

Worldview Apologetics

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Week 4: Postmodernism

Postmodernism: The Basic Idea

There's no such thing as objective reality.



"The truth is out there."
The X-Files

"The truth isn't out there."
The Postmodernist

- Why Postmodernism?**
- The disillusionment with 'modernism'
 - Science isn't the savior after all
 - Human reason hasn't brought agreement
 - Globalization, pluralism, egalitarianism
 - The "death of God"
 - No objective morality → Relativism
 - No transcendent values → Nihilism
 - No absolute truth → Subjectivism/Skepticism

Postmodernism: Theology

- There is no objective ultimate reality
- 'Reality' is just a human construction
 - It depends on what we think and how we speak
 - No distinction between appearance and reality
- There is a God... if you think there is!
 - Religious truths are person/community-relative
- But there's really no God in the biblical sense

Postmodernism: Anthropology

- We are whatever we think or say we are
 - In effect, we are whatever we choose to be
- There is no such thing as "human nature"
 - No objective purpose or meaning to life
 - No objective obligations or expectations
 - No objective constraints on our thinking /behavior
- No intrinsic authorities or hierarchies
- No inequalities and no boundaries

Postmodernism: Knowledge

- No one really knows anything!
- There is no objective truth or knowledge
 - 'Truth' is a human social construction
 - 'Truth' is relative to individuals or societies
- There are no universal standards of reason
 - One man's logic is another man's lunacy!
- Experience is a better guide than reason
 - Go with your heart rather than with your head

Postmodernism: Ethics

- There is no objective good/evil or right/wrong
- There are no absolute moral standards
 - ‘Morality’ is a human cultural convention
 - ‘Morality’ is relative to individuals or societies
 - One man’s virtue is another man’s vice!
- There is only one absolute: *tolerance*
 - Never say that those who disagree are wrong
 - Never say that those who differ are immoral

Postmodernism: Salvation

- There is no real problem (objectively speaking)
- Our most serious problem is...
 - *Intolerance* – we don’t accept others who differ
 - *Inequality* – some people have things others don’t
- The solution to the problem...
 - Eradicate intolerance (by re-education or by force)
 - Eradicate inequality (by re-education or by force)

Tool #1: Consistency

- Are there really no objective truths?
 - What about “There are no objective truths”?
- Is it universal tolerance possible *in principle*?
 - You can’t consistently tolerate intolerance
- Christian worldview:
 - There is objective truth and one right worldview
- Postmodernist worldview:
 - There is no objective truth and no right worldview

Tool #4: Coherence

- Are intolerance and inequality real problems?
 - Only if you assume that Postmodernism is false!
- Christian worldview:
 - Tolerance *properly understood* is a moral virtue
 - Some inequalities are bad, but not necessarily all
- Postmodernist worldview:
 - There are no absolute truths or moral standards
 - Yet intolerance and inequality must be eradicated!

Tool #5: Conscience

- Are there no absolute moral standards?
 - There are some near-universal moral intuitions
- Morality cannot be relative to individuals
 - *Example:* Jeffrey Dahmer
 - *Example:* Jerry Sandusky
- Morality cannot be relative to societies
 - *Example:* Nazi Germany
 - *Example:* Hindu custom of *Sati* (widow burning)

Tool #6: 'Livability'

- Is universal tolerance possible *in practice*?


