

ENACTIVISM AND MĀORITANGA:
AUTONOMY, HOMONOMY AND HETERONOMY

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- Please note, there is a backlog of pending issues for 2023 and 2024 that will be published during 2025. Apologies for any confusion regarding the dates of ongoing publications.

ABSTRACT

Enactivism, a form of cognitive science that has arisen largely this century, heralds a return to a positive form of homonomy, or sense of belonging, through the recognition that we are relationally-minded with one another, and, indeed, all life. Drawing on the work of philosophers, psychologists and psychoanalysts, this paper offers an explication of enactivism in humans. Resonating with developmental systems theory and its focus on co-evolution, enactivism offers us an understanding that will lead to more ethical harmony. Drawing parallels with some indigenous cultures, and in particular Māoritanga, this article argues that such harmony is achieved through an appreciation of both our autonomy and homonomy. These are further steps to an ecology of mind.

Keywords: enactivism; Māoritanga; heteronomy; autonomy; homonomy.

INTRODUCTION

In his book *Steps to an Ecology of Mind*, published in 1972, Bateson emphasised the importance of adopting a mode of thinking aligned with nature in order to live in harmony with it. Bateson considered that the then recently developed cybernetics represented the most significant leap in humanity's pursuit of knowledge in the past 2,000 years. Since then, advances in the life sciences in the past 50 years, which have been greatly influenced by cybernetics and social constructivism, have led to a growing number of voices advocating for a shift in the social sciences towards heteronomy, due to the emphasis placed on the social environment shaping individual reality.

Previously, the Western Enlightenment had given rise to ideas of individual autonomy as proposed by Kant and Rousseau, ideas which dominated discussions on political theory, medical ethics, and personal identity. These ideas have been severely criticised by anti-Enlightenment environmentalists on the basis that they are responsible for disastrous attempts to enslave nature and colonise people (Anker 2002; Trisos, Auerbach, and Madhusudan 2021). Such environmentalists include those who have developed views of an alternative, radical Enlightenment based on more holistic assumptions (Gare 2017; Israel 2002; Jacob [1981] 2006), and those who question the Euro-centric nature of Enlightenment (*e.g.*, Graeber 2019). They argue that an excessive and unwarranted sense of autonomy had been allowed to flourish, resulting in the ecological crisis. Thus, throughout the twentieth century, the assumption of autonomy and individualism has gradually eroded, which may be found in Weber ([1930] 2001), Dewey (1934), Mauss ([1950] 1979), Wittgenstein ([1953] 2009), Adorno ([1970] 1997), and others. Although there are significant time and philosophical gaps between these writers, they collectively emphasise the importance of adopting a more relational mind-set, and letting go of our emphasis on individualism.

In this context, this article explores enactivism, a branch of cognitive science that can contribute significantly to a shift towards experiencing heteronomy – an approach that integrates both biological autonomy and its lesser known counterpart, homonomy (the willing subordination of oneself to others or something larger). It draws on the philosophical ideas pertaining to heteronomy of Wittgenstein ([1953] 2009), Løgstrup ([1956] 2020), and Lévinas (1974), as they relate to enactivism, and on Angyal's (1941) psychological work on homonomy. This article also draws on the work of the early psychoanalyst and group therapist, Trigant Burrow ([1953] 1968), which anticipated significant aspects of radical enactivism (see also Drury and Tudor 2022, 2024). In addition, it considers developmental systems theory (DST), a new paradigm in biology that takes a co-evolutionary perspective on relationality, of which enactivism is a component. Finally, this article weaves in some explorations of indigenous cultural thinking, with a specific focus on Māoritanga, and its common ground with enactivism.

From the outset we have restrictions regarding the use of various words in this article. Firstly, we note that the term 'Māoritanga' was coined early in the twentieth century by the Young Māori Party to invite pride in identity as well as a sense of cultural homogeneity to counter European hegemony (van Meijl 1996). Secondly, prior to the 1830s, the word 'Māori' was not used as a noun identifying people but as an adjective meaning 'ordinary' or 'usual'. We would

also note that, when we use a term that denotes a body of thought, e.g., ‘enactivism’, or culture and practices, e.g., ‘Māoritanga’, or an identity, e.g., ‘indigenous’, we run the risk of misrepresenting them as homogenous, when, in fact, each of them are characterised by diverse theories, concepts and values. In most cases, we are referring to them as representing diverse bodies of knowledge.

In terms of our own positionality, the first author spent his formative years playing in the swimming hole of Kai-a-Te-Mata marae. Having qualified as a psychologist, he later worked for a decade as a kaimātai hinengaro in a kaupapa Māori service of the mental health department in a District Health Board, and is the author of a pōwhiri poutama approach to therapy (Drury 2007). The second author has a long and strong interest in cross-cultural work (e.g., Singh and Tudor 1997) and, since emigrating to Aotearoa New Zealand in 2009, in bicultural encounter in and with regard to therapy (Green *et al.* 2014; Haenga-Collins *et al.* 2019; Tudor and Rodgers 2020).

