

Postmodernism or ‘Scientific solutions to find the truth’?

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Abstract

This study explores the nature of postmodernism. It is “the scientific solutions to find the truth”. Upholding the principle of dialectics and self-reflexivities and promoting reawareness the postmodernist rejects the notion of fixed awareness and objectivity according to contemporary criteria. Postmodernism is a product of the era of mass communication and information technology. Postmodernism was born at a time when human beings existed in the polar opposites of socialism and capitalism. It develops and has stability in society almost without grand violent opposition. Postmodernism worships ‘Nothingness’, ‘Chaos’ and ‘Random’. Postmodern humanists are against the form of ‘friendship which enslaves’. They want to build a global society that is based upon certain principles that are independent of culture or country. They do not want anyone or any nation to live as debtors or voluntarily become a slave to others. Postmodernism functions delete obsolete universal truth and building, not a new truth, but scientific means to reach the truth, postmodernism has fiercely criticized grand narrative and has never aspired to turn into grand narrative itself. Never giving out truth but it does show the unsuitableness of much of what passes for truth and helps people to find the road to what might be the real truth of the age.

Key words: *Postmodernism, scientific solutions, truth, friendship which enslaves, nothingness, chaos*

Introduction

Postmodern philosophers are known for doubting reason, truth and values which are considered to be eternal while scientific achievements have represented physical progress but not a true understanding of nature. Meanwhile, scientific achievements are a danger to their inventors and threaten to wipe out the human race. Above all, postmodernism is sceptical of itself. In fact, postmodernists don’t want to present established theories because they think that theories are always the product of man’s institutions’ rules. In a discourse, concepts such as liberty and democracy have the colour of the era and their existence is not felt outside of personal political concepts. If all individual and biased voices could be removed, life would be able to be the existence which it simply is.

So what is the nature of postmodernism? Where and when it comes from? Who benefits from it? Why researchers have not stopped discussing about it? Here we try to solve those issues.

Postmodern sensibility: chaos and nothingness

Paul Feyrabend (1924–1994), an American philosopher of Austrian origin who identified himself as a “Dada philosopher of science”, in the famous book *Against Method* (published in 1975) tried to deduce the state of anarchy as being the nature of postmodern science. He said that chaos is the basis of all knowledge and progress.

Enthusiastically embracing multivalued concepts from all fields from culture, to art to economics to politics, giving prominence to values which are felt and accepting complex, infinite junctions, postmodernism in view of the non-believers has been termed anarchistic, neutral, vague and even antihuman. Postmodernism has also become a powerful and indispensable overview – something of a “grand narrative” (Lyotard, 1979) of human life.

Upholding the principle of dialectics and self-reflexivities and promoting reawareness – the constant reawareness of every individual who is always gaining knowledge – the postmodernist rejects the notion of fixed awareness and objectivity according to contemporary criteria. They argue that there is not a truly objective reality that exists outside of our minds. The reality that exists is always interpreted by the discourse of men, and it’s usually a discourse of power with the intension of imposing that

thought and theory of life upon others. Indeed, life cannot be seen with absolute objectivity. Moreover, in this era of technologies, when a visual media has been developing at a geometrical rate, people are sitting in front of computers and televisions nearly two - thirds of their waking day. And with this, human perception is being coloured by and is relying on the 'digital world'. Human beings are becoming less aware of the living, external reality and they are becoming dangerously close to believing that the reality presented on the screen is more important to them than their immediate 'real' life. From this perspective, postmodernists propose the concept of 'irrationality' which is that reality is what is digitized. What cannot be entered into the data stream and cannot be brought up on the screen is not reality at all.

Naturally, postmodernists don't deny the objectivity of existence but through the use of ironic statements (which use the form of backwards discourse with metaphors or never saying all) and with the idea that nothing can be totally understood, postmodernists have been accused of negating the existence of objectivity.

Most researchers identify postmodernism as a product of the era of mass communication and information technology. These two powerful, new phenomena have totally fascinated people. The virtual world is for them unreal but yet it is extremely attractive because it exudes the promise of liberation and freedom. When in the virtual world, people feel that they can do many things they cannot or even would not do in real life.

