

Comparison of Premodern, Modern, and Postmodern Views/Situation

Larry Kirkpatrick, HANDOUT, presentation 3, Northeast Washington Camp Meeting 2013-07-25, Sheridan Meadows, WA

	<i>Premodern</i>	<i>Modern</i>	<i>Postmodern</i>
1. Starting Point	God is beginning of all knowledge	<i>Knowing begins with the self.</i> “I think therefore I am”	Knowing begins with “I” <i>but there are seven billion “I’s,”</i> all different
2. Foundations	Some foundationalism. Knowledge can be based on self evident truths needing no support from religion or other external authority	Profoundly foundationalist	Profoundly <i>suspicious</i> of all foundationalism. Sees these “foundations” as mere products of finite human beings
3. Method	Some method	Rigorously controlled method	There are methods, but insists on many. There are many ways, none producing truer results than others
4. Objective knowledge	Obtainable and desirable	Obtainable and desirable	Objective knowledge is neither attainable nor desirable. This view is seen to be a very positive development
5. Universality of Truth	“Truth” transcends the historical and is universally true	“Truth” transcends the historical and is universally true	“Truth” does <i>not</i> transcend the historical nor is universal. All truth claims are only true for <i>some</i> people in <i>some</i> times in <i>some</i> places
6. Universe Open or Closed	Universe is “open.” Rigorous scientific relationships and understandings not worked out. God can operate via magic or science, a variety of means	Philosophical naturalism (becomes “science”). Matter, energy, time, space worked out. This is all that is. Leads to a “closed” universe with no God	“Open” to many methods. Less rigorous. Mystical appeals, pantheism, non-exclusive religious appeals, even superstition is acceptable
7. Authority	In the church	In the state and in self’s reason	In the self and in experience (<i>not</i> in any group or other entity)
8. Community	Local, congregation/church-centric	Incidental and generic. Changing and rearranging, re-sorting	Personal inner circle/also virtual (internet). Personal and impersonal
9. Personal Roles	Traditional	Traditional roles (e.g., providing, protecting, judging, fathering, mothering, educating) absorbed by state	Roles are determined by <i>personal preference</i> . Education shift towards autodidacticism (self-teaching)

NOTES: -- Similar squares highlighted to show similarities. In some cases, Premodern, Modern, and Postmodern columns all quite different.
 -- Chart created and adapted based esp. on D.A. Carson, *Becoming Conversant With the Emerging Church* (2005), pp. 87-98.

<p>“POSTMODERN[ISM] IS INCREDULITY TOWARD METANARRATIVES”</p> <p>Jean Francois Lyotard</p>	<p>“Lyotard makes a distinction between 'narrative knowledge' and 'scientific knowledge'---the latter being distinctly modern. . . Narrative knowledge is grounded in the custom of a culture and, as such, does not require legitimation. . . . Scientific knowledge, which considered itself to be a triumph over narrative knowledge, covertly grounds itself in a narrative. . . . Whenever science attempts to legitimate itself, it is no longer scientific but narrative, appealing to an orienting myth that is not susceptible to scientific legitimation. . . . Postmodernism is not incredulity toward narrative or myth; on the contrary, it unveils that all knowledge is grounded in such. . . . What characterizes the postmodern condition, then, is not a rejection of grand stories in terms of scope or in the sense of epic claims, but rather an unveiling of the fact that all knowledge is rooted in <i>some</i> narrative or myth. . . what Lyotard describes as a 'problem of legitimation.' . . . no knowledge is untainted by prejudice or faith commitments”</p> <p>(James K.A. Smith, <i>Who's Afraid of Postmodernism</i>, pp. 66, 67, 68, 69).</p>
<p>“THERE IS NOTHING OUTSIDE THE TEXT”</p> <p>Jacques Derrida</p>	<p>“It is not just that writing or texts are the portal through which we must pass in order to get to things or the gates that provide access to an uninterpreted reality; rather, when Derrida claims that there is nothing outside the text, he means there is no reality that is not always already interpreted through the mediating lens of language. Textuality, for Derrida, is linked to interpretation. To claim that there is nothing outside the text is to say that everything is a text, which means not that everything is a book, or that we live within a giant, all-encompassing book, but rather that everything must be interpreted in order to be experienced”</p> <p>(<i>Ibid.</i>, p. 39).</p>
<p>“POWER IS KNOWLEDGE”</p> <p>Michel Foucault</p>	<p>“Postmodernism is characterized by a deep hermeneutic of suspicion. This is why Foucault, following Nietzsche, describes his method in intellectual history as 'genealogy' or 'archaeology,' whose task is to uncover the secret, submerged biases and prejudices that go into shaping what is called the truth. There is no claim to truth that is innocent; there is no knowledge that simply falls into our minds from the sky, pristine and untainted. What might be claimed as obvious or self-evident is, in fact, covertly motivated by other interests---the interest of power. . . . To claim that power is knowledge, then, is to make a claim about the power relations that stand behind both institutions and ideals”</p> <p>(<i>Ibid.</i>, pp. 86, 87).</p> <p>“Foucault seeks out discontinuities, breaks in the chain, to undermine the notion that 'sameness' persists in a body or institution over time”</p> <p>(A.K.M. Adam, <i>What is Postmodern Biblical Criticism?</i> p. 46).</p>