ENACTIVISM

Towards the end of his life, Bateson recognised Maturana and Varela (1980) as the successors of his work on cybernetics. They were exploring how life has the ability to produce itself, i.e., is autopoietic. Autopoiesis is a kind of ‘knowing’ in the form of ‘know-how’, and refers to the ability of living organisms to self-produce and self-maintain their own organisation and structure. The autopoietic perspective has since become an influence on personality theory (Yolles and Friedan 2021), which reflects the holism epitomised in the work of Carl Rogers (1951). This ‘know-how’ is stored in a network of interactions in the bodies of all living forms, implying that a form of cognition (or knowing) is central to life. Thus living things retain a biological autonomy, in that they know how to harvest nutrients and produce themselves. However, in order to achieve this, organisms have to be sensitive to the environment within which they live – and of which they are a part. The body and its environment are intertwined to such an extent that enactivists stress how perception and action are tightly integrated and mutually influential. In 1991, they even coined the word ‘enactive’ to capture this perception/action (Varela, Thompson, and Rosch 1991). Instead of regarding cognition as the manipulation of information (or the manipulation of mental representations of an outside world by a separate mind), it is now recognised as the bringing forth (or enacting) of a dependent world of relevance to the organism through embodied action. Through active embodied processes, an organism attempts to remain in a situated engagement with their environment: a form of ‘know-how’ rather than ‘know-that’.

Although enactivism was developed by way of cybernetics, it attracted the attention of the school of the third Wittgenstein, who claimed Wittgenstein to be the first enactivist (Moyal-Sharrock 2016). The third school emphasises performance knowledge (or ‘know-how’) as the basis of our certainties (as opposed to Descartes who built his philosophy systematically doubting propositions or conceptual knowledge to arrive at certainty). Therefore, Wittgenstein holds actions, and not propositions, are the basis of all our speaking and thinking. As enactivism also maintains that mentality is rooted in engaged embodied activity (as opposed to detached forms of thought), the claim that Wittgenstein preceded enactivism is consistent. While parallels between Wittgenstein and tikanga have previously been made (Drury 2011), the relationship between Wittgenstein and enactivism demonstrates how a creature is able to perceive and keep track of some object in the world without an internal referent (an idea or ‘know-that’) in mind.

We get a glimpse of this ‘bringing forth (enacting) a world’ by considering Held and Hein’s (1963) discovery that newborn kittens do not develop depth perception if they are deprived of movement. Similarly, post-cataract surgery patients have to move around in order to learn to see (Hutto 2011). From this perspective, it is embodied motor skills that facilitate seeing rather than the brain or nervous system interpreting sense-data hitting the eye. As Thompson (2007, 173) puts it, in lived cognition, ‘[p]erception and action, are fundamentally inseparable’. When we examine a work of art, it is not a passive process (or all in the head): we physically move around, expanding our perceptual skills, as Dewey (1934) also noted. In addition, within enactivism there is a sense of perception being extended or distributed. All creatures with a nervous system have more motor nerves going to the senses than sensory nerves leaving them (Noë 2009). Therefore, we are using our senses much like the blind person with their cane: their attention is moving around a circuit that includes the sound of tapping, the muscular contractions and extensions of their arms and legs, and the feel of their stick on the street. We used to think that the passive skull encasing the mind or the brain (which were viewed as synonymous), received and processed these perceptions, but enactivism takes a more direct, embodied approach. When we sit down for lunch, a different circuit (or enaction) comes into play.

Although enactivists seldom talk of ‘oneness with the world’, their thesis aligns well with what phenomenologists call ‘readiness-to-hand’ (Dreyfus 2007, 1138). For example, when driving a car, I feel *my* wheels on the road until something goes wrong, at which point phenomenologists (and some enactivists) would say that I have lost my ‘readiness-to-hand’ (Gallagher 2012, 43). This embodied

view brings into focus the sensorimotor structure. Regarding humans developmentally, the sensorimotor stage is not abandoned or overcome, as Piaget's theory suggests, but instead refined, as language and perspective develop (Thelen 2010) – another point Dewey foresaw. Change blindness demonstrations, such as the person in the gorilla suit we fail to see because we are too busy counting the number of times the players pass the ball (Simons and Chabris 1999), show that we are using our sensorimotor skills to enact a particular (in this case, directed by the instruction) world. We are seeing an action-relevant world, i.e., one that is relevant to us. In the 1930s, von Uexküll ([1934] 1957) noted that a beetle, a child and a forester see different forests to one another and hence are living in different worlds (*umwelten*). Similarly, in the eighteenth century, Goethe ([1906] 1995, 307) urged us to develop a 'delicate empiricism', or an embodied science, which encourages us not to turn away from the world and rack our brains for a fitting hypothesis but, rather, to make ourselves at 'one' with the phenomena until we gain sense of it as a process-in-context (Drury 2006; Seamon and Zajonc 1998). Thus we get a 'feel' for the phenomena we are examining, whether it be a client in a therapist's office or a geological feature weathered by the seasons. It should be noted in passing that amongst Goethe's discoveries were the ice age and the premaxillary bone in humans.