Knowledge as a commodity and 'friendship which enslaves'

With regards to economics, postmodernism is the offspring of postcapitalism (Jameson, 1991). In general, mankind until recently was experiencing a period of high economic growth. In modern times, national economies have tended to shift from production to consumption. Descartes' famous saying, "I think, therefore I am," (Cogito, ergo sum) (Descartes, 2008) is transformed into "I shop, therefore I am". Feeding consumption (and feeding off of consumption), advertising and other forms of marketing have ascended to something like a throne. Advertising, as an art form, is not expected to present raw truth and it's not supposed to. Advertising is always more unreal than the product being promoted. Due to the nature of advertising and the possibilities of media technology, advertising has been pushing, or luring, people deeper into the virtual world. With prosperity and an establishment of banks that encourage people to go into debt, 'consumer' has come to mean one who willingly enters the endless cycle of borrowing, working and paying. Human existence is for many a disembodied equality. People are going into debt just to meet their immediate material needs, and the way out of debt is not in sight for them. In modern society the gap between rich and poor is accelerating, and this is a recipe for social conflict.

Postmodernists see knowledge as being a commodity (Lyotard, 1979). Postmodern society produces not only tradition, physical commodities but also tangible and intangible 'goods' which were created by the intellect and have value due to their desirability and the ability of an owner/creator to control access to their 'intellectual property'. A product which is nothing more than an idea can be acquired and used like any other item if its distribution can be controlled and sold to users.

Globalization is now a reality. With the creation of this form of multinational economy, poor countries that play by the rules have access to technologically sophisticated goods and can take part in the activities associated with global economic policy as dictated by the richer countries. It is now clear that the relationship between rich and poor countries or regions is not in any way determined by the needs or wishes of the poorer countries. The threat is that this relationship cannot be altered. Postmodernism espouses those aspects of globalization which are positive but it eschews the establishment of an economic order – a relationship between the rich and poor countries – that is skewed to benefit the rich.

Today, the concept of oppression and slavery has changed from what it was long ago. Previously, in colonial times, human beings were enslaved the rich by force of guns and the threat of death. After slavery was outlawed, colonialism came to mean the control of natural resources in poor countries by the rich countries. This situation was a consequence of an inequality of power. Rich countries had very effective organization and made use of the latest technology in transportation and warfare. Poor countries typically had weak internal political organization and no history of inventing and using 'modern' technologies. Due to the nepotistic system of government that existed (and now exists) in most of the poorer countries, it was (and now is) quite easy to gain control of a segment of a poorer countries' natural resources through bribery. This bribe money is most welcomed by those in power and has become the basis of 'strong friendships'. Such bribes can take many forms. Huge loan at no

interest and scholarships to schools in the richer countries are much appreciated by those within the poorer countries who hold the strings to the country's resources.

In this way, those who hold political power in poor countries which have desirable resources (including unskilled labourers) have been 'cared for' and are good friends of the rich, which currently means the large multinational corporations. Monetarily, the strength of currencies is at risk, far more so than during the times of Balzac, who was no friend of bankers. Power is now and has long been concentrated in the hands of banks. They owe each other in terms of digital currency debt, they control and assist each other with digital currency transfers, they get rich by investing and manipulating money and they finance wars around the world with their money. There is a 'discourse' of extreme importance but relatively unseen in the postmodern era. Having money, the rich dominate economic activity all over the world as they choose to invest or disinvest, with return-on-capital-invested their reason to live. By investing their capital in poor countries, the rich turn third world countries into places which willingly provide raw materials and cheap labour. Their current practice of making large-scale investments in agricultural production within poorer countries is the most modern form of economic colonialism.

By agreeing to make use of this investment capital, the economy has improved within these poor countries but, due to corrupt governance, the land, water and air has become terribly polluted and large numbers of people have become diseased. While production is greatly improved through the use of the most modern technology, this technology takes money to buy and it is the corporations of a rich country and multinational corporations that hold that money and may or may not choose to invest it. Manual labour is what the uneducated and unskilled have to offer and manual labour is nothing more than manual labour. Unemployment is the main concern of the high numbers of young adults in the poorer countries. Having a job is happiness (and the possibility of getting married), regardless of how miserable the job. Manual labourers are invisible and they become slaves to money, slaves to the capitalist policies of foreign investors who bring in a sum of money under terms that allow them to pay low wages, pollute and repatriate their capital gains. In this form of postmodern slavery, the slaves volunteer to be slaves.

