The Antinomies of Postmodernism

Postmodernism in a philosophical sense may have arisen from the dust of the radical movements of the 1960s, may have blossomed with the failure of so-called \"socialism\" in Eastern Europe and Asia, with continued disillusion with Reason following the tragedies of the Second World War, but will the early 21st century show this new darling of leftist theorists just as flawed if not more so than the theories of the left that its adherents sought to displace? While I sympathize with some postmodern ideas, I cannot deny that Eagleton makes a very compelling case and gives readers much to consider.

In his prominent Marxist critique to Postmodernism, *The Illusions of Postmodernism* (1996), Eagleton describes the contemporary world as an \"appalling mess\" (ix). Such chaos, according to Eagleton, was initiated by Capitalism, which he defines as \"the most pluralistic order history has ever known, restlessly transgressing boundaries and dismantling oppositions, pitching together diverse life-forms and continually overflowing the measure\" (133). During the Twentieth Century, Capitalism, for Eagleton, \"became the new foundation for social cohesion\" since \"the middle class or bourgeoisie began to focus on business in favour of the metaphysical\" as a result of Nietzsche's destructive pronouncement of 'the death of God' \"which allowed the individual to subscribe to their own religious, political and cultural ideologies (if any) which were previously used by states as oppressive tools\" (2014).
Such characteristics of the late Capitalism seem perfectly compatible with some of the distinctive features of Postmodernism which was defined by Jameson as \"the cultural logic of late capitalism\" (1991, 46). Since Postmodernism preceded late Capitalism and, arguably, contributed to its rise, Eagleton regards Postmodernism as a kind of \"straw-targeting\" or \"caricaturing its opponent's position\" (1996, viii) and accuses it of complicity with the late Capitalism, and thus lacking any critical force. It is not only Eagleton, but many other Neo-Marxists who shared the same general view of accusing postmodernists of being \"always already complicit in the system\" (Sim, 166) they criticize. In sum, the main charge against late Capitalism and Postmodernism, in plainly Marxist terms, is that the infrastructure does not generate the superstructure.
In his *The Illusion of Postmodernism*, Eagleton is concerned \"less with the more *recherché* formulations of postmodern philosophy than with the culture or milieu or even sensibility of postmodernism as a whole\" (viii). This indicates that Eagleton is more interested in displaying the historical context of the political, economic, social, and cultural background out of which Postmodernism has been emerged, rather than with investigating the philosophical roots embedded in the postmodern thought. Throughout his book, Eagleton sets out to expose the illusion of Postmodernism through his subtle grounded argument, devastating gifts for irony and satire, commitment to the ethical and inspiring social engagement, and sharp refusal to acquiesce in the \"appalling mess\" of the contemporary world.
In his well-known article \"The Contradictions of Postmodernism\" (1997), Eagleton states that \"postmodernism is both radical and conservative together, springing as it does from [the]structural contradiction at the core of advanced capitalism itself\". Thus, the contradiction of Postmodernism is mainly due to the contradiction of the late capitalism. He elaborates the very contradiction of the late Capitalism, and of Postmodernism as well, as follows:

The more market forces level all distinct value and identity to arbitrary, aleatory, relative, hybrid, interchangeable status, confounding fixed ontologies, mocking high-toned teleologies, and kicking all solid foundations from beneath themselves, the more their ideological superstructures … will need to insist … upon absolute values and immutable standards, assured grounds and unimpeachable goals, the eternal givenness of a human nature which is mutating before their very eyes, the universal status of values which are being exposed as historically partial even as we speak (4).

Eagleton's argument about Postmodernism is based on two fundamental, however opposing, premises which emphasize the contradiction of the overall postmodern movement. According to his argument, Postmodernism is conservative because it lacks the resources to produce change (1996, 135). As a matter of fact, what distinguished Postmodernism from other movement is its pronounced political dimension. Hence, Eagleton describes Postmodernism as a political project without any \"substantial change\" on its agenda (95). Thus, he situated Postmodernism inside \"the unbreachable system\" of the late Capitalism which it mainly aimed to criticize. Incapable to challenge \"the system\" (2), the conservative character of Postmodernism clearly outweighs its political dimension. Hence, the radical aspirations of the postmodern enterprise to elicit political change resulted in a conservative tendency which legitimate, rather than challenging, \"the system\". Eagleton condemns Postmodernism for its:

