fragmentation

alienation

newness

**KEY WORDS**

authenticity

the unconscious

mass



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| **CHARACTERISTICS**   1. Belief in the **nuance of psychological experience and the multiplicity or “fragmentation” of self** (Cobley 113)—in contrast to the possibility of a stable, unified, rationalistic viewpoint or identity posed by previous -isms. 2. **Mistrust or inaccessibility of the past** as a guide for solving contemporary problems or representing modern experience. 3. Skepticism toward **mass culture and social institutions**, which are contrasted to the authenticity of a reflexive self which is “closed, autonomous, antagonistic” and often alienated (Cobley 135) 4. Distrust of **official truths or communal, common-sense assumptions.** 5. Recognition of the primary role of the **unconscious** in identify and the experience of life (Freudian repression, for example): “the human ego is not even master of its own house” (Cobley 137)   **HISTORY**  Emergent: 1900-1910s  Dominant: 1920 - present | **HISTORICAL CAUSES AND CONDITIONS**  A. expansion of society to a vaster **scale**: “industrial acceleration” (qtd. in Cobley 136), globalization, economic competition, imperialism, and world war  B. rise of **mass politics** conducted through media and the techniques of designed public spectacles, propaganda, public relations, etc.    C. the “**imperialist” phase of capitalist** development resulting from growth in the scale of economic activities beyond national boundaries and politics (Eagleton qtd. in Cobley 88).  D. a **reaction against realist styles**, which were seen as inauthentically objective, politically uncritical, and psychologically unaware.  **E. rationalization** of life through the increasing influence of science and technological standardization: psychology, economics, corporatization, media networks, surveillance, etc. | **QUOTATIONS AND COMMENTARIES**  *“Make It New.” — Ezra Pound 1935*  *“On or about December 1910, human character changed.”*  *—Virginia Woolf, “Mr. Bennet and Mrs. Brown.”*  *1924*  *“I mistrust all frank and simple people, especially when their stories hold together.”*  *— Ernest Hemingway (as narrator),* The Sun  Also Rises*. 1926.*  *“…[M]odernism…obstinately refuses to abandon the struggle for meaning. It is…agonizingly caught up in metaphysical depth and wretchedness, still able to experience psychic fragmentation and social alienation as spiritually wounding, and so embarrassingly enmortgaged to the very bourgeois humanism it otherwise seeks to subvert. Postmodernism, [on the other hand, presumes to have] confidently… outlived all that fantasy of interiority, that pathological itch to scratch surfaces for concealed depths; it embraces instead the mystical positivism…for which the world—would you believe it—just is the way it is and not some other way.” (69-70)*  *— Terry Eagleton,* Capitalism, Modernism,  Postmodernism. |
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**Modernism**