CHAPTER - IV

POSTMODERN TURN IN PHILOSOPHY

Postmodernity is a manifold idea that refers to a diverse and important social and cultural changes that took place at the end of the twentieth century in many ‘advanced’ societies. In a wide sense rapid technological change, including telecommunications and computer power, shifting political concerns, the rise of new social movements related to gender, green, ethnic and racial focus, are involved in the postmodern discourse. It never has single definite meaning, but several, often diverse and ‘relatively standardized’ ones and signifies an effort to combine a number of diverse and ambiguous themes. The concept of postmodernity/postmodernism has its place in social thought because it leads us to certain significant social as well as culture changes took place at the end of the twentieth century.

Postmodernism is often understood as something that not just comes after the ‘modern’, but is based on a negation of the ‘modern’, a perceived abandonment, a break with or shift away from what characterizes the modern. Sometimes postmodernism is seemed as a dimension within modernism as a periodizing concept and as a particular cultural, intellectual style or orientation. As a periodizing concept – usually reflected to as
postmodernity – it is used as a brand for certain orientation in arts and architecture. In common, Postmodernism is to be viewed as a denial of many, it questions one’s obligation to cultural ‘progresses’ as well as political structure. Postmodernists often refer to the ‘enlightenment project’ as a liberal humanist ideology that has come to dominate western culture since the eighteenth century that tried to bring about the liberation of mankind from economics want and political oppression

4.1 Postmodernity: A Historical Survey

The aim of enlightenment project was to eliminate uncertainty and ambivalence. Modernity was its result. Economic and political supremacy of Europe initiated new ways of thinking. According to Antony Giddens, “The growth of European power provided, as it were, the material support for the assumption that the new outlook on the world was founded on a firm base with both provided security and offered emancipation from the dogma of tradition”. Humanity has lost its faith in natural progress following the Second World War, but only to be revived artificially by massive scientific and technological development and an unprecedented consumer boom. Colonies became politically independent and the rate of migration increased. This chaotic flex began to question conventional ideas. The notion of modernity was developed as a totality of these changes. This came to an end by 1960s.
In Europe 1960s ensued significant political and cultural challenges. Tradition was questioned. New social movements sprang up. Progress through technological advancement and economic development appeared as the best path before humanity. Intellectuals argued over whether this was crisis or opportunity, and sought for new terms to describe emerging situation. ‘Postmodernity’ is one such term framed to address this new turn. ‘Postmodernity’, still depends on the collapse of modernity, has to do with putative social changes. Certain features of modernity are being magnified, and by contrast shrink others into insignificance, to produce new social and cultural forms. Postmodern debate has responded the question of how the cultural and social change informs each other. To understand social change one has to understand cultural change. The most common method to describe modernity-and thus postmodernity - is to focus on rationality seen as a guiding principle as well as an attained objective for the modern project. Rationality is embodied particularly in the certainty and accuracy of science and knowledge and the far reaching control and use of nature through this knowledge.

Postmodernism exists, as an idea or a form of critique in intellectual discourse developed from the condition of postmodernity. Since 1980s it initiated massive, anxious debates in a lot of disciplines ranging from geography to theology and from philosophy to political science. Postmodern perspective is worth following because it leads us to a series of
significant questions. It increases our sensitivity and helps us to view certain issues as problems to be confronted and obliges us to raise our eyes above narrowly technical and discreet issues and struggle with historical change on a grand scale. Generally ‘Postmodernism’, as a cultural and intellectual phenomenon, refers to the production, consumption and distribution of symbolic goods. It questions all key promises of the European Enlightenment. As Gary Wolker says, “postmodernism is about deposing the trinity of the Enlightenment-reason, nature and progress-which presumably triumphed over the earlier trinity”. In usual practice, postmodern may be seen in the blurring of behaviour between ‘high’ and ‘low’ culture; the collapse of hierarchies of knowledge, taste and opinion and the interest in the local rather than the universal. François Lyotard was the first thinker to formulate a clear and distinct idea about the state of knowledge in the newly evolving period of modernity. In this sense the postmodern stands for a particular epoch with its own feature in philosophy and culture. Frederic Jameson in his preface to The Postmodern condition had made it clear that it is the expression of a particular period in history.

4.1.1 Origin of Postmodernism

The first noted use the word ‘postmodernism’ is back in the 1870s, and although it proceeds to crop up periodically over the next few decades, sometimes with negative meaning. It is only in the latter half of the
twentieth century that it comes to take on the specific meaning of a reaction against modernism and modernity.

In the 1870s the English painter John Watkins Chapman proposed that any art going beyond impressionism, the revolutionary new art style of the period, would be definable as ‘postmodern painting’. By 1917 ‘postmodern’ was the term chosen by the author Rudolf Pennwitz to describe the new form of military style and anti-humanistic culture developing in Europe ravaged by war. In the 1920s and 1930s the term had more positive meaning the work of the American theologian Bernard Iddings Bell, for whom a postmodernist was religious faith indeed. The eminent historian Arnold Toynbee returned to the pessimistic application of the term, when in *A Study of History*, he spoke of the period from 1875 onwards as the ‘postmodern age of Western history’; an age marked by cultural decline as evident in its two world wars. Eventually ‘postmodern’ began to take on the meaning of ‘ultra-modern’, with the architectural theorist Joseph Hudaut using it in a fashion to describe new buildings produced in the aftermath of the Second World War. Architectural theorist Charles Jenks is highly influential in the formation of the idea as it is seen today with his strong criticism of modern architecture, which he thought had lost touch with the general public. It was the so called ‘interaction style’, with its severe tower blocks constructed of concrete and glass, all
straight lines and lacking in ornamentation, with which Jenks particularly took issue.

Ecological movements developed over the later twentieth century were concerned about technological advancements environment. ‘Green’ political parties were formed in many western European countries. Creative artists began to rebel against the structures of the modernist style and demanded abstraction in art and dissonant non-tonal composition in music. Philosophers and cultural theorist reacted against theories such as structuralism, which reduced the world to a series of interlinked system with their own interest denies or ‘deep structure’.

The ideas about postmodernism have been adapted virtually by every discipline. Each area has produced a lot of literature describing postmodernism in their own perspective. Taken on broad by many different fields, where it can refer to so many different things, meanings of postmodernism have multiplied. For an in-depth analysis of postmodernism we must have to visit the traditional understanding of modernity and its related areas.

4.2 The Emergence of Modernity

The term ‘modern’, derived from the Latin modo, simply means ‘of today’ or what is current, as distinguished from earlier times. It has been used in various periods and places to distinguish the contemporary from
traditional and in principle can refer to any sphere of life. It is still used in this local, contextually determined way: hence people refer to ‘modern English’ or ‘modern dance’. The concept of modernity found one of its first expression in the seventeenth-century debate between the ‘Ancient and the Modern’ in Swift’s the ‘Battle of the Books’, about literary style and the status of the classic and contemporary writers. ‘Modernity’ in contemporary intellectual discussions refers to the new civilization developed in Europe and North America over the last several centuries and culminated in the early twentieth century. ‘Modernity’ indicates that this civilization is modern in the strong sense that it is unique in human history.

In England modernity was more closely connected with the rise of modern science, and is best represented in Francis Bacon’s opposition to the wisdom of antiquity. By this time, modernity and the modern had already come to designate a particular kind of time consciousness defined by an orientation to the past and postulating an origin from which the present was both an origin and a distinction. For Christian thinkers of the early medieval age, the modern referred to the contemporary period of the early church. Modernity was thus defined in opposition to the pagan period. To be modern was to be contemporary, to witness the present moment. The idea of ‘the moment’ is central to the time consciousness of modernity and expresses a tension between present and past. The seventeenth-century discussion can be seen as a keen consciousness of the uniqueness of the
present moment. The moment of modernity exists in the space between
present and past. The modern is not only an epoch, but is one that is formed
out of a particular conception of history. The term ‘modernism’ is used in a
famously ambiguous way referring to the philosophy or culture of the
modern period as a whole and also to a much more historically
circumscribed movement in the period between 1850 to 1950.

