

POSTMODERNISM: A REACTION TO THE TERRORISM OF THE MODERNIST PHILOSOPHICAL THOUGHT

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Abstract

This paper is the concluding part of a series of two papers exploring and explaining the concept of postmodernism. The approach adopted for examining the postmodern phenomenon was to picture it as a collage incorporating three distinct but interrelated concepts/themes: one, postmodernism as an epoch; two, postmodernism as a signifier of the problematical features or the limits of modernity; and three, postmodernism as a reaction to the terrorism of the modernist philosophical thought. The first two of these were discussed in the paper published in the pervious issue of the Market Forces. This paper involves an examination of the third theme: postmodernism as a reaction to the terrorism of the modernist philosophical thought which has been described as positivistic, technocentric, and rationalistic, and the belief in linear progress, absolute truths, the rational planning of ideal social orders, and the standardization of knowledge and production. The approach adopted for this paper involves the use of the term 'post' as a counter concept and a broad-gauged cultural and intellectual movement that is re-conceptualizing the way we experience and understand the world around us. It involves a re-examination of eight areas of our knowledge base that form the basis of our conceptual foundations. These are: the concept of truth; the concept of theory; the concept of representation; the concept and the relationship between the author, the text, and the reader; the concept of subject; the problematic of disciplinary research; the concept of space; and the concept of history. The discussion involves an examination of the normally accepted definitions of these concepts and the counter-concepts or the alternative definitions offered within the realm of postmodern philosophical thought. Investigation into the counter-concepts is aimed as understanding how postmodernism represents a departure in our way of thinking regarding the best strategy for confronting the problems of the new epoch - the postmodern epoch.

"No one exactly agrees as to what is meant by the term, except, perhaps, that 'postmodernism' represents some kind of reaction to, or departure from 'modernism'."

Harvey (1992, p.7)

"Post-modernism signals the death of such 'metanarratives' whose secretly terroristic function was to ground and legitimate the illusion of a 'universal' human history. We are now in the process of waking from the nightmare of modernity, with its manipulative reason and fetish of the totality, into the laid back pluralism of the post-modern, that heterogeneous range of lifestyles and language games which has renounced the nostalgic urge to totalize and legitimate itself. ... Science and philosophy must jettison their grandiose and metaphysical claims and view themselves more modestly as just another set of narratives."

Eagleton¹

I. INTROUDUCTION:

This is the second and the concluding part of our exploration into the concept of postmodernism. The first part which was published in the previous issue of the Market Forces (Vol 3, No 4) explored the concept of the postmodern philosophical thought in the context of two approaches: one, postmodernism as an epoch; and two, postmodernism as a signifier of the problematical features or the limits of modernity. In paper we add the third and the final element of the jigsaw puzzle in our exploration into the concept of postmodernism. In this paper we apply a third approach to examine the concept of postmodern philosophical thought: **'Postmodernism: A Reaction to the Terrorism of the Modernist Philosophical Thought'**. The label of this element of the puzzle has been inspired from the two quotes cited above. The word **'reaction'** has been sourced from the

¹Eagleton, T. (1987), "Awakening From Modernity", Time Literary Supplement, 20 February 1987. (Cited in Harvey, 1992, p.9).

quote from Harvey who has referred to postmodernism as some sort of reaction to or departure from modernism, and the term '**terrorism**' has been sourced from the quote from Eagleton who has referred the modernist philosophical thought in terms of its 'metanarratives' whose secretly terroristic function was to ground and legitimate the illusion of a 'universal' human history. This approach is also the most powerful form of postmodernism because, it not only involves a direct attack on the most sacrosanct elements of the modernist philosophical thought: the metanarratives or the master codes legitimated by it, but also provides us with counter concepts to realign our thinking for approaching the problems of this world.

This paper begins with a brief introduction to our third and the final approach towards understanding the concept of postmodernism. This is followed by an examination of some of the counter concepts that characterize the concept of postmodernism as a reaction to the terrorism of the modernist philosophical thought. Studying these counter concepts is important because they allow us an alternate approach towards understanding our social reality and for formulating strategic approach for meeting the challenges of the rapidly changing social conditions.

Postmodernism has been defined at a reaction to the terrorism of the modernist philosophical thought, which has been characterized as "positivistic, technocentric, and rationalistic", and "the belief in linear progress, absolute truths, the rational planning of ideal social orders, and the standardization of knowledge and production."² The postmodern goal according to Rosenau (1992, p.6) is to "delegitimize all master codes". The postmodern goal is not to formulate an alternative set of assumption but to register the impossibility of establishing any such underpinning for knowledge. It is in this context that Harvey defines postmodernism as "a mode of thought that is anti-authoritarian and iconoclastic, that insists on the authenticity of other voices, that celebrates difference, decentralization, and democratization of taste, as well as the power of imagination over

²Harvey (1992, p.7).

materiality, has to have a radical cutting edge even when indiscriminately used."³ Postmodernists therefore call for a re-examination of all that modernity had delegitimated, for example, the tradition, the sacred, the irrational, etc. Postmodern social scientists, therefore, support a refocusing of what has been taken for granted, what has been neglected, regions of resistance, the forgotten, the insignificant, the borderline, the subjugated, the rejected, the marginal, the peripheral, the excluded, the silenced, the disqualified, the differed, etc., all that modern age never cared to understand⁴.

The key problem or the crucial weaknesses with modernism, according to this school of postmodernists, relates to the meta-languages, the meta-theories, and the meta-narratives propounded by the modernist philosophers that tended to gloss over important differences and failed to pay attention to the important disjunctions and details⁵. In this respect postmodernism has been very important in terms of acknowledging 'the multiple forms of otherness' as they emerge from the differences from subjectivity, gender and sexuality, race and class, temporal and spatial geographic locations, and dislocations⁶. The idea that all groups have a right to speak for themselves, in their own voice, and have their voice accepted as authentic and legitimate is essential for the pluralistic stance of postmodernism⁷. The importance of postmodernism emerges from the opening it gives towards understanding the difference between different subgroups, as well as the liberatory potential that it offers for a whole host of new social movement. 'Pluralism' is, therefore, one of the most important features of postmodernism, which itself may be characterized as a reaction to the universalization and standardization legitimated by the modernist philosophical thought.

³Harvey (1992, p.353).

⁴Rosenau (1992, p.8).

