

The Purpose of Culture, or Inception of Social Collision Theory

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May 29, 2015

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Abstract: This essay presents introductory concepts and philosophy of the “social collision theory” which may offer presumably calculable suggestions on what societal habits can be cultivated which produce a more diverse and economically extensive and efficient society, regardless of the country.

I had a very special dream. In this dream I saw a symbolic culture spreading among nations and societies. The humanity looked like a triangular fractal, with small pyramids filling the inside of a single big pyramid. A substance that represented culture was spreading among small pyramids, eventually reaching the top and bottom of a big pyramid. Then I saw humans arranged into a kind of two-dimensional “matrix” on a plane, each standing close to each other. Each human performed some action, spanning arms, legs and body long and wide in different directions, performing a kind of personal dance. The most fascinating thing about this was that while standing close to each other, humans were not interfering with neighbors as neighbors did a different action with a different body movement which was somehow complimentary to movements of all neighboring humans. All this looked like a grand organized human dance. Then I saw two alternatives to this arrangement: in the first alternative all humans tried to perform the same set of actions all together, in the second alternative humans performed actions that interfered with their neighbors. Such arrangements looked clumsy, painful and inconvenient, featured conflicts, damages and completely stalled humans.

The idea of the dream was that the human society better functions when there are no collisions in human actions present, when the actions of a human do not interfere with neighbors while the actions themselves are diverse. Now this may sound utopic and banal to some, but to me this was a completely new idea, new approach, new understanding of the purpose of culture in general with culture being a substance whose goal is reduction of tensions and increase of the diversity inside a society. This gave an idea of the “social collision theory” which may offer an answer on what kind of habits can be beneficial to a society.

This theory uses the following terms in relation to a social environment it is applied to:

1. Action is some initiated or performed act of a person in a social environment. A social environment can be characterized by the diversity (or the number of classes) of actions it currently supports.
2. Potential [to act] is a meta-information that a person has a potential to perform an action given the required resources and information are available. The person itself may or may not know about its potentials. Potentials are more or less universally shared by all human social environments, but each potential may have a priority and probability of turning into an action in a given social environment.
3. Collision is a negative outcome when a person cannot initiate or fully perform an action of its choice in a social environment, mainly due to short-comings of this environment. Collision can be defined as inability to act, prolonged pause, stoppage, injury or even death of participants of an action. The main reasons for collisions are lack of resources or interference with other actions. Collisions reduce chances of a potential to act to turn into a real action, or if a real action was initiated a subsequent collision produces a partial or full waste of resources.

4. Resources are some tangible or intangible entities required to initiate and perform an action: for example, time, purchasing power, space, equipment, health, personal traits, etc. Actions compete for resources. New resources can be made available as a result of certain collisionless actions.
5. Awareness (or information) is a special kind of resource, it is always related to an action, with each action connected to one kind of awareness resource. Any action requires a resource of awareness about this action. From quantitative point, awareness resource is only limited by population's size, and so its supply has a differential nature: it can be positive (promotion of awareness) or negative (demotion or non-promotion of awareness). When awareness is being introduced, it is like airing a series of radio-shows titled "you can do such thing". When awareness is being demoted, it not only means that "you can do such thing" radio-shows are stopped, it also means that another kind of radio-shows titled "it is harmful to do such thing" is aired. Spreading of awareness is an important part of culture.
6. Misactions are actions that were culturally rated as undesired. This includes harassment, killing, robbery, drug use, etc. While misactions are mentioned under a special term, this theory does not treat them differently to normal actions. Working models, however, should treat misactions as actions that lead to collisions and waste of resources.

The general problem is: maximization of the number of actions in a given social environment, for prolonged periods of time. The meta-information (possibly with geographical and national attribution) about potentials, collisions, resources, awareness and misactions is designated to solve this general problem. It can be hypothesized that the general solution will not only maximize the number of actions, but will also diversify both the actions and resource usage, and will reduce the average number of collisions per action. All this is under assumption that each class of actions is related to its own set of collisions and resources. The solution may reveal such details as to what kind of resources and awareness may be required in a city or neighborhood to solve the problem on local and global levels.

The influence mechanism of this theory can be considered "indirect" as it only relies on the adjustment of availability of resources and awareness. This theory hypothesizes that the "potential to act" in a social environment will bring fruits given the required resources and awareness are available while collisions are minimized. The theory does not rate actions by their commercial viability; however, it can be hypothesized that as the general solution provides a way to increase the overall diversity and the number of actions of a person, in parallel this ensures an increase in money flows.

The leading hypothesis of this theory is the resource hypothesis: both absence and availability of resources and awareness affects the general solution. Resources and awareness may produce both negative and positive systemic effect by supporting actions that interfere or do not interfere with other actions.

Extensive education hypothesis: intensive elementary education may be less preferable than an extensive education: for example, instead of learning 10 subjects intensively during the education course, learning 20 subjects with less intensity may be more beneficial to the future diversity of actions. In other words, the lesser number of subjects a group of persons is aware of, the higher the competition and social collision between them will be. From a bigger perspective, introduction to a wider range of problems can be more important than actually knowing solutions to only some problems.

Cultural cannibalization hypothesis: while cultural exchanges on any level definitely increase awareness, such exchanges can lead to cultural realignment with a set of "more efficient" habits replacing a set of "became-less-important" habits thus adjusting (and most probably reducing) the diversity of actions in a

long run. Much like in a marketing slang this effect can be called a cannibalization of culture. This hypothesis also touches a reason why national societies historically fought against most “foreign culture” influences: otherwise we would not have a variety of nations and languages in our world we have now. This brings another hypothesis: humans and human societies have a natural mechanism of supporting a minimal level of diversity of actions.

It should be also noted that while in economy the competition and market collisions between companies are considered positive for the customer, if we leave out the money-making and perfection aspects all such collisions are accompanied by bankruptcies, human life tragedies, and waste of resources in general. However, this does not mean the competition should be forcefully reduced, instead it should be minimized by means of diversification of actions. In other words, growing a market may be counter-productive (this increases competition without increasing diversity), but growing the number of markets may be beneficial: also a sum of smaller independent markets can be larger than a single “standard” big market.

The theory can be used to:

1. Score the existing status quo or “cultural power”.
2. Evaluate reasonability of incremental introduction or removal of resources and awareness, based on scoring.
3. Build a computation model designed to optimize existing (if they are adjustable) and introduce absent resources and awareness so that they maximize the score.