we maintain that we are not culpable, we invoke the contradictory myth that we are powerless and they are all powerful. And so the binary dilemma stares back at us: How can we be all powerful in changing the world to our demands, yet powerless in the face of getting others to change? In truth, in this entangled complex reality where *everything is interrelating tangibly and intangibly*, we are both. We are implicated everywhere we are; and with that, in my view, comes responsibility: radical responsibility to enhance our response-ability, enabling us to act from a state of metalogic coherence.

▶🎵 It took me years to realise that in many challenging situations in which I found myself, I had neither recognised nor accepted responsibility for the part I had played. Over years, I came to appreciate the flaws in this meaning-making dance within me; and discovered that anytime I fell into making another person wrong or bad, this was a clue to what was awry and off-centre in me! When I opened up to what I was noticing and started attending to my own meaning-making, something rather amazing happened. A [naturally incorporating sensemaking](#) brought me home to myself, free of judgement, full of compassion and with a renewed ability and commitment to engage with those I had been blaming, with loving, bold humility. Now I am not saying I am 'fixed'. I am engaged in continuing process(ing). Each time I **admit**<sup>xi</sup> my own internal dissonance and all that is bringing this alive in me, I find myself responding to the situation with greater, clarity, self-assurance – a sense of trusting that how I am responding is fitting for the situation and me in it.

▶♦ Gaining such awareness does not come easy – at least it did not for me. And to imagine we can be fixed once and for all, is to fall again into the Cartesian trap. While ever we are alive, we are attempting to make sense of all that is going on around us, in a way that helps us know what to do. The key question for me, is do we want our processing to be driven by reactive, fast thinking (Kahneman, 2011) or enformed by increasingly attuned, responsive sensemaking that helps us attend to that which is unfamiliar?

### **Symmathesic agency born of personal processing**

▶🎵♦ As I alluded to earlier, I struggled emotionally for many years. Over the decades of my life, I sought explanations and solutions to fix the me who, back then, I believed was broken and all wrong. I chased after models and theories which I believed would provide me with **the** answer to my problems. Some were so abstracted from my lived experience as to be distressingly useless to me. Others afforded useful insights; yet most were largely impractical in helping me cope with what was going on in me, moment-to-moment. Increasingly, I found myself drawing upon my own sensemaking whilst interacting with others, and finding

resonances with various bodies of work. The arrival of the praxis of PIA bears testament to this interplay between personal knowing (first-person), interpersonal (second-person) and impersonal (third-person) knowledge sources. I came to the realisation that these cannot be split apart without imbalance, discordance and systemic perturbation arising. Yet the imperative to split, sits at the heart of the philosophy of science. This contradicts the principle of natural inclusion (Rayner, 2017a, 2017b, 2018, 2020b), denying us access to metalogically coherent approaches such as PIA, which are attuned instead, to the philosophy of Natural Inclusionality (Rayner, 2020c, 2020d).

► Nowadays, I am but one of a growing number of PIA Practitioners. We engage regularly in our community-in-practice, deepening and extending our acuity, agility, fluency and artistry in our daily lives. We do our personal processing; support each other 1-1, informally and in praxis-development triads; we engage in supervision and support new people to experience this work as practice partners in formal training sessions; and we participate in up to four community-in-practice gatherings each year. These take place in person and online depending on what is possible. This extending learning ecosystem co-evolves as our learning needs shift with the wider contexts in which we find ourselves. We constantly experiment with new ways to organise and take action, alone and together, in ever-shifting configurations. In January 2019 we established ourselves as a Community Interest Company – PIA Collective – to bring PIA to people everywhere we are. Our economic exchange model is based on what we call a ‘Sufficiency Principle’ in which we, along with many others, recognise that [enough is enough](#)<sup>xii</sup>.



