

## Equality: The beginning or the end?

The final question - of this set challenge, anyway: what is the proper equivalence of public duty and social obligation with private liberty and self-interested preference? Equality is at the heart of this challenge. All entries are to be considered equal and judged on their perceived merits, by a final, independent and disinterested arbiter. The organisers have adopted the current version of equality: every contestant is to be free to achieve their own potential. But each contestant is free to choose their own interpretations of the challenge - equal and indeterminate. Much like life, really. Except that we are still quarrelling over who we should erect as the final arbiter, and on what grounds. We end where I began, with the question of authority.

The arguments I have outlined so far have a very substantial tendency to echo and self-repeat on nearly all imaginable scales and levels. The scope for metaphor and allegory in the flow of the argument is so strong as to suggest simile. Which makes me smile, if I am careless enough to become too conceited. For the ambition of this project is clearly enormous, if not ridiculous - to re-write the paradigms of our social sciences, and thus of our rules, reasons and faiths for living.

What makes me think I can possibly aspire to such ambition? Good question. Insanity, arrogance, unwarranted self-belief, innate curiosity coupled with an over-active imagination, over-weaning personal ambition, civic duty, humane responsibility, stupidity masquerading as over (or under) educated intelligence. Any one of these possible answers, and all the others I am too stupid or lazy to list, will do. They are all human. And none is satisfactory.

The real answer, I suggest, is nothing more than the consequence of my own character, circumstance, context and culture. For me, it seems to fit. That I happen to be in this condition is merely my good or, more likely, misfortune. For evolution, as a flow system, is governed ultimately by the uncertainty principle - the most improbable of events will happen somewhere sometime. And most of these events (or arguments) will prove unsustainable. Those which prove sustainable will be the exception rather than the rule. Our very existence is exceptional, if not unique. Our continued existence depends on the exceptional. Pure equality, whatever that might mean, is simply not a sustainable answer.

But, how to discriminate? How to tell the more probable outrageous from the improbable but usefully wise? For that we need a story of what things are and who we are, and where we come from, and how we got to be here, and which of our conditions is critical and which ephemeral and superficial, and why. And thus when, where and what we might seek to do about it. We cannot discern genuine understanding from wishful thinking without such a story. And we cannot finally answer the question of a sustainable morality, as the reliable arbiter of our choice, without such a story.

### *My Story - in essence*

The time has come to try and tie in the arguments of the previous movements into a coherent whole. My story is that everything began as May - entirely entropic, without form or shape, yet universally capable of producing everything we are, see and know. Completely equal, in other words, is how we all began. Which might explain equality's eternal attraction. Until the whisper of the moment in May. Integrated, coherent and consistent flows of information and realisation are then irrevocably established. They materialise and happen as flows of energy

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or action and gravity or matter. The evidence of our universe is that the flows of animation and realisation of May can produce life as we know it, at least in one remote and apparently rather unlikely part of this galaxy in the universe. The story, only outlined here, is that the rest of the universe 'knows' of this unlikely event already and automatically, through the corresponding flows of signals and movements through the fabric of spacetime imposed in May.

In appropriate, if unlikely, circumstances and contexts, the accumulation of matter and associated energy fields can produce the complexity of what we call living systems, which evolve to be efficient users of available resources. And, most lately, evolve to produce a cognitive ape with the capacity to outgrow and over-graze its territory, but with the potential to re-invent and restructure its natural, physical and social environments. In short, an ape that can cultivate and become a farmer - not just of land and nature, but also of ideas and all their materialisations. An ape that, through its apparent cognitive ability, gets to choose. Further realisation is now down to the human race - because we get to choose. How we do that is becoming increasingly critical for us, though probably not for anything else. Except that everything else might know how and what we do.

I skip the enormous detail of the how and what still being explored and elucidated by our bio-physical sciences. These sciences, despite their growing fragmentation and specialisation, still and increasingly subscribe to the same essential story; though not quite as told here - yet. Not so, however, with our social sciences, which are still in the dark-ages as far as intellectual correspondence is concerned.