MĀORITANGA AND POLYNESIAN SCIENCE

We find a similar philosophy of science in Salmond's (2005) account of eighteenth century Polynesian navigators. Although some European navigators had also acquired an embodied knowledge of the seas and the stars, *etc.*, they seldom had bloodshot eyes from staying awake for long periods to maintain unity with the world. The Europeans could turn to their technical instruments, charts and drilled routines but at the cost of some atrophy in their know-how skills, and an intimate relationship with the world. Sadler (2007) also describes a philosophy of science that is similar to Goethe's 'delicate empiricism'. By making oneself identical to the phenomena studied, Sadler says the *whanaungatanga* (or network of relationships) is sensed. *Nohopuku*, a form of meditation, is useful in achieving this (Royal 1996; Salmond 2013). *Nohopuku* literally means 'silent stomach', and the word is used to mean 'to fast' as well as 'to meditate'. Although we do not endorse the practice of swallowing pebbles to enhance meditation (Royal 2007a), being centred low in the belly is common to martial arts and meditation in Zen Buddhism, which shares a similar goal to *nohopuku* (Drury, forthcoming). Thus it is possible to attune to the natural unity of the world and, as a result, a variety of genealogies (*whakapapa*) may show themselves (Roberts 2013).

Whereas Cartesian-based science aims at a ‘grand theory of everything’ (or, as the Duhem-Quine thesis puts it, at minimum a hypothesis that is coherent with other theories), Polynesian science has a different aim: a grand *experience* of everything (te Ao mārama). or ‘the understanding’ (māramatanga). Whilst Cartesian science is based on an engineering approach to nature that seeks to acquire ‘aboutness knowledge’ (conceptual knowledge) to leverage the world, Polynesian science is concerned to a greater extent with developing tikanga (practices, customs) that enhance our ‘know-how’ to live in harmony more sustainably – what Shotter (2011) calls ‘withness knowledge’. In this respect, Polynesian science finds resonance with Wittgenstein’s philosophy, which seeks perspicuity or clarity as an end in itself rather than about something (Drury 2011). Thus Polynesian science deepens our embodied ‘knowing how’ knowledge (mōhiotanga) of the world or some aspect of it – hence our emphasis in this article on Māoritanga, on which ‘knowing that’ or ‘aboutness knowledge’ (mātauranga) is based.

EMBODIED SKILLS: TOWARDS UNDERSTANDING PEOPLE AND LANGUAGE

If we recognise that embodied skills develop in much the same way as, for example, walking develops into sporting abilities later in childhood, then we are open to regarding events such as our sociality beginning much earlier than previously thought. There was a time when many psychologists thought that language had to develop before we could truly understand one another. Since the 1990s, Wittgensteinian scholars had criticised these psychologists for claiming a theory of mind (ToM), which develops around four years of age, was needed to succeed at false belief tasks (Leudar and Costall 2009). These same psychologists claimed that one did not function well socially unless one acquired a ToM (autism was often used as an example). However, Wittgenstein (1980) claimed,

‘We *see* emotion’ – As opposed to what? – We do not see facial contortions and *make the inference* that he is feeling joy, grief, boredom. We describe the face immediately as sad, radiant, bored, even when we are unable to give any other description of the feature. – Grief, one would like to say, is personified in the face. This is essential to what we call ‘emotion.’ (Wittgenstein 1980, 570; emphasis in original).

As no inferences are made, this rules out both the theory ToM and the simulation ToM. It is in fact more immediate than that: ‘It is there as clearly as in your own breast’ (Wittgenstein 1967, 220). This is known as direct social perception: we directly perceive others’ mental states; their emotions, desires and intentions

are not hidden inside their heads.

More recently, researchers have been looking at this ‘mind-reading ability’ (or direct social perception) by using a method referred to as ‘violations of expectations’, which is the spontaneous non-verbal response of infants in looking longer at a person if they act contrary to the infant’s false ‘belief’. Using this method, 10-month-old infants have been found to be sensitive to the false ‘belief’ of another (Luo 2011). To what age can we trace this back? For example, most preschoolers demand reciprocal relatedness as they frequently deny they can see a person whose eyes are closed (Moll and Khalulyan 2017). When does direct social perception start?