Cultural relativism, moral conventionalism, its skepticism, pragmatism, and localism, its distaste for ideas of solidarity and disciplined organization, its lack of any adequate theory of political agency. (1996, 134)

Since Eagleton defines Postmodernism as \"a style of thought which is suspicious of classical notions of truth, reason, identity and objectivity, of single frameworks, grand narratives or ultimate grounds of explanation\" (1996,vii), thus, it is a mode of interrogation that aims at problematizing the epistemological assumptions whose distinctive characteristics are anti-totality, anti-hierarchy, anti-essentialism, and anti-tetology (93-120). Indissolubly connected to the late Capitalism, yet potentially subversive if \"the system\" is not compatible with its demands, Postmodernism has redefined the human being as unstable subject, created a vacuum of moral and social values through its abolition of the concept of absolute truth that shaped the political and social reality of the Twentieth Century.

The postmodern principle of the negation of totality, according to Eagleton, results in the failure of Postmodernism to acknowledge \"the system\" in the first place, which is the prerequisite for challenging it. Furthermore, such negation of totality involves a liberation from commitments which could enable postmodern subjects to totally undermine \"the system\" through engaging in a particular radical action. Also, the negation of totality implies the fragmentation of the postmodern subject who loses a clearly defined identity that suggests his incapability to produce change, and, consequently, to engage in any political action. Hence, Postmodernism legitimate \"the system\" rather than challenging it as it had previously claimed to aspire. As the incapability to perform any political change suggests the perpetuation of the status-quo.

Furthermore, the postmodern preoccupation with marginal issues such as sexuality, race, gender, language, subjectivity, and identity deliberately redirects the worldwide attention from the truly significant issues to those of secondary importance which, indeed, do not threaten \"the system\". Thus, feminism and ethnicity – which Eagleton confesses to credit Postmodernism with some strength especially its works on identity-thinking and the dangers of totality – are popular postmodern obsessions not because they are significant challenges to Postmodernism but because they are not radical ones. Regarded by Eagleton as the single most enduring achievement, Postmodernism firmly established the questions of sexuality, gender, feminism, race, and ethnicity on its political agenda. For him, Postmodernism only substitutes the more classical forms of radical politics which deal with class, state, ideology, revolution, and material modes of production with less radical ones. In fact, such displacement from pure politics to marginal issues does not indicate that this older political issues have been disappeared or resolved, rather Postmodernism aims at edging them from its political agenda. Once again, Postmodernism reinforces the confirmation of \"the system\", as Eagleton illustrates that:

The politics of postmodernism, then, have been at once enrichment and evasion. If they have opened up vital new political questions, it is partly because they have beat an undignified retreat from older political issues – not because they have disappeared or have been resolved, but because they are for the moment proving intractable. …Feminism and ethnicity are popular today … because they are not necessarily anti-capitalist and fit well enough with a post-radical age. (1996, 25)

In addition, a major aim of Postmodernism is the gradual loss of traditional values essential to the human life like the belief in an ultimate truth legitimating existence. Hence, the postmodern insisting rejection of ultimate truth, fixed reality and objective knowledge leads to relativism and disorientation which greatly contributes to the well-functioning of \"the system\". Again and again, Postmodernism enhances the consolidation of \"the system\". Eagleton states that:

Its nervous of such concepts as truth has alarmed the bishops and charmed the business executives, just as its compulsion to replace words like 'reality' in scare quotes unsettles the pious *Bürger* in the bosom ofhis family but is music to his ears in his advertising agency. (1996, 28)

Consequently, Postmodernism is a provocative movement which in spite of its incapability to perform any meaningful political action, it possesses a fascinating power to persuade oneself that any totality one might fight against is actually illusory. Thus, the postmodern subjects lack any ability to distinguish between truth and false simply because there is no truth in the first place, just several individual interpretations according to everyone's view of the world. Reality and appearance are one, so that what you see is the truth. Truth, for Postmodernism, is a question of who can practice the most persuasive rhetoric. In the postmodern mode of thought, the individual is a self-fashioning creature whose supreme achievement is to treat himself as a work of art.

