



This manifesto is written on behalf of
THE FOUNDATION FOR THE UNHARMONIOUS DEVELOPMENT OF MAN
- dedicated to the escalation of creative conflict and the ruthless perpetration of knowledge



THE ART OF CREATIVE CONFLICT

We apparently live in a violent world. Every day the newspapers are full of rapes, muggings, murders and wars. Television feeds us a constant diet of simulated violence - war films, cops and robbers etc. Conflict of one sort or another is widely perceived as a social evil. Conflict is seen as a problem in need of solution. There is a widespread belief that man should live in peace and harmony both with his fellow man and with nature. This is a daydream based on a deliberate ignorance of the real world.

Conflict permeates the Universe at every level. At the most basic physical level the space-time continuum is distorted by opposing forces. The struggle between expansion from the Big Bang and the remorseless pull of gravity form an arena for violently exploding supernovae and black holes which gobble up galaxies.

At the biological level survival of the fittest is the rule. At the social level there is constant competition for status, territory, jobs and possessions. At the personal psychological level one is driven this way and that by conflicting drives and emotions. We live in a universe at war.

If this is the case the question arises as to why the universe hangs together at all, rather than tearing itself apart into a chaotic mess. This notion arises out of confusing conflict with anarchy. In fact most conflicts are limited conflicts occurring in a predictable manner - the Law of the Jungle. (Contrary to popular belief the jungle is a very orderly place and its inhabitants strictly limited in their freedom of action).

The principle of "lawful conflict" is intuitively recognised in most "well adjusted" members of society. Thus we are all encouraged from an early age to be competitive and outgoing yet there is an instinctive abhorrence of the "cheat" - the one who goes too far, beyond the rules of our game, escalating the conflict to another level. Thus all the baddies in our folklore are those who have cheated in some way - escalating the conflict beyond the social game. The outlaw who lives outside the limits of normal social behaviour; the mad scientist who consciously overrides "natural" processes; the vampire who cheats death; the black magician who shares the same motivations as his fellow men but who uses unfair means (the chance would be a fine thing! The real black magic is far more widespread and far less romantic - that which keeps sentient beings in a state of retarded growth).

What is the point of all this conflict? Surely the universe should be adjusted so that we all work together in harmony and peace? Paradoxically the root of conflict lies in unity. In order to realize the creative potential inherent in it unity gives rise to a diversity. This can be seen as a threefold process. Firstly it is one of multiplication / division. One unity multiplies itself to many unities by a process of division within itself. Secondly it is a process of differentiation / separation whereby the unities take on different functions forming a universe of diverse types of entity. Thirdly all these entities are in process of interaction generating structures.

At every level of structure unity acts so as to maintain the integrity of its own being. This gives rise to conflict. Thus for example every cell within our body is a unity and functions in a manner that maintains its own integrity. At a higher level of unity ten billion cells affirming their existence maintain the unity of the body as a whole. This body acts so as to maintain its own integrity. This illustrates the principle that conflict on a given level maintains the unity

of the next level up. The integrity of our present social structure is maintained by the "rat race" of its human components. Life forms killing and eating one another, struggling for space and resources maintain the delicate fabric of an ecosystem. But the converse is also true. Conflict at a given level may maintain the integrity of lower levels. Thus for example conflict on the world political and economic scale maintains the integrity of nations. Conflict within the nation maintains the integrity of power groups and organisations. Conflict within such groups maintains the integrity of individual egos. Conflict within an ego may maintain the integrity of certain habit patterns. This is what is known in General Systems Theory as sub-optimisation - the part functioning more efficiently (in its own terms of reference) to the detriment of the whole.

Thus conflict on a given level may have two effects. It may act so as to enhance the unity of the level above or the level below. It is the balance between these two tendencies which determines whether conflict is creative, destructive or futile.

Creative conflict on a planetary scale is what our scientists normally call evolution. Paradoxically the struggle for survival results in increasing levels of co-operation between life forms and their integration into larger and larger functioning wholes. There is a progression from the first primitive cell to colonies of cells, to multicellular organisms. Creative conflict throughout these levels maintains the integrity of the body of the biosphere - the unity of life on Earth.

