

New Orleans, July 2021

Professor Derritsch,

Enclosed is my clumsy attempt at the synthesis I suggested was possible between your philosophy and the work of your colleague Denis Noble, in systems biology. I have not cited you in the paper, but only because your influence on my perspective has been so deep and general to point to in any particular instance, I thought. If you can find a particular place where I should cite you please point it out to me and I will include it before publication if possible.

This paper would not have been possible if I had not begun to realize the importance of Popper's epistemology and its application to the problem of biological intelligence, which was entirely your influence on me. You made me realize that if knowledge is about conjecture and refutation, and a human body contains knowledge somehow, then the human body itself must be a conjecture, that is sensitive to refutations that come from its environment. This helped me see the difference between the human niche and other places in the universe, and realize that there must be a downward causal logic as simple and universal as the upward logic of Neo-Darwinism.

I hope the ideas in this paper meet with a receptive audience somewhere, so that I can raise funding to test it empirically, or interest others in doing so. I have spent

many months re-writing it to try and express it in language that makes it accessible to the reader, but the idea is so counter-intuitive I worry that very few have the context to really grasp what my argument is. You are the only person I am quite sure has all that context, so if the idea doesn't land for you either, I will know I have a lot more work to do. If you do find the time to read this paper please shoot me an email to let me know that you've done so, if you wouldn't mind, if for no other reason than to stop me from pestering you about this in the future.

Thank you for all the work you have done opening the way to an intellectually honest way to be optimistic about the progress of knowledge. I'm quite sure very few people in this world yet realize the importance of the ideas you have developed, but I expect that eventually they will, and hopefully we will all live to see that more realistic view of technology take hold. It has made a critical difference for me and for several people I care about deeply.

Sincerely,

Charlie

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