Unit 31

Post Structuralism and Post Modernism

Contents

Learning Objectives

After having read this unit you should be able to

▫   outline post-structural theories

▫   critique structuralism

▫   describe deconstruction

▫   explain "late capitalism"

▫   discuss Baudrillard and postmodernism

31.1   Introduction

It is the intellectual trend in the ontology of ideas and schools of ideas, that they are constantly superceded. The ideas or ideologies that are superceded recede into the history of ideas. The new theories and ideas then occupy centre stage in the national and international sociological and social scientific world views. This cycle further repeats itself and though this fact is often lost sight of in the heyday of a theoretical orientation that has become popular.

In the essay that follows we will first take up post structuralism and then postmodern theory. We will see how there are several overlaps indeed intermeshes between various strands of these two contemporary approaches to the study of society and culture. Thus what we are dealing with are strands of an overall approach. There is no one view on these approaches and both post structuralism and post modernism are blanket terms containing many strands of thought. Let us turn now to post structuralism first. What does the term indicate? As is clear from the word "post structuralism", these approaches are those that came after 'structuralism'. These theories and approaches sought to seek insights into society by critiquing and deconstructing social and cultural processes. The post modernism break with structuralism was the fact that structuralism reduced everything into binary oppositions and the interrelations between them. The structuralists held they could analyse any phenomena with the help of their methodology. We must emphasise that post structuralism is a number of approaches and not one monolithic theory. However, these approaches have in common their point of departure a critique of "structuralism".

31.2   Critique of Structuralism

Poststructuralists often point out in their various writings that meaning in language is diverse and open to many different interpretations. Yet to get to the meaning of a text it can be deconstructed and is different from its apparent or surface meaning. That is different meanings can be assigned to a single text depending upon the perspective taken. As would be clear by now that post structuralism proceeds as a critique of structuralism which is itself bounded by its own linguistic boundaries. Structuralism, however, was found to be inadequate as an explanation of social process and phenomena. Thus we find that

- structuralism did not pay heed to historical processes and is a-historical

- applied the rules of linguistics to societal processes which is a questionable procedure

- it is assumed that a work has meaning in itself and this persists even before it is discovered and

- the text is only a conduit between the subject and the structure of rationality.

Thus the structuralists argue that it is language and its structure which itself produces reality and since it is language that is responsible for thought it determines mans perceptions whatever they may be. Further there is the idea that meaning does not come from individuals but the rules of language and the overall 'system' which controls individuals. Therefore, the individual is subordinated and superceded by "the structure." It is the structure which produces meaning not the individual. It is specifically language which is at the base of such domination over the individual.

31.3   Post Structural Theories

As can be seen post structural theories do not agree with the 'structuralists' in several key areas of analysis and understanding. We will now turn to these and see how the two differ. However, before that let us look briefly at the background to post structuralism. By the 1950's the influence of structuralism had set in. Saussure (1857-1913) was of the view that 'meaning' had to be found in the "structure" of the whole language (Guller, 1976). It could not be discovered in individual words, and had to have an overall linguistic setting – that is the language as a whole. We find that around the 1960's the structuralist movement tried to amalgamate the ideas of Marx Freud and Saussure. The structuralists were opposed to the existentialist movement which put the individual and life experience at the centre. By contrast the structuralists opined that the individual is everywhere being conditioned by social psychological and linguistic structures which control and direct him, rather than the individual doing the same. As you will have noticed this is an extreme stand and the claim for universality of application of method also drew attention to the fact that such claims of universal application did not necessarily hold true. Also how is it that any two structural analyses of the same field or phenomena would be different?

It was because of the short-comings of the structuralist approach that post structuralism was developed by the intellectuals. This post structuralism is based on a member of basic assumptions/positions. These include: 1) putting all phenomena under one explanation, 2) there is a transcendental reality which overarches all other reality. Post structuralism is also critical of the

concept of man as portrayed and developed by Enlightenment thought. The Enlightenment view that the individual is separate and whole and that the mind is the area where values evolve on the other hand the poststructuralists felt that the individual was embedded in social interaction. Such symbolic beings are referred to by the word "subject". We can then say that the subjects are intertwined with society and culture and occupy some place within them, and sociologically based sites. Further subjects are the actors in everyday reality. In fact it is the subjects that make up society and the activities therein, include work and entertainment. We could add here that the subjects meaning and values are embedded in the identities of groups and the activities which lead them to having an identity.

