

DARUL IHSAN UNIVERSITY STUDIES

Volume 1 2005

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Postmodernism: An Islamic Critique

Md. Azabul Haque*

Introduction

Postmodernism occupies an important place in the Western thought. It is based on a philosophy dealing with the nature of reality and men's perception of that reality. In this article I will attempt to present an Islamic critique of postmodernism. Before getting into the critique, I would like to clarify some basic tenets of postmodernism and trace its historical development.

Modernism and its Origin

Allowing for a few differences, it is mostly agreed that postmodernism is a reaction that reflects the hollowness of the values, standards, spirits, and aims of modernism. So without a short discussion on modernism, the idea of postmodernism can not be clarified properly.

The Renaissance and the Reformation, a period of history mainly in the 15th, 16th and early 17th centuries, are supposed to extract the European from the dark Middle Ages and cause them to enjoy liberty, civil rights, and freedom. It also gives birth to the rise of modern science, education, and universal literacy. Concepts considered to be divine revelations are rejected, and man himself with the power to discern truth from error becomes the only standard for judging everything in the world. It is widely believed that reason, logic, science, technology, and bureaucratic management would improve knowledge, wealth, and well-being through the rational control of nature and society. This is the Age of Reason, the

Enlightenment, the Modernism. This human-centered ideology generates an extremely anti-religious sentiment, and everything is measured from materialistic standpoint. The rise of modernity with the triumph of the Enlightenment predominates over everything.

A short analysis will reveal the fact that the emergence of some scientists, philosophers, psychologists and their theories make the thinkers' outlook change in a large scale. Of them, Darwin's (1809-1882) theory of evolution becomes the greatest support for materialism. Its result becomes so far reaching, diffusing and influential that this theory gets rooted and gains a foothold on every aspect of modern life. Most assume that because of the impact of Darwinian thought and culture, postmodernism emerges with the form that truth, meaning and objective reality cannot exist and that all religious beliefs and moral codes are personal and subjective.

Karl Marx (1818-1883) plays another significant role to turn the whole European think tank into a new turn. His metaphor of the base and superstructure of the economic laws of a society takes people from spiritual values to materialistic gains. Terming religion as opium, he presents it as a part of superstructure and a merely ideological mirror of the economic structure of a society.

Sigmund Freud (1856-1939), a psychologist, depicts religion as a delusion reflection of some deeper psychic reality. He along with Marx argues that truth of an individual or a society is rarely self-evident to that person or group. To them, there are so hidden realities and meanings and these 'must be discovered through new forms of social scientific analyses,'¹ Scientists like Descartes and Leibniz become philosophers who give a new idea where relationship between God and man and the knowledge from that relationship is discarded.

They say that only reason, rationalism, scientism, and objective knowledge can assure truth, progress, and even values in the society. Modernity in this way takes a transcendent shape. According to professor Sayed Ali Ashraf:

"Kant established the dominance of reason but he gave it a transcendent character. This period, known as the period of Enlightenment and the victory of Liberalism, led to the establishment of a framework of values by

* Lecturer, Department of English Language and Literature, Darul Ihsan University, Dhaka, Bangladesh

1 Grassie, William. "Postmodernism: What one Needs to Know". *Zveon*. (March 1970).

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tradition. This meant that with the help of reason society has been able to establish a hierarchy of values and a tradition that could withstand the challenge of changing times".¹

The Rise of Postmodernism

But many theories and scientific discoveries start rejecting the transcendence of reason from the middle of the 20th century. They argue that the predominance and transcendence of reason lower the difference, uniqueness, and singularity of persons. So there is nothing inevitably reasonable and essential about human beings in the world. The world is heterogeneous; the past has always been radically different from the present; and all cultures radically different from one another. Consequently, the idea of transcendence turns to be absurd and meaningless.

