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A Critical Analysis of Some Ideals of Postmodernism in Various Fields of Knowledge and Morality

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Abstract

Postmodernism was born under Western episteme and is based on the rejection of the narratives given by modernity. The first and foremost characteristic of postmodernism is the rejection of absolutism including absolute truth and it propagates relativism in every field as the only possible solution. Moreover, it does not endorse absolute values and beliefs, contemplates human identity as the construction of society and denies essentialism. It does not endorse the idea that values are a source of development and rejects the idea that human actions are influenced by predetermined ideals. The texts that have been the source of change and guidance for millions of people throughout the history have been devoid of all their sacredness and authenticity using the theory of deconstruction. This theory gives every reader the right to interpret every text according to his own will and liking. Postmodern debates have influenced every field of knowledge. Even the morality and the value system endorsed by postmodernism is relative and subjective instead of absolute and objective. This research paper is based on the descriptive method and provides a critical examination of postmodernism and its impact on various fields of knowledge.

Keywords: epistemology, meta-narratives, pluralism, postmodernism, relativism, values

Introduction

Postmodernism is a dynamic intellectual movement with its influence in various areas including education. It enjoys great prominence and it has expanded from the West to the Muslim world. It is taken as a serious topic not only in scientific circles but also in political, economic, social, educational and other areas

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of life. Postmodernism is not the name of any determined or unified perception; rather, it is the “*Denial of Doctrines.*” Western man, in the absurd world created by modernity, was desperate due to the failure in the quest of truth; consequently, he proclaimed that there is nothing absolute about truth. According to the postmodernist view, there is no existence of universal truth in the world, instead the concept of universal truth is merely a utopia. Not only truth but also moral values, aesthetic sense or any other taste; all of these are relative. A concept or idea that is acceptable to someone can be unacceptable for another person at the same time. It means that it is more concerned with individual likes and dislikes and circumstances. So, a singular fact may be true in particular circumstances at a particular point in time and may be false in other circumstances. There can be nothing in the world which is true always and true in every aspect. According to postmodernism, democracy, freedom, progress, God, communism and other assertions often called “mega-narratives” have the same status as mythologies had in the past. Postmodern thinkers are of the view that they constitute many ‘truths’ which, if followed, would result in a better civilized world. The most prominent effect of postmodernism is that it diminishes the interest of people in views, doctrine and ideology. The modern man adhered to particular views and doctrines and he was enthusiastic and motivated to preach and promulgate them. Postmodern man has no particular goals and set principles. Therefore, Stephan Mitchel called this age “*The Age of no Ideology.*” Postmodernists consider that modern civilization and knowledge are established on some assumptive truths. So, according to them it is necessary to deconstruct all these constituted truths. Consequently, literature, fine arts, arts, values, morality, social rules, etc. all are to be redesigned and redeveloped.

2. Literature Review

Postmodernism is a movement which appeared as a reaction of modernism. The main focus of modernism is the quest for truth and progress, while postmodernism emphasizes relativity, creation of realities and inherent instability of everything. Modernism advocates certainty of things and of meta-narratives, while postmodernism does not believe in meta-narratives, the certainty of politics, values, moralities and education. There are no universal principles according to postmodernists; rather, there are multiple realities. There is no universal and theoretical foundation in postmodernism. Postmodernists believe that values are relative and vary from culture to culture. Some modernists believe that this movement initiated from the writings of Richard Rorty (1931-2007).¹ Gitlin argues

¹A, Rahnama, *An Introduction on Moral Education* (Tehran: Ayizh, 2009).