The idea of modernity is thus a projection and a depression at the
same time and for this reason many of its formations embody nostalgia as
well as utopianism. The idea becomes political in relation to its
interpretation by early Christian thinkers defining their age as modern in
opposition to the pagan. One way of understanding the relation of the terms
‘modern’, ‘modernity’, and ‘modernism’ is aesthetic as a form of art
characteristic of high or actualized or late modernity a period in which
social, economic, and cultural life in the widest sense were revolutionized.

4.2.1 What is Modernity?

‘Modernity’ is today described as ‘modernization’ or simply
‘development’ in the non-western world. The modern-western civilization is
generally characterized by capitalism, a largely secular culture, liberal
democracy, individualism, rationalism, and humanism. The term refers to
the social order emerged after European Enlightenment. Modern world is
marked by its unprecedented dynamism, its dismissal or marginalization of
tradition, and by its global consequences. It relates strongly to belief in
progress and the power of human reason to produce freedom. Modernity can be seen in achievements such as science and technology or democratization of politics, it also attach profoundly the routines of everyday.

The idea of modernity was strongly present behind the development of Sociology in 19th century. ‘Modernization’ is often presented as a means of summing up of social and political processes associated with technology led economics progress. Technology uprooted agricultural workers and transformed them in to mobile industrial urbanites. Modernity questions conventions in science, economic growth, democracy or law and culture and unsettles the given self by constructing a new one.

4.2.2 Achievements of Modernity

In the last few decades profound and irreversible social changes took place in Europe altering everyday life. Our social relations have become stretched over time and space, connected by electro-magnetic signals and fibre-optic cables. The positive self-image given by modern-western culture to itself is drawn by eighteenth-century Enlightenment founded on scientific knowledge of the world and rational knowledge of value. This gives highest place for individuality, freedom and believes. Freedom and rationality will lead to social progress through virtuous, self-controlled work, creating a better material, political, an intellectual life for all. This
combination of science, reason, individuality, freedom, truth and social progress has, however, been questioned and criticized by many.

Enlightenment is legitimized by a rupture which has occurred in recent history with the beginning of modern times. The early modern idea of revolution, for instance, not only signified a radical break from the past and as embracing of the future, but signalled a cyclical conception of history by which the future was a returning and appropriation of the past. Immanuel Kant answers the question ‘Do we live in an enlightenment age? By saying ‘No but we do live in an age of enlightenment’. Kant clearly equated enlightenment with a particular way of thinking and one which exemplifies the spirit of modernity. In his words, “Enlightenment is mankind’s exit from its self-incurred immaturity”; ‘immaturity’ is the ability to use of one’s own understanding without the guidance of another. This immaturity is self-incurred of it cause is not lack of understanding, but lack of resolution and courage to use it without the guidance of another. The motto of enlightenment is therefore: *sapereaude!* have courage to use our own understanding”.³ This is a very clear statement of enlightenment as an idea capitalizing the central ideas of Kant’s philosophy revolving around the themes of autonomy, critique, publicity. Enlightenment as a condition may have emerged out of the historical age of modernity, but is defined as much by opposition to the present as it is to the past.
For Hegel modernity is understood not only in relation with Enlightenment but to history also. Hegel’s philosophy can be seen as a historisization of Kant’s critique, for morality is deemed to be created in society and is articulated in human history. For Hegel, epistemology thus becomes social theory rather than just a theory of knowledge constructed in history. Here reality is constituted by knowledge which is critique. By critique Hegel means a form of knowledge that transforms its objects as opposed to being merely self-limiting as in Kant. In this way, knowledge and reality are dialectically shaped. Critical knowledge, then for Hegel is a form of knowledge, it is consciousness about the self. The result of Hegel’s endeavour is a conception that stresses its internal ambivalence and struggles of modernity. Self, knowledge and power are severely delimiting, as they make their autonomy impossible.

The realization that modernity is inherently contradictory becomes more pronounced with Marx. Unlike Kant and Hegel Marx views modernity as a radical project of action. Since there is the realization that cultural idea and social reality are contradictory, modernity as a project is expressed less in the overcoming of an origin than in the struggle to overcome alienation and exploitation.

Modernism, strictly speaking, refers to development in aesthetic modernity, and is not normally applied to the other dimensions of cultural modernity such as cognitive rationality and morality. But some of the core
features of modernism are expressed in the writings of Marx and Engels, such as the vision of modernity as a dynamic force by which subjectivity and objectivity are formed, the fusion of consciousness with historical experience, the transformation power of consciousness, the confluence of politic and aesthetic in the expressive potential of creativity and violence.

As Karl Marx noted in the *Communist Manifesto*, “The bourgeoisie cannot exist without constantly revolutionizing the instruments of production, and with them the relation of production, and with them all the relations of society…. Constant revolutionizing of production, uninterrupted disturbances of all social relations, ever-lasting uncertainty and agitation, distinguish the bourgeois epoch from all earlier one”. Here Marx points at the societal scope of the changes taking place, changes that others have limited by terms such as ‘industrialization’. In truth, while ‘modernity’ may rather appear vague, it has the virtue of indicating the sheer magnitude of social changes consequent on industrial-capitalist-technological growth.

### 4.2.3 Alienation and Exploitation

Karl Marx, though he welcomed modernity, was no friend of capitalism. The constant upgrading of technology, the dogged quest for market dominance, the increasingly global tentacle of capital are aspects of a system designed to dive between those who profit and those who has nothing to lose but their chairs. To Marx capitalism succeeded in driving a
wedge between capitalist and labourer, between labourer themselves-as they competed for job opportunities-and, more profoundly, between workers who are alienated from their own humanity. So capitalism is understood as a free purposeful activity with an insatiable lust for profit.

4.2.4 New Technology and Society: Beyond Modernity

In the smart-card controlled present day life technology expresses a demand for greater co-ordination and control of social process. Improvement and development through the application of new technologies are assumed. Many people still believe in equality brought about by technology. Modern social and cultural theories are being ripped apart by new structures of time and space associated with the development of information and communication technologies. Any failure to integrate the social aspect of new technologies to postmodern sociology will affect our understanding of the present world. At the same time, the belief that technological advancement necessarily promotes the progress of human civilization often exists as the undercurrents of postmodern social theories. This is false but to abandon progress need not be essential for showing commitments either to understand or guide technological development.

4.3 Declaring the Postmodern

The postmodern became significant during 1970s. It coincided with a crisis in capitalist civilization which brought about a transformative
resolution that is still immensely consequential. In the 1970s, architects began talking earnestly about postmodernism as a way to make up for the manifest deficiencies of modern architecture. Cultural critics also began to notice something strange going on in entertainment forms, particularly the emergence of the hyper real which unsettled the relation between representations of reality. It was relatively new as the centre of all these happenings was mass popular culture with trails of lineage from the tradition of counter culture of the 1960s. There are many other instances of the emergence of postmodernism in, say, literature and fine art. It seems that the declaration made concerning philosophy, architecture and entertainment are the most significant and exemplify much of what is at stake when considering modernity and postmodernity.

4.3.1 Postmodern Philosophy

The postmodern as a philosophical approach runs the risk of turning all social science in to literary criticism or making social research highly subjective, intuitive and preoccupied with the researcher his worries about text production. It can be tempting to separate postmodernism as a statement on the present society, culture and transformation of specific social institutions from postmodernism as a philosophy and intellectual style. One could also turn this around and say that social studies based on postmodern philosophy tend to produce a post-modernist social reality-
everything is turned in to hype-reality or rhetoric or is in a state of flux and indeterminacy.