Many condemn the 'reason' of the modernism for it contains a reasonable reality. Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900) is one of them, who declares that God is dead and whose skeptic philosophy asserts the difficulty of achieving any absolute knowledge. According to him:

"— Reason 'is the cause of our falsification of the evidence of the senses. In so far as the senses show becoming, passing away, change, they do not lie — The 'apparent' world is the only one: the 'real' world has only been *lyingly added* — 'Reason' in language: oh what a deceitful old woman! I fear we are not getting rid of God because we still believe in grammar"—.²

The 'reason' of modernism is blamed for its illogical exclusion of and gross failure to cope up with the various groups in the society. A universal call for justice and truth to modernism remains unanswered to a collection of quite separate and isolated groups often with conflicting and even mutually exclusive beliefs and goals. As Foucault in his book *Madness and Civilisation: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason*, 1961 argues that though reason excludes the following groups for their

1. Syed Ali Ashraf, "Future of Islam in the Twenty-first Century," Muslim Education Quarterly, editorial., (1997), Vol. 14, No. 4, Cambridge: The Islamic Academy, U.K.
2. Waugh, Patricia. *Postmodernism: A Reader*. London, New York: Arnold, 1992. , p. 110.

irrational activities, these people have some values what a society can never ignore:

"... reason has brutally excluded a whole section of the population — the insane, the debauched, defrocked priests, homosexuals, criminals, prostitutes, single mothers and any number of the other 'unreasonable' people".¹

The underlying truth in modernism that reality is objective and that man's reason can decipher the mystery of nature and unlock her secrets is shattered and rejected. The rational thought of modernism is supposed to appeal to a person a factual truth opposite to fictional and image-based reality.

The situation demands that truth based on competition, images, powers and plural ideas available in a society cannot be constant and standard at all. On the other hand truth in Buddhism cannot be exclusive of the believers of Christianity. So truth is true for one person and false for another and it is a matter how one looks at things. This is a new thinking that declares the demise of modernism. However, this thinking acts as an earthquake which causes to fall much of the structure in music, painting, literature, architecture and so on. It comes to its peak in the pre-20th-century and seems to be centred in Vienna during 1890 to 1910. Peter Berry describes it in the following way:

"But the effects were felt in France, Germany, Italy and eventually even in Britain, in art movements like Cubism, Dadaism, Surrealism, and Futurism".²

The influence of this new thinking accelerates the change in everything. Melody and harmony in music, perspective and direct pictorial representation in painting, traditional forms and materials in architecture and traditional realism in literature are rejected.

This time termed as high modernism is supposed to be the twenty years from 1910 to 1930. It is characterized by 'stream of consciousness', a

1. Clare O'Farrell, "Postmodernism for the Uninitiated," in Daphne Meamore, Bruce Bunett and Peter O'Brien, eds., *Understanding Education: Contexts and Agendas for the New Millenium*, (Sydney: Prentice Hall 1999), p.11-17.
2. Berry, Peter. *Beginning Theory*. New York: Manchester University Press, 1995. p. 81.

continuous flow of ideas, thoughts, and feelings, as experienced by a person. It is a movement away from a fixed narrative point of view and clear-cut moral positions. However, there emerges:

'a new liking for fragmented forms, discontinuous narrative, and random-seeming collages of disparate materials'.¹

It is termed postmodernism?

Another View of the Origin of Postmodernism

There is also another view of the origin of postmodernism. It says that 'knowledge is no longer assessed in terms of its truth or falsity or its promotion of justice but in terms of its efficiency at making money'.²

Many consider that during the 20th century the economic needs of capitalism take a new turn from production to consumption. The capitalists keep themselves busy setting up factories and big industries. Manufacturing of goods and updating of the machines become a grave concern to them. Because of the Industrial Revolution, men turn to be very mechanical and materialistic. Engaged with iron, steel, energy, roads, rail, communications, education, a welfare state, work ethic, discipline, etc, they adore production and sacrifice consumption.

But after the capitalistic society is fully established, these worldly people feel the need of consumption. Thus they get themselves busy with the growth of the consumer credit, advertising, persuading, marketing, designing, etc. Now their main business is to encourage people to consume to their best. So a culture evolves which celebrates consumerism, hedonism, and style. Now media become the most important standards to the explanatory structure of this new culture where life and reality consist of TVs, VDUs, videos, computers, internets, personal stereos, adverts, theme parks, shopping malls, fictitious capital or credit, cyberpunks, etc. So the signs used in this world deny the existence of any fixed meaning. For instance, an advertising company does not sell a car but the image of a car. So what is original and what is reproduction or copy are not clear in this world. It is also termed postmodernism.

What is postmodernism?