⁵Harvey (1992, p.113).

⁶This aspect of postmodernism, has however, caused fears amongst the traditional neo-conservatives especially with respect to the accommodations of the postmodernism theory regarding individualism, commercialism, and entrepreneurialism (postmodernism of reaction).

⁷Harvey (1992, p.48).

The pluralism acknowledged in postmodern philosophy is not only pluralism across space, but also across time. In other words postmodernism not only acknowledges that individuals and social groups may differ across space, but also that the same individuals and social groups may also differ across time⁸. Hence the rationale for postmodernism's opposition to the imposition of meta-discourses and meta-frameworks not only across space, but also across time. This can be explained in the context of the postmodernist concept of the 'text'. In postmodernism, the concept of text is very broad. It is not simply the work of an author. The whole world of human thought and action is covered within the concept of 'text'. According to the postmodern view, our texts and those of others are never settled. They are always in the process of development. The text we produce intersects with the text produced by others that we experience (either through talking, reading, seeing, etc.), which influences our texts in ways we cannot easily unravel. Our human mind is therefore, always reviewing and redefining our text in the context of our experience and our knowledge. Postmodernism acknowledges the dynamic nature of our text, and therefore, instead of aiming to order and control our text via a meta-discourse, postmodernism encourages us to unravel the text by trying to raise questions and making an effort to explore and understand the text.

Postmodernism can thus be viewed as a departure from modernism with regard to the perception of the problems of the present era, and the appropriate strategy required for meeting the challenge of the rapidly changing social conditions: whether it is appropriate to control the social conditions via a meta-plan, or it is more appropriate to examine and understand the change and allow flexibility for meeting the challenge of the change? This question points to the 'becoming' and 'being' conflict that is characteristic of modern and postmodern dialectic. Modernism is based on the rationale of 'becoming' which rationalizes the ordering and control of the society as per the meta-framework developed by the policy makers. It ignores the differences between 'beings' and standardizes them as a homogeneous lot that can be (and also needs to be) ordered and controlled through a meta-

⁸Kumar (1995, p.107).

framework that can be applied across time and space. Postmodernism on the other hand, implies an effort to understand the 'being' and respect the difference; the emphasis is on pluralism - the coexistence of different spaces. The only way that pluralism can be achieved without conflict is through improvement of the transparency of the society so that different subgroups understand and hence accept the rights of the others. Most conflicts and problems are after all, on account of ignorance; ignorance that is a reflection of blind ideological beliefs - whether they relate to traditional discourse or scientific discourse, blind faith in discourse echoes ignorance. This is the basis of postmodernism's aversion for the global/universal meta-theories rationalized by the modernist philosophical thought for the development frameworks for ordering and control of the ontological conditions⁹. Flexibility, pluralism, eclecticism, and transparency are therefore, not only the key characteristics of postmodernism, but also the key parameters of the postmodern strategy for meeting the challenge of the rapidly changing ontological conditions.

The key difference between the concept of postmodernism under this approach and the other two approaches discussed in the first part of our exploration into the concept of postmodernism (Khalidi, 2007) is that under this approach the postmodern critique goes beyond simple criticism and deconstruction of the modernist philosophical thought, it also involves the development of alternate counter concepts that may assist us in understanding our social reality. The next section therefore involves an examination of some of the counter concepts presented within the landscape of the postmodern philosophical thought. These counter concepts are important not only because they allow

⁹ The term 'ontology' is derived from the Greek word for 'being'. The term ontology is also a seventeenth century coinage for a branch of metaphysical inquiry concerned with the study of 'existence' itself (Blackburn, 1996, p.269-70). It has also been described as the science of 'being' embracing issues such as the nature of existence, and the category and structure of reality (Honderich, 1995, p.264). It involves investigation into the different ways in which entities belonging to various logical categories (for example, physical objects, numbers, universal, abstraction, etc.) may be said to exist (Flew, 1979, p.255-56). Here the term 'ontological conditions' has been used as a concept that incorporates the circumstances of our existence (being in itself). It includes the structure and the operational framework of the society and the individuals who are a part of the society. It also includes the assumptions and the cumulative knowledge base of the individuals that forms the basis of their actions and the effects of their actions on the behaviour of other individuals, and the operations of the society as a whole.

us a different set of spectacles to examine and comprehend the world and the problems of the world, but also because they (perhaps) even allow us to understand ourselves better.

2. The Counter Concepts:

As apparent from the title, this approach to the concept of postmodernism involves an examination of the counter-concepts that represent a reaction to the terrorism of the modernist philosophical thought which has been defined as rationalistic, technocentric, and positivist, and the belief in the existence of, and hence the rationale for the search for the truth, and the imposition of a meta-framework (the truth) for the ordering and control of the ontological conditions. Postmodernism represents a departure in our way of thinking of what could/should be done to face the problems of the present era. Our investigation into the counter-concepts that represent a reaction to the terrorism of the modernist philosophical thought covers eight key areas of our ontological assumptions that form the basis of our thinking. Investigation into the counter-concepts is aimed at understanding how postmodernism represents a departure in our way of thinking regarding the best strategy for confronting the problems of the new epoch - the postmodern epoch. The key text that forms the basis of this section is Rosenau (1992): "Post-Modernism and the Social Sciences: Insights, Inroads, and Intrusions". The discussion to follow covers the following eight areas of our knowledge base:

1. The Concept of Truth.
2. The Concept of Theory.
3. The Concept of Representation.
4. The Concept and the Relationship Between the Author, the Text and the Reader.
5. The Concept of Subject.
6. The Problematic of Disciplinary Research.
7. The Concept of Space.
8. The Concept of History.

