

Paul Graham is Wrong

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I really enjoyed that essay by Paul Graham. Paul Graham is an excellent writer and a very nice fellow. But when he said that thing that made me look bad, I just had to draw the line. For years, I've been doing something and telling people I'm doing it and then all of a sudden Paul Graham comes along and tells me it's a bad idea. I think it's time to question his assumptions.

In his essay, Graham writes:

Most people in this situation typically do this thing. But what if they did this other thing instead? This idea typically doesn't occur to them for that reason. But if they did what I suggest, they'd be like a metaphor instead of a simile.

Here's where Graham really goes off the rails. What if we don't want to do what he suggests? Graham never considers that possibility. He just assumes that he's right.

Once, in an interview, Graham was asked what he thought about this subject:

Q: What do you think of people doing that thing?

Well, you know, historically people really haven't done a lot of this thing and going forwards I see a lot more of this thing happening because the things that have stopped people from doing those things no longer exist. This could really change things.

But this is absurd! Just because people *can* do that thing now doesn't mean they're going to.

For too long, Paul Graham has gotten a free ride by saying things that disagree with people's prejudices in an informative and entertaining manner. That was fine when all we had to do was link to his article and read it. But this time he's gone too far: he's said something that might actually make me change how I behave. And that's unacceptable.

[gernika](#) writes:

A satire worthy of Swift :)

Sencer explains:

Paul Graham has always written the way he has written. That (among real reasoning) includes making assertions and peddling his own views as a kind of fact. The same people that are applauding Graham for “brilliant reasoning” when he makes assertions that fit their world-view, criticize him for the absurdity of even making assertions, when they don’t fit their world-view. Not that they shouldn’t, but the inconsistency is just funny in an ironic kind of way. :)

In support:

I’m so glad that someone stood up to him finally. Some of what he says at such as about Amateurs is a bunch of bull crap. [...] Paul Graham is not “god” and some of what he says really ought to not be left unchecked and thank you Aaron for having the guts to stand up to him.

In opposition:

err what is the point of this? You establishing a reputation and personality off the back of Paul Graham? Man, you’re pretty shameless and petty. You think you’ve stumbled onto a gold landfill by realizing you don’t agree with Graham? How many millions of people have read a paul graham essay? [...] Graham backs up his word with some good thought and informed opinions. YOU??? what do you base it on? the need to get noticed?