Postmodernism, which emerged as a branch of academic study in the

1. *ibid.* p. 82.

2. Clare O'Farrell, "Postmodernism for the Uninitiated," p.11-17.

mid-1980s, is very hard to define for its floating and ever-changing stands in architecture, technology, literature, music, film, art, fashion, sociology, communications, etc. As to when it first appears, the explorers have failed to reach any fixed point; even then I will try to give a concrete idea of this theory.

Firstly, Postmodernism rejects any human autonomy with the logic that a person with a particular faith or belief is unimaginable because he is always a part of a larger sociological structure which includes culture, economics, history, and philosophical worldview. Various beliefs and skepticisms and even atheism are also an integral part of this structure. It asserts that 'theology does not fall from the sky but is constructed within a complex socio-cultural matrix'.¹

Secondly, it opposes any classical metaphysical thought or metanarrative or grandnarrative which is defined in the following way:

"Metanarratives are the supposedly universal, absolute or ultimate truths that are used to legitimize various projects, political or scientific. Examples are: the emancipation of humanity through that of the workers (Marx); the creation of wealth (Adam Smith); the evolution of life (Darwin); the dominance of the unconscious mind (Freud), and so on".²

A postmodern person, who is a disillusioned modernist, is supposed to be convinced that human reason and cleverness cannot achieve universal happiness. Thus a man with this idea 'must be cynical toward political or ideological grand-standing'.³ It may be the grand theories of science, and myths in religions, nations, cultures, and professions, no matter what its message is and who creates it. Any hope in any particular movement either liberal or conservative or democratic or communitarian is meaningless to postmodernism. It is a totalizing negation of modernism, and a rejection of everything from Plato onward. For postmodernism, knowledge is inherently local, provisional, unstable and confessional. To put it simpler:

1. Daniel J. Adams, "Toward a Theological Understanding of Postmodernism", *Metanoia*, Spring-Summer (Prague 1997).
2. Richard Appignanesi and Chris Garrat, *Introducing Postmodernism*, Australia: Icon Books UK, Totem Books USA, 2000.
3. Michael Horton, "The Tower of Babel: Modernity built the tower -now postmodernity must face the challenge of condemning the 'unsafe structure'", *Modern Reformation* September / October 199

"They are against universal systems, utopian progress, and absolutes, but they do not quite know yet what to substitute. There are myriads of proposals, but no single direction — perhaps that is required in a system that glorifies fragmentation and contradiction".¹

Thirdly, it says that the non-Western cultures have been exploited and oppressed, and there are so many detached groups with various beliefs and goals in our society, who are neglected and kept down for years unnecessarily. Of these, 'there are feminists, homosexuals, environmentalists, neo-Nazis, Christian and Islamic fundamentalists or any number of other interest groups'.² Postmodernism does not believe in the marginalization of any such group, and so it emphasizes the preservation of the rights of all these groups. It thinks that different ideologies or theories for human welfare basically corner people and divide them into many sections. A homosexual and a pious person are of equal value to postmodernism.

Fourthly, postmodernists build their theories on the basis of language, different cultures, psychotherapy, quantum physics, cutting-edge science, etc. 'It is a commitment to plurality of perspectives, meaning, and methods and values everything'.³ It appreciates double meanings and searches alternative interpretations with irony. For an example, a postmodernist justifies truth from a different and peculiar point of view. He says, "Truth is what people agree on," or "Truth is what works," or "Hey, there is no Truth, only lots of little 'truths' running around out there!"⁴ Any idealized view of truth inherited from religions or Marxism is refused and it is replaced by a dynamic and changing truth bounded by time, space, and perspective. Intimately related to relativism—the doctrine that truth and morality exist in relation to culture, society, or historical context, postmodernism says that two or many contradictory 'value judgments' can be true and no value or belief is absolute rather

1. *ibid.*

2. Clare O'Farrell, "Postmodernism for the Uninitiated".

3. Hlynka, D., & Yeaman, R.J. "Postmodernism educational technology" ERIC Digest No. EDO- IR-92- Syracuse NY: ERIC Clearinghouse on Information Resources, September, 1992.

4. Brent G. Wilson, "The Postmodern Paradigm", in C.R. Dills and Romiszowski eds., *Instructional development paradigm* (March 1997).

they change from person to person, age to age, place to place and so on.