### 4.3.2 Implications of Postmodernism

There are five important postmodern themes in that four are objects of its criticism, and one constitutes positive method. Postmodernism naturally criticizes: presence or presentation (versus representation and construction), origin (versus phenomena), unity (versus plurality), and transcendence of norms (versus their immanence), it usually offers an analysis of phenomenon through constitutive otherness.

Presence refers to the quality of immediate experience and to the objects thereby immediately ‘presented’. What is directly and immediately given as an experience has traditionally been constructed with representation (the sphere of linguistic signs and concepts), and construction (the products of human invention, perception or sensation or sense data). These have been considered, at various times, as immediate conduits, at reality, more reliable or certain than mental contents subsequently modified, represented, and altered by thought or language. Postmodernism questions and sometimes rejects this distinction.

### 4.3.3 Artistic Expressions

In art forms postmodernism is usually the rejection of high modernism and its models by movements as diverse as pop art, photo
realism and Trans-avant-gardism. For the postmodern artist, there is nothing new about modernism’s continuous quest for the ‘new’. It is merely an assertion of the contemporary as the sole defining gesture of the modern.

At the same time, this plethora of artistic and cultural responses to modernism has come to be understood by many as a sign of some new socio-historical reality in the wake of a post-industrial world, where the classic economic forces of production and industrialization have made way for a service, information and consumer oriented economy. Postmodernity thus means a paradigm shift from the low tech-realm of smokestacks and loco-motives to the high-tech world of silicon chips and digital communication. Whether this brave new world represents a break with capitalism or merely a new phase of it remains a source of tremendous discussion and dissension among theorists of the postmodern. They are eager to draw correlations between the artistic revolt of postmodernism and our possible entry in to a new period of history and a new type of social organization.

4.3.4 Hyper Reality

A special case of the claims about radical changes is the idea of hyper reality- simulacra- replacing the ‘real world’, so that simulations take priority in the contemporary social order. This idea does not point at a particular period and the reasoning is based on sociological ideas. Clearly the notion of hyper reality calls for the expansion of mass media, and can
thus be seen as an attempt to say something about contemporary society as distinct from earlier periods. The idea of hyper reality shows any existing linguistic or represented systems as self-referential. Such systems are anchored neither in a socially produced objective world nor respect the excess of an outside. They produce the very same world that they appear to represent accurately. For example contemporary media and information system have the capacity to represent, an outside world. Such systems can dominate the scene with an array of reproduced imaginary words. The notion of hyper reality is not easy to demonstrate in a conventional empirical research program, although one can study hyper-real as ‘real’ phenomena in advertisements, media performances, brand names and activities.

4.3.5 Language

Many postmodernists reject a representational view of language. Language cannot mirror the reality ‘out there’, or people’s mental state. Given the belief in the centrality of language and its active, constructing role, many advocates of postmodernism question and even deny the idea of a ‘reality out there’ or ‘mental status’. Language is figural, metaphorical, undeniable, and full of contradiction and inconsistencies. Meaning is fixed, but precarious, fragmental and local. Instead of language being used to illuminate ‘something’, language in itself should be illuminated and ‘deconstructed’. Linguistic tricks should be exposed, not in order to reach a
‘truth’, but in order to understand that there is no truth— with the possible exception of the statements just made. Science is seen as linguistic construction and thus should be explored. Paradoxically such enterprises are to be carried out with language and thus should be deconstructed and studied in terms of rhetoric. This alternative view of language is one of the significant aspects of postmodernism.

From this understanding on language, it partially follows that far-reaching theories called grand or master-narratives are problematic. We cannot talk about society, family, unemployment, child-caring, love or values in any general sense. A more sociological version of this moving over to the postmodernism as period camp-stresses that these narratives are unpopular at present. The philosophic version of postmodernism would stress the theoretical case against efforts to offer branded theoretical explanations. Master narratives are part of the tyranny of modernist ideology and are built upon a deeply problematic understanding of language.

4.3.6 Consumerism and Beyond

Changes within capitalism and industrialism following the post war consumer boom in the advanced societies produced what Bell called ‘post-industrialism’. These changes are now taken to be more significant as the material and social spring board for postmodern condition. So postmodernisation has to do with the altered industrial landscape with its
mobile, flexible production. This altered landscape codifies a new occupational structure that places services and so-called information workers in a majority, and a compressed world created by new technologies, new methods of production and new ways of social relationship. In this new social pattern the key motif is consumption, seem both as the cornerstone of a dominant cultural code and as a picture new social condition. What may be fairly obvious in a world of rock fans, theme parks, shopping malls and hip-hop seeps in to domains once thought somewhat beyond the market, such as science, religion, gender, ethnicity and the human body.

4.3.6.1 Consumer Culture

The postmodern is precisely related to a society where consumers’ life style and mass consumption dominate the immediate life of its members. Some who still hold on to a hierarchy of values and cherish chronology suggest that reality itself is unsettled, undermined, so that, eventually, meaning itself evaporates.

Here consumption and a focus on the production of needs and wants are central. Everything is commodified, and this process is reinforced by constant TV advertising. An adequate fund to support consumer life style is presupposed along with sufficient leisure time to indulge in it. City is the suit of cultural shifts. The altered emphasis from economic and functional to cultural and aesthetic is clearly visible in urban areas. Consumer culture
may be connected with other more general cultural phenomenon. Intellectual and religious ones are subjected to the market, which resists ‘authoritative’ pronouncements and responses to it may help to correct a cultural climate conducive to religious revival.

Through mushrooming shopping malls, tightly targeted junk mails or the cacophony of commercial on TV, advanced societies are constantly reminded that they inhabit consumer culture. Shopping, no longer a necessary evil or a domestic chore, now exhibits itself as a leisure pursuit. Television and consumer culture supports each other although it is a mistake to impute simple causal status to the former. They have grown symbolically since the Second World War.

Definitely it is hard to find any cultural boundary in the markets of today. The rise of consumerism and of TV viewing have accelerated an ‘impression’ of reality, obscuring previously cherished differences between highbrow and lowbrow-between the culture of the elite and the culture of the masses. History becomes ‘heritage’ and the musty museum a ‘hands on’ multimedia experience. From TV ads to soap operas, mediated experience is involved in the construction of the self. The global and the local have never before interacted in such intense ways in routine, daily experience.

Postmodernism in novels, films, music and architecture is highly significant as a mirror held up to social and political change. For Marxists
like Frederic Jameson, postmodernism is unmasked as the cultural logic of late capitalism. The production of culture has been integrated into commodity production in general, so that struggle once limited to production now spill over into cultural sphere. Everything from the definition of taste to counter cultural movements of the 1960s could be understood under this rubric. Neither the decrease of the issues to the ‘merely cultural’ nor their diversion back into modernist Marxism will be enough in this situation. Marxism can no longer supply all the answers. But they insist, sociology of postmodernity is still worth pursuing even one that still takes something from Marxism.

Cultural hegemony is redundant with consumer choice established as the market-lubricated axis on which system reproduction, social interrogation and individual life-words are smoothly revolve. ‘Cultural variety, heterogeneity of style and differentiation of belief-system are become conditions of its success’

4.3.7 Varied Voices

Consumerism knows no boundaries. It neither respects domains once immune from its effects nor supports existing marks of cultural territory. So the symbolic decentring becomes a metaphor for postmodern consumer culture in general. Everything is fragmented, heterogeneous, dispersed, lured-and subject to consumer choices.
As the predominant ideal of the modern era gives way to the fluttering, varied voices of the possibility postmodern, so any hope of holding to a single being or a unified cosmos declines away. In scientific sense, the old certainties of method and experiment dissolve as reason based ‘truth’ is dismantled. Values and belief seem to lose any sense of coherence, let alone existing in the world of consumer choice, multiple media and globalized postmodernity. Hesitation, anxiety and doubt seem to be the price posed for that sense of choice. The seemingly liberating shift from fate to choice or from providence to progress appears to have a dark side, which veils the future spiral in to nihilism.

