

The german people  
an assault by russia  
and



The Significance of Modernity Throughout time, nations have attempted to become independent from one another by discovering means, which would help their citizens experience more fulfilling lives. The dilemma that troubled each of these countries is whether or not innovations, in technology and society, led to a higher quality of life. Modris Eckstein and Marshall Berman examine both, the damages and benefits of modernity.

Eckstein looks at individual changes that lead to the overall acceptance of modernity. He examines Germany, and how the lives of every citizen was altered following the revolutionary changes of the first half of the 20th century. Marshall Berman, on the other hand, assesses modernity as an all-encompassing characteristic of certain societies.

He analyzes whether or not large-scale changes that societies made, improved the well being of their inhabitants. Rites of Spring, by Modris Eckstein, gives an overview of all the modifications Germany experienced, in the first half of the 20th century. Eckstein considers these individual alterations to be an attempt, by German society to modernize itself. General beliefs in German nationalism, and the treatment of homosexuals, are two of the several topics Eckstein uses to describe the aforementioned change in German livelihood.

These two subjects encompass Ecksteins belief of a national German movement towards a unified culture. It is a book about the emergence, in the first half of this century, of our modern conscious? At the turn of the century Germany was a divided nation that did not have a sense of national

pride. In the forthcoming years, the convictions of all German citizens changed and the nation became unified.

Eckstein attributes this massive modernization of German nationalism to the ongoing threat of war. The citizens of Germany relinquished their internal feuds, and centered their attention on the enemy outside of their borders. German focus changed abruptly because their newfound enemy was Russia and Great Britain. To the German people an assault by Russia and England was an attack on all forms of German livelihood. We are defending in this moment all that is German Kultur and German freedom? Therefore, all German citizens came together in support of their brethren and decreed their approval of foreign bloodshed.

Along with a new sense of nationalism, Eckstein believes acceptance of homosexuality is another prime example of why Germany was one of the most modern nations in Europe. This newfound approach to German sexuality was due to a youth movement, which believed restrictions on sexuality were simply not warranted. There was a new emphasis in general on leibeskultur, or body culture, on an appreciation of the human body devoid of social taboos or restrictions? Tolerance of homosexuals is a prime example of modernism because this approach was truly ahead of its time. One can make this deduction because homosexuals were shunned in all other European countries throughout this era. Although Germans did not collectively approve of homosexuality, their over-all measure of tolerance was unlike any other. As opposed to Modris Eckstein, Marshall Berman looks at modernity as an encompassing characteristic of society, which affects every facet of its populace.

<https://assignbuster.com/the-german-people-an-assault-by-russia-and/>

Bermans text, *All That is Solid Melts Into Air*, is not a historical account (A contrast to Ecksteins novel) , but rather an assessment of what modernism achieved in the societies, which embraced it. The broad and open way enables us to see all sorts of artistic, intellectual, religious and political activities as part of one dialectical process? Berman supports his argument by informing the reader of two specific incidents in Brazil and the United States, where modernism affected the whole population. Lucio Costa and Oscar Niemeyer designed Brasilia (The capitol of Brazil) with the belief that a new age motif would bring prosperity to the city. According to Berman, this modern plan backfired because it did not give importance to public space. Public space is extremely important in democratic countries like Brazil because it gives people the ability to congregate and discuss their problems. This circumstance accurately portrayed Bermans assertion, because it demonstrated that modernist beliefs affect all people in the societies, which embrace it.

Berman also relays to the reader that Brasilia was designed with the wrong objective. The principle of the citys design should not have been to create something new and artistic, but rather an idea that incorporated all of the citizens needs. Brasilia should have been designed like all other Latin American cities. ? The great tradition of Latin urbanism, in which life is organized around a plaza mayor, is explicitly rejected? Bermans second example of modernism focuses on Ronald Reagans presidency, and how American opinion drastically changed throughout his tenure. Reagan began his presidency by convincing the American public that a concrete set of values and a police like state was how society should be run. As his ideals

became a reality, Americans realized they preferred a government with less control over its population. Berman views this change of American opinion as an example of the public maintaining their modern outlook towards government.

The people of the United States mutually realized the benefits of modern politics and chose not to revert to previous schemes. This resistance to the Reagan social agenda testifies to the depth of ordinary peoples commitment to modernity and its deepest values? Both Modris Eckstein and Marshall Berman formulate exceptional arguments regarding modernism. Each of their arguments is so persuasive that one has a difficult time reaching a tangible conclusion on his/her position.

Consequently, my opinion on modernism is a mixture of both of their arguments. I agree with Ecksteins conviction that modernity should be looked at in terms of different issues, but I also believe that a general trend towards modernism affects all aspects of society. My perception of modernism comes from my own experience at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Here I have learned of both unilateral and joint forms of modernism. My belief about individual change, towards a modernist perspective, stems from my dealings with homosexuals.

Before I attended Wisconsin I did not get the opportunity to associate myself with any homosexuals (at least not to my knowledge). As a result, I arrived to this University with naive beliefs and a vocabulary that included the word faggot. I was also known to use derogatory phrases like: That is so gay, or what a homo? The turning point of my approach, towards homosexuals,

came when I met a guy named Adam. Adam enlightened me by explaining the true aspects of homosexuality. He also informed me that my vocabulary was hateful.

After that day I came to understand that individuals who deplore homosexuals or use derogatory language are no different than those who are racists. Unfortunately, large portions of Americans do not hold the same stance. For this reason I can relate my modernist perspective to that of Ecksteins. Individually, some people have changed their opinion of homosexuals, but the nation as a whole has done little to accept their lifestyle. Lastly, I can also relate to Marshall Bermans attitude towards modernism.

I believe that in certain societies one can notice a general trend towards modernist behavior. It is my belief that one can observe this in modern day Germany. As opposed to the conservative regimes of the 30s and 40s, Germany presently lives in one of the worlds most progressive societies. This is a perfect example of Bermans argument because the German people came together and implanted their newfound convictions into their everyday way of life.

Words/ Pages : 1, 238 / 24