Title: Pros and Cons of Postmodernism

Your Name

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Postmodernism is a late 20th century artistic and intellectual movement that is associated with a wide range of different conflicting interpretations. Postmodernism complexity stems from the main fact that it is linked to a wide variety of social, intellectual and artistic trends. Postmodernism in the late 1950s refers to the artist's work who challenged concepts and ideas that are taken for granted, specifically those that are promoted under the paradigm of modernism. Since then, different disciplines have deployed postmodernism and perceived it as a movement whose main objective was to drop those ideas that were central to modernism. The postmodernism foundations are placed in the philosophical current of anti-dualism, and anti-representationalism.

The concept of scepticism underlines much of the postmodernism ideas (Alvesson). The roots of postmodernism lie in the work of some philosophers such as Martin Heidegger and Friedrich Nietzsche. The most famous postmodernism thinkers include poststructuralists such as Julia Kristeva, Jacques Derrida, and Roland Barthes. Some other thinkers that are not directly aligned with this movement include Gilles Deleuze, Gayatri Spivak, and Judith Butler. The postmodernism concept has been criticized for over-reliance, nihilism, and vagueness. Postmodernism is basically an intellectual movement that becomes popular in the 1980s. The ideas that are associated with postmodernism can be seen as a response to main social changes that occur with a shift from modernity to postmodernity. Postmodernists claim that social thinkers took their inspiration from an idea that history has shaped. According to [Jean Francois Lyotard](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jean-Fran%C3%A7ois_Lyotard), this idea cannot be observed in real world. The postmodern world is not destined as hoped by Marx. According to it, the Marxism and its promise of a good future are no more relevant to the less predictable and complex postmodern age. Lyotard argued that scientific research is done vigilantly to uncover the knowledge which makes this world a better place.

It seems that the scientific knowledge search has made this world a riskier and dangerous place. For example, global warming and nuclear weapons are both the inventions of science. According to Jean Baudrillard, the postmodernism age is where individual respond more to images instead of real places and persons. For example, when Lady Diana died in 1997, there was a huge outpouring of grief all around the world but people were not mourning a real person. Most of the people knew Diana only through mass media and Diana’s death was presented as an event.

Zygmunt Bauman has made a clear distinction between two ways of postmodernism thinking i.e. Do we need postmodern sociology or sociology of postmodernity? According to the first way, the social world has moved very rapidly in the direction of postmodernism. The large spread and growth of new information technologies, development of multicultural societies, mass media and fluid movement of people across the world shows that we are living in a postmodern world. According to the second view, the sociology type which has analyzed successfully the modern world of industrialization and capitalization is no more capable of dealing with the globalizing, media-saturated, decentered pluralistic postmodern world.

**Pioneer of Postmodernism**

Postmodernism has its pioneer critics, philosophers, and theoreticians that are known for critiques of modern technology and media. Jean Baudrillard developed various other concepts like floating truth, and hyper-reality have a role in science fiction. Baudrillard has denied this concept of a distinction between the appearances. He broke down the difference between the signified and signifier. In his work,' Simulacra and Simulation," Baudrillard have explained these concepts and denied true existence as long as it is linked closely with media, imaginative rhetoric, language error, exaggeration metaphorical, and conjecture. According to him, the hyper-reality concept is that in which something is only real when it moves within a media. The postmodernism pioneer, Lyotard argues that knowledge cannot claim to offer truth in absolute terms and it depends on the language tricks that are always relevant to specific contexts. He claims that the spread of logic and enlightenment does not produce scientific arrogance. Jurgen Habermas has refused to accept this assessment in which it is believed that they are viable. Jacques Derrida is also one of the most renowned philosophers of postmodernism.

For the last two decades, the debate of postmodernism dominated both intellectual and cultural scene in the different fields throughout the world. The assaults of postmodernism produced new political and social theories and the multifaceted aspect of the phenomenon of postmodernism. Postmodernist advocates criticized tradition, politics, and culture whereas, modern tradition defenders responded either by attacking it in return, ignoring the new challenges or by attempting to come up with a new position and discourse. Emerging postmodern discourses raise issues that resist facile incorporation and easy dismissal in an already established paradigm. Postmodernism concept is not easy to define because to define this it would violate the premise of postmodernists that no definite boundaries, terms and absolute truth exists.