Human society arises out of the creative conflict at the biological level. Man is weaker than many other animal species except in his powers of abstraction (i.e. his ability to perceive higher orders of unity). This enables him to band together in large co-operative groups.

If such groups are to function efficiently they have to possess internal structure. When groups reach a critical size (multiplication) a process of differentiation of function becomes feasible. The structure that arises is maintained by conflict within the group. Thus for example in a baboon troop ritualized conflict establishes and maintains a social hierarchy. Similarly there is a "pecking" order in a hen coop. I personally have vivid memories of exactly the same process occurring in the school playground. Karl Marx was on the right track when he saw conflict between opposing groups as the driving force of social evolution (although many of his predictions as to the future course of such evolution have subsequently proved wide of the mark).

Within the intellectual sphere the advance of human knowledge occurs by a conflict of ideas. The zoologist Professor Richard Dawkins has even gone so far as to suggest there is a natural selection amongst units of thought (he coins the term "meme" by analogy with the biologist's gene). Whenever such conflict has been absent human development has stagnated.

The same could be said on a personal level. A healthy human being is busy fighting and fornicating. The chances of seeing a man at peace within himself and in harmony with the world are slight since we are compelled by law to bury such people. Any life form exists by actively maintaining a state of thermodynamic imbalance between itself and the environment. As my old biochemistry teacher used to say: "An organism in a state of equilibrium is dead".

In humans years of social conflict superimposed on these basic survival instincts generate an ego. If the ego is happy and well adjusted no further development occurs. If there is

conflict within the ego this may be resolved by moving to a higher level of being (which brings its own conflicts).

The reader will probably require little persuasion that conflict can be destructive as well as creative. Indeed, prior to being enlightened by the previous pages you may have held the mistaken opinion that all conflict was destructive. However having once seen the creative role of conflict it becomes surprisingly difficult to find examples of conflict that are unequivocally lacking in creative potential (no matter how unpleasant they may appear to us personally).

At this point it would perhaps be helpful to try and define a little more clearly what is meant by the term "creative". We earlier made the assertion that creation occurs in order that the potential inherent within unity may be realized. Conflict is a mechanism whereby this may be brought about. Once the potential of a particular level of Creation has been exhausted further development can only occur by the generation of a "higher" level. For example, the generation of life from the level of chemical conflict opened up a whole new ball-game. Hence the tendency of Nature to produce successively larger units of integration. We could define as destructive any form of conflict which thwarts this process. To take a topical example, if Man were to exterminate himself in a nuclear war this would be a destructive conflict since the integrative process on this planet would be set back a short while.

In defining creative or destructive conflict with respect to the integrative process there is a slight complication. Conflict which establishes higher levels of integration may inhibit the creativity of lower ones. In developing our civilization we humans have reduced the variety of species on the planet and in that sense have inhibited its creativity.

There is a third category of conflict which neither facilitates nor retards the creative process and can in that sense be considered futile. Of course from the point of view of a particular being in the cosmos the conflict may appear anything but futile since it serves the functions of preserving what already is. Ninety-nine percent of modern philosophy can be placed in the futile category. Another possible candidate would be a species that has reached an evolutionary dead end. In the social field the perpetuation of outmoded customs and rituals springs to mind.

In discussing creative, destructive and futile conflict I have endeavoured to define them as objectively as possible. However, they can also be defined in relation to any particular level of unity. Thus for example, from the victim's point of view being eaten is destructive conflict whereas from the predator's standpoint the act is creative. In the human realm the works of Man may destroy the beauty of a landscape. On the Cosmic scale the destruction of matter creates black holes. Much of human behaviour both creative and destructive is futile when seen from a wider perspective since it changes nothing.

Nevertheless, from whatever the relative viewpoint it appears that we live in a universe structured by conflicts within conflicts. Ultimately all conflict can be seen in terms of three forces. Within all things there is that which affirms the unity of all. We can call this the Holy Affirming Force. Were this force to predominate the Universe would return to its undifferentiated state and no creation would occur. However, within all things there is also that which denies the unity - the Holy Denying Force. The creation of a lawful universe depends on the balancing of these two forces - the Holy Reconciling Force. This trinity of the Affirming, the Denying and the Reconciling will doubtless provide food for thought for

Christian readers. The three also occur in Hindu theology as the Trimurti - the three aspects of Brahman - Brahma the creator, Shiva the destroyer and Vishnu the preserver.