### *The philosophy?*

The story, then, is a naturalistic philosophy, if crudely vernacular as outlined here. As such it is subject to G.E. Moore's critique - that natural definitions of good or moral are contradictions in terms. One cannot define morality in non-moral terms, since morality is *sui generis*. To which I reply, with the greatest of respect, not so. The critique only stands if one seeks to stop the flow and treat it as a pool. But, if you freeze the flow to get a better look at it, you destroy its very essence and don't see it at all. You see something quite different: a static reflection which has seemingly quite different characters depending on the pattern captured in the frame and the way the light was shining on it when you clicked the shutter. And this, too, seems to be the nature of much of our vast literature on the philosophy of morality and ethics. Different thinkers come to different, but apparently plausible and realistic conclusions, depending on when and where they click their shutters. They raise a dust, and then complain they cannot see.

But in a flow, all things are relative - they are related to each other, and are necessarily reflexive. There is no such thing as *sui generis* in a flow, other than the flow itself. And how the apparent *sui* become *generis* is then of rather clear and obvious importance. If life is a flow, we cannot understand it by freezing it into a static condition. In a flow, one needs to know the source and the general direction or tendency of the flow to discern the principles according to which the flow might be thought of as running. These principles, then, might provide a clue as to what we might mean by equality (or any other morality) and whether we might be able to deduce their essential character.

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### *The Implications*

We live with the levels of starvation (as ultimate inequality) we are jointly prepared to tolerate. And we may die, if our commitment to reducing levels of starvation is not sufficient to offset the intolerance of the starving for their condition, so that they, or their champions, seek retribution and revenge. What we seem to be missing is resonance. Our social systems are apparently increasingly dissonant. Fewer people now regard politicians as worthy of respect, or the conventional political system as worth the trouble of voting, still less participation. Politics more closely resembles the tribal warfare of our earliest ancestors than the cognition and care of our more recent predecessors. Our ancestral tribes were based on consent, and driven by brotherly (or sisterly) love and an associated blind loyalty. These primitive mechanisms and motives have their natural antonyms - dissent and hate; apathy or antipathy, echoed strongly in the language of politics - to fight (or flee). For most of us, most of the time, such words conjure up a reasonably accurate picture of our politics, and generate the risible derision so commonplace amongst our comics and court-jesters.

The dissonance is echoed in our social science. We have no single science of our social systems, so we practice a more or less primitive, or desperately abstract, art of social reconciliation, generously spiced with ideologies and rituals. Our governing moralities are *ad hoc*, transient, prejudiced, opportunistic and subjective. Only an enlightened public interest can hope to satisfy the inevitable tensions. But such enlightenment requires a common understanding of what it is we are all about, and why - the meaning, and thus the morality. There can be no common moral without a common story. Without a story, any moral is arbitrary, which is a contradiction in terms.

### *The integration of Social Science*

So, finally, I come to the purpose of this project - to try and integrate our social sciences. I outlined the story under the heading of war - appropriately, I think. We need this integration now more than ever, since we have apparently run out of room for more trial by error and experiment. If we seek now to experiment with our social institutions, we do so by conscious design and not by accident. We had better understand what the rules and reasons of conscious design are, otherwise we can only prosecute by faith alone. And it is clear that there is too much dispute over the appropriate faiths for the prosecution to avoid persecution.

Table 1 re-capitulates and summarises the proposed 'natural' progression of social evolution - the essential mechanisms of conscious design. The table is constructed according to the generic patterns and flows of evolutionary systems. The structures generated by these systems are identified as the archetypical institutional type of each phase. The principles are indicated as the major governing characters, responses and motives of people and their communities in each phase. The local process of each phase is identified as the result - which generates the archetypal negotiation or transaction system as the pattern of each phase. In the final column of the table each phase is associated with its 'natural' social science discipline - the integration I seek.