Postmodernist states that western world society is an outdated lifestyle that is disguised under faceless and impersonal bureaucracies. Post-modernists believe that western society should move beyond the primitiveness of ancient traditional practices. The concerns such as using and building weapons of mass destruction encourage the huge consumerism amount thus fostering violence at a sacrifice of environment and earth resources while at the same time, not serving the equitable and fair socio-economic needs of the population. According to postmodernists, the west claim of prosperity and freedom has not met the needs of humanity and it is nothing more than an empty promise. Post-modernists have defended and promoted new ways of conceptualizing and rationalizing progress of humans and life. Post-modernists are agnostic and atheistic, whereas, some practice eastern religion. Most of them are environmentalists, humanitarians and philosophers. Post-modernists do not try to refine their views about what is true or false, good or evil, and right and wrong. They think that no such thing as the absolute truth.is present. According to postmodernists, no one has any authority to define the truth or impose the idea of right and wrong on other people. The postmodern writer argues that every reading of fiction work creates a different text version in the mind of reader. Postmodernism states that the fictional world is mediated through different frames. The postmodern writer involves organization, selection, and interpretation in the narration. Postmodernism determined that the dominant form of modern rationality incorporates additional meaning to that of its practical, formal and instrumental ideas.

**Postmodernism Theories**

In 1950, structuralism, a philosophical movement, was developed by French academics in response to [Existentialism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Existentialism) and it is often interpreted as modernism. Those thinkers who have been known as structuralists include Marxist philosopher, [Louis Althusser](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Louis_Althusser), anthropologist, [Claude Lévi-Strauss](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Claude_L%C3%A9vi-Strauss), semiotician, [Algirdas Greimas](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Algirdas_Julien_Greimas), and linguist, Ferdinand de Saussure. Those who start as structuralists but became post-structuralists include [Julia Kristeva](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Julia_Kristeva), Jacques Derrida, [Jean-François Lyotard](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jean-Fran%C3%A7ois_Lyotard), and Luce Irigaray. Poststructuralists assumed that individual values, economic condition, and identity determine each other. The ideas of postmodernism in philosophy, the analysis of society and culture increased the importance of critical theory. One of the most important concerns of postmodernists is deconstruction (McHale). It is a theory for literary criticism for philosophy and textual analysis that is developed by Jacques Derrida.

From the 1980s, postmodernism emerged as the main area of academic study. It is a complex term and it is difficult to define exactly because the term postmodernism appears not only in art but also in other areas such as sociology, architecture, literature, technology, fashion, and science. It is not clear that when exactly the postmodernism movement started. According to some researchers, the best way to think about postmodernism is to start with modernism. The postmodernism movement encourages art that promotes humor, irony, and parody. One of the most renowned postmodernists is Leumund Cult. He has a unique style of work and also held several exhibitions of his artwork. In 2002, he held a recent exhibition in the Cabaret Voltaire for sharing ideas that were formed in 1916 by Emmy Henning and Hugo Ball (Annells).

According to C Wright Mills, postmodernism is a fourth Epoch and idea of freedom and reason has no practical significance. Michel Foucault stated that knowledge can be increased by increasing the will of power. Knowledge is a form of power and an individual is an effect of power. He focuses on how emotions and feelings of people are linked with power. According to this, truth is generated from power. Knowledge differs across societies and time. Each society has its truth discourse such as science, religion, etc. which shows social power associations. Some of the postmodernism disciplines include geography, history, art, civil engineering, anthropology, education, law, marketing, political science, sociology, economics, zoology, cultural studies, and psychology. In last last two decades, the debate of postmodernism dominated the intellectual scene in the different fields (Alvesson). There is a consensus that despite different postmodernism interpretations, it is primary cultural phenomenon and various perspectives of postmodernism are present. For example, if someone recognizes marketing as part of the culture then the cultural characteristics of postmodernism become a crucial factor in the marketing context. The cultural aspect of postmodernism is explained below.

