

## Creating Freedom by Changing the Model

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### Models and Forms of Models

We all live in individual mental worlds created and restrained by our beliefs, thoughts and ideas. The natural consequence of this is that we each live in a different mental world. Each of these mental worlds is a simplified version of the external world that we examine with our senses. These mental worlds of ours must be simplified, because the informational content of the external world is high and we do not have the resources to create detailed representations of it.

In creating a representation of the external world we invent and apply formulas; simple rules that help us to generate a realistic representation with a minimum of resources, but this introduces errors. Someone may for example determine that cheese is "bad" because it sometimes triggers a migraine headache. This "cheese is bad," rule is then used in their model of the world and they avoid eating cheese, even though there may be types of cheese that do not produce the migraines.

These simple rules may become prejudices or phobias. We all have many of them and use them to guide our decisions and actions as we live. They are essential and cannot be eliminated, as they simplify non-critical decision-making and allow us to use our limited resources for more important tasks.

Our mental models remain static until updated with new information. For example, we model the people we meet and our model of them stays static until we get information to update it. "My how you have changed," is a common greeting after a long absence, as we compare the new model of what we see before us with the old model of our friend stored in our memory.

Science helps us model the physical world. It has devised techniques that ensure that its models are consistently applied so that everyone applying them gets the same results. For example, the model created by the formula  $F = ma$  (force equals mass times acceleration) is always the same, independent of who is applying it. Similarly, the models developed in mathematics and logic can be used by different people without detracting from their accuracy. But, despite their possible complexity, these models are relatively simple compared to the models needed to deal with other aspects of our lives, such as "freedom," "oppression," "emancipation" and "accomplishment."

Despite the challenges, we need models to represent these things, as without a model ideas cannot be related to each other. In the example above the model relates the ideas force, mass and acceleration. Without the equation these ideas would be much less useful to us. Similarly, models that relate things like freedom, oppression etc. would be a tremendous help in improving our understanding of these ideas and, as can be expected, models of this type do exist.

The great world religions present us with models to guide our thinking. Christianity, for example, models the world as being created by an Almighty God and being composed of good and evil. It champions "good," and provides formulae, beliefs and prejudices to guide us to be good. In its model, there is an eternal battle between

good and evil and our role is to join the forces of the good to combat the forces of evil. It models "freedom" as being free from the devil's influence, "oppression" as the result of being influenced by the devil and "accomplishment" as successfully following the Christian path.

The general design or form of this model is easily copied and used in other aspects of our lives. The same form is used in business. There, "freedom" becomes having enough money to do what we want to do, "oppression" as being restrained from achieving our economic goals, and "accomplishment" as having achieved economic goals.

As we apply this form to other aspects of our lives, its characteristics are transposed to the new application as prejudices, formulae that we apply without conscious attention to why we are applying them. For example, in Christian communities the spiritual structure of the Christian hierarchy is replicated when a family unit is formed. The father takes on the role of the Christian God, and dispenses judgment and punishment. Since God does not involve anyone in his deliberations neither does the father. The same is true of other organizations founded on this basic model, which defines the role to be played by the leader and the roles to be played by the followers.

Many of the problems associated with this model have been documented and valiant attempts made to avoid the worst effects that these models generate. For example, leaders are encouraged to be less autocratic and followers encouraged critical thinking and becoming more independent, but this is being done without changing the underlying model that everyone is subconsciously following. While progress is being made, it is very slow and when the effort is relaxed, the tendency is to slip back into the "form" of the underlying model.

Even after analyzing and determining that there are serious problems with the model promoted by Christianity, critics follow the "good/evil" model that Christianity propagates. Their thrust seems to be to invert the roles and make Christianity "evil" while placing themselves in the "good" role. They adopt the "fight evil" meme and pick their fight, ignoring the fact that they are following the same pattern of behavior they are criticizing. In doing this they are accepting the underlying "form" and applying it to suite their circumstance, rather than examining and changing it.

Repeatedly reapplying the same underlying "form" in new ways does not seem to solve the fundamental problems. People still fight and poverty still exists. When all efforts to change fails, a feeling of oppression pervades, a feeling that no matter what is done the same problems will reoccur. Feelings of frustration and failure, of not being able to live an accomplished life, contribute to the problem because it encourages everyone to force rather than persuade others to accept their point of view. This enhances the feeling of oppression.

