

the premodern

original meaning is possessed by authority, e.g., The Church; the individual is dominated by Tradition

the modern

associated with the European Enlightenment; characterized by the rejection of tradition and authority in favor of reason and natural science; founded upon the assumption of the autonomous individual as the sole source of meaning and truth (the Cartesian cogito); valorizes progress and novelty w/in a linear conception of history

<http://jefferson.village.virginia.edu/elab/hfl0242.html>

modernity

1. There is a stable, coherent, knowable self. This self is conscious, rational, autonomous, and universal--no physical conditions or differences substantially affect how this self operates.
2. This self knows itself and the world through reason, or rationality, posited as the highest form of mental functioning, and the only objective form.
3. The mode of knowing produced by the objective rational self is "science," which can provide universal truths about the world, regardless of the individual status of the knower.
4. The knowledge produced by science is "truth," and is eternal.
5. The knowledge/truth produced by science (by the rational objective knowing self) will always lead toward progress and perfection. All human institutions and practices can be analyzed by science (reason/objectivity) and improved.
6. Reason is the ultimate judge of what is true, and therefore of what is right, and what is good (what is legal and what is ethical). Freedom consists of obedience to the laws that conform to the knowledge discovered by reason.
7. In a world governed by reason, the true will always be the same as the good and the right (and the beautiful); there can be no conflict between what is true and what is right (etc.).
8. Science thus stands as the paradigm for any and all socially useful forms of knowledge. Science is neutral and objective; scientists, those who produce scientific knowledge through their unbiased rational capacities, must be free to follow the laws of reason, and not be motivated by other concerns (such as money or power).
9. Language, or the mode of expression used in producing and disseminating knowledge, must be rational also. To be rational, language must be transparent; it must function only to represent the real/perceivable world which the rational mind observes. There must be a firm and objective connection between the objects of perception and the words used to name them (between signifier and signified).

Modernity is fundamentally about **order**: about **rationality and rationalization**, creating order out of chaos. The assumption is that creating more rationality is conducive to creating more order, and that the more ordered a society is, the better it will function (the more rationally it will function). Because modernity is about the pursuit of ever-increasing levels of order, modern societies constantly are on guard against anything and everything labeled as "disorder," which might disrupt order. Thus modern societies rely on continually establishing a binary opposition between "order" and "disorder," so that they can assert the superiority of "order." But to do this, they have to have things that represent "disorder"--modern societies thus continually have to create/construct "disorder." In western culture, **this disorder becomes "the other"**--defined in relation to other binary oppositions. Thus anything non-white, non-male, non-heterosexual, non-hygienic, non-rational, (etc.) becomes part of "disorder," and has to be eliminated from the ordered, rational modern society.

<http://www.colorado.edu/English/ENGL2012Klages/pomo.html>

structuralism

An approach to the study of culture and society that seeks to uncover **underlying patterns and structures and the basic elements from which such patterns are constructed**. The leading figure of this school was the French social anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss, whose work on kinship, art, myth, ritual, and religion has been concerned also with the elucidation of universal laws of human thought through the analysis of its underlying structure. This approach was stimulated by the structural school in linguistics, as originated by Saussure, which maintains that linguistic signs are in themselves completely arbitrary and achieve meaning only through their structural relationships with other signs in the same system. In the 1960s a structuralist approach to literary criticism and popular culture was pioneered by French critics, such as Roland Barthes, and became widely influential in the humanities and social sciences (see also semiotics). During the 1970s structuralism evolved into so-called poststructuralism in the work of Derrida and others.

