Instrumental Reasoning (IR)

- **Definition**: Reason as an instrument or tool for achieving a narrow, specific, pre-defined end.
  - Max. efficiency, max. output
  - Good: Focused, disciplined, results oriented
  - Bad: Not systemic/ecological
    - Miss unintended consequence
    - Miss “side-effects”
    - Not reflective or critical
    - E.g., importing Kudzu

IR is Multi-leveled: Individual & Societal

- Mode of individual thought
  - Work to pay bills, seek food, navigate traffic, adjust thermostat
  - Goals motivate (I/O goal setting theory)
- Embodied intuitionally
  - Technologies: cars, f. fuels, retirement plans
  - Capitalism: invest for profit, own property, beat competition; more=better
  - Corporations: socio-legal constructions for max. profit.
  - Legal system: means of control and authority, created powerful to maintain power.

IR Driven by Modern Transformations

- Scientific & Industrial Revolutions
- Modern assumptions:
  - nature inert, control for profit and progress; nature mechanical vs. enchanted
- New form of reason:
  - control vs. contemplate world;
- Individualism — revere agency, utilitarian individualism

IR antagonistic toward Eco. View

- Seeking gain/progress, not harmony or attunement
- Mechanistic vs. Holistic
- Linear vs. Systemic
- Eg:
  - fossil fuels
  - cars
  - sprawl

Learning Check

Stop! Write answers to following:
1. Define IR – given an example; ± “blinders”
2. How embodied institutionally?
3. How reflecting transf. of modernity?
4. How dangerous for ecologies?
Case Study of IR: Scotts Corporation

Reading:
The United States of Fertilizer, Steinberg (2009)

The Puzzle Pieces
1. Website to max. use
2. Artificial fertilizer facts
3. Eutrophication
4. Gulf of Mexico Dead-zone
5. The Corporate Form
6. Legal Structure
7. Crammed moral landscape
8. Conclusions

Scotts: 1. Website “framing”

Scotts: 2. Fertilizer Facts
• History
  – 1909 Haber process, synth. fertilizer, high temp, high energy
  – WWII bombs
  – Corn uses heavily
• Demise of Clover
• How turf builder different
• Grass engineered to fertilizer

Scotts: 3. Eutrophication
Scotts: 4. The Corporate Form

- Instrumental Vehicle?
  - tool to make profit for shareholders
  - Motivate fert. use > sales > profit
    - (side effects?)
- Board of Directors’ mission
- Criterion for Exec. evaluation
- Limited liability
- Linear control
- Annual report
- Instrumental Reasoning dominates

Scotts: 5. Legal Structure

- Profit as ultimate goal
- Executives required to maximize shareholder value
- No room for ecological criteria

Scotts: 7. Cramped moral landscape

- Barriers to being “good corporate citizens”
- Are corporations people?

Legal Update!

- Sup. Court & Citizen’s United (2010)
  - 5 to 4 vote!
  - Corporations people
  - Need free speech
  - Campaign donations as free speech
  - So….. Can’t restrict corporate campaign giving

![Graph showing total outside spending by election cycle, excluding party committees](http://www.opensecrets.org/lobby/forchart.php?c=21&cid=H16300)
Scotts: 8. Conclusions

- Instrumental reasoning
  - attitude / values / corp. form / legal structure
- What questions get asked?
  - What’s the “bottom line” for fertilizer use?
- What questions don’t?
- Who benefits? loses?
- Alternatives?

Other examples: “Writing” papers efficiently

Other examples of Instrumental Reasoning ....

Saving money by ... “streamlining” universities

- Gov. Scott Walker in 2015 proposed changing Univ. of Wisc. mission:
- FROM
  - “search for truth”
  - “improve the human condition”
- TO....
  - “meet the state’s workforce needs.”

Addressing CC by ... funding deniers

Addressing CC by ... shifting the blame

Getting more space by ... consuming land/gas

Detroit

Where They Work

Where They Live

I will finally get a programmable thermostat.

[Image of a person looking at a thermostat]

Go to Expanded View
Optimizing for cars... not pedestrians

How do I get in there???

Factory farming – Efficient or costly?