Fifthly, nostalgia that 'rewrites history in the terms of desire'¹ is the basic form of postmodern condition. Jameson connects the 'schizophrenic' tendency to postmodernism with 'a pervasive nostalgia'.² 'A schizophrenic experience is an experience of isolated, discontinuous material signifiers which fail to link up into a coherent sequence'.³ So postmodernism is 'a schizophrenic fragmentation'⁴ that responds to a continuing obsession with an impossible ideal. According to Patricia Waugh, this nostalgia produces the desire to fragment, where ideal object is impossible. Nietzsche, often considered as the first postmodernist, 'was one of the first to connect the nostalgic impulse with nihilism'.⁵

Sixthly, postmodern condition is a type of revolution what the existing Marxists have termed it as 'forces of production'. In this 19th century industrial capitalism, the production is so dispersed, flexible and information-based that a new technologicistic theory has been evolved through the base / superstructure frame to constitute the cultural logic of late capitalism. It is 'neo-Marxism'⁶ interpreted as postmodernism.

Seventhly, postmodernism is characterized by 'an eclectic approach, aleatory writing, parody and pastiche'. The word 'eclectic' suggests the use of a fragmented form; 'aleatory' means to incorporate an element of randomness or chance like the Dadaists of 1917. This 'use of parody and pastiche is clearly related to the abandonment of the divine pretensions of authorship'.⁷ Jameson defines pastiche in the following manner:

"Hence, once again, pastiche: in a world in which stylistic innovation is no longer possible, all that is left is to imitate dead styles, to speak through the masks and with the voices of the styles in the imaginary museum. But this means that contemporary or postmodernist art is going to be about art itself in a new kind of way; even more, it means that one of its essential messages will

1. Waugh, Patricia. *Postmodernism: A Reader* London, New York: Arnold, 1992. , p.194.

2. *ibid.* p191.

3. *ibid.*, p.191.

4. *ibid.*, p.194.

5. *ibid.* p.192.

6. Andermahr, Sonya and Lovell, Terry and, Wolkositz, Carol. *A Glossary of Feminist Theory*. New York: Arnold, Oxford University Press, 2000, p.207.

7. Berry, Peter. *Beginning Theory*. New York: Manchester University Press, 1995. p. 83.

involve the necessary failure of art and the aesthetic, the failure of the new, the imprisonment in the past".¹

Eighthly, cyberpunk is supposed to be the most postmodern of all postmodern things. It is mainly known for its hybrid quality of counterculture, cybertechnology and anarchy. 'The word 'punk' gives us a clue to the attitude that cyberpunks have towards computer technology: hip, sexy, violent, mind-altered, with distaste for the dominant lifestyles of the Regan / Bush era'.² 'According to cyberpunk, postmodernism is a world dominated by multinational corporations and the data they control. Yet cyberpunks advocate a hacker ethic tapping into and using such data for personal ends'.³

Ninthly, media and postmodernism are considered to be similar. The hyperreality of media, which is another defining agent of postmodernism, and is produced from 'miniaturization units, matrices, memory banks and command models can be reproduced in an indefinite number of times'.⁴ It no longer has to be rational and real at all, because the tornado of images hypnotizes and conditions us. The hyperreality of the Madona images becomes more real than Madonna herself.

Tenthly, a simulacrum that has become another main characteristic of postmodernism means the copies of real objects or events. Simulacrum, according to Plato, is the '*false copy that overshadows our experience and ideal Forms*'.⁵ In a postmodern society, things cannot exist with its actual identity because the real thing is killed and reduced to scientific terms. Thus the real thing is evaporated and we get simulated otherness. So, it reveals the fact that postmodernism promises a new man-made world full of mixed thoughts without particular emphasis on a single one. According to Jim Powell:

"The ideas that the only God is Yahweh, or Allah, or the Goddess, or that some god named Bumba vomited the moon

1. Vincent B. Leitch. *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*, New York . London: W.W. Norton & Company, 2001 p, 1965.
2. Powell, Jim. *Postmodernism for Beginners*. Hyderabad, India: Orient Longman 2001, p. 131.
3. *ibid.*, p 137.
4. Vincent B. Leitch, *The Norton Anthology*, p. 1730-31.
5. Powell, Jim. *Postmodernism for Beginners* p.55.

