

Peter Berger: The Three Imperatives

“To live in the social world is to live an ordered and meaningful life. Society is the guardian of order and meaning not only objectively in its institutional structures, but subjectively as well, in its structuring of individual consciousness.”

- **The Imperative of Social Order**

- Society, in essence, is the imposition of order upon the flux of human experience.
- Social life abhors disorder as nature abhors a vacuum.
- Every social institution, no matter how “non-repressive” or “consensual” is an imposition of order.
- All social order is precarious; because of this precariousness societies will react with almost instinctive violence to any fundamental or long-lasting threat to their order.

[ORDER vs Chaos]

- **The imperative of Continuity**

- Families – parents and children – are equally “hostages to history.”
- There is a need to explain and validate the past and project and protect the future for those we care about.

[MEMBERSHIP vs Isolation]

- **The Imperative of Triviality**

- The human attention span is limited.
- The human ability to tolerate excitement is limited.
- Society protects our sanity by pre-empting a large number of choices – of both thought and of action.
- “Were social life in its entirety to be charged with profound meaning (or unceasing explicit choices) we would all go out of our minds.”

[MEANING vs Emptiness]