

Modernism and Its Impact

By John Armstrong

*Utilising some material developed and taught by Dr
Wolf Wolfensberger*

Empiricism & Ideology

- A. Empiricism: Reliance on observation & experiment to understand and formulate predictions. **Describes** what is or is likely to be.
- B. Ideology: **Prescribes** what *should* be.
 - Morality is our conception of how humans *ought* to behave, as spelt out via:
 - Political (Eg; Marxism, conservatism)
 - Spiritual/"Religious" belief (Eg; Catholicism, humanism)
 - Legal/ethical (Eg; Magna Carta, US Constitution)
 - Values construct our ideologies
 - Can be collective or personal

What are 'Values'?

- The established ideals of life; objects, customs, ways of acting, etc that the members of a given society regard as desirable.
- For example –ask yourself: what are the 10 most important things in your life? Answers reflect what you value.
- *“Man lives by values; all his enterprises and activities...make sense only in terms of some structure of purposes which are themselves values in action. (Will Herberg)*

The Distinction Between Empiricism and Ideology Can be Ambiguous

- We see what we *want* to see.
- Thus, facts can be distorted by our perception.
- We tend act on instinct and emotion, and in hindsight justify our decision.
- So our *actions* (or inactions) are motivated and driven by our assumptions and values.
- “When a man is not thinking what he is doing, he is probably doing what he is thinking.”

Some Current “Scientific” Controversies

- Fluoride in water
- Vaccination
- Circumcision
- Home schooling
- Testing and grading in schools
- Stem Cell research
- Abortion
- Euthanasia
- Others?

The Five Interrelated Components of 'Modernism' (Wolfensberger 1997)

- **Materialism**, as in the forms of:
 - Obsession with possessions, goods, consumption
 - Obsession with objects, material processes, technology
 - De-spiritualised world view
- **Individualism**
 - Idolatry of individual human; “self actualisation” regardless of cost to family, community, society.
- **Sensualism:**
 - Comfort, convenience, preoccupation with the body & youthfulness; Sex; thrills, speed, travel

The Five Interrelated Components of 'Modernism' (Wolfensberger 1997)

- **Externalism:**
 - Decline in inner life & self reliance;
 - Passive orientation to TV, other media, models;
 - Susceptibility to propaganda, gurus
 - Language manipulation, cults, peer & crowd influence
- **“Here & Nowism”**
 - Negation of the future (& therefore consequences)
 - Often, also the past and of time itself

The Basis for Morality

Morality is largely dependent on or determined by the idols one serves

Of/Within Modernism

Of Valid Morality

- **5 Heaps of Sand**

- What I Want Now
- What Makes Me Feel Good Now
- What Is Easy & Convenient
- Superficial Slogans
- What My Peers or Reference Groups Do/Say

- **2 Universal & Eternal Pillars**

- Truth
- Integrity

Three Important Terms

- **Comity:** Civility, social harmony, friendly social atmosphere
- **Polity:** A political or governmental structure that unifies a society
- **Comitous Polity:** A way of people living together in a nation &/or under a governmental structure in sufficient agreement to do harmoniously

For Comitous Polity & as a Minimum,
A Society Needs a Confluence of
Sufficient Degrees of 4 Qualities
Among Its Members

- Rationality
- Self control
- Altruism
- A shared moral code