

Technicality



Pointless formalism, used to conceal lack of meaning and to prevent criticism.



The use of complex techniques in modern cultural output, indicating sophistication.

There are texts of theory that resist meaning so powerfully that the very process of failing to comprehend the text is part of what it has to offer.

Critical Terms for Literary Study

The key theme of mediocratic high culture is **vacuity**, i.e. the absence of meaningful content. Content is too threatening because it might conflict with mediocratic ideology, and is too reminiscent of the idea that reality might be objective rather than socially constructed.

In order to retain the appearance of robust cultural disciplines, mediocracy needs alternative proofs and justifications for their existence, and an alternative criterion for producer status. The alternative is provided by *technicality*.

Technicality, which includes the use of jargon and complex techniques, is vacuous but highly demanding. It therefore functions successfully as an intellectual absorbent, distracting both practitioners and audience from attending to the absence of meaningful content.

Fashion is crucial to technicality, as it is necessary to exclude practitioners with inappropriate motivation, e.g. those wishing to challenge mediocracy. Not any technicality will do therefore; it must be of the type currently approved by the relevant professional elite.