that if modernism has destroyed the older unity and collapsed itself, then postmodernism is strongly influenced by the remnants of modernism and is a parasite on it.² The birth place of postmodernism is France and the main proponents of postmodernism are Jacques Derrida (1930-2004), Michel Foucault (1926-1984), Jean-Francois Lyotard (1924-1998), and other philosophers of 19th and 20th centuries like Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900), Martin Heidegger (1889-1976), Soren Kierkegaard (1813-1855), Sandrys Peirce (1839-1914), William James (1842-1910) and John Dewey (1859-1952). It is widely considered that it was Nietzsche who was the first to propagate the postmodern ideals. He, in many of his writings, is clearly seen as a relativist philosopher and thinker. His famous book *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*³ gives an account of his philosophy. He was also the originator of the famous dictum “God is dead”,⁴ which means that all the authorities over man including the authority of religion is a thing of the past. These words show that according to him there is no longer any credible, objective and permanent source of moral justification. In his book *Antichrist*, he divided morality into two versions, master’s morality and slave’s morality.⁵ He said, “there are no moral phenomena, only moral interpretations of phenomena,”⁶ In this way Nietzsche was in the favor of perspectivism. J. F Lyotard says, “The language of science and the language of ethics and politics hold a profound relation and this relationship constitutes the cultural viewpoint of the West.”⁷

These philosophers are considered as the founders of postmodernist thoughts and can be considered as big critics of modernism. Although, the ideas of postmodernism are critically different from modernism, however, both have a common nature, ground and senses except some of its elements.⁸ There are many

²H. A. Ozmen, and M. S. Crower, *Philosophical Fundamentals of Education*, G. Motaghifar et al., Trans. (Qom: Imam Khomeini Educational Institute, 2000)

³F. Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (London: Dover Publications, 1999).

⁴Ibid.

⁵Ibid.

⁶F. Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale (London: Penguin Classics, 2003) 108.

⁷J. F. Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, trans. Geoff Bennington, 1st edition (June 21, 1984) (Minnesota, : University Of Minnesota Press, 1984).

⁸H. A. Ozmen, and M. S. Crower, *Philosophical Fundamentals of Education*, G. Motaghifar et al., Trans., (Qom: Imam Khomeini Educational Institute, 2000); H. Poorshafei, and N. Arian, *Postmodernism and its Implications in Religious Education* (:IstambulIslam and Educational Researches, 2009).

recent thinkers who remain in total or partial disagreement with postmodernism and have seriously criticized it. One of the most important figures in this regard is Jürgen Habermas. He, in his seminal work *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*⁹, confronts postmodernism at the level of society and “communicative action.”

3. The Nature and Characteristics of Postmodernism

3.1 Postmodernism and Modernity

Although experts believe that there are many fundamental differences between modernism and postmodernism; however, there are some philosophers who argue that postmodernism is a part of modernity with some of its claims and its critical approach and due to its fundamental and humanist commonalities with modernism. In fact, some of its claims are differently reproduced and restructured. In this way, it can be claimed that postmodernism is the extension and explanation of modernism. On the other hand, it has fundamental differences with modernity regarding the nature of meta-narratives and absolute truth. Indeed, postmodernists want to change the dominating factors of morality in the West in a more precise and moderate way. The philosophers of modernity consider reason as the identity of human beings and highest level of being. Modern world gives a special privilege to reason and perception and denies the validity of revelation. Due to Cartesian subjectivism, the individual becomes the center and origin of everything due to his faculty of reason and perception. In this way, the authenticity of wisdom in the modern world is above board and it has become its fundamental characteristic. However, the strong criticism by Kant (1724-1804) on theoretical and practical reason, criticism by humanist philosophers like Nietzsche and others and the work of Max Weber (1864-1920) providing the critique of reason has caused it to lose its validity and authority in the postmodern world. Therefore, postmodernists reject the authenticity of reason and include multiple external factors impacting and influencing the behavior of the observer. In this way, they reject the concept of certainty, totality and necessity that is the most fundamental and prominent feature of the rationalists.¹⁰

3.2 Postmodernism and Moral Relativism

Postmodern theorists do not provide any authentic theory regarding values and morality. Due to their particular system of belief they just attack absolute values

⁹Jürgen Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity: Twelve Lectures*, trans. Frederick G. Lawrence, Reprint edition (Cambridge, Mass: The MIT Press, 1990).