4.3.8 A Critique of Economic Modernity

Postmodernism is most readily well-defined as a set of response – cultural, political, intellectual – to perceived failure of modernism both as a vanguard aesthetic movement and as a common ideology of human progress forged in the fires and bellows of the industrial age. Given the absolute variety of modernism itself, various postmodernist responses to it form the middle of 1970s to early 1990s themselves are variable, even paradoxical and contradictory.

Postmodernity is best realized in a post-industrial America that also happens to be the primary locus for the cultural trends and intellectual discussions associated with postmodernism. The theoretical inspiration for its analysis as simultaneously aesthetic and historic break is primarily
drawn from the writings of a number of French thinkers whose works are commonly grasped under the rubric of post-structuralism, and more generally, that of critical theory.

4.3.9 Postmodernism as a Grand Narrative

From the wide characterization of modernism follows a strong feeling to use correspondingly extensive statements about it. One of the most interesting features of modernism and postmodernism is the attack on general frameworks (grand narratives, totalizing discourses etc.) combined with a preference for categorical statements especially on the nature of ‘modernism’ and on subjects such as language. Postmodernism criticizes modernism for a kind of intellectual imperialism, but many advocates of postmodernism are even more vulnerable to this type of criticism. This paradox can possibly be avoided if one says that the grand narratives of postmodernism about the nature of language, the individual, scientific knowledge, rationality, formal organizations and so on are explanations to the generally outstanding nature of the grand narratives.

A major difficulty in the discussions on postmodernism is the contradiction between taking postmodernism seriously as a philosophy (style), on the one hand, and understanding a ‘new’ social reality on the other (e.g., postmodern organization and postmodern society). From the position of postmodernism as a style of critical analysis which opens up ironies, inter-textually and paradoxes and takes the ambiguity of language
seriously, to attempt to diverse a theory of postmodern society (postmodernity) are essentially flawed efforts to totalize or systematize. The rejection of master narrative or language as representations means that it has become impossible to illuminate huge amounts of social reality. A possible defence for postmodernist would be to emphasize that they are less troubled by the possibility of contradiction and incoherence than their opponents.

There is, however, a better reason for people to want to associate themselves with postmodernism, and this is its usefulness for the mobilization of power. Given the broad terrain the postmodern label covers, it offers some protection against the tendency of people who pursue ‘odd’ agendas. Deviating from established tradition of rationality may lead to the fate of not being published or read even not to get employment. The common use of the term postmodernism means that it cannot that easily be neglected or marginalized so the more effectively one can spread the word, the better-protected one is against the powerful mainstream.

Postmodernism is sometimes celebrated as it questions dominant truths and challenges categories that are seen as oppression of claims about the current state of affairs and the formulation of political interests. Sometimes this leads to a peculiar mix of and even contradictory statements and positions. From a Postmodern perspective all such statements and positions may appear as a suitable text to be deconstructed, where the
categories ‘women’, ‘interests’, ‘social relations’ etc. would be seen as questionable elements in an effort to inscribe order in a messy and fluid world. Parker, recognizing that there are many version of modernism, with divergent politics and methodologies, describes the core of modernism as ‘a rationalism that is unchallengeable and a faith that is ultimately possible to communicate the results of enquiry to other rational beings’. In contrast, Postmodernism suggests that this is a form of intellectual imperialism that ignores ‘the fundamental uncontrollability of meaning’. Such a description captures the essential aspects of what some people talk about in terms of modernism and Postmodernism

4.3.10 Loss of Foundation and Master Narratives

Strong philosophical foundation makes the position one occupies strong. This grounding could be either in a metaphysical foundation like an external world in empiricism, mental structures in rationalism and human nature in humanism, or in a narrative, a story of history-such as class struggle in Marxism or survival of the fittest in social Darwinism or invisible hand of market economy.

As in the case of identity postmodernists take two different but compatible stances. One is categorical (valid throughout history and social centred) and the other is interested in recent historical trends (thus overlapping the philosophy/periodization distinctions). Following the first position, foundation and legitimating narratives have always been a hoax.
They have been used (usually unknowingly) to support a dominant view of the world and its order. Feminist for example, have argued that the historical narratives has always been his story. Empiricists appeal that the nature of the external world supported the force of their own concepts (and those borrowed from elite group), methods, interests, actions and reports in constructing that world. The significance of discourse and the inability of language to represent contribute to a general skepticism towards the legitimating (Meta) narratives supporting Western scientific thought since no privileged access to external realities can be granted. Lyotard showed the decline of the grand narrative of ‘spirituality’ and ‘emancipation’.

The concept of postmodernity is geographically dispersed, so its ‘history’ migrates. Some European thinkers with American connections helped to spark postmodern debate. USA after all epitomizes the ‘modernity’ from which postmodernity derives. The prominent figures of this debate are Jacques Derrida, Michal Foucault, Frederic Jameson and Jean Francois Lyotard. The term ‘postmodern’ came in to popular usage after Jean-Francois Lyotard’s *The Postmodern Condition* is published.

4.4 Lyotard on Knowledge and Little Narratives

Postmodernism as a philosophy or an intellectual style rejects conventional principles such a rationality, order and certainty. It is doubtful about categories and any idea of a constant meaning. Instead, ambivalence, variation, fragmentation, institution and emotion are celebrated as
guidelines for how we should understand the social world. Postmodernism as a philosophy would abandon its generalizing ambitions of social science and instead parasitically play with the ironies, incoherencies, inconsistencies and inter-textuality of social science writings. One of the best ways of describing postmodernism as a philosophical movement would be as a form of skepticism. Skepticism is a primarily negative form of philosophy, which sets out to undermine other philosophical theories claiming to be in possession of ultimate truth, or criteria for determining what count as ultimate truth. The term to describe such a style of philosophy is ‘anti-foundational’. Postmodern philosophy provides us with the arguments and technique to make that gesture of dissent, as well as the means to make value judgments in the absence of such overall authorities.

Lyotard exposed the shifts in the ways in which knowledge and science are conceptualized and practiced. By means of evaluating the changes in the realm of knowledge he arrives at the conclusion that the suspicion towards meta-narratives is the mark of postmodernity. This incredulity results from scientific progress. Lyotard views these shifts as a necessary consequence of the developments in science and technology.

Lyotard’s *The Postmodern Condition* (1979) draws the picture of a world beyond progress. It is hard, he observes, ‘to see what other direction contemporary technology could take as an alternative to the computerization of society’. In this situation Lyotard’s central point is that
the ‘status of knowledge is changing’. But he complains that computerization of society fails to challenge the general paradigm of progress in science and technology to which economic growth and expression of social-political power appear as natural complements. Any meta narrative of progress can no longer be assumed. In Lyotard’s view advanced societies are obliged to direct optimal contribution of higher education to the best performativity of social system.

New technology finds significant place in Lyotard’s analysis. He insists, “along with the hegemony of computer comes certain logic, and therefore a set of prescriptions determine which statements are accepted as ‘knowledge’ statements”. So for Lyotard, power and its self-legitimacies have everything to do with date, storage and availability. Control is enhanced by the ‘computerization of society’. By reinforcing technology, one reinforces reality and one’s chances of being just and right increases accordingly. Reciprocally, technology is reinforced more effectively if one has access to scientific knowledge and decision-making authority. The main ‘metanarrative’ in question follows the Enlightenment line that science legitimates itself as the bearer of emancipation.

