

CONTRASTS AND CONTINUITIES: A REVIEW OF MODERNIST AND POSTMODERNIST WORLDVIEWS ACROSS TWO ERAS

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Abstract

The two schools of thought, modernists and postmodernists, have had a significant impact on philosophical advances throughout history. Numerous literary works explore the two ideologies, each offering a distinct perspective on the universe. Therefore, the goal of the study is to review research works on the six ways that modernists and postmodernists interpret the world over the two eras. The study will also cover a detailed discussion of the paradigm shifts between the two intellectual movements and ideas. Despite having distinct viewpoints on philosophical advancements, the literature showed that both eras made significant philosophical contributions to the social sciences. While the postmodernists' research is likely to take the shape of a typical science and lean towards closure, the modernists examine the innate forces that work against closure and stasis.

Keywords: Discourse Analysis, Epistemological Shifts, Modernism, Postmodernism, Philosophical Paradigms.

Introduction

Modernist and postmodernist perspectives are two significant philosophical times that are frequently distinguished by contemporary epistemic studies, particularly about their contributions to the arts and social sciences. The Enlightenment (1687–1789), which altered our sense of the universal truth, gave rise to the modernist movement. Immanuel Kant and Isaac Newton were among the intellectuals of this era who promoted the idea that science could save the world (Hoffman, 2005). Throughout this time, the intellectual elite had encouraged the ideas of individualism and independence. As a result, political movements in the Western nations began to express new concerns. The desire for democracy, capitalism, industrialization, science, and urbanization are some of the core ideas and events of modernity (Barrett, 1997). During the American and French political democratic revolutions, one of the main forces behind modernist philosophy promoted the idea of egalitarianism. However, postmodernism, as proposed by several literary works, criticizes the modernity perspective as the source of monarchy systems and societal deconstructions. Social practices and institutions that justified the dominance and control of a dominant society were viewed as incompatible with the actual practice of equality and universal liberty (Barrett, 1997). Accordingly, the postmodernist movements started when riots broke out in Paris in May 1689. Students at the time, backed by

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numerous prominent academics, staged a protest and called for drastic changes, particularly in the creation of the exclusive European university system (Milovanovic, 1997). The later movement denounced modernity for introducing the royal system, which led to social suffering and misery. Other repressive events in society, such as the annihilation of indigenous peoples and the severe persecution of workers under capitalist industrialization and imperialism, have been sparked by this initiation. Modernist philosophers like Newton, Descartes, and Kant, to mention a few, were interested in studying reality and proposed that "reason" is the source of truth. Economic forces, which are said to be the surface of society, and psychological forces, which are beneath it and unconstrained by reason, are the two categories of forces that have been found to influence how individuals and society view the truth (Barrett, 1997). However, postmodernists like Sigmund Freud, Karl Marx, Jacques Derrida, Ludwig Wittgenstein, and John Dewey criticized the ideas, arguing that truth is subjective and is created by various groups and that facts are only interpretations (Barrett, 1997). These academics also recognize that language and culture, as they transmit information, influence perceptions of truth.

In addition, over the two periods, two opposing academic movements-structuralism and post-structuralism-built significant research in the fields of language and the arts. Ferdinand de Saussure, a prominent linguist who researched semiotic theory in the study of language as a system of signals made up of signifiers (words) and signified (concepts), was a pioneer in the ideas of structuralism. Later researchers looked more closely at the relationships between the systematic signs in cultures as a result of De Saussure's linguistic studies on language as a system of signs. He suggested that a culture designates the ideas of signifiers and signified. In other words, there is a connection between concepts and culture. Roland Barthes began studies to investigate De Saussure's ideas on language as a system of signs and to examine how language, signs, images, and signifying systems organize the psyche, society, and culture. This marked the beginning of a new paradigm in the association of language and culture (Barrett, 1997). In addition to broadening their literary and linguistic investigations, structuralists were also interested in revealing hidden rules via deciphering unconscious coding. Like modernists, structuralists rejected subjective understandings and sought to maintain objectivity and consistency in their scientific theories (Hoffman, 2005).

"Jean-François Lyotard, a leading postmodernist philosopher, has maintained that postmodernism is marked by the disintegration of grand narratives-comprehensive accounts or ideologies purporting to tell universal truths, e.g., progress, emancipation, or scientific rationality. In his book *The Differend: Phrases in Dispute* (1988), Lyotard formulated the idea of the "differend"-a dispute between two sides that cannot be mediated because the sides play incommensurable language games. The idea highlights postmodernist skepticism about universal truths and emphasizes the fractured, pluralistic character of knowledge and discourse in modern society."