Thus these approaches that we are discussing have often been dubbed "anti-humanist" because post-structuralism is against the divine or transcendental wholeness as was the humanist theories view. However, 'anti-humanist' is a misnomer and is actually another way of looking at human beings one that is essentially not against individual persons. Further we find that while structuralism presents reality as relations between binary oppositions post-structuralism's vision of reality is a fragmented one. Social process and cultural relations are not viewed as neat oppositions – on the other hand social and cultural processes are seen in bits and pieces and the nature of reality is not seen as being amenable to total understanding of a whole process. Parts of social process can be focused upon and analysed. Poststructuralists are completely opposed to grand narratives and Meta theory feeling these are equivalent to a fiction and not really apprehending reality. Thus post-structural theories are themselves looking at the specific. Further the physical self (the body) is studied in the context of time and history, and brought out of the closet so to speak. Similarly it is the details of discourse and cultural actions that are now looked into. Further the role of language in building social and cultural reality is also evident in the work of the poststructuralists (Godelier, 1972). Thus the fact that society and the individual are "linguistically bound" with each other and the relationship between the two is complex. This stand clearly negates the earlier assumptions of social scientists that language was easy to comprehend and use and that there were no ambiguities regarding language – use. This the post-structural theories negate as an erroneous assumption. In fact "reality'' itself is constructed within the social matrix and continues to reproduce itself over time.

31.4 Discourse Knowledge and Experience

The world of discourse and knowledge set the limits for our experience – and the subject (ego) can only experience or describe what he has experienced. That is to also say that there are experiences for which there is no language or a language is slowly being pieced together, and certain words and concepts gain ground and usage. This includes the usage of metaphor, metonymy and irony. These usages lead by themselves to a concern with ideology which provides an ingress and insight into relations of power and the world-view of the subjects.

Again another area in which post structural theories focus upon in their analysis on what are known as cultural codes which themselves provide an understanding of our lives and how they work out within various contexts. However, it needs to be pointed out that it is understood by the post structuralists that construction of meaning implies that some aspects of

social process and individual life will be emphasised and others will be relatively reduced in importance. In other words "objectivity" as in the case of earlier sociological theory is found to be an illusion. That is the analyses of poststructuralists does not deny its subjective orientation. Yet poststructuralists also hold that meaning in society can be deconstructed to open up new ideas and practices. However, such an exercise leads to an understanding of specifics rather than general constructions. Thus loops of meaning and process of construction reveal more about the specific scaffolding of the subject rather than an understanding of the whole. The world is mediated by discourse, language and ideology all of which structure the experience of the subject. According to post structural thinking it is the text which is the repertoire of meanings and there is no meaning outside the text. Thus meaning resides in the text itself in toto. An understanding resides in social signs and discourses in particular fields of study. Again almost paradoxically, every text exists only in relation to other texts. However, it needs to be pointed out that man's ability to perceive reality is not at stake. Nonetheless what we know of reality is known through various processes of discourse symbols and language. Yet it must be understood that discourse itself is very varied in content. It is also a fact that discourse is sometimes sketchy and abrupt. It originates through chance and disappears also through unspecified reasons. Thus according to Foucault there is no question of predicting history through grand theories and meta narratives (Foucault, 1969). History is thus viewed by poststructuralists as happening by chance. Thus in history the twists, turns, plots, subplots and important events and happenings cannot be pinned down – that is it happens by chance.

31.5   Derrida and Deconstruction

This brief note on structuralism is important for our understanding of the process of "deconstruction" initiated by Derrida. The basics of this structuralism are:

- positing of a centre of power or influence which begins and ends all social processes. This could be 'mind' or 'self' or even 'God'.

- all structures are composed of binary pairs or oppositions one of which is more important than the other and often signified thus: +/- . These could be good/evil, god/man and so on.

Reflection and Action 31.1

Discuss what is "deconstruction". How did Derrida deconstruct structuralism?