¹⁰Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, 1984.

especially those given by religion. To talk about an absolute and objective value system in the perspective of postmodernism is quite contradictory because this school is fundamentally against foundationalism. The identity of postmodernism is determined by the destruction of meta-narrative and it is opposed to any objective criterion-based value system. Postmodernists are fully against the principle of ‘totality’ in morality and are at total disagreement with any universal values. Postmodernists have a concrete belief that there is no single and constant reality existing in this world due to their post-constructive background.¹¹ Postmodernists reject objectivism and focus on “mutual mentality.” According to postmodernists, being a social creature human beings grow up in a particular environment with special values, cultures and goals. This is the reason that they need special presumptions and particular goals which affect the research and study of researcher.¹²

Postmodernists do not believe in the concept of universal morality, universal truth and spiritual values. Instead, they believe in relativity in all areas of life. In this way, there is no specific value system which exists in this world for them. Thus everyone has his own values, approaches and value preferences.¹³ Values and education have no objective and absolute criteria according to them. Richard Rorty preferred a contingent moral nature with activism and rejected the concept of fundamentalism as a replacement of activism. Activism as similar to the school of Dewey, in this school of thought, the main concept of morality is experience. Relativity of morality, the importance of experience and the rejection of absolute values are concepts similar to the school of John Dewey’s activism concerning moral and educational matters.¹⁴ We are living, they claim, in a universe with numerous values and multiple sources of values and there is no concept of a single value system or a single source for values. Human beings can accept any values concerning and matching with their social self.¹⁵

¹¹H. A. Ozmen, and M. S. Cramer, *Philosophical Fundamentals of Education*, Trans., G. Motaghifar et al., (Qom: Imam Khomeini Educational Institute, 2000).

¹²S. Beheshti, *Philosophical Contemplations in Education* (Tehran: Beynolmelal, 2009). M. Farmahini, *Postmodernism and Education* (2nd ed.). (Tehran: Ayizh, 2010), 282.

¹³A Rahnama, *An Introduction on Moral Education* (Tehran: Ayizh, 2009).

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵H. Poorshafei, and N. Arian, *Postmodernism and its Implications in Religious Education* (Istanbul: Islam and Educational Researches, 2009).

3.3 Rejection of Common Nature

Postmodernists reject definite and constant truths in ontological topics and they also reject the common origin of human beings. They believe that human identity is constructed by national and local culture and these have a strong influence on human identity. They share a concrete belief that human identity is constructed by three fundamental societal elements including gender, social class and race. The personality of man is mostly a manifestation of his society and his culture, where he has grown up, and this is the main reason that makes him different from others in nature. He is also influenced by his education and the values, which he has adopted in his society. These elements have a strong impact on his personality. Also, they claim that human beings do not have the same nature. There exist multiple realities within a person and there is no single reality that would be constant throughout his life. The subject (human) of postmodernists lives in the present and has no meaningful linkages with his past and with his future.¹⁶ Postmodernists believe that there are no intrinsic, natural and internal values and the existing values are the product of cultural and social factors and are cultivated through discussion. They reject the particularity of human nature, as a source of values. Contrarily, they believe that values are constructed.¹⁷

3.4 Postmodernism and Metaphysics (Religion)

Postmodernists are against ontology and they do not give any significance to religious or metaphysical topics and debates. This is one of their fundamental principles. According to them, human beings are the source of all values, realities and knowledge and they forcefully reject all branches of knowledge related to metaphysical and supernatural truths. Postmodern school of thought strongly rejects any external power or the concept of God as well as theological beliefs and the concept of religion. They believe that whatever exists in this universe has a material, concrete and tangible shape entailed with constructed local realities. Thus, they do not endorse any religious tradition, the concept of God and any metaphysical phenomenon. They believe in an empirical world and posit that there is no trace of material dualism and a spiritual world.¹⁸

¹⁶H. Poorshafei, and N. Arian, *Postmodernism and its Implications in Religious Education*, 2, 5-60.

¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸M Farmahini, *Postmodernism and Education* (2nd ed.). (Tehran: Ayizh, 2010).

3.4.1 Reality as “Constructed” Not as “Objective”

One of the fundamentals of postmodernists is their assumption that reality is constructed and it is subjective instead of objective. In their view, human society is a construct and change is the only constant value in the very nature of human beings. They are of the opinion that facts cannot be discovered but they can be constructed. Therefore, in their philosophical tradition, they give an undue place to fortune, luck and incidents.¹⁹ They say that observation is something related to the loaded or theoretical matter. It means that observation is mostly influenced by previous knowledge and the accepted values of the researcher. The same is the case in social sciences where a research only focuses on objective realities with all its presumptions and value judgments.²⁰ The idea of “auxiliary presumptions” given by Duhem and Quine shows that knowledge is an interconnected network dependent upon a man’s observations. Poppers believes that we cannot find definite truth. It is beyond human access. He used his famous term “justified firmness and decisiveness” in his book *Theoretical Research*. According to him, a researcher should believe in fundamental reasonableness and should consider that there is enough evidence for the reasonableness of his research. Dewey says that we should search for such beliefs which are reasonably convincing.²¹ In this way, we can sum up that reality is a constructed matter and it is not independent of social values, traditions and needs. Reality is a social matter and the result of social beliefs.²²

3.5 Pluralism

Pluralism is basically a belief system in which the denial of pre-experimental, definite, and everlasting realities is a fundamental component. Pluralism is one of the most important traditions in postmodernist fundamentals, following the denial of the ontological system. Postmodernists have a firm belief in pluralism. They believe that all beliefs are the product of special circumstances and conditions and prove true only in those particular circumstances.²³

¹⁹Ibid; N. Noddings, *Philosophy of Education* (Stanford University: West View Press, A Member of Perseus Books, L.L.C. Published in United States of America ,1995)

²⁰G. Ritzer, and B. Smart, *Handbook of Social Theory* (Georgetown: Sage Publication, 2001), 35.

²¹John Dewey, *Human Nature and Conduct* (Online Publications: Cosimo Classics, 2007).

²²H. Poorshafei, and N. Arian, *Postmodernism and its Implications in Religious Education*, 2009.

²³Ibid.

3.6 Language

Postmodernists reject the results influenced by empiricism and objectivism. This is the reason that they also reject analytical philosophy. Their main focus is language in education and theoretical discussion. Modernists admire reason, whereas postmodernists give the same value to language. The reason behind giving importance to language is to provide a path separate from objectivism; thus, education and values are formed and expressed by language in the postmodernist perspective. Hence, language remains not only a tool of communication but it is everything according to postmodernists. We receive our identity and our mentality through language. Our thoughts, ideas, values and identity are reflected through language. Wittgenstein's language games have influenced postmodernists. Therefore, they consider that a word's meaning is not independent. It is dependent on the kind of relation we produce between word meaning and context. In this way, word brings us a frame of understanding which if it is replaced then it not only can provide different meaning but also provides opposite meaning. Language and speech are also not considered equal and synonymous. There are some speeches that can be produced in a particular language only and vocabularies can produce different relations among them and combine them in different ways.²⁴

3.7 Postmodernism and Epistemology

Postmodernists reject philosophical fundamentals and provide their own fundamentals. They do not emphasize epistemology in epistemological discussion; rather, they emphasize knowledge-socialism and try to prove a close relation between knowledge and power. It shows that they have accepted the transition from epistemology.²⁵ They are of the opinion that what we imagine contrary to that reality is more complicated. Reality is not something which is related to objective and predetermined issues. These are human beings who format and construct reality according to their own needs, cultural traditions and values.