Science, once taken to be the touch stone of legitimate knowledge, has lost its assumed unity. As science grows in to disciplines and sub disciplines it becomes harder to maintain that they are all part of same enterprise. Each form of discourse is feared to generate what homemade
authority it can. Scientist must be much more modest than hitherto; far from stating definitely how things are, offers only opinions. The traditional sense of ‘knowledge’ thus discomposes. Lyotard does not go deep in to the sociological aspects of his argument, though he does refer to some economics and political factors that affect the status of knowledge. According to him “Postmodern knowledge is not simply a tool of the authorities; it refines our sensitivity to differences and reinforces our ability to tolerate the incommensurable. Its principle is not the expert’s homology, but the inventor’s paralogy”.  

The growing field of science and technology studies has taken Lyotard’s insights much further in an attempt to understand the growth of knowledge as a social and cultural process. The field embraces everything from macro-level studies of, say the military shaping of major technoscience projects, through its micro-scale analysis of how scientific decisions about how to proceed are actually reached within the laboratory. Such social influences turn out to be profound, subverting the sense that some sciences are as ‘hard’ as their proponents claim. According to Lyotard, the harvest has been repaired by the advent of computer technologies in the later twentieth century. This have helped shift the emphasis away from the issues of intrinsic value or purposes of knowledge to ‘performativity’, the efficiency and productivity of systems. Computer printers are trusted as indicators of ‘reliable’ date and become the guide for
analysis of research and investigation. Indeed Lyotard observe the rationales or purposes of knowledge are seldom sought beyond the immediate.

4.4.1 Legitimizing Knowledge

In Lyotard’s text of 1979, The Postmodern Condition he says “I have decided to use the word ‘postmodern’ to describe that condition. The word is in current use or the American continent among sociologists and critics; it designates the state of our culture following the transformation which, since, the end of the nineteenth century, have altered the game rules for science literature and arts”. Lyotard’s postmodern condition is indeed a policy document. His remark on science, technology and education makes it recognizably so. In his words, “Science has always been in conflict with narratives judged by the Yardstick of Science; the majority of them prove to be fables. But to the extent that science does not restrict itself to state useful regularities and seeks the tenth, it is obliged to legitimate the rules of its own game. It then produces a discourse of legitimates with respect to its own status, a discourse called philosophy”. On science and technology, Lyotard observes that the most significant development in the second half of the twentieth century happened with communication. Linguistics and application in various branches of knowledge, cybernetics and its relation to computing and management, digitalization, informatics, transfer, storage and retrieval, genetic coding and its implications in biological engineering
and medicine are the cutting edge of later-day science and technology. To him “Scientific knowledge is a discourse. And it is fair to say that for the last forty years the ‘learning’ science and technologies have had to do with language – phonology and theories of linguistics, problem of communication and cybernetics, modern theories of algebra and informatics, computers and their language, problem of translation and the search for areas of compatibility among computer languages, problems of information storage and data banks, telematics and the perfection of intelligent terminals”.

Computer is at the heart of the post-industrial body politics, with enormous capacity for symbolic manipulation and accelerating the technological transformation of work and where ever possible, replacement of labour by machine. In his words, “Along with the hegemony of computer comes a certain logic, and therefore a certain set of prescriptions determining which statements are accepted as ‘knowledge’ statements”. Economic transactions are increasingly driven by commodification of information-a fact which presents the universe with great challenge and possibilities.

For Lyotard postmodern condition is essentially epistemological; that means connected with production and legitimation of knowledge. In modern Western world, science has become the touch stone of knowledge. He says, “Knowledge is and will be produced in order to be sold, it is and
will be consumed in order to be valorised in a new production: in both case, the goal is exchange. Knowledge ceases to be an end in itself; it loses its ‘use-value’”.\textsuperscript{11} Traditional knowledge was legitimized by the authority of religion. Science was the only one way of knowing and thus displacing this form. Science has the power to legitimize itself. Other ways of knowing according to Lyotard, generally take the form of narrative. For example, the great world of religion tells stories about the world and our places within it. Modern scientific knowledge has typically contested the authority of religion giving rise to disputes that have been resolved with more or less satisfactory turns. Lyotard sees science and narrative as simply in commensurable ways of knowledge. He says, “Knowledge (Savoir) in general cannot be reduced to science, or even to learning (connaissance). Learning is the set of statements which, to the exclusion of all other statements, denote or describe objects and may be delivered true or false. Science is a subset of learning. It is also composed of denotative statements, but imposes two supplementary conditions on their acceptability: the objects to which they refer must be available for repeated access, in other words, they must be accessible in explicit conditions of observations; and it must be possible to decide whether or not a given statement pertains to the language judged relevant by the experts”.\textsuperscript{12}

Lyotard identifies two major narratives that have legitimised modern science- narratives of emancipation and of speculation. The later makes it
clear that scientist holds the exclusive right and power to legitimize their own work: ‘science for science sake’. Narratives of emancipation have stressed the social usefulness and purpose of science and modern knowledge generally and its speculative nature has never come to forefront. Its lack of justification according to social unity has made it extremely vulnerable. Emerging with European Renaissance of neo-classical thought and culture (Fourteenth, Fifteenth and Sixteenth centuries), progress (Nineteenth century) and analysis (Twentieth century) - in the conventional periodization of the history of ideas-big stories have been narrated about the growth of (scientific) knowledge and its power for improving human condition. Lyotard narrates the meaning of knowledge thus - “what is meant by the term knowledge is not only a set of denotative statements. Far from it, it also includes notion of ‘know how’, ‘knowing how to live’, ‘how to listen’ (Savoir faire, Savoir vivre, Savoir encounter), etc. Knowledge then is a question of competence that goes beyond the simple determination and application of the criterion of truth, extending to the determination and application of criteria of efficiency (technical qualification), of justice and/or happiness (ethical wisdom), of the beauty of a sound or colour (auditory and visual sensibility), etc.”

There is, then, according to Lyotard, a crisis of narrative legitimation of science and uncertainty about the prospects for human emancipation in the postmodern world. Under these conditions, how does science legitimize
itself? Scientific legitimation is achieved now according to the criterion of performativity, that is, ‘the optimization of the global relationship between input and output’. The computer terminology of ‘input’ and ‘output’ is not incidental to this observation. Power over knowledge production takes on the character of cybernetic cost-accounting where what goes must be necessarily and demonstrably justified by what comes out. Lyotard talks of ‘the mercantilization of knowledge’ in ‘the post-industrial society’ where there is ‘hegemony of computers’. This takes us in to ‘the real world’ of investment in research and development. Knowledge, according to the criterion of performativity, is thus reduced to instrumental value. That is affect, according to Lyotard, and he is not at all sentimental about the ways in which knowledge has been thought to be otherwise

Lyotard, however, does not entirely dispose with critique: he just sees it as being rather limited and localized in the postmodern world. This is partly evident in his notion of Paralogy: it must be distinguished from innovation; the latter is under the command of the system. Or at least used by it to improve its efficiency; the former is a move (the importance of which is not recognized until latter) played in the pragmatics of knowledge. The stronger the ‘move’ the more likely it is to be denied the minimum consensus, precisely because it changes the ruler of the game upon which the consensus has been based. Lyotard’s own declaration of the postmodern condition with regard to the fragmentation and performativity of knowledge
may itself be viewed as a paralogy, a move that was created a local disturbances at first in the humanities and social science, the larger implicates of which are still not fully appreciated.

Lyotard relates this directly to the use of computers right at the end of the postmodern condition. For him, and anticipating many subsequent debates, the computer may be seen as the means of perfecting control in the market system or alternatively and simultaneously, a means of popular empowerment through access to information, and therefore, participated in the knowledge game.

