

Power Politics: All That's Left in a World without Truth

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Recent Examples of Power Politics

1. Occupy Wall Street (09/11 – 10/11)
2. Wisconsin State House Standoff (03/11)
3. Philadelphia Flash Robberies (03/11)

How Did We Get Here?

Modernism

- ⊙ the “Big Story” (metanarrative)
 - > NOT to be found through divine revelation
 - > BUT to be discovered through science
 - MAYBE even to be determined by science
- ⊙ a firm belief in human progress
- ⊙ Modernism, discredited by WWI, WWII, and the Cold War gave way to Postmodernism.

Postmodernism

- ⊙ dismisses the “Big Story” (metanarrative) of “human progress”
- ⊙ no metanarratives at all
 - > certainly no religious metanarratives
- ⊙ only culturally-bound narratives
- ⊙ believes all “truth” is culturally bound and cannot be understood by outsiders
- ⊙ questions anybody’s claim to an authoritative, comprehensive worldview

Postmodernism Claims

- ⊙ no absolute truth, only cultural “truths”
- ⊙ no universal meaning
- ⊙ no trans-cultural knowledge
- ⊙ no such thing as objectivity
- ⊙ Everybody is trapped by BIAS.

Is This Bias Real?

- ⊙ If man is not intrinsically valuable by design ... (Pre-modernism)
- ⊙ If man is not even valuable by self-made dignity ... (Modernism)
- ⊙ ... then our identity derives from our group associations. (Postmodernism)

If they're right

- ⊙ ... we become:

- > Racially re-segregated
 - > Sexually disoriented
 - > Politically entrenched
 - > Economically entrapped
 - > Religiously alienated
- ⊙ The rise of pluralism in Western culture reinforces this concept.

Postmodernism Maintains

- ⊙ You cannot know reality. You can only know your perception of reality.
- ⊙ Therefore, nobody is stating facts. They're only stating their biased perception of the facts.

Postmodernism Thus Charges

- ⊙ It is pointless to try to know intended meanings.
- ⊙ All narratives must be deconstructed of religious bias, gender bias, racial bias, political bias, sexual orientation bias, nationalist bias, and generational bias.

So What's Left

1. pragmatism
2. power politics
3. identity politics

Foucault

Every society is made up of the powerful and the oppressed.

- > The powerful decide what is socially, behaviorally, and legally normal.
- > The powerful impose these standards of "normalcy" on the oppressed.

Postmodernism in Action

- ⊙ In our culture issues of identity become issues of "rights".

Power Politics Tactics

- ⊙ Redefinition of terms
- ⊙ Invention of new, negative terms
 - > homophobe, dominionist, theocrat, Christianist
- ⊙ Group identification
 - > oppressors, victims
- ⊙ Vilification of persons or groups
 - > Quayle, Palin
 - > Tea Party
- ⊙ Labeling as "dangerous"
- ⊙ Name calling

- ⊙ False associations
- ⊙ Stereotyping
- ⊙ Over-exaggerating
 - > Claiming Christians want the Christian equivalent of sharia law in America.
- ⊙ Repetition of unsubstantiated claims
 - > Gay gene
 - > “They shouted racial epithets.”
- ⊙ Marginalizing opponents while claiming to be centrists
- ⊙ Defining what is and is not permissible to say
- ⊙ Using social networking to organize rapidly

How Is Power Politics Manifested in Our Classrooms?

- ⊙ The world of postmodernist power politics and identity politics is the world where many of our students and their families live.

Responding Back

- ⊙ “For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;)” **(2 Cor. 2:3-4)**
- ⊙ What we cannot do: lose our testimony through the careless use of crass language

Winning on Substance, Losing on Style

- ⊙ The data may favor our worldview, but ...
- ⊙ we often shoot ourselves in the foot when it comes to
 - > civility
 - > word choice
 - > positive examples

Responding Back

- ⊙ “For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men:” **(1 Pet. 2:15)**
- ⊙ “But speaking the truth in love ...” **(Ephesians 4:15)**
- ⊙ Truth encounters, not power encounters
- ⊙ It’s theology, not theocracy.
- ⊙ It’s politics, not racism.
- ⊙ Focus on ideas, not on persons or parties.
- ⊙ “And the servant of The Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves;” **(2 Tim. 2:24-25)**

Responding Back

- ⊙ NEVER give in to “the spiral of silence.”

The Truth Will Be Vindicated

- ◎ “Fear them not therefore: for there is nothing covered that shall not be revealed ; and hid, that shall not be known .What I tell you in darkness, that speak ye in light: and what ye hear in the ear, that preach ye upon the housetops.”
(**Matthew 10:26-27**)

- ◎ “Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation.” (**1 Pet. 2:12**)

Recommended Reading

Copan, Paul. *True for You, But Not for Me: Overcoming Objections to the Christian Faith*. Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House, 2009.

Groothius, Douglas. *Truth Decay: Defending Christianity against the Challenges of Postmodernism*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2000.

Phillips, Gary, William E. Brown, and John Stonestreet. *Making Sense of Your World: A Biblical Worldview*. Salem, WI: Sheffield Publishing Company, 2008.