Furthermore, poststructuralists emerged as a reaction against structuralists' attempts to develop scientific theories, the pursuit of universal truth, and the idea that human nature is constant (Barrett, 1997). Postmodernists, on the other hand, embrace the limitations of different viewpoints, fragmentation, and indeterminacy, whereas modernists assume that the unified and coherent basics of truth are universally true and applicable (Barrett, 1997). Poststructuralists asserted that signs are subjective and ought to be considered natural, emphasizing their arbitrary nature in language, culture, and society. Postmodernists went further by rejecting the idea that an individual is a single, rational being, as proposed by modernists. Postmodernists, on the other hand, believe that the person is free, undefined, and at the center of the cosmos. Barrett's (1997) assertion that "existence precedes essence," made by one of the most prominent postmodernist scholars, Jean-Paul Sartre, supports the viewpoint in contrast to Descartes' (modernist) assertion that "I think, therefore I am." Stated differently, postmodernists assumed that language, social interactions, and the unconscious all influence the idea of "self."

This research aims to investigate the distinctions between the postmodernist and modernist paradigms in the evolution of intellectual ideas and movements. It also seeks to understand how

scientific ideas in the social sciences evolved, highlighting important philosophical influences from these two periods.

LITERATURE REVIEW: LINGUISTIC PERSPECTIVES ON MODERNIST AND POSTMODERNIST WORLDVIEWS

The philosophical and intellectual transitions between modernism and postmodernity prominently influenced the theories and practices. This overview considers the significant impact of these two movements on the epistemological framework of discourse analysis and the study of language as a cultural and social construct. The study compares and contrasts postmodernist and modernist views of language, meaning, and communication through examining key linguistic works from both periods.

EPISTEMOLOGICAL SHIFTS AND DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

The Enlightenment paved the way for modernist thought, emphasizing universal truths and reason. This perspective was the foundation of early language theory, like the structuralism of Ferdinand de Saussure, where language was perceived as a rule-governed systematic structure. The idea of language as a static system of signs was founded on the distinction between signifier (the word) and signified (1976) proposed by Saussure. Structuralists such as Roland Barthes argue that there are hidden structures and codes that provide meaning to cultural texts (Barthes, 1967). Postmodernists were less accepting of fixed meanings and universals than realists. Poststructuralist thinkers such as Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault argue that language is volatile and that meaning is always relative to context, power relations, and cultural horizons. For example, Derrida, with his deconstruction theory, claimed that language was fluid and that texts do not have only one or clear meaning, which is likely to be contradictory often (Derrida, 1976). Foucault's work on discourse analysis also demonstrated how language is involved in the construction of knowledge and power, influencing norms in institutions and society (Foucault, 1972). These shifts in the structure of poststructuralism merely reflect the overall transition from the certainty of modernism to the indeterminacy of postmodernism. Language and Ideologies Modernist theorists commonly assumed that language served as an impartial medium for communicating objective facts. For example, Immanuel Kant's emphasis on reason and universal laws inspired the modernist conviction in the clarity and definiteness of language (Kant, 1781). But postmodernists deconstructed this idea by saying that language is inextricably linked to ideology and power. For example, Ludwig Wittgenstein in his later philosophy abandoned a structuralist view of language for a more contextual one, arguing that meaning is produced in use within a given "language game" (Wittgenstein, 1953). Postmodernist theorists, including Jean-François Lyotard and Jean Baudrillard, expanded the function of language in the construction of reality and in the legitimation of ideological narratives. One of Lyotard's postmodern conditions (Lyotard, 1984) was the demise of grand narratives and the multiplication of regionalized, fractured narratives. Following the simulacra theory of Baudrillard, signs, and language no longer represent reality but create hyperrealities where there is no differentiation between what exists and what does not (Baudrillard, 1981). Such perspectives point towards the postmodernist critique of modernist assumptions of linguistic and truth-based ones.

Postmodernist theorists like Jean-François Lyotard have gone on to dismantle the modernist belief in the neutral vehicle of language for the expression of objective truth. Lyotard's theory of the 'differend' shows how various language games-scientific, artistic, or political discourses-are played according to incommensurable rules so that there can be no one unified narrative for resolving differences. For instance, the scientific language based on empirical data and reason cannot be made easily commensurable with art language, where subjective experience and beauty are of more importance.

