

Hegemony: Beliefs, Myths and Lies

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Introduction

This presentation will explore the concept of hegemony and how common sense ideas often associated with it function to maintain the status quo while destroying living systems - including our species — and other creatures on this planet.

We can live any culture that does not kill us before reproduction.
Humberto Maturana

In this report I will define hegemony, examine three basic premises that our western culture hegemony currently conserves and offer alternative ways of thinking about each of them.

I. Hegemony II. Current premises III. Alternative premises

I. Defining Hegemony



Hegemony is a concept invented by Italian **Antonio Gramsci** during the early 20th century which suggests that the power elite of a society rule not by the threat or use of force BUT when controlling the very ideas members of a society come to *believe*.

Believers make liars.
Herbert Brün

Hegemony includes the assumption that the dominant class has the ability, power and authority to inflict its beliefs, values, norms and products onto the non-dominant classes when the masses of said society internalize these beliefs and myths as if they are in their own best interests -- even when the evidence suggests they are not.

Video: [Chomsky: Hegemony or Survival](#)

In a hegemony the ruling class is not only a political and economic or military force BUT media force as well. Media generally manufacture consent and conformity of the messages driven by the powers that exist which generate a form control *over* the masses.

Video: Democracy Capitalism Finance

A fundamental component of any hegemony is the ability to perpetuate common sense assumptions that go against the best interests of the majority of members of that society.

Hegemonic idea: [Public Housing](#) doesn't work.

II. Current Hegemonic Premises

1. Objectivity is possible and desirable
2. Aggression is our fundamental emotion
3. Peace is always something to be achieved

1. Objectivity is possible and desirable

The concept of Objectivity assumes that an observer can, through empirical observations, generate a reality that matches an external Objective reality, realism. A world that is thought to exist independent of *any* observer (a contradiction). As in modern science, a central practice of scientists has been to attempt to discover and uncover this Objective world so that (we) can predict and thus control it with certainty.

The belief that there is this external, independent, predictable and controllable reality contributes to the meanness, greed and violence accepted and occurring worldwide. It fits perfectly with an **anthropocentric** worldview which is used to rationalize man's violence against the earth and other living entities when placing one's self and their beliefs *above* the earth, its ecosystems and biosphere we are all interdependent on for survival. Our current Anthropocene.



This type of worldview or ontology, a shared explanation or set of theories about the nature of being, opens space in (our) heritage for the legitimization of the illegitimization of the “other,” as a foundation for generating and conserving interrelations of domination, submission and pseudo control — violence.

Video Science is violence when?

The phenomenon of control exists only in the discourse of the observer as a metaphor of what the skipper does, not as a feature of how the course of the ship is constituted as the ship moves under the skipper. — Humberto Maturana

Paper [Notions of Cybernetics](#)

We human beings often confuse our need to generate order with a desire to control.

2. Aggression is a fundamental human emotion

The assumption that “man is basically aggressive has been fundamental to our ways of thinking about human beings for hundreds of years. Freud constructed aggression, with the help of others, as a fundamental for explaining and understanding the human psyche. Media, movies, plays, operas, lyrics and (our) language perpetuates this myth both in relation to aggression and sex. Do I need to say more? I doubt it just look and listen around.

Hegemonic Idea: Man is inherently selfish and basically aggressive so it is only natural to want more.

Paper Human Nature Isn't Inherently Violent

Now comes the third.

3. Peace is something to be achieved

When you look and listen you'll notice that in (our) discourse we use the term “peace” as something to be achieved. We are expected to find and or make peace. Under these circumstances violence, including war, can be rationalized as a means for achieving peace.

Assuming peace is something to be achieved reflects the depths of living immersed in a hegemony nested in a reward-oriented paradigm that rules what we say, think and do. A paradigm view that keeps (us) pushing up that huge rock that keeps us down. One that includes a willingness to kill and die in a desire to achieve peace.

Question

What if we were to language differently about peace, aggression and Objectivity? Could we create, generate, imagine a more equitable, loving and understanding world? I think so.

III. An Alternative (cybernetic) Premise

When working on my Ph.D. in Human Relations and Cybernetics, while at my first American Society for Cybernetics (ASC) conference about the cybernetics of Herbert Brün and Humberto Maturana, I experienced a *radical shift* in my ways of thinking about thinking and being human.

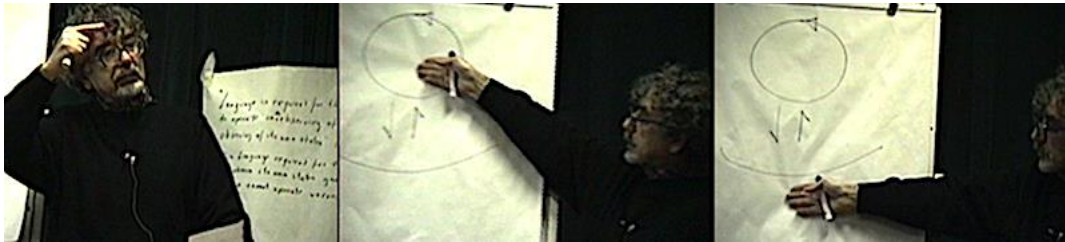
Radical in that I experienced at my core a thorough and fundamental epistemological shift in my understanding of understanding that was healthy and hopeful.