2.1. The Concept of Truth:

"in a society such as ours, but basically in any society, there are manifold relations of power which permeate, characterize and constitute the social body, and these relations of power cannot themselves be established, consolidated nor implemented without the production, accumulation, circulation and functioning of a discourse. There can be no possible exercise of power without a certain economy of discourses of truth, which operates through and on the basis of this association. We are subjected to the production of truth through power and we cannot exercise power except through the production of truth."
Foucault (1980b, p.93)

Foucault's emphasis is on the circular relationship between power and truth. We are either required to submit to the power of truth, or command power by producing the discourse of truth; hence, the rationale for postmodernist antagonism for the modernist concept of truth. The concept of 'truth'¹⁰ is a very important facet of postmodernism's reaction to the intellectual terrorism of the modernist philosophical thought. There are two aspects of the modern concept of 'truth' that are worth discussing: one, the accuracy and hence the legitimacy of truth; and two, the connection between truth and power. The basis for producing knowledge in the modernist philosophical thought is 'truth claim', and the assumption that truth is essential¹¹. Almost all postmodernists reject 'truth' even as a goal or ideal because it is the very epitome of modernity. They reject universal truths and dismiss the idea that truth is out there waiting to be discovered. Truth makes reference to order, rules, and values. It depends on logic, rationality, and reason, all of which are attributes questioned by the postmodernists. Postmodernists question the value of truth, because they think that it is impossible to evaluate the adequacy of 'knowledge claims' with certainty. All criteria for distinguishing between truth and falsehood require the choice between categories. It is based on a hierarchy of values, that designates some as good and others as bad, which itself is arbitrary, and hence the arbitrariness of truth. The rejection of

¹⁰The following examination of postmodern view vis.a.vis the concept of 'truth' is based on Rosenau (1992, Chapter 5, p.77-91).

¹¹Rosenau (1992, p.77).

truth is also in line with the postmodernist views on representation. Representation assumes the possibility of a true image being reproduced and represented. This according to the postmodernists is not possible; truth to the extent that it tries to represent reality is therefore deceitful. This is also in line with the postmodernist view of language as an artificial sign system. Meaning can therefore never be communicated completely through the agency of language. What actually is communicated about events is determined, not by the character of the events themselves, but by the linguistic figures or forms. Language has a will to power of its own. It generates meaning that is quite independent of the human agency of will.

Some postmodernists, especially the sceptical¹² ones, are very antagonistic to the concept of truth¹³ because of the relationship between truth and power. The implication being the possibility of truth claims being products of power games manipulated into position by those whose interest they serve. The sceptic postmodernists therefore consider truth claims as a form of terrorism. Truth by its very existence is said to silence those who disagree. Truth claims serves to justify the powerful, and to make the weak feel at fault, and inadequate. This is echoed in Nietzsche and Foucault's exposition regarding the connection between truth and power. According to Nietzsche (1968, No. 481, p.267), truths or facts are only interpretations, it is necessary to posit an interpreter behind the interpretation. The world is not knowable; it is interpretable. The drive behind interpretation is the 'will to power' - to compel all others to accept one's perspective as the norm and hence the truth. Nietzsche provides is a style of philosophic writings which remains intensely sceptical of all claims to truth - its own included - and thus opens up the

¹² Rosenau classifies postmodernists into two classes: the sceptical postmodernists and the affirmative postmodernists. The 'sceptical postmodernists' represent the negative and the gloomy side of postmodernism. They argue that the postmodern age is one of fragmentation, disintegration, meaninglessness and the absence of moral parameters and societal chaos. Inspired by Heidegger and Nietzsche, it speaks of the demise of the subject, the end of the author, the impossibility of the truth, and the abrogation of the order of representation. They believe that there is no truth. All that is there, is the play of words and meanings. The 'affirmative postmodernists' agree with the views of the sceptics regarding modernity, but are however more optimistic and more hopeful in terms of the postmodern age. These postmodernists seek philosophical and ontological practice that is non dogmatic, tentative, and non-ideological.

¹³They consider it as some distorted form of rhetoric or propaganda.

possibility of liberating thought from the age-old conceptual limits. Nietzsche argued that philosophers were self-condemned dupes (cheats) of truth who preserved it simply by effacing the metaphors or figurative discourse, which brought it into being. Only by suppressing its origin in metaphor, had philosophy from Plato to the present, maintained the sway of a tyrannizing reason, which in effect denied any dealing with figurative language. Reason had crushed out the imaginative life out of philosophy. Truth he concludes is a mobile marching army of metaphors, metonymies, and anthropomorphisms. Truths are illusions of which one has forgotten that they are illusions. Thus for Nietzsche, this insight led to the conclusion that all philosophies, whatever their claim to logic or reason, rested on a shifting texture of figurative language, the signs of which were systematically repressed under the sovereign order of truth¹⁴.

The postmodernist antagonism for the modernist concept of truth, can also be connected to the modernist rationalization of the subject-object relationship. Truth implies an author, rejecting of truth implies a rejection of the author or the subject's right to impose his/her interpretation as the truth. It is also the connection between truth and theory, which forms the basis of postmodernist reaction to the modernist concept of theory. This is also the area of investigation of the next section.

2.2. The Concept of Theory:

The concept of postmodernism as a reaction to modernism, is also apparent in the difference between the modernist and the postmodernist concept of 'theory'¹⁵.

Postmodernists reject theories that are presented in the form of grand narratives that claim the status of being 'scientific' and 'objective'. They reject them as being logocentric¹⁶, linear, and totalizing, that serve to legitimise modernity, and assume justice, truth, and hegemony. They reject them because modern theory by specifying a single interpretation

¹⁴ Norris (1991, p.56-57)

¹⁵The following examination of postmodern view vis.a.vis the concept of 'theory' is also based on Rosenau (1992, Chapter 5, p.77-91).

¹⁶Logocentrism refers to propositions that claim legitimacy by reference to some a priori concept.

interferes with, or resists the basic concept of postmodernism, which emphasises on multiple interpretations. They reject them because they consider theory building as being analogous to truth seeking, which is characteristic of a totalizing and logocentric project. They reject them because modern theory assumes an epistemological reality whereas no such reality exists. They reject them because modern theory is assumed to operate in every context, which is dubious in an ever-changing postmodern world. They reject them because modern theory, although claiming to be scientific, may actually be ideological and rhetorical, and may be used as an authoritarian weapon to provide legitimacy to monopoly of power. Last but not the least, postmodernists reject modern theory because it fails to fulfil the very goal that it sets for itself - it does not provide direction for practice or action, rather it may either be an ad-hoc justification, or a generalization of previous practice.