***Economic***

Forces of capitalism and globalization have resulted in enhanced production which in turn increases consumption and the world operates 24/7 and chaotically in this process

***Multiculturalism***

Postmodernism states that the world is comprised of diverse and multiple cultures. For example, class issues, increase awareness of minorities’ interest, the fulfilment of multiple roles, erosion of nuclear family, drive towards self-actualization, and reduced dependence on religion. Globalization can attribute to postmodernism's multiculturalism as some of its outcomes include increased knowledge of different practices, cultures, and societies which in turn enhances general public acceptance and deep understanding of diversity.

***Tolerates Difference***

Although the concept of postmoderenism tolerates difference, it does not eliminate preferences.

***Social Constructivism***

Values and truth are constructed socially.

**Pros and Cons**

In recent years, political, social theories and literary have emerged resulting from postmodernism debates. It covers a wide range of disciplines such as literature, communication, art, sociology, and film. Postmodernism is a concept that is used in different media text that aims to be controversial. Postmodernism has both advantages and disadvantages. The postmodernism concept originated as a reaction to modernism in which individuals thought that technology and science are improving their lives. However, during World War 2, most people realized that these new advancements and ideas were being used against them in the form of weapons and bombs. Post positivism is most likely to deconstruct different media texts so that they can be constructed through spoofs and parody using intertextuality. One example of this is when the comedy show “Brass eye" did news spoof by portraying something hyper-real or make itself fake though it was needed to be representing real life. In this, they were able to mock the newsreader structure sarcastically by mimicking the styles. It was followed by stereotypical codes and news program conventions such as meaningless figures and graphs. This can be seen as a positive for postmodernism as it shows that individuals can laugh on serious things. Further, it was represented in a comedy series: Family Guy". This uses a lot of outtakes and parodies from other texts by using different cross-references. For example, the main narrative such as Christianity is mocked as Jesus changes the water to wine for the party of teenagers. This provoked the controversy from religious leaders. One issue of postmodernism is that it uses generic blurring. This is defined as when different genres and styles merge into one text to create something new. This technique is used in the music industry and film. For example, Lady Gaga who is a pop artist uses generic blurring in her daily life activities and her live performances (Murthy). This can be viewed as a negative aspect of postmodernism because by merging these genres sight of original text or genre is lost.

According to postmodernism, it is no longer possible to create something original. This states that everything is created by mixtures and blending of previous work. Postmodernism takes it to the extreme by using intertextuality and bricolage. It leads to many original narratives that are being treated with irrelevance. For example, the film "The Cabin in the Wood" uses intertextuality to showcase many creatures and monsters from other horror movies such as masked murderers from strangers and twins. By integrating these iconic horror characters and scenes into one movie creates a homage for the horror genre. The postmodernism concept rejects stratification theories and focuses on differences and identity (Hutcheon). According to postmodernists, a class is not the main source of identity as identity is now derives from consumption and leisure and not from production and work. Postmodernism concept is meaningless because it adds nothing to analytical knowledge (Alvesson). Best argues that postmodern stratification is all about lifestyle changes and the seduction into consumer spending through control change and advertising. Friedrick Jameson had related postmodernism to the second and third phases of capitalism. The postmodernism era corresponds to the age of electronic and nuclear technologies and capitalism. Postmodernism can be viewed from post-colonial angles and feminists. The postmodernism concept, in its denial of objective reality and truth, forcefully advocates constructivism theory and that everything is constructed ideologically. Postmodernism also relies on deconstruction methods to analyze the socio-cultural situation.