The Macmillan Encyclopedia 2001, © Market House Books Ltd 2000 (www.xrefer.com)

- semiotics

poststructuralism

School of thought which emerged in the late 1970s, claiming to supersede - or at any rate to 'problematize' - the earlier structuralism. Best understood as a French-inspired variant of the so-called 'linguistic turn', it is the **idea that all perceptions, concepts, and truth-claims are constructed in language**, along with the corresponding 'subject-positions' which are likewise (so it is argued) nothing more than transient epiphenomena of this or that cultural discourse. From Saussure post-structuralism takes the notion of **language as a system of immanent relationships and differences 'without positive terms'**; from Nietzsche, its outlook of **extreme epistemological and ethico-evaluative relativism**; and from Foucault, its **counter-Enlightenment rhetoric of 'power/knowledge' as the motivating force behind talk of reason or truth**. Such thinking is vulnerable to all the familiar criticisms - including forms of transcendental refutation - rehearsed against thoroughgoing skeptics and relativists down through the ages.

Bibliography J. Sturrock (ed.), *Structuralism and Since* (Oxford, 1979).

The Oxford Companion to Philosophy, © Oxford University Press 1995 (www.xrefer.com)

Originally labelled a structuralist, the French philosopher and historian Michel Foucault came to be seen as the most important representative of the post-structuralist movement. He agreed that language and society were shaped by rule-governed systems, but he disagreed with the structuralists on two counts. Firstly (sic), he did **not think that there were definite underlying structures that could explain the human condition** and secondly (sic) he thought that it was **impossible to step outside of discourse** and survey the situation objectively.

Jacques Derrida (1930-) developed **deconstruction** as a technique for uncovering the **multiple interpretation of texts**. Influenced by Heidegger and Nietzsche, Derrida suggests that **all text has ambiguity** and because of this...**a final and complete interpretation is impossible**.

<http://www.philosopher.org.uk/poststr.htm>

deconstruction

A method of critical analysis of philosophical and literary language, concerned with unravelling the meanings of texts. In *On Grammatology* (1967) the French philosopher Jacques [Derrida](#) claimed that exposing a text's underlying, but unformulated, ideas revealed meanings which contradicted the apparent meaning or the author's intentions. There was, he argued, **no one meaning of a text, but rather a series of often contradictory meanings all elusive and none definitive**. Derrida's writings are abstruse, and fierce dispute has erupted over his theory, which some regard as a fearless questioning of the possibility of meaning and others as an adventure playground for intellectual élitism.

Oxford Paperback Encyclopedia, © Oxford University Press 1998 (www.xrefer.com)

To deconstruct a text is to draw out conflicting logics of sense and implication, with the object of showing that the text never exactly means what it says what it means (Norris and Benjamin, *What is Deconstruction?*). It is “that which attacks the systemic (architectonic) constructionist account of what is brought together, of assembly”

Neil Corkeran, “Post)modernism” [http://www.msu.edu/user/corcora5/essays/post\)modernism.html](http://www.msu.edu/user/corcora5/essays/post)modernism.html)

Jacques Derrida: Deconstruction

For Derrida, language or 'texts' are not a natural reflection of the world. **Text structures our interpretation of the world**. Following Heidegger, Derrida thinks that language shapes us: texts create a clearing that we understand as reality. Derrida sees the history of western thought as based on opposition: good vs. evil mind vs. matter, man vs. woman, speech vs. writing. These **oppositions are defined hierarchically**: the second term is seen as a corruption of the first, the terms are not equal opposites.

Derrida thought that all text contained a legacy of these assumptions, and as a result of this, these texts could be re-interpreted with an awareness of the hierarchies implicit in language. Derrida does not think that we can reach an end point of interpretation, a truth. For Derrida **all texts exhibit 'différance': they allow multiple interpretations. Meaning is diffuse, not settled**. Textuality always gives us a surplus of possibilities, yet we cannot stand outside of textuality in an attempt to find objectivity.

One consequence of deconstruction is that **certainty in textual analyses becomes impossible**. There may be competing interpretations, but **there is no uninterpreted way one could assess the validity of these competing interpretations**. Rather than basing our philosophical understanding on undeniable truths, the deconstructionist turns the settled bedrock of rationalism into the shifting sands of a multiplicity of interpretations.

