

WHY DO I EXIST?

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We ask some interesting questions that probably have no answers such as:

Why do I exist?

What is my purpose?

I don't think we ask these questions because they have any real value or content but because of one thing we do better than any other known being: make tools.

Unlike any other observable qualities, we have excelled at employing tools and improving the tools we already have. The crucial element allowing us to innovate is that, instead of just seeing and imitating tool usage, we identify what the task is that the tool helps us with and what it is about the tool that makes it helpful. Our use of tools is an advantage but our ability to improve our pre-existing tools is what really got us where we are as a species.

If one has a tool, one could identify what that tool's *purpose* is. This process extends naturally to behavior. If someone is doing X , we can identify why they are doing X ; i.e., what they are achieving through X . S is cleaning her vegetables to avoid food-borne illness. T is planting seeds to grow food bearing plants. We have an innate drive to achieve ends in a more efficient

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way; i.e., improving the tool. So we have abstracted our tool-thinking to apply to things which are not tools. (If we're worried about what we call a tool, we can say a tool is an *object* that is used towards a specific end.) We can now see almost anything, imagine it having an end or purpose, call it t , and think of ways that t can be reached more effectively and/or efficiently.

Now, the problem we have (as I see it) is that the ends and purposes are somewhat more real to us than the methods used to achieve them. For instance, it would seem strange for a person to use fine cutlery to dig holes or, as flash mobs have shown us, to use a grocery store as the location for a pillow fight. We have grown attached to only using things for their designated purpose. A hammer that doesn't get nails into pieces of wood would be considered a worthless hammer. So the hammer's value is decided mostly on its ability to hammer and has almost nothing to do with the hammer itself.

Another thing to consider is that our goal-oriented tools are objects. When I search for my "purpose," it seems that I am viewing myself as a tool to accomplish something. The problem with applying our tool-thinking here is that we're trying to apply it to a subject, not an object. Subjects can (and do) serve as tools but subjects are not tools. So why do we apply our tool-thinking to subject related considerations? Probably because our abstracted tool-thinking has been useful to us and we naturally apply it to everything.

Why does it rain?

The rain helps plants grow but that's not *why* it rains. It rains because it rains. If it didn't rain, you and I probably wouldn't exist and we wouldn't be asking these questions. In the same way, you and I exist, not towards an end, but simply because we exist. Be glad you're not a tool and that you have freedom, as terrifying and as heavy of a burden that freedom may be.