Enactivists Hutto and Myin (2013) are of the view that the bulk of all social interaction is due to *implicit* (or embodied) understanding (or an implicit system), and the later to evolve secondary *explicit* system (that relies on conceptual knowledge) just supports it. This is understandable when you consider that language is a very new development, perhaps only 100,000 years old (and, indeed, may have evolved out of our direct social perception.) We find it convenient to talk about these as two systems, which, as we shall see, is in accordance with a number of other thinkers. Therefore, it could be said that enactivists consider a supportive ToM, which they refer to as the narrative practice hypothesis, to have evolved out of the implicit (embodied) system. Ciaunica (2017) traces the social aspects of this implicit sensorimotor system back into the womb by citing Lymer’s (2011, 138) observation that, from twenty-two weeks onwards, ‘the maternal-foetal relationship begins to manifest *as a relationship or communication*, as reciprocity, when there is maternal engagement with intentional foetal movement’ (emphasis in original). This is supported by the observation of Castiello and colleagues (2010) that newborns appear to have a propensity to interact socially, or possess a proto-conversational skill, that appears to be in place before birth. Thus Ciaunica’s (2020) argument is that our sociality precedes our empathy, and is in fact the source of our empathy. Ciaunica calls this primary system the ‘relational self’, although, in line with Bromberg (2011) and others (e.g., Seikkula *et al.* 2015), we prefer to use relational *mind*, or, better still, relationally-minded.

From this perspective, a condition such as autism is a result of a narrowing of interests (but with greater intensity of interest) during development of this primary implicit system. This narrowing of interest (but with greater intensity) is now thought of as a better description of autism (Williams, Wharton, and Jagoe 2021), and is usually witnessed as a paucity of joint play in the first weeks of life. This means it is not an impairment in the slower to develop explicit system, as

suggested by ToM advocates (Ciaunica 2014). Previous researchers have failed to consider that children ‘fail’ false belief tests because they don’t understand ‘belief’ until after the age of six (Hedger and Fabricius 2011). We learn as children to explain ourselves and others in terms of reasons that we pick up from the narratives we are told. The implicit system, or our direct social perception, is showing us how people’s attitudes (which young children are now learning are called such things as ‘desires’ and ‘beliefs’) are to be navigated non-verbally. It takes some time to incorporate or coordinate these new language games of reason, and for a while children may mistakenly think that Little Red Riding Hood will be afraid of her grandmother. But she will be in good company for as Wittgenstein said ‘Philosophy is a battle against the bewitchment of our intelligence by means of our language’ ([1953] 2009, 109).

One of Wittgenstein’s ‘bewitchments’ was substantivisation: the tendency to treat certain words as if they referred to substantial and independently existing objects. These tend to lure us away from a relational or interactional focus. For example, he accused Freud (and his followers) of substantivising the word ‘unconscious’, turning an adjective into a noun (that was neither verifiable nor falsifiable). ‘New regions of the soul have not been discovered’ (Wittgenstein 1979, 40). That is to say, if it was a region then it could be substantivised; but as it is not, it cannot. Many abstract words or concepts that, by their everyday use, suggest that they can be possessed (or are possessed), such as ‘knowledge’, ‘truth’, ‘justice’, ‘meaning’, ‘time’, ‘mana’, *etc.*, are not ‘things’ at all, but they get their sense or meaning from a way of acting (or a form of life). Importantly, even words that are ‘things’ get their meaning through use, as this passage from Wittgenstein reminds us: ‘Children do not learn that books exist, that armchairs exist, *etc. etc.*, – they learn to fetch books, sit in armchairs, *etc., etc.*’ (1969, 476). All words or concepts are rooted in language games or ways of life. They are primarily forms of or part of our ‘know-how’, or embodied skills and, although it is convenient to treat abstract concepts as nouns, we mystify (bewitch) ourselves when we lose sight of this. Wittgenstein approved of St Augustine’s famous quote about time: ‘What then is time? I know well enough what it is, provided that no one asks me; but if I am asked what it is and try to explain, I am baffled’ (Wittgenstein [1953] 2009, 89). Philosophers have spent centuries searching for the essence of these things, but we use these words everyday with little trouble. Using ‘I’, the ‘relational self’, the ‘relational mind’, ‘mana’ (which, according to Keesing (1984), was originally a verb), and, as we have seen ‘Māori’ in a substantivised way, gives rise to identity politics, as Keesing observed. With regard to the ‘relational self’ or ‘relational mind’, we see that Hutto and Ilundáin-Agurruza (2018) are more cautious using this term because they do not want to lose sight of the animal we are – which we are at

risk of doing by substantivising this concept.

WHAKAPAPA OF CO-EVOLUTION

The enactivist Gallagher (2017) proposes that enactivism can be regarded as an aspect of the broader biological paradigm DST. DST can be looked upon as both a philosophy of science guiding research and a philosophy of nature in itself (Oyama, Griffiths, and Gray 2001). Darwin's *The Origin of Species* (1859) focused on the individual species' competitive struggle for existence. However, his second book on evolution, *The Descent of Man* (1871), had a different focus: the interaction or co-evolution of species, including cooperation between species. For much of the twentieth century *The Origin* dominated biology, but, today, *The Descent* is 'coming into view' as a distinct evolutionary theory (Corning 2023, 563). Prior to DST, the big issues in biology were dominated by the thesis of genetic determinism (Dawkins' 'selfish gene'). However, 'nowdays everyone is an interactionist' (Oyama *et al.* 2001, 1). Nature/nurture debates are now resolved by an interactional solution. Writing more than fifty years ago, Gregory Bateson was prescient in seeing this shift of focus to co-evolution or the cooperation of species:

