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Society and Culture: Modernity and Globalization

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Course

Introduction

In "The Consequences of Modernity" Anthony Giddens argues that the global form of modernity that we feel today is the decline of traditions, the increasing risk awareness, and the changing nature of trust within our relationships. In the work, Giddens defines modernity by stating, "modernity refers to modes of social life or organization which emerged in Europe from about the seventeenth century onwards and which subsequently became more or less worldwide in their influence" (Giddens, p. 1). Giddens believes that there are both positive and negative aspects of modernity. Most people can easily identify the positive aspects of modernity, however, the negative aspects they may not have previously considered. Throughout this paper, I will discuss Giddens' view of modernity incorporating views that concur with and decent from it.

Giddens and Modernity

Giddens feels that modernity was the swift change in the characteristics of society that cannot be considered the evolution of society because it lacks the slow progress that could be characterized as such. According to Giddens, "Traditional civilizations may have been considerably more dynamic than other pre-modern systems, but the rapidity of change in conditions of modernity is extreme" (Giddens, p. 6). He feels that the advent of technology produced swift changes in society that made it virtually unrecognizable from earlier times. In addition, the modern though that arose with modernity has created significant and swift changes in society. The article "Sex, Morality, and Modernity: Can Immanual Kant Unite Us?"

appearing in *The Atlantic* discusses how a more modern way of looking at sexual relations has dramatically changed society.

Giddens also believes that modernity produced and produces a significant change in social relationships. He argues that the social transformation that took place as society modernized spread across the earth. In addition, he argues that new social institutions emerged as a result of modernity. He states, "Modern urban settlements often incorporate the sites of traditional cities, and it may look as though they have merely spread out from them. In fact, modern urbanism is ordered according to quite different principles from those which set off the pre-modern city from the countryside in prior periods" (Giddens, p.6). Thus, Giddens believes that the entire structure of society is different from that of early times, and is based on a different foundation. Furthermore, Giddens argues that modernity has produced the restructuring of social relations. One of the primary ways that the modernity has changed the social structure and the way in which people interact has to do with the nature of money in modern society. The way in which money changes the nature of trust in relationships is by permitting the exchange of anything for anything (See Giddens, p. 22). In "Karl Polanyi and the Rise of Modernity" the author argues that the pursuit of money may not alone erode traditional society and trust, however, it is a major catalyst of such an occurrence.

Giddens also argues that modernity brought with it the need for increasing risk awareness. The type of military power that is present today is a product of modernity. "In the present century thus far, over 100 million people have been killed in wars, a higher proportion of the world's population than in the nineteenth century, even allowing for overall population

increase" (Giddens, p. 10). Giddens proposes that today's world is more dangerous than the world was in preceding years. He claims that although there are a number of positive benefits to modernity, there are also so serious negative consequences which has served to dampen the assumption that progress would lead to a happier social order (See Giddens, p. 10).

There are a significant number of people and groups that agree with Giddens view that modernity is the decline in traditions. In fact, some go so far as to stand for the proposition that modernity is the decline in values that were traditionally present. Such is the case with Muslim extremists who strongly oppose every instance of globalization that they can due to the fact that they believe that it promotes the erosion of Islamic culture and traditions. In addition, it is argued that some agree with Gidden's view of modernity because they feel a benefit from the lack of advancement of society. The article "The Global War on Modernity" appearing in the Wall Street Journal online earlier this year proposes that a significant amount of resistance to modernity arises because of modernity's threat to traditional power bases. In the article, the author suggests that we should call modernity modern values (Kasparov, 2015). "In addition to bringing these relics into contact and competition with the modern world that threatens their power, globalization provides the time traveler [those who oppose modernity] with markets for their natural resources and with the technology they use for murder and repression. Thus, they cannot disengage from the modern world entirely. Since time travelers cannot fight head-to-head with the ideas and prosperity of the Free World, they fall back on their arsenal of ideology, violence and disregard for human life" (Kasparov, 2015). Thus, according to the author, even those who strongly oppose modernity cannot escape it and are willing to utilize its

benefits will contending that modernity is damaging to our society. The reasons that these time travelers feel that they benefit from the lack of modernity may be because of a lack of access to information as well as less progressive thought.

Conclusion

Anthony Giddens argues that modernity has both a positive side and a negative side. On the negative side, Giddens argues that modernity leads to a decline in tradition, a change in the nature of trust in relationships, and an increased risk awareness. To support this proposition, Giddens' asserts that technology has led to such rapid change in society that it bears little resemblance to the past. In addition, the foundations of society have changed from what they used to be. The values and trust relationships that previously existed have been altered by social constructs such as money. Furthermore, modernity has brought with it an increase in danger that was not present in previous eras. There are a significant number of people who agree with Giddens' view of modernity for various reasons.

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