This incommensurability brings out the postmodern fragmentariness and pluralism of knowledge, under which no single discourse can invoke universal authority.

Semiotics and Narrative Forms: Modernist fiction and linguistics generally pursued coherence and unity in narrative modes.

Modernist fiction and linguistics generally pursued coherence and unity in narrative modes. T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* and James Joyce's *Ulysses*, for example, tried fragmented narratives but eventually ended up with a shared conception of reality (Eliot, 1922; Joyce, 1922). Structuralist semiotics also addressed itself to disclosing universal structures within narratives and cultural texts. But postmodernist fiction embraced fragmentation, intertextuality, and indeterminacy. Writers, e.g. For example, Jorge Luis Borges and Thomas Pynchon rejected linear narratives in the spirit of postmodernist rejection of master narratives and essential meanings (Borges, 1962; Pynchon, 1973). But in language, postmodernist semiotics was concerned with the arbitrariness of the sign and multiplicity of meanings. As an example, the later work of Roland Barthes moved away from a focus on structuralist meaning towards a more open reader-based approach, highlighting the role of the reader in the creation of meaning (Barthes, 1974). *The Self in the Language*.

Modernist philosophers like René Descartes envisioned a rational, independent self at the center of knowledge and language. The celebrated mantra of Descartes, "I think, therefore I am," epitomizes the modernist confidence in the capacity of the individual to know truth through reason (Descartes, 1637). Postmodernists, however, like Jean-Paul Sartre and Jacques Lacan, rejected this idea, arguing that the self is fractured and constructed by language, culture, and the unconscious. Sartre's statement that "existence precedes essence" points to the postmodernist conception of the self as a dynamic, provisional construction (Sartre, 1943). Lacan's psychoanalytic theory underlined the construction of identity through language, contending that the unconscious is structured like a language (Lacan, 1977). *Contributions to the Social Sciences*: The ideas of modernists and postmodernists have significantly contributed to the field of social sciences. Modernist linguistics, with its focus on structure and objectivity, gave rise to new areas of study such as sociolinguistics and cognitive linguistics (Chomsky, 1965). Postmodernist critiques provided new pathways for examining the interplay between language, power, and identity. For instance, feminist and postcolonial theorists have applied postmodernist concepts to discuss how language supports gender and race disparities (Spivak, 1988; Butler, 1990). These efforts prove the continued influence of both movements on social scientific and linguistic studies.

THE EVOLUTION OF PHILOSOPHY AND ITS IMPACT ON THE TWO ERAS

The Construction of Social Structure

Developing theories about society and social dynamics was a major focus of modernist thinking. Hegel's Absolute Spirit, Freud's homeostasis, and Weber's theory of rationalization are examples of totalizing theories or structural functionalism that might be linked to early modernist ideas. Freud proposed the idea of "tension-reduction" as the driving force behind social structure evolution to elucidate the factors at play in this process (Hoffman, 2005). Aside from it, Newtonian physics and its impact were other significant ideas that emerged throughout the modernist era.

Furthermore, the critique of modernists served as the foundation for postmodernist ideas. They began their analysis by focusing on the "disorder" instead of the "order." By giving particular attention to instabilities, they started their inquiry with paralogism (Lyotard, 1984). (1997, Milovanovic). Godel described the specifics of the impossibility of formal closure in his theorem, implying that the pursuit of a comprehensive totalizing theory is a futile endeavor. Postmodernists proposed "dissipative structures"-a notion that suggests relative stability and ongoing transition between "order" and "disorder"-to address the earlier findings made by modernist researchers in response to social growth. Dissipative structures thrived on the idea of constant and continuing change, which is restricted by the concept of far-from-equilibrium conditions, in contrast to structural functionalism and the idea of homeostasis (Milovanovic, 1997). Additionally, postmodernist researchers looked at constitutive

theory to explain how structure and environment are related to knowledge (Barrett, 1997). The coexistence of several sites of determinants in which distinct historical articulations are never exactly predicted was mandated by constitutive theory (Milovanovic, 1997). According to the hypothesis, iterative processes result in unpredictable outcomes since initial conditions are inherently unknown. The theory supports the constructs of marginalized, disenfranchised, and disempowered people in addition to providing other explanations for the existence of ongoing fragmentation, deconstruction, and rebuilding (Milovanovic, 1997). The social sciences paradigm's arguments advanced in the 1960s and 1970s, which subsequently compelled intellectual movements to adopt a postmodernist stance (Hoffman, 2005). The study by the well-known postmodernist academic Unger, who in 1987 established ideas on an empowered democracy and proposed that orderly disorder should be valued, is another significant work in the investigation of society structure.

