

PERFECTION

Is it possible ever to reach perfection? Are perfect answers epistemologically impossible? Would perfection even be natural?

Perfection

Perfection is the process of completing something so that it cannot be improved upon or so that no further work is required on it.

Complexity

What is suggested on this site is that perfection is impossible precisely because there will always be change and therefore that nothing will ever be finished or perfected. Rather, everything remains in flux. By way of explanation, suppose the following. Works of art which seek to communicate aesthetic statements may seek to be perfect in the sense that they seek to be a complete statement or presentation of a given concept. Nevertheless, even if the artist completes her statement, that statement will never be the last word on that particular subject. There will be change and there will be progress in that context in the future. In a world which is becoming ever more complex, it becomes ever more difficult even as an aspiration to say or to do anything which is perfect because the concepts themselves and their contexts have become ever more sophisticated, hidden and incapable even of description.

That said, I have written elsewhere (AS Hudson, “Rapporteur” in *New Perspectives on Property Law, Human Rights and the Home*) that the only things which may be considered perfect are biscuits, the works of PG Wodehouse and the Stone Roses’ first album. They can be considered not to be perfect in that they do not say anything: biscuits are inert, and the other two works do not aim to say anything in particular but rather operate within their own aesthetic. They can be considered to be perfect in that they are complete and in that, in an aesthetic sense, they express their worlds in a manner that is flawless. My statement was ironic but it suggested that the only things which could be considered even to be complete in their own aesthetic mission (to use that as a rough synonym for being aesthetically perfect) were those which had such a narrow (the ambitions of a biscuit are simply to present a narrow taste; of a Wodehouse novel to explore the latent farce in a narrow, value-neutral world of wealth and leisure) or a self-contained (the Stone Roses sought to sound like no-one else and to use their own, single sound for an entire album) project.

Intellectually, perfection is not possible in that almost nothing can be known with certainty. The only thing that can be known is bound up in the proposition “I think, therefore I am”: I can only know that I exist because I am conscious of my own mind. Beyond that knowledge, all else is perceived, experienced and supposed. Given that

almost nothing can be known, nothing can be perfect – in the sense of being complete and incapable of change.

Perfect answers

With many theories there is an imperative to provide logically impenetrable structures. My criticism of restitution of unjust enrichment, in its ambition to replace equity based on conscience, is that it supposes that it can create perfect models with which to generate perfect answers to legal problems; whereas it is supposed that equity operates otherwise than on such a certain basis and therefore generates unpredictable answers. My suggestion is that, following on from the preceding paragraph, it is not very difficult to generate perfect questions, let alone perfect answers. Given that the world is subject to change in its natural processes, no answer can anticipate that change nor be perpetually intellectually valid in the face of that change. In consequence, the closest one can come to a good answer is by accepting that perfect answers are neither possible nor always desirable even as an aspiration. If we accept imperfection then we can focus on the development of those general principles by which we wish to live and then apply them to circumstances as circumstance requires. This may generate uncertainty at times, compared with more rigid taxonomies which suppose perfect answers, but uncertainty is quintessentially human. We know nothing about tomorrow other than eventually we will have no more tomorrows. And even the nature and time of that end are uncertain. Attempting to create perfection is subconsciously an attempt to fight against that chaos and uncertainty when in truth there is nothing more natural than to surrender to the chaos and complexity of tomorrow.