**Characteristics**

Postmodernism had many flaws from the beginning. The concept of low and high culture is not descriptive. They are vague and provoke unnecessary ideological tensions which creates confusion. Because of similar characteristics of postmodernism and modernism, sometimes it becomes confusing to differentiate one from others. Postmodernism also believes that there is no absolute truth and truth is relative. Postmodernism states that truth is not mirrored in the understanding of humans and it is constructed. Therefore, falsehood and facts are interchangeable such as in a classical work "King Oedipus" there is only one truth that is "obey your fate". Modernism places faith in cultural norms, values, ideas, and beliefs of the West in contrast postmodernism rejects this. Modernism tries to reveal the profound truth of life and experience whereas postmodernism is suspicious of being profound as these ideas are based on values of Western systems. Modernism focus on central themes and a combined vision in a particular set of literature on the other hand postmodernism sees the experience of human as ambiguous, unstable, unfinished, discontinuous and internally contradictory. Postmodernism is characterized by broad relativism or scepticism and general suspicion of reason. It broadly focuses on western cultural values and norms and intellectuals are influenced by the elite and dominant group and indirectly serve their interests (Hutcheon). Postmodernism rejects that there is one way to do anything. All practices and theories are subject to questioning and challenge. The book "Postmodern Challenge to the Theory and Practice of Educational Administration English" discusses various practices and theories that are used by educational administrators.

**Table 1.**Characteristics of Postmodernism.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Berthon & Katskeas (1998) | Brown (1994,1995) | Firat & Dholakia (2006) | |
| Hyperreality | Hyperreality | Hyperreality | Hyperreality |
| Antifoundationalism | Antifoundationalism | Difference | Fragmentation |
| De-differentiation | Pluralism | Decentering | Reversals of consumption and production |
| Paradox | differentiation | Fragmentation | Loss of commitment |
| Time and space | Chronology | Juxtapositions | Paradoxical juxtapositions |
| Fragmentation | Fragmentation |  | Decentering of the subject |

Postmodernism is differentiated from modernism through its grand narratives of modernism such as progress and history, revolution and reason, freedom and truth and democracy and discovery. Western society progress with achievement in democracy and scientific discovery and capitalism. Different postmodernism interpretations across different disciplines have resulted in poor consensus on the precise postmodernism definition and characteristics which are inherent in it. The characteristics of postmodernism tend to coalesce into each other and not mutually exclusive. The postmodernism characteristics are presented in the table below. Postmodernism criticism is intellectually diverse and includes an assertion that postmodernism promotes [obscurantism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Obscurantism) and is meaningless. Dick Hebidge criticizes the vagueness of postmodernism. Noam Chomsky argued that postmodernism concept is meaningless because it adds nothing to empirical and analytical knowledge. Douglas Kellner insists that the procedure and assumptions of modern theory must be ignored. Kellner analyzes this theory in real-life examples and experiences. Kellner uses technology and science studies as a major part of his analysis, and he states that theory is not complete without it. In sociology, postmodernism basically focuses on the truth of individuals and stays away from that information which is confined to groups, races, culture, and tradition and yet understands that individual experience is relative and does not yield universal truth. Postmodernism is a thought which does not believe in specific, unchanging, finite certain principles and according to it there is no theory that can explain almost everything for all human beings such as philosophical and religious truth (Hutcheon). One of the major issue with postmodernism is that it can be seen as idealistic, unrealistic, romantic and overly sentimental. Postmodernism gives voice to fragmentation, insecurities, and disorientation of the 20th century of the western world. Postmodernism is marked by an array of a historical and social phenomenon that shaped our contemporary worlds such as rapid technological progress, globalization, and capitalism. Postmodern texts are usually written in clear language but despite of this they have quite complex structure. Postmodern texts do not tend to engage in innocent and linear storytelling. Postmodernism usually works by perspective, multiple narrators and linear storytelling. This represents postmodern scepticism towards unitary, single and totalizing narratives.

**Table 2:** Comparison of the orientation of knowledge between postmodernism and modernism.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Modernism** | **Postmodernism.** |
| Objective knowledge | Roundedness knowledge |
| Objectivity | Subjectivity |
| Universal laws | Lack of universal laws |
| Spectatorship | Irrationality |
| Generalizations are meaningful | Generalizations have limits |
| Absolute truths | Participation |

**Conclusion**

The postmodernism foundations are placed in the philosophical current of anti-dualism and anti-representationalism. Postmodernism is characterized by broad relativism or scepticism and general suspicion of reason. Postmodernism gives voice to fragmentation, insecurities, and disorientation of the 20th century of the western world. Postmodernism is marked by an array of historical and social phenomena that shaped our contemporary worlds such as rapid technological progress, globalization, and capitalism.

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