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| **Modernism/Modernity** | **Postmodern/Postmodernity** |
| Master Narratives and Metanarratives of history, culture and national identity; myths of cultural and ethnic orgin. | Suspicion and rejection of Master Narratives; local narratives, ironic deconstruction of master narratives: counter-myths of origin. |
| Faith in "Grand Theory" (totalizing explantions in history, science and culture) to represent all knowledge and explain everything. | Rejection of totalizing theories; pursuit of localizing and contingent theories. |
| Faith in, and myths of, social and cultural unity, hierarchies of social-class and ethnic/national values, seemingly clear bases for unity. | Social and cultural pluralism, disunity, unclear bases for social/national/ethnic unity. |
| Master narrative of progress through science and technology. | Skepticism of progress, anti-technology reactions, neo-Luddism; new age religions. |
| Sense of unified, centered self;   "individualism," unified identity. | Sense of fragmentation and decentered self;   multiple, conflicting identities. |
| Idea of "the family" as central unit of social order: model of the middle-class, nuclear family. | Alternative family units, alternatives to middle-class marriage model, multiple identities for couplings and childraising. |
| Hierarchy, order, centralized control. | Subverted order, loss of centralized control, fragmentation. |
| Faith and personal investment in big politics (Nation-State, party). | Trust and investment in micropolitics, identity politics, local politics, institutional power struggles. |
| Root/Depth tropes.   Faith in "Depth" (meaning, value, content, the signified) over "Surface" (appearances, the superficial, the signifier). | Rhizome/surface tropes.   Attention to play of surfaces, images, signifiers without concern for "Depth". |
| Faith in the "real" beyond media and representations; authenticity of "originals" | Hyper-reality, image saturation, simulacra seem more powerful than the "real"; images and texts with no prior "original".   "As seen on TV" and "as seen on MTV" are more powerful than unmediated experience. |
| Dichotomy of high and low culture (official vs. popular culture);   imposed consensus that high or official culture is normative and authoritative | Disruption of the dominance of high culture by popular culture;   mixing of popular and high cultures, new valuation of pop culture, hybrid cultural forms cancel "high"/"low" categories. |
| Mass culture, mass consumption, mass marketing. | Demassified culture; niche products and marketing, smaller group identities. |
| Art as unique object and finished work authenticated by artist and validated by agreed upon standards. | Art as process, performance, production, intertextuality.   Art as recycling of culture authenticated by audience and validated in subcultures sharing identity with the artist. |
| Knowledge mastery, attempts to embrace a totality.   The encyclopedia. | Navigation, information management, just-in-time knowledge.   The Web. |
| Broadcast media, centralized one-   to-many communications. | Interactive, client-server, distributed, many-   to-many media (the Net and Web). |
| Centering/centeredness,   centralized knowledge. | Dispersal, dissemination,   networked, distributed knowledge |
| Determinancy | Indeterminancy, contingency. |
| Seriousness of intention and purpose, middle-class earnestness. | Play, irony, challenge to official seriousness, subversion of earnestness. |
| Sense of clear generic boundaries and wholeness (art, music, and literature). | Hybridity, promiscuous genres, recombinant culture, intertextuality, pastiche. |
| Design and architecture of New York and Boston. | Design and architecture of LA and Las Vegas |
| Clear dichotomy between organic and inorganic, human and machine | cyborgian mixing of organic and inorganic, human and machine and electronic |
| Phallic ordering of sexual difference, unified sexualities, exclusion/bracketing of pornography | androgyny, queer sexual identities, polymorphous sexuality, mass marketing of pornography |
| the book as sufficient bearer of the word;   the library as system for printed knowledge | hypermedia as transcendence of physical limits of print media;   the Web or Net as information system |

Chart Created by Martin Irvine,

<http://www19.homepage.villanova.edu/karyn.hollis/prof_academic/Courses/2043_pop/modernism_vs_postmodernism.htm>