

The Power of Disassociation

The most powerful tool we have to shape our lives is disassociation. A major problem is that it is a tool that wasn't available evolutionarily, nor in our youth. It ends up being a somewhat counter-intuitive strategy that many people don't really contemplate.

Historically we worked in small tribes and your whole life revolved around that tribe. When someone did something you didn't like, disassociation wasn't an option. If you left your tribe you left behind all of your social equity and took a dangerous risk that another random tribe who has no investment in you will be better than the one you came from. This is an extremely poor survival decision and our emotional disposition didn't evolutionarily take this into account. Our emotional tools and ingrained intellectual framework are created in response to a small tribal system where disassociation wasn't an option.

If someone treats you poorly in a free market, the best option is to disassociate and share the information you acquired with other people (if you wish). However, our emotional ecosystem still wants to use mechanisms from evolution where disassociation isn't an option ... tit for tat, anger, retribution, "justice", revenge, etc. Emotionally, we are the same as our historical relatives and it is difficult to adapt to a radically new incentive structure.

This is one reason voting is so problematic. People are handling a radically different incentive structure and ecosystem with evolutionary incentives. Tribes were often zero sum, and certain emotional dynamics were built to make sure to balance personal and tribal interests. Envy, resentment, retribution, violence, forgiveness, and tons of other emotional strategies and reactions evolved in the way they did due to the tribal incentives. Today, people are projecting these evolutionarily emotional and tribal dynamics into politics.

At the personal level people have a hard time balancing modern incentives with evolutionary/emotional drives. People in certain parts of life and society have torn apart from one another due to certain economic pressures while associating with problematic people/organizations/businesses because they don't emotionally have the tools to handle the new landscape.

I am not as positive about innovation as most libertarian types. Many modern incentives solve problems without addressing the vast ecosystem it distorts. For example, we are happier in complex social networks, but a major drive to work with others and to develop these social networks is to survive. Once survival is assured without the social networks the incentives radically distort the short run incentives to the point where people don't compromise and develop their social lives. Their immediate interests are met, but their deeper emotional needs are compromised. In many ways, we construct zoos for ourselves

to live in ... our immediate needs are met, but we live uninspired and sad lives. Of course, my solution wouldn't be to retard technological and economic development.

I think I am meandering into various directions now. Long story short, modern incentives and evolutionary incentives are often at odds with one another. There is no way to fix this in a centralized way, the best option, as always, is decentralization and to have markets and individual choice try to sort out this mess.