One of the major reasons for Eagleton's hostile attitude towards Postmodernism is his established commitment to Marxism. As Marxism has failed to develop throughout time in order to be 'an authoritarian theory' that could be able to impose its own theories and its own version of truth on the critical field. Thus, the failure of the Marxist grand narrative contributes to the ascendency of Postmodernism (Sim, 12). On the other hand, the opponents of Postmodernism consider it as a kind of \"an update version of skepticism\" whose ultimate aim is to attack other theories related to truth without \"set[ting] up a positive theory of its own\" (13). As a result of the purposelessness of Postmodernism, Eagleton announces the end of theory in his *After Theory* (2003). In this book, he stresses that the current cultural theory of Postmodernism is extremely orthodox, referring to its inability to perform any political change, to the point that it lost its connection to our everyday social and political situation. He states that \"I do not believe that this orthodoxy addresses itself to questions searching enough to meet the demands of our political situation\" (ix).

Another major difference between Postmodernism and Marxism is their distinct attitudes towards the notion of the self. Whereas Postmodernism considers the self as a language-based social construction without any fixed or stable identity, Eagleton refers to the importance of the existence of an individual identity to the human self as if there were no individual self, there would be no free will and choice. Also, Postmodernism and Marxism differ in their perceptions of the reflexivity of language. While Postmodernism thinks that the text stands only for itself, Marxism searches for an underlying truth beneath the surface appearance. For Eagleton, the literary text does not only reflect textual reality, but also represents or misrepresents other extra-textual realities. Therefore, he rejects the notion that \"a text has a value in itself\" (1983, 11) and suggests that \"Marxist criticism analyses literature in terms of historical conditions which produce it; and it needs, similarly, to be aware of its own [current] historical conditions\" (1976b, vi).

Aiming to illustrate the function of ideology throughout the literary text, the foremost Marxist literary critic Terry Eagleton begins with the search for the historical factors which have contributed to the production of the text in the first place. Selden, Widdowson and Brooker elaborate Eagleton's view in his *Criticism and Ideology* as follow:

texts do not reflect historical reality but rather work upon ideology to produce an effect of the 'real'. The text may appear to be free in its relation to reality (it can invent characters and situations at will), but it is not free in its use of ideology. 'Ideology' here refers not to formulated doctrines but to all those systems of representation (aesthetic, religious, judicial and others) which shape the individual's mental picture of lived experience. The meanings and perceptions produced in the text are a reworking of ideology's own working of reality. (Selden and Widdowson, 2005, 101)

Moreover, the approach to history constitutes a great difference between Postmodernism and Marxism. Firstly, history and literature, for the Marxist criticism, are the components of the superstructure while social, historical, and ideological conditions are the components of the infrastructure. Secondly, history and literature are the outcome of the social, historical, and ideological conditions. Thirdly, the Marxist evolutionary approach to history based on class-struggle and aimed at evoking a socialist revolution whose main purpose is the rise of classless society. On the other hand, Postmodernism aggressively rejects the evolutionary approach to history and accuses Marxism of being illusory. Consequently, in his attempt to prove the illusion of Postmodernism, Eagleton elaborates that Postmodernism believes in the discontinuous, random nature of history and accuses it of being ahistorical (1996, 51).

From all these reciprocal accusations, it is apparent that both movements are intensely concerned with the past but with different purposes. While Marxism exposes the evolution of societies from one stage to another throughout history, Postmodernism is interested in offering various versions of history depending on its notion of plurality. For Eagleton, there is certain historical moment which initiated the general ideology responsible for the production of the literary text.