If there are underlying forms that we are subconsciously applying when we create new models we need to examine these, as they will remain unchanged until examined. As indicated above, in order to change our image of a friend we need to revisit their image. Similarly we need to visit the underlying forms and bring new information to them, if we are to alter them and by so doing alter the form of the models we create using these underlying forms.

We therefore need to identify and study these underlying forms, define them and discover what assumptions go into their creation. We can also analyze how these underlying forms have been applied and what affects this has had. In essence we need to model this "form" so that we can more easily conceptualize it. To discover these forms we have to look for patterns of behavior and abstract away from those patterns to determine the essential features of the form that is being applied.

### **Social and Cultural Effects**

The mental worlds we create represent, or models, the world we see around us. These models are greatly influenced by our culture, language, environment and learning. Beliefs and ideas about our world are passed on from person to person while it is easy to accept the beliefs of others and in so doing adopt their mental model of the world, we can all choose not to do this. Philosophy gives us the tools to examine our own view of the world, from inside our own mental world (our perspective), find its flaws and correct them. Doing this helps us to create a new worldview and generates feelings of freedom, of being able to live in and explore new mental worlds.

Philosophers like Plato, Hegel, Marks and Popper have criticized various aspects of old models and subsequently developed new models that seek to correct the problems they highlight. All do this by applying reason (within their own worldview) and seem to assume that because reason is the best tool we have for this purpose, using it produces the best possible products.

For example, Popper in *The Open Society and its Enemies*, criticizes Plato, Hegel and Marx for supporting what he termed "closed societies," ones governed by laws that restricted personal freedom. He was probably influenced to do this by his own experiences. This same form of idea, that laws cannot control the world, is repeated in his philosophy of science where he is famous for his claim that scientific laws never become laws, but remain hypotheses that are continually being challenged and updated. The underlying form of his idea is that the models we create in science are descriptive and not dictatorial. In other words the laws discovered by scientists are not laws that the material world obeys, they are simply aids to our understanding of how material things interact. These laws help us to create better models of the material world.

He criticizes the models, created by the other philosophers mentioned, by using reasoned analysis and in doing this he follows a "form" of philosophical discussion, the same "form" that is used by the philosophers he criticizes. But reason has its limitations. It can only be applied once a model has been created. It is a tool for analysis, not creativity.

Popper's work demonstrates that he is a creature of his environment. We all are creatures of our environment and are only capable of creating simplified, approximate models of the world we sense around us. It is a mistake to assume that we flawlessly model the world revealed by our senses. There must be errors and simplifications that are generated by us while observing and modeling.

To get a better picture of our circumstance we should therefore include models of ourselves, of our observation and thinking process, in the models we create of our sensory world so that we can better understand how these influence the models we create.

## Modeling our Thinking Process

The human thinking process is one that can be modeled as a combination of a creative process and an analytic process. Most philosophers devote their time and writing to analysis, rather than discussing how the models they analyze are created. For example, Russell sought to create a logical language and many who follow him apply logic to language, but where did the idea of logic come from? What inspiration generated the laws of logic?

The concepts for logic had to be created before they were defined. The creation of the logical variable "p" as being either true or false with no intermediate state is itself not a logical process. This concept had to be created before it could be tested with analysis. We are reasonably comfortable with the analytical process, but how did the creation take place? From an analytical perspective the statement "p is either true or false," appears to be circular, as the concept, "is either true or false," exists in the concept "p" before its definition was established.

Many philosophers have pointed out that there is circularity in much of our thinking. The concept, "p is either true or false," exists in our consciousness prior to our writing it down. It is therefore incorrect to say that "is true or false," defines "p". It does not define it so much as explain the idea. I follow Popper in claiming that we should think of "p" as a label, or name and "is true or false," as an explanation of the label (*Popper Selections*, p. 92). While this type of circularity does not add value to the analytical process, and needs to be avoided there, it may be essential for the creative process.