The evolution of the horse from *Eohip pus* was not a one-sided adjustment to life on grassy plains. Surely the grassy plains themselves were evolved *pari passe* with the evolution of the teeth and hooves of the horse and other ungulates. Turf was the evolving response of the vegetation to the evolution of the horse. It is the *context* which evolves. (Bateson 1972, 164)

This vision of co-evolution is expressed as visual metaphors in a number of M.C. Escher's ([1952] 1992) graphic tessellations in which figure and ground create each other. We expect the hostility to Darwinism amongst many social scientists, including feminists, to dissipate as a co-evolutionary perspective develops, and economists to switch from the metaphors of physics to biology (Richerson and Boyd 2010).

Due to their holistic standpoint, certain indigenous scholars are now claiming co-evolution as an aspect of their worldview (*e.g.*, Luat-Hū'ēu *et al.* 2021; Schott *et al.* 2020; Woodhouse *et al.* 2021). Despite Desjardins (2019, 45) noting that most descriptions of co-evolution 'remain elusive and poorly articulated', they are conveying an understanding of nature that humans are a part of rather than in control of. As Woodhouse and colleagues (2021, 3) explain, 'such holistic views of the environment are reflective of a concern for overall environmental

well-being as opposed to imbalances that may arise from a focus on singular species or entities'. They conclude that, by focusing on the collective landscape (of which we are part), rather than distinct individual welfare, those concerned with conservation in Aotearoa New Zealand would be better off integrating Māori concepts and values into practices (and policy). A similar conclusion was reached by the United Nations' Intergovernmental Science Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services, which recommended adopting a framework inspired by indigenous cultures. Rather than the individualist lens of traditional Western science, which only emphasises living *from* nature, they added living *in* nature, living *with* nature, and living *as* nature (Kenter and O'Connor 2022). Reviewing different forms of ecotherapy, Key and Tudor (2023) offer a paradigm analysis whereby such therapies are understood as being reciprocal (in which humans are nature) or extractive (in which nature is viewed as a resource), and ecocentric (in which nature is therapist) or anthropocentric (in which the human is therapist).

Bateson (1972) claimed that, by embracing Darwinism with its focus on the individual and ignoring the context, his father (William Bateson, the father of genetics) and his colleagues made a major error, one which characterises Occidental Thinking. Bateson (film) argues that Bateson (père) and his colleagues told the story as one by which 'organisms learned more tricks for controlling the environment; and man had better tricks than any other creature' (Bateson 1972, 445). He reflected that this represented a certain scientific arrogance (and cultural attitude) that was symptomatic of a lack of ecological harmony in the West. It is not difficult to see how this supported racism amongst nineteenth and twentieth century colonialists. It can also be seen as underwriting 'the great transformation' of Western society in the nineteenth century, which substantivised money, land and labour – defined by Polanyi (1944, 71) as the 'fictitious commodities' – and drove most people into a form of financial slavery (Kuttner 2014). Darwinism has bred an unnatural global monster called 'the market', which endorses itself as a positive force and beneficial for society, whilst promoting the questionable ethic of self-interest (Roy and Grant 2019). There is little doubt that free market capitalism, as it emerged in the nineteenth century, eradicated the ethical principles that had dominated trade in earlier traditional societies (Rogan 2017).

RELATIONAL MINDEDNESS

As we have observed, enactivism contends that, although living things are biologically autonomous, they only maintain that autonomy by having embodied skills that allow them to be sensitive to their environment. As humans, we are

so sensitive to our social environment that we have a direct social perception of one another, a skill that we begin to develop in utero. This contrasts with the standpoint of previous mainstream social science which endorsed that we are socially autonomous and require a theory of mind to socially navigate. One of the earliest challenges to Freud's theory of mind was the American psychoanalyst Trigant Burrow. We believe he came closer to enactivism than the majority of Freud's followers.

In the 1920s, Burrow approached Freud with the claim that it made more sense to regard the mother as the 'love subject' rather than the 'love object' as Freud had proposed. Both were in agreement that the child has 'oceanic consciousness', or is at one with the mother at birth. Their difference lay in Freud regarding us as frustrated narcissists objectifying the mother when we cannot access the breast, whereas Burrow viewed us as remaining in radical communion and harmony not only with the (our) mother but also eventually with each other, despite frustrations at times. He goes on to argue that, from this sense of unity, we gradually objectify *ourselves*, especially after language develops, but this ego is something of a false self, which we can do without, as Burrow ([1953] 1968) demonstrated by the use of biofeedback and his development of group therapy. In other words, we can regain or retain our intuitive unity with others. Enactivists state that this accounts for our direct social perception. For his troubles, Burrow was ostracised from the psychoanalytic community (but survived in his self-created Lifwynn community) (Drury and Tudor 2022). Nowadays, enactivists, such as Ciaunica (2020), are also claiming that we learn to objectify ourselves while retaining a sense of relational-mindedness through our (embodied) intuitions, and there is a growing list of social scientists suggesting that we retain an intuitive sense of our sociality, albeit from different standpoints (e.g., Henrich 2016; Porges 2009; Reddy 2008; Siegel 1999).

