

# Toward a Maturana-Informed Viability Grammar

Diagnosing, understanding, and transforming the manner of living.



Distilled from the academic white paper by Dr. Bichara Sahely.

Viability is not mere survival. It is the disciplined inquiry into how living systems, cultures, and institutions conserve or negate the conditions of living itself.

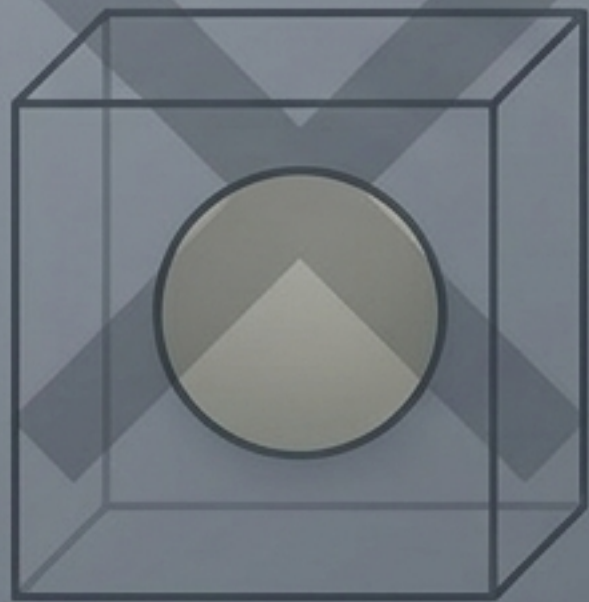
# Living as Conservation-Through-Change



# The Reality of Structural Coupling

## Internalism

The illusion that living occurs only inside the organism (genes, individual choices).



## Structural Coupling

A history of recurrent, congruent change. The organism and medium change together. Encounters trigger change, but do not specify it.

## Determinism

The illusion that the medium shapes and commands the organism from the outside.



# Emotioning Specifies Possible Doings

Behavior is not an isolated output; it is a relational occurrence distinguished by an observer.



Emotion is not decoration around behavior.  
It is the domain in which a behavior becomes possible.

# The Braided Cord of Human Worlds

Not merely words, but the generation of shared worlds.

Not what people possess or officially declare, but the network of conversations they recurrently live. Formal structures fail if the emotional thread is toxic.

Languageing  
(Recursive consensual coordination of doings)

Emotioning  
(The relational domain)

Conversation

Culture  
(A conserved network of conversations)

The braided flow.  
The same words ("Come here") live in different worlds depending on the emotioning braided with them.

# The Decisive Human Center: Love vs. Aggression

*Love is not sentiment. It is the biological and cultural ground of humanness.*

## Love

### Core Premise:

The other arises as legitimate in coexistence.

### Conflict Resolution:

Opposing behavior without negating the being.

### Reasoning Style:

Reflective, responsible, relational.

### Institutional Result:

Healing, teaching, trust.

## Aggression

### Core Premise:

The other is denied as legitimate.

### Conflict Resolution:

Dehumanization required to resolve conflict.

### Reasoning Style:

Strategic, justificatory, defensive.

### Institutional Result:

Control, extraction, humiliation.

# Breakdown and Repair



## Suffering (The Conserved Negation)

Suffering is not merely pain; it is the world conserved when the negation of love becomes normalized.

Diagnostic check: What suffering has this culture made legitimate? (e.g., calling humiliation "discipline" or extraction "development").



## Healing (Restored Legitimacy)

Healing is not forcing change or fixing an object.

It is the restoration of a relational domain where self-respect and possible living can reappear without needing to conserve the old negation.

# The Pathway to Freedom

## Step 2: Ethics

Care for consequences.  
Releasing absolute attachment  
to desire to see its effect on  
coexistence.

## Step 1: Reflection.

Living becoming able to  
see how it is living.  
The pause where a world  
stops pretending to be  
the only world.

## Step 4: Freedom

The reflective possibility of  
living otherwise.  
No longer automatically  
conserving what one does  
not want to conserve.

## Step 3: Responsibility

Answerability for participation.  
Not blame or omnipotence, but  
accepting that what continues  
through us concerns us.

*You cannot reach freedom without  
passing through responsibility.*

# Why Reforms Fail: Change vs. Transformation

## Traditional Reform (Change)

### Mechanism:

Adopts new formal language, rules, or metrics.

### Emotioning:

Conserves the old emotioning (e.g., adopts 'well-being' language but keeps ranking/fear).

### Result:

The old culture restores itself beneath the new vocabulary.

## Maturana-Informed Transformation

### Mechanism:

A new manner of living begins to be systemically conserved.

### Emotioning:

The relational domain itself changes (e.g., protecting the dignity of error).

### Result:

A new network of conversations is sustained in recurrent practice.

# Life-Coherence Defined

Conservation that does not betray living.



A system can be highly stable, efficient, and resilient, yet entirely life-incoherent.  
Resilience is not enough. We must ask: Resilience for what manner of living?

# The Viability Grammar Overview



*A life-coherent grammar for diagnosing, understanding, and transforming the manner of living.*

# Diagnostic Primitives: The Structure of Conservation



1. **Conservation:** What is being conserved?  
(Does this continuation conserve or negate living?)



2. **Constraint:** What limits possibilities?  
(What must be respected for this conservation to continue?)



3. **Margin:** What remains possible? (How much room is left for trust, play, reflection, and viable change?)



4. **Disturbance:** What disrupts coherence? (What triggers change without determining it in the coupled history?)

# Diagnostic Primitives: The Dynamics of Response



**5. Present Structure:** What is the current manner of living? (From what embodied history does the response arise?)



**6. Regulation:** What regulates this manner of living? (What recurrent dynamics restore or stabilize the pattern when disrupted?)



**7. Relevance:** Why does this matter for living? (What becomes visible, meaningful, or legitimate? What is made invisible?)



**8. Possible Doings:** What alternative doings are possible? (What can actually be lived next within this relational domain?)

# Systemic Application of the Grammar

Domain	Life-Coherent Conservation	Life-Incoherent Conservation
The Family	Trust, play, dignity, boundary	Control, fear, abandonment, conditional worth.
The School	Curiosity, disciplined inquiry, dignity of error	Ranking, performance anxiety, shame, compliance.
The Clinic	Healing, presence, patienthood, science	Objectification, throughput, hierarchy, patient invisibility.
The Economy	Provisioning, care, sufficiency, regeneration	Accumulation, scarcity, extraction, disposability.

# The Recursive Safeguard

The grammar must be applied to itself.  
A diagnostic tool used without love is  
just another instrument of negation.

## The Observer's Check

When I ask "What is conserved?", I must ask "What am I conserving by diagnosing this way?"



## The Observer's Check

Am I negating the other in the very act of distinguishing their behavior?

*The grammar ends where living begins again. Diagnosis is life-coherent only when it opens a path toward renewed living.*