Another significant feature of Postmodernism which asserts the contradiction of the movement is the correlation between history and fiction. Since history, according to Postmodernism, is neither fixed nor stable, so it is various linguistic constructions which differ according to the author's point of view. Thus, there is no total account of history but several histories. Moreover, it is impossible, for Postmodernism, to provide a continuous objective history, instead it proposes discontinuous subjective fragmentations of some events of history. Hutcheon indicates that:

like fiction, history constructs its objects, that events named become facts and thus both do and do not retain their status outside language. This is the paradox of postmodernism. The past really did exist, but we can only know it

today through its textual traces, its often complex and indirect representations in the present: documents, archives, but also photographs, paintings, architecture, films, and literature. (1991, 78)

On the same track, Marshall confirms the non-linear, discontinuous histories of Postmodernism which differ according to the ideological message that an author wants to deliver to his audience. She illustrates that:

Postmodernism is about histories not told, retold, untold. History as it never was. Histories forgotten, hidden, invisible, considered unimportant, changed, eradicated. It's about the refusal to see history as linear, as leading straight up to today in some recognizable pattern-all set for us to make sense of it. It's about chance. It's about power. It's about information. And more information. And more. And. And that's just a little bit about what postmodernism [is]. (4)

In its attempt to cover the fictional formations of history, Postmodernism uses certain devices which emphasize that history is a merely fragmented literary construction that differ in its representation from one author to another according to his intended ideological conviction. For Postmodernism, history is constructed according to the intended ideology of the dominant powers which they aim to deliver to their people. Through its use of irony, parody, and self-reflexivity, –which are mainly modernist devices that have been modified to fit the postmodern thought – Postmodernism stresses the lack of distinction between fact and fiction as such distinction is relative. Since history is represented through language so history is the product of the limits of our use of language, thus history is what is represented by our language; this summarizes the postmodern approach towards language. Furthermore, the incomplete, fragmented postmodern representations of history evoke the engagement of the audience in order to participate in completing the missing parts according to their own convictions. Such evocation, furthermore, increases the fragmentation of postmodern representations of history.

According to Eagleton, Postmodernism merged history and fiction in order to create the mode of irony. This postmodern mode of irony is the reason beneath \"what condemns postmodernism to triviality and kitsch\" (Hutcheon 1991, 18). For the opponents of Postmodernism, including Eagleton, the mode of irony is fundamentally \"anti-serious\", while postmodernists intentionally employ it because it is the only serious approach to the past since \"The reader is forced to acknowledge not only the inevitable textuality of our knowledge of the past, but also both the value and limitation of the inescapably discursive form of that knowledge\" (Hutcheon 1988, 127). Moreover, the postmodern mode of irony enhances the postmodern notion of the indeterminacy of language as it is difficult to decide whether a statement is intentionally ironical by its author or it was only ironically interpreted by its reader. Also, readers themselves differ in their interpretations of the same statement: some of them can interpret it ironically while others can not.

Worthy of mention is Eagleton's dealing with the notion of the postmodern subject \"whose body is integral to its identity\" (1996, 69). For Eagleton, the postmodern preoccupation with the body displaces radical politics. Such preoccupation asserts the materiality of the postmodern thought since it concentrates on the concrete body of the human subject as opposite to the humanist approach which concentrates on his abstract soul. In fact, it is a shift from the body as the locus of the phenomenological subject to the body as the total determination of the subject. In brief, it is, according to Eagleton, a shift \"from the body as subject to the body as object\" (71). Therefore, Postmodernism centralizes the body as being the main construction of the identity of the human self. For Eagleton, the performance of a significantly transformative action demands the existence of a unified human subject with a reasonably secure identity in the first place. This implies an ethical accusation to the postmodern thought which is morally irresponsible to the importance of the role of ethical in the formation of the human identity. Eagleton refutes this postmodern conviction as follows:

> What is special about the human body, then, is its capacity to transform itself in the process of transforming the material bodies around it. … But if the body is a self-transformative practice, then it is not identical with itself in the manner of corpses or carpets, and this is a claim that soul language was trying to make. It is just that such language located this non-self-identity in the body's having an invisible extra which is the real me, rather than viewing the real me as a creative interaction with my world. (72)