Figure 2: Enough is Enough, performed at COP26, Glasgow, (Photo Dave Hammond, 10 November 2021)

▶🎵 Through PIA Collective's Sufficiency Principle we are offering an alternative to Corporate Social Responsibility that is **attuned to natural needfulness** (Rayner, 2011, 2017b, 2020a) i.e. **the flow dynamic evident in nature, where energy, invoked by receptive space, flows from full to empty**. The flow dynamic playing out in global economies, **is perverting this natural flow** in at least two ways: a) by **those who have more than enough**, seeking to **accumulate more and more**; and b) by **those who have nothing other than themselves, e.g., migrants from war-torn/impooverished states, 'flowing to where they believe there is plenty'**. Noticing what I have just written, I tune in to myself. What is going on within me, when this reversion of natural flow shows up in my ways of being-doing? In the first, I judge myself as 'greedy'; in the second, as 'needy'. Neither judgement is helpful because they distract my attention from what else is going on within me. In daring to sit amidst the rushing tumble of feelings that I want to run away from (e.g. shame, disgust, embarrassment, guilt etc.), I finally tap into what is driving both patterns when they show up in me: **my perceived or actual fear (believing) that I will 'not have enough to survive'**. Such meaning-making is non-consciously derived from past experiences when my natural needfulness (e.g. for shelter and/or physical or emotional sustenance) was not met.

▶ Whenever I find myself turning to judge others, I now know that this is a sign that I am (non-consciously) accusing and trying to protect myself from **facing something in/about me**. Until/unless I engage in this interior inquiry, I compromise my own trustworthiness. What helps me? Continuing to engage with others equally committed to safeguarding their own trustworthiness. Being part of the PIA Collective community-in-practice, is re-shaping what it means to be in relationship as friends, partners, peers, parents, colleagues, siblings, supervisors, artists, mediators, managers, musicians, coaches, therapists, teachers, learners, facilitators, hosts. Through PIA we are equipping ourselves to attend with more attuned response-ability in the heat and immediacy of everyday encounters. And in so doing, we are liberating ourselves into engaging more freely, joyfully, responsibly and coherently with others, in all we do in our lives, everywhere we are. This is [≈Symmathesic Agency](#) revealing itself in and through us as the living-learning individual and collective symmathesies we are becoming!

## A taste of PIA

▶ I am aware that my knowing about this way of being-doing (PIA) is in **and of** me, and my writing about it can only give you a glimpse of what it is, how it works and what it might bring to you. ▶🎵 ≈ However, let's see if I can open the space for you to get a taste of PIA.

≈ ♦ I invite you to walk into the shallows of this way of engaging and illuminating the content and dynamics that run within you. Below, I introduce you to some distinctions about a few words used in the P6 Constellation framework. There are key words in six outlying 'portals', held in self-centering communion by a space called 'Presence'. Here, I introduce you to the foundational four<sup>xiii</sup> that open a place for us to play:

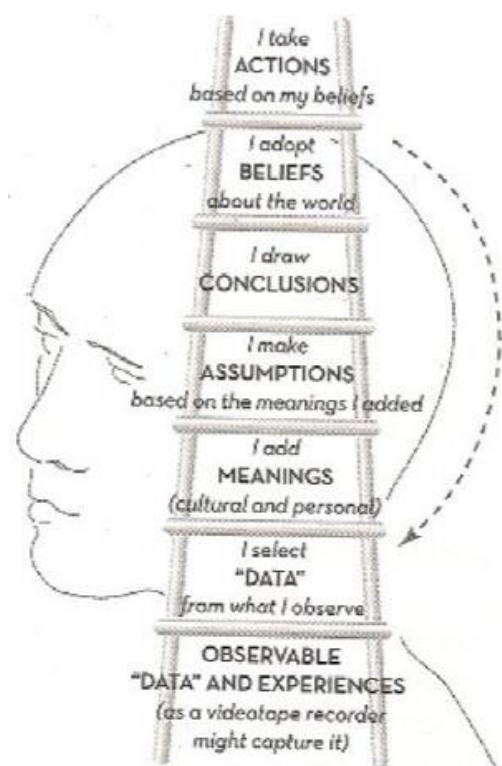
PRESENCE: becoming present to what is 'present' and 'current' within and beyond us, in any given situation in which we find ourselves. Imagine standing in the 'still point' at the centre of a vortex like a hurricane, seeing all that is spinning around you, yet remaining free of the turbulence. Presence, to some, affords a sense of being connected to the Divine. In the P6

Constellation, we understand Presence as a state of being in which we may be free of attachment, yet wholeheartedly connected to all that is in and around us. This portal represents a place in which we invite ourselves or another into a receptive state of 'acuity' – invoking our capacity to 'notice', using all the faculties known and, as yet, unknown to us.

