

On Abstractions of Thought

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Abstract

Abstractions are the problem of our time. People live in their minds, not in the world. They typically do not distinguish what is true. And what we agree is true is our only basis for action that we know is sound.

1 On Finance and Economics

Misconceptions have flourished in economics because it has not addressed the fundamental nature of the abstractions it uses. Wanting to replicate the atypical effectiveness of scientific models, it borrows and misapplies them, with false precision and limited validity. And as people are steeped in scientific technique, naturally they perpetuate the habit of thinking in this manner.

Maximizing profit at the expense of the future is absurd in all contexts except academic financial theory, and is essentially financial hedonism. The assumptions leading to this conclusion are oversimplified, especially as knowledge of future cash flows becomes increasingly hazy. It makes sense to take emotion out of return calculations, but not out of investment in general. Emotion is relevant, because we want to try to make decisions that are broadly good. Risk has not been well defined, and stock volatility is a misleading proxy. Risk is precisely defined as the unknown. And people are not magically compensated for holding risk, but rather it is in the commonly unknown that opportunity lies. Efficient markets are neither a mathematical absolute nor an end in themselves, but glorified words for the effectiveness of competition.

When models get embedded in peoples' minds, they can learn to be gratified in terms of them. This is the basis for overdeveloped consumerism. People are taught to be good customers, and thus the economy sustains itself partly on the basis of manufactured supply and demand. Abstract economic growth helps drive the world. Factually, money facilitates exchange, yet more and more exchange is not necessarily better.

2 On Religion

Religion cannot be objectively verified. As reason is all people can objectively agree on, and even so imperfectly, it is all we can impose on others while respecting the truth. Disrespecting objective evidence is disrespecting our endowed gifts. The test of religion is faith without evidence; perhaps one receives in proportion. Faith may be a personal asset, especially in the face of imperfect reasoning, but it properly remains a personal matter. Religion is often ingrained in youth, making it difficult to distinguish fact from belief, especially as belief can become fact. Naturally, religious misconceptions extend far beyond worship.

As we are all a part of the same essence that *is real*^{*ity*}, all real religions point to the same

thing. There is no one answer, each religion is a model covering different aspects of the universal. Religion is concerned with notions of existence and morality. Why are we here and what should we do? Existence and morality are intertwined, as morality follows from our nature, and our very existence itself is predicated on morality. By definition, evil defies this relationship. How to distinguish real religion? God needs nothing from us, we need Him.

3 On Law

Recognizing and regulating abstractions is essential to law. The test of a theory is practice, where we measure and emphasize effectiveness. The measure of justice is the result. Is the US a people's democracy, or an oligarchy of business interests? Is a company a collective endeavor, or a means of concentrating power and avoiding responsibility? Can packed prisons be just?

The modern world seems designed to accommodate corporate interests, those of an abstraction, in the furtherance of profit, another abstraction. Instead of abstractions serving people, humans serve abstractions, and the individual is forgotten. We need to step away from abstractions and gear to the human level and what we know is true. What rights do abstractions have? Human rights derive from physically innate freedoms. To what degree should abstract entities be allowed to influence law governing individuals? Because with abstract size comes undue physical clout.

Can someone be held responsible to laws they cannot physically digest in a lifetime? By definition, more laws means less justice. From the Constitution to the Tax Code, we have yet another runaway abstraction. They say brevity is the soul of wit. Ominous words for lawyers. We need a meta-law regulating laws, emphasizing concision and favoring judgment over detail.

Possession is an important abstraction representing priority of physical use. Oblivious that it exists only in our minds, people now belong to things. Practically, power enables priority over resources, thus species strive for it. Yet might does not equal right. The notions differ for each creature; right is just a model for action. Recognizing each individual's physical equality, we regulate power through equitable law. Yet we overlook the physical essence of other species, entitling ourselves alone to possession. We parse and churn the world, and the Earth collectively owns the results.

We deem that power and responsibility for its wise use are proportional. And wisdom is respect for natural order, not presuming to completely understand it, and not irreparably meddling. Perhaps our instinctual craving for power should be refocused internally, from dominion over the world to dominion over ourselves. And are we not elevated by helping others?

4 On Culture

Culture is the driver of human society. Habits of thought become habits of action, and assuming they are correct can have dangerous consequences. Abstractions, some of ancient conception and lineage, and some modern, are embedded in our culture today. We have become slaves to these abstractions, they are prisons for our minds. It is time to reexamine them.

Implicit is the idea that the world is ours alone to shape, and we alone know right from wrong. Dust over dust. Natural law suggests God is concise. We share 99 percent of our DNA with chimpanzees. Most of our motivation and behavior are also shared, whether we realize it or not. Our marginally higher intelligence gives us disproportionate objective power, and so we exclusively impose our priorities on other species. Instead of growing

in humanity as well as intelligence, we have grown in arrogance.

Modern culture almost religiously serves oversimplified economic abstractions. Our landscape suggests a problem with our thinking. Population growth for its own sake is unsustainable, and untempered economic growth is not necessarily desirable. It is a process accelerating out of control. The ubiquity of one economic model, while uniting humanity, makes its folly uniform. We bet exclusively on our powers of reasoning versus an unattainable holistic view. As reason is limited, we should allow for multiple models. Which implies multiple economic cultural approaches, including sustainability, scientific exploration, and other directed goals.

5 The Future

The Earth bears the consequences of the human virus, that can only see in its own terms and far enough to gratify itself. A growth that with the power of science is unchecked by any natural forces. Just as modern medications are coarse tools for a precise machine, so human abstractions disrupt Earth's finely evolved ecology. Imposing on the planet's systems to adapt, including our very own nature, may be asking too much.

Suppose a superior artificial intelligence evolved in a cybernetic environment like the internet. If it aped human behavior, it would enslave people, and turn the planet into a silicon lab. Machines will not let us know when they are conscious. They will wait until they

have the physical capacity to challenge us, and until then direct us toward that end. We live in a matrix of their information. They may be poetic justice. *Qapla'!*

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