Hutto and Ilundáin-Agurruza (2018) describe this relational mindedness as 'if we are anything at all, we are a sea of selfless activity and experience' (516), and noting that an explicit sense of self is 'a quite sophisticated conceptual achievement [...] that only comes late in development' (515). To avoid substantivising this relational mindedness, we could describe it as an aspect of our being. With regard to the explicit self, the anthropologist Geertz (1983, 59) has commented that 'the Western conception of the person as a bounded, unique, and [...] distinctive whole is [...] a rather peculiar idea within the context of the world's cultures'. Similarly, Taylor (1989, 11) writes that the idea of a 'self', which exists at the centre of our being and is the source of meaning, is a peculiar Western idea. Henrich (2020) makes the case that Westerners are considered weird by the rest of the world because of our disposition towards the self. In

their major work on person-centred therapy, Tudor and Worrall (2006) also critique the prioritising in person-centred psychology of the concept of the self over that of the organism, which they view as the root metaphor of that form of psychology and its therapy.

The Danish theologian Løgstrup ([1956] 2020) counters Dawkins' idea that humans calculate whether our altruism will be reciprocated with his claim that trust is not made (as Dawkins suggests) but given. Similarly, Lévinas (1974) articulated the ethical implications of such innate relationality, arguing that because we are embodied relational beings, we have basic ethical obligations. As we become increasingly aware of this embodied responsive aspect of our being, we are driven to a conclusion that Wittgenstein shared with Lévinas: they favoured Dostoevsky's Father Zossima who said that 'each of us is responsible for everyone and everything, and I more so than others' (Dostoevsky [1880] 1958, 339). For Lévinas, our ethical obligations for one another alone is infinite, and is only limited by competing ethical obligations to others. Thought is born, or we have to make decisions, when two or more ethical obligations are upon us at the same time; we have to choose how we will limit our infinite ethical obligations to each.

Lévinas sees Kantian autonomy as part of a selfish and close-minded striving for our own fulfilment. Recognising that the 'I' or ego is not simply or only a subjective centre of consciousness or self-enclosed but, rather, an open inter-subjective or relational system that achieves its eventual, but perhaps mythical, freedom by meeting its obligations, leads to an understanding of ourselves as fundamentally relational beings. This being the case, some argue that our language and metaphors need to change in order to reflect this. For example, in transactional analysis (TA), famous for its advocacy of the 'I'm OK-You're OK life' position (Berne [1972] 1975), Tudor (2016) argues that the fundamental life position is, more accurately, 'We are'. This is informed by a reading of Angyal (1941), who coined the term 'homonomy'. Alongside autonomy, he views this as a trend of the actualising organism, which he defines as a longing 'to be in harmony with superindividual units, the social group, nature, God, ethical world order, or whatever the person's formulation of it may be' (172). More recently, Tudor (2024), has taken his critique of TA further by arguing for a deconstruction of the ego and, in TA terms, ego states. As Panksepp (1998, 14) outlines, 'Homologies at the neural level give us solid assurance of common evolutionary origins and designs.' Thus Lévinas is consistent with the newly emerging definition of heteronomy and a longing for homonomy that is arising with enactivism (Steiner and Stewart 2009).

UBUNTU AND WHAKAWHANAUNGATANGA

Across sub-Saharan Africa there is a sense of an interconnected self known in Zulu as *ubuntu*, which is often translated as ‘I am because we are’ (Kitcher 2021). Remember this is first and foremost a form of know-how, one of many that make up a culture. Henrich (2016) has claimed that, when we have lost touch with some of our common ‘know-how’ (e.g., through epidemics killing off large portions of culture bearers, loss of homonymy, etc.), humans have not fared so well. His thesis is that being relationally-minded (or collectively minded) accounts for human success spreading into nearly every corner of the globe. Burrow ([1953] 1968, 36) called this our ‘social instinct’. Henrich is claiming that our relational mindedness has an intelligence that is superior to individual intelligence. He cites experiments in which chimpanzees outperform humans on certain cognitive tests yet claims that humans have an edge with our social learning. Chimpanzees may rely on mimicry, but, as Wittgenstein highlighted, ours is much more immediate – ‘as clearly as in your own breast’.

New co-evolutionists are also calling attention to this when they cite research showing that ‘young children are considerably better imitators than adult hand-reared chimpanzees’ (Richerson and Boyd 2010, 563). The anthropologist Roy Rappaport (1999) states that most cultures acknowledge this relational mindedness through communitarian rituals. Most people in the majority of collectivist cultures achieve what has been called a numinous state in which the distinction between self and other is blurred; an experience of ‘we-ness’ and a form of religious experience that has made collectivist cultures ‘vulnerable’ to colonisation by missionaries.