4.4.2 Postmodern Culture

It also become evident that Lyotard own conception of ‘postmodern culture’ is not like this of all but, instead somewhat closer to the modernist impulse of avant-garde art. He states this view paradoxically or should use paralogy: ‘A work can become modern only if it is first postmodern. Postmodernism is thus understood not as modernism at its end but in the nascent state, and this state is contrast’. More over ‘the postmodern would be that which denies the solace of good form’ (1984:78, 81). Scientific knowledge then may have become postmodern but art, according to Lyotard’s appendix to The postmodern condition. The modernist project of endless inquiries, creating new ways of seeing, presenting the un-presentable, has not lost force it gathered at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries
Actually, Lyotard wanted to show the shift in the realm of knowledge production and subsequent calamity awaiting human race. Lyotard discusses the way in which knowledge turns inhuman. “It is at this precise moment that science becomes a force of production, in other words, a moment in the circulation of capital”.\textsuperscript{14} Despite the pessimistic and a political conclusion Lyotard somehow positively referred to the epistemological crisis evolved in the present world. In several debates on postmodernism knowingly or unknowingly the economic aspect was ignored-and there was deliberate attempt to draw that Lyotard was a mere ideologue of right wing philosophy of Laizers-faire or an anti-socialist. Contrary to this statement, Lyotard derives his conclusion by evaluating the economic condition which created a crisis in the realm of epistemology. He writes, “the prevailing corporate norms of work management spread to the applied science laboratories: hierarchy, centralized decision making, team work, calculation of individual and collective returns, the developments of saleable programs, market research and soon. Centres dedicate to ‘pure’ research suffers from this les, but also receiving less funding”.\textsuperscript{15} Lyotard, talks about a world, which transmits inhuman ideology in the name of science. The incredulity in science means the incredulity in the dominant order, which prescribes the measure of truth and untruth. The quote Lyotard: “The humanist principle that humanity rises up in a dignity a freedom through knowledge is left by the wayside”.\textsuperscript{16}
Lyotard, who formulated the methodological shift in epistemology and he pointed out the limitation of postmodern itself. He wrote, “It should know how be clear methodological approach. I am not claiming that the entirely of social relations is of this nature - that will remain an open social origins to establish that language games are the minimum relation required for society to exist: even before he is born, if only by virtue of the name he is given, the human child is already positioned as the referent in the story recounted by those around him, in relation to which he will inevitably chart his course. Or more simply still, he question of the social bond, in so far as is a question, and is itself a language game, the game of inquiry. It immediately positions the person who asks, as well as the addressee and the referent asked about: the social bond. On the other hand, in a society whose communication component is becoming more prominent day by day, both as a reality and as an issue, is clear that language assumes a new importance”.

Actually Lyotard wants to counter the newly evolving hegemony in knowledge and there by open up new cultural space for different communities. The following quote from Lyotard shows this beyond doubt. He says, “It is the entire history of cultural imperialism from the down of western civilization. It is important to recognize its special lines, which sets it apart from all other forms of imperialism: it is governed by the demand for legitimation”. Lyotard discusses not only the meta-perspective strategy
of western science but also the organizational of even universities all over the world. Lyotard shows how the logic of modernity rise up and he is very much critical about substance.

4.5 Foucault on Historicism

The concept of new historicism has been developed during the 1980s as a reaction to the text-only approach. New historicists like formalists recognize the significance of literary text but they also evaluate the text with an eye on history. In this respect new historicism is not ‘new’ since majority of critics have focused on the historical context of a work and based their interpretations on the interaction between the text and history. But in another way new historicism varies from the historical criticism. It is informed by the poststructuralist and reader-response theories and by the concepts of feminist, cultural, and Marxist critics. They do not view history as linear and progressive and do not think in terms of specific eras with definite time frame. In this sense they are unlikely to propose that a literary text has a single or easily identifiable historical context.

New historicists tend to define the discipline of history more broadly than did their predecessors. They view history as a social science similar to anthropology and sociology, whereas older historical critics used to view history as ‘background’ of literature and social sciences as being properly historical. New Historicism obscured the line separating historical and
literary materials, showing that the production of historical plays by William Shakespeare was both a political act and a historical event.

New Historicism shares with cultural materialism the conception of culture as a material practice. Close analysis of the social, cultural and historical situation in which a text is produced and viewed is the starting point of New Historicism. The literary and non-literary discoveries are then placed in creative juxtaposition to show how power transactions permute the production of textuality of literature in a society.

New historicists are profoundly indebted to the writings of Michel Foucault. Foucault brought together incidents and phenomena from areas normally seen as unconnected, encouraging new historicists and new cultural historicists to redefine the limits of historical inquiry. Like Friedrich Nietzsche, Foucault refused to see history as an evolutionary process, a continuous development from cause to effect, from past to present toward the end. No historical event, according to Foucault, has a single cause but, each event is tied into a vast web of economic, social, and political factors.

Foucault is often labelled as a postmodernist and used by other postmodernist thinkers. He rejects the label and his suspicion towards all the contemporary talk about far-reaching changes and the inclination to overact to what one perceives as new era should provide a warning for
contemporary enthusiasts. When asked about postmodernism he said “here I think, we are touching upon one of the forms – perhaps we should call them habits – one of the most harmful habits in contemporary thought, in modern thought even; at any rate, in post-Hegelian thought: the analysis of the present as being precisely, in history, a present of rapture, or of high point or of completion or of a returning dawn etc. I think we should have the modesty to say to ourselves that… the time we live in is not the unique or fundamental or irruptive point in history where everything is completed and began again”.  

Foucault’s explorations into the nature of language, culture and power lead him to forms of self-conflict and the limits of his own conceptualizations. Against the primacy of economy, social structure and material condition, Foucault comes to argue that power is formed through ‘discourse’ as it operates in human relationship and is experienced at the frontiers of individual forms. The primary focus of his thought falls then on the liberating enterprises for the individual subject. In his poststructuralist phase, Foucault wanted to show that his attempts would not slide away in to some other forms of discursive hegemony were the intellectual would ‘speak for others’, leading them into the artifice of someone else’s freedom.

4.5.1 Knowledge-Power Relation

Power and knowledge are not embedded in social structure. Power is a process, a matter of exchange and always challenged. It is unstable,
processed and forever switching direction. People and structures do not possess power, they merely transmit and it is experienced at the level of the body of individual subject- the local level of ‘microphysics’

For Foucault appearances of power are the outcome of fundamental power relations residing in the discursive formation itself- the combination of a set of linguistic distinctions, ways of reasoning and material practice that together organize social institutions and produce forms of subjectification. Knowledge for Foucault is ‘a power over others, the power to define other’ ordering and structuring the world formed by institutionalized knowledge. He adds, “There is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations”.20 Various forms of knowledge are in the service of power and function as instruments of discipline insisting normality by regulating individuals’ self-perceptions and behaviour. Knowledge cannot be neutral. Power and knowing are parallel non-identical concepts. This constitutes and is constituted by discursive practice in particular historical period.

Foucault, inspired by Nietzsche, claims that will to know is intimately connected with will to power. Knowledge lies at the root of exercise of power, while the exercise of power – also produce knowledge. To place it another way, power becomes a central dimension not only of repressive knowledge but ‘supportive’ and ‘progressive’ forms of
knowledge also are associated with power, and operate in discipline-inspiring manner.

Ideas of archaeology and genealogy explain operations of history. History is replete with imprecise and capricious detests: elements, characters and issues which discontinue as often as they continue. According to Foucault post structuralism, power, knowledge and discourse are the central contingency of history. Foucault’s basic methods are to examine historical periods which for him constitute the building blocks of cultural modernism. Particular phenomena like hospitals, mental institutions, prison, sexual technologies of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries are examined using his historiography to shed a border light of modern culture. Power/knowledge and discourse/power binaries constitute culture. At one point Foucault claims that everything is discourse and power is everywhere. According to Foucault, then, nothing in culture exists that is not mediated in some way by the meaning making of discourse (language, image, etc.) and its corollary of power.

