Abstractions: Turn-Good-into-Evil Semantics

written by Jackson Pemberton | November 22, 2025

The human mind learns how to create an abstraction at an early age[1], so early that abstractions seem to be a part of reality at full maturity, and indeed they are, both in the sense that abstractions exist and in the sense that they represent reality. When the mind builds an abstraction, it creates a mental tool that facilitates reason and comprehension by dramatically simplifying complexity so the mind can deal more easily with that complexity. However, for an abstraction to accomplish this task, it necessarily hides fundamental facts of its antecedent reality. These now-hidden objects can then become victims of the logical manipulation of their abstractions. In other words: Abstractions necessarily hide aspects of their antecedents and are therefore candidates for clandestine manipulation of their antecedents.

This paper explores a method of identifying abstractions and the inherent dangers associated with their use. It also identifies examples of tragedies stemming from ignorance of these dangers and proposes a viewpoint that precludes abstractions from gaining precedence over their antecedents.

Identifying an Abstraction

A tree can exist without a forest, but a forest cannot exist without a tree.

This simple statement proves that “forest” is an abstraction devoid of self-existence. Its existence is dependent upon the more fundamental fact of “trees”. Any time this pattern can be repeated, an abstraction can be revealed. For example: A person can exit without a society, but a society cannot exist without a person.

Meanwhile, we do find slightly different mental reactions to the following two sentences (Please pay attention to your feelings while reading these.):

The forest went up in flames.
The trees went up in flames.

We notice a subtle difference in our moral response to these two almost identical reports. The second one seems to identify the moral loss in the destruction of the forest. We see the first one as a cold, disaffected report of fact, while the second identifies trees as moral victims. This is because “forest” is an abstraction that ignores the individual trees, while “trees” are the underlying reality that was destroyed. We have intuition that tries to recognize this distinction.

The Non-Existential Nature of an Abstraction

Every abstraction has at least one antecedent, the thing from which the abstraction is drawn. The word “abstract” is used in the context of real estate property deeds where an “abstract” is a summary rendition of the metes and bounds detailed in the full property description. The abstract is “drawn out” of the description.

If an abstraction had no antecedents, it would have no logical traction and collapse. Unfortunately, this mirrors the nature of a lie, which must connect with truth at some point, or it also lacks traction. This hints at the dangers of abstractions.

The point of all this is that abstractions are purely and exclusively conceptual, that they represent reality the same way x represents a number, but is not an actual number. But the practical matter here is that when an abstraction elicits a response that comes back to affect the abstraction, it doesn’t. That is the nut of the big lie that abstractions can foist upon us. For example, social legislation is stimulated by social observations. These laws are written to change the social environment or society itself, but they have absolutely no effect upon the abstraction, passing through it as the ghost that it is, and changing the antecedents: people. The people or their environment may or may not change in the expected way.[2] It is this disconnection that gives traction to the big lie

that abstractions adequately represent reality. They do not because they cannot, and that is because “society” neither rights nor capabilities. Let me explain.

One of the features of the Temporal Rights paradigm of natural rights is that it disallows attachment of moral value to abstractions. It demands that moral value resides exclusively in “operators” – in the case cited earlier, trees. Operators are the only entities exhibiting natural rights and are therefore the only entities that can experience moral harm. This distinction arises because abstractions don’t exist at the primitive level like operators do. Because Temporal Rights are based on existential phenomena they intrinsically recognize and enforce that.

Understanding How Groupthink Makes Evil Good and Good Evil

We need to understand the process behind groupthink so we can direct our efforts to secure freedom in an environment where it is disappearing. There are many instances of this phenomenon: gender is a recent one.

When gender was redefined as a set of several realizations, gender was pushed out of the realm of physical reality (where gender and sex were synonyms) into an abstraction. This occurred without any recognizable logical consequences, except that we all felt that something was wrong. It was a particularly subtle sleight of hand.

The sophistry of the rich and/or “educated” enabled them to become excited about this new “insight” into gender, and so it was turned into a fad. Fellow sophisticates, who seemed to know nothing about objective reality, gleefully adopted and promoted the false idea facilitated by this new abstraction. The result has been a return to practices that mirror pagan sacrifice and bodily mutilation. It should not surprise us that this profoundly erroneous new perspective on something so absolutely fundamental as sex is wreaking havoc in the mental processes of its adopters. It has created a deep but invisible dissonance that is nearly impossible to

identify and overcome.

I think the following process describes what happened.

