

## Themes and Values of Post Modernity

- **‘Optimism is overrated’**
  - the optimism of modernism has given way to a more ambivalent attitude about the future.
- **‘What is truth?’**
  - confidence has been lost in objective, absolute, universal truths
    - Claims to such truths no longer match the complexity of reality
    - It is widely accepted that claims to exclusive truths often end in violence  
*(eg claims by religious groups to hold “fundamental truths” is seen to be at the root of many conflicts across the world...)*
    - Greater awareness of the rich diversity of human societies and cultures has led to increased awareness of contested truths.
- **Pluralism**
  - *“Postmodernity is ... first and foremost an acceptance of the ineradicable plurality of the world; plurality which is not a temporary station on the road to not yet attained perfection but the constitutive quality of reality.”*  
(Zygmunt Bauman)
  - Pluralism is held up as the ideal. Universal acceptance and tolerance are perceived to be the goal for a fair, just and ethical society...
- **Consumerism - ‘I shop therefore I am’ ... *Tesco ergo sum* [other supermarkets are available...]**
  - Consumerism has become a dominant cultural icon
  - Factories (production) replaced by retail parks (consumption)
  - Our identity is seen to be less about the job we do than the labels we wear or which phone we use. Are you a Mac user or PC user?

- o Shopping centres have become more 'Cathedral like' than Cathedrals in architectural terms (e.g. the Trafford Centre or Meadowhall). People are more likely to visit a city to shop at its famous shopping centre than they are to make a pilgrimage to its cathedral...

- **Dissatisfaction with Materialism**

- o Paradox; although consumerism has become rife, many are also dissatisfied with the simple materialism of modernism and are looking for 'something more'
  - "New Age" spirituality has gained pace.
  - Many look to pre-Modern myths and beyond the West to 'exotic' spiritualities.
  - Night school classes are offered in yoga, crystal therapy and Feng Shui.

- **Image is Everything**

- o Style has largely replaced substance  
*(e.g. who cares if a pop star can actually sing so long as their look makes them attractive to the target audience? Huge followings on Twitter of certain pop stars are more well known than the music which they produce... ie Taylor Swift, Lady Gaga...)*
- o The only thing worse than having a mobile phone without the latest features is having one that looks like a brick.
- o News is largely expressed in short soundbytes via social media.
- o The current American president predominantly communicates with his people and other world leaders via short "280 character" posts on social media.

- **Mass Culture**

- o Culture has become a commodity, sold in mass markets across the globe (globalisation).

- o Traditional boundaries have been blurred (e.g. metrosexuality replaces masculinity, and currently questions of gender identity and sexual fluidity).

- **Changing Community**

- o Less focussed on geographical location (neighbourhoods) or family ties and more on networks (specific groupings of people with similar interests, engaging in similar activities, or purchasing similar products/services). This is especially true and heightened by the rise of virtual social networks.
- o People have become more sceptical of institutions and authority figures.
- o Membership organisations have largely declined.
- o Individualism has become rife – although community is talked about, many do not make the sacrifices necessary to build and maintain community – it all has to fit ‘me’... “what benefit do **I** get” trumps “the common good”.
- o Choice is king – people more likely to travel rather than use their local amenities and services; this is especially true of shops, schools, churches to name a few examples.

- **Spiritual but not Religious**

- o Interest in ‘the divine’ has increased, but for many people has moved away from organised religion towards a personal interest in the realm of ‘the spiritual’ (*increasingly people self-identify as ‘spiritual but not religious’*).
- o People are more likely to have a “pick and mix” spirituality than hold an allegiance to any particular formal religious belief system.