There seems to be evidence to indicate that circularity plays a prominent role in our creative process. For example, is the idea, "p is either true or false," original, or is it a recycling of an older concept, one that appears in Genesis with the instruction, "do not eat from the tree of knowledge of good and evil"? The close similarity between the good/evil idea and the true/false idea strongly suggests that one is derived from the other, but an analytic process cannot do this. Analysis cannot make the jump from good/evil to true/false. This leap has to be made by a creative process that copies the good/evil idea (meme?) into a different context.

Here we see the benefit of the abstraction process. It gives us the facility to distill ideas, developed in one context and create an abstract form that can then be applied to other completely different contexts. But, there is also a strong element of circularity in doing this as the same form appears repeatedly in the models we create and, as the discussion on circularities amply illustrates, doing this repeatedly and unknowingly can result in a sterility of ideas; where no fundamentally new ideas are generated.

The discussion at the beginning of this paper suggests that we are in fact faced with a sterility of ideas, that we are enclosing ourselves in mental cages and limiting our creativity and our ability to find solutions to the problems we face. If it is true that we are simply recycling old ideas rather than developing new original ideas it is certainly a cause for concern.

It was also suggested that we cannot avoid creating simplified, somewhat inaccurate models, as models are essential to our thinking process, our facilities are limited, and the world we need to model is very complex. In the face of this we need to revisit

the creative process, analyze it and "model" it so that we can better understand what we are doing. This will help us get beyond some of the limitations that are apparent in our current approach. Perhaps we can come up with a new "form" that can then be successfully applied to a wide range of problems. We should be aware that, if we do not analyze our creative process the danger will remain hidden and we will inadvertently condemn ourselves to sterile repetition.

We can use our analytical tools to examine ourselves, question our beliefs, ideas and emotions and determine how to work around their influence to see our individual mental worlds from the outside. Doing this breaks restraining links created by well-established beliefs about ourselves and the world we experience. This overview or model appears to be from a perspective outside ourselves because it includes a model of human creative and analytic thought as part of the model. It facilitates the creation of a new worldview which is more robust as it provides an overview that shows how the old view was formed, why it is so resilient and why the new world views, created from inside the same belief set, failed.

The new model created by doing this includes models of people and models of the worlds these people believe exist. It effectively puts people into the model rather than viewing the world through an individual pair of eyes. Freedom is created by this approach as it correctly suggests that each person is free to view the world in a different way. None of these views are necessarily any better than any other; all are approximations, all are simple models of a complex world.

This model immediately suggests that there is little benefit derived from arguing about which worldview is "correct" as a correct worldview cannot be obtained. Instead it suggests that, our intellectual efforts can be coordinated to build and analyze more complex models.

## **Conclusions and Implications**

It is apparent that even when there is freedom of belief and expression, people can and do feel restrained and oppressed. If they believe that "others" are responsible for the way they feel, it is likely that they will seek to influence, by ideas and by threat, those "others" to remove the constraints they believe are being imposed upon them. This can very easily lead to conflict and this conflict can again without doubt result in heightened feelings of oppression and the cycle closes on itself.

Human history is dominated by these cycles of conflict and although we are slowly following a path that takes us away from armed physical conflict, the conflict remains as an underlying concept or "form" that shapes the way we think. It would appear that we are applying the "form" of conflict to the design of our games and intellectual discourse so that while we are moving away from physical violence, we retain the same form of thinking in our games and intellectual activities. While this form remains unexamined it will continue to express itself in our subconscious and we will continue to perpetuate conflictual behavior and this will sustain feelings of oppression.

However if we can find a way to break this cycle, we may be able to achieve a different form of social organization. To do this we need to include models of the human thinking process in our model of the world.

It is likely that we will find that the cycles of conflict are generated internally, in the way we think, rather than imposed upon us by external circumstance. If this is the case we need to come up with alternative ways of thinking, rather than fighting new wars to correct the excesses of old ones. In addition, if we have underlying forms, or patterns of thinking, that subconsciously influence how our ideas are created and we can find ways to alter this form, then it will be a relatively easy task to propagate a new way of thinking across a wide range of activities. To put a more biological flavor on it, if our ideas are created by a meme (mental equivalent of a gene) and we find a way to alter that meme to create a new, self-perpetuating "form" for generating ideas it could have a profound impact on the future of our society.

We can create mental freedom by doing this.

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