

Seven middle axioms for a new political economy

In 1941, in the midst of one of the greatest crises Britain has ever faced, William Temple and William Beveridge worked on the reconstruction of Britain as a welfare society. The collaboration linked practical details of a welfare state and the ethical-religious understandings which energised and shaped it. At the end of Temple's seminal Christianity and Social Order, written in 1941, and developing his contribution to the reconstruction debate, he produced 6 guidelines, essentially middle axioms. They performed a dual function in Christian social ethics, as critiques of the existing social order, and principles for reconstruction.

In 2009, in the midst of the greatest economic crisis Britain and the world have faced since 1929, 7 principles emerge out of the participation of ethics and religion in interdisciplinary conversations over economic, social and personal wellbeing:

1. The nurturing of children in the material – immaterial experiences of life, including support for strong, loving and secure family life, with a high priority on marriage – including if necessary, high quality child care provision, adequate income, and addressing the work-life balance of parents. Particular priority should be given to the first 3 years of a child's life.
2. The commitment to education as life long learning in the knowledge of the world ethics and religion, as of value in itself, linked to strong, rich cultural contexts, with skill acquisition only part of such processes.
3. Developing health as personal and communal wholeness, including as holistic life styles, traditional and complementary medicines, and including affirming the spiritual dimensions of life.
4. Recognising the importance of income and work for wellbeing, including affirming the principles of justice in the formation of prices and wages within and between nations.
5. Fostering care for and delight in the good stewardship of the created order, especially as environment, and paying unequivocal regard to its sustainability.
6. Promoting an ethical finance, including by subordinating financial systems to the personal and common good of all, and by encouraging modest lifestyles including thrift and addressing excessive debt - all to be located in and sustained by a movement from material to immaterial concerns in the development of wellbeing.
7. Promoting more egalitarian societies and way of living, including the distribution of income, wealth and culture.