<http://www.philosopher.org.uk/poststr.htm>

post-modernism

Originating from an **architectural** reaction to the modernist (very possibly anti-humanist) International Style and Bauhausian traditions, and combining “with the attempt to break the automatic link between architecture and habitation” postmodernist expression has encouraged various attempts to recognize one's social and historical context and simultaneously break with that same force of tradition (Norris and Benjamin). “The past was consulted (and plundered) for the sake of the reinfusion of ‘non-monotonous beauty and variation in the space of the everyday’” (Jencks, Charles, “The Post-Modern Agenda”).

Neil Corkeran, “Post)modernism” [http://www.msu.edu/user/corcora5/essays/post\)modernism.html](http://www.msu.edu/user/corcora5/essays/post)modernism.html)

“Post-Modernism is fundamentally the eclectic mixture of any tradition with that of the immediate past: it is **both the continuation of Modernism and its transcendence**. Its best works are characteristically **doubly-**

coded and ironic, making a feature of the wide choice, conflict and discontinuity of traditions, because this heterogeneity most clearly captures our pluralism”—Charles Jencks, “What is Postmodernism?”

If ‘post’modernism is by necessity “that which comes after Modernism” or “the overcoming of modernist stereotypes” (Lyotard, Jean-Francois, *La Condition Postmoderne*), we must examine the stated agenda and resultant product of the “parent paradigm” to understand how postmodernism is (re)defining itself. Modernism can be described as reductivist, determinist, and mechanistic and following from the Enlightenment goals of humanism, liberal democracy, and scientific rationalism. But these goals, “devised” to bring individual liberty are seen as having failed us:

The results of modernism have been bureaucracy, oppression and misery, as the Enlightenment narrative of liberation and equality has ground into its opposite (Selden and Widdowson, *A Reader’s Guide to Contemporary Literary Theory*).

[Humanism] has been both a disguise for an a manifestation of social privilege; it has been almost exclusively male-centered.... [H]umanism [is] used to justify western superiority and cultural imperialism” (Rosenau, Pauline Marie, *Post-Modernism and the Social Sciences*).

We see in the condition of “late-modernism” elements supposed to have brought positive changes but that have actually resulted in vast negative human effects: industrialism, urban sprawl, over-population, vast differences of wealth between social classes, increased war technologies, ubiquitous advertising, transnational corporate power, the Third World, and ideological control leading to the manufacture of consent.

Neil Corkeran, “Post)modernism” [http://www.msu.edu/user/corcora5/essays/post\)modernism.html](http://www.msu.edu/user/corcora5/essays/post)modernism.html)

Postmodernism: In its broad usage, this is a ‘family resemblance’ term deployed in a variety of contexts (architecture, painting, music, poetry, fiction, etc.) for things which seem to be related - if at all - by a laid-back **pluralism of styles and a vague desire to have done with the pretensions of high-modernist culture**. In philosophical terms post-modernism shares something with the **critique of Enlightenment values and truth-claims mounted by thinkers of a liberal-communitarian persuasion**; also with neo-pragmatists like Richard Rorty who **welcome the end of philosophy’s presumptive role as a privileged, truth-telling discourse**. There is another point of contact with post-modern fiction and art in the current preoccupation, among some philosophers, with **themes of ‘self-reflexivity’**, or the puzzles induced by allowing language to become the object of its own scrutiny in a kind of dizzying rhetorical regress. To this extent post-modernism might be seen as a ludic development of the so-called ‘linguistic turn’ that has characterized much philosophical thinking of late.

Bibliography Thomas Docherty (ed.), *Postmodernism: A Reader* (Hemel Hempstead, 1993).

The Oxford Companion to Philosophy, © Oxford University Press 1995 (www.xrefer.com)

a late 20th-century style and concept in the arts, architecture, and criticism, which represents a departure from modernism and has at its heart a **general distrust of grand theories and ideologies as well as a problematical relationship with any notion of ‘art’**. Typical features include a **deliberate mixing of different artistic styles and media, the self-conscious use of earlier styles and conventions, and often the incorporation of images relating to the consumerism and mass communication of late 20th-century post-industrial society**. Post-modernist architecture was pioneered by Robert Venturi; the AT&T skyscraper in New York (completed in 1984) is a prime example of the style. Influential literary critics include Jean Baudrillard (1929) and , Jean-François Lyotard (1924).