ROLES

Modernists frequently use the Parsonian construction when constructing a role in society, which holds that social factors enable individuals to integrate into society and be able to accept the demands placed upon them. Later, this approach sparked concerns about "functional integration," when positions are twisted into binary categories like "good guy" and "evil guy," "employer" and "employee," and so on (Milovanovic, 1997). Apart from that, a lot of modernist social theorists gave careful thought to the "I-me" notion and emphasized the "me" domination, which shows that the "self" operates on the state for different audiences and shapes itself with the character required by the condition. To put it another way, someone is reduced to role-playing (Barrett, 1997). Unlike postmodernists, who have a distinct perspective, roles are considered essentially unstable, and centrifugal and centripetal forces are dialectically correlated. To elaborate, two behaviors were analyzed: one's behavior in the lawful world and another's behavior in the criminal underworld. Maximum indeterminacy arises when these two behaviors are plotted in a dimension that postmodernists refer to as a "diagrammatical depiction" (Milovanovic, 1997). In other words, a person's destiny is reduced to role-making, and local indeterminacy resides in a relatively inclusive constancy (Young, 1994).

SUBJECTIVITY

The idea of the transcendental "self" was initially created during the Enlightenment. Modernists' adoption of the individualistic concept—which holds that people are conscious, self-directing, reflective, unitary, and transparent—brought about a significant homo-duplex understanding of human nature, according to which egoism and altruism coexist in harmony (Milovanovic, 1997). This comprehension emphasizes the idea that personal preferences influence societal structures. According to Foucault (1977; cited in Milovanovic, 1997), "the desiring subject becomes a body of passivity and economic or political utility." Desire must therefore be controlled and regulated by various prevailing discourses. According to Foucault, wishes can be adapted in two ways: passively and actively. The person is motivated to achieve homeostasis through passive adaptation, in which their discursive stances are required by the smoothly operating socioeconomic political order. The adaptation, on the other hand, suggests manifestations of opposition, resistance, despair, and alienation, which traps the oppositional subject in the "discourse of the hysteric" (Milovanovic, 1997).

Therefore, postmodernists suggested the idea of a "decentered subject" in contrast to the modernists' "centered subject." "The subject is less unified and more determined than a desiring subject caught within the constraints of various discourses and their structuring properties," according to the suggestion made by Milovanovic (1997). Lacan (1977) developed a theory called Schema L, which further elucidated the concept of the decentered subject. He suggested two traversing axes for this schema: the imaginary axis, which places the subject at each of the schema's four corners, and the unconscious or symbolic axis. Operationally, the topic is torn between the imagined and symbolic axes. The "I" loses to the symbolic axis (unconscious), and a structured system like language loses to

the unconscious domain. The entity through which the "self" develops itself as a coherent (although illusory) entity dominates the entire being, and the imaginary axis triumphs over fictitious creations of the self (Lacan, 1977, in Milovanovic, 1997). Postmodernists proposed the idea that desire can be viewed as an upward movement, which defined the principle of the synthesis of forces whereby the conservative force is perceived as associated with positive processes, in contrast to modernists who proposed the idea of desire as a negative and responsive force to lack (Barrett, 1997).

DISCOURSE

The Modernists created frameworks for studying conversation that assume the idea that discourse is neutral. It is a method of rational expression that inherently presents a subject-centered image. They maintained that certain discoverable transcendental signifiers are at the core of social structure and phenomena (Hoffman, 2005). According to Young (1994), modernists focus on nouns rather than verb forms. The conscious level of semiotic production is a major concern for modernist proponents. They created a scheme that highlights conscious discourses along two coordinated axes: the syntagmatic axis, which resumes the signifiers' grammatical placement, and the paradigmatic axis, which displays the word choices. The idea is that meaning is created by the interaction of these two axes. The ideas of "discourse" and "discursive production," which seek to study the impacts of discourse on the production and reproduction of conventionality, were promoted by modernist philosophers throughout history.

