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5-3-1 Quiz – Postmodernity and the Moral Life
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Fill in the blanks:

1. The postmodern impulse is a reaction against the _____, _____, _____, and confidence in progress that so characterized the past few centuries.
2. Gene Veith contrasts Modernists values with _____ and postmodernist values _____.
3. Defining any movement of history or cultural trend involves _____.
4. Stanley Grenz describes “the postmodern understanding of knowledge is built on two foundational assumptions: 1. _____ and 2. _____.
5. Because interpretations and attempts to define reality are intimately linked to _____ and _____, many postmodern advocates call for a hermeneutic of suspicion, meaning that we must be suspicious of the ideological backdrop to all interpretations.

Answers:

1. Rationalism, pursuit of truth, certainty,
2. Unity/diversity
3. Risk
4. Views all explanations of reality as constructions that are useful but not objectively true/deny that we have the ability to step outside our constructions of reality.
5. Power and control

Definitions:

Postmodern: can be described as a new period of history set apart by its own social, cultural, and intellectual traits or can be seen as a phase or extension of modernity.

Metanarratives: are the grand ideas of foundational constructs that people use to explain reality and bring coherence to the world.

Deconstruction according to Derrida: a mode of analysis that purports to take apart all expressions of objective meaning, showing that everything from a play by Shakespeare to the Declaration of Independence to a scientific experiment is actually unstable linguistic constructions, mask for cultural power, and rationalization for oppression.

Summary:

Chapter 5 in Hollinger’s book discusses postmodernity and the moral life by highlighting philosophers, literary critics, and linguists such as Richard Rorty. Jean-François Lyotard was one of the first philosophers to employ the term postmodern. Jacques Derrida which rejected metanarratives and thought postmodern thought is deconstruction of texts that questions the ability of readers to get at the intentions of authors and the ability of authors to uncover any real meaning about the world. Hollinger discusses postmodernity as either viewed as an extension of the modern world or a new era in its own right by going over the intellectual tenets of deconstructionism, the questioning of metanarratives, the social construction of reality, and the coercive power of ideas.