Three major disciplines are missing - Philosophy, Theology, Science. Philosophy, here, is taken as the study of rationality of cognition, inference and concept - and thus as the all-embracing discipline. If philosophy departments are shut, the lights go out and the heat of

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enquiry dissipates to entropy. Science (or theology), in this construct, is the implementation of philosophy. If science is shut down, the motors of human (as opposed to animal) life support systems die; unless theology takes its place.

**Table 1 A conjecture on a natural progression of institutional evolution:**

Institutional Type	Character	Responses	Result	Transaction System	Motives	Discipline
Natural	Mind Neglect	Respond React	Adapt & Adjust	Food & gene chains	<u>Life</u> (death)	Ecology
Tribe	Care Fight	Reply Retaliate	Hunt & Gather	Consent ( <i>sentient</i> )	<i>Love</i> ( <i>hate</i> )	Anth'pology
Community	Recognise Ignore	Relate Tolerate	Cultivate & Tame	Cognition ( <i>Investigative</i> )	Inference (instinct)	Psychology
Society	Rationalise Reject	Reason Refute	Invent & Reconstruct	Care ( <i>Social</i> )	Charity (bigotry)	Sociology
Economy	Expect Exit	Rely Re-Invent	Specialise & Trade	Contract ( <i>Enterprising</i> )	<i>Barter</i> ( <i>autarchy</i> )	Economics
State	Concede Lead	Respect Reign	Govern & Preach	Convention ( <i>Realistic</i> )	<i>Habit</i> ( <i>anarchy</i> )	Politics
'Ocracy	Coerce Submit	Demand Revere	Institute & Regulate	Coercion ( <i>Conventional</i> )	<i>Fear</i> ( <i>security</i> )	Law
Empire	Question Accept	Re-search Test	Exhort & Display	Commitment ( <i>Curious</i> )	Hope (despair)	Humanities
Civilisation	Imagine Play	Re-create Teach	School & Train	Curiosity ( <i>Artistic</i> )	<i>Fun</i> ( <i>spite</i> )	Education
Culture	Believe Doubt	Trust Legitimise	Commune & Cohere	Charity ( <i>Aesthetic</i> )	Faith (distrust)	Aesthetics

There is an apparent consensus within some of the current literatures on the principle motives for human behaviour: *love*, *barter*, (or exchange) and *fear*. It is logical to add *habit* (as the accumulated understandings and acceptances of past 'best practice'), to this triumvirate. Table 1 identifies these four key motives, but adds a further four (over and above the preconditions of life and the human development of conscious inference, which I take to be the defining human characteristic). Of these, *fun* and curiosity is probably uncontroversial as a fundamental motive for human behaviour. However, there may well be more quarrel over the remaining three: faith, hope and charity; at least amongst those not convinced of St. Paul's recipe for human happiness.

It is widely commented that lack of trust is an important problem for modern institutions, which generally substantially increases transaction costs and the probability of transaction failures. In this table, trust appears as an emergent phenomenon or response only at the climax of the evolutionary progression, itself only sustainable given the continuation of the supporting phases of evolutionary development. For the table itself is potentially misleading. It lays out the logic in two dimensions. But the practice involves rolling the logic up into a scroll or cycle, in which each spoke needs to be both properly balanced and connected to an axle to make progress. And the axle is the meaning of it all.

*I have to be joking?*

To be sure, displaying the conjecture in all its bold, simplistic and transparent assertiveness invites ridicule. We all know that life, the universe and everything is much more complicated than this. I can only answer - how complicated do you want it to be? My re-construction allows for very considerable complexity, even chaos. But it also allows for a more or less

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sensible, coherent and consistent interpretation of the complexity. Without such an interpretation, what is it that separates us from the animals? If your answer to that is 'what needs to?', I suggest you consider our position very carefully. For, whether you like it or not, we have now become very much more powerful than our animal ancestors.

In short, we all need a story we can understand and believe. This is mine. If you do not like it, tell me another of equal scope and span, and with a more credible, coherent and consistent plot, and with more legitimate assumptions. In the meantime, I ask that you resist the natural animal instincts to novel or challenging things: fight, flight, or submit. Better, indulge in the more obviously human response of reconstruction and rationalisation, either of this story or of your own preconceptions, or both.

