

Lecture 4 – Postmodernism C: Epistemology; D: Consequences I, Part 1

“Reality isn’t what it used to be.” Anderson

Key Terms

Postmodernism, modernism, epistemology, relativism, pluralism

Objectives

- *Articulate the way in which postmodernism approaches questions of epistemology.
- *Identify some of the consequences of this epistemology.

Introduction

Characteristics of Postmodernism:

Postmodernism:

- definition:
- understood in three areas:

C. Epistemology

Premodern

Modernism [Enlightenment to recent past]

Postmodernism

1. There is nothing transcendent (neither God nor anything else) that understands everything – so there is no objective truth available to us.
Examples (Obvious Man)
2. In knowing, I am not ever free, I always come to every issue with prejudices, with beliefs, with a background – and these ‘glasses’ determine what I ‘see.’
3. Reason is a weak tool, and can never lead us to true knowledge, for it is constrained by our prejudices. Reason and the ‘claim’ of knowledge are weapons.
4. Postmodernism is passionately anti-abstract. Sartre wanted to create a philosophy “that makes human life possible.”
5. There are no grounds for optimism about humanity or the future. Not even scientific knowledge is certain.
Examples

D. Consequences I

What is my neighbor thinking?

1. Human reason is inadequate to lead us to truth
 - No possibility of finding objective truth or absolute truth
 - Only personal truth
 - a. Pluralism reinforces this
 - Descriptive pluralism [pluralism within five miles of Covenant Seminary]:
 - Relativistic pluralism:
 - Legislative pluralism:
 - b. American democracy