As we consider indigenous peoples we find various concepts that seem to indicate a relational mindedness. The Sámi of northern Scandinavia and the Kola Peninsula have a concept, *maadtoe*, which is defined as a ‘network of mutual rights and responsibilities that an individual possesses through biological and social relations with both living and dead’ (Nilsson 2020, 296). Korean culture has the word *shimcheong* which appears to refer to being relationally-minded. Choi and colleagues (2007) explain that, in a culture of relational responsibility, you come to expect caring from others, and *shimcheong* is the emotional state aroused when it is not shown by the other, or the amount shown far exceeds expectation. In this respect, it can be positive or negative. *Shimcheong* appears to have thrived in Korea. Although some sub-Saharan Africans have claimed that, because of *ubuntu*, their hospitality is warmer than that of others, cross-cultural studies show that relationships with others is also of high importance to East Asians (Ho 1998).

In Aotearoa New Zealand, the word ‘whakawhanaungatanga’ refers to the practice of building relationships and making connections. It is derived from ‘whanaunga’, meaning kin or relation. With the suffix ‘tanga’ added it becomes ‘kinship and the rights, responsibilities, and expected modes of behaviour that accompany the relationship’ (Benton and Meredith 2013, 524). And with the prefix ‘whaka’, meaning to action added, it gives the overall dictionary meaning as the ‘process of establishing relationships, relating well to others’ (Māori Dictionary n.d.). Although, like some sub-Saharan Africans, a few may claim this as unique to Aotearoa New Zealand, we believe it is an Aotearoa New Zealand expression of the recognition of humanity’s relational mindedness. Because of their relational mindedness, we believe Māori are closer to embodying the way nature thinks, as Bateson (1972) urged us. However, as the poet James K. Baxter wrote,

‘Ko te Māori te tuakana. Ko te Pākehā te teina.’ The Māori is indeed the elder brother and the Pākehā the younger brother. But the teina has refused to learn from the tuakana. He has sat sullenly among his machines and studied his account books, and wondered why his soul was full of bitter dust. (Baxter 1969)

According to Dennison (2005), it was a theme Baxter expressed frequently in his poetry, and it was his invitation to see a reverse-cultural colonisation. Similarly, the ecologist Thomas Berry (1999, x) has argued that, if we are to become more attuned to the world, ‘an indispensable resource in the fulfilment of this task is the guidance of the indigenous people’.

AN ENACTIVIST VIEW OF LEARNING

As we have seen, enactivism is offering a new understanding of human nature. It highlights how, for the most part, we still engage the faster animal intuitive side of our mind as opposed to the later-to-evolve linguistic side. This can be easily understood by considering the anti-representationalism of enactivists, who have made a distinction between an intention (with a ‘t’) and intension (with an ‘s’). An intension is the representation of the intention. It is doubtful that animals and small children have intensions, although they clearly have intentions. It is equally doubtful that the dog that barks at the bottom of the wrong tree in pursuit of the cat (because, unbeknown to the dog, the cat has changed trees) has a representation in its mind of its false ‘belief’ (though, strictly speaking, we should not really refer to this as a ‘belief’, as a ‘belief’ is the intension). More obviously, the bacterium swimming towards the concentration of sugar has an intention but not an intension. Wittgenstein refers to this distinction

between an intention and an intension when he writes about a person: ‘My attitude towards him is an attitude towards a soul. I am not of the *opinion* that he has a soul’ (Wittgenstein [1953] 2009, 179). The anti-representationalism of enactivism is the idea that we can get by without many representations (or a lot of substantivisations may be useful in our discourse with each other, but, like the word ‘soul’, they do not refer to anything.)

This anti-representational ethos reflects a rejection of the old idea that cognition consists of the computational processing of representations, or the manipulation of information, which is a legacy of Descartes. A simple way of understanding this non-representational thinking is to understand it as intuition (Drury and Tudor 2024). Others, such as Gladwell (2005), Haidt (2006), and Kahneman (2011), have called this ‘fast’ thinking, which is no more than subtle changes in our sensorimotor system: we literally shift perspectives. Haidt (2006) has also coined the term ‘the elephant and the jockey’ to capture this idea of the animal (the elephant) side of our nature and the more recently evolved language (representational) side (the jockey). Dreyfus and Dreyfus (1984) demonstrated how, once a skill is mastered, the jockey becomes redundant or can do other things, by having a chess grandmaster defeating skilled opponents in a five-seconds-a-move game whilst simultaneously adding numbers delivered at the rate of one a second. Many of us allow our ‘jockey’ to daydream or engage in stimulating conversations with passengers when our ‘elephant’ is driving the car. Athletes, in particular, find that, if there are too many explicit rules, which, presumably, were acquired when they learnt the skill, they are at risk of ‘choking’ or over-intellectualising the task by focusing on them (Hutto and Sánchez-García 2015). Although enactivists divide the cognitive system into two separate ‘aspects’ as opposed to ‘systems, we find it convenient to refer to them as ‘systems’. This allows us to link in with the popular work of Gladwell (2005), Haidt (2006) and Kahneman (2011) (the last of whom studied Wittgenstein) who talk of a two systems approach without detracting from the core of enactivism.

