# Postmodernity and Postmodernism

## Postmodernity

- Scepticism about the benefits of science
- Politics less important as a source of identity
  - People have an incredulity to metanarratives
- Globalisation and the decline of the nation state
- Consumption more important
  - Culture free from economic and social structure
- Consumer societies
- Post industrialisation and the service sector
- More individual freedom and diversity
  - Also more uncertainty
  - Hybrid identities
- 1970 ish onwards
- A distinct break with modernity

## Lyotard

- Society no longer organised according to a 'grand plan'
  - This is better as people are less likely to oppress other people in the name of 'progress'
  - Individuals are freer to just get on with constructing and expressing their identities
- Incredulity to metanarratives
  - People no longer believe a single theory can be used to understand the world
  - Or used as a basis for perfecting the world
  - Means a rejection of Marxism
- Metanarratives replaced by technical Language games
  - Search for 'ultimate truths' is abandoned
  - Knowledge now has to be useful and focused on small scale problems
    - E.g right and left realist theories about reducing the crime rate

## General ideas of Postmodern theory

- Society just consists of many narratives, or stories
- There is no underlying reality or 'structure'
- There is no such thing as truth, we need freeing from the idea of 'the truth'

## Baudrillard

- The death of the social (people have lost touch with 'underlying reality')
  - People rely on the media for their knowledge about the world
    - But the media does not reflect reality
  - People are less interested in politics
    - And more interested in superficial consumerism
    - Which is fuelled by advertising in the media
  - This creates a lot of complexity and confusion
    - Increasingly people copy lifestyles and norms generated by the media, which have no basis in reality
- Sign objects and the consumer society
  - Affluence and Consumerism have changed the nature of society
  - We no longer consume objects because they are functionally useful
  - We consume objects because of their 'sign - value' - in order to express something about ourselves
  - Relations with our objects are as important as our social relations with other people
- Hyperreality and the simulacrum
  - Simulacrum
    - A sign which has no underlying reality
  - Hyperreality
    - A society which is largely based on Simulacra
  - In modern society it is believed that signs represent real things in reality
  - In the hyperreal society power disappears
    - It does not matter who is elected into power, they are just puppets caught up in an endless circulation of signs
  - In postmodern society, signs increasingly do not reflect any underlying reality, it is a 'hyperreal' society based on simulacra
    - Eg Disney
    - Eg Harry Potter World
    - Eg Tomb Raider