

Discuss the differences between modernity and post modernity

[Sociology](#)



Modernity began when reason replaced religion as the basis for taming passions, maintaining order, and organizing society. A sociological definition of modernity would be describing it as an "immersion of new types of society", including urbanisation and industrialisation. Thus, a changed way of thinking about the world, based on science. Modernity is a linear progression to an improved social state, valuing rationality and technical achievements.

Post modernity is about fragmentation, diversity and consumption.

A theoretical approach or position that emphasises the uncertain nature of the modern world, the diversity of cultural styles and options in modern societies. It has been applied in many disciplines, most particularly in literature and the arts. In sociology, postmodernism has been judgemental of those 'grand' theoretical perspectives that have formed all surrounding theories to do with logical and rational accounts of the progression of societies. (Appignanesi, 1997)

The political philosopher Karl Marx provided possibly the main influential account of modernity. His arguments and opinions about the impact of industrialisation and capitalist growth have helped to form the work of countless social analysts throughout the twentieth century, and many theories of postmodernism tackle themselves in one way or another to his ideas. During the times of Marx's writings, modern industry was in a constant search for new sources of labour, new raw materials, new technologies and new ways of spreading into social life. Marx looked at this, but saw in it a potential for strengthening the material comforts of people's lives. He

recognised that modernity was far from all bad: it had a immense capacity for improving people's standards of living.

Yet Marx also recognised that the innovations of modernity were driven by the capitalist economic system and he was profoundly critical of this. Marx was a historical materialist. In other words, he believed that all societies in history could only be understood by analysing the way they organised people's labour. Marx defined labour as the ordinary relations of human beings with their environment. He believed that labouring under capitalism defined lives in a particularly immoral way. The bases of his critique was that, he believed under capitalism, " all features of culture are determined by economic forces and that the by and large effect of this was dehumanisation and the impoverishment of creativity". (Marsh, 2000)

Marx thought that: In order to buy what they need to live, people will have to sell their labour power (their capacity to work) for wages. Their labour is bought and sold as a commodity: a price tag is attached to everybody. Everyone is just a means of making profit. (Ward, 1997) The trade of labour for money is not a fair exchange. Employees want to do just the amount of work necessary to pay their earnings. But employers need workers to create prosperity far in surplus of this basic requirement. So only a fraction of the working week is spent replacing the value of wages. The rest is a surplus amount of work which generates wealth and affluence for the capitalist. This is exploitation. (Ward, 1997)

Meta-narratives of theorists such as, Marx, with their exclusive claim to fact have been replaced with a relativist perspective that treats their work as

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'texts' rather than gospels. Post-modernism views all points of view as valid with none able to claim superiority or control; they are merely diverse ways of viewing things. Post-modernism is less easy to describe, in part because it is not a unified theory but a collection of different positions and ideas.

(Marsh, 2000)

In line with modernity, Marx's breakdown of society saw the economic base of society as influencing and shaping all other features of communal life. Marx disputed that in all societies there are fundamental challenges within this economic base, due to the disagreement of interests among diverse social clusters drawn in the economic progression.

Bauman argues that the theory of post modernity rejects the suggestion that 'society' functions as an organism " which in Parsonian fashion is cohesive, equilibrated, with a central value system, and a set of elements that perform 'functions' for the system as a whole". (Lyon, 2000)

He discusses that politics in the modern era was dominated by questions of inequality and redistribution, whereas the present-day demand is more and more for the redistribution of human rights, which Bauman views to be a code for the freedom of choice that constitutes agency in the post-modern habit. (Bauman, 1992: 197).

Also, conversed are newer forms that go ahead of the " echo of modern redistributive politics that he refers to as the 'reallocation of attention: the politics of desire, of fear, and of certainty, along with 'tribal politics' ". (Lyon, 2000)

According to Bauman, ethics can no longer be viewed as a detached activity of sociological theory. Therefore, modern societies put principled guidelines of manner " under the aegis of various formal institutions or, of course, what was conceived as the private sphere of the family". (Lyon, 2000)

" Modernity resisted moral self-explanation; in post-modern contexts it becomes unavoidable". (Lyon, 2000) Ethical concerns stays effectively alike to those of contemporary times, states Bauman, but are now improved by uniquely post-modern questions of pluralism of power on the one hand, and the focus of choice on the other.

Bauman's theory of post-modernity in brief is that, he does not throw out the ideas produced by sociology, but moderately quarrels that sociology must connect " with a new object, a different kind of situation"; post-modernity. Sociology has itself to revise internally in a number of respects.

It too has to own up to " hitherto controversial alliances with politics and ethics". " But it still seeks systematic understanding of the social world, now dominated by choice, pluralism and fresh forms of power". (Lyon, 2000)

He also focused his consideration to religion, in his book entitled " Post-modernity and its Discontents" (Bauman, 1997). It contains a chapter on post-modern religion, which talks about its prospects. He acknowledges that modernity was all about 'doing without God', and that " the look for compensations and substitutes does not seem to have slowed. But he makes a point of isolating fundamentalism as a post-modern form of religion, seeing

in it the offer of relief from the agonies choice confronting inhabitants of contemporary consumerist cultures".

Bauman's view of politics could be related to religion: it 'cannot be kept outside the basic theoretical model as an epiphenomenon, a super structural reflection or belatedly formed, intellectually processed derivative' (Bauman, 1992: 196)

" Whereas Bauman sees in fundamentalism relief from choice provided by fresh forms of authority, he fails to note that many fairly conventional forms of religion as well as the more obvious New Age movements also appropriate and adapt to the cultures of choice and expressive individualism discovered in post-modernity".

Post-modernity is a notion used to depict contemporary social circumstances in which the focus has been put on consumerism, information technology and communication. Zygmunt Bauman's theory of post-modernity is argued to be the most comprehensive, as it doesn't necessitate discarding sociological analysis. It does suggest that a novel social scheme is in construction.

However, other theorists dispute that the " real debate is over modernity, which may be seen variously as completed (global age) or incomplete (high modernity)". (Lyon, 2000). Post-modernity assists us to concentrate on vital parts of social change that are " long- term and global, as do terms such as global age or informational age-but accents the cultural". (Lyon, 2000) The

edifying twist designated by post-modernity is importantly noteworthy but at present plays inadequate notice to religion or faith.

In difference to modernist and postmodernist perspectives, there is in addition disagreement that humankind does have an apparent fate but it is one that is condemned to disappointment and collapse. In his negative outlook of the future, " Paul Kennedy (1993) argues the case for a world divided by crisis, domination and ecological decline". (Marsh, 2000)

Post modernism proposes that the look for a definitive answer and analysis of and for the society in which we live is an endeavour fated to breakdown. This viewpoint disputes that all theoretical texts are valid, with no single perspective having superiority over another.