Thus post structuralism began with Derrida's critique of structuralism or rather this 'deconstruction' of language society and culture. The structuralists felt that man was chained to structures which controlled him. In contrast, however, Derrida feels that language can be reduced to writing which does not control the subjects. According to him all institutions and structures are nothing but writing and incapable of controlling the individual. The structuralists saw order and stability in language, hence in all structures; the poststructuralists on the other hand saw language as essentially changing and quite unstable. This means that the language structure being itself in flux cannot create structures that constrain, restrain, or punish people, because language itself is disorderly, and the underlying laws of language cannot be 'discovered'. This is what is the process of deconstruction which as the term suggests is a sort of conceptual dissection of the concept or

process being studied. Derrida who coined the term deconstruction felt that logo centrism has dominated the Western countries. This way of perceiving has meant that writing has always been suppressed historically speaking. This has also meant that the freedom to analyse and think is taken away in a logocentric system. Derrida wants to dismantle this type of approach as it sets writing free from repression. Under these circumstances what takes place in the art form of traditional theatre is a representation of real life. Such a representation is extremely important, in fact a controlled theological theatre.

Box 31.1: The Theological Theatre

Derrida contrasts 'theatre of cruelty' as against traditional theatre which has representational logic and renders traditional theatre as theological. Derrida writes: the stage is theological for as long as its structure, following the entirety of tradition comports the following elements: an author creator who, absent and from afar, is armed with a text and keeps watch over, assembles, regulates the time or the meaning of representation …. He lets representation represent him through representatives, directors or actors ….. who represent the thought of the "creator". Finally the theological stage comports a passive, seated public, a public of spectators, of consumers, of enjoyers. (Derrida, 1978, *Writing and Difference* : p:235).

Derrida's chosen alternative stage is one which will not be controlled by texts and authors but fall short of disorder/anarchy. Thus Derrida wants a fundamental change in traditional theatre/life which would mean a great change from the dominance of the writer (God?) on the stage (theatre) or in societal process as well leading closer towards freedom of the individual. Derrida feels thus that traditional theatre needs to be deconstructed. In this mode of suggestion is included a critique of society itself, which is, as mentioned earlier 'logocentric.' Derrida feels that in theatre it is the writer who puts together the script, and that this influence is so strong that it is akin to a dictatorship. Similarly in social processes the intellectual ideas and formulations are controlled by the intellectual authorities which create discourse.

Further we may add that post structuralists believe in the process of decentering because when these is no specific authoritarian pressure on society it becomes open ended and available for 'play and difference'. This process is ongoing reflexive and open (Derrida, 1978 :297). Thus the present alone exists and it is the arena where social activity takes place. Thus we should try to find solutions by harking to the past. The future itself cannot be precisely predicted. However, there is no precise solution that Derrida provides except that in the end there is only writing, acting and play with difference. At this point in our presentation it would be instructive to look briefly at an example of post structural ideas and ideology in the case of Michel Foucault one of the major poststructuralists. One critical difference between Foucault and the structuralists is that while linguistics is the main influence for the former, it did not occur exclusively as the domain of ideas that have to be adopted or modified into a poststructuralist schema. That is post structural thinkers use a variety of ideas and influence and are not reduced to examining the relations between binary terms. This variety of sources in presenting an argument is what puts Foucault into the group of the poststructuralists.

31.6 Foucault and the Archaeology of Knowledge

Foucault described his approach/methodology as the "archaeology of knowledge." Using this approach Foucault studied knowledge and discourse. According to Foucault this approach provides better ingress to understanding society and it is different from history, which he feels is portrayed in a stereotyped linear progression, whereas the reality remains limited and 'continuous.'

Box 31.2: The Archaeology of Knowledge

In his early work on methodology, Foucault (1966) is doing an "archaeology of knowledge". His objects of study are bodies of knowledge, ideas, modes of discourse, he contrasts his archaeology of knowledge to history and the history of ideas, both of which he regards as being too rational and as seeing to much continuity in the history of knowledge…. This highly structural approach in Foucault's early work was later abandoned for a poststructuralist orientation because it was silent on the issue of power as well as the link between knowledge and power. Michel Foucault died in 1984 at the age of 58 as a leading sociologist. Among Foucault's last works was a trilogy of sexual study. There works indicated Foucault's interest in studying sexuality. These books were The History of Sexuality 1976, The Care of the Self 1984, and The Use of Pleasure 1984. (From Ritzer, 1996 *Sociological Theory*, p:604-5).

