

Exchange vs. Repetition: a call for balance through economy and art

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Abstract

Exchange and repetition, or else categorisation and uniqueness, are two, different in kind but equally indispensable, ways of making sense out of the indefinite complexity of generality. Economy and art, viewed as social systems, are called to employ both the former and the latter in their proceedings and practices, as they are expected to create meaning (i.e. reduce inner complexity) if they are to preserve their social role.

The balance between exchange and repetition is a challenge that both systems have failed to meet. Each one of them, focusing on fast, short-term, measurable efficiency and instant reward, have exaggerated exchangeability in all domains, while, practically, sacrificing the nurturing qualities that stem from uniqueness – namely trust, honesty, truth, love, beauty, romance, and the like – thus lapsing into a sui generis form of autism. In this suicidal disposing of heartfelt communication, the two systems have gradually paved their way out of the meanings – thus, the identity – of the psychical systems (persons) they are supposed to comprise, as they have failed to co-produce shared meaning. At the same time, in an attempt to re-establish the sense of uniqueness necessary for the continuation of life, they have a. provided a series of uniqueness substitutes (addiction) and b. set up a mechanism of reward and punishment over (forced) participation. This has resulted in the psychical systems defending themselves against rather than evolving within these two social systems, with their participation and contribution being confined to what is made absolutely essential by means of extortion.

1. Declaration of perspective

This paper has been prepared as part of the outcome of interdisciplinary research, conducted by the writers in their attempt to explore and account for the underlying affinity among apparently unrelated phenomena, which all share the property of a social structure. As the paper has been presented in the context of the *Renewable Futures 2017 – Economia (Topic: Evolution)* conference, the particular cases of economy and art have been put at the core of this negotiation. Both writers have a varied background, ranging from engineering and linguistics to art/design, education, and business, which reflects their primary interest in the deep structures and universals that determine and shape the functioning of all things. In this light, they have attempted a consilient, inside-out approach to this task, aiming at developing a holistic vocabulary, which will reveal the evolutionary, anti-gravity dynamics underneath a unified experience of what is perceived as “the world”.

2. Defining our semantics

2.1. Exchange and Repetition

Exchange and repetition are the two major orders that all systems (persons and social constructs) consciously or unconsciously employ to make sense out of the indefinite complexity of the world. Exchange defines a process of using similar units interchangeably; repetition is about managing something that is unique and has no equal or equivalent, therefore it can only be repeated (not exchanged for something else). In that sense, exchange describes the functioning of the head (categorisation), whereas repetition resides in the heart (uniqueness).

2.2. Economy, art

In the context of this presentation, both economy and art are viewed as social systems, i.e. systems which are formed by psychical systems (persons), in their effort to make sense of the world (produce meaning) by reducing inner complexity. In so doing, persons need to rely on the management of resources, the primary one being the self. Therefore, any true discourse over economy or art need revolve around the notion of management of the self. (Consider this: Have you ever reached your destination by driving outside your car?)

3. Economy around money and art around acceptance: a call for responsibility

Economy constructed and discussed around money, as well as art pursued around acceptance, are both instances of a collective shift of focus outside the notion of self. The idolisation of money, as well as the anxiety of acceptance by an impersonal “audience”, both reveal a social reality that runs and undermines all human activity: a major responsibility deficit. By going after an external end, what we avoid is taking responsibility for what we are – which, in turn, directs what we actually do. As put by F.M. Alexander, the way the organism is used

determines the way it functions – “use determines functioning” (“use” = a person’s response to stimuli).

4. The body as an active agent

4.1. How the body reveals the root of the crisis in economy

“Inhibition maintains integrity of the responding organism, so that a particular response can be carried out **economically** without involving inappropriate activity in unrelated parts” F.P. Jones, BODY AWARENESS IN ACTION, 1976

Long before becoming a system of managing social resources, economy was already the body’s way to achieve best functioning and prevent energy waste. This bodily function is prevented by bad habits of use.

4.2. Inhibition as a bodily function

Inhibition in the context of the Alexander Technique is the prevention of habitual, set behavioural patterns that makes room for judgement and conscious choice of what is going to happen.

A process that makes this sort of inhibition possible, involves the following steps: Stimulus-procedure-inhibit unwanted habitual responses by not stiffening the neck, directing the head forward and up and directing the back to lengthen and widen – in other words, assuming a physical vocabulary that signifies EXPANSION.

Inhibition postpones immediate action and allows for observation and judgement, so that response can happen in optimal conditions. Although we’re only talking about one hundredth or even one thousandth of a second, it is still a delay that allows for a conscious, informed response.

5. Economy as a profit-oriented (end-gaining) system

Economy as we know it is a social system that relies on analytical processes to direct involved parties towards an end, by dividing an organism and sacrificing its integrity. Although the functions of the head can be fully present in such processes through extreme, meticulous categorisation, uniqueness suffers a thorough abandonment. Factors such as health, well-being, happiness, love, etc. still haven’t managed to find their way into any sort of economic planning. Therefore, what economy has failed to do, is get people fully, genuinely, holistically involved in any sort of economic activity, by failing to incorporate their personal meanings.

5.1 The lack of trust

Insufficient shared meanings and division of self result in a shortage of trust within the social system of economy. People don’t feel represented – even worse, they feel trapped, deceived and extorted. Low trust means that participants can

only use part of their energy in interacting with the system, as they need another part of it for self defence, given that the partner is also the enemy. In other words, we're talking about "inappropriate activity in unrelated parts" or energy leakage, which can only result in longer delays.

Attempts to "build trust" among team members through relevant activities and exercises can only result in developing an illusion of trust, for one simple reason: trust is not an end, it can only be a means!

6. "End-Gaining" vs. "Means-Whereby": what it means for the body

A MAN'S SUPREME INHERITANCE, F.M.Alexander: "As long as the 'end' is held in mind instead of the 'means', the muscular act, or series of acts, will always be performed in accordance with the mode established by old habits."

(categorisation of response; stiffening the neck, pulling the head back and down, shortening and narrowing the back)

"When each stage of the series essential to the 'means-whereby' is correctly apprehended by the conscious mind of the subject, the old habits can be broken up, and every muscular action can be consciously directed until the new and correct guiding sensations have established the new proper habits, which in their turn, become subconscious, but on a more highly evolved plane."

6.1. Shrinking vs. Expansion

Stiffening the neck, pulling the head back and down, shortening and narrowing the back can only mean one thing: making a new choice from a shrinking position. Can you guess how possible it is to evolve and expand, when we decide our next move from a shrinking position???

Not stiffening the neck, directing the head forward and up and directing the back to lengthen and widen (expansion) in-between actions could be an interesting alternative.

7. Economy and art as evolution

Both economy and art encapsulate and make available huge potential for evolutionary change, merely by offering ceaseless opportunities to revisit our response habits and explore new ways of using ourselves. Evolution is lurking in that one thousandth of the second in which we can decide on a new way...

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