### *Meanwhile*

There are some rather curious coincidences with this one. I mention only three. The foundation psychology textbooks tell us that our human personalities seem to resolve into five major axes or predispositions - the five-trait or OCEAN model. These texts note that these traits seem hard wired - born of our animal ancestry - as responses to unknown or challenging situations or unfamiliar peers. The five traits (Conscientious, Extroversion, Agreeableness, Neuroticism, Openness) correspond with consent, contract, convention, coercion and curiosity - the five transactions systems which are here associated with our animal instincts for love, barter, fear, habit and fun. Psychologists amongst you might most object to my association of neuroticism with fear. But how do you suppose it would be to be an early ancestor, just coming to grips with an incredible cognitive ability? It is a surprise we don't suffer more of it than we do.

It is also coincidental that the archetypal transaction systems identified here correspond closely with Holland's characterisation of peoples' attributes in relation to appropriate 'job fits'. Holland's archetypes are frequently regarded as rather crude at the psychological level. Nevertheless, they have proved remarkably robust in providing useful and profitable recruitment services. The Holland taxonomy characterises six archetypal occupation forms: realistic; investigative; artistic; social; enterprising; conventional. The taxonomy suggested here indicates that there are two missing archetypes - curious and aesthetic (see table 1). Thus, a proposition - inclusion of these two would improve the Holland characterisation of 'occupation space'.

The coincidences go deeper, or should that be wider? Consider the Buddhist creed of the eight steps of the Noble Path, or the Confucian teachings of the eight educational steps to harmony. There are eight very similar steps beyond the consenting and tribal ape in Table 1. There is neither the space nor the resource within the confines of this essay to explore the potential relationships between these ancient and persistent teachings and the cognitive flows outlined here, but the linkages seem superficially remarkable. But maybe too superficial? How deep do you want or need to go?

### *A test of the tale*

I have, in any event, embedded in this account a substantial test of at least the power of the logic or reason I seek to deploy here. The test is whether the simplified view of the beginning of it all - the Maybe universe - turns out to be roughly the nature of the eventual Theory of

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Everything, for which the particle physicists and quantum mechanics are currently searching. There are some curious resonances here, as well, with the numbers of dimensions that the superstring and super-symmetry theorists seem to be working with. My bet is that my story will fit.

And if it does, I suggest the rest of the story might need to be taken rather more seriously than I suspect you are willing to at present. Never mind. The point is, it helps me. And the corollary is that you, too, need some such story to make sense of our lives. If this one does not fit for you, then, as I keep saying, tell me a better one.

*So what for equality?*

The essence of the argument so far is that our present condition (at least in the west) can be characterised as an uneasy, and necessarily local compromise between economics, politics and law. Economics is clear about equality - it is not a sensible aspiration. For economies, inequality is the motor of progress, and is a necessary and inevitable consequence of progress. Purely democratic politics, with one person one vote, says the poor will govern, as they will inevitably outnumber the rich. Politics, then, will necessarily slow the motor of progress, if the poor are as self-interested as the rich are taken to be. The law, though, necessarily treats everyone as equal, at least in principle, though the practice proves more difficult, since legal dispute tends to be expensive.

State authority is constructed through democratic judgements on equity as justice, fairness, impartiality, and righteousness - the merits of the case, in the majority opinion of those willing to express an opinion, loosely based, we suppose, on a common faith in humanity. But economies express judgements on equity as well; as investment, property, outlays, and wealth - the deserts or matter of the case, based on the logic and inhumane reason of the market. And our practised morality (such as it is) consists in ruling on the equality of these separate and distinct verdicts, on reaching equilibrium, symmetry, balance or properly weighted equivalence between them - from each according to social responsibility, to each according to inalienable rights.

