It is not controversial that different people are better than others at filling different social roles, but there is little general agreement about what those roles happen to be. Some people may even think that we get to invent the way society is divided into social roles—that we have no natural social positions.

I have gathered evidence about the natural structure of society, and it can be found at https://figshare.com/articles/Measuring_evaluative_computational_differences_in_humans/4003407/1

The summary is that humans divide into types that play different roles in a larger machine, much as cells are parts of a human body. The parts are equal in the sense of being interdependent, but not equal in the sense of having equal potential to fill all roles.

This evidence has profound implications for citizenship and civic engagement. Most importantly, what makes the machine we form together valuable is its ability to discern moral truth—individual humans are mere parts of that machine and therefore incompetent to discern moral truth and therefore incompetent to fill the roles usually assigned to them by typical models of citizenship. Of course, this evidence could be misleading, but that is a matter to be investigated, rather than assumed.

The first problem with this evidence is that it probably isn’t final. The evidence is a lot like evidence that matter can be divided into elements—over time we may find many more elements than the original evidence could support.

The second problem with this evidence is understanding how to make practical use of it. Trying to respond to this second problem, I have recently written two articles about how the practice of social engineering would need to change to account for interdependence:


If you are genuinely seeking an evidence-based understanding of the appropriate relationship between individuals and communities, then these articles are an appropriate response. When the British economy was entangled with slavery, it was inconvenient to genuinely seek an evidence-based understanding of the appropriate relationship between people of different races, and these articles may be inconvenient in a similar way, but inconvenient evidence is better known than hidden.

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