and stars, or the scientific notion that the moon is a physical body of such and such mass that orbits another physical body—all these are man-made notions".¹

In a postmodern society:

"We are beginning to understand that not only our stories but also our rituals, religious dogmas, myths, gender roles, self concepts, beliefs, histories, and the theories are cultural, social inventions. We live in a world of man-made signs and symbols, and we have begun to play around with those signs and symbols humorously and ironically so that we are not enslaved to them".²

Finally, postmodernism considers heterogeneity and differences to be the sources of a multidirectional progress. It is based on the legitimacy of fragmentation, indeterminacy and the distrust of universal or totalizing discourses. The very idea of postmodernism is:

"postmodern people, instead of dreaming of the day when all the world will be united under the universal banner of Marxism or Christianity or Science, are more interested in seeing the world as a kind of carnival of cultures — a tribal gathering".³

Postmodernism, in this way, distrusts the standardization of production and disciplinization of knowledge and is based on the emergence of concern in ethics, politics and anthropology for the validity and dignity of the other. According to Gellener, postmodernism, like relativism 'does entail nihilism'.⁴

Islam and Postmodernism

'Islam' says that it has a concise, clear and fixed definition. It asserts that it cannot be scaled by anything rather it scales everything. The Qur'an, the Scripture of Islam, declares its supremacy over everything saying:

1. *ibid.*, p 151.
2. *ibid.*, p 152.
3. *ibid.*, p 152
4. Gellener Ernest. *Postmodernism, Reason, and Religion*. Routledge, London 1992. ix p.49.

'And He revealed the criterion' (i.e., the Qur'an).¹ It claims itself as a 'Book about which there is no doubt, a guidance for those conscious of Allah'.² It also reveals:

'This day have I perfected for you your religion and completed My favour on you and chosen for you Islam as a religion'.³

The map-makers of postmodernism, on the contrary, demands that any ideology is 'just one brand of many available in the shopping mall'.⁴ However, in this section, I intend to present some references to the Scripture of Islam, the Qur'an and postmodernism side by side. I hope it will help the reader to see the nature of relationship between these two.

Because of his celebrated announcement of the death of grand narrative, Jean-François Lyotard (b. 1925-1998), a French intellectual and follower of Immanuel Kant became the centre of debate on postmodernism during the 1980s and 1990s. According to him:

"the general human emancipation" could not be gained through the universalist strategies characteristic of both liberalism (with its appeal to human rights) and communism (with its goal of a one classless society)".⁵

Declaring that mankind has been created as different tribes for their own convenience and better understanding, Islam banishes the differences among the races, colors, and countries, and brings the whole being on the same principle of moral foundation. It also considers itself to be the only code of emancipation for all human beings:

"And whoever desires other than Islam as religion--- never will it be accepted from him, and he, in the Hereafter, will be among the losers". (Al Qur'an - 3: 85)

Postmodernists think that any idealism like Christianity, Marxism, Darwinism, everything is fluid and changing and transient. It hails fragmented doctrines, philosophies, skepticisms, religious and atheistic

1. The Quran 3:4, Saheeh International, Abul Qusim Publishing House (Al-Multada Alisamu), Riyadh 1997.
2. The Quran 2:2
3. The Quran 5: 3
4. Ahmed. Akbar S. *Postmodernism and Islam*, Penguin Books, India 1993. p.10
5. Vincent B. Leitch. *The Norton Anthology* p, 1609.

values at the same time. It delineates a hermeneutical world where text or language betrays itself. The Derridian philosophy of undecidability grasps everything in this world. The fathers of this theory, according to professor Sayed Ali Ashraf, 'believed that society would be ever changing and, therefore, 'schools' ideals, morals and values should go on constantly adjusting themselves to the changing concepts in the society'.¹

Regarding this uncertainty and confusion, Islam says:

Indeed, the religion in the sight of Allah is Islam. And if they submit (in Islam), they are rightly guided; but if they turn away then upon you is only the (duty of) notification. And Allah is Seeing of (His) servant. (Al Qur'an - 3: 19-20)

Postmodernism denies any sort of allegiance to anything received yesterday or today. Nothing is above suspicion here. Since the diversified ways and outlooks for a better life swing man back and forth with concrete wastelands, there is none who we can follow and imitate. So how man will consume does depend on men's free wills. Men in this world are only loyal to their own options of enjoyment. Islam declares:

"O you who have believed, obey Allah and obey the Messenger and those who in authority among you. And if you disagree over anything, refer it to Allah and the Messenger, if you should believe in Allah and the Last Day. That is the best (way) and best in result". (Al Qur'an - 5: 59)

"Who so judges not according to what god has sent down, they are the unbelievers". (Al Qur'an -5:44)

The hodgepodge of hybrid images and free mixing of various cultures strengthen the idea of postmodernism; whether polluted or copied does not matter. If it becomes a religion then it is a new religion made of many ones. Any one can take the advantage of any part of any religion; whether one part goes against another does not matter:

"It is something like a conversation, a new direction after

1. Syed Ali Ashraf, "Future of Islam in the Twenty-first Century," Muslim Education Quarterly, editorial.

the previous one. It belongs to Christianity, Cartesianism, Jacobinism ——— the philosophies of the most radical group during the French Revolution, the one most determined to make an entirely new world".¹

In this new world, tradition never stays constantly and purely rather it is syncretized and reproduced spontaneously. Turner observes that "(postmodernity) brings about social change in everyday life through the hedonistic consumption of commodities in which, even in the everyday world, there is a profound sense of the simulation and inauthentication of cultures via the endless production of global commodities".² Islam's indication of inventing doctrines and mixing truth with falsehood is:

"And do not mix the truth with falsehood or conceal the truth while you know (it)". (Al Qur'an : 2: 42)

"and (because) they were deluded in their religion by what they were inventing". (Al Qur'an - 3: 24)

It is a world where truth and falsehood both are welcomed with equal zeal, and falsehood, with the help of the media and its collages of images turns into truth and is praised. Thus, media are coldly neutral to moral positions and spiritual messages.

But in Islam:

"That is because Allah is the Truth and that what they call upon other than Him is falsehood, and because Allah is the Most High, the Grand". (Al Qur'an - 31: 30)

Everything in postmodern environment is so alluring and persuading that any development seems to go against a harmonious advancement of all good human powers. It depicts a very perplexed and pessimistic attitude about the human being:

"Postmodernism believes the present development as an autonomous force or 'motricity' and says that human entities (individual or social) seem always to be

1. Vincent B. Leitch. *The Norton Anthology*, p. 1613.

2. Turner, Bryan S. *Orientalism, Postmodernism, and Globalism*. Routledge, London 1994.

destabilized by the result of this development. We are in this techno-scientific world like Gulliver: sometimes too big, sometimes too small, never at the right scale. Consequently, the claim for simplicity, in general, appears today that of a barbarian".¹

The opinion of Islam is:

"Certainly will the believers have succeeded: they who are during their prayer humbly submissive and they who turn away from ill speech and they who are observant of Zakah and —" (Al Qur'an - 23: 1-5)

Islam scales man's profit and loss in the following way:

"By time, indeed, mankind is in loss, except for those who have believed and done righteous deeds and advised each other to truth and advised each other to patience". (Al Qur'an- 103:1-3)

Frederic Jameson (b. 1934—), professor of Harvard University and later University of California and an icon of postmodernism, sees this theory as an 'expression of the inner truth of the newly emergent social order of late capitalism.' The crises after the World War II, the words — consumer, postindustrial, or multinational capitalism have become synonymous to postmodernism to him. He terms postmodernism as "hyperspace" what is bewildering and lacks the necessary perceptual and cognitive tools to understand. He identifies history as:

"In a postmodern world, we "seem condemned to seek the historical past through our own pop images and stereotypes about the past, which itself remains forever out of reach".²

Baudrillard (b. 1929), the most advanced theorist of media in the postmodern era during the 1970s and 1980s argues in favour of the 'sign' of poststructuralism whose essence is that 'there are no facts only interpretation'.³ Contemporary consumer culture and imperialistic Western science and philosophy – these two are held responsible for this sign. To clarify the function of this sign he chooses the term:

1. Vincent B. Leitch, *The Norton Anthology*, p. 1614.

2. *ibid.*, p.1935.