- ◆ The space of Presence invites us to notice what we notice, and to use the surrounding portals of the framework to illuminate the content and nature of what is showing up within us. Through a simple acuity process (how we enquire), aided by the visual representation and a receptive, nonlinear way of holding our process(ing), we find ourselves noticing more than we usually do.
- ◆ The 3Fs within the P6 Constellation include: FACTS, FEELINGS and FICTIONS. The distinctions we make between these are crucial. Everything finds a place within the P6 Constellation and all – tangible and intangible – is considered data:

**FACTS:** Past and present events/happenings - including what was said/done, or not said/done and by whom. This is a type of data which is available to all of us; only some of which is accessible to each of us. Accessibility is limited by our proximity to what is happening; our perspective in relation to what we witness; and by the way in which we 'filter' what we notice, which is affected by our past experiences and what we make of those experiences. Put simply – we find what we are looking for, thereby proving it is there!

**FEELINGS:** a simple, catch-all term that includes our physical and physiological sensations i.e., somatosensory (muscles, connective tissue, skin); proprioceptive (movement and posture) and interoceptive (our internal organs e.g. heart, lungs, guts); AND what we ordinarily call 'emotions' such as anger, joy etc. Only the person feeling the feelings knows what their feelings feel like!



**The Ladder of Inference:** Argyris (1982) and Senge (1994)

And finally

**FICTIONS:** "what my mind does with...." This is about the meanings we make of what we notice, feel and experience. In the P6 Constellation we use this catch-all term for all the labels which refer to 'different types' of meaning-making e.g. beliefs, conclusions, assumptions, interpretations, myths, stories, values, memories from the past, future imaginings.

♦ Why use the term FICTIONS? In our super-fast internal processing (see Daniel Kahneman's book 'Thinking Fast and Slow'), we do not (have time to) differentiate between numerous sub-divisions and abstractions such as we might find in philosophy and academic disciplines; nor indeed in practice-oriented offerings such as those identified in Peter Senge's image of the Ladder of Inference (Senge, 1994) - building on the work of Argyris (1982).

♦ We also do not internally process in the progressively linear, seemingly objective manner as is implied by Argyris's ladder metaphor on the previous page – which you might note, makes no reference to emotionality. In the P6 Constellation, the middle five steps of this ladder are held within the Fictions portal. This distinction matters! This accounts for the reality that our inner processing is chaotic and nonlinear, with recursive interdependencies over which we have no fundamental control. We filter what we notice and make meaning of what we see, hear and feel even though (until we become practised) we are usually unaware of the details of what we have noticed and what we have missed.

♦ So – we are subject to the complex interplay between: our past-influenced, filtered 'noticings' (partial FACTS); the FEELINGS we feel amidst our noticings; our meaning-making (FICTIONS) of our filtered noticings; and our meaning-making of our meaning-making (more FICTIONS)! As you can see, often we are not reacting to WHAT factually happened, or is happening in the here and now. The more these patterns replay, the more they become locked in. Our fast-thinking patterns persist until we slow down sufficiently to become aware of the content and dynamics keeping them in play.

▶ ♦ What I have found through the praxis of PIA, is that our stuck patterns of meaning-making substantively change only WHEN we illuminate new or unnoticed 'data' which, through their revelatory arrival, serve to disrupt our previously locked-in, meaning-making patterns. Fragmentation/disintegration is a requisite for reconfiguration into new patterns. All this all is simply and elegantly scaffolded in the praxis of PIA, through which we become 'Presences' in action.

♦ Within the framework of the P6 Constellation, we accept FICTIONS, FACTS and FEELINGS as 'raw data'. These simple data-types keep us as close as is possible to our experiences – made accessible to ourselves and others in the words, gestures and representations we adopt as we attempt to comprehend what is manifesting; and as we attempt to communicate with each other about it all. In using, sharing and witnessing what unfolds as we deploy the P6 Constellation, people come to recognise that these three core types of data (the 3Fs) are necessary, yet not always sufficient for a clear, clean, coherent exchange between us<sup>xiv</sup>. When we omit one or more of these, the listener fills in the gaps with their personal and/or intergenerational experiences, meaning-making and future projections. This dramatically increases the likelihood of misinterpreting and misunderstanding.

