

# Southport Pips

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## Zero Sum Situations.

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This topic seems to grow while mulling it over. Competition seems to be the major driver, though I've tended to ignore Sports and Gambling as they probably warrant their own space. Any insights would be interesting.

What I find most disconcerting is the apparent ubiquity of someone's gain being another's loss. The classic examples are in the legal field, though it's probably in business where we're most affected. For example, in simple situations like keeping insurance and utility payments manageable: where it's a yearly battle contending with companies hiking rates, testing our attention spans and our willingness to do research. Justifications are offered: e.g. price discrimination helps the 'invisible hand', and its social awkwardness means it can only take place via a back door. Also apparent equal losses are experienced differently, based on wealth, and zero sum situations in financial markets are actually trades of risk, allowing resources to be employed profitably.

How far can common business practice be made benign? If the answer is 'not very' then it begs the question if there are systemic changes to business, as well as to law and tax, which would allow us to dedicate our education to tasks benefiting the whole of society, or at least just ourselves at no one else's expense.

Fairness could be said to make mankind partners, and so eliminate conflicts of interest. Could this be applied in a meaningful way to all aspects of our social lives? If equitable outcomes exist for myriad social situations, how easy is it to make this clear or embed it into our social consciousness?

Competitive life seems to run deep, if just living and using possessions to clothe, shelter and transport us is always seen in comparative terms. Curiously we sometimes escape this mindset and are uplifted by the beauty of a rare possession we can never own, or are inspired by a moment of sporting brilliance despite our team 'suffering' its immediate effects. It's as if humanity has enjoyed a big success and the 'Joneses' never existed. Can this happen more often? Thinking more generally, can we ever escape our actions adversely affecting others? To give just one example: technological advances rendering others' life long skills useless?

Steve.