Sceptical postmodernists therefore substitute the modernist concept of theory with the postmodern idea of 'invitation to discussion'¹⁷. This is perhaps the reason why, there is no theory of the 'postmodern' in the modern sense of the word. The position of the affirmative postmodernists is slightly different. While they reject the intellectual hegemony implicated in grand theory, deny the truth claims of theory, and annul its privileged status, they do allow for decentred theory that is anti-positivist anecdotal empiricism that savours detail, and reserves a special place for what is unique in each and every life. The postmodern view of theory is reflected in Foucault's (1980d, p.145) observation regarding the 'role of theory' in political power. According to Foucault, the 'role of theory' today, is not to formulate the global systematic theory that holds everything in place, but to analyze the specificity of mechanisms of power, to locate the connections and extensions, and to build little by little a strategic knowledge. In this respect Foucault observes that one of the reasons that the traditional parties have been able to reestablish their hegemony over the 'left' and over the diverse forms of struggles which had not originally been under their control, is that only a profoundly inadequate logic was available to these (left wing) struggles for the analysis of their unfolding and their effects.

¹⁷Rosenau (1992, p.81-82).

In defence of the modernist concept of theory, and in reaction to the postmodern view of theory and truth, Rosenau (1992, p.89-91) argues, that a world without a theory would mean the transformation of the entire intellectual climate of social sciences. It would mean an absolute equality of all discourses and an end to foundational claims. One possible outcome of the absence of the universal theory would be theory overload - it is not a question of no theory, but one of too many theories that are altogether equal. Postmodernism by erasing the difference between truth and error (or between theory and nonsense), opens the door to nihilism - since there is no truth, there is no error either. Postmodernists however argue, that the absence of any possibility of truth claims does not lead to nihilism, rather it makes totalitarianism impossible. The reason being that totalitarianism depends on its own version of truth. Postmodernism mediates against totalitarianism by abandoning truth claims and affirming gentler practices of listening, questioning, and speaking, hence the rationale for replacing theory with 'invitation to discussion'.

Another argument in favour of modern social science theory presented by Rosenau (1992, p.90) is that modern social science seeks to produce objective theory that can be challenged on the basis of data, i.e. theory is data dependent and data has priority over theory in the sense that if data shows that the theory is wrong, then the theory must be abandoned. Data and evidence are the basis for arbitrating between two competing theories. But a counter argument against Rosenau's argument could be that the choice of the data itself is arbitrary, or may be based on some other theory with its own limitations, which itself indicate the problematical basis of the modernist theory. Furthermore, until a theory is proved wrong by another theory, the old theory is given the status of truth. This implies that the modernist theories are actually transitory truths that are dependent upon the accuracy and legitimacy of their ontological assumptions. This is also an indicator of the theory blindness of the modernist philosophical thought. Hence, the questionability of universal theories generalized across time and space, especially in social sciences where the society is continuously in the process of evolution and change. Hence, the rationale for the crisis facing the modernist philosophical thought. Postmodernism by releasing one from the

straitjacket or the mental prisons of modern theory, allows the opening up of one's intellect to the realization of new ideas and new possibilities.

2.3. The Concept of Representation:

Postmodern critique of the modernist concept of 'representation'¹⁸ is a very important facet of the concept of postmodernism as a reaction to modernism. Representation assumes that there is something out there that is true or valid that has to be communicated via 'representation'. Representation also assumes a clear distinction between presence and absence. Representation is the practice of taking one thing for another. It assumes the identity of a concept with some indefinable unspoken presence. For example the representation of citizens through the elected members of parliament secures the presence of the people in their absence. Similarly theory tries to represent reality in a narrative form. Representation assumes the ability to reproduce and duplicate external reality. Representation also assumes the referential status of words, images, meanings, and symbols. It assumes that each constitutes a fixed system of meaning and that everybody understands them in more or less the same way. The subject as researcher seeks to represent the object of inquiry. Representation assumes that an individual's information processing procedures can in fact represent external reality. It assumes objectivity; where as an external object of nature is conveyed to the subject through the agency of 'sense'. The implication being that representation depends upon the accuracy and correctness of the subject's judgment, which implies subjectivity. Representation is epistemologically objectionable to the postmodernists because it assumes the ability to reproduce and duplicate external reality. For the postmodernists, representation is problematical because the assumptions on which it is based are themselves problematical. The key goal of deconstruction is to lay out the deficiencies in the representational claims of the modernists and their theories. This is also the contribution of Derrida. By laying out the deficiencies in the representational claims of the modernist philosophers and social scientists, Derrida releases us from the mental prison based on the a priori truths of representation.

¹⁸The following examination of postmodern view vis.a.vis 'representation' is based on Rosenau (1992, Chapter 6, p.92-108).

2.4. The Concept and the Relationship Between the Author, the Text and the Reader:

The reorientation in the power and the relationship between the author, the text, and the reader¹⁹ is one of the more distinctive features of the concept of postmodernism as a reaction to modernism. In postmodernism the author loses his control on the text, which takes on a life of its own, independent of the author. Instead of the author, the reader takes the centre stage and assumes an unprecedented autonomy in extracting meaning from the text. This is the reason that postmodern text is referred to as 'writerly' rather than 'readerly' text, implying that the reader rewrites the text in the process of interpreting the text. The basis of this rationale is discussed below:

2.4.1. Author: A modernist author is defined more broadly than just a writer. He is assumed to have privileged access to truth, reason, and scientific knowledge. He is looked upon as a legislator having the attributes of a specialist, a manager, a professional, an intellectual, or an educator. He is considered as an agent who creates a situation or is responsible for a larger play of events and a specific social outcome. The postmodernists, especially the sceptical ones consider the concept of modern author to be analogous to that of hegemony²⁰ in international relations. Hegemony is "an ensemble of normalized knowledge practices, identified with a particular state and domestic society ... that is regarded as a practical paradigm of sovereign political subjectivity and construct". Its functions are to set the standards, designate by opposition what is abnormal, fashion the political agenda, establish 'ritual practices of enframing', without ever manifestly accomplishing any of these. Postmodernists therefore try to correct the situation by sharing the power of the author with those being studied (the object), and at the time leaving everything to a more active reader.

¹⁹The following examination of postmodern view vis.a.vis the relationship between the author, the text, and the reader is based on Rosenau (1992, Chapter 2, p.25-41).

²⁰ Ashley, Richard, (1989), "**Imposing International Purpose: Note on a Problematic of Governance**", in Ernst-Otto Czempiel and James N. Rosenau (eds.), "Global Changes and Theoretical Challenges: Approaches to World Politics for the 1990s", Lexington Books, Massachusetts (Cited in Rosenau, 1992, p.30).

