

Review of: "Categories of Wrong Beliefs—A Proposal"

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This is an interesting start to an way of thinking— I think the concept of stigmergy is useful. That systems of collective intelligence (bee hives) and cooperative activity (bodily growth) have to deal with the problem of errors is an important insight.

What I think is missing, within this biology based metaphor, is the idea of evolutionary advantage. While it is true that there are strong evolutionary advantages to collective success – bees building good hives; cells in the body working together – there are also advantages to individuals to disrupt the collective order. I don't know that much about bees, but I am aware that they can be schisms in a colony through the process of swarming. In swarming, a portion of bees leave the nest to go to form a new home.

In this situation, there are now evolutionary advantages to individual bees “doing a bad job” on their own home. After all, they may be leaving it soon, and soon the residents of their home will be a competitor. Again, I don't know about bee behavior specifically, but it is at least “expected” then that some bees will “misinform” their compatriots, such as by doing shoddy work in the home they are soon to leave only to their rivals. Maybe bees don't do this, but evolutionary logic would suggest they would try.

Similarly, factions within human communities have different interests. “Misinformation” to some is advantageous information to others if it weakens rival factions. In other words, the idea that citizens are passive recipients of information, and use it only to make decisions that serve the collective good, where “the collective” boundaries are drawn by legal lines (e.g. national or state borders), is not realistic.

To draw on biology, then, the framework needs to account for this underlying tension between cooperation and competition.

