

POSTMODERN CONDITION & ART

It became apparent to many that the worldview fostered through Modernism (and by the Western humanist tradition) was flawed, corrupt, and oppressive. Both recent events (i.e. since the World War Two), and the perception of those events, has given rise to the notion that Modernism has played itself out and is now floundering and directionless.

If Modernism was at an end, we are now facing a new period. The name given this new period is Postmodernism.

The seemingly anti-modern stance involves a basic rejection of the tenets of Modernism; that is to say, a rejection of the doctrine of the supremacy of reason, the notion of truth, the belief in the perfectibility of man, and the idea that we could create a better, if not perfect, society. This view has been termed deconstructive postmodernism.

One compact definition is that **postmodernism rejects modernism's grand narratives** of artistic direction, eradicating the **boundaries between high and low forms of art**, and disrupting conventions with **collision, collage, and fragmentation**.

"**Pluralism and diversity**" are other defining features, including addressing questions of **identity** and **embracing all forms** as equally valid.

PHENOMENOLOGY

Merleau-Ponty's central thesis in "The Phenomenology of Perception" (1945) is what he later called the "**primacy of perception**."

In it he argued humans first perceive the world, then we do philosophy (or think).

This critique of the Cartesian notion "I think, therefore I am", together with Descartes' dualism of mind and body calls into question our primary way of existing in the world. The Cartesian concept of consciousness is rejected in favor of an intersubjective conception or dialectical concept of consciousness.

What is characteristic of his account of perception is the centrality that the body plays.

We perceive the world through our bodies; we are embodied subjects, involved in existence.