2.4.2. Text: In postmodernism, the concept of text is very broad. It is not simply the work of an author. The whole world of human thought and action is covered within the realm of 'text'. Everything is a text including a life experience, a war, a revolution, a political rally and election, a personal relationship, a vacation, etc. Postmodernists argue that every text is related to every other text. This phenomenon is known as intertextuality. In other words effects radiate out from a text and have an impact on all other text. Postmodernism therefore stresses on the importance of the reader in the process of reading and interpreting the text. Postmodern text, is therefore a plural text, i.e., more than one interpretation of the text is possible. The reader takes control of the text, hence the term 'writerly text' - it is rewritten by the reader during his/her reading/encounter of/with the text. This is because it involves an intertextual encounter between the text of the reader²¹ and the text being examined. The result of the encounter will be the reinterpretation of the text by the reader in the context of his/her own ontological assumptions, which may be different from that of the author. This intertextual encounter may (or may not) create a change in the reader's ontological assumptions, and as a consequence, may (or may not) create a change in the orientation and thinking of the reader. That is why postmodernists argue that in examining a text, we should not focus exclusively on what the text says, but also on what it fails to say and what it suggests by innuendo. This is the opposite of the modernist concept of text, which assumes a passive reader, and hence is referred to as 'readerly text'.

2.4.3. Reader: Reader is the third element of the author-text-reader triad. Unlike modern text which implies a passive posture for the reader who is required to reconstruct the authors ideas, attitudes, and aims, in order to construct the meaning of the text (as intended by the author), the postmodern reader, on the other hand, is an active reader who assumes control of the text and reinterprets it

²¹The text of the reader consists of his/her experience and knowledge base, which also forms the basis of his/her ontological assumptions.

(the text) in the act of reading²². By reacting against the hegemony of the author, and in the process reorienting the power and the relationship between the author, the text, and the reader, postmodernism encourages a much wider intellectual development. The broadening of the concept of text, and the transformation of the reader from passive to active, can also be interpreted as a realization of the increased level of literacy, especially in the West, and hence the confidence in the quality of intellect of the society to take its own decisions rather than having them imposed by others. It is also a reflection of the increased pace of the change of ontological conditions and the crisis of confidence in the author as the dispenser of 'truth'. This facet comes to prominence in the postmodernism critique and its reaction to the modernist concept of 'subject'.

2.5. The Concept of Subject:

The difference between the modernist and the postmodernist concept of 'subject'²³ is a very important facet of postmodernism's reaction to modernism. Modernist concept of the 'subject' is similar to that of the modernist author. Postmodernists consider it as an invention of modernity, a child of the enlightenment process and rationalism. As modern science replaced revelation as the source of knowledge, the 'rational individual' was implanted to take the place of 'God'. Postmodernists criticize the modernist assumption of subject as being at the centre as sovereign - as an individual possessing the power of intuition to apprehend both internal and external reality²⁴. They criticize the subject for seizing power, for attributing meaning, and for dominating and oppressing. They question the value of a unified coherent subject such as human being, as a concrete reference point²⁵.

²² However, a possible qualification for the postmodern way of thinking is that the readers do not have absolute freedom in their readings - they are guided by professional communities. In other words the reader re-creates the text but within the context of what he has learned from an interpretative community.

²³The following examination of postmodern view vis.a.vis the 'subject' is based on Rosenau (1992, Chapter 3, p.42-61).

²⁴Rosenau (1992, p.46-47).

²⁵Rosenau (1992, p.42-43).

They also criticize the modernist concept of the subject because it forms the basis of the subject-object dichotomy²⁶. This subject-object dichotomy also implies a relation of power between the subject and object with the subject as the active entity taking decisions on behalf of the objects. Such arbitrary appropriation of power for the subject (the hierarchical relation of power between the subject and the object) is rationalized on the assumption of the subject as the 'rational individual'. A rational individual has been defined as a person who respects rational rules, the general will, the social conventions, and fix standards that seem fair (Rosenau, 1992, p.43-44). Postmodernists consider the status of the 'subject' problematical, not only because the assumption of the subject being rational and having the intuition and the intellect to take the best decision on behalf of the others is questionable, but also because the subject can be a source of deliberate misinformation and manipulation. This is very much apparent in the field of politics where ideology and symbolism becomes a tool for manipulating the masses (the objects).

The postmodernists, especially the sceptical ones, therefore react against the hegemony of the 'modern subject' by replacing him/her with the 'postmodern individual' who is conceptualized as an active human being constituting his/her own social reality, pursuing a personal quest for meaning but making no truth claims. The postmodern individual emphasizes choice, free expression, individual participation, private autonomy, and personal liberation, without any need for universalistic claims and ideological consistency. S/he is non judgemental rather than dogmatic, and relinquishes the need to base attitudes or actions on reason or to lay claims on truth. The postmodern individual calls for an end to certitude, reasoned argument, modern rationality, objective modern science, law grounded on jurisprudence and art subject to evaluation on the basis of standard criteria²⁷. Unlike their more sceptical counterparts, the affirmative postmodernists take a more lenient view of the subject. Instead of destruction, they call for a repositioning of the subject as a de-centred subject unrecognizable by the modernist, empiricist, and

²⁶In the context of social science research, this implies that the subject as the observer becoming the centre of power, while those being studied being relegated to the status of an object or a thing (Rosenau, 1992, p.49-50).

²⁷Rosenau (1992, p.53-56).

positivist - a subject who is focused not on the great men of history, but rather on the daily life at the margins; a subject who struggles for autonomy and seeks to construct a new identity by appealing to life, personal freedom and creativity²⁸. The postmodernist rejection of the modernist concept of subject, and his/her replacement by the postmodern individual or the repositioning of the subject by a de-centred subject, is not only a realization of the reality of our present ontological conditions, but also a reflection of the pluralistic attitude of the postmodern philosophical thought.

2.6. The Problematic of Disciplinary Research:

There are two facets of the problematic of disciplinary research that are questioned by the postmodernist: one, the politics of disciplinary research, and two, the rigid differentiation between disciplinary boundaries.