My story, such as it is, is that equality may be where we were born, and maybe where we will die. But in between, equality is not where it or we are at. My conclusion, then, is that equality is not a sensible temporal or spatial goal. Life is necessarily and inherently unequal. Which is not necessarily to say unfair. Fairness depends on humane judgement. Our ideas, on which these judgements are made, come in two forms. First are our personal goals, and aspirations - the self-ideas, which can be seen as simply an extension of the selfish gene and exploitation of the comparative advantages associated with having a largish brain. Second, and uniquely human, come the public goals and ambitions for society - the public-ideas, as an exhibition of the existence of consciousness, and thus a conscience. We are driven, at bottom, by guilt and gilt, where guilt is simply gilt with a 'u' in it. The one counteracts and balances the other, if we are lucky.

We come back to Weber's notion of the separation between material and ideal ambitions. These, Weber suggested, are irreducible and fundamentally different. Well, perhaps so, but irreducibly connected, nevertheless. Consider the remote possibility that the fundamental flows of our existence are as outlined in the second essay, on knowledge. And consider, too, that the nature of flows is to self-repeat in self-similar patterns at all different scales and

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levels. Might it not be the case that material and ideal conditions correspond to the twin character of elementary particles or wavyicles - as matter and energy? The energy of our ideals become materialised in the matter we create. The richer and the more material we become, the more guilty we might feel, as the gravity of our material circumstance attracts those of less material weight. The energy of our ideals (and their conversion to action and effort) needs to be commensurate with our weight, or we grow cold and inert, or dissipate in noxious gas.

Might it not be the case that our twin concerns with self and public interest closely correspond to the space-circumstance and time-context within which we are bound to live? Our personal space and circumstance and our social context? Which become warped and twisted as matter grows every more mighty, its gravitational forces condemning us to perpetual spin, orbiting whatever nearby stars or planets there are, while we seek to break free and find some more congenial galaxy or constellation or solar system within which to reside?

### *Conclusions*

We began with authority and I seek to end with authority. But in the middle is ambiguity, and that is where most of us live most of the time. The argument is a flow. It goes round in circles and perhaps makes some progress while it does so. But the judgement as to whether the flow makes any real sense, and thus conforms to notions of coherence and consistency, must rest with you - the readers. As, too, must the judgement as to whether the argument adds to our understandings of our conditions, and provides new and useful insights, and thus conforms to notions of progress. There are no external authorities to which we can agree to appeal - we have met the enemy and he is us. There may be some of this which is novel, and there may be some which you might agree with. But it will be fortunate indeed if the novel coincides with the agreeable. And that is the nature of our human condition. To go with the flow. Or to ignore the currents, tides and eddies and strike out for the shore of certainty and fact.

But what are we to treat as certain and fact? Our most scientific of sciences (whichever you think them to be) are discovering that facts are ephemeral and contextual. Certainties, such as they are, are time and place dependent - they are incurably and irreducibly relative. Our scientific laws are necessarily both only provisional and only conjectural. We cannot indubitably prove them to be true. We can choose to ignore these inconveniences. Or we can choose to play games with the paradoxes and conundrums to which they give rise. Or we can choose to try and make some sort of working sense of them, to try and cultivate and grow more harmonious lives. I suggest that anything we might call progress in our history so far arises solely and only from picking the last of these three options - the third way, if you must. And our working senses will also be relative to our time and space. Now seems more than appropriate for a revival of a common working sense. Only with such a common sense can we hope to provide for the missing resonance.

Notwithstanding your protests and complaints, the points of this quintet of answers are worth emphasis.

First and most importantly, answers to any fraction of these questions, without coherent and consistent answers to those outstanding, will be wrong. Except, that is, by the most improbable of accidents. But, second, recognition and appreciation of the most improbable of

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accidents requires an essential understanding of how such an answer might fit the overall picture. Without such a picture, how can you tell the useful and helpful answers from the massively more common rubbish? In other words, answers to any one question which are not also consistent and coherent with all other questions cannot constitute understanding and genuine knowledge, but can only count as mindless information. We need a metaphysic, as well as respect for our biophysics.