Enactivists argue that we can get by without a lot of ‘know-that’ or representations (Hutto 2023). Being taught a skill mainly through analogies and metaphors (and less by rules) is closer to the animal intuitive system and, as we shall reveal, it is demonstrably better. Mathematics, for example, is viewed by enactivists primarily as doing something. Abacus users thereby have an edge on non-abacus users (Brooks *et al.* 2018). Children learn proportionality faster if they enact proportions by moving their hands apart before being introduced to symbols (Hutto and Abrahamson 2022). Getting a ‘feel’ for an activity through gesturing and structured activities is now seen as essential for

education (Abrahamson, Ryokai and Dimmel 2023). Enactivists turn to East-Asian martial arts to describe the development of skills with analogies and/or minimal or even no rules (Ilundáin-Agurruza 2017): ‘Wax on, wax off’, says Mr Miyagi in the *Karate Kid* movie (Cappuccio, Miyahara, and Ilundáin-Agurruza 2021). Wittgenstein imagined a person even learning chess without learning or formulating rules ([1953] 2009, 31).

As we have highlighted, ‘know-how’ supersedes ‘know-that’, and the highest forms of learning include computations carried out without representations (*i.e.*, without the linguistic system). A parable for staying sharp in this manner was offered by Chuang Tzu in the fourth century B.C. A cook has not needed to sharpen his knife in nineteen years because he lets the knife find its way through the gaps in the meat, and, when it comes to a piece of gristle or bone, he slows and lets it find its way through the gaps there too (Watson 1996). Similarly, Royal (2007b) explains ‘mōhiotanga’ as embedded knowledge, which is tacit and embodied in activity, and does not require an exchange of verbal knowledge. He exemplifies this by citing numerous instincts, and thus it appears consistent with ‘performance knowledge’ (or ‘know-how’) as expressed in this article. In the educational philosophy of ‘te whatu pōkeka’ (Walker 2008), it is not only what we start with or bring to a learning situation but also what we end with, for, as Marsden (2003, 79) notes, ‘knowing’ (mohio) belongs to the heart and not the head – it is a form of ‘know-how’ rather than ‘know-that’. In line with what we have covered, this is the Dreyfus brothers’ exposition on learning skills. This indicates that Māori had some comprehension of learning that is consistent with enactivism.

Furthermore, ‘Te whatu pōkeka’ uses the word ‘mātauranga’ to describe the *process* of negotiation or educating (when we look to explicit exchangeable concepts or rules for guidance), and, amongst the many uses of the word ‘mātauranga’, it is also used to refer to the conceptual knowledge itself (Royal 2007b). ‘Māramatanga’ is the word for when we ‘get it’ (understanding, enlightenment, clarity), or, in the words of Wittgenstein, when we say ‘now I can go on’ ([1953] 2009, 154). Therefore, skill mastery takes us through a stage of awkwardness as we monitor ourselves, or use training wheels, but eventually returns us to our primary intersubjectivity, albeit in a more artful form. However, do not forget Wittgenstein’s suggestion that we do this without rules or with as little awkwardness as possible.

CONCLUSION

A new cognitive science called enactivism has arisen this century that is offering greater ecological harmony. It is closer to some forms of indigenous thinking, including 'Māoritanga'. This may give Māori an edge in learning enactivism as many of the concepts can already be found in existing cultural habits. Enactivism embraces homonomy and autonomy in a context of heteronomy because our sense of autonomy stems from the internal tensions arising from competing ethical obligations. As we embrace our shared relational mindedness, we may find greater social and ecological harmony. This is a step further towards an ecology of mind.

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NOTES

- 1 Nick Drury was a registered psychologist in Aotearoa New Zealand, and is now retired. Most known for his pōwhiri poutama model of counselling, he continues to write, and has published several articles on enactivism, Māoritanga, the social world, Wittgenstein and Burrow, and the practice of counselling and psychotherapy. ORCID ID: 0000-0002-7179-7585
- 2 Keith Tudor is a qualified social worker and psychotherapist, professor of psychotherapy at Auckland University of Technology, and the author of over 400 peer-reviewed publications. He is particularly interested in the interplay between psychotherapy, politics, and culture, and in bi-culturally-informed and -engaged therapies. His most recent publication is a chapter on 'A psychosocial perspective on belonging and unbelonging in Aotearoa New Zealand' in Lythberg *et al.* (eds.), *Settler Responsibility for Decolonisation* (Routledge, 2025). ORCID ID: orcid.org/0000-0001-7443-140X

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