

POM: A Zero-Sum Simulation

A zero-sum game is one in which the amount by which the winners win is exactly matched by the amount which the losers lose. A poker game is the usual example given of a zero-sum game. If player A wins the pot, everyone else who contributed to the pot lost and the total of what they lost is exactly what player A won.

As anyone can see with a moment's reflection, an economy *is not and never has been* a zero-sum game situation. Usually, most if not all, of the participants in an economy are winning. Sometimes, an economy goes really bad and then most of the participants are losing. So the zero-sum game is not at all a good simulation of any functioning economy anywhere in the world.

But all the nations of the world use physical object money (POM). Let's examine the influence of using a POM on an economy.

Let's start with the idea that the supply of a POM is constant. It is obvious that the money supply increases and decreases all the time. But is that how we think of it? I suggest that we do not. I suggest that it is very easy to count and watch the money as it moves around in an economy but very much more difficult to count and watch the movement of goods and services in an economy, especially if we are interested in the value of those goods and services. If we establish a value for those goods and services, it will be in terms of money. Therefore, it feels like only money is moving in the economy. We all know that isn't the case. In truth goods and services are moving. But we tend to watch only the money.

So we say things like "we should provide day care for all children with working parents but we don't have the money." "We should repair all those old bridges and highways but we don't have the money." "We should clean up the pollution at many industrial sites but we don't have the money." "If we spend more money on those things we will not have enough money for other things."

Now look at those statements. Don't they imply that the supply of money is fixed, a constant? Don't they give the impression that there is a limit to the amount of money? Don't they suggest that money spent for one thing is not available to be spent for something else? Doesn't every successful business have a budget and each part of the company has a fixed amount to spend and money allocated to one aspect cannot be spent on other needs?

So we are constantly in contexts in which the amount of money is a constant and those projects, activities, needs, and so forth which get

money get it at the expense of each of the others. For each person and each organizational unit the amount of money seems fixed. The competing interests can only win at the expense of the other interests. The amount spent on one project reduces by exactly that amount the amount that can be spent on some other project. Isn't *that* a zero-sum relationship?

The more money spent on labor, the less money can be spent on executive offices. The more money the military gets, the less money can be spent on children's health. The more money spent on cigarettes, the less money is available for cancer research. You see what I mean. All those statements have the ring of truth because *that is the way a POM makes the situation feel*. Yet those statements are all silly. We have already seen that The Supply Of POM has no necessary relationship to the supply of goods and services. There is never any *real* physical reason why the supply of money should prevent the production of any needed good or service.

It is by being a physical object, the supply of which is fixed, that a POM simulates a zero-sum situation throughout every economy, business, family, church and government.

Now let us examine how zero-sum relationships affect human interaction. I think these effects will be pretty obvious to all of us. If my gain is your loss and your gain is my loss that makes us competitors. That makes us opponents. That makes me expect that you will attempt to hurt me, if not physically, then economically. It makes me defensive. It makes me try to think of ways to thwart you. It makes me unwilling to cooperate with you. It makes me count my change. And it makes me expect you to act the same way.

I have published my novel, "Invisible Hand" [here](#) as well as on [Gather](#) and at [my University-hosted website](#). I have offered it to all freely. I expect no compensation or money profit from people reading my novel. (I do get lots of satisfaction from folks reading it.) But how could anyone believe that I don't have a profit motive? How could any reasonable person in our modern world believe that someone would go to all the trouble to write a rather long novel and post it on the Internet unless they thought they would make a lot of money by doing so? It defies reason. I am sure that many of those who have seen my offers to others to read the book for free figured that I was at least trying to get [Gather points](#) which I could convert to money.

Why would you automatically expect a money motive on my part? You don't know me. (As the old cartoon puts it, I could be a dog.) So your expectation that I have a money motive must be what you expect of everyone who offers you something for nothing. And you have every reason to expect a trick. Why? Because other people can and will profit at

your expense. Other people can win because you lose. Other people are motivated to get your money any way they can.

This psychological state is the natural consequence of a POM. It exists in all nations. Look what it does to us. It makes us think we can win/gain when others lose. It tempts us to do things which are immoral because we can gain at the expense of others. And remember that POM is amoral and uncontrollable and can be taken from others against their will, so it can be used to pay for help in taking your money. And always the excuse "Do unto others before they can do unto you." The zero-sum relationship guarantees that people will be motivated to hurt each other. It guarantees that people will treat each other as enemies. It guarantees that the slave will be kept down. It guarantees that the minimum wage will be kept low. It guarantees that people will steal. It guarantees that governments will spy on their own citizens.

The zero-sum relationship is a POM lie that breaks up families, a lie that creates labor/management conflict, a lie that justifies neglect of the poor, a lie that makes us distrust our neighbors. If our money were not a POM we would not believe that lie.