

THE DESIGN OF INTELLECTUAL MOVEMENTS

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How I became interested

- Second order cybernetics was an important addition to the philosophy of science
- It was not being widely adopted in the U.S.
- People in Europe seemed to be more interested
- The advocates gave as a reason for their interest a consequence that is not widely challenged in the U.S.

Definitions of first and second order cybernetics

- The cybernetics of observed systems
- The purpose of a model
- Controlled systems
- Interaction among the variables in a system
- Theories of social systems
- The cybernetics of observing systems
- The purpose of a modeler
- Autonomous systems
- Interaction between observer and observed
- Theories of the interaction between ideas and society

Examples of intellectual movements

- Communitarianism in the political culture of the U.S.
- Total quality management in corporations in Japan, the U.S., and other countries
- Multi-culturalism in the humanities
- Lefebvre's theory of reflexive control

Generalizations about intellectual movements (1)

- Cultures are influenced by climate, geography, and history
- Cultures deal with some issues subconsciously (in cultural norms) and with other issues consciously (in philosophy and education)
- The distribution of issues to culture or philosophy will be different for different societies

Generalizations about intellectual movements (2)

- Concepts that are taken for granted in some societies are missing in others
- An intellectual movement grows out of a particular culture and is an attempt to change a particular culture
- Intellectual movements which have a dramatic impact on one society may have little impact on another

Generalizations about intellectual movements (3)

- To be accepted, a new message must fit the local culture. What the new message values, the society must value
- If we assume that societies pass through similar stages of development (e.g., pastoralism, agriculture, industry, etc.), then cultures may be ready to adopt different messages at different times

An American strategy vs. a European strategy (1)

- Knowledge is based on an assessment of the situation
- Influenced by British empiricism and American pragmatism
- Question: What does American society need now?
- Knowledge is prior to action
- Influenced by German idealism
- Question: What do philosophy and science need now?

An American strategy vs. a European strategy (2)

- Answer: People should be concerned about their responsibilities as well as their rights
- Recommendation: Citizens should become more involved in public affairs
- Answer: The observer should be included within the domain of science
- Recommendation: Scientists should use a constructivist as opposed to a realist epistemology

An American strategy vs. a European strategy (3)

- Theories are imperfect descriptions of the phenomenon described
- Action is based on social role
- Ideas are important if they enable more effective action in the world
- The inner world has primacy over the outer world
- Action is based on philosophical position
- The free realm of ideas is preferred over the necessary realm of matter

An American strategy vs. a European strategy (4)

- The public interest is debated by the citizenry
- Arguments are addressed to educated citizens, and also academics
- Social change requires changing policies, laws, and institutions, not just ideas
- The public interest is debated primarily in a university
- Arguments are addressed to professional intellectuals
- If ideas about the nature of knowledge change, change in science and society will follow

An American strategy vs. a European strategy (5)

- Focus on certain academic disciplines -- economics, sociology, political science
- An historical experience of domination by a remote government
- The key task of society is to protect individual liberties
- Attempt to alter the conception of knowledge, regardless of discipline
- An historical experience of political chaos and disorder
- A key task of society is to control dissent

An American strategy vs. a European strategy (6)

- A high regard for practical, not theoretical, knowledge
- Tolerance is justified by respect for the individual, by empathy with others, and by the desire to ensure one's own liberties by protecting those of others
- A high regard for philosophical thought
- Tolerance is justified by our knowledge of neurophysiology and the consequent inability of the individual to be certain of his or her beliefs

An American strategy vs. a European strategy (7)

- Intolerance is restrained by morality and law
- Tolerance and respect for others are axioms, a starting point
- Intolerance is inappropriate given the imperfect nature of our knowledge
- The appropriateness of tolerance is the conclusion of a scientific investigation; “others” are needed to confirm or challenge our beliefs

Coming to understand an intellectual movement (1)

- What do those who are advocating the new point of view believe? What are they saying?
- Why do they think that what they are saying is important? What is the problem they perceive?
- What is missing in the society such that the new point of view fills a gap?

Coming to understand an intellectual movement (2)

- What are the underlying assumptions about human nature and the role of government?
- What groups favor or oppose the new view?
- What groups within society are the advocates of the new view attempting to persuade?
- How will the political, economic, and cultural life of the society change if the new ideas are accepted?

How to create an intellectual movement (1)

- What is the problem? What is needed?
- Why is this a problem? Why is the problem important?
- If the problem is not yet widely recognized, why not? What beliefs or values prevent its recognition?
- Where is attention currently focused instead of on this problem?

How to create an intellectual movement (2)

- Why was that focus of attention appropriate in the past?
- What circumstances have changed such that a redirection of attention is appropriate/ needed/ required?
- Is the message adequate or complete, that is, is there a philosophy, theory, and method of implementation?

How to create an intellectual movement (3)

- Is the message being delivered often enough and through enough channels?
- What change in behavior is expected if people change their beliefs or values?
- What trends in society support the new view? What trends oppose the new view?

APA Work Groups (1)

- Using quality improvement methods within APA
- Promoting professional ethics through best practice guidelines
- Increasing public understanding of the effects of violence in the media on childhood development

APA Work Groups (2)

- Raising awareness about disparities in health care services and outcomes
- Promoting discussions of end-of-life issues