

Analytical silliness

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Analytical silliness is the study of what makes something silly from a rational scientific perspective. It is a serious subject and has relevance to scientific methodology, society, politics and comedy. We discuss how a series of laws can be written that define some of the aspects of silliness, the absurd and innately irrational. We endeavour to expand logic to the illogical to find new forms of optimality and perfection.

So let us begin by plucking a hypothesis out of the air, without any foundation and then take it further using analytical logical tools in existence. What one would from induction believe is that this will lead us to a better understanding of silliness. What we note is that much can be said from analysing silliness such that it can in fact give us useful ideas. It might seem silly but we do not know enough about silliness.

Consider silliness as a function of x which is a parabola. Differentiating this function leads us to the optimal at the top of this. However, silliness could be an ever upward sloping monotonic function. Consider having billions of cups of tea. This innately is silly. Thus we see silliness as something one can intuitively see, thus we see it as a general aspect of humanity. We will consider later the variation in different culture's ideas of silliness such that problems occur between them. Silliness clearly can be seen as partly to do with having too much of one thing, to not consider the other aspects of one's optimisation of life or objective. Thus we define the first law of silliness:

Law 1: Silliness is the inverse of logic

Silliness is the opposite of logic, it would seem silly to optimise silliness, especially were it to be a monotonic function of x . The question to pose among others is what is silliness a function of. One of the empirical effects of silliness is that at some point it does lead to laughter in those who observe it understanding something as wrong. It is thus innately related to an advanced intelligence looking and pondering over a less advanced one. We learn the concept of silliness from our parents initially thus it is associated as an idea map with childhood and thus is considered attached to the idea of something that is not something one should consider valid yet at the same time is not necessarily morally wrong.

Silliness implies the least efficient means to achieve something, in some sense it is a variation from the logical optimal, thus silliness optimality is being as far from the logical optimal as possible. Thus our initial wild hypothesis was silly and now we see that we were going the wrong way. One thing should be remembered, this essay takes silliness very seriously.

Silliness is not ignorance, for ignorance is not knowing, while to make something silly the subject must be able to know the problem in their argument or belief yet still accept a less than optimal answer. Silliness can be seen as knowing the correct answer yet not going for it, a truly silly thing in itself. Being counterproductive, that is establishing a strategy or plan that does not take into consideration the problems with the plan or some variable or piece of knowledge that is deeply important and is obvious is an aspect of highly logical beings being silly. Later we consider history as silly, since being cumulative, incremental, set with precedence it becomes caught in a web of associations and beliefs which are highly silly.

Our hope is to develop a statistical test to one day be able to determine the level of silliness of something and to come to a conclusion as to whether everything is silly, in other words, test the universal set for levels of silliness.

Idea maps and deconstruction

We can take any argument or belief or idea or subject and separate it into subjective links as understood in the mind, culture and in written knowledge. This is an idea map. For example, war may be associated with killing, weapons, fear, terror and evil. These are generally held ideas related to war, yet war continues throughout history. Our early work on idea maps started to show that the nature of meaning of various concepts does not actually follow necessarily logical and coherent analysis. Foucault's point was the same in history and can be seen as the classic in understanding silliness and humanity. We could relate war to power however and then see a logical reason for war. Yet should everyone fight war then the game theoretic situation shows this is not optimal. International relations leads the world to war necessarily along the same lines of the laws of thermodynamics (that an ordered system will tend towards disorder). Yet in the social world people have the concept of 'silliness' which keeps the disordered suboptimal silliness from happening.

Thus silliness is a vital part of humanity. It seems silly that no one has previously thought to analyse this concept for all its uses and as a key power word in semiotic analysis. Another interesting aspect of silliness is that people do not define themselves as a sillism follower, a social group that believe in silly approaches. In fact the use of silliness as a rhetorical tool is evident in many direct action movements as well as in political comedy.

