The Real Nature of the Emerging Attention Economy:
The Real Nature of the Emerging Attention Economy: Seen As a New Level in the Massively Multiplayer Game Known as Western Culture

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An Economy Most Generally…..

is a massively multiplayer SINGLE-LEVEL game
that involves some kind of passing of scarce entities
between players
so as to knit all players intricately together
Economic History Is a Multi-Level Game
First Level

FEUDAL

800-1200
2 Levels

FEUDAL
800-1200

MARKET-MONEY-INDUSTRIAL
1650-1980
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Time Period</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Feudal</td>
<td>800-1200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Market-Money-Industrial</td>
<td>1650-1980</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attention Economy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3 Levels

FEUDAL
800–1200 [1]

MARKET-MONEY-INDUSTRIAL
1650–1980 [20,000]

ATTENTION ECONOMY
[30,000,000,000]
TPI coefficient of Economies

Transactions per Lifetime ×
Pool of people Interacted with ×
Intensity of Interaction
When do we reach a new level?
When enough of the players in current level reach their (implicit) goals.
When enough of the players in current level reach their (implicit) goals.

That is, by success, not by failure.
Each new level has new “rules,” “roles,” “moves,” “goals,” (and values)
BUT

THERE IS NO GAME DESIGNER

"Creation of Adam" by Michelangelo
New level game emerges from...

- basic human proclivities,
- capacities
- and inventiveness
- in environment created by prior level,
- and its lacks,
- openings,
- partially utilized capacities
- oversights
- and limitations
## 2 changes of level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feudal ➔ MMI</th>
<th>MMI ➔ Attention Economy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Success:</td>
<td>Success:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Security</td>
<td>Material abundance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Openings:</td>
<td>Openings:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ungoverned cityspaces</td>
<td>High school;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safe travel;</td>
<td>Broadcasting;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mostly no slavery</td>
<td>Publishing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet</td>
<td>Internet</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2 changes of level, cont’d.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feudal ➔ MMI</th>
<th>MMI ➔ Attention Economy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lack: material goods</td>
<td>Lacks: chance to get attention; Personal uniqueness, self-expression</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affordances: Monasteries and the technology they created</td>
<td>Affordances: “Info-tech” consumer goods</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Aspects of 3 Levels

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goals (scarcity):</th>
<th>Roles:</th>
<th>Moves:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Loyalty, Feoffdoms</td>
<td>Knights, Serfs</td>
<td>Obtaining feoffs by winning battles, pledging loyalty or marriage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Security</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goals (scarcity):</td>
<td>Roles:</td>
<td>Moves:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Material goods, money, jobs</td>
<td>Owner, Worker/Consumer</td>
<td>Organizing production, selling at a profit, working a job, Buying at a good price</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goals (scarcity):</td>
<td>Roles:</td>
<td>Moves:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attention from others</td>
<td>Star, Fan</td>
<td>Performing, Creating Seeking an audience, Paying attention</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Cycles and Structure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FEUDAL</th>
<th>MMI</th>
<th>ATTENTION ECONOMY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vassals $\rightarrow$</td>
<td>Work $\rightarrow$ Earnings $\rightarrow$ Goods $\rightarrow$ Profits $\rightarrow$ More Capital</td>
<td>Attention $\rightarrow$ Memory $\rightarrow$ More Attention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Battles won $\rightarrow$ More vassals</td>
<td>&amp; Capital $\rightarrow$ More Capital</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Each serf has one lord</td>
<td>Each worker has one employer</td>
<td>Each fan has many stars</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
II. WHAT IS ATTENTION?
Or, how does attention work as an economic entity in this new kind of economy?
Key points about attention

A. It is scarce, and always will be.  
B. It is very desirable.  
C. While having only one body limits how much food you can eat or how many cars you can drive, nothing limits the amount of attention you could absorb, if you could get it.
The penumbra of “paying attention” includes:

Heeding, listening, seeing, etc., doing what is wanted, serving, waiting for or waiting on, recognizing, reputing, honoring, granting meaning to, deriving meaning from, learning, etc.
Paying attention amounts to temporarily (and thereby permanently) allowing another to shape how your mind works.
Is Attention about Money or is it about Time?
Short answer:
NO
Who owns your attention?
Right now, in part, I do.
And, if you are paying attention now, I will continue to own some part of your attention, until you get senile.

Sorry.
We can think of having attention as owning a kind of property. This property is located in the minds of those who have paid you attention.
Finding meaning in life comes from sharing meanings with others. That can only happen if you get some of their attention.
What is “being productive” about?

A. Being productive means being able to increase amount of attention one gets.
B. Since total attention *per capita* is limited, net productivity cannot rise beyond a certain point.
C. Developing new tech tools is largely about seeking stardom in geekdom
How Much Attention Can You Expect?
How Much Attention Can You Expect?

Suppose you do the attention equivalent of writing one book a year
How Much Attention Can You Expect?

Suppose you do the attention equivalent of writing one book a year.
And suppose everyone “reads” one “book” a year.

Then

The average “book” will have one “reader.”
In actuality, we can pay attention to more, say even 300 books per year.

So the average audience you can expect is 300 for your year’s work.
NOT

the next Google!