2.6.1. The Politics of Disciplinary Research: The politics of disciplinary research is the area of investigation in Foucault's (1972) "The Discourse on Language", in which he explains the concept of disciplines, that "disciplines are defined by groups of objects, methods, and their corpus of propositions considered to be true, the interplay of rules and definitions, of techniques and tools: all these constitute a sort of anonymous system, freely available to whoever wishes, or whoever is able to make use of them, without there being any question of their meaning or their validity being derived from who ever happened to invent them."²⁹ To put it in simple words, disciplines outline the requirements for the construction of new statements. In order to belong to a discipline, a proposition is required to fit into a certain type of theoretical field. In other words a proposition is required to fulfil some onerous and complicated conditions before it can be admitted within a discipline; or as Foucault explains, even before it can be pronounced true or false, it has to be 'within the true'. One would only be 'within the true' if one obeyed the rules of some discursive 'policy' which would have to be

²⁸Rosenau (1992, p.57-60).

²⁹Foucault (1972, pp,222).

‘reactivated each time one spoke’³⁰. Putting it another way, disciplines constitute a system of control in the production of discourse, fixing its limits through the action of an identity taking the form of permanent reactivation of rules. Although there may be certain advantages of such disciplinary controls in terms of providing order and certainty in the research process and a basis for the career development of the researcher, which is manifested in the huge output of knowledge generated within the confines of different disciplinary groups, at the same time however, there are negative implications of such restrictive controls: it repulses a whole teratology of learning³¹. The reference here is to the local narratives and other knowledge that are considered to be de-legitimated knowledge because they cannot confirm to the requirements of scientific discourses. Disciplines and methodologies including those upon which social and economic research is based thus become discourses of power, which classify, process, and position people. Foucault (1980c, p.133) therefore identifies the key problem in producing the truth as not being the truth itself or the ideological contents linked to the truth, but rather the fundamental problem relates to the politics of truth, i.e. the political, economic, and the institutional regime for the production of truth. This is what the postmodern question is all about. By laying out the problematical features of disciplinary research, postmodernism allows the researcher the power and the confidence to react against, and as a consequence, go beyond the constricting requirements of disciplinary research in the production of knowledge.

2.6.2. The Problem of Rigid Differentiation Between Disciplinary Boundaries: One of the most conspicuous features of postmodernism is its eclecticism and the de-differentiation of the rigid disciplinary boundaries. According to Rosenau (1992, p.6-7), postmodernists question and therefore call for a de-differentiation of the rigid disciplinary boundaries between:

- natural sciences, humanities, social sciences, art and literature,

³⁰Foucault (1972, p. 224).

³¹Foucault (1972, p. 223).

- between culture and life, fiction and theory, image and reality in nearly every field of human endeavour.

Rosenau (1992, p.13) therefore describes postmodernism as the merging of the elements (not all) from a number of different, often conflicting orientations, including Structuralism, Romanticism, Phenomenology, Nihilism, Populism, Existentialism, Hermeneutics, Marxism, Critical Theory, and Anarchism. Postmodernists agree with some elements of these philosophical ideologies, while at the same time they disagree with some other elements of the same ideologies especially those that form the logocentric elements of these theories. For example: they agree with Marxists criticism of modern science as being a myth and enlightenment heritage as being totalitarian and dominating, but at the same time they criticize the Marxist project of emancipation itself as being logocentric in terms of its emphasis on the societal totality at the expense of le-quotidian (analysis of local or daily life). Similarly they agree with the critical theory, which urges a suspicion of instrumental reason, modern technology, and the role of the media in a modern consumer society, but at the same time they question critical theory's emphasis on extra-textual explanations of social phenomenon and their search for truth as 'naive'. Paralleling anarchism, postmodernists question authority and the arbitrary impositions of any singular, systemic, point of view. They tolerate different, even contradictory perspectives. From Romanticism, the postmodernist inherit a critical stand vis-à-vis the objective, all that is supposedly permanent, and the unity of time and place. In agreement to the Romanticists, postmodernists question the dominant aesthetic values, that there are no universal criteria of beauty, goodness, and truth. The postmodernists, much like the Romanticists feel they live in a twilight world of transition between an unsatisfactory present and an unworkable past, a world in which the conventional social maps are no longer effective, but at a point of time when new ones have yet to be constructed (Rosenau, 1992, p.13-14).

One of the most conspicuous features of modernism has been the development of a number of distinct disciplines and areas of specialization. Postmodernism reacts against this predilection of modernity through the process of de-differentiation, postmodernism thus allows new knowledge generation through the process of cross fertilization or

hybridization between different disciplines and specializations, and hence encourages a more holistic approach to knowledge generation.

2.7. The Concept of Space:

The concept of postmodernism as a reaction to modernism, is also apparent in the difference between the modernist and the postmodernist concept of 'space'³². Conventional geography which is based on the modernist philosophical thought, limits the concept of space to physical space, which implies that concrete objects located in objective geographical space can be chartered out in terms of latitude and longitude. It assumes that once located, things stay put or if they move, they do so in a predictable pattern. The sceptical postmodernists concept of hyper space makes no such assumption. It takes into consideration the effects of electronic reality. It assumes that space has been annihilated and spatial barriers have disappeared - everything is in geographical flux, constantly and unpredictably shifting in space, as a result it is not possible for the individual human body to locate itself, to organize its immediate surroundings, and to talk cognitively, map its position in a mappable external world. This is in line with Marshal McLuhan's³³ assertion that during the mechanical age we used mechanical technology to extend the reach of our physical bodies. Now during the electronic age we have used the electronic and telecom technology to extend our nervous system across the globe. The affirmative postmodernists, while rejecting the modernist concept of space and geography, rethink the concept of space in political terms rather than geographical. This forms the basis of their preference for local space, the space for community, the space of regional resistance, etc. This is also the basis of the pluralist stance of the postmodernists - their emphasis is on the respect of others space, and their insistence on the preservation of their own place.

³²The following examination of postmodern view vis.a.vis the concept of 'space' is also based on Rosenau (1992, Chapter 4, p.62-76).

³³McLuhan, and Powers (1989).

Both these postmodern concepts of space fit into Henri Lefebvre's (1991) concept of 'social space'. Lefebvre combines the space occupied by the sensory phenomenon, with the mental space, and most importantly, the space of social practice, to develop a single holistic concept of space, the concept of 'social space'. The term 'social' implies the primal importance that Lefebvre attaches to the subject and his/her subjectivity. This includes his/her knowledge, his/her imagination, his/her ontological assumptions, his/her relations with other subjects, his/her actions as a part of a group, etc., all of which have an affect on his/her interpretation of the problems, and consequently his/her relationship with the other subjects, and his/her actions. Lefebvre reflects on the centrality of the subject as "the whole of the (social) space proceeds from the body"³⁴. Metaphorically speaking, unlike the modernist concept of space which can be described as the 'stage' or the 'theatre' for the staging of the human drama, Lefebvre's concept of space includes, not simply the stage or the theatre for staging of the drama (physical space), but also the actors, their intellect³⁵ and the products of their intellect, their relationship with the other actors, and their act (both individual and collective). Thus, Lefebvre provides a holistic concept of space - the space of a society, of social life - a space that they may enjoy, and modify to serve their needs.

