

# EXPLORING THE CHARACTERISTICS OF MODERNISM AND POST-MODERNISM: A REVIEW PAPER

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## ABSTRACT

This review paper aims to explore modernism and post-modernism. Indeed, these terms can be taken into account based on the framework of post-renaissance intellectual thoughts. Thus, it can be stated that modernism and postmodernism can be discussed among the post-renaissance views. These are the schools of thoughts formed and developed based on the rejection of supernaturalism and focusing on human-oriented and instrumental rationality. However, for a more proper explanation, it is necessary to provide some description on these two terms and the related thoughts. Modernism is the symbol of a period, where the realms of religious and materialistic life are separated so that modernism can be regarded as opposition to traditions. Modernism is a cultural, political, economic, social and philosophical combination began since the fifteenth century. Postmodernism has conceptual ambiguity due to the critical space created in it. The long and significant attempts of modernism were misled due to some meaningless illusion. Consequently, postmodernism merged to create a wave and change the current condition. As a widespread intellectual movement, postmodernism emerged in Europe and United States during 1960s and developed in 1970s and 1980s so that it affected many intellectual, and even artistic and scientific areas. The most important point in this regard is that no modern framework can be structurally considered for postmodernism apart from modernism.

**Keywords:** Postmodernism, Modernism, Synthesis, Difference.

## INTRODUCTION

### Modernism

The word "modern" is derived from the Latin word "Modo" meaning "Today" and is different from earlier times. The word modern has been used at various times and places to distinguish contemporary methods from traditional one; and has tremendous use in every step of life. Modernization is known as modernism, means an intellectual and behavioral tendency toward latest and advanced cultural phenomena and the neglecting some of the archaic tradition and the process of spreading rationalism in society and its realization in the context of modernism. In addition, modernism describes a range of cultural movements rooted in the changes in Western society in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The term refers to a collection of artistic, architectural, musical, literary, and applied arts movements that took

place during this period. Modernity is a stream of thought meaning the use of human knowledge, technology, and empirical ability to produce, improve, and change the environment.

The emergence of modernism in the West can be considered a reaction against the tradition and religion of Christianity. Those who believe in this distinction often refer to the processes of urbanization, industrialization, democratization and the emergence of an empirical analytical approach to knowledge (Peter, 2015). The confrontation between the traditionalism and the modernism begins after the Middle Ages or after the Renaissance; there is much debate as to when modernism began, and these debates have been suggested through different periods of times. Many scholars consider the beginning of modernism in Europe in the sixteenth century AD (Hosseini, 1391, p. 4).

However, all scholars believe that modernism is the concept of Enlightenment that reached perfection in the eighteenth century. The modernist movement emerged in the 19th century (1848) and the 1880s. Modernism spread throughout the continent of Europe and flourished at different times and in different countries. The culmination of modernism, as approved by the vast majority of writers and theorists, is the years (1910) to (1930). This movement took place in Russia in the years before the Russian Revolution, in Germany in the 1890s, and again in the years before World War I, in England in the pre-war years almost (1908), in the United States after (1912), and In France, it was dispersed and weakly presented and went downhill after (1939).

Does modernism guide? Our answer (based on the views of some sociologists and philosophers) to this question will be yes. They use this concept to refer to the social patterns that characterize post-industrial societies. On the other hand, for some, this concept and values are not very urgent and they do not agree with the supporters of this school; This concept has been used for a long time in philosophy, art and literature, cinema, etc. (Ali Babaei, 1390, p. 608). From the mid-1960s, it also found its way into the realm of sociology. Although traces of postmodernism can be found in the writings of the likes of Nietzsche, Heidegger, and Freud, the serious controversy between these two schools, both of which are contemporary children of the West. It began with the presentation of Habermas in 1981; In this presentation, Habermas's speeches and speeches by postmodernists (especially Lyotard) were criticized. Habermas is one of the theorists and thinkers of modernism. (Azdanloo, 2005. p: 162).

### **Principles and Components of Modernism**

Modernism has principles and foundations that can be summarized as follows:

**Empiricism:** It means paying special attention to the method of experience for studying and researching in the natural and human sciences, without paying attention to philosophical and argumentative matters.

**Humanism:** It means believing in the centrality of man in all areas.

**Rationalism:** In the sense that the intellect, independent of divine revelation and teachings, has the power to manage human life and man is able to understand and solve all problems using his intellect.

**Liberalism:** means freedom outside the framework of religion.

**Welfare and urban life:** means raising the level of material life and welfare and spreading urban culture.

**Technology growth:** Attention to the unprecedented growth of technology in industrial production and the emergence of new approach in industrial production.