3. Berry, Peter. *Beginning Theory*, p.63.

"*simulacrum*, a word that denotes representation but also carries the sense of a counterfeit, sham, or fake. Simulacra seem to have referents (real phenomena they refer to), but they are merely pretend representations that mark the absence, not the existence, of the objects they purport to represent. Consumer society provides "a precession of simulacra," a parade of images that project a life that consumers are encouraged to try to live".¹

Regarding sign, Islam presents a clear distinction between truth and falsehood:

"We will show them Our signs in the horizons and within themselves until it becomes clear to them that it is the truth. But is it not sufficient concerning your Lord that He is, over all things, a Witness? Unquestionably, they are in doubt about the meeting with their Lord. Unquestionably, He is, of all things, encompassing". (Al Qur'an -41:53-54)

Postmodern opposes the actual identity of a thing because the real thing is killed and reduced to scientific terms. Thus the real thing is evaporated and we get simulated otherness. If so, then it is a question, whether love, sympathy, kindness, fellow feelings and the good and bad are simulated. However, any search for authenticity is meaningless here. In Islam:

"And not equal are the good deed and the bad. Repel (evil) by that (deed) which is better; and thereupon, the one whom between you and him is enmity (will become) as though he was a devoted friend". (Al Qur'an - 41:34)

"And We did not create the heaven and the earth and that between them in play". (Al Qur'an 21:16)

As to truth, Islam declares:

"And who is more unjust than one who invents a lie about Allah or denies the truth when it has come to him? Is there not in Hell a (sufficient) residence for the disbelievers"? (Al Qur'an - 29:68)

According to the Hyperreality of postmodernism, art is dead firstly because of its critical transcendence is gone and secondly because reality

1. Vincent B. Leitch. *The Norton Anthology*, p.1935.

itself for its entire and inseparable impregnation that causes a confusion with its own image. Here:

"Disneyland is an elaborately artificial land created precisely to convince us that our "real" lives are real. Caught up in the "precession of simulacra" that kills everything real and replaces it with fabricated models, we feel that something is wrong; but we have no satisfactory strategies for overturning the growing dominance of images and signs".¹

'Reality here no longer has the time to take on the appearance of reality'.² It is an operation to deter every real process by its double, metastable, programmatic and perfect descriptive presentations. In case of Disneyland again:

"It is there to conceal the fact that it is the 'real' country, all of 'real' America, which is Disneyland just as prisons are there to conceal the fact that it is the social in its entirety, in its banal omnipresence, which is carceral. Disneyland is presented as imaginary in order to make us believe that the rest is real, when in fact all of Los Angeles and the America surrounding it are no longer real".³

Islam's stand regarding this concealment:

Indeed, those who conceal what We sent down of clear proofs and guidance after We made it clear for the people in the Scripture – those are cursed by Allah and cursed by those who curse. (Al Qur'an - 2:159)

Concerned with the problems of power and legitimacy, Michel Foucault (1926-1984), a historian and another postmodern theorist says:

"Power does not belong to anyone, nor does it all emanate from one specific location, such as the state. Rather it is diffused throughout social institutions, as it is

1. Vincent B. Leitch. *The Norton Anthology*, p. 1730-31.

2. Simulations, trans. P. Beitchman, Semiotexte: New York, 1983, p. 142-56

3. Brooker, Peter, ed. *Modernism / Postmodernism* Longman, 1992, p.154.

exercised by innumerable, replaceable functionaries'. Foucault sees power as decentralized and depersonalized".¹

He thinks that power discursive produces homosexuality. He legitimates it by calling it 'one of the forms of sexuality':

"Homosexuality appeared as one of the forms of sexuality when it was transposed from the practice of sodomy to a kind of interior androgyny, a hermaphrodism of the soul. The sodomite had been a temporary aberration; the homosexual now was a species."²

Islam justifies homosexuality as a distorted form of sexuality and a heinous crime punishable. About homosexuality Islam says:

"And his people came hastening to him, and before (this) they had been doing evil deeds.³ He said, "O my people, these are my daughters⁴; they are purer for you. So fear Allah and do not disgrace me concerning my guests. Is there not among you a man of reason?" They said, "You have already known that we have not concerning your daughters (i.e., women) any claim (i.e., desire), and indeed, you know what we want." (Al Qur'an - 11:78-79)

Truth to Foucault is to be understood as a system of ordered procedures for the production, regulation, distribution, circulation and operation of statements. Power produces and sustains truth. But Islam's view of power is:

"Unquestionably, His is the creation and the command; blessed is Allah, Lord of the worlds". (Al Qur'an -7:54)

Patricia Waugh, a postmodern critic, views that postmodernists are in confrontation with epistemological and ethical contradictions, and over the last 30 years, postmodernist art and theory have been dealing with the break-up of traditional aesthetic conceptions and the internal conflict of

1. Vincent B. Leitch. *The Norton Anthology*, p. 1731.

2. *ibid.*, p. 1669.