"Space does not eliminate the other materials or resources that play a part in the socio-political arena, be they the raw materials or the most finished of products, be they business or culture. Rather, it brings them all together and then in a sense substitutes itself for each factor separately by enveloping it. The outcome is a vast movement in terms of which space can no longer be looked as an 'essence' as an object distant from the point of view of (or as compared with) the 'subjects', as answering to a logic of its own. Nor can it be treated as a result or a resultant, as an empirically verifiable effect of the past, a history or a society. Is a space a medium? A milieu? An intermediary? It is doubtless all of these, but its role is less and less neutral, and more and more active, both as instrument and as goal, as

³⁴The genesis of a far-away order can be accounted for only on the basis of the order that is closest to us - namely the order of the body (Lefebvre, 1991, pp.405).

³⁵Covering the realm of mental space incorporating their knowledge, their ideas, and their imagination.

means and as end. Confining it to so narrow a category as that of 'medium' is consequently woefully inadequate³⁶."

From the above excerpt, it is clear that Lefebvre considers the Cartesian concept of space (space as a medium) as woefully incomplete and hence inadequate for understanding the problems of the present era primarily because it ignores the collective element³⁷. Lefebvre combines the space occupied by the sensory phenomenon³⁸, with the mental space³⁹, and most importantly, the space of social practice, to develop a single holistic concept of space, the concept of 'social space'⁴⁰.

"(Social) space is not a thing among other things, nor a product among other products: rather, it subsumes things produced, and encompasses their relationships

³⁶Lefebvre (1991, p.410-411).

³⁷According to Lefebvre (1991, p.1-7), while the scientific attitude towards space is structurally linked to the spatial sphere, the epistemological concept is also guilty of eliminating the collective subject. In this respect he criticizes some philosophers like Noam Chomsky (linguistics), Derrida (grammatology), Roland Barthes (semiology) as being guilty of promoting sophistry whereby the philosophico-epistemological notion of space is fetishised and the mental realm comes to envelop the social and the physical ones. Such concepts reflect a powerful ideological tendency. The problem with this approach is that it is unconsciously expressing the ideas of a dominant class. What is happening, is that a particular theoretical practice is producing a mental space, which then becomes the locus of the axis or pivot or reference point. This mental space then apparently becomes the reference point for the theoretical practice. Thus a circular relationship exists which is separated from the social practice. This creates an abyss between the mental space and the physical and the social space. Philosophico-epistemological thinking has therefore failed to furnish a basis for science - the science of space. They may supply inventories of what exists in space or may even generate a discourse on space but cannot ever give rise to a 'knowledge of space'.

³⁸The nature, the cosmos, the concept referred to as physical space.

³⁹This is the space of the philosophers and the mathematicians and includes their logical and formal abstractions.

⁴⁰This is reflected in Lefebvre's preliminary hypotheses (1991, p.27):
"Social space will be revealed in its particularity to the extent that it ceases to be indistinguishable from mental space (as defined by the philosophers and mathematicians) on one hand, and physical space (as defined by the practico-sensory activity and the perception of 'nature') on the other. What I shall be seeking to demonstrate is that such a social space is constituted neither by a collection of things or an aggregate of (sensory) data, nor by a void packed like a parcel with various contents, and that it is irreducible to a 'form' imposed upon phenomenon, upon things, upon physical materiality. If I am successful, the social character of space, here posited as preliminary hypothesis, will be confirmed as we go along".

in their coexistence and simultaneity - their (relative) order and/or (relative) disorder. It is the outcome of sequence and set of operations, and thus cannot be reduced to the rank of a simple object. At the same time there is nothing imagined, unreal or 'ideal' about it as compared, for example, with science, representations, ideals or dreams. Itself the outcome of past actions, social space is what permits fresh actions to occur, while suggesting others and prohibiting yet others. Among these actions, some serve production, others consumption (i.e. the enjoyment of the fruits of production). Social space implies a great diversity of knowledge⁴¹".

The significance of social space as a concept relates to its utility as a tool not only for analyzing and understanding the change we are experiencing - the phenomenon of 'globalization', but also for understanding and appreciating the consequences of this change. The concept not only allows us to take a holistic view of the space at a point of time, but also allows us to understand the process of change of space across time.

2.8. The Concept of History:

The final area to be examined within the realm of postmodernism as a reaction to modernism is the concept of 'history'. For the postmodernists, especially the sceptical ones, history is a humble discipline, dependent on the present, without any integrity of its own. The contemporary period is the time frame that counts most. "We live in the present as text, in a fragmented 'series of perpetual presents', where the future is only an 'anticipated presence', and the past a 'former presence'. History is only important to the extent that its traces have an impact on the contemporary, and even then, those traces are complex and intertextual. It is sufficient to let the present interrogate the past⁴². An example of a postmodern approach towards history is Foucault's Genealogical analysis of knowledge. Foucault (1980c, p.117) refers to genealogy⁴³ as a form of history which can account for

⁴¹Lefebvre (1991, p.73).

⁴²Rosenau (1992, p.64).

⁴³In order to understand and appreciate the concept of 'genealogy', it is necessary to understand the difference between 'archaeology' and 'genealogy'. 'Archaeology' is the method that Foucault applies

the constitution of knowledge, discourses, domains of objects, etc., without having to make reference to a subject which is either transcendental in relation to the field of events or runs in its empty sameness throughout the course of history.

