

## On Best Effort

I am in the garden, there is a lot of snow. I can see the small peaks and the valleys, from where the water has carved its way through. It is reminiscent of looking down from a flight over the Norwegian heartland to whichever destination that makes you cross it. I reflect on many things in this garden, one being how this text will be read and what knowledge these words will give to the reader.

It connects to my thoughts on Best Effort as a concept. Still in its infancy and still a personal opinion, it has not yet been affected by thought from others, not yet connected to existing theory or framework. It feels pure, and fairly fluff, both difficult to get a hold of, but also very familiar. I guess it is so, because the thought is still mine, it has not been opposed by anyone.

I am currently in a state where I wonder how to convey the idea. It is not easy, because the thought is so simple, yet it contains so much. Telling it through stories based on experience might be an option. I have knowledge of this, and my mind quickly moves further to think that it is how music is commonly shared. This personal connection gives extra weight to the method, and for now I trust that it is a reasonable way of presenting the idea. I am aware that I'm inclined to lean towards one way of reasoning, that it might change, and that the idea itself is vulnerable to objections. I am also aware how it can easily be crushed under the weight of academic terminology and referencing, but sometimes it is necessary to *stick with it* for a while. To see what can be reached from a particular foothold.

In the end, how can anyone prepare for every possible objection? How can one trust that the objections themselves are valid? Within theoretical bodies of knowledge I see *agreement* as being the only finite unit of measure, and to reach that point, one has to acknowledge that we are aiming for a moving target, and possibly also realize that the target is rather big and volatile. Nothing can really be 100% certain, because there will always be possible to argue that we are measuring by a system that is tailored to benefit our senses. To add to the confusion, we can easily argue that everyone has a completely personal conception of reality, or possibly even a completely personal universe, depending on how far one wants to go.

These might be ideas far fetched, but they serve a purpose in identifying that underneath every conclusion, there is trust, and it further means that the method of science, established and developed over centuries, is proof of the theory in itself. It always comes down to agreements. It builds on nothing but the fact that we trust that any approach to anything, is done in a sense of Best Effort.

Going back to storytelling, my presentation at ARF in early 2023 gave me something to ponder. The story is short, and it goes like this:

I prepared, and the idea and mission was to present the state of the project. Very clearly written in the program was information for everyone that this was a first-year presentation, still in its early stages. The purpose was to state something like: "how are things going?"

The invitation gave instructions by asking us simple questions, most likely there to give us freshmen something to hang our thoughts on. So, I tried to answer these questions and give a fairly straightforward presentation aimed at the prepared and the not-so-prepared. Experience tells me that there is always someone who has a reason not to read the introductions or prepare. Sometimes I am one of those myself. By virtue of knowing this, I wanted to be as clear and structured as I could, not to avoid objections, but to give everyone in the room the best possible base for considering the ideas I tried to present and myself the best possible vantage point from which to answer and explain further.

I gave my presentation using the Research Catalogue, in which I had created a thought map as a visual aide. It was a visual aide *for me*, not intended to be viewed without my guidance, something I also clearly stated to begin with. It was just something to look at while I spoke, so I thought it would be helpful.

There were a short talk afterwards, from which two responses stood out:

1) *the presentation was all over the place and confusing*

2) *the presentation was too boxed and structured*

My presentation thus yielded two opposite responses, on each side of that moving target of agreement in an academic setting, and in an effort to convert this into something that I could use to benefit my next presentation, I find myself locked in a conundrum in which the statements can be seen as:

a) mutually exclusive, meaning that I either need to tidy up, or tidy down

b) mutually inclusive, and thus mostly based on personal opinion. It is difficult, then, not to ponder whether better preparations from the enquirer would have aligned these views better.

I do not believe that it is possible to reach a conclusion in which one of these conditions are seen as having a clear advantage over the other, but I do think it can be solved, by which I mean that we can reach an agreement (or at least, I can reach an

agreement with myself), by using the method of Best Effort. In this case, one could argue that there is a high probability that my presentation can be improved, an argument that can be based on the fact that this was my first presentation, on a new subject. The chances of someone reaching a complete understanding at first try is more or less nil, so it stands to reason, without further argument, that the assumption of further improvement being possible, is valid.

On the other hand, one can also assume that the enquirer could have made better preparations. An indication of this is the fact that two completely opposite responses were given to the same presentation, and also, again, that the responses were given to a first presentation, which means that one can assume the level of preparations was also done accordingly. In an ideal situation, everyone would always be maximum prepared, but it is a rather certain fact that most scale preparations and effort based on what they expect.

This way of reasoning now gives me a preliminary answer to a question that cannot really be solved, but only reasoned with. The question still is: how can anyone prepare for every possible objection?

Through a method of Best Effort, here applied to the analysis of the presentation and following discussion as a whole, I see how my presentation is related to both responses, by allowing the target to become large and inclusive, seeking to narrow it down and pinpoint by further thought. The method allows for all objections, and does not exclude by demanding specifics that might be inaccessible to some. Neither does it simplify the question, or the project to begin with, it is simply a method that addresses the underlying component of trust, in such a way that it can be used to differentiate views, thus focusing, narrowing, and moving ideas forward.

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My thoughts are still in the garden, but my body is in my studio. I am pondering how my memory of snowy peaks and valleys are no longer an accurate representation of the current state there. It is a rather romantic example of how there are no absolutes, and, by ways of creative extrapolation, it leads me to contemplate how nothing holds true unless we believe it to be true.

Between us and the point in time where everything dissolves into photons, becoming a condition devoid of mass, size and time, we can not reach beyond the best of our abilities, but if we use those abilities as a benchmark, we can progress and improve, through a method that probably can be best explained by acknowledging Best Effort as a qualitative, although theoretical, measure.