Foucault, however, moved away from this structural type of analysis and began studying the 'genealogy of power.' His concern was to find out the facts about governance through knowledge production. The nature of knowledge as power should not be hierarchical and also that the higher the knowledge (e.g. science) the greater the power it wields over the subjects. Thus Foucault studied technique and process in science since this is what exerts power over people through the medium of institutions. This is not to say that the elites are scheming and manipulating power. Again Foucault uses a non linear perception of progress in societies from the stage of barbarism to the present civilisation. Thus history is seen instead as shifting patterns of domination. However, knowledge/power is such that it is always opposed and resisted. Thus Foucault's post structural view is that while knowledge/power are ubiquitous they are certainly not omnipotent and total in their domination but their power/authority is always questioned and opposed. A brief introduction to Foucault's ideas would help us in completing the section on post structuralism (Foucault, 1979). Thus according to Foucault

- the mad have been misunderstood and mistreated over the course of history, and subjected to moral control

- power/knowledge are implicative of each other

- technologies exert power e.g. the Panopticon a prison with the cells around a large observation tower from which every thing that inmates do is visible and observable. Such an institution is metaphoric of total societal control of the prisoners, since it forces even the prisoners or inmates to exercise self-restraint. Thus this is a direct relationship between technology, knowledge and power. Thus the Panopticon is a prototype of societal control and surveillance and the forerunner of intelligence services and satellite observations over geophysical territories.

Post modernism is not the term for a single type of theory, metanarrative, or grand theory. It is rather the term for an overall approach involving many

similar strands. There is thus no single position in postmodernism, but all the thinkers in this approach share certain common features that separate it from "modernism." This has been both a feature that separates it from 'modernism' and the approaches all indicate that what they are doing is to present, dissect, construct ideas that will be relevant to the postmodern context. A large number of sociologists still tend to think that post modernism is a passing fancy, however, it is now obvious that postmodernism cannot be ignored both as fact and phenomena. However, it cannot be denied that postmodernism is surrounded by diverse positions within the field itself.

Reflection and Action 31.2

Outline the common features of postmodern writers. How are these separate from "modernism".

It would be proper at this point to distinguish between some common terms that are often confused with each other although they are quite distinct from one another. Thus "post modernity" is the word used for the historical epoch following the modern era. Further 'post modernism' itself refers to cultural products which are different/separate from the modern cultural products (in art, architecture etc.). Again 'postmodern social theory' refers to a method of ideating that differs from modern social theory.

From the above it can be said that the post modern covers: 1) a new epoch, 2) new cultural products, 3) new theories about society. Further these new realities are getting strengthened and there is a widespread feeling that the modern era is ending and being superceded by another epoch. This was evident in breaking up of buildings which were modern and complete. However, the post modern theories themselves provide ready made solutions in a general sense. However, it is questionable whether the birth of the post modern era can be precisely dated though it appears to have transited, from the modern in the 1960's.

Post modernism indicates that in the cultural field postmodern cultural products tend to replace modern products. Again postmodern social theory has emerged from and has differences with modern social theory. Thus postmodern theory rejects the notion of 'foundationalism' of the earlier theories but itself tends to be relative, non relational and nihilistic.

31.7   Jameson and Late Capitalism

Again the postmodern thinkers reject the nation of a grand narrative or meta narrative. For example Lyotard contrasts modern knowledge which has a grand synthesis e.g. the work of Parsons or Marx such narratives are associated with modern science. Thus as Lyotard identifies modern knowledge with metanarratives, then obviously postmodern approaches demand that such theorising should be negated in its completeness. This is because postmodern scholars such as Lyotard are not afraid to face the differences and challenges of such a viewpoint. Thus post modernism becomes an instrument that welcomes different perspectives under the same broad umbrella. Let us now turn to look at some examples of postmodern theory. A good illustration of the postmodern theory is clearly set out in the work of Fredric Jameson. The point of departure is that modernity and post modernity mark a radical break from each other and are hard to reconcile the two. However, a middle position is taken by Jameson who writes that there are some continuities between the two epochs. According to Jameson

capitalism is in its 'late' stages, but continues to be the main form of production the world over. However, this 'late' stage of capitalism has been ushered in with post modernism. Thus while the cultural logic is altered, the underlying structure remains the same as in the incipient forms of capitalism. This is reflective of the Marxian framework. Jameson sees the postmodern situation as possessing both positive and negative aspects of postmodernism. Thus there is progress and chaos side by side. Thus according to Jameson there are three stages in the progress of capitalism. The first is market capitalism typified by national markets. Following this phase comes the imperialist stage which is backed up by a global capitalist network. Then the third phase is 'late capitalism' share capital is used to commodify new areas. The effect of changes in the economic structure automatically create appropriate cultural changes. Thus Jameson points out that we can see that:

- realist culture is associated with market capitalism
- modernist culture is associated with monopoly capitalism
- postmodern culture and multinational capitalism

Box 31.3: Late Capitalism

…..aesthetic production today has become integrated into commodity production generally the frantic economic urgency of producing fresh waves of ever more morel seeming goods (from clothing to airplanes), at ever greater rates of turnover, now assigns an increasingly essential structural function and position to aesthetic innovation and experimentation. Such economic necessities then find recognition in the institutional support of all kinds available for art, from foundation and grants to museums and other forms of patronage. (from Frederic Jameson, 1984 "*Post-Modernism, or The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*". New Left Review, p:57).