Consider though deconstructing an idea like war. War leads to peace in all circumstances, yet it is the co-dependency that means that both sides can believe they shall dominate. Yet looking at history we see one side winning or stalemate. Thus complex systems can lead to silly outcomes when both sides are logical. The idea of war being justified can be considered as relating the idea of war to a good outcome. For example, one could spread democracy as a result of war, yet consider the silliness of bombing someone to change their mind. This is an observation that society changes due to different policy levers being pulled than political power. Yet people know that society changes through different means. For example, to say that a political system involving only one person in charge rather than all people having equal influence is silly is a means to peacefully achieve a democratic outcome as opposed to war. Thus lack of analysis of silliness has led to a silly outcome of trying to change societies using war. The essence of silliness is that rational abilities and competence is not understood. Kafka gives us an example (in the trial) of silliness issuing from following rules. Indeed it is understood that the lack of reflection in action and planning is key to creating silly outcomes even in sophisticated rule based systems of government. Notably financial institutions in the 2007-9 crash followed silly approaches that were individually rational yet on a systemic level lead to much bigger losses. Thus silliness can occur in the markets. We see here that an analysis of silliness can have great relevance to strategists and managers of large scale institutions and organisations.

Circular logic is a well known form of scientific silliness, it seemingly being invalid. In essence one takes from one idea the justification for itself from itself. But we could analyse an idea such that we separate it so that it is no longer itself. Thus the problem is defining concepts. How scientists define concepts depends highly on the methodological rules imposed on them by themselves. Thus we see that science is at risk from the same process as above of the rule based system leading to irrational outcomes at the same time as having a circularity to it. Thus we cannot say that science is never silly when considered as a whole.

Moving on from circular logic is a class of statements of self-referentiality. What this statement says is a lie, being the most celebrated one. But when one has two statements from one each of which contradict one another there is no actual answer to what that statement means or is it simply something to be disregarded. To hold that self-referentiality is irrelevant is to deny non-linear dynamics and chaos theory from mathematics. An iterative map, essentially a self-referential equation, creates many great dynamics and holds within it discontinuities from small changes in some of the variables of itself. The essence of feedback from rules in organisations and social systems leads to such wondrously strange and illogical outcomes. Consider being a dot on an iterative map's curve. One would feel great turbulence and a rough and unstable ride that without knowledge of the iterative map's equation one would never truly understand. Thus we see that the focus of the scientist

is necessarily to be on the underlying system, which is remarkably something we can deduce simply by thinking about it. Isn't it kind of silly that no one ever thought about this before? Thus we see the second law of silliness:

Law 2: Silliness can issue from rationality given rule based behaviour

The third law issues from a synthesis of law 1 and 2, that is that silliness though not logic can occur from logic yet in being comprehended becomes a logical means to advance one's systems.

Law 3: A system will tend towards silliness without comprehension of itself, in other words a self-referential consciousness of itself

Analysis of silly cultural forms, and the strategic use of analytical silliness as a political and rhetorical tool

1. Pretty fly for a rabbi; contradictions in idea maps and other idea maps
2. Day Today; logical silliness
3. Serious-silly synthesis (the above forms)
4. Silliness issuing from lies, justification of war on terror (terror to WMD to regime change and democracy, shoe throwing in Baghdad)
5. Silliness issuing from lack of projection and reflection (the emperor's new clothes)
6. Pride and status, making someone look silly to remove them from power
7. Logical rule based systems leading to silliness (what are the key variables for turning a serious system into a silly one), from this we work out a silliness test, applied to economic methodology
8. Having two interlocking feedback systems of silliness to create chaos of silliness
9. Does logic as a rule based system itself lead to silliness? Does this mean therefore that the world being either silly or logical is in fact completely silly? Where science from here?
10. Silly semiotics and the insertion of a phrase that tends a system towards infinite silliness

Pretty Fly for a Rabbi

A spoof song by Weird Al Yankovich taking the Offspring hit 'pretty fly for a white guy' and replacing the words in that song to Jewish related concepts and phrases is innately amusing and silly as a song. Instead of the original musing on a white man who is cool (pretty fly) he sings of a rabbi who is cool in Jewish terms. Coupled with the fear endemic in Western culture of discrediting Jewish people this produces a clearly silly effect. Whether this is due to the belief that Jewish people are not 'cool' in the sense of being fashionable and representative of youth culture or due to the idea that a rabbi cannot be interesting the combination seems to have a psychological effect on the listener.