**Democracy:** means believing that all human beings, regardless of race, gender, religion or belief, are equal in every way.

**Capitalism:** Attention to the capitalist system and the free market economy.

**Individualism:** means the originality of the individual and the belief in the primacy of the individual in society.

**Secularism:** means the rule of the scientific and non-religious individual, and consequently the isolation of religious authority from the social spheres, and in general the spread of a material and global culture.

In short, "modernism refers to an ideological set that declares its purpose to break and transform pre-modern forms ... into modern forms" (Fekouhi and Nasser, 2016, p. 306). The concept of modernism became a broad school and soon revealed a tendency to innovate in all aspects of life and the values of society: innovation in ideas, arts, beliefs, and in every area of life such as politics, economics and is evident in the literature of modernist innovation. More clearly, modernism is a symbol of an era in which the realm of religious and secular behavior were alienated from each other, which can be called dreaming and confrontation with traditions. Many believe that modernity is a cultural, political, economic, social, philosophical complex that has lasted from about the fifteenth century to several decades ago (Goldstone, 2016, p. 88).

### **Post-Modernism**

The term postmodernism was first used in 1939 by Arnold Twain B. The term was later coined by artists and critics in New York in the 1960s, followed by European theorists who used the term in the 1970s. Jean-François Lyotard, a European theorist, criticized the legalized and generalized myths of the modern age, such as the idea of the great narrative, in his famous work *The Post-Modern Condition*. He also criticized science and philosophy for failing to guarantee human freedoms. Danst also believed that such a science and philosophy was incapable of creating a unity of practice in learning and presenting valid, general and universal scientific principles. The points that Lyotard pointed out are some of the components and features of postmodernism. In essence, postmodern theory embraces the critique of holistic science and the rejection of universal fundamentalism. In recent decades, the term postmodern, in its broadest sense, refers to the end of the peak of modernism and the decline of this era after the rise of modernism in the twentieth century. The term also refers to the contemporary intellectual movement. However, in contemporary Western culture, the term evokes a kind of conceptual skepticism and confusion in most philosophical writings and interpretations, and on the other hand, simplistic ideas. Thus, trying to provide a clear definition of the above term may seem ineffective and fruitless (Malpas, 1389, p. 8).

Postmodernism is not only a threat to liberal democracy, but also to modernity. This claim may be a bit bold or even exaggerated, but the fact is that a set of ideas and values underlying

postmodernism has transcended the boundaries of academia and gained great cultural power in Western society. The irrational and identity-oriented "signs" of postmodernism are easily recognizable and widely criticized, their underlying ideas and perspectives are not well understood. One reason is that postmodernists seldom articulate their ideas clearly, and their way of thinking has internal contradictions and discontinuities that deny reliable reality and knowledge. Postmodernists, however, have consistently put forward a range of ideas that require understanding and critique. It should not be forgotten that the lack of a critical look at fundamental postmodern ideas reflects the problems we see today in the struggle of social justice activists, undermining the credibility of the left and threatening to return to a "pre-modern" tribal culture. (Khaled Khosrow, 2004). In this case, postmodernism should be considered a rejection of a philosophy that values morality, rationality and clarity of thought.

[Postmodernists] structuralism, a movement that (with extreme confidence) seeks to analyze coherent structural relations based on the analysis of human psychology and culture, and Marxism, which divides society through class and economic structures. He understands that they have considered it other and simplistic. Above all, postmodernists have attacked natural science and the acquisition of objective knowledge of reality independent of a human imagination as its ultimate goal, calling scientific understanding another form of ideology dominated by the assumptions of the Western bourgeoisie. . At the same time, left-wing postmodernism embraced absurdist and revolutionary behaviors and views that were in line with the prevailing spirit and way of thinking in Western countries after World War II and the fall of European empires. In the process of the development and diversification of postmodernism, its powerful, absurdist and deconstructive initial stage has taken on a secondary (but still fundamental) significance to its revolutionary stage of "identity politics."