Jameson's perspective, works mainly within a base and superstructure model. According to Jameson postmodern society has some characteristics: firstly there is superficiality, in the sense the cultural products keep to superficiality and do not enquire deeply into the situation e.g. the soup cans and portrait of Marolyn Munroe – both of which are simulacra as they are a "copy of a copy." Both paintings were painted from a copy of the photographs. Thus the pictures are simulacrum – in which one cannot distinguish the original from the copy (Jameson, 1984:86). These paintings are simulacrum and lack in depth, and covers the surface meanings only. Further emotion or emotionality is hardly to be found is the postmodern societies. Thus alienation has been supplanted by fragmentation, which results in the impensonalization of interaction. Again, and thirdly historicity is set aside and it is clear that all that can be known about the past is textual and can spawn intertextuality at the most. What this implies is that the postmodernists do not restrict themselves to a single linear past but pick and choose from among the available styles. That is to say there is a strong element of *pastiche*. This implies that 'truth' about past history, is that we have no way of knowing what happened. The historians then have to be satisfied with a *pastiche* which in itself may not reflect much of past reality and there is no such thing as linear historical development. Finally postmodernism has a new technology available to it especially the computer and other electronic machines not present earlier. What we can say then is that the post modern societies are in deep flux and great confusion and many symptoms of this have appeared especially with regard to certain kinds of affliction. Thus whole new breeds of psychiatrists are busy trying to undo the stress and

tension that post modernism is clearly associated with. Thus there is a problem of chaotic and disturbing trends of late capitalism. It is difficult to cope with multinational economy and the according cultural impact of consumerism. Jameson feels that cognitive maps are needed to deal with postmodern realities. The maps can be put together by artists novelists and working people. Thus Jameson's schema tries to build bridges between Marxian theory and post-modernism, but ended up antagonising both Marxists and postmodernists. This was to be expected because despite Jameson's efforts to synthesise it was clear that a grand theory/metanarrative was unlikely to bend backwards, and therefore, Jameson uses mainly its base/superstructure dichotomy. Jameson's postmodernism does try to maintain some basic/tenous link with Marxian theory despite the fact that Marxism is a grand narrative. However, in the case of Jean Baudrillard postmodernism is presented as a maverick social theory of contemporary times. Thus Baudrillard journey of ideas commences in the 1960's, when he started out as a Marxist critique of consumer society he was influenced by both linguistics and semiotics. However, he soon left this orientation behind him and abandoned both Marxism and structuralism.

31.8 Baudrillard and Post Modernism

In the 1970's Baudrillard alleged that Marxists and their detractors both had a similar beorgeoisie orientation which was conservative. He felt that an alternative explanation was necessary. Thus Baudrillard put forward the notion of "symbolic exchange" as an alternative to economic exchange. Symbolic exchange itself involves a continuous process of a gift giving and gift taking. It is clear that symbolic exchange was beyond and opposed to the logic of late capitalism.

Such symbolic exchange implied the creation of a society based on the same, but Baudrillard chose to be a-political. He studied contemporary society, and saw that it is not production but the electronic media that characterises it e.g. TV, computers, satellites. We have moved from societies under different modes of production to a society that is more involved with the code of production. Exploitation and profit motives have given way to a domination by the signs/systems that produce them. Again signs referred to something else but in postmodern society they become self referential and characterised by "simulations" and 'simulacra' which are representations of any aspect of consumption (Baudrillard, 1973).

For Baudrillard the postmodern world is "hyper reality." Thus media becomes more real than the reality itself, and provides news, views and events in an exaggerated, skewed, and even ideological manner – thus the term hyper reality. This is not without consequences as the real tends to be buried in the hyper real and may ultimately be banished altogether.

