

On Defining "Postmodernity"

(the cultural worldview/perspective currently in vogue)

After much research on Postmodernism, Dr. Millard Erickson describes the basic motifs of the movement through the listing of the following tenets:

1. The objectivity of knowledge is denied;
2. Knowledge is uncertain and there are no true first-principles;
3. All-inclusive systems of explanation are impossible;
4. The inherent goodness of knowledge is also questioned;
5. As a result of the above observations, progress is rejected;
6. Truth through the individual is minimized as the collective community now serves as the authoritative voice by which truth is determined;
7. The scientific method is called into question. Truth is not known simply through reason, but through a variety of other channels.

Postmodernizing the Faith (PtF); pp. 18,19

Please note: **Every** tenet above relates to the issue of knowledge/truth methods - sources leaned upon in order to speak authoritatively toward the building of one's perspective. The platform or fundamental starting point of the Postmodern is relativism! The ways in which our society is expressing this fundamental worldview assumption are many. Relative truth, in general, is only the starting point. "All religions are one" is a relative religious statement. "Question reality" is a relative mandate (ever so contradictory) about what is real. Moral relativism is yet another category where a truth standard is denied. It has even come to the point where language itself, they say, is hopelessly relative and that little to no communication can really take place. Dr. Erickson highlights this relative language game when he offers his suggestion as to how to minister to the postmodern:

Erickson encourages the reading audience to help those trapped by a relativistic worldview commitment by leading them to discern the inconsistency of their position. "I believe that we may need to help the deconstructionist [a relativist who goes about tearing down or casting doubt upon others' worldview presuppositions] 'hit bottom,' like an alcoholic, before there will be any significant sense of need to move beyond that approach." Dr. Erickson goes on to share the following outstanding example, one that once again illustrates the relative perspective in the area of communication/language.

"When we do that [help the relativist to hit bottom], we will find some frustration and resistance, but it will also bring to the surface the impossibility of living consistently

with a thoroughly radical postmodern view. This was brought out rather dramatically in the case of Derrida.* John Searle wrote a response to an article of Derrida's, challenging and criticizing several of his conceptions. Searle's article was eleven pages in length. In his *ninety-three*-page reply, Derrida objected that Searle's statement had been unfair to him, and had at several points misunderstood and misstated his position. He even asserted at one point that what he had meant should have been clear and obvious to Searle. I consider that an incredibly nondeconstructionist, nonpostmodern response for someone who maintains that the meaning of a text is not in the author's intention, but in what the reader finds it saying to him or her [— a *fundamental* tenet of the relative linguist!]. Michael Fischer observes that some of Derrida's followers are embarrassed by this inconsistency between Derrida's profession and his actual practice in this article. Yet John Ellis maintains that those same disciples 'generally have also done exactly what embarrassed them when they saw Derrida doing it (i.e., they too routinely accuse Searle of misunderstanding, missing the point of, and misstating Derrida's position).' Similarly, Frank Lentricchia accuses the 'Yale group' of misconstruing Derrida's writing by 'ignoring ... an important part of the author's intention.' If, however, the position of deconstruction is that the author's intention does not control the meaning of his or her text, then this would seem to be an inconsistent position. We must help finish deconstructing the horse [the one who holds to the relative-truth language position who is seeking to knock down / expose as false, other worldview perspectives], before the horse can be de-deconstructed, or reconstructed." [bracket material mine]

(PtF; pp. 156,157)

Simply put, this issue of relativism, which is at the core of Postmodernity, brings those who hold to such a position into a lifestyle of hypocrisy - they cannot live their position! Our Endurance Ministries' handouts will serve to well-illustrate the potential in the Truth Foundation tool for the sake of the Gospel and ultimately, for the glory of the One who is Truth. We are called to speak His Truth in love so as to help those who have been blinded by the deceptions of our day see and embrace the Truth and so be set free. John 8: 31, 32. **One other thing:** This Postmodern relativism continues to have strong undermining effect upon the Word of God in that so many today appeal to aspects of interpretation. We have our hands full simply focusing on the explicit data of the Word so let's keep to what the Word of God actually says while not forsaking His Counsel that we are to be doers of His gracious revelation ... unto His glory and praise.

* Note: Jacques Derrida was a very influential Postmodern French deconstructionist.

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