Lyotard, Foucault, and Derrida were the three "main founders" of postmodernism whose ideas shared themes and points with other influential postmodernist "theorists" who shared the ideas of these leading theorists in various disciplines of the sciences. As a result, extreme sensitivity to language is formed at the word level, and it is thought that the main issue of individuality and shared humanity is nothing but illusion, and people, according to their social status, which is more based on identity than their individual participation in society, or they are the victims of discourses. Ethics are relative cultural phenomena, and inherent realities; they are as pessimistic about empirical evidence as they are about dominant cultural ideas such as science, reason, and universal liberalism. To them, the values of the Enlightenment are crude, generalizing, and repressive, and therefore breaking them is a moral necessity. Yet there have been various readings of postmodernism; some see postmodernism as a process that transcends mere events into a cultural mechanism, while others see it as a social theory of which Pierre Bourdieu is the most important figure. Scott Lash, author of the famous book "Sociology of Postmodernism" also believes that postmodernism today is definitely a cultural thing that has become a mechanism and model. (Lash, 1994, p: 26) Therefore: lived experiences, narratives and beliefs of the group "In the margins" that are equally "real" are of great importance and should be preferred

to the values of the Enlightenment, thus reversing the repressive, unjust and utterly arbitrary social construction of reality, morality and knowledge (Helen Pluckrose, 2002: 3)

### **Definition of Postmodern**

So far, there has been widespread debate among commentators over the exact definition and definition of postmodernism. Postmodernism is defined in the Encyclopædia Britannica as "a reaction to modern philosophical hypotheses and values in Western history (specifically Europe)." Expresses two types of attitudes toward postmodernism; The first form is related to the definition and expression that recognizes postmodernism based on and derived from modernism, and the second form is related to the definition and expression that considers postmodernism as opposed to modernism and denies it. Lyotard advocates the second theory and Jameson advocates the first theory. (Bashirieh, 1375, p. 61) Another conception of postmodernism suggests a more moderate way of thinking. According to this definition, postmodernism has neither the aspect of destructiveness and rejection nor the aspect of evolution and stabilization. In this case, postmodernism should be considered as a kind of reviver of modernism. Sigmund Freud can be considered as a representative of this definition (Ibid., P. 62). In Bowman's view, postmodernism does not mean that it was born in terms of time in a moment that could be called the moment of extinction and the end of modernism. Moreover, postmodernism is not a factor or in the sense of the impossibility of realizing the view of modernism. It is not that with the wave of postmodernism the current of modernism is declining and it is not possible to realize the views and goals of modernism. Thus, postmodernism will mean that the long and prominent efforts of modernity have been misled by the pressure of illusory illusions. With this situation, modernity shows the disappearance of hopes and the fruitlessness of efforts. In this case, the art of postmodernism is to create a wave and figure out the situation in a different way. (Malpas, 1389, p: 31). Structurally or formally, it is still not possible to consider a new structure distinct from the form of modernism for postmodernism. Thus, the lack of formability of intellectual, scientific, and philosophical developments makes it difficult to determine a particular period of change under the name of postmodernism. Thus, postmodernism is formally the same modernism that continues to exist. For modernism, two characteristics can be considered in two contexts: growth rate, maturity, and the extent of scientific-industrial, intellectual, and cultural developments. It seems that the same characteristics can be considered true with more emphasis on the conditions that are referred to as the conditions of postmodernism. (Lash, 1394, p: 87).

Postmodernism as one of the most important and largest currents in the field of ideology and philosophy on the one hand and on the other hand as another is the situation that occurred on human life at the end of the twentieth century. (Benadaki, 1393, p: 4). It is very unusual; It is the system that is fundamentally constructive. "Although the idea of postmodernism originated in the twentieth century, it is fundamentally rooted in history, and in a short period of time it reached the far horizons of contemporary intellectual life Influence such as philosophy, literature and art, postmodernism is a phenomenon that from the beginning of its formation due to the opening and expansion of the concept of providing an appropriate and accurate definition of it has been a point of contention and controversy among researchers (MokhtabadAmri, 2007, p: 2).

### **Principles and Components of Postmodernism**

There is no consensus on the characteristics of postmodernism. Some of the following features are listed for postmodern:

1. Refutation of the government: Postmodernism does not accept the government as a symbol of national identity.
2. Relativity of ethics: This school emphasizes the relativity of ethics.
3. Opposing the growth of the economy: considers the growth of the economy as the cause of the destruction of the environment and opposes it if it causes the destruction of the environment.
4. Opposition to dominant cultures: Postmodernism does not accept the suspension of subcultures in the dominant culture.
5. Refutation of racism: Postmodernism does not accept the ideas of the modern world about race at all and considers the reason for the disintegration of society in the field of modernity.
6. Opposition to bureaucratic oversight of production: From the point of view of modernists, the detrimental organization of modernism, which has been bureaucratized by the free market, strongly opposes it.
7. Refutation of rationalism and enlightenment: Rationalism provides international security to human beings, on the contrary, has disrupted all security (political security, economic security and ideology) and has lacked this management.
8. Belief in the end of the working-class struggle against capitalism: Modernism is concerned only with the welfare of capitalism, and the working class has taken the form of metaphorical forms.
9. Belief in the diversity of destiny: Instead of similarity in human nature and destiny, it relies on difference and diversity.
10. Opposition to Enlightenment ideas: such as constructivism, rationalism, great narratives of history and great images of social life.
11. The variability of political goals.
12. Opposition to any epistemological paradigm.
13. Deliberate combination of previous styles, conventions and traditions.
14. Defending dispersion and lack of cohesion.
15. Lack of decisive interpretation of the world: According to postmodernists, no definitive belief in the world can be given and there is no clear boundary for the interpretation of the world (Epiganzi, 2016, pp. 158-160).