3.8 Relativism

Postmodernists do not believe in the universal, the definite and the constant. Instead, they adopt the notion that knowledge is relative and influenced by values, cultures and traditions. They also reject the universality of mathematical principles and universal laws. They justify their claim with the logic that these mathematical

²⁴M Farmahini, *Postmodernism and Education*, 2010.

²⁵N. Noddings, *Philosophy of Education* (Stanford University: West View Press, A Member of Perseus Books, L.L.C. Published in United States of America ,1995), 27.

principles have a relative totality when compared to other propositions.²⁶ Lyotard said that we should doubt a story until it verifies a knowledge production framework. He used the term “empirical science paranormal justification” for this method. Lyotard, for the first time, introduced his famous meta-narrative which claims the subjectivity and relativity of knowledge. It says that there is no theory, interpretation, knowledge and perception that is definite, absolute and constant.²⁷ Postmodernists have a firm belief in the strength of beliefs. They say that beliefs which are strong and firm can be considered as definite theory. On the other hand, we can say that beliefs can be proved false because what can be seen as certain superficially can be a misunderstanding. There are many beliefs which seem definite and obvious but they can be false. According to H. L. Mencken, “The most expensive stupidity is that we romantically believe in something untrue. This is human’s main job.”²⁸

3.9 Social-Cultural Identity

Postmodernists give more emphasis to the freedom of individuals and they are against the prevailing system of the world. They represent an anti-imperialist, anti-monarchy thinking. Although they accept authority as a personal characteristic, yet they do not accept it as a source of theological determinism. They consider human beings as a constructed and forced object and they are constructed by the most dominant factors affecting the society, such as culture. Postmodernists do not believe in the concept or theory of ‘person’ or ‘independent self’ or ‘I,’ although they have a strong faith in the conception of self constructed as a ‘social-cultural identity.’ Thus, there is no original ‘self’ that exists in this constructed world. To understand individual identity and behavior, there is a need to identify and understand the social relation network. If we want to know somebody, we need to understand his social-cultural milieu.²⁹

3.10. The Idea of History

Postmodernists are very much against the belief of historical fatalism and any prediction for future. There is no concept of historical lawfulness in history and in this regard, they strongly reject Auguste Comte’s concept of historical materialism

²⁶N. Noddings, *Philosophy of Education*, 1995.

²⁷M. Tajik, *Epistemology Crisis in the Globalization Period, Globalization Proceedings, Opportunities and Challenges of Iran’s Education System*, 2004.

²⁸H. L. Mencken, *Treatise on Right and Wrong* (New York City: Knopf Doubleday, 1936) 43.

²⁹S. Beheshti, *Philosophical Contemplations in Education* (Tehran: Beynolmelal, 2009); Farmahini, *Postmodernism and Education*, 2010.

about lawfulness. They also declare that the idea of certain historical stages is unacceptable and unreasonable. No one can predict the future of the world. Hence, it is unnecessary to categorize the future of the world as either good or bad because it is unpredictable. Postmodernists also strongly reject such type of theories like ‘the end of history’ given by Fukuyama and the ‘end of philosophy’ given by Heidegger. They consider both theories as unreasonable.³⁰

4. The Collective Ideals of Postmodernism

4.1 Institutionalization of Pluralism

With pluralistic beliefs, postmodernists believe that human life has no particular and fatal goal, rather it has variable and multiple goals based on its values. The collective goal of a society should be to provide acceptance of multiple values and cultures.³¹ Postmodernists argue that the western societies should strive for globalization and cultural homogenization with this perception. They believe that social institutions should be the place of social and political grooming and all stakeholders should play their role to save the world from monarchies and despotic systems. The goal is to produce different identities of individuals on an equal ground so that they may fight challenges and inequalities and develop fundamental human rights.³²

4.2 Decentralizing Authority

Postmodernists are hostile towards any authoritarianism and any value system that considers itself as central, indestructible and pervasive. They reject any authoritarianism and dogmatism and adopt social and cultural values. They propagate that the whole system of a society should be based and institutionalized on principles expounding what you like for yourself also like for others in the society. Social and educational methods should be developed which generate a sense of responsibility toward the outsiders and the marginalized. Marginalized does not mean geographically marginalized people; rather, it refers to those who are socially, culturally and economically marginalized.³³ Regarding education, an American theorist Henry Giroux has proposed a type of education system known as “Boundary Education System” in which many traditional goals of education are

³⁰M Farmahin, *Postmodernism and Education*, 2010.

