

Epstein: “Why Model?”

1. Suppose a modeler and a non-modeler are asked by a government agency to make fiscal policy recommendations. According to Epstein, what is the central difference between the modeler’s approach and that of the non-modeler?
2. Epstein enumerates sixteen uses of models other than prediction. Pick three that he describes in detail, and pick one that he does not.
 - (a) For each of the four uses, pick a model that you have encountered (e.g., in high school, previous college courses, or your personal readings) that illustrates the use. If possible, please do not use Epstein’s examples.
 - (b) Explain how (if at all) Alexander’s models are used (or could be used) in the four ways you have chosen.
3. Are there any additional uses of models that you think are not captured in Epstein’s list?
4. Epstein claims a central virtue of developing models is that one’s assumptions are made explicit, and hence, capable of being tested. Are there any features of models that are often left implicit?

Alexander: *Structural Evolution of Morality*. Chapter 8.

1. Explain Alexander’s distinction between “thinly” and “thickly” conforming to a principle of morality.
2. Does Alexander believe that evolutionary game-theoretic models can explain why individuals thickly conform to morality? Why or why not? (Food for thought: Does Alexander provide any evidence that individuals do, in fact, thickly conform to any principles of morality?)
3. Explain the relevance of the comic on page 283. That is, what is the central question that Alexander wishes to address in Section 8.3?
4. In one sentence, explain the main conclusion that Alexander draws from Yaari and Bar-Hillel’s experiment in which subjects were “trained” by a computer in a two-person, asymmetric game.