How Abstractions Overpower Reality

1. Gender was redefined as [60?] members of an abstraction set called gender. This redefinition was automatic because sex has two genders, and when the number went beyond two, it had to become an abstraction.
2. Moral weight was shifted from the sexes to the new abstraction of gender. (the excitement)
3. Individual sexes became subject to the advancement of the abstraction called gender (the fad).
4. Dissent was reframed as harm to gender owners (this is typical for abstractions as we shall soon see)
5. Authorities of gender claimed exclusive competence.
6. Power was centralized (A major political party puts its eggs in that basket.).
7. Logical “violence” is justified in order to protect the abstraction.

We can see this same process in the deceptions (intended or otherwise) attending the replacement of individual freedom by groupthink. Notice that the only real “power” of these processes arises from control of the public dialogue. This control is necessary to keep focus on the abstraction and away from its antecedent(s).

1. Individuals are redefined as members of an abstract set (“the people,” “the masses,” “society”).
2. Moral weight shifts from people to the abstraction “society” (good/bad judged at group-level).
3. Individual rights become conditional and subject to benefits for the abstraction “society”.
4. Dissent is reframed as harm to society, not as disagreement

among persons.
5. Authorities of society claim exclusive competence to interpret society’s interests.
6. Power centralizes to enforce those interpreted interests.
7. Violence is justified as necessary to protect and perfect society.
8. Individual deaths are discounted as statistically or morally negligible in comparison to the morally huge weight of the good of society. (A tiny person is invisible when held up to a huge “society”.)
9. Dictatorships stabilize society by continual reference to societal necessities and the elimination of opposition.

The process creates a temporarily stable society, but its inevitable collapse only waits upon the natural economic and rights harms these systems create. Those harms finally cause individual citizens to throw off the leaders of the oppressive society and establish a government with sufficient respect for freedom to calm their resentment. This is apparent in the present organic revolution going on in Iraq, and in our own revolution we celebrate this year (2026). Then the process begins again as freedom facilitates wealth, and wealth facilitates the distancing of the wealthy from the natural realities of labor (where common sense is born and raised intrinsically). The idle minds of the wealthy become the fountains of sophistry, and that sophistry enables mental excursions where common sense dies. And finally, for the sake of fame and fortune, they come upon some new fashion and convert it into a fad that requires other seekers of fame to come along. And so it has been, historically, for millennia.

Human Abstraction Skills Abused in Historic Examples

Millions have died at progress point 8 in the above as the following shows.

Cuba (Castro regime) — ~50,000–100,000 deaths

East Germany (SED regime) — ~80,000–100,000
Romania (Ceaușescu) — ~100,000
Yugoslavia (Tito) — ~300,000–500,000
Ethiopia (Derg) — ~500,000–1,500,000
Vietnam (Communist regime) — ~1,000,000
North Korea (Kim dynasty) — ~1,000,000–3,000,000
Cambodia (Khmer Rouge) — ~1,700,000–2,200,000
Soviet Union (Lenin–Stalin era) — ~15,000,000–20,000,000
China (Mao Zedong era) — ~30,000,000–45,000,000

The total loss of humanity, about 60,865,000, is staggering and does not even begin to convey the suffering inflicted by methods used while terminating lives to “protect or perfect society”. This figure represents almost 18% of the current population of the United States.

What Can Be Done

We need to break the historic cycle. I propose that natural rights become a familiar subject for all citizens. We all want our rights. I suppose the first need is for us all to understand the fundamental difference between abstractions and their antecedents. The Temporal Rights theory of natural rights exposes this difference profoundly. Its broad acceptance could reframe the entire rights domain into a powerful, unassailable demand for exclusive recognition of the individual as the primary entity whose rights need protection. (Under Temporal Rights, other entities like chickens and dogs have rights very similar to humans.) This would push the *idea* of “society” entirely out of the rights domain.

“Social Justice”, for example, completely collapses under such a light and is dethroned as the supreme ruler of political morality.

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[1] Beginning early but developing slowly through ages 12 -15. Vygotsky, Lev S. *Mind in Society: The Development of Higher Psychological Processes*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press,

1978.

[2] A famous example of legislation that does the opposite of its intended effect is the minimum wage concept. Legislators look at low wages, rightly feel that they are inadequate to meet the needs of the people, and force employers to pay more for the labor that runs their business. Employers, needing to keep a profit margin so they can also earn a livelihood, can raise prices or look for more efficient operational tools than labor. They do both. And in the process, thousands not only don’t receive higher wages, but their jobs disappear altogether. The real problem in this scenario is the perception that wages are inadequate. Inadequate for what? For a life style standard created by marketing and widely and falsely accepted.