> **Box 31.4: Catastrophe Management**
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> In short, there is such distortion between North and South, to the symbolic advantage of the South…..that one day everything will break down. One day, the west will break down if we are not soon washed clean of this shame, if an international congress of the poor countries does not very quickly decide to share out this symbolic privilege of misery and catastrophe. (Jean Baudrillard, *The Illusion of the End*, p:69).

For Baudrillard culture is undergoing a very deep change which makes the masses more and more passive, rather than increasingly rebellious. Thus the masses encounter these changes with seeming ease absorbing each new cultural idea or artifact. Thus for Baudrillard masses are not seen to be the products of media. Rather it is the media which is observed to provide these wants to the masses (for objects and entertainment). For Baudrillard society is in throes of a 'death culture.' Thus it is death anxiety that pushes people to try and lose this anxiety by using and abusing the consumerist culture. There is no revolutionary silver lining to Baudrillard's theory and the problem is also that symbolic exchange societies may exist but how to bring them about is not addressed to by Baudrillard. All in all Baudrillards brilliant and unusual ideas make it a clear breakaway from the ideas and artifacts of modernism. Baudrillard in deconstructing contemporary society shows just how much sociological theory has moved forward and away from classical thought. Thus we can see post modernism does display certain characteristics and we can see below just what these are.

The first of these characteristics is that in postmodernism that is a multiplicity of views, meanings and so on. Secondly the postmodernists are looking for polysemic and alternative meanings. Thirdly there is a distrust of metanarratives and grand narratives as found in classical sociological theory. It also holds that since there a multiplicity of perspectives there will always be many truths. Thus postmodernists regard concepts ideas as texts which are open to interpretation. They also look for binary oppositions in the text. Further, these binary oppositions are themselves shown to be false or at least not necessarily true. Finally the post modernist identifies texts, groups which are absent or omitted. This is regarded important to any 'deconstruction.'

Now postmodernism is reflected in almost all areas of life including film, TV, literature etc. which are deeply influenced by postmodern viewpoints. Let us now turn to some postmodern aspects visible in other fields. Thus in language words and forms are used and the concept of 'play' is basic to it. Thus 'play' implies altering the frame which connects ideas – allowing the troping of a metaphor. Thus the 'text' has a meaning which is understood or interpreted by the reader and not the author. This 'play' or exercise is the way that the author gains some significance in the consciousness of the reader. The problem with this postmodern view about language is very difficult to understand and is against the basis of communication where the author communicates to the reader in as lucid a manner as possible.

In literature it is found that postmodern works is not so much opposed to modernist literature. Instead it tends to extend it stylistically. Some post modern literatures include David Foster Wallace and Thomas Pynchon both of whom are critical of the vast system building of the Enlightenment modernity. As you would have noticed post structuralism and postmodernism do have an intermeshing quality. Indeed some authors straddle both fields e.g. Francois Lyotard. Further structuralism tries to build models seeking out factor and patterns that are stable, which is anathema to postmodernists and rejected outright as a futile manoeuvre. Thus postmodernism has retained the cultural dimension of structuralism but has rejected the claims to its scientificity. Again post structuralism is a position in philosophy, it is not the name of an era whereas postmodernism is associated with the post modern epoch.

31.9 Conclusion

What then has postmodernism achieved? The answer is that postmodernism has turned away the shroud over the analysis and demystified both epistemological and ideological constructs. Further a deep look at ethnography has to led to a reexamination and questioning of ethnography itself. Postmodernism and its adherents point out that sociologist should analyse the role of their own culture in the study of culture, and therefore, increase the sensitivity of the subject. Postmodern approaches have been criticised on several grounds. To begin with postmodernists are against theory. This paradoxical since this is itself a theoretical position taken by the postmodernists. Again the postmodernists emphasise the illogical or non-rational aspects of a culture. Further, the postmodern concentrates on the marginal which is itself evaluative. Then again the stress on intertextuality, but do not always follow their own advice and often treat texts as standing alone. Postmodernists also put away all assessment of theory – but this does not mean that there is no means of assessment. Thus according to postmodernists modernism is inconsistent but they themselves exercise it as and which way they want. Finally the postmodernists are self contradictory when they deny any claims of reality or 'truth' in their own writings. Finally there is the issue of postmodernism not having any confidence in the scientific method. But if sociology does follow this position, then it will turn into a study of meanings, rather than causes which influence what it is to be an individual in society.

31.10 Further Reading

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