



# The Sum of Our Discontent: Why Numbers Make Us Irrational

*David Boyle*

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# The Sum of Our Discontent: Why Numbers Make Us Irrational

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## **The Sum of Our Discontent: Why Numbers Make Us Irrational** David Boyle

In *The Sum of Our Discontent*, David Boyle has put his finger on the problem with our numbers-obsessed societies: The trouble is that numbers have proliferated and that it is sometimes hard to tell the difference between a good statistic and a bad one and that therefore numbers have become meaningless and in the process reduced humans to be coldly calculating. Boyle points out that the important things in life, such as wealth, success, rehabilitation and wisdom, are intangible, and because they are intangible, they cannot be measured and so are not used as a standard of happiness. Boyle asks how can businesses measure what they are worth when value is increasingly ephemeral – encompassing things that go way beyond the traditional balance sheet? The trouble is, he says, is that numbers cannot capture the complexity of human life...the know-how, ethics, and self-esteem or kindness. Boyle emphasizes that the counters are taking over our lives. For centuries, humankind has attempted to divine meaning from life through numbers.

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**David Boyle**

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