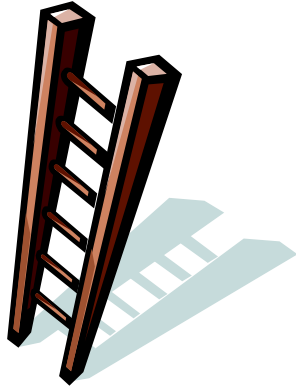


CALL TO ACTION FOR JUSTICE

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In response to calls across the world for solutions to rampant injustice, I have a modest suggestion:

Promote universal use of the abstraction ladder in daily discourse and in thoughts.



Promote simple goal setting and goal achievement through understanding the relative degrees of abstraction.

The more people who understand how to back down the ladder from the abstract concept of justice through intermediate rungs **with achievable goals**, the more prevalent justice will become.

If you don't know how to do this, I strongly recommend you check out "Simpleology." The system is free to the public and available here:

<http://evycole.simpleology.com>

All of our conscious experience is made up of sensations, emotion, and our perception of similarity and difference. That perception is our filter; also, it is our power of abstraction.

We can easily see how things are different. Over time we learn to see similarities. To perceive relationship at high levels of abstraction, one definition of intelligence, we must recognize all the rungs in between.

Question: How is an ant like a eucalyptus tree?

Answer: They are both alive. To get to that answer you have to climb up several rungs.

Justice is an abstract concept containing a variety of specific instances. The philosopher, Immanuel Kant, wrote, “Percepts without concepts are empty. Concepts without percepts are blind.”

In other words, our daily perceptions by themselves are empty unless we can see how they relate to some abstract point—some specific goal.

Concepts alone are blind. Karl Marx came up with an intriguing concept that all people could own and share material goods in common. The perceptions from observing human behavior, however, do not support a Marxist system of government.

To avoid the trap of empty percepts or blind concepts, we use the abstraction ladder. It is a visual metaphor to illustrate the generality and specificity of data.

In the language of the physical sciences, facts are the building blocks. These blocks are held together by theories or ideas that explain groups of facts.

Theories operate generally at a high level of abstraction but they need low-level facts to support them. Einstein perceived the relationship between space and time. To do so he climbed many mathematical rungs.

In sports, rules add tension to any game by providing the boundaries that players push against as they push against each other. “Rules” is higher up on the abstraction ladder than “basketball rules” because basketball is a specific sport. All sports have rules.

In the language of art we begin with photographic representations of objects, animals and people. As the artist thinks about the concept he wants to convey, he distorts photographic representation. At midpoint on the artist’s ladder the viewer can recognize his perception. At the top of the ladder the viewer may not if he sees two colors and nothing more. However, if he has followed the history of art, he understands the significance of the two colors and feels the artist’s communication. If not, he may say, “Any

kindergarten kid could do that.”

The technology of a given period affects the way people perceive the world. The fast-growing tech of the 17th Century was in the field of optics and lens-making. People then described the mind as a mirror or a lens. The 18th Century Freudian metaphor of mind borrowed from the universe of the steam locomotive. Images and thoughts “billow” up from the subconscious.

The metaphor of thinking in the first decade of 20th Century came from telephone technology. The mind was described as a vast telephone-switching network with circuits and relays running through the brain.

Now we use the computer as a model. We speak of early “programming” that interferes with “multi-tasking”. One man said his wife had disappeared. “She was cruising the Internet too long. I put her in storage but was unable to retrieve her.”

Language affects understanding. Technology changes the pictures we see in our minds. It is hard to “see” justice without looking at history.

In the language of Social Studies the question “Are social systems progressing or simply changing?” would be on a fairly high rung of the ladder.

The statement, “The predominant religion of the people of England is protestant protesting Catholicism because Henry the VIII wanted a divorce,” would be midway on the ladder.

The statement, “Vasco de Gama was the first person to go to Asia by sailing around Africa to India,” would sit comfortably on a low rung. It would take a long ladder to connect these three statements under the higher abstraction of human curiosity.

In the language of politics, use of the abstraction ladder is crucial to comprehend the cultural barriers that divide people and cause conflict. We need to climb the ladder to see the common qualities that unite us.

Each of us grows into a social contract in our family. That’s where we first learn to yell, “That’s not fair!” We need to cooperate to survive, so we learn to be as “fair” as possible through

thoughtful definitions of “fair”.

Also, we need to play together to enjoy survival. Therefore, we form larger social contracts with rules to makes things fair.

The prevailing wisdom at the inception of a social contract directs its growth over centuries. The Protestant Reformation of the 15th Century brought forth the idea of individual salvation and individual liberty. This spurred the onset of democracy.

Democracy is a hard-won social contract because it takes so much work. Our troops are fighting for “freedom”. They lost their freedom when they signed up to fight for freedom, to fight for people who don’t want American Freedom as much as they want to live.

True freedom takes work.

Justice takes work, at all levels.

As we watched Katrina’s devastation of Louisiana and Mississippi, we reacted with horror first and then jumped up too many rungs high, missing consideration of percepts in between. Some shouted, “Racism”. Others said, “Well you know most of those people were on welfare and don’t know how to take care of themselves.”

One senator said, “We tried for years to get rid of that public housing in New Orleans. Finally, God did it for us.”

Some support President Obama, others revile him. The divide is so great now we can’t converse across it.

But we must start talking, beginning at the basic survival level of the ladder and slowly climbing rung by rung up to the lowest rung for justice, the one that requires full cooperation.

If everyone understood that conflict comes from misperceptions of the social contract, that the biggest mistake we make is to assume communication has occurred, that political leaders can hypnotize us with empty concepts such as “freedom”, we would still have conflicts, but we would know how to vote for justice at all levels.

Not communism
Not capitalism
Just justice.

It begins at home. It requires a systematic plan to achieve a series of intermediate goals en route to that huge goal, universal justice.

If every family learned how to think in terms of daily, weekly, monthly actions toward immediate, intermediate and long term goals . . .

If every family learned to talk and listen to each other discuss the varied meanings of justice on an imaginary abstraction ladder. . .

If everyone realized that communicating from different levels of abstraction is the main source of miscommunication . . .

and if everyone knew his own whole mind,

the earth would survive longer and the world would experience a degree of universal justice that it has never known.

I challenge educators everywhere to teach justice on all rungs of the abstraction ladder and in all curricula.

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