The Oxford English Reference Dictionary, © Oxford University Press 1996

... **gone are the underlying certainties** that reason promised. **Reason itself is now seen as a particular historical form**, as parochial in its own way as the ancient explanations of the universe in terms of Gods.

The postmodern subject has **no rational way to evaluate a preference in relation to judgments of truth, morality, aesthetic experience or objectivity**. As the old hierarchies of thought are torn down, a new clearing is formed on the frontiers of understanding: quite what hybrids of thought will metamorphose, interbreed and grow in this clearing is for the future to decide.

<http://www.philosopher.org.uk/poststr.htm>

Michel Foucault: Genealogy of Knowledge

Foucault attempted to analyse the 'discursive practices' or serious speech acts that lay claim to revealing knowledge. Rather than analyse these discursive practices in terms of their truth, he analyses them in terms of their history or genesis. He claimed that he was attempting to do an 'archaeology' of knowledge, to show **the history of truth claims**.

In his latter work, he borrowed from Nietzsche the 'genealogical' approach and from Marx his analyses of ideology. Foucault sought to show how **the development of knowledge was intertwined with the mechanisms of (political) power**. Unlike Marx, Foucault had no underlying belief in a deep underlying truth or structure: there was **no objective viewpoint from which one could analyse discourse or society**.

Foucault focused on the way that knowledge and the increase of the power of the state over the individual has developed in the modern era. In his 'History of Sexuality' he argued that the rise of medical and psychiatric science has created a discourse of sexuality as deep, instinctual and mysterious. This discourse became accepted as the dominant explanation, and its assumptions began to seep into the discourse of the everyday. In this way the human subjects' experience of their own sexuality is shaped and controlled by the discourses that purport to explain it. The search for knowledge does not simply uncover pre-existing 'objects'; it actively shapes and creates them.

<http://www.philosopher.org.uk/poststr.htm>

	MODERNITY	POSTMODERNITY
TIME LINE	Renaissance/Enlightenment (~1750s) → 1890-1945	Post WWII
GENERAL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attempt to fashion a unified, coherent world-view from the fragmentation that defines existence • High Modernism 1920s & 30s, following WWI: outmoded political orders and old ways of portraying the world no longer seemed appropriate or applicable; reaction against existing order; avant garde • Alienation; objective, essential knowable truth and beauty, totality and unity can still be found; meaning can be known, understood, and mastered through rational and scientific means • Classification of the world; order; hierarchy • Mastery and progress in historical development; past affects present and future • Universalizing • Linear • Works of art, science are windows to the truth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attempt to subvert the distinction between “high” and “low” culture • Eclecticism, a tendency toward parody and self-reference, and a relativism that knows no ultimate truth; no distinctions between “good” and “bad” • Texts: world is a multiplicity of texts and discourses • Relativism • Ahistorical: future is indeterminate; past is a “text”; we can’t learn from the past; we can live only in the present • “Localizing,” pluralizing • Non-linear • Works of art, science are only texts, can only be understood in themselves