4.6 Deconstructive Turn and Language - Derrida

Philosophy, as a form of writing, is inherently equipped to go across the socially determined boundaries. It is the peculiarity of language, which makes it, both subservient to the hegemonic ideas and takes a counter position to given world view at once. So a deconstructive turn in philosophy helps us to examine the philosophical text and find out the
potential and lacuna in such texts. Christopher Norris explains that “Deconstruction is a constant reminder of the etymological link between ‘crisis’ and ‘criticism’. It makes manifest the fact that many radical shift of interpretative though must always come up against the limits of seeming absurdity. Philosophers have long had to recognize that thinking may led them inescapably in to region of skepticism such that life could scarcely Corry on if people were to act on their conclusion”. 21

From Plato to Derrida philosophers interpreted the world in different ways. All such interpretations can be deconstructed and directed towards their own mystification. The deconstructive strategy in philosophy reflects contemporary resistance movements in philosophy. It provides techniques for philosophical intervention and inspires one to overcome biased structures. The techniques for re-reading important texts provide new epistemological and ontological continuation by directing texts against their own arguments.

Jacques Derrida opened up critique of western metaphysics in an entirely new fashion. As Richard Wordsworth says “Derrida’s negotiation with the western tradition claims that his thinking, rather than betraying a reduction of political possibility- a retreat on the margins of a political community at the ‘closure’ of metaphysics- amounts to an active transformation of the political field”. 22 His writings produced a large array of deconstructive reading in philosophy and literary criticism. Derrida not
only introduced a method of his own but also propounded a philosophy of his own.

Directed against the system building side of structuralism, it fights with the idea that all phenomena are reducible to functioning of the system. He demonstrates the instability of language and indeed of the system in general. Signs are not predictable entities, and there was never any perfect conjunction of signifier and signified to generate unproblematic communication – some ‘slippage’ of meaning always occurred.

Derrida suggests a critique of the ideal of representation by recalling the suppressed term (the defined term) that provides the style and thus allows the positive term to appear, to stand for an existing object. When the suppressed term is given values the dependency of the positive term on the negative is shown and a third term is recovered, which shows a way of world-making that is not dependent on the opposition of the first two. It means that one’s agreement with a particular text need not remain an agreement in all aspects. A humanistic text, for instance may turn anti women in its deconstructive reading. In a broad sense the text may be upholding humanism where as it hides male dominant ambition and presuppositions. In the same way with a deconstructive approach a feminist reading of a man-made text will reveal the gender prejudice inherent in the text. As a result, philosophy has become a re-reading rather than repeating the question of the ultimate truth. It is a two way process. On the one hand
old philosophical texts attaining new status a result of new reading and an
emerging new philosophy bringing forth added vigour and energy for
political and cultural intervention on the other. It thus becomes a reworking
of the history of philosophy like postmodernism that reworks modernity.
Deconstruction stands for an analysis that shows how a discourse
undermines the philosophy it asserts or the hierarchical oppositions on
which it relies by hiding the rhetorical operations behind the argument or
key concept.

For Jacques Derrida it is a question of ‘Texts’. He raises crucial
quarries concerning what he calls the Western philosophical tradition.
Cultural life involves texts we produce that intersect other texts in ways we
cannot predict. The task of ‘deconstruction’ is to question Persistently our
own texts and those of others, to show that no texts are settled or stable.
Thus logo-centric stance of modernity is radically disrupted by stressing the
indeterminacy of language. Deconstructive approach does not categorize
texts as literary or philosophical and in its search it reveals the culture of
society. The task of philosophy is actually to reflect the culture of which it
is a part. It carries dominant ruling ideas as well as its oppositions.
Deconstruction attempts to remove the demarcating line between the
signifier and the signified. For Derrida there are “two heterogeneous ways
of erasing the difference between the signifier and the signified: one the
classic way, consists in reducing or deriving the signifier, that is to say
ultimately in submitting the sign to thought; the other, the one we are using here against the first one, consists in putting in to question the system in which the preceding reduction functioned: first and foremost the opposition between the sensible and the intelligible”. 23 The deconstructive method and practice in philosophy has produced essential changes in the approach towards studying texts.

Christopher Norris suggests, “Deconstruction draws no line between the kind of close reading appropriate to a ‘literary’ text and the strategies required to draw out the subtler implication of critical language”. 24 The deconstructive approach may be applied elsewhere, as a way of viewing distrust of tradition, or the free play of desire. From this perspective popular participation in cultural production becomes more than an option, such that texts are networked and recombined by their consumers. Boundaries between knowledge and world, or text and interpretation, no longer exist. The mind is always renewing and redefining the text it tries to contain. This implies that science can no longer presume on logical coherence or comprehension of truth. This is applied to social science also long driven by the disputes over positivist and hermeneutic-interpretative-approaches.

As Edward Said acknowledges it was Foucault and Derrida who constituted to the new awakening in philosophy. Said says “I shall argue that Derrida and Foucault propose not only to describe but also to produce
knowledge of what will fill neither in to the prefabricated moulds provided by the dominant culture nor in to the wholly predictive from manufactured by a quasi-scientific method. In both cases, dramatically different though each may be from the other, there is conscious effort to release a very specialized sort of textual discovery from the mass of materials, habits, conventions, and institutions constituting an immediate historical pressure”.

Derrida’s critique of modern tradition and metaphysics has created a shift of focus from the core to margin of culture and ideology. It has developed a new space in cultural studies which Edward said and many others all over the world have taken up in their own contexts.

A good number of postcolonial writings have emerged in different parts of former colonies. Philosophy of Africa, Latin America, Arabs and India come to play a decisive role. The western centre is being questioned and there is an upsurge of local philosophies in various parts of the world even when mono-culturisation resulting from the process of globalization is getting momentum. Understanding of the dominant, hegemonic culture and philosophy has provided an occasion to boost the writing and reading of such marginalized philosophies. By deconstructing the high/low binary Derrida has created an occasions to use the cultural space appropriated by the force of domination. Deconstruction of hegemony and its idols produces new meanings. The deconstructive turn in philosophy, therefore is a deliberate ethical intervention to safeguard the interests of the oppressed
and marginalized in the history of civilization. It is meant to comply with any paradigm or cohere with any system.

We witness how the most important ideas of postmodern thought also link the social and cultural. The concept that modernity must be revalued, revised or rejected is not related with actual social condition created in the wake of increasing computer and screen-centred technologies or the conquest wrought by consumer capitalism. The global culture created by the spread of electronic technologies largely relate to the dominant western ideas.

Whether Derrida would accept or not, his concept of deconstruction has entered postmodern critique. Just as Lyotard’s description shows how scientists have lost status, so Derrida indicates how authority itself has been warned—cannot impose their own meanings on their texts which are not theirs. Once the text out in to the open, it is extended by others’ interpretations, spiralling endlessly beyond all efforts that might be made to tether the text to truth or to fixed meaning. The meaning of the texts is produced according to the nature of reading. It opens up the possibility for many problematising authentic meaning and interpretation. The texts themselves will provide the means for re-reading and new interpretation. In this sense Derrida stove to establish that there is nothing outside texts. As he practiced each text will produce its own contradictions and blind spots. It is interesting that while some understand this as all knowledge is
contingent, or that argument on meaning is impossible, Derrida himself strives to ensure that his own texts accurately reflect his views.