Third, then, if you do not like this outline, the next challenge is clear - tell me another one which makes even more sense, and is more parsimonious with necessary assumptions and foundation beliefs. Unless you can, I submit that your protests are purely semantic. But, fourth, semantics are important. Here, I insist that Fermat's last theorem (knowledge essay) is not simply relevant but fundamental. Not only that, but it is exactly harmonious with a tried and trusted method of social and philosophical enquiry - the dialectic. This, I believe, is neither accident nor mere coincidence.

Plato's Socrates (Phaedrus) describes two methods of reasoning in understanding rhetorical argument: "The first method is to take a synoptic view of many scattered particulars and collect them under a single generic term, so as to form a definition in each case and make clear the exact nature of the subject one proposes to expound. ... (the second method is) the ability to divide a genus into species again, observing their natural articulation, not mangling any of the parts. ... Hitherto I have given those who possess this ability the title of dialecticians ..."

My contention is that unless one can conceptualise systematics in two-dimensional form, and imagine the outcome as a multiplicative and reciprocal combination of two dimensions, then the result of your conceptualisations and imaginings will be wholly fairy stories - they do not and cannot exist. It follows that the both the postmodernists and Einstein are right. Everything is ultimately relative and constructed. Conceptualisation is simply realisation written another way. And realisation is what this flow system we live in and with is all about. That is its point - to realise.

Finally, realisation is about cultivating. I am just a farmer. I cultivate ideas rather than plants and animals is all. I, like you, own nothing. I am merely one of many stewards of this rather remote and unlikely bit of universal real estate - its realisation. In so doing, I am bound to recognise and respect the necessarily unique circumstance and context within which I find myself, and I am bound to understand my own culture and character so that I can hope to make it fit. Ultimately, we have to grow our own moralities from our understandings.

### *Practical Implications*

Social scientists cannot answer these questions - all we can seek to do is re-frame them so that we can gain insights into the fundamental reconciliations and resonances we need to achieve to survive and persist. This will, no doubt, be a serious disappointment to practitioners hoping for clear-cut guidance from our social science. But this hope is to misunderstand science. Science cannot provide answers, it can only re-phrase and re-formulate the questions. In so doing, it tells stories about how things are, and thus how they might be. The answers, the implications, however, are up to us. Sorry, but that is the way it is.

What are my practical deductions, for what they are worth? Our wealth and position, such as they are, are mostly the result of the happenstance of our position and status in the flow.



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You may choose to regard them as rewards to be enjoyed, or as chances to escape the flow. I strongly suggest that they are better regarded as obligations. Our rights come with reciprocal responsibilities, echoing the necessary resonance between matter and energy on which our biophysical existence depends. The more wealth, information and knowledge we have, the greater the obligations to use them wisely. Use them foolishly, and they will dissipate or explode or implode, despite the great times you may temporarily enjoy. Wisdom requires an understanding - a story to give meaning to life. And we get to choose, write and read our own stories.

We have all known this forever. We are now rapidly running out of time and space to make many more mistakes. This, at the end, is my story and I'm sticking to it. You had better make up your own minds as to what gives meaning to your lives. Since without meaning, what separates us from nature? Without meaning, what is the purpose of life? Meaning, then, I think, is the sustainable fundamental ambition, not equality. Without meaning (or with perfect equality) life and the universe is nothing, even if then also and maybe everything. Without meaning, any morality is ignorant and arbitrary. The point is to realise. The devil is not in the detail - life is in the detail. The devil (and god) is in the conception. Your alternative conceptions, please.

### **The Question**

Questions have answers, yet every answer  
conceals yet more questions, world without end.

Does there exist the ultimate answer?  
One which contains no further questions?

If there exists the ultimate answer  
then that answer must be God.  
If God exists, then we and all our confusions  
are but a very small part of God.

But, if God exists, then It is without,  
or all inclusive of both time and space.  
No more than infinite and immortal.  
If so, then so too are we.

Finite defines of us and life  
cannot, then, be the whole truth.  
To escape the finite gives the chance  
of experiencing God.

To escape needs faith, the faith in if.  
Belief in the hypothesis  
is needed for the testing of it  
Any further thought is inadequate for the question.

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