

## Smart

Most people like to think of themselves as smart. I do. Atleast until I started thinking about what smart might mean.

You'd think that something like 'smart' would be simple to understand. But the more I thought about it, the more I have come to realize that there is so much I do not understand. Am I just playing with words? Maybe a little, but then words are my favorite toys. Anyway, words are really just straight jackets we use to constrain ideas.

Considering how simple 'smart ' should be, but really isn't, brought me to the idea that nothing is entirely simple. In fact, everything is potentially very complex.

There are levels of meaning, implication, associations, and applications that the very simplest of things reveal depths of complexity far beyond however simplistic they might appear. For this purposes of this article, levels begin with the most simplistic and drop into deeper more detailed and nuanced levels.

What Is intended by the word 'smart'?

- Knowing things?
- Understanding things?
- Being able to explain things?
- Being able to create new things?
- Being able to solve problems?
- Being able to make effective use of knowledge?
- Being able to use two things to discover a third?

This list could go on and on, but it does not bring us any closer to an understanding or application of 'smart'. And I think that points to something important. Function. Words, or the ideas they represent, have to function.

For a thing to have meaning and usefulness it has to function properly at one or more levels. At a very superficial, more commonly used instance of 'smart', just knowing things will do. But at a deeper more specific level 'smart' needs to function differently. To quantify how 'smart' someone is, we need to be much more specific and define what types of things count towards 'smart', how many of them a person must have to be considered smart, how accurate each known thing is, and so on. 'Smart' then has to function effectively using all of these additional criteria to be the least bit useful or functional at the deeper levels.

As you identify additional levels of detail and complexity there will be different criteria that must be considered and satisfied otherwise you have an instance of 'smart' that functions well at one level and is meaningless or misleading at other levels.

I suspect that is why we have so many words that are used interchangeably. While at the more shallow levels two or more words can be interchanged and function equally well, at deeper more specific levels the nuance between similar words becomes necessary for them to be accurate, to function properly, at a given level.

I am ignoring the important point that so much of communication is nonverbal. It is a factor, but I am focusing on the dynamics of words and their inner meanings.

I also notice as I consider all of this that I am not envisioning them sequentially as the text implies. Instead, I see these points and their associations in a three dimensional field where atomic points are associated by strength of gravity (attraction) rather than lines of sequence or process. The sense of order is achieved by strength of attraction. Oddly, the distance between these elements is for convenience and does not convey information.

Getting back on track, take another word. For example, 'good'.

"Good" can be;

- acceptable
- agreement
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An example of the problems of words without proper straight jackets is 'paradigm'. When spoken, what does paradigm mean/convey?

- A defined system or arrangement
- Two dimes
- The cost of a pear

Do you see where this is headed? We put tremendous reliance on both the sender and receiver of communications to correctly intuit the context which gives a word its proper straightjacket, and consequently meaning.