Human Motivation

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Many people who have achieved a certain age, live in a certain sense of bewilderment. How can people, companies, and countries do the things they do? How can our neighbors, our co-workers, our bosses, our employees, and our family members do the things that they do? How can the opposing political party do the things they do? Why are things so unfair? It just doesn't make sense!

Many people think that if we just got together and talked it through, we can resolve our differences. But man has been talking for thousands of years. That isn't working. This paper is not about resolving those differences. It is about understanding why those differences exist.

1 Power

The word *power* has many connotations, both good and bad. So the first thing we need to establish is what that word means in this paper.

Power has many negative connotations. When we think of people with power, we sometimes imagine people who treat others as less valuable than themselves. We also imagine people who cause damage to others for no reason whatsoever. We may also think of people who are physically strong. For example, a strong person may have the power to lift a heavy weight. Although these things ultimately relate to the type of power discussed herein, it misses the point.

When a person is born, the first thing they notice is that they are experiencing things. They probably notice this even before they are born. The next thing they notice is that they like some of those experiences, and they do not like others. They notice that their arms and legs flail around. They soon notice that they seem to have some control over their arms, legs, head, and mouth. They use their developing abilities to control what they can — their arms, legs, head, and mouth — to maximize their positive experiences and minimize their negative experiences.

The measure of their ability to control their environment to minimize their negative experiences and maximize their positive experiences is called *power*.

Instinct is effort a person exerts because of innate, built-in, impulses. Breathing is one example. Going to the bathroom, and loving a child are others.

All thoughts and actions a person performs are the product of no more than two factors. The first, and the significantly greater factor, is their power. The second is instinct. All thoughts and actions all animals, including man, exert are a product of no more than these two factors.

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2 The Subtleties Of Power

Although, on a cursory look, it may appear that people's motivations are more complex than previously stated, I am going to try to show how, in each case, apparently complex actions can be shown to be based entirely on power and instinct.

People need things to survive such as food and shelter. Money buys those things. Working supplies that money. What a person's work supervisor thinks of them affects their ability to keep their job. What the company's clients say to their supervisor affects what their supervisor thinks of them. For these reasons, an employee will do what they can to assure their customers and supervisors are happy with them. So, how an employee performs their job directly affects their power (ability to best control their environment to best suit their individual needs). This explains why a food server, for example, would be so friendly and agreeable to patrons yet so uninterested and otherwise occupied outside the workplace.

3 Pleasure And Pain

Pleasure and pain are outgrowths of the desire for power. Increases in power are experienced as pleasure, and decreases in power are experienced as pain.

For example, if someone says you are pretty or handsome, you experience pleasure. In effect, being more pretty or handsome gives you more options in terms of opportunities (such as modeling), and relationships. Thus, your power was increased. The reverse is also true if someone says you are ugly. They are saying you are repulsive, to one degree or another. This reduces your power for relationships of all sorts thus your power is decreased.

4 Empathy

We are built such that when we see others suffer, we feel their pain, to a much lesser degree, too. This is called *empathy*. This moves us to try to reduce the other's suffering. People without this sense (psychopaths) are not so moved. So, this is not really a motivation to help others, it is a motivation to reduce our own pain.

5 Altruism

One may ask, what about giving charity? What about helping the needy? Aren't these examples of a third motivating force, altruism? No. Altruism, the desire to do something without self-benefit, does not exist.

Although altruism does not exist, things like charity, and helping the needy does exist. The reason it is not altruistic, however, is because the reason for the act ultimately boils down to personal power or instinct as will be shown.

Being thought of as a "good person" is incredibly beneficial to an individual — their power. We all need other people, and other people are willing to help us if they believe we will help them in their time of need. This is part of the social, family, or friendly contracts described below.

One strong indicator of a "good person" is the charity they give and their efforts to help the needy. So, seemingly altruistic behaviors boil down to individual power.

Often, even if the benefit is clearly not direct and others don't see what they are doing, they still gain personally through feeling like a good person. This gives them three things:

- Others often see when we don't think they do.
- This is something we can bring up if anyone challenges us regarding how good a person we are.
- Even if no one knows, we can interact with others in a tone assuming we are good people knowing well that, if challenged, we can provide the evidence.

Grasping at contrary evidence, one may point to very rare incidences of self-sacrifice in its many forms.

For example, risking one's self in an effort to help a child; jumping in front of a bullet to save a friend; donating an organ.

All of these boil down to a combination of three things:

1. An effort to be a good person, with all of its associated benefits
2. In a limited time, one may misjudge the danger.
3. Instinct

Suicide occurs for the following reasons:

1. Because the pain of living is overwhelming
2. In an effort not to succeed but gain attention or a cry for help

Society often mis-credits acts of self-sacrifice as altruistic in an effort to promote such behavior. (It would be nice to have someone self-sacrifice themselves when a bullet is coming in your direction!)

6 What Is Excluded

By the time one adds in instinct, self-interest, and empathy, one might ask if that includes everything we already think of as human motivations. The question we ask ourselves now is, what is missing? Are there other human words, actions, and thoughts that we attribute to other factors? Do we attribute certain acts to motivations that do not exist? Let me list some types of actions that we attribute to non-existent factors. These items are really motivated for reasons other than what we commonly think. For example, all types of virtuous behavior such as:

- being moral
- being fair

- doing the right thing
- honesty and integrity
- doing what is legal
- manors and decency
- etc.

