

Apologetics – Postmodernism

Not architecture or art. Philosophical thought.

To explain all of postmodernism in a single message would be impossible. Instead, we will look only at the core tenant that shapes all postmodern thought.

Truth.

- Postmodernism asserts that truth is relative or is variable according to whoever relates to it.
- This also includes thoughts that truth is dependent on culture, education, gender, race, etc...

Lyotard's "Postmodern Condition" established the term and the central thought that there is incredulity towards metanarratives. Metanarratives being a story big enough to pull together philosophy and research, politics and art and relate them to one another with a unifying sense of direction. Examples would be Christianity, Marxism, Enlightenment and others.

There is an argument that words are only symbols, and meanings are not fixed.

3 main schools of thought govern this:

1. Truth is an illusion – Nietzsche – there is a disconnect between what is true and reality. If a coin gets so worn it loses its faces, it is no longer a coin, but now matters only as metal.
2. Truth is relative – Tarnas – reality is constructed in the mind, not perceived by it. Truth and reality are radically ambiguous. Here, the physical may not even exist. This is what shaped the thought behind the scene in the matrix – what is real? If by real you mean what we can sense, synapsis firing off in the brain...
3. Truth as pragmatic - Rorty - Truth is made rather than found. You cannot define true or good.

Essentially postmodern thinkers believe that we no longer discover the world, but rather construct the world through the concepts we bring to it.

Postmodernism thought is what is driving the majority of the thought processes governing society and certainly what is taught in universities today.

- That's why there are debates on gender
- Why some argue for equity above equality
- Why CRT exists
- Why crime is increasing in so many areas (part of a reason)
- Why abortion is considered ok by many

Yet this is most definitely not a new way of thinking.

John 18:37-38 Pilate therefore said to Him, "Are You a king then?" Jesus answered, "You say *rightly* that I am a king. For this cause I was born, and for this cause I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice." ³⁸ Pilate said to Him, "What is truth?" And when he had said this, he went out again to the Jews, and said to them, "I find no fault in Him at all.

What is truth?

Josh McDowell phrases it this way: "That which is true at all times in all places for all people."

God declares that He is truth. This is important.

- **John 14:6** Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.
- **John 16:13** However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own *authority*, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come.
- **John 17:17** Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth.

We will come back to what truth actually is

Disclaimer - Colossians 2:8 Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ.

The 3 main tenants of postmodernism thought:

1. Truth is inaccessible. All knowledge is fallible.
2. Truth needs a starting point. There must be a truth that does not owe it's credibility to another truth or belief.
3. Everything is interpretation.

Truth is inaccessible. All knowledge is fallible

- First of all, all knowledge is not fallible, rather when there are fallacies in our knowledge it simply means the knowledge was not sufficient.
- Even if someone believes this, there is no one that lives this way. In fact, all people live with the basic idea of truth in their everyday lives. That's why we try not to pick up trays directly from the oven. Or breathe underwater. Or jump off high buildings. We understand that there is truth.
- And if someone grabs a tray from the oven without burning themselves we don't change the idea of truth, we change our knowledge – Oh, the oven must not have been on.
- For one thing, if truth doesn't exist, then by definition his statement is also false. And how can relativists be certain about their position if "truth can't be known"? Apparently, the only one allowed to be dogmatic is the relativist! In order to reject truth, skeptics must imply the very thing they're denying. It's what scholars call a self-defeating statement.
- Our culture has become quite comfortable pontificating about the nature of reality and the absence of absolutes. Christians are chided into silence because "all beliefs are equally valid" and people are "sure that no one can be sure."
- Besides relativism's inherent logical flaws, the fact is, such platitudes just aren't livable. I doubt someone would remain tolerant of a bank teller who said, "You and your bank statement both say your account contains \$5,000. That may be true for you, but it's not true for me." We can talk as if the world is relative, but how we live proves that it is absolute.

- Truth is not inaccessible. It is taught and experienced all the time. Part of our education is learning to interpret experiences to align with truths, not the other way around.

What does the Bible say:

- **John 8:32** And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”
- **Romans 3:3-4** For what if some did not believe? Will their unbelief make the faithfulness of God without effect?⁴ Certainly not! Indeed, let God be true but every man a liar. As it is written: *“That You may be justified in Your words, And may overcome when You are judged.”*

Truth needs a starting point. There must be a truth that does not owe its credibility to another truth or belief.

- I actually agree with this statement.
- However, this statement, without God, is self-defeating. What is the starting point for this belief statement?
- Also, you cannot buy into this school of thought and any theory of world origin outside of intelligent design. They are in exceptional conflict.

