Twitter Thread by Dan listens to the long come down



Dan listens to the long come down
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The reason to try a new approach to things is because you have demonstrated proof that existing approaches are not working.

let's unpack:

1. what counts as proof?

2. what counts as failure?

3. not working for whom?

4. not working towards what end?

what counts as proof? and what counts as failure?

in order to answer this one needs to understand a thing well enough to know what success looks like and to know what failure modes exist.

A thing can fail by succumbing to a known failure mode, or failing in a new way. New failure modes commonly emerge from new contexts. Or they may be due to new developments in an existing context.

proof of failure means you have observed (rather than concluded via hearsay or via abstract reasoning) failure in a known mode or new mode. in order to obtain this proof, a relatively close distance or even insider perspective is usually necessary.

failure modes are specific to the thing being examined but there are some very common patterns. here's a couple of the most common patterns:

- social breakdown in the authoritarian direction. this leads to physical and mental abuse by those in power towards subordinates.

- social breakdown in the anarchist direction. this leads to dissolution of functioning relationships and unchecked all-against-all power struggles.

- systematic breakdown in the direction of incoherence. view and belief losing touch with the principle and function of practice. cargo-culting. magical thinking.

- systematic breakdown in the direction of ossification. inability to adapt existing systems to changing conditions. excess focus placed on tradition and institutional sanction, to the detriment of the functionality of the system.

not working for whom?

the most relevant group, obviously, are people currently involved in working in/on/with/through (prepositions lol) the thing.

also relevant however are people who might become directly involved in the future. the over-the-horizon growth potential.

but there's a special group that I want to identify as the most relevant here. the group of people who are currently attempting to become involved or are involved and in the process of becoming uninvolved (probably due to a social or systematic failure). the liminal cases.

the liminal cases are the most relevant cases because they represent the living edge of the thing. this is where most of the action is taking place. what direction a thing goes in in the future is largely determined by what's happening at the margins in the present.

not working towards what end?

this is part of the necessary context. systems are a means to an end. if the system either cannot clearly define its ends, or defines unobtainable ends, it is incoherent.

each system defines its means and ends differently. once again, the importance of having a sufficiently close-range perspective really stands out here. in order to understand the principle and function of a thing, and what it's methods and expected results are, requires proximity

in order to determine if a system works according to its own stated goals, one has to understand those goals in detail, and be in a position to evaluate results. this requires discernment and experience. it also requires a level of detachment from the blinders of identity.