Conversely, postmodernists do not engage in an impartial discourse. According to Young (1994), they assume that various discourses reflect on local production sites that carry the embodiment of desire in signifiers and in the construction of realities. According to postmodernists, the highest awareness level of semiotic production is the paradigm-syntagm semiotic axis (Milovanovic, 1997). Furthermore, a "writerly text" is preferred by postmodernists since it is perceived as more subversive than a "readerly text," which would motivate readers or interpreters to infer meaning (Barthes, 1974, in Milovanovic, 1997). Postmodernists contend that this approach is especially necessary in a modern culture defined by the non-referential and the emerging internet order (Gibson, 1984, in Milovanovic, 1997). They have also argued for the continued development of the verb over the noun form to overcome the constraining metaphysics and metanarratives present in subject-verb-object discursive forms (Hoffman, 2005).

CAUSALITY

The determinism of Newtonian physics, which frequently manifests as positivism, served as the foundation for modernist ideas. They based their study on the fundamental unit of particles, which included social factors, assuming independent individuals, and distinct categories concerning their contributing impacts. Providing the previously specified elements will impact the findings.

Postmodernists, on the other hand, see the idea in diverse ways. They suggested that indeterminacy, uncertainty, and disproportional effects are all underlying presumptions and crucial issues to consider when attempting to explain an occurrence. In his assertion that "something can arise out of nothing at points identified as singularities; the result is the sphere of order arising out of disorder," Milovanovic (1997) provided support for the idea. Postmodernism merely restates the previously formed ideas and recalculates solutions from many perspectives using a similar methodology. Derrida used this approach to investigate how words acquire new meanings in novel circumstances (Milovanovic, 1997).

Postmodernists therefore value small contributions for their significant potential. Consequently, one might attribute causality to field effects rather than particle effects (Bohm, 1980, in Milovanovic, 1997). Postmodernity frequently views certainties as the product of subjects. According to Young (1994), a subject must have perspectives that allow for the discovery of semiotic fictions, which create the illusion of a centered subject. According to Foucault and other postmodernist thinkers, the "fear of the chaotic and the unclassifiable" (Milovanovic, 1997) accounts for the order we attribute to nature.

KNOWLEDGE

The idea created by the Enlightenment, which proposed formal, rational ways for totalizing truth, is what propels modernity. Lyotard (1989, in Milovanovic, 1997) contends that the emergence of new navigational tools, which are influenced by power, impacted rational behavior by replacing narrative knowledge with scientific knowledge. While scientific knowledge tends to develop toward closure, narrative knowledge embraces imagination since it is built on myths, legends, and tales, which offer ancillary resources for being in society. Establishing "absolute postulates," from which deductive (linear) reasoning may explain all other "facts," served as a fundamental guide for modernist research on the concept of "truth" (Barrett, 1997).

Furthermore, because knowledge always includes numerous places of production, postmodernists see it as perpetually contingent, incomplete, and fractured (Milovanovic, 1997). This understanding was derived from a dialogic pedagogy, which implies the formation of a linguistic potential by reproducing the original signifiers through the process of review. Postmodernists, in other words, support local knowledge. The proposition of "space" always threatens the dominant forms of knowledge, and postmodernists noted that local knowledge(s) are not always subsumable under one logic (Godel's theorem), which describes subjects within a social formation as disillusioned in their attempts to be true to their desires. According to postmodernists, knowledge is always positional and relational (Milovanovic, 1997). It is discovered that knowledge and power are closely related. Therefore, one must learn the logic and reason that are ingrained in a discursive construction to adopt it (Foucault, 1973, in Milovanovic, 1997). The truth becomes "discourse-specific" at that point.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the postmodernist critique of modernism, as defined by intellectuals such as Jean-François Lyotard, deconstructs the modernist notion of universal truths and coherent narratives. Lyotard's theory of the 'differend' is an evocative metaphor for the postmodern condition, in which several, sometimes contradictory narratives exist simultaneously without resolution. This fracturing of knowledge and meaning captures the larger movement from the certainty of modernism to the indeterminacy of postmodernism, as it continues to contrast order and disorder in contemporary thought.

Despite significant conceptual disagreements between the two proponents, it is evident that both eras made significant philosophical contributions to the social sciences. The modernists' views have been seen to dominate the modern era in the six areas that have been discussed: social structure, roles, subjectivity, discourse, causality, and knowledge. However, this trend changed when postmodernists began to question the modernists' methods and came to believe that there are multiple ways of knowing. The comparison of the two methods clearly shows that whereas the modernists examine the underlying factors that work against closure and stasis, the postmodernists approach studies in the manner of conventional science and gravitate towards closure.

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