What does the Bible say?

- **Hebrews 6:18** that by two immutable things (*God’s promise and Oath*), in which it *is* impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before *us*.
- **Deuteronomy 32:4** *He is* the Rock, His work *is* perfect; For all His ways *are* justice, A God of truth and without injustice; Righteous and upright *is* He.
- **Psalms 90:2** Before the mountains were brought forth, Or ever You had formed the earth and the world, Even from everlasting to everlasting, You *are* God.
- **Hebrews 13:8** Jesus Christ *is* the same yesterday, today, and forever.
- **1 Timothy 3:15** but if I am delayed, *I write* so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.

Everything is interpretation.

- Perspective does not undermine knowledge
- JP Moreland says “It is not that we cannot see reality itself. In fact, through effort we can look at things from a different perspective and either confirm or disconfirm our previous viewpoint. Habit-forming beliefs do not stand between a person and reality as do glasses. Rather, they habitualize ways of seeing and thinking which, through effort, can be changed or retained, hopefully on the basis of comparing them with reality itself.
- If you have never seen a chair, and only see it from the back, you may not understand it completely. Your unwillingness to circle around it, look underneath it, see it from all perspectives does not change the truth of what a chair is.
- Your laziness to try to see things from other perspectives does not negate truth. This is a very high form of selfishness.

What does the Bible say?

- **John 1:14** And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.
- **Ephesians 1:13-14** In Him you also *trusted*, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise,¹⁴ who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.
- **2 John 1:2** because of the truth which abides in us and will be with us forever:

How to recognize truth

2 Thessalonians 2:9-12 The coming of the *lawless one* is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders,¹⁰ and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved.¹¹ And for this reason God will send them strong

delusion, that they should believe the lie,¹² that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

1. Truth is divine. - God is the one Source and sole Author of truth. Truth can be known only by divine revelation. Sin is whatever God says it is. Judgment is whatever God says it is. Salvation is what God says it is. Heaven and hell are what God says they are. It matters not what man says but simply what God says.
 - a. **John 15:26** “But when the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the *Spirit of truth* who proceeds from the Father, He will testify *of Me*.
 - b. **John 14:6** Jesus said to him, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.

2. Truth is absolute. - This means that only what is of truth is true. Everything contrary to the truth is a lie. Truth is exclusive, not inclusive. Two contradictory statements cannot be true at the same time.
 - a. $2+2=4$, never anything else.
 - b. You cannot be a sinner and righteous. Pick one.
 - c. If Jehovah is God, then there is no other.

3. Truth is singular. - truth is a single entity. It does not exist in bits and pieces of unrelated ideas or disconnected data. The Bible most often uses the definite article when speaking of the truth. Truth can never be merely a truth, as if it exists in fragments from various sources. Truth is not a collection of ideologies gleaned from detached sources.
 - Because truth is one body of truth, it is always internally consistent. It never contradicts itself. Truth always speaks with one voice and is always in perfect agreement with itself.
 - This is why you can't believe in science and gender fluidity. Why you can't believe in evolution and in homosexuals being born that way. Whatever belief system you ascribe to must not exist in pieces, or that will lead to confusion. The Bible holds together all truth.

- This is why you cannot believe in the Bible and weird scientific principles like evolution or world origins apart from God. Truth cannot be compartmentalized.
4. Truth is objective. It is not discovered by personal feelings nor determined by private intuitions. It is definite, definitive, and conclusive. Truth is not abstract, vague, or nebulous. It is accurately stated by the fixed meaning of words and can be observed, discussed, studied, analyzed, believed, proclaimed, and defended.
 - It is impartial, unbiased, unprejudiced, and non-partisan. It speaks to all people in all places the same.
 - There is no my truth. We have a word for that – opinion. Truth is only truth if it is true for all.
 5. Truth is immutable. Truth is the same yesterday, today, and forever. Right is always right and wrong is forever wrong. Society may try to redefine morality. Culture may try to reclassify its mores. Truth is permanent, fixed, and established. It is inflexible, unvarying, constant, lasting, enduring, timeless, unchanging. Therefore, truth is always relevant. It is always current, always contemporary. Truth addresses the issues of the day with penetrating insight. It is never outdated, never obsolete, never expired. Truth never ceases to be true.
 6. Truth is authoritative. It always makes demands upon us and never offers mere suggestions. Truth speaks with the voice of sovereignty. When we live in denial of truth, there are consequences. Truth has the final word in all matters, telling us how to worship and how to walk. It tells us how to follow Christ.