We tend to believe that these sorts of qualities are qualities in and of themselves. That we do them for their own sake. We see these things all around us and believe that these are just normal parts of decent, human society. However, as we grow in experience, we meet more and more people who show these actions on the surface but act entirely the reverse when it doesn't suit their purpose. This is why older people are so cynical.

When we see people act contrary to these we bemoan their actions and question their motivations. We can't understand why they would do what they do. The reason is that there are no motivations for fairness, honesty, morality, or decency, etc. even in those who appear to be strong in those areas. The motivations are self-interest, instinct, and empathy, in that order. Everyone's actions are a product of no more than self-interest, instinct, and empathy. Actions that appear fair, honest, moral, or decent, etc. are wholly a product of self-interest, instinct, and empathy. Looked at in this light, people's actions make a lot of sense.

For example, an employee who does a good job may appear to be motivated by a desire for the company to succeed, to have integrity and loyalty towards the company and his co-workers, or because of belief in the company's products. None of this is ever directly true! Even if they actually believe it themselves, they are merely deluding themselves. If you watch long enough, you will see that their motives are different than purported. How fast do an employee's loyalty and goodwill last when they are fired? Are their decisions truly best for the company, or are they ultimately self-serving?

Their true motive is power. Their motive for getting the job initially was to gain money to survive. Their loyalty and apparent interest in the company is designed to best retain or promote their position in the company. If they are a supervisor, the performance of their subordinates determines their success, and the shareholders or owners are interested in company profits. Each element has only self-interest, but the company is structured to leverage off of individual desire for power to advance the interest of the upper levels — who are also self-interested.

Looked at this way, many things make a lot more sense. Why are many government workers uninterested in performance? Because there is little to no relationship between their productivity and the ability of the organization to continue to support them. Why are members of small companies so productive? Because their efforts closely relate to their personal survival and success.

What about club and religious organization participation? What is self-serving about those?

- There is an unwritten, unspoken agreement — to some extent, the organization will be there when you need assistance if you agree to help others in the organization

- You gain power when people tell you or imply that you are a good person (one worthy of assisting)
- Since society has taught you that good people help others, you help others to assure yourself that you are a good person.

What about closer relationships? These are merely stronger versions of the same thing. There is an unspoken agreement that others will assist you in your time of need if you agree to hep them in their time of need. The extent that they see you doing this for others is the extent that you are a "good person" (one who will assist others in their time of need).

Qualities are features that are innate. Strategies are schemes used to obtain something. *Things like morality, fairness, integrity, honesty, loyalty, and restraint are not qualities. They are strategies, strategies used for the acquisition of power.*

7 Nature

Man's motivations are not bad or evil, and man's motivations are not unique. Except for empathy, all of nature is motivated by the exact same forces: instinct and power. Man is a part of nature, and this is how nature operates.

8 Part Of A Community

People need other people to survive. Each person has numerous needs that are filled by other people. For example, other people fill the stores with food we need. Other people at restaurants cook the food we sometimes eat. Other people build the houses we live in. Other people produce the electricity and gasoline we use. Other people eliminate the trash we generate. And other people heal us when we are ill. The list goes on and on.

Being a part of our community, we too fill a role in this chain of products. We do this not out of some loyalty to our role in the community. We do it out of our own desire for power.

9 Wisdom

Religious people often act as *good people* because they either believe that being a *good person* will give them some future reward, or they believe that acting as their religion promotes will give them a better standing in their community.

There are two categories of people who are either not religious, or not associated with a religious community — the wise, and the unwise.

The unwise person is conscious of their desires and self-interest, but they fail to see their dependence and connection with others. These people become self-serving hedonists of one sort or another with lessening degrees of connection, over the long haul, with others.

The wise person understands their need and dependence on others. They also understand the types of behavior that promote their connection with others. This, over the long haul, is significantly in their interest and serves their power.

So, religion and wisdom often lead to the same ethical results for completely different reasons.

9.1 Social Contracts

The wise person either consciously or unconsciously understands their need for and connection with others. They enter into an unwritten, unspoken social contract with society as a whole or various groups of people. This contract states: I will assist you in times of need, and you will assist me in times of need.

There are several levels of this agreement that serve different purposes. The broadest agreement is that made with society as a whole. You agree not to harm others and follow laws, and society agrees to protect you from aggression as is possible.

A second agreement is made with a closer community such as a religious organization. Rather than agreeing to protect you, they, in essence, are agreeing to assist you in times of need at a somewhat minor level. You agree to participate in this effort for other members of the organization.

Next, there is an agreement among friends. This agreement is like the community agreement but extends to a much greater degree.

Lastly we have the family agreement. This agreement is like the friendly agreement but extends significantly further. Family connections sometimes agree (unspokenly) that they will assist other family members with nearly no limit.

10 Conclusion

What has been shown here is that every appearance of loyalty, integrity, honesty, friendship, etc. is ultimately a product of no more than a desire for power, and to a far lesser degree, instinct. Looked at in this light, people's actions make clear sense. The actions of others are no longer mystifying.

It has also been shown that even though all actions boil down to a desire for power, there is a great benefit to acting with integrity, loyalty, and honesty, etc. A wise person sees this connection and the benefits therefrom, the ignorant person does not.