

The Harmony Principle

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Abstract

The new ethical principle that I had proposed, called the “order principle”, appears to have been misunderstood. To continue an incomplete *samvad* with Daya ji, and because ethical autonomy is the essence of *swaraj*, this paper clarifies the ethical principle, and the meaning of “order”.

As I have argued earlier, ethical models in common use (both utilitarian and religious) are all anchored in beliefs about time. Time perceptions were transformed with a view to transform human behaviour, and these transformed time beliefs have penetrated the content of science. Resolving the resulting difficulties leads to the corrected and most general formulation of current physics, which allows a “tilt” in the arrow of time. A “tilt” is not a new physical hypothesis; it amounts to taking cognizance of the history dependence of physics *and* rejecting the common assumption of causality. A “tilt” does, however, involve a radical new mathematical understanding of existing physics (time evolution according to mixed-type functional differential equations), which is expected to include quantum mechanics. One can now ask the question in reverse: what sort of ethics flows from this revised time belief?

A “tilt” leads to a *non-mechanistic* and irreversible physics. This resolves the classical paradoxes of thermodynamics by permitting *both* entropy increasing and order increasing processes. Though entropy increasing processes overwhelmingly predominate, so there is no conflict with the entropy law, the entropy decreasing processes play a valuable role. Living organisms are physically characterized as those capable of spontaneously producing negentropy or “order”—better renamed harmony. This “spontaneity” differs fundamentally from “chance” (time evolution according to stochastic differential equations). Spontaneity also differs from indeterminism (in the sense of ontically broken time). The traditional notion closest to this picture of time evolution is *paticca samuppada*: coorigination conditioned, but not fully determined, by the past.

This new understanding of physics, as permitting spontaneity, also entails a new understanding of biological evolution with spontaneity, rather than chance, as the key driving factor in generating mutations. Against this background, the harmony principle provides a purpose to life, transcending biological survival, but without appealing to any religious or metaphysical entities like a creator-god. The new ethics flows from this.