Inextricably bound to the notion of the subject is the postmodern oppositional pairing of nature/culture which constitutes an important part of the postmodern thought. According to the radical universalism of the Enlightenment, since all individuals share the same common human nature, all of them have equal rights: every individual is endued with freedom, autonomy, justice, and political equality. Eagleton argues that Postmodernism suffers from a 'holophobia': a fear from universality and totality which he considered to be its main charge. He states that \"postmodernism is quite mistaken to believe, with Hegel rather than Marx, that all objectification are tantamount to alienation\" (74). With its paralysing skepticism, Postmodernism valorizes the postmodern subject in the prison of culture with the help of the so-called \"new somatics\". In fact, this resulted in the increasing loss of subjectivity as the body becomes a mere object. Eagleton states that \"the new somatics … risks dispelling subjectivity itself as no more than a humanist myth\" (75). As a severe reaction and absolute rejection against the natural, biological, and abstract nature of the existence of the modernist stable human subject, Postmodernism

reduces the existence of the self-identity of its postmodern subject to an immanent culturalism. Therefore, it is the external various forces of one's own culture, rather than his own biological nature, that constitutes the self-identity of the postmodern subject.
For Eagleton, Postmodernism is a form of culturalism as it refuses to recognize that the common social and political ground is more important for the emancipation of the different ethnic groups than their cultural differences. According to Eagleton, Postmodernism underestimates nature in favour of culture. In his refutation of this point, Eagleton illustrates that there are no non-cultural human beings not because culture exists everywhere around us, but because culture belongs to our nature. He states that:
It is important to see, as postmodernism largely does not, that we are not 'cultural' rather than 'natural' creatures, but cultural beings by virtue of our nature, which is to say by virtue of the sorts of bodies we have and the kind of the world to which they belong. Because we are all born prematurely, unable to look after ourselves, our nature contains a yawning abyss into which culture must instantly move, otherwise we would die. …

Because postmodern thought is nervous of the natural, … it tends to overlook the way in which humans are cusped between nature and culture …, and brusquely reduces them to the latter. Culturalism is quite as much a form of reductionism as biologism, or economism, words at the sound of which all stout postmodernists have been trained to make the vampire sign. (1996, 72-74)

As contradiction exists at the heart of the postmodernist enterprise, the postmodern decentring of the human subject, destabilizing of his self-identity, and subjecting him to various forms of exploitation at the hands of 'the system', that is late Capitalism, contradicts with the postmodern notion of 'difference' which considered the major achievement of the postmodern enterprise because it gives political voice to the marginalized. While the postmodern notion of the self proposes a fragmented, unstable representation of the human subject, difference can not be flourished under exploitation since it necessarily requires a universal notion of humanity. For Eagleton, it is not Postmodernism which destabilized and decentred the human self, rather it is the late Capitalism which did that for considerable reasons. The deconstructed postmodern subject is capable of performing various types of subversions of the dominant social values and beliefs, but incapable of performing an emancipatory action for a respectable goal of transforming society in any meaningful way. On the other hand, Socialism, according to Eagleton, goes further and performs emancipatory actions at the level of human reciprocity. For Eagleton, the performance of any significantly transformative action requires a unified human self as rebellion could not succeed if human agents are not self-identical enough to carry it through.

The term derives from an architectural movement of the 1960sthat is, itself, impossible to clearly define since it intentionally grafts together approaches and traditions in experiments that celebrate kitschy excesses of style and that defy narrative coherence. Postmodern architecture gave us modern malls and multiplexes, aiding and abetting late capitalist sprawl. (But this is another story….)

Lyotard certainly fit the stereotype of the Postmodernist philosopher, with his lifetime of socialist activism and theoretical hybrids of Marx and Freud. He gets little credit, though he put the term in circulation in philosophy. Instead, Michel Foucaultis often cited as a significant influence, though he rejected the categorization and thought of himself as a modernist.

The term \"postmodernism\" first entered the philosophical lexicon in 1979, with the publication of *The Postmodern Condition* by Jean-François Lyotard. I therefore give Lyotard pride of place in the sections that follow. An economy of selection dictated the choice of other figures for this entry. I have selected only those most commonly cited in discussions of philosophical postmodernism, five French and two Italian, although individually they may resist common affiliation. Ordering them by nationality might duplicate a modernist schema they would question, but there are strong differences among them, and these tend to divide along linguistic and cultural lines. The French, for example, work with concepts developed during the structuralist revolution in Paris in the 1950s and early 1960s, including structuralist readings of Marx and Freud. For this reason they are often called \"poststructuralists.\" They also cite the events of May 1968 as a watershed moment for modern thought and its institutions, especially the universities. The Italians, by contrast, draw upon a tradition of aesthetics and rhetoric including figures such as Giambattista Vico and Benedetto Croce. Their emphasis is strongly historical, and they exhibit no fascination with a revolutionary moment. Instead, they emphasize continuity, narrative, and difference within continuity, rather than counter-strategies and discursive gaps. Neither side, however, suggests that postmodernism is an attack upon modernity or a complete departure from it. Rather, its differences lie within modernity itself, and postmodernism is a