Three Elements of my Radical Shift

1. Love is a fundamental human emotion
2. (objectivity) is the best we can do
3. Peace is a need

1. Love is a fundamental human emotion

Many people associated with the peace movement speak about the importance of living in love. Dorothy Day, Mohandas Gandhi and Martin Luther King all spoke of the importance of love, insisting love is the fundamental human emotion - not aggression.



During the ASC 92 conference, Humberto Maturana, a neurobiologist who coined the term autopoiesis, introduced me to his radical ideas for explaining living loving entities as systemic dynamic beings.

Video: Structural Determined Entities

I hardly understood a word he said, I was totally intrigued by his sensible yet uncommon explanations for when is being human, including his biological positioning that the **biology of love** is THE fundamental emotion that all living systems share — in the domains in which we exist.

Video: [Spider](#)

The biology of love, the domain of behaviors through which the other in coexistence with oneself arises as a legitimate other with each other. As Maturana suggests if you look you will see that our human condition is such that when the biology of love is interfered with we become ill and that we are cured through love.

Video: [Biology of Love](#)

He also claims that this is so fundamental that sooner or later we fall into love or we will disappear.

Video: [Why the word love?](#)

If I want to live in the biology of love I can, when reflecting and acting with intent (not purpose) to *want* to live in love.

We are all actors and when we act with intent, performers.

When owning the Truth (transcendental ontologies nested in Objectivity) it is difficult to reflect and/or understand the other. However when accepting the biological question about observing (a constitutive ontology) reflecting seems reflexive.

Video: [Biological questions of Love and Observing](#)

Maturana and Varela's work suggests that (objectivity) is nested in observing, knowing, and reflecting — the best we can do.

That when asking and accepting the biology of observing an alternative worldview, epistemology, ontology emerges for explaining reality.

2. The best we can do (objectivity)

Objectivity the delusion that observations can be made without an observer.
Heinz von Foerster

Radical constructivism and intersubjectivity

One alternative premise to Objectivity generated over the last 50 years constructed by Ernst von Glasersfeld is "radical constructivism." Ernst first used this term when discussing Jean Piaget's theory about genetic epistemology. He noticed how people failed to notice that Piaget's concepts about epistemology *evolved* over time in ways that went beyond a traditional constructivist framework. It was a *radical view* of constructivism, hence radical constructivism.

So, when I was teaching genetic epistemology I made it a point to distinguish my understandings and approach toward Piaget's constructivism from *other* constructivists when using the term *radical*. - Ernst von Glasersfeld

Radical meaning at the root, and in this context the idea that -- at the root of anyone's knowing is a self-determined observer; distinguishing and organizing their experiential world in accordance with the constraints in which they exist.

So, knowledge, knowing is NOT a commodity. Nor is it the conventional ideas associated with a transcendental ontology of an independent world in which one can we discover, predict and control. In fact the best we can do is co-construct an intersubjective experiential reality.

Basic Principles of Radical Constructivism (RC)

- Knowledge is actively built, not passively received by a cognizing agent.
- The function of knowledge is adaptive in a biological sense of the term.
- Cognition is a subject's *orientation* of an experiential world.

Video: Intro to radical constructivism



Structural determinism and Radical constructivism assumes that knowledge—knowing is generated via one's interactions in experiential worlds we co-construct according to our stories while living while immersed languaging.

Languaging a circular, recursive dynamic process distinctively human.

Just as the fish is the last to know it lives in water, we humans seem to be the last to know that we live in language, more specifically languaging. It is our *actions in languaging* that give rise to generosity and its opposite, meanness.

Kathleen Forsythe

When languaging, we humans dance together in recurrent interactions that constitute a flow of recursive coordinations of coordinations of actions. Language is taking place in the coordinations of actions not in a brain.

Emotions + Language => Languaging

Video: RC and daily life

One cannot come back too often to the question what is knowledge and to the answer knowledge is what one knows. - Gertrude Stein

3. **peace is a need**



In order to understand the concept "peace is a need" it might be useful to distinguish between needs, wants and desires.

Needs - conditions that must be met so that they can happen again and again.

Wants - conditions I desire even though I know I will survive without them.

Desires - designing with awareness of mine our needs and wants.

Video: When peace is a need.

Peace as a need generates a desire for a new more honest language, one in which conflicts are celebrated and embraced as opportunities for generating something new.

So how do we know when peace is a need?

Video: When we say so