

The Spirit of the Age

POSTMODERNISM

Video

Introduction

- ⦿ During the last three decades, an era has emerged that many are calling postmodernism
- ⦿ Postmodernism is reflected in all aspects of culture and society:
 - Arts
 - Architecture
 - Politics
 - Sociology
 - Literature
 - Media

Origin

- Postmodernism got started in the field of architecture.
- Fed up with the modern style of building design, architects rebelled against these styles and created a new art form.
- Today, it refers to the time period from the 1980s onward.
- It became embedded in every facet of life.

Definition

- It is almost impossible to come up with one definition of postmodernism.
- Postmodernism isn't a philosophy. It isn't a philosophical system which seeks to answer the big questions of life.
- Postmodernism **is a mindset** of the Western culture in the latter half of the twentieth century

Definition

- It is an “Attitude”.
- Postmodernism refers to the **intellectual mood and cultural expressions** that are becoming increasingly dominant in our society.

OUCH!.. YOU'RE
STANDING ON
MY NECK!

WELL, THAT'S ONE POINT
OF VIEW... BUT ONE
COULD ALSO SAY THAT
YOU'RE TRYING TO
TRIP ME WITH
YOUR NECK...

YOU SEE, IN THE POSTMODERN
CONDITION WE CREATE OUR OWN
REALITY BASED UPON OUR
INTERNALIZED PRECONCEPTIONS.
SINCE THERE IS NO LONGER
ONE OBJECTIVE TRUTH, WE ARE
FREE TO CREATE OUR OWN
TRUTH... SO YOU SEE, THERE
IS NO RIGHT AND WRONG
JUST AN INFINITE
NUMBER OF EQUALLY
VALID "STORIES"

BUT YOU'RE
STILL STANDING
ON MY NECK!

YOU NEVER
WENT TO COLLEGE
DID YOU?

Historical Background

1st Century

17th Century

19th Century

19th-20th Century

20th Century

Late 21st Century

Pre-modern

THEISM

Theism → Deism → Naturalism → Nihilism → Humanism → Fill in the blank

GOD

GOD



WORLD

WORLD

(Ps. 19:1) The heavens are telling the glory of God; and the firmament proclaims his handiwork.

Modern

ATHEISM

~~GOD~~

WORLD

(Psalm 53:1) The fool says in his heart, "There is no God."

Karl Marx (1818-1883)
Sigmund Freud (1856-1939)

Postmodern

PLURALISM

New Age,
Pantheism
Moral Relativism
Postmodernism
We are gods

(Judges 17:6) In those days there was no king in Israel; every man did what was right in his own eyes.

Friedrich Nietzsche
(1844-1900)

The Bankruptcy of Modernism

- ⦿ Modernism is characterized as a movement that "**delights in the natural**" as opposed to the supernatural
- ⦿ It is a movement that stresses the power of our "**minds**" to attain truth

The Bankruptcy of Modernism

- ⦿ A main tenet of modernism is that **human reason armed with the scientific method**, is the only reliable means of attaining knowledge.
- ⦿ It proposed a world created without any assistance from God.

The Rise of Postmodernism

- Postmodernism rejects modernism's view on humanity as an ocean of individuals, postmodernists think of humans as **"social constructs."**
- Our society's values, languages, arts, entertainment define who we are.

The Rise of Postmodernism

- ④ We **do not have fixed identities** which are separable from our surroundings and which remain the same.
- ④ Postmodernism is a result of the failures of modernism.
- ④ The inescapability of seeking the supernatural

Modernism vs. Postmodernism

Modernism	Postmodernism
Reality is knowable	Reality is creatable
Reality is what it is	Reality is what you want it to be
Christianity is rejected for its claims are thought to be untrue	Christianity is rejected for it claims to be true
Words have objective meaning	Words have no objective meaning
We can know everything without God	We cannot know anything
Supremacy of Reason	Supremacy of Feelings

Postmodernism – Historical View

Premodern	Modern	Postmodern
Faith	Reason	Bias (the self)
Efficiency	Solution	Entertainment
Revelation	Scientific Method	Subjectivity (feelings)
Supernatural Explanation	Natural Explanations	No Explanations
Fulfill your duty	Find your dreams	Invent yourself

Postmodernism – an Overview

SOURCE	WRITINGS OF NIETZSCHE, LYOTARD
THEOLOGY	Atheism / Pluralism
BIOLOGY	Chance Evolution
PSYCHOLOGY	Socially constructed self
ETHICS	Ethical Anarchy
SOCIOLOGY	Multiculturalism
ECONOMICS	Socialism
POLITICS	Political Correctness / World Government
CULTURE	Deconstructionism

Characteristics of Postmodernism

- **The Death of Truth**
- **Moral Relativism**
- **The Rejection of Objective Knowledge**
- **The “Deconstruction” of Language**
- **Religious Pluralism**
- **The Authority of “Self”** (Mt. 10:39) compare with Slide #31
- **intellectual marketplace**

The Death of Truth

- *Rejecting objective truth is the cornerstone of postmodernism.*
- Truth is created not discovered rationally.
- Reality itself turns out to be a "**social construct**" or paradigm

The Death of Truth

- Postmodernism cannot separate the belief from the believer.
- Rejecting the content of faith means rejecting the person holding it, because truth now means personal preference.
- It's no more appropriate to question the validity of a person's belief than to critique their choice from the dinner menu. Simply believing is justification enough.