³¹H. Poorshafei, and N. Arian, *Postmodernism and its Implications in Religious Education*, 2009)

³²S. Beheshti, *Philosophical Contemplations in Education* (Tehran: Beynolmelal, 2009).

³³Ibid.

ignored. This education system provides various types of engagements for students with multiple references and resources that can provide many experiences, cultural codes and languages. It means that students can discover these codes and apply them critically and be aware of their limitations within the boundaries set by this education system.

4.3 Rejection of Supremacy and Establishment of Justice

Postmodernists criticize centralized concepts such as globalization, monarchy and many other national, racial, religious and gender biases. They consider it their mission and goal to make societies free of these injustices and biases. This is the reason that in their collective system setting the common man free from these injustices and biases is the most important goal. They stress that the system should bring changes in the cultural understanding governing the world. Individuals should know that injustices and cruelties ought to be finished. They also must know that how much their experience influences the social conditions.³⁴

4.4 Training for Self-Determination

According to postmodernists, acquiring scientific knowledge should not be the goal of life. The goal should be to prepare individuals to participate in social and political fields, bring changes in favor of marginalized groups and end the oppressive despotic and monarchial systems.³⁵ Henry Giroux is of the opinion that knowledge acquisition should be aimed at increasing the strength of individuals and society. McLaren's view is that the fundamental goal of education should be the strengthening of the individual and the development of the learner's commitment to transform the marginalized groups of societies.³⁶ Richard Rorty introduced the idea of "ideal human" who has "self-creating" abilities. Social institutions should focus to increase the critical abilities of people in order to bring change and fight against the current social and political system. The aim is to make individuals good citizens with strong critical thinking skills, who can identify and understand the problems, inequalities and contradictions within a society.³⁷

4.5 Democratic Consolidation

Postmodernists believe that the main purpose of a society is to propagate values like democracy and equal opportunity for everyone. They claim that

³⁴S. Beheshti, *Philosophical Contemplations in Education*, 2009; M. Farmahini, *Postmodernism and Education*, 2010.

³⁵Ibid.

³⁶M. Farmahin, *Postmodernism and Education*, 2010.

³⁷Ibid.

democracy has not flourished to its true potential in the modern era and has resulted in the domination of a specific culture. This is the reason that the main hurdles in the way of true democracy are nationalism, racism and genderism etc. Its primary example is the globalization of American dominance and a unicentric world.³⁸ So, the ideal of democracy should be achieved in its true letter and spirit.

5. Critical Analysis of Postmodern Ideals

Postmodernist ideas have both positive and negative aspects as well as advantages and disadvantages. Followings are some common weaknesses of the postmodernist discourse that critics have identified.

5.1 Moral Relativism

The most important weakness and problem with the postmodernist perspective is the denial of absolute and objective truths, facts, moral values and conscience. This actually has made the concept of morality absurd and meaningless. Although some values are universally accepted as good and some others are considered bad. For instance, the establishment of peace, not to harm others, justice, and truthfulness are globally recognized good values. There is a common set of moral values which are common to every culture such as friendship, bravery and courage. The existence of these common values is prevalent because these values are vital for the development and nourishment of a society. Non-existence of these values in a society might threaten it and jeopardize it from within. If a nomadic culture having infanticide as their moral convention while contrary to their culture others are rejecting it and taking it as wrongdoing. The DNA of this convention eventually shows that the people who adopted this idea may have done so due to the lack of resources. Thus, other cultures who do not suffer from the lack of resources consider it wrong and perceive it as murder. So, if in a society killing others is acceptable then it cannot be questioned according to the concept of moral relativism as propagated by postmodernists. Another aspect of moral relativism is considering moral values as subjective and independent of any objective criterion. This will also result in a state of anarchy as everyone is free to keep his own individual opinion about every matter.