What we see here is two different types of idea map linkages, a straight forward link overtly in the song of 'rabbi' to 'cool', yet with the listener's a priori idea map linkage of a rabbi being linked to religion, which is itself 'not cool'. Thus we see a new point in idea maps that a link can be a 'not link', in the sense that certain ideas are not associated with such an such an idea. Fascism is 'not good', Bush is 'not intelligent', Footballers are 'not good at homework', nerds are 'not good with people', God is 'not evil', lies are 'not truth', etc. Thus from the initial analysis we see that idea maps do not simply move around society mimetically but are created by the brain in response to a thought inspired by experience.

The Day Today

The Day Today was a comedy spoof of news broadcasting taking on many of the forms of serious news and giving fake news stories that had a great deal of contradictions, illogical approaches and surreal implications and being to undermine the credibility of news broadcasting itself. Poor quality journalism, quarrelling journalists and an arrogant and self-serving nature and ethos to news was brought to the fore by this comedy series.

What we see here is again a similar linking as of the above 'pretty fly for a rabbi' song. News is related to truth and democracy yet the day today showed a lacklustre and unprofessional professionalism and surreal news stories that had a mangled and unteleological structure. News is related in the mind to truth, whereas the Day Today brought surreal dreams as the story. The fact that this was done in a deeply serious characteristic of the frame of the programme showed the viewer a critique of the critique.

What we can see is that this is the inverse of pretty fly for a rabbi:

Day Today – Serious form – Surreal content (untrue stories about real people)= silly

Pretty Fly for a Rabbi – Cool and fun form – Surreal and uncool content (religion)=silly

It is hypothesised that this serious-silly linkage can thus be bidirectional, it is simply the idea maps in the mind searching for coherency and not whether one has serious

form and silly content or silly form and serious content. In both cases we innately see the silliness.

Silliness issuing from Lies

Shakespeare is a great example of lies leading to silly and ironic situations and comedies. Yet in the real world such things occur, for example, the justification for the war on terror, initially justified by terrorism became a search for weapons of mass destruction. When these WMDs were not found the justification ex post became the need for regime change and creating a stable democracy. When the situation in Iraq became a terribly unstable one this justification became less and less believable. The politicians ceased to really give justification at that point, a nihilistic view and when related to the prevailing idea of linking Islam to fascism a truly ironically silly one.

What explains why rational strategic and clever politicians may have got into this mess is that they were lying repeatedly to avoid censure for their true intention thus leading them to continually change their story as a criminal under interrogation. Thus silliness appears in the historical narrative by critique of policy though here argued to be because of lies leading to changing stories. In the context of politicians who have a measure of control over a sound bite media that continually changes the daily and weekly mindset with sensational story after sensational story it is evident that this is something politicians felt they could get away

with, though not without more considered and reflective approbators.

What this tells us is that a system of belief created by media as being short and unreflective narrative that is ever changing can lead to a silly approach of politicians undertaking imperialist adventures. The fact that two sets of people exist, the reflective and scholarly as well as the common man of which the common is the majority leads to a dual dialogue occurring.

One such event was the shoe throwing incident of an Iraqi journalist at George Bush, then president of the US. The irony of a journalist being beaten for making a gesture of defiance in symmetry to the recklessness of the American military in Iraq, whilst George Bush is on video smiling and then going on to discuss how freedom and democracy, (linked to press freedom), is being achieved in Iraq was lost on the world's media as well as for Bush. Thus we see how a small gesture made by the correct person can semiotically communicate and collapse the legitimacy of an entire policy based on lies.

The Emperor's New Clothes

The story of the emperor who was tricked into becoming naked and wearing clothes that were supposedly so great that they cost him much gold and silver with everyone told that to not consider the clothes amazing was a mark of their lack of intelligence gives an interesting silly

situation. The real result is of an emperor naked in front of others (thus humiliated) yet for no one to accept this reality because everyone is held down by the sink of not wanting to appear stupid by not being able to understand the 'greatness' of the invisible clothes that are non-existent. The fact that each person does not realise that others also see the emperor naked and do not wish to contradict either the emperor or others leads to a consensus leading to a situation where the emperor proudly parades himself in his birthday suit.

The implications of this as a thought experiment fable is that everyone should think for themselves, that to serve the emperor to such loyalty that one does not save his dignity is silly and counterproductive is a core liberal idea and teaches us of another aspect of silliness, that of being inefficient in obtaining our objectives whilst also not reflecting on a situation because of a sink word, "you would look stupid if you criticise the greatness of these clothes", coming together with the result that the "emperor and all who were unable to criticise" looking stupid.