CULTURE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High culture vs. low culture: strictly divided; only high culture deserves to be studied, analyzed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “Popular” culture deserves to be studied; pluralizing Commodification of culture; everything can be bought or sold
SYMBOLISM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Symbols have meaning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Symbols drained of meaning, often appropriated by advertising
ARCHITECTURE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “Form follows function”; Le Corbusier: “machine aesthetic”; Mies van der Rohe; International Style (straight, clean lines) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Multiple historical references; “playful” mix of styles, past and present (e.g., Las Vegas, Pompidou Center, Venturi)
ECONOMICS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fordism: mass production; global (International) style 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Post-Fordism: “global localism,” multiple styles
SCIENCE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bacon, observation, scientific rationalism; Newtonian physics, “clockwork universe”; David Hilbert 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Einstein, quantum physics, Heisenberg uncertainty principle; chaos; Kuhn, Rorty; science as a “game,” as “made” rather than “found”
POLITICS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Big ideas; big, centralized political parties rule Door-to-door politics; big rallies Capitalism vs. communism: clash of ideologies “The Making of the President” Parody: Dr. Strangelove, Orwell’s Animal Farm 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fragmented ideas, decentralized power; “micro-politics”: interest groups rule (minority factions, business groups, etc.); Foucault, “everyone has a little power” TV politics: clash of images “Late capitalism” rules “The Selling of the President” Pastiche: Wag the Dog
ARTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Artist is creator rather than preserver of culture Impressionism, Cubism, abstract expressionism, suprematism “Photograph never lies”: photos and video are windows/mirrors of reality Art fights capitalism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Artist plays with different styles; aesthetics; pastiche all-important Pop Art, Dada, montage Photoshop: reality of image?; montage Art is consumed by capitalism
FICTION/LITERATURE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Novel is the dominant form; Author determines meaning; the “canon”: Shakespeare, Kafka, Joyce Critics can tell “good” from “bad” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> TV, WWW; meaning is indeterminate; Thomas Pynchon, Don DeLillo; rise in importance of popular culture Can’t tell good from bad; it’s all relative
THEATER/MOVIES/TV	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> John Ford, Modern Times, Bertolt Brecht, Metropolis 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> RepoMan, Pulp Fiction, Blade Runner, X-Files, David Lynch
MUSIC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mozart, Beethoven, Schoenberg Idea of creating an artistic “piece” continued through to rock’n’roll era 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “World music”; pick-and-mix of styles Sampling John Cage, David Byrne
	<p><i>“disenchantment with material truth and search for abstract truth”</i></p>	<p><i>“There is no universal truth, abstract or otherwise.”</i></p>

K.I.S.S. of the Panopticon: New Media Literacy Project, <http://carmen.artsci.washington.edu/panop/modpomo.htm>

postmodern media

Postmodern media products are characterised by stuff like **recontextualisation, bricolage, pastiche, irony, reflexivity, recycling, kitsch, time machines, museums, curating, random access, exhaustion...**

<http://www.demon.co.uk/momus/thought270199.html>

“the ‘flat’ multiplication and collage of styles, as opposed to the ‘deep’ expressive aesthetics of unique style characteristic of modernism”—Jameson

Thompson, Kenneth, “Social Pluralism and Post-Modernity”

“If we are entering a post-modern age, then one of its most distinctive characteristics is a loss of rational and social coherence in favor of cultural images and social forms and identities marked by **fragmentation, multiplicity, plurality, and indeterminacy.**”

Kenneth Thompson, “Social Pluralism and Post-Modernity”

“Although it is possible to list the tell-tale stylistic features of postmodern design—the move **away from abstraction and geometrics to the overly familiar and mass-produced; the replacement of purity with eclecticism, internationalism with cultural specificity, and invention with rearticulation**—the cultural significance of these changes and their ideological ramifications remains a matter of intense debate”—Jim Collins, “Television and Postmodernism”

Other Important Concepts:

- Eclecticism
- Bricolage: “appropriating and recombining according to personal need” (Jim Collins)
- Subjectivity; identity conceived as “an intersection of conflicting subject positions” (Jim Collins)
- Intertextuality
- Fragmentation of meaning
- Depthlessness
- Time-Space Compression (David Harvey)
- Hyperconsciousness: “a hyperawareness on the part of the text itself of its cultural status, function, and history, as well as of the conditions of its circulation and reception” (Jim Collins)
- Simulations, Seduction, Simulacra, and Hyperreality (Jean Baudrillard)
- “Irony, Metalinguistic play, enunciation squared” (Umberto Eco)
- Schizophrenia (Frederic Jameson)