The most important criticism on postmodernists is the collapsing of the value system and diminishing the status of religious centers which creates moral chaos in the society. By removing values and religious injunctions, postmodernists try to legitimize individuals to follow their own desires. Hence, they destroy and

³⁸Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*.

deconstruct the value system given by religion by undermining its conceptual structure and objectivity.³⁹

5.2. Self-Destruction

Postmodernist belief in relative attitude is self-destructing in many ways. Paradoxically, rejecting every ideology is also an ideology in itself. The diction which postmodernists use to impose their views is also very exclusive and assertive in its form and reality. They try to convince others that their theory is good and rational but the question arises that if there is no universal principle or meta-narrative then what is the position of their own claim? Is their claim universal and absolute or conditional and relative? If postmodernists consider that there is no essentiality and certainty, then the foundation of their claim collapses under its own weight.

5.3 Lack of Solution and Negativity

Postmodernists only provide criticism, point out negative aspects and indulge in deconstruction without providing solutions, hence their theory is far below its own standards. The destructive diagnosis is very good but the solution or the set of solutions is not up to the mark. They do not have not any constructive aspect and they destroy buildings one after another without any new construction. They only create cultural and intellectual anarchism which provide absolute perplexity in their consequences.

5.4 Indiscriminate Attention to Differences and Negligence of Commonalities

Postmodernists emphasize the degradation of the past and the separation of generations but such type of separation is very dangerous for societies. On the other hand, gender, subcultures and other differences are necessary but an extreme emphasis on these points only results in a utopian society.

5.5 Failure and Incoherence

Postmodernists have huge differences in their theories, ideas and practices. There are many cases where they are inconsistent in their arguments and at critical points contradict each other's views and ideas.

6. Conclusion

The fundamental function of postmodernism is breaking up meta-narratives and norms. This is the reason that if one speaks about absolute morality in postmodernism, it sounds like self-contradiction. Even though postmodernists

³⁹R. Kumar, *A Step-by-Step Guide for Beginners* (London: Sage Publications, 2010).

reject all ideologies but they defend their own values in a quite dogmatic way. It is evident that this movement is spreading, preaching and even compelling its values in a quite exclusivist manner. Postmodernists also have a conflict with philosophy, so it seems contrary to speak about the philosophical fundamentals of postmodernism. However, if philosophy can be criticized and denied by philosophy, then the claims of postmodernists are based on a sequence of philosophical fundamentals. There are many philosophical fundamentals of postmodernists like relativism, pluralism, and the opposition of objectivism. They are highly critical of the knowledge position of reason and intrinsic and natural values. They consider that all values, realities, human nature and innate values are basically constructed by external and social factors. Thus, they do not believe in the sanctity of religious beliefs and the value system described by religion. They consider self-determination and autonomy in an individual as the highest goal and value that is to be achieved. They prefer individual freedom in education as the most fundamental principle and reject any dogmatism and artificial boundaries among various sciences in their educational principles. In order to achieve their goals, they apply the method of discussion, the use of media, norm breaking and consistently argue against the centrality of any system. They emphasize the pluralistic approach, give attention to social and political matters and avoid elitism. Postmodernists emphasize the drawbacks of an absolute and objective value system and ignore its strong points.

Postmodernists have mainly adopted a critical and destructive approach towards absolute ideals, moral values and beliefs. However, they have only criticized the system but have not provided any remedies and alternate solutions and their constructive aspect is very weak. They destroy buildings one after another without any new construction. They only create cultural and intellectual anarchism which provide absolute perplexity in their consequences. Their critique may be very relevant but their inability to provide any solutions is very evident.

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