continuation of modern thinking in another mode.
Finally, I have included a summary of Habermas's critique of postmodernism, representing the main lines of discussion on both sides of the Atlantic. Habermas argues that postmodernism contradicts itself through self-reference, and notes that postmodernists presuppose concepts they otherwise seek to undermine, e.g., freedom, subjectivity, or creativity. He sees in this a rhetorical application of strategies employed by the artistic avant-garde of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, an avant-garde that is possible only because modernity separates artistic values from science and politics in the first place. On his view, postmodernism is an illicit aestheticization of knowledge and public discourse. Against this, Habermas seeks to rehabilitate modern reason as a system of procedural rules for achieving consensus and agreement among communicating subjects. Insofar as postmodernism introduces aesthetic playfulness and subversion into science and politics, he resists it in the name of a modernity moving toward completion rather than self-transformation.

The Nietzschean method of genealogy, in its application to modern subjectivity, is another facet of philosophical postmodernism. Michel Foucault's application of genealogy to formative moments in modernity's history and his exhortations to experiment with subjectivity place him within the scope of postmodern discourse. In the 1971 essay \"Nietzsche, Genealogy, History,\" Foucault spells out his adaptation of the genealogical method in his historical studies. First and foremost, he says, genealogy \"opposes itself to the search for 'origins'\" (Foucault 1977, 141). That is, genealogy studies the accidents and contingencies that converge at crucial moments, giving rise to new epochs, concepts, and institutions. As Foucault remarks: \"What is found at the historical beginning of things is not the inviolable identity of their origin; it is the dissension of other things. It is disparity\" (Foucault 1977, 142). In Nietzschean fashion, Foucault exposes history conceived as the origin and development of an identical subject, e.g., \"modernity,\" as a fiction modern discourses invent after the fact. Underlying the fiction of modernity is a sense of temporality that excludes the elements of chance and contingency in play at every moment. In short, linear, progressive history covers up the discontinuities and interruptions that mark points of succession in historical time. Foucault deploys genealogy to create what he calls a \"counter-memory\" or \"a transformation of history into a totally different form of time\" (Foucault 1977, 160). This entails dissolving identity for the subject in history by using the materials and techniques of modern historical research. Just as Nietzsche postulates that the religious will to truth in Christianity results in the destruction of Christianity by science (see Nietzsche 1974 [1882], 280–83), Foucault postulates that genealogical research will result in the disintegration of the epistemic subject, as the continuity of the subject is broken up by the gaps and accidents that historical research uncovers. The first example of this research is *Histoire de la folie à l'age classique*, published in 1961, the full version of which was published in English as *History of Madness* in 2006. Here, Foucault gives an account of the historical beginnings of modern reason as it comes to define itself against madness in the seventeenth century. His thesis is that the practice of confining the mad is a transformation of the medieval practice of confining lepers in lazar houses. These institutions managed to survive long after the lepers disappeared, and thus an institutional structure of confinement was already in place when the modern concept of madness as a disease took shape. However, while institutions of confinement are held over from a previous time, the practice of confining the mad constitutes a break with the past.
Foucault focuses upon the moment of transition, as modern reason begins to take shape in a confluence of concepts, institutions, and practices, or, as he would say, of knowledge and power. In its nascency, reason is a power that defines itself against an other, an other whose truth and identity is also assigned by reason, thus giving reason the sense of originating from itself. For Foucault, the issue is that madness is not allowed to speak for itself and is at the disposal of a power that dictates the terms of their relationship. As he remarks: \"*What is originative is the caesura that establishes the distance between reason and non-reason; reason's subjugation of non-reason, wresting from it its truth as madness, crime, or disease, derives explicitly from this point*\" (Foucault 1965, x). The truth of reason is found when madness comes to stand in the place of non-reason, when the difference between them is inscribed in their opposition, but is not identical to its dominant side. In other words, the reason that stands in opposition to madness is not identical to