The Holy Denying Force appears to us physically as the expansion of space-time from the Big Bang. This is opposed by the force of gravity which strives to return the universe to its original unity. The reconciliation of these two forces generates the structure we see around us.

Like the three types of conflict the three forces can be seen from the relative standpoint of any level of unity. Thus when the Holy Reconciling Force predominates in the human body it acts to maintain its own integrity. When the Holy Denying Force predominates within its cells cancer occurs. An imbalance of the Holy Affirming Force manifests in allergies. Within society individuals may be altruistic, selfish, or just do their job.

Hopefully, by now the astute reader will have realised that there is a lot more to conflict than bashing each other over the head. In affirming that conflict occurs at all levels the author is not condoning futile acts of violence. Indeed these aspects of conflict which are unpleasant for us can only be minimised by a thorough understanding of the implications of universal conflict, not by ignoring them.

In considering the "problem" of conflict there are two common errors. On the one hand violent and destructive behaviour is viewed as something peculiarly human. The plaintive cry goes up that man is the only animal that kills its own species etc. This is simply not true. There are many examples of intraspecific killing in nature (e.g. infanticide amongst lions and in seagull colonies). The zoologist Desmond Morris makes the point that in comparison with other primates the incidence of violent behaviour in humans is extremely low. Unfortunately we have consciously extended our efficiency of action to such an extent that when violence does occur it can be very destructive. The myth that Man is the only destructive element in an otherwise harmonious scene is soon dispelled by any observation of the real natural world. The classic illustration is that of the ploughed field. If the land was left to its own devices we would observe a succession of vegetation - each new species establishing itself and growing at the expense of its unfortunate predecessors. So much for the Harmony of Nature!

At the opposite extreme aggression is viewed as Man's "lower", animal instincts which must be suppressed in favour of the beautiful, peaceful spiritual and religious side of our nature. However, our instincts are examples of principles which operate throughout the Universe at all levels. Tradition tells us there is conflict even amongst the angels.

We are forced to the reluctant conclusion that if you want to exist conflict is unavoidable, so one had better make the best of it. If you know that life is conflict you can gain an understanding of how it operates. One can then act wisely so that one is involved in creative conflicts rather than destructive or futile ones. Man has the ability to choose the level of unity with which he is identified. If a person is identified with a particular level of unity he will act so as to maintain the integrity of that unity - whether the unity be a family, a trade union or a country. For those hedonists amongst us I can drop the hint that one's suffering is inversely proportional to the level of identification.

Having explored the question of conflict in some depth I think the time has come when we must consider how concepts such as peace and harmony ever arose. The simplest explanation would be to dismiss them as illusory. Thus one could argue for example, that

although your garden appears a very peaceful place on a sunny summer's evening this is in fact far from the truth. If the garden were to be viewed in sufficient detail over a longer time scale it would be apparent that it was in fact the scene of a very bitter and prolonged conflict. Namely between on the one hand you the gardener and on the other hand weeds, slugs and assorted insects.

But the very persistence and power of concepts such as "peace" and "harmony" imply that they must correspond to some reality. The reality is this: the feeling of harmony or peace is a state of consciousness which arises when the balance of conflict acts to maintain the level of unity with which we are identified at the time. One may adjust one's actions so that they maintain this dynamic equilibrium. You are then in harmony with Nature (with Nature as perceived by you, that is).

There is, of course, another deeper reason for our quest for "peace". We all carry within us a memory of that undifferentiated unity from which we came. This Unity can be contacted at the centre of our own being - that still point within which is changeless yet the centre of all change - "a peace that passeth all understanding".

Unity exists.

May its potential be realized.

Within Creation sentient beings exist.

May their creativity be enhanced.

May I know the Unity.

May all sentient beings who desire it know the Unity.