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Quotes about Modern and Modernism

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Postmodernism is, almost by definition, a transitional cusp of social, cultural, economic and ideological history when modernism's high-minded principles and preoccupations have ceased to function, but before they have been replaced with a totally new system of values. It represents a moment of suspension before the batteries are recharged for the new millennium, an acknowledgment that preceding the future is a strange and hybrid interregnum that might be called the last gasp of the past.

- Adair, Gilbert

Modernism may be seen as an attempt to reconstruct the world in the absence of God.

- Appleyard, Bryan

This strange disease of modern life, with its sick hurry, its divided aims.

- Arnold, Matthew

Modernity is the transient, the fleeting, the contingent; it is one half of art, the other being the eternal and the immovable.

- Baudelaire, Charles

We are becoming like cats, slyly parasitic, enjoying an indifferent domesticity. Nice and snug in the social, our historic passions have withdrawn into the glow of an artificial

coziness, and our half-closed eyes now seek little other than the peaceful parade of television pictures.

- Baudrillard, Jean

You are born modern, you do not become so.

- Baudrillard, Jean

I am prisoner of a gaudy and unlivable present, where all forms of human society have reached an extreme of their cycle and there is no imagining what new forms they may assume.

- Calvino, Italo

The modern mind is in complete disarray. Knowledge has stretched itself to the point where neither the world nor our intelligence can find any foot-hold. It is a fact that we are suffering from nihilism.

- Camus, Albert

A modern man has nothing to add to modernism, if only because he has nothing to oppose it with. The well-adapted drop off the dead limb of time like lice.

- Canetti, Elias

Now here, you see, it takes all the running you can do, to keep in the same place. If you want to get somewhere else, you must run at least twice as fast as that!

- Carroll, Lewis

I think the adjective post-modernist really means mannerist. Books about books is fun but frivolous.

- Carter, Angela

Our own epoch is determining, day by day, its own style. Our eyes, unhappily, are unable yet to discern it.

- Corbusier, Le

By Modernism I mean the positive rejection of the past and the blind belief in the process of change, in novelty for its own sake, in the idea that progress through time equates with cultural progress; in the cult of individuality, originality and self-expression.

- Cruickshank, Dan

Don't bother about being modern. Unfortunately it is the one thing that, whatever you do, you cannot avoid.

- Dali, Salvador

In societies where modern conditions of production prevail, all of life presents itself as an immense accumulation of spectacles. Everything that was directly lived has moved away into a representation.

- Debord, Guy

Postmodernism is among other things a sick joke at the expense of revolutionary avant-gardism.

- Eagleton, Terry

The postmodern reply to the modern consists of recognizing that the past, since it cannot really be destroyed, because its destruction leads to silence, must be revisited: but with irony, not innocently. I think of the postmodern attitude as that of a man who loves a very cultivated woman and knows he cannot say to her, I love you madly, because he knows that she knows (and that she knows that he knows) that these words have already been written by Barbara Cartland. Still, there is a solution. He can say, As Barbara Cartland would put it, I love you madly.

- Eco, Umberto

It cannot be denied that for a society which has to create scarcity to save its members from starvation, to whom abundance spells disaster, and to whom unlimited energy means unlimited power for war and destruction, there is an ominous cloud in the distance though at present it be no bigger than a man's hand.

- Eddington, Arthur Stanley

It takes a kind of shabby arrogance to survive in our time, and a fairly romantic nature to want to.

- Friedenberg, Edgar Z.

The reason for the sadness of this modern age and the men who live in it is that it looks

for the truth in everything and finds it.

- Goncourt, Edmond and Jules De

If work and leisure are soon to be subordinated to this one utopian principle -- absolute busyness -- then utopia and melancholy will come to coincide: an age without conflict will dawn, perpetually busy -- and without consciousness.

- Grass, Gunther

I am truly horrified by modern man. Such absence of feeling, such narrowness of outlook, such lack of passion and information, such feebleness of thought.