### **Now let's put these distinctions to work...**

▶ In the pages that follow, I share several quotes. I invite you to discern Facts, Feelings and Fictions in these statements. As you use your cognitive faculties to identify the 3Fs distinctions, notice what else begins to show up within you. Hold these three questions in mind:

- Which of the 3Fs are evident in the quote?
- What FEELINGS do you notice arising in YOU as you read these quotes?
- What FICTIONS do YOU make of what is said and who said it?

## The Quotes

### Quote 1: Nicola Sturgeon, 24.6.2016

“Yesterday, Scotland - like London and Northern Ireland - voted overwhelmingly to remain in the EU. We voted to protect our place in the world's biggest single market - and the jobs and investment that depend on it. We voted to safeguard our freedom to travel, live, work and study in other European countries. And we voted to renew our reputation as an outward-looking, open and inclusive country.”

*Which of the 3Fs are evident in the quote?*

FACTS	FEELINGS	FICTIONS

*What FEELINGS do I notice arising in me as I read this quote?*

*What FICTIONS do I make of what is said and who said it*

### Quote 2: Katie Hopkins, 08.09.2019

“I think women are really vicious in the work place, they’re really jealous, really competitive. Women are emotional, they cry in toilets. The sisterhood only extends as far as the kitchen door. Men talk in logic and rational terms, they don’t squark and make a noise.”

*Which of the 3Fs are evident in the quote?*

FACTS	FEELINGS	FICTIONS

*What FEELINGS do I notice arising in me as I read this quote?*

*What FICTIONS do I make of what is said and who said it*



### Quote 3: Osama bin Laden, 2005

“Every Muslim, from the moment they realise the distinction in their hearts, hates Americans, hates Jews, and hates Christians.”

*Which of the 3Fs are evident in the quote?*

FACTS	FEELINGS	FICTIONS

*What FEELINGS do I notice arising in me as I read this quote?*

*What FICTIONS do I make of what is said and who said it*

► Do go to the [Appendix](#) if you want to check your acuity in discerning the 3Fs. You might even have some fun going through this with a pal!

Before moving on, I invite you to ponder these questions. As you went through the above quotations:

- What did you notice? What did your pal notice?
- What did you notice about what you (each) noticed?
- What did you discover about yourself and each other?

### And the point of practising?

► ♦ Now, how does fluency in the 3Fs and PIA support us to address climate change, Brexit, religious and political fundamentalism, or spiraling Mental Health challenges?

► 🎵 To answer this I first want to refer to one of my favourite films, “Karate Kid”. Daniel wanted to be a karate expert in an instant. My Miyagi knew that there was no fast-track to that level of artistry – the art of defence in the face of offense. He set out Daniel-San’s learning path which the young boy, at first, resisted. First he got Daniel to paint the very large fence surrounding his Japanese garden, alternately using both hands and arms using the brush in a motion straight up and straight down. Brush up; brush down. Brush up; brush down. Brush up; brush down. Then, when Daniel thought he was done, Mr Miyagi put him onto his next task: to wax and polish all the cars in the parking lot, again using both arms – wax on, wax off. Wax on, wax off. Wax on, wax off. Daniel started to believe that Mr Miyagi was taking advantage of him (Fictions) and walked off (Facts) in frustration and anger (Feelings). Only on coming face to face with his bullies, did Mr Miyagi’s tangential teachings reveal their worth to Daniel. Practice. Practice. Practice, until it becomes your practice. The movements he did repeatedly in painting the fence and polishing the cars, were the core components of karate – defending himself when under attack.

▶ In PIA Collective, our community-in-practice gatherings, supervision and triad practice sessions are our equivalent of 'wax on, wax off'. They afford opportunities to practice personal processing; practice hosting each other; practice witnessing and holding the space for others as they practice processing and hosting.

▶ 🎵 The joys and unanticipated benefits of practising our praxis arise as we connect, open and expand in all our humanity together. We access the true that is raw, messy, unpredictable and fallible in each of us. This liberates an essential goodness in each of us, expressed through humility, compassion and forgiveness for ourselves and each other. And we burgeon with the undeniable beauty of the life-force of Nature that cannot not express itself when we access acceptance of who we are and what IS. We unlock none of this when we 'choose' to remain suffocating beneath the deluge of fake news in our own minds, coming out of our own mouths; as well as the sanitised positivity and pursuit of pretence-ful success and happiness. Such myths maintain the tyranny that has us judge ourselves and each other, as somehow mad, bad or deviant if we experience feelings such as shame, rage, guilt, despair, anxiety, resentment and bitterness. Rejecting these naturally occurring, energetic-affective states denies us accessing curiosity and intrigue which can help us discover what (non-)sense we may be 'making' of the past, present and future situations, relationships and contexts in which we find ourselves or imagine ourselves to be.