### **A Combination of Modern and Postmodern**

In principle, postmodernists are very different from each other, but most of them agree on the following:

First, modernism has failed in important circumstances. Modernism had heralded a new life, but postmodernists perceived the process as failing to eradicate social poverty and lacking the security of the global economy.

Modern society usually expects their lives to improve in important ways, but postmodernists do not believe in these modernist norms.

Second: Science can no longer meet human needs. One of the main features of the modern era was that the scientific view and belief in technology could have made life more problematic than problem solving. In their view, science has destroyed nature and endangered human beings. For example, postmodern thinkers are skeptical about the expression of science in this case (that there is such a thing as fact or objective truth). For them, reality is not a natural fabrication but a social fabrication.

Third: Cultural debates are now on the growth. Modernism originally promised individual freedoms and the expansion of tolerance for dissenting views, but supporters of postmodernism believe that modernism has failed to do so. (Azdanlu, 2005, p. 588)

### **Major Differences Between Modern and Postmodern**

The prefix (post) in (postmodern) refers to postmodernism as modern modification; in other words, postmodernity is the nature that occurs after modernity. Modernism generally deals with the structures of social organization and knowledge. Therefore, modernism is a broader category that tries to explain all forms of social experience. Any other modernism in its general nature, is interested in progress, whether progress is related to the development of ideas and technology or the production of wealth is a move towards justice for all, given the transformation that takes place in the identity and experiences of individuals and societies with changes in knowledge and technology (Malpas, 1389, p. 20). Modernism argues that it gives these rights to human beings and seeks to finance these values and is considered one of the major components of modernism, divided into three categories:

Human-centered: In modernism, being human-centered means believing in the power of human thought.

Materialism: Modernism believes in the nature and material value of human beings and prefers human values.

Rationalism: Rationalizes rationality based on the philosophy of rationalism. (Azdanloo, 2005, p: 589)

What separates modernism and postmodernism are the principles on which each of modernism and postmodernism are based, but in general these three theses are described between the two schools as opposed to the other:

1- Theory of Cultural Transformation: Modernism believes that cultures are different from each other and each society has its own culture.

1 ≠ 1: But postmodernism opposes this belief and calls itself a process against cultural differentiation.

2- Cultural type theory: Modernism considers cultural type as a product of cultural discourse formation.

2: 2: Postmodernism is a visual and symbolic cultural formation.

3- Social stratification theory: Modernism believes that social classes are declining and emerging. Classes that were in the past are declining and are being replaced by new classes.

3 ≠ 3: But postmodernists reject this idea and believe that society is non-evolutionary (Lash, 2016, p. 41).

## CONCLUSION

This review paper attempted to explore modernism and postmodernism. In short, modernism refers to an ideological set that declares its purpose to break and transform pre-modern forms ... into modern forms. Similarly, modernism is a symbol of an era in which the domains of religious and secular behavior were separated from each other, which can be called dreaming and confrontation with traditions. Many believe that modernity is a set of cultural, political, economic, social, philosophical that has lasted from about the fifteenth century to several decades ago. On the other hand, postmodernism as one of the most important and largest streams in the field of ideology and philosophy on the one hand and on the other hand as a situation that happened to human life at the end of the twentieth century. The postmodernism of the signification system is very unusual; It is the system that is the fundamental characteristic of the builder." Although the idea of postmodernism originated in the twentieth century, it's fundamentally rooted in history, and in a short period of time it reached the far horizons of contemporary intellectual life. Influenced by philosophy, literature, and art, postmodernism is a phenomenon that has been the subject of controversy among scholars since its inception due to the opening and expansion of the concept of providing an appropriate and accurate definition of it. First, modernism has failed in important cases. Modernism had heralded the good news of a new life, but postmodernists seemed to have failed in this process to eradicate social poverty and lacked the security of the global economy. Second, modern society has usually expected this. They know that their lives will improve in many ways, but postmodernists do not believe in these modernist norms. Third: Science can no longer meet human needs. One of the main features of the modern era was that the scientific view and belief in technology could have made life more problematic than problem-solving.

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