Moral relativism

- The worldview of postmodernism provides the foundation for moral relativism.
- Moral relativism is the belief that morality is relative to the person.
- Moral relativism can be summed up with the phrase: “It all depends.”
- Is murder always wrong? Relativists would say, “It depends on the circumstances.”
- Is adultery wrong? They would say, “It just depends on whether you are caught.”

Postmodern Accounting 101

$$2 + 2 = 5$$

(Because that's what I need it to equal!)

The Rejection of Objective Knowledge

- Knowledge is seen as uncertain, subjective, relative.
- Postmodernism rejects the idea that our knowledge is an accurate representation on how things are of reality

The Deconstruction of Language

- Words and language are human conventions. They cannot convey Truth
- But if language is what we use to convey ideas about reality, then we can't know objective reality.
- What we do with words is not to reflect reality, but rather to create it.

Video

The Deconstruction of Language

- Words then, can only refer to other words and not to any "objective reality"
- For Postmodernists, It's all about interpretation, not about what's real or true.
- Every interpreter is free to handle the text selectively, that is, to deconstruct it, and to refashion it to reflect one's own preferences

The Deconstruction of Language

- Consider the following quotes from the first postmodern American president:
- “I did not have sexual relations with that woman.” (‘Sexual relations’ is redefined to mean something that does not hurt me politically.)

Religious Pluralism

- The basic premise of religious pluralism is that no religion can assert any legitimate claim to superiority over any other religion.
- Pluralism advocates that God has revealed Himself in "saving ways" in other religions.

The Authority of Self

- ⦿ The self is the source of truth and reality.
- ⦿ We live in “an age that believes that freedom will make you true.”
- ⦿ “Political correctness”.
- ⦿ All selves have an equal voice and, more importantly, all are considered equally valid.

The Intellectual Marketplace

- Satellite TV, computers, email, etc. have over loaded our minds with information.
- This free diffusion of knowledge begs the question:
- which information is authoritative, reliable, and valuable?
- Postmodernism's answer is: All of it!, no one is left to police the intellectual marketplace.

Postmodernism in Education

- ◎ Universities have become **Pluraversities**
- ◎ There is no search for unity in diversity.
 - The Holy Trinity (example)
- ◎ Values clarification: let the children make up their own values

Postmodernism in Politics

- Poll rather than principle driven
- Clinton – It depends on what 'is' means
- Judicial Activism– personal opinion overcomes what the text says or any absolute morality

Postmodernism in Business

- Diversity Training
- Flattened hierarchies
- Many successful companies today have seen the advantages of appealing to the community - concept and are thriving because of it. (Starbucks, Barnes & Noble's)

Postmodernism in Church

- Emphasis on **pop psychology** and your personal happiness.
- Worship is image not Truth driven.
- The Ecumenical Movement – since there is no objective truth, differences are minimized in the interest of unity
- Pluralism

Problems with Postmodernism

- **World of Chaos**
- **Loss of Meaning**
- **Loss of Identity** (Mt 10:39)

World of Chaos

- Postmodern leads to the dangerous inference that **no one can ever be wrong** about what they believe.
- If we are free from the constraints of rationality, nothing separates truth from self-delusion.
- The rejection of truth leads to the rejection of standards which leads to the rejection of perspectives by which we evaluate ideas which in turn leads to a world of chaos.

Loss of Meaning

- Postmodern anti-dogmatism ends up being anti-intellectual.
- If we can't reject a theory because it is objectively false, then **the pursuit of truth becomes meaningless.**

Loss of Identity

- We, Christians, have our identity in God who created us in His image.
- According to postmodernism, you have **no unique identity** that is identifiable from birth to death;
- There's no real "you" which remains constant throughout all of life's changes

Loss of Identity

- Human personhood is the product of socialization
- There is no universal human essence.
- It is not we who think, speak, and act but the culture which thinks, speaks, and acts through us.

Conclusion

- We cannot embrace postmodernism, yet we must not retreat to the hills either.
- We must echo St Paul when he said to his disciple Timothy:
- **“Hold fast the pattern of sound words which you have heard from me, in faith and love which are in Christ Jesus” (2 Tim 1:13)**

Conclusion

- With sound Orthodox biblical teaching, we can refute the tenets of this era.
- Unless we are rooted in the Scriptures with sound Orthodox teaching we will have nothing to say to postmodernism.
- Postmodernism tells us to abandon the quest for truth, yet we must humbly affirm that truth is nonetheless available. It is found in the Person of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

Philippians 2:15

We must become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world

Suggested Readings