◆ Many approaches seek to categorise people, behaviours or conditions. [Presence in Action](#) does none of this. In essence, it enables each person to admit what is presenting within them; to meet and attend to whatever is showing up. This naturally inclusional approach is profoundly accepting, and it is this acceptance that enables the illumination of what previously was inaccessible to us. Such revelations ultimately free us from non-consciously recreating our self-made messes – messes we are co-creating through flawed perceptions, misconceptions and reactivity.

### **PIA seeding symmathesic agency**

◆ This self-centering dynamic of PIA may not look like a way of reverting and averting the damage human kind is having on the world. Certainly, those who venture here initially do not come because of their concerns about the planet. They come because they have witnessed change in others or they have reached a point in their lives when they know something has to change. They no longer want to be experiencing life as they currently are.

▶ 🎵 ◆ In coming into this space, they are able to meet themselves in ways they have never done before. In so doing, they begin to recover their relationship with themselves. What is changing in them trickles into their relationships. They begin to manifest this meta-conscious capacity: noticing what they did not notice previously, shifts their interactions with family, friends, children, colleagues. This catalyses changes in others but not in ways anyone can invoke on demand; nor trace through direct causal links.

◆ No one engaging with this praxis need know anything about the theoretical explanations that illuminate what and how it seems to 'work'. It does work. People pick it up without necessarily realising, because it is metalogically coherent with their/our inherent, natural ways of processing. This makes sense of the fact that children grasp it easily.

♦ The personal-relational context provided by PIA Collective is crucial. The mutually supporting, relational realm of this community-in-practice affords the space within which we each can meet ourselves, wherever we are. Practising together incorporates the notion of “complex self-identities” which recognises that we each have the capacity to act both individually and relationally (Mead, 1934; Rayner, 2005; Tesson, 2006); i.e. that when we hold ourselves as being in and of nature, the actions of ‘collective others’ do not preclude or deny the actions/agency of ‘ones’. The praxis of PIA and the existence of the PIA Collective community-in-practice are living manifestations of this: individuals practising collectively seeding [symmathesic agency](#).

Yes, we are in this together, and no, we cannot leave what is ours to do, to anyone else.

## Closing invitation

Given that I may be opening up rather than resolving curiosities, please do feel free to [email me](#) for more information, check out my [website](#) or sign up to [experience PIA](#) for yourself.

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She has been passionately involved in liberating human potential for 30+ years. Her pioneering approaches are born of an enduring commitment to act for the wellbeing of all and to safeguard her own trustworthiness in whatever she does. Her body of work represents the fusion of real-world practice and academic research. Presence in Action and Symmathesic Agency are at the heart what she offers. This integrating body of work – underpinned by principles of natural inclusion, complexity thinking and primal animation – brings together radically different approaches to catalysing and nurturing personal and collective capacities for generative change – consciously, creatively, playfully.

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# Appendix – Differentiating the ‘3 Fs’

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## Analysis of quotes

### Quote 1: Nicola Sturgeon, 24.6.2016

“Yesterday, Scotland - like London and Northern Ireland - voted overwhelmingly to remain in the EU. We voted to protect our place in the world's biggest single market - and the jobs and investment that depend on it. We voted to safeguard our freedom to travel, live, work and study in other European countries. And we voted to renew our reputation as an outward-looking, open and inclusive country.”

<i>What is present &amp; absent in the quote?</i>		
FACTS	FEELINGS	FICTIONS
Yesterday, [a majority of people in] Scotland - like London and Northern Ireland – voted... to remain in the EU.		Overwhelmingly ... we voted to protect our place in the world's biggest single market - and the jobs and investment that depend on it. We voted to safeguard our freedom to travel, live, work and study in other European countries. And we voted to renew our reputation as an outward-looking, open and inclusive country.

