

## Summary concepts: the pre-modern and modern world

Pre-Modern	Modern
Change (technological or social) is very slow, usually not observable in one or even several generations; the concept of progress does not exist – food production, once invented, remains largely unchanged for decades or longer	Change, both technological and social, is rapid, and the pace of change increases over time; change is usually (but not always) viewed as progress and progress itself is a goal of society –food production changes rapidly, new foods become available, foods flow from place to place
All products, including food, are hand-crafted through human labor (maybe with some animal labor applied) – every loaf of bread is different – these are artisanal products	All products, including food, are produced through uniformly applied production systems in which chemical and mechanical power supplements or replaces human labor; resulting products are no longer individually distinguishable
Communities are geographically defined and fixed – you are a member of an unchanging or slowly changing community whether you want to be or not	Communities are varied and contingent – they exist because people want to create them and your individual membership in a community is contingent, it’s because you “want to” belong; some communities (cybercommunities) have no physical basis at all
Communities are largely dependent on their own internal resources and interact little	Communities are linked into a global system and are mutually dependent -- communication, transportation, resources, information
Life is experienced as cyclical and repetitive, controlled largely by natural phenomena – day and night, the seasons, birth and death of whole generations an endless repetition of activities, aspirations, experiences	Life is experienced as a continuum, controlled largely by technology – buy, sell, talk 24 hours a day, seasons have little effect on what we do or where we do it, we expect the life of each generation to be different from that of the previous generation
An individual’s economic and social privileges in society are determined at birth	Individuals are socially mobile and can move up or down the ladder of social and economic privilege
Human rights as a concept does not exist – individuals have rights and obligations based on birth status (serf versus lord); different groups are seen as almost different species	Human rights, at least theoretically, are seen as universal and all humans are seen, again at least theoretically, as being equal
Dominant ideas, norms, values and beliefs are “givens,” there is a “natural order” that is immutable and not subject to questioning, an order that needs no explanation – it just “is”	Ideas are viewed as created by human endeavor, as human creations, and are open to continual challenge and change based on what humans can observe empirically –evidence (empirical observation) is the fundamental basis for determining which of many competing ideas, norms, values and beliefs is “the best”
Labor is not bought or sold; serfs “belong to” the lord and all of their effort is his to command; labor is “rewarded” by providing the laborer with some portion of the product s/he produces, enough to keep him/her alive in most cases	An individual (at least in theory) has the right to sell his labor and receive a universal mechanism of exchange – money in some form – which s/he can then use to buy whatever s/he wants