3. Referring to their practice of sodomy and homosexual rape of males.

4. The women of his community who were available for marriage.

liberal individualism. Postmodernism, according to her, should value a man from a completely different point of view. She says:

"Like feminism, Postmodernism (in theoretical and artistic modes), has been engaged in a re-examination of the Enlightenment concepts of subjectivity as autonomous self-determination: the human individual as defined without reference to history, traditional values, God, nation. Both have assaulted aesthetic or philosophical notions of identity as pure autonomous essence".¹

Islam has described man with reference to values, history, God and so on. It calls upon man as follows:

"And if there should come to you guidance from Me – then whoever follows My guidance will neither go astray (in the world) nor suffer (in the Hereafter). And whoever turns away from My remembrance – indeed, he will have a depressed (i.e., difficult) life, and We will gather (i.e., raise) him on the Day of Resurrection blind". (Al Qur'an- 20: 123-124).

Islam does not deny the existence of the contradictions but it emphasizes following the truth:

"And do not be like the ones who became divided and differed after the clear proofs had come to them. And those will have a great punishment". (Al Qur'an- 3:105)

According to Terry Eagleton:

"Postmodernism, wedded as it is to the particular, would be reluctant to accept that there are propositions which are true of all times and places, yet which are not simply vacuous or trivial".²

Islam, on the contrary, calls upon all the people irrespective of time, place and race. The truth Islam preaches is universal and general. Islam does not limit itself to the Muslim only:

"Indeed, We sent down to you the Book for the people in truth. So whoever is guided — it is for (the benefit of) his soul; and whoever goes astray only goes astray to its detriment. And you are not a manager (i.e., authority) over them" (Al Qur'an- 39:41)

1. Waugh, Patricia. *Postmodernism*, p.190.

2. Philip Rice and Patricia Waugh, "The Illusions of Postmodernism", *Modern Literary Theory*, (1997), p.110.

"O mankind, worship your Lord, who created you and those before you, that you may become righteous –". (Al Qur'an- 2:21)

Islam says that any man can enjoy liberty in a society to that extent which Allah permits because He is the only All-Knowing of everything good and bad. For an example, sexuality or lesbianism is strictly forbidden in Islam because it looks upon these as irrational, unreasonable and as a great sin. Postmodernism on the contrary hails these all.

Among a few Muslim thinkers, Akbar S Ahmed has appreciated the postmodern socio-cultural heterogeneity that creates a space for the acceptance of Islam in the West. But he has not clarified how Islam and the above groups of heterogeneity can go together. He tries to prove that the new media and technology are useful for the distribution of a global Islamic message. But how the unrestricted, corrupted and hybrid images in media can promote the idea of Islam is not clear at all. He also argues that since Islam recognizes local identities and promulgates a universal message of Muslimhood, it is possible to contextualize

'local versions of Islam within global structures'¹ But postmodernism neither recommends local identities as superior to other nor considers any ideal as universal.

Conclusion

Theories like Marxism and Darwinism totally reject religions in general whereas postmodernism sees Islam just one of the many metanarratives like Hinduism or Buddhist or Christianity, etc.² Where there is no fragmentation, there is no postmodernism. Now, Islam means complete submission to the will of Allah who is one and All-knowing. In postmodernism, one must surrender himself to the unstable, floating and ever-changing ideas prevailing in society. In Islam the idea of oneness is dominant whereas the loss of faith and spirit of pluralism are dominant in postmodernism.

1. Akbar Ahmad and Hastings Donan. *Islam, Globalization and Postmodernity* Routledge. London 1994. p.5.

2. Ahmed, Akbar S. *Postmodernism and Islam*, p.10.

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