### Quote 2: Katie Hopkins, 08.09.2019

“I think women are really vicious in the work place, they’re really jealous, really competitive. Women are emotional, they cry in toilets. The sisterhood only extends as far as the kitchen door. Men talk in logic and rational terms, they don’t squark and make a noise.”

<i>What is present &amp; absent in the quote?</i>		
FACTS	FEELINGS	FICTIONS
I think ...		... women are really vicious in the work place, they’re really jealous, really competitive. Women are emotional, they cry in toilets. The sisterhood only extends as far as the kitchen door. Men talk in logic and rational terms, they don’t squark and make a noise.

### Quote 3: Osama bin Laden, 2005

“Every Muslim, from the moment they realise the distinction in their hearts, hates Americans, hates Jews, and hates Christians.”

What is present & absent in the quote?		
FACTS	FEELINGS	FICTIONS
		Every Muslim, from the moment they realise the distinction in their hearts, hates Americans, hates Jews, and hates Christians.

### Notes

- <sup>i</sup> 'Ego' in common vernacular has become a short-hand pejorative term indicating selfishness or self-centredness in a person. In some psychological traditions, Ego has been 'thingified' – i.e. it is an abstract concept made into a noun, but when used, it is pointing to particular patterns of behaviour.
- <sup>ii</sup> Inclusionality: (Gardiner, 2018; Rayner, 2004a, 2004b, 2017a, 2017b, 2018; Shakunle & Rayner, 2009) Alan Rayner first used this term in 2004 to illuminate reality as he has come to know it. His revelations/synthesis challenges the assumptions on which Darwinian thinking is based. He also exposes the assumptions that pervade mathematics and physics. Alan now uses the term 'Natural Inclusionality' (2016, 2018).
- <sup>iii</sup> Admit: I leverage all meanings of this word, to let in, recognise, accept, accept as valid.
- <sup>iv</sup> Self-centering refers to past-oriented (reflective) to in-the-moment (reflexive) acuity and adaptability; 'receptive-responsive' acknowledges the flow dynamics between receptive-responsive presences according to the principle of natural inclusion (Rayner, 1997, 2004a, 2011, 2017b, 2018) where "receptive space invokes in-flowing responsive energy" (Gardiner, 2021, PhD pending publication: Chapter-Five-as-Appendix, Figure A-63, p.524)
- <sup>v</sup> According to Sheets-Johnstone, animation is the fundamental condition of/for life. While ever we are alive we are animate i.e. moving, even in sleep; when all that is us, stops moving, we will in fact be dead!
- <sup>vi</sup> ▶ Please do follow the hyperlink for an introduction to the notion of Symmathesic Agency, carried by ≈ Visual-Kinasethetic and ♪ Aesthetic-Poetic
- <sup>vii</sup> Nora Bateson (Bateson, 2016: p. 169-194) coined the term symmathesy for trans-contextual, living-learning systems.
- <sup>viii</sup> I deliberately adopt this term instead of 'subconscious' which is associated with psychological theories and particular meanings which do not align with what I mean here: a neutral descriptive term of that which is outside our awareness.
- <sup>ix</sup> I recount some of the facts of my earlier life experience, in this video link: [A mask is the sign of a dead soul](#).
- <sup>x</sup> *Erforming*: meaning 'to form or fashion' what is becoming. This archaic word is more fitting than the present day term 'informing'
- <sup>xi</sup> In using this word, I take to mean all that it means: acknowledge that something is there, accept it, let it in and accept that it has validity i.e. it is there with something to 'say'.
- <sup>xii</sup> Song written by Karine Polwart, sung by her, the Soundhouse Choir, Oi Musica and Govan Primary School, COP26, Glasgow, 10 November 2021.
- <sup>xiii</sup> The remaining three portals – Purpose, Outcomes and Decisions - help us access the deeper patterns that play within and through us beyond our conscious awareness. The way these come to life in practice cannot easily (if at all) be conveyed through written explanation. (Gardiner, 2021, PhD pending publication)
- <sup>xiv</sup> The other three types of internal contents in the P6 Constellation come into play alongside the 3Fs. They are essentially nuanced Fictions. They are harder to access as they run more deeply in our non-conscious processing, linking what is present in the here and now, to past experiences and future projections. Surfacing all that is running in us **initially** requires being supported by experienced hosting, although with practice, becomes accessible to anyone.