Foucault's genealogy is an example of postmodern method in which the past is revisited to investigate and understand the present. Genealogical analysis, unlike modern history does not interpret the past through the present perspective. Genealogy is, rather, the history of the present in the sense that it finds its points of departure in problems relevant to the current issue and finds its points of arrival and its usefulness in what it can bring to the analysis of the present. The difference between Foucault's genealogy and the traditional historical research is that genealogy eschews the latter's implicit metaphysical search for origin or the primordial truth. According to Foucault (1995, p.366) we should avoid thinking of emergence as the final term of historical development. Emergence is the entry of forces, it is their eruption, and the leap from the wings to centre stage, each in their youthful strength. Foucault's genealogy, is not a pursuit of the origin of an idea, an attempt to capture the absolute essence of things, their metaphysical essence, or the primordial truth. Genealogy does not go back in time to restore an unbroken continuity, or to demonstrate that the past actively exists in the present. Foucault (1995, p. 365) explains the concept of genealogy, that an examination of descent of a trait or a concept allows one to understand the myriad events through which - thanks to which, against which - they were formed. Genealogy follows the complex course of descent with the aim of identifying and outlining the "accidents, the minute deviations - or conversely, the complete reversals - the errors, the false appraisals, and the faulty calculations that gave birth to those things that continue to exist and have value to us; it is to discover that truth or being do not lie at the

for revealing the historical contents of the emergence and the evolution of the knowledge and the discourses and institutions connected to that knowledge that dominates our present. 'Genealogy' on the other hand would be the application or the tactics by which the information revealed through the archaeological research is brought into play to create a knowledge of knowledge (Foucault, 1980b, p.85). Foucault's research, therefore, involves two acts: one, Foucault, the 'archaeologist', the erudite researcher, digging up documents, raiding archives, rereading and demystifying canonical texts; and two, Foucault the 'genealogist' applying the information/knowledge revealed through his archaeologies to create a knowledge of knowledge. Since the concept of 'archaeology' is necessary to consummate the concept of 'genealogy', Foucault therefore employs 'genealogy' as a holistic concept that presumes archaeology as its necessary component.

root of what we know and what we are, but the exteriority of accidents. This is undoubtedly why every origin of morality from the moment it stops being pious - and Herkunft⁴⁴ can never be - has value as a critique. ... The search for descent is not the erecting of foundations: on the contrary, it disturbs what was previously considered immobile; it fragments what was thought unified; it shows the heterogeneity of what was imagined consistent with itself."⁴⁵

Genealogy necessitates the removal of every mask to ultimately disclose an original identity, which may be different from its image of primordial truth. In this respect Foucault (1995, p.363) explains "if the genealogist refuses to extend his fate in metaphysics, if he listens to history, he finds that there is 'something altogether different' behind things: not a timeless and essential secret, but the secret that they have no essence or that their essence was fabricated in a piecemeal fashion from alien forms." In this respect he gives the example of the history of 'reason', that there was no primordial truth behind its emergence, rather it was born out of chance. The devotion to truth and the precision of scientific methods arose from "the passion of the scholars, their reciprocal hatred, their fanatical and unending discussions, and their spirit of competition - the personal conflicts that slowly forged the weapons of reason". The genealogical analysis of modernity therefore concentrates on the basis of the genesis or the emergence of the principles of modernity, and how they were thereafter given a metaphysical or an ideological status, as a result of which they became a liability rather than an asset. It was the output of such research by Foucault and his fellow scholars labelled as postmodernists which put a question mark on the validity of the metanarratives that form the basis of the modernist philosophical thought. Postmodern philosophical thought thus makes history a useful discipline that is not aimed at glorifying or glamorizing the past but to remove the shrouds that cover the truth. It is a discipline that helps us to understand the origin and the progression of the problems that continue to plague our society.

⁴⁴German equivalent of the term 'origin'.

⁴⁵Foucault, (1995, p.365).

3. Conclusions:

This concludes the series of two papers exploring the concept of postmodernism. The aim of these papers was to understand the concept and to investigate into some of the ideas generated within the realm of postmodern philosophical thought that may serve as a source of inspiration and ideas for assisting us in understanding and ameliorating the problems facing our rapidly changing society. A problem that was faced in this investigation was the confusion surrounding the label of postmodernism. The term 'postmodernism' has been used in the media as a label for a number of (sometimes even conflicting) phenomena. This is because that there was no precise definition of postmodernism. Unravelling this confusion was therefore necessary in order to have a clear sense of what one is expected to explore. The approach adopted for examining the postmodern phenomenon was to picture it as a collage incorporating three distinct but interrelated concepts/themes: one, postmodernism as an epoch; two, postmodernism as a signifier of the problematical features or the limits of modernity; and three, postmodernism as a reaction to the terrorism of the modernist philosophical thought.

In view of the complexity of the topic it was too difficult to explore the subject in one paper, the strategy adopted was therefore to split the exploration into the postmodern phenomenon into two papers. The first paper published in the previous issue of the Market Forces involved the unravelling of the confusion associated with the label of postmodernism. The first two themes noted above were examined in the first paper. This paper involves an examination of the third theme: postmodernism as a reaction to the terrorism of the modernist philosophical thought which has been described as positivistic, technocentric, and rationalistic, and the belief in linear progress, absolute truths, the rational planning of ideal social orders, and the standardization of knowledge and production.

The approach adopted for this paper involved the use of the term 'post' as a counter concept and a broad-gauged cultural and intellectual movement that is re-conceptualizing the way we experience and understand the world around us. It involved a re-examination of

some of the basic concepts that form the foundations of many of the discourses legitimated by the modernist philosophical thought. It also involved an examination of some of the counter concepts presented within the realm of the postmodernist philosophical thought; counter-concepts that encourage a reconceptualization of the way we think, imagine, and plan our strategies for meeting the challenge of a rapidly changing society. The counter-concepts examined within the realm of the concept of postmodernism as a reaction to modernism covered eight areas/elements of our reality namely: the concept of truth; the concept of theory; the concept of representation; the concept and the relationship between the author, the text, and the reader; the concept of subject; the problematic of disciplinary research; the concept of space; and the concept of history. Postmodernism not only allows us the power to question the problematical nature of the normally accepted definition of these conceptual areas, but also provides us with counter concepts that offer an alternate outlook regarding these conceptual areas, thus allowing us with a different perspective for examining and understanding the problems of the present era. The overall message or the inference drawn from the investigation into the counter-concepts presented within the realm of postmodernism as a reaction to modernism, for us the readers, is to become active rather than passive readers, to approach the text, especially statements of truths and universal formulae with caution and a bit of scepticism. Similarly the message for us as the writers of the text is to view our text as direction flags rather than statements of truth. This is also the aim of this paper.

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