4.7 Postmodernism – Logic of Late Capitalism – Jameson

Frederic Jameson is anxious with the cultural expressions and aesthetics allied with the different systems of production. He is not concerned with the mechanism of change. Jameson draws from the fields of architecture, art and other culturally expressive forms to launch his thoughts. It is important to grasp postmodernism as a dominant cultural form indicative of late capitalism. Postmodernism is set apart from other cultural systems by its stress on disintegration. He asserts that there has been a radical shift in our surrounding material world and the ways in which it works. He argues that all position adopted in relation to postmodernism could be shown to project particular vision of history. “Indeed, the very enabling premise of the debate turns on an initial, strategic, presupposition about our social system; to grant some historic originality to a postmodernist culture is also implicitly to affirm some radical structural difference between what is sometimes called consumer society and earlier moments of the capitalism from which it emerged”.26

Rejecting historical moralizing, Jameson calls for genuinely historical and dialectical analysis: “The point is that we are within the culture of postmodernism to the point where its facile reproduction is as impossible as any equally facile celebration of it is complacent and
corrupt... it seems more appropriate to assess the new cultural production within the working hypothesis of general modification of culture itself within the social restructuration of late capitalism as a system”. Postmodern culture, from this position, is best understood as culture in general, including contemporary mass-popular culture, media texts and everyday experience conceived on the model of force fired on structures of feeling. That is a satisfactory means of understanding what is going on controlling now than a limited and elitist conception of postmodernism which is indistinguishable from the memory and resided trace of Avant-garde modernism.

Jameson’s account of postmodernism highlights new experiences of space and time and in particular pastiche and schizophrenia. In the previous case he contrasts modernisms use of parody and quotation with the postmodern practice of pastiche. Parody, he suggests, plays on the uniqueness of style. It “seizes on (its) idiosyncrasies and eccentric ties to produce an imitation which mocks the ‘original”, but in doing so it retains an implicit linguistic norm against which the original is being judged. Above all, parody returns a subversive ‘other voice’. An imitation of a unique personal style rests on assumption about the nature of the subject also, which ‘since the post-structuralist decentring of the subject, are no longer held to be tenable. Pastiche while sharing many features of parody, is in a sense a neutral practice. Pastiche is symptomatic, contends
Jameson, of a general loss of historicity, and our incapacity to achieve aesthetic “representation of our own current experience”.  

4.7.1 The Periodization of Late Capitalism

For Jameson, the term postmodernism does not designate a particular style but rather a periodizing concept which serves to “correlates the emergence of new formal features in culture with the emergence of a new topic of social life and a new economic order”.

This new economic order began after Second World War, that is to say, somewhere around the late 1940s or early 1950s, for the United States, and in the late 1950s for Europe. The key transitional decade, though, is seen to be in the 1960s. Jameson describes this ‘post-industrial or consumer society’. This is the society of the media or the spectacle’, ‘multinational capitalism’, and finally ‘late capitalism’. Postmodernism holds many of the features of high modernism—for narrative forms like constant eclecticism and sense of parody but to see postmodernism as a contribution of modernism will fail to grasp the reconstruction, these feature have undergone and above all will fail to take account of the social position of the older modernism.

Jameson writes, postmodernism and modernism, “the two phenomena would still remain utterly distinct in their meaning and social function, owing to the different positioning of postmodernism in the economic system of the late capital and beyond that, to the transformation of the very sphere of culture in contemporary society”.

In modernism the
domain of culture seemed to have retained an oppositional stance and critical distance towards capital. But postmodern culture has become fully assimilated into commodity production in general, annulling its oppositional and critical stance. Postmodernism, then, is what Jameson calls a cultural domination, a notion that allows for “a range of very different, yet subordinated, feature”. These include the remaining characteristics of modernism as well as emergent characteristics of postmodern culture.

Jameson’s periodization is ambiguous. Identifying the period with the era of post-Second World War is equating it with Mandel’s periodization of late capitalism and from late 1960s and early 1970s equate with Mandel’s second phase of stated accumulation, or possibility a new long wave. In his introduction to *Postmodernism or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* Jameson tries to clarify this point. “Thus the economic preparation of postmodernism or late capitalism began in the 1950s, after the wartime shortage of consumer goods and sphere parts had been made-up, and new products and new technologies (not least those of the media) could be pioneered. On the other hand, the psychic *habitus* of the new age demanded the absolute break, strengthened by a generational rupture, achieved more properly in the 1960s”.

Jameson goes on to argue that the founding moment of crisis for both the economic and cultural sphere was the oil crisis of 1973. In other words,
Jameson is proposing that we have to respect the ‘semi-autonomy’ of each distinct level—the economic, the psychic and the cultural. He acknowledges the reproduction of underlying tendencies of postmodernism by micro-groups and various ‘minorities’ since it “is essentially a much narrower class-cultural opportunities serving white and male dominated elites in the advanced countries”.

Jameson even goes so far as to acknowledge that postmodernism is specifically North American cultural phenomenon, but with the rider that it is the first timely ‘global’ North American cultural phenomena. He asserts that postmodernism is the cultural expression of the deep structural dynamics of global capitalism and more specifically the cultural expression of the third machine age.

Unlike many other postmodernist Jameson tries to reveal that postmodernism does not mark the emergence of a new historical epoch but it is the intensification and restructuration of the social and productive relation of capitalism. For Jameson the term postmodernism does not designate a particular aesthetic or discrete style but rather a periodising concept, which serves to ‘correlate the emergence of new formal features in culture with the emergence of new type of social life and a new economic order’.

He scientifically unearths the new types of invasion and colonization of Nature and unconscious. New forms of colonization is implemented through strategies like destruction of pre-capitalist Third world agriculture.
by the Green revolution, and the rise of the media and the advertising industry clearing the way for a uniform culture of the world. Neither the postmodern economy nor the postmodern culture is to hitherto uncommodified areas that have brought forth unprecedented change in the realm of culture.

Postmodernism is a popular label for a rather broad spectrum of artistic and intellectual orientation, as well as claims about a range of novel social trends and forms. In the present context is Postmodernism as a way of grasping the unique features of contemporary (Postmodern) society and/or specific social institutions. A greater interest is to use Postmodernism as a philosophical/theoretical perspective. There are good reason not to mix these two project prematurely, although occasionally Postmodern theorizing may facilitate sensitive inquiry in to what are fragmented contemporary identities or a social world ‘made up’ of freely floating images.

E. P. Thomson (1993:201) follows a similar path, arguing that when concepts move away from their original fields and are widely dispersed, ‘modernism and Postmodernism become conceptual catch-all’s, conflicting quite distinct social processes’. Quite often Postmodernism represents intellectual imperialism, despite the claims to the contrary. The frequency with which the word is used creates the impression that it stands for something ‘real’ and significant.
Postmodernism is a successfully marked label. It is not the only word that is ever consumed or used to refer to a wide range of diverse phenomena or positions. This does not shield use of the word Postmodernism from accusations that it is extraordinarily problematic. The problem is not the word itself, but its institutionalization to emerge problematic intellectual moves.

On the other hand, people with a postmodern inclination may have considerable carrier problems in fields strongly dominated by conventional epistemologies, so the other side of this imperialist political move is the counter action as part of a defensive project. As with all phenomena, as advocates of postmodernism will have it, there is no single self-evident or best interpretation. The gathering of a variety of streams under the Postmodern label may be seen as a matter of marketing, as self-contradiction (as Postmodernism disfavour grand narratives), as a political move assembled strength against the dominant forces of the dark (modernism) or as something one should not.

References


Ibid, p. xxv.

Ibid, p. xxiii.

Ibid.

Ibid, p. 3.

Ibid, p. 4.

Ibid, pp. 4-5.

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Ibid, p. 45.

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Ibid, pp. 15-16.

Ibid, p. 27.


Ibid, p. 113.

Ibid, p. 5.
32 Ibid, p. 4.

33 Ibid, p. xx.

34 Ibid, p. 318.