Thus we see that silliness can be something arising from discontinuity, i.e. the system of consensus for "clothes are great" becoming a consensus for "the clothes do not exist". Such leads to laughter, indeed many jokes rely on a 'punch line', i.e. a discontinuity, when the mind does reach coherence or at least insight. The idea of build-up as the silliness is held together by seriousness that then leads to outbursts of laughter can be considered in terms of Jung as

an energetic principle in the subconscious being born into the consciousness leads to a dam cracking and flooding the valley of perception and thought, communicative groups and social forces.

What can be noted is that social systems often use various 'sink words' to avoid reflection and thus maintain control. A Muslim fundamentalist would use the words 'this is bidah' (an idea not derived from Islamic legal tradition) or a priest during the crusades would use the words 'this is blasphemy' to any who would deny the certainty of victory for Christendom. A politician would use the words 'that is unpatriotic' or 'this only serves to help the terrorists' or 'we must never forget event x' or this is 'anti-American/Semitic/Sinoistic or Islamophobic'. Thus we see that political people and systems can be undone simply by pushing an argument to break through the sink words. Of importance to note is that sink words are understood by the political class yet not the dominated majority.

Using silly strategies to undermine social systems

As previously discussed one can see the potential for affecting social systems by exploiting consensus change using strategies against sink words. What can be added to this strategic matrix is the common, perhaps general properties of a leader. Typically proud, certain of their judgement, in need of respect of his subjects, concerned about their image to their subjects and to other leaders, as well as knowledgeable and intelligent and perhaps veering towards

the qualities of arrogance, superiority, megalomania, lack of sympathy for others, lack of consideration for others, selfishness and always concerned with maintaining their power and all related aspects to this such as legitimacy. True some leaders are Hitler and some are Gandhi. Yet the core attitudes of power, whether Machiavellian or Motherly, hard or soft, corrupted or saintly, require the aforementioned attributes in varying degrees. At the core of a leader is seriousness since this is crucial to retaining legitimacy.

Thus one can consider a strategy for affecting a leader of a populace of free thinking (to some extent) beings using the bringing to silliness of the system of control of the leader. The build up of this especially forcing the leader to justify in a debate the legitimacy of their regime and their suitability and strength in their position can be the key towards unseating a leader or starting a power struggle.

This must be understood as a game theoretic situation against a clever and cunning opponent. Thus one can with such a situation move the opponent with the credible threat of revelation of a sink word's use, perhaps by using the sink word yourself to your own advantage, as a means to tie up the politician one wishes to depose.

What must be understood is the power pride holds to reduce the reflectivity of a leader, as an attitude that is generated from their power. Thus to avoid looking silly they will go irrationally towards any outcome you may wish.

The question now becomes, what phrase would send such a general system of legitimacy into silliness to break into laughter and then power struggle?

Consider a series of phrases in a debate that was public which implied a serious yet silly rule that all beings of that culture followed being slowly attributed and proved by the replies of the leader. This would lead to laughter eventually and a power struggle.

Consider knowing someone who was a confidant of the leader to engage in creating such a series of phrases as a straight man who did not know as much as the leader about what was really going on. The essence of sparking off such a series of questions, effectively maintaining a pincer movement against the leader is a powerful means to obtain the power struggle, the questioner co-opted without realising it then becoming the Brute (as in Julius Caesar, Shakespeare). The fact that Brute is himself chosen as someone with much less political skill then provides another power struggle and can be leveraged to create a process of chaos for the territory in question.

Logic is silly?

We have discussed above that self-referential feedback systems which create rules can become silly. Yet logic itself as a subject is an evolving system such as this. Is it a property of logic in its definition that means it cannot be silly. Given our first law of silliness, logic is not silly, however

our second law suggests that systems such as logic can themselves become silly over time. Paradoxes do however appear in logic, though indeed many seem to eventually be solved. Understanding what property logic has to be coherent tells us the key to silliness. Logic is by definition of its methodology about coherence. Silliness as described above is innately and necessarily about incoherence. A logic of silliness is a coherent look at the incoherent. Thus logic has within it one element of incoherence which is deeply amusing to the silly logician.