Another form of 'friendship which enslaves' seems innocuous but is twice as dangerous – it is the rich 'giving' money to the governments of poor countries in the form of 'grant aid'. With their low-interest (or no-interest) loan money – which is what most aid capital is – most poor countries invest that capital by filtering it through a number of associates who syphon a large per cent of it off. And, some of it goes back to the donor country in the form of salaries for technicians and consultants, or equipment. Foreign capital that goes towards building 'production facilities' actually goes towards building processing or assembly plants which import about 80% of their production materials and export their assembled products. Also built are 'food' factories (breweries, wineries, bakeries) which create moderately priced products for popular in-country consumption. The expected risk and return on capital invested and restrictive government regulations does not encourage foreign investors to build 'industrial machines' in poor countries or to mine and process local raw materials, which does have greater potential to improve people's lives. Business continues to be business and investors continue to look at the bottom line. The bondage keeps recurring: labourers spend all of their money, they seek work under any conditions, when they do attain a secure job they take the bank's bait and borrow money and go into debt to put money down on a vehicle or residence and they become permanent debtors. The humane face of aid capital is a sham.

Postmodernism in globalization landscape

Postmodern humanists are against this type of slavery. They want to build a global society that is based upon certain principles that are independent of culture or country. They do not want anyone or any nation to live as debtors or voluntarily become a slave to others. If globalization went in this direction, it would have the true spirit of humanity. A realization of postmodernism would be profound revolution of every aspect of life.

Of course this is just a personal interpretation of the purposes of postmodern actions. By avoiding all theories and revolutionary propaganda, the postmodernist always shows the face of one who is politically neutral. Left or right is not important to them. What is important is how human values are treated in institutions and are people really been enjoying the benefits of their minimum rights or not. As with postmodernism, there is no distinction between monism and pluralism, multi-party and one-party. These concepts exist only in a relatively independent world because leaders are primarily concerned with keeping and concentrating their power. Such is true in monism and pluralism.

In terms of politics, postmodernism was born at a time when human beings existed in the polar opposites of socialism and capitalism. It develops and has stability in society almost without grand violent opposition. It was unfazed by the dissolution of both of the socialist factions (including the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe) and the capitalism (the United States and Western Europe) after the Berlin wall was lifted in 1989. The world today has been able to form a neutral political ground between the two extremes going under the name 'global industrial nations'.

It is important that countries which confront each other can now negotiate, look in a rational direction and discuss the future of human beings. Countries can speak in many different voices, but all are respected. The multinational corporation interests (including the banks) which have stepped to the front have stopped the cold war and they can stop a hot war if it is in their interest. Their interest is their economic standing, or what they call 'the global economy'. They have created groups (the G7, for example), regions (the euro area, for example) and they even support the power structure of individual countries (the United States, Japan, China, Russia). They use their economic models to solve problems in the way that will bring them mutual benefit, with a promised trickle-down to people worldwide.

We cannot ignore conflicts that are the result of disagreement and economic disparity. In the present nuclear age, some say that it is improbable that a world war will ever happen. However, countries that hold nuclear weapons have been carrying out wars for decades. Conflicts in which millions are displaced and many thousands killed still occur frequently. Some believe that today the only potential conflict is between the West and the Muslim world. With foreign troops occupying nations in the Middle East and killings by drones, bombs and gunfire happening daily, one might worry about the future. Stability and economic control is sought by powerful corporations. However, war is a very profitable business for many of these same corporations. When taken as a whole, postmodernists are concerned at 'the empty reality' and the fullness of nothing.

As the prefix *post* implies, postmodernism is the product of a series of *other posts*, such as poststructuralism, postcolonialism, and it's also related to *des* such as destructuralism and dethesis...

At the beginnings, postmodernism is mainly used when referring to methods in composition and art critics might use it to describe innovative works of the second half of the twentieth century. It is said that postmodernism is the offspring of deconstruction and poststructuralism and is the dialogue or revolution against New Criticism. But, gradually, postmodernism has expanded its scope, taking in all of the material and spiritual life of the times. It takes all of the principles of philosophy and all of the approaches to every branches of science. Today, with postmodernism firmly established, the concepts of deconstruction, postcolonial criticism, New Historicism and others have all but disappeared from the press.

The expansion of postmodernism is quite spectacular and special because it follows a path which is full of thorns and challenges. Defining mainly the scope of activities in small fields, locality, temporality with no ambition of the universal or totalitarian, postmodernism takes on elements of mass things, junk put on the side of life, and turns them into important criteria, taking in values of the new era and immediately taking out values which have recently been established. So postmodern values never become universal or crowd others out. It is, as always, not valid to propose any new value to postmodernism. Any evolution takes place almost simultaneously and rather than a latter replacing a former, it's more like the new replacing the old in the simultaneous time.

Postmodernism functions as does of any philosophy by *deleting* (or *inheriting*) and *building*. Deleting obsolete universal truth and building, not a new truth, but scientific means to reach the truth, postmodernism has fiercely criticized grand narrative and has never aspired to turn into grand narrative itself. A 'dual code' is established in the foundations of postmodern philosophy. On the one hand it undermines the innocent and immortal confidence of the grand narratives and on the other hand it always makes fun of itself, renewing itself in order to avoid the cage of permanent discourse. Thus, irony becomes a property of postmodernism. Nuances of postmodern irony sometimes stop at the level of gently mocking, but sometimes a cynical or dark humour describes the misery of human beings in the age of chaos.

'Making new' of philosophy

Overall, postmodern philosophy is essentially a resurrection, the 'making new' of Friedrich Nietzsche's nihilism, Carl Marx's dialectics, Sigmund Freud's psychoanalysis, Martin Heidegger's ontologism, but postmodern philosophers almost dissolved the ideas of their cultural and social perspective. Starting with the principle of objecting to Jean-François Lyotard's grand narrative, Jacques Derrida offers deconstruction (Derrida, 1978), Jean Baudrillard initiates *simulacra* (Baudrillard, 1983) and Frederic Jameson researches Political Unconscious (Jameson, 1983)... All not unexpected since social existence has been a whole which is constantly moving.

Refusing the principle of encoding reality in the method of Semiotics, which is considered the manifestation of the totalitarian with its characteristic closeness, postmodernism proposes *decoding*, which means breaking down the encryption, not finding out what features are hidden in that code using an existing methodology.

Richard Rorty (1931–2007), an American philosopher, believed that postmodernism was the science of the communication process (Rorty, 2009). This view captures the spirit of postmodernism because postmodernists, when discussing whatever about philosophy, are also concerned with language. They accept that language works in life as a basis to illuminate social issues. They study the process and nature of communication to expound philosophical concepts. Through language, the postmodernist firmly established the territory of knowledge in the new era.

So what is the goal of postmodernism?

To answering this question one faces the same issues and questions that human beings always want to have answered: What is real independence, freedom, equality and happiness?

The essential difference is that postmodernism attempts to put people in a genuine nature with the complexities of oneself, and in a specific environment to promote the capacity of individual perception. Postmodernists don't avoid the weak-points of human beings, but sometimes they are tantalizing the out-dated moralists by declaring that human beings have died, the subject has died. They can affirm the value of what seemed worthless before. They can deny much of what was considered extremely valuable surrounding human life. In short, they want to radically change that which does harm to human beings, that which constitutes the privilege of a small interest group, that which gains dominant power over all human life.

Postmodernism thinks highly of the individual and the being. In this regard, postmodernists inherit the thinking of the philosopher Martin Heidegger (1889–1976) (Heidegger, 2010). They take the 'I' as the focal point for explaining any philosophical treatises. But the 'I' is not an intact 'I', but an 'I' that is shattered into pieces. These pieces continuously have a dialogue with each other in which the permanent dialogue is between the value-ego and the ego dissolving values of the value-ego.

'I' in self-awareness and dialogue with itself has created the interested double ego. René Descartes (1596–1650) enthusiastically declared, "I think, therefore I am", Jacques Lacan (1901–1981), a new descendant of Freud ridiculed the statement saying that it could not have a kind of 'I' that is both thinking and saying it is thinking. One ego is the subject of the statement and another is the subject of a subject of that statement (Lacan, 1968). This proved that when commenting or giving an idea of whatever, human beings usually have to divide bodies, such as Heidegger has done when he showed an ego existing and the other ego knowing of the existence. From this theory, postmodernists have claimed that it will not be able to obtain an absolute objective view because the subject always tends to make the self into another, and the ego is fictional in any circumstances it has faced.

Thus postmodernism is not on behalf of totalitarianism and full understanding, advocating an integration. In postmodernist slogans such as multi-value, multi-subject, non-centre and deconstruction, these are the vital principles. But where the boundary is they do not say. That depends on each culture, each of the institutions of a community or nation.

Another remarkable point in the philosophy of postmodernism is the effort to eliminate the obvious boundaries between rational and emotional awareness. Their argument is that both rationality and emotion come from a living organism. There will never be awareness of pure reason and vice versa. Each cognitive ability given is a synchronization of both rationality and emotion. So they propose the concept of *Corporeality* or *Bodiness*. By that, postmodernists believe that sexuality is an important discourse in the establishment of values and the perception of behaviour of human beings.

Linda Hutcheon, one of the leading theorists of American postmodernism, in the work *The Politics of Postmodernism*, section *What is postmodernism?* wrote: "Few words are more used and abused in discussions of contemporary culture than the word 'postmodernism'. As a result, any attempt to define the word will necessarily and simultaneously have both positive and negative dimensions. It will aim to say what postmodernism is but at the same time it will have to say what it is not. Perhaps this is an appropriate condition, for postmodernism is a phenomenon whose mode is resolutely contradictory as well as unavoidably political" (Hutcheon, 1989, p.1).

This observation of the researcher found that at time (1989) total agreement in the United States regarding postmodernism. But just 13 years later (in the issue reprinted in 2002), Linda Hutcheon spoke quite differently about the 'legitimization' of the concept: The issue is whether or not postmodernism is 'no conversation' because postmodernism has had a long history, written of by many authors around the world and a crowd of philosophers and critics with the number of literary and research works printed being several million copies. But more importantly, the postmodernists gave birth to – or coincided with – a new generation of readers who liked the principles of postmodern aesthetics. They believe that it is what they need in life and maybe that is the truth of life.

Truth is always in life. But it is whether they exist eternally or not that should be discussed. Postmodernism thinks highly of objective truth although at first hearing their arguments seem to be negative. Actually, they just deny the subjective unique way of approaching truth.

Does postmodernism deny rationality? It does not because postmodernists have been advocating for the legitimization of the higher knowledge that human beings have in life. Because of the way they use this rationale to brake rationality, postmodernists are criticized by people who do not understand them. The principles of game have always been applied in this idea of rationality. Just as the great writer Miguel de Cervantes constructed *Don Quixote* as a novel about a knight while his purpose was to openly mock the kind of knight novels which harmed progress by putting brains to sleep and satisfying the ordinary tastes of human beings, postmodernists have been breaking rationality in much the same way. Using positive rationality to wipe out negative rationalities which have become obsolete and trashy in real life is one of the operational principles of postmodernism.

By the use of language in the way called 'discourse', postmodernists formulate questions about the self, the nature of existence and the objective, subjective and cognitive abilities of human beings. They have found that most of what people 'worship' is problematic, not because it's unright but rather because it doesn't suit the human condition. They explain that it's not unright itself but it could be from people's approaches. The road to truth of human beings has now been so covered with footprints of practice that people are nowadays passive in approaching truth. When made aware of the oldness and the need to open a new road or using new vehicles people will be able to get to the truth.

Conclusion

Postmodernism never gives out truth but it does show the unsuitableness of much of what passes for truth and helps people to find the road to what might be the real truth of the age. While it must be done by language, it is a new language, the kind of language knowing to 'ironize', a language having high self-reflectivity which takes away all prejudices and stylizations by building a revolutionary non-centre, deconstruction and deself in order to bring it back to an original pure nature.

So what kind of researchers are those who initiated postmodernism? And who benefits from these revolutionary ideas?

They are great intellectuals of the era. They are white (mostly), and citizens of the advanced countries in the world such as England, France, Germany and the United States, those who experienced a privileged upbringing and economic status. However, they do not accept inherent privileges. They want a change, and those who would benefit the most are not them but the poor, the workers in the factory or in the field and not those in the laboratory. What postmodernists are doing coincides with the release of the creative energy of human beings, creating equality, democracy and autonomy for people through the effective use of knowledge in life. Postmodernism helps people approach and get closer to the truth, but each action depends on the individual.

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