- Herzen, Alexander

Post-modernism is modernism with the optimism taken out.

- Hewison, Robert

When you automate an industry you modernize it; when you automate a life you primitivize it.

- Hoffer, Eric

Even in a time of elephantine vanity and greed, one never has to look far to see the campfires of gentle people.

- Keillor, Garrison

In these great times which I knew when they were this small; which will become small again, provided they have time left for it in these times in which things are happening that could not be imagined and in which what can no longer be imagined must happen, for if one could imagine it, it would not happen; in these serious times which have died laughing at the thought that they might become serious; which, surprised by their own tragedy, are reaching for diversion and, catching themselves red-handed, are groping for words... in these times you should not expect any words of my own from me -- none but these words which barely manage to prevent silence from being misinterpreted.

- Kraus, Karl

In the society of men the truth resides now less in what things are than in what they are not. Our social realities are so ugly if seen in the light of exiled truth, and beauty is no longer possible if it is not a lie.

- Laing, R. D.

It is a tribute to the peculiar horror of contemporary life that it makes the worst features of earlier times -- the stupefaction of the masses, the obsessed and driven lives of the bourgeoisie -- seem attractive by comparison.

- Lasch, Christopher

A work can become modern only if it is first postmodern. Postmodernism thus understood is not modernism at its end but in the nascent state, and this state is constant.

- Lyotard, Jean Francois

The sickness of our times for me has been just this damn thing that everything has been getting smaller and smaller and less and less important, that the romantic spirit has dried up, that there is no shame today. We're all getting so mean and small and petty and ridiculous, and we all live under the threat of extermination.

- Mailer, Norman

Modernity exists in the form of a desire to wipe out whatever came earlier, in the hope of reaching at least a point that could be called a true present, a point of origin that marks a new departure.

- Man, Paul De

Unable to create a meaningful life for itself, the personality takes its own revenge: from the lower depths comes a regressive form of spontaneity: raw animality forms a counterpoise to the meaningless stimuli and the vicarious life to which the ordinary man is conditioned. Getting spiritual nourishment from this chaos of events, sensations, and devious interpretations is the equivalent of trying to pick through a garbage pile for food.

- Mumford, Lewis

You don't have to be old in America to say of a world you lived in: That world is gone.

- Noonan, Peggy

The atom bombs are piling up in the factories, the police are prowling through the cities, the lies are streaming from the loudspeakers, but the earth is still going round the sun.

- Orwell, George

Today we all speak, if not the same tongue, the same universal language. There is no one center, and time has lost its former coherence: East and West, yesterday and tomorrow exist as a confused jumble in each one of us. Different times and different spaces are combined in a here and now that is everywhere at once.

- Paz, Octavio

Anyone who lives in this time is concerned with grottness.

- Reading, Peter

For we which now behold these present days have eyes to wonder, but lack tongues to praise.

- Shakespeare, William

There is something terribly wrong with a culture inebriated by noise and gregariousness.

- Steiner, George

One cannot spend one's time in being modern when there are so many more important things to be.

- Stevens, Wallace

I don't think we can ignore the Modern Movement. But I wouldn't have minded at all if it hadn't happened. I think the world would be a much nicer place.

- Terry, Quinlan

The fate of our times is characterized by rationalization and intellectualization and, above all, by the disenchantment of the world. Precisely the ultimate and most sublime values have retreated from public life either into the transcendental realm of mystic life or into the brotherliness of direct and personal human relations. It is not accidental that our greatest art is intimate and not monumental.

- Weber, Max

It is only the modern that ever becomes old-fashioned.

- Wilde, Oscar

Postmodernism refuses to privilege any one perspective, and recognizes only difference, never inequality, only fragments, never conflict.

- Wilson, Elizabeth

A multitude of causes unknown to former times are now acting with a combined force to blunt the discriminating powers of the mind, and unfitting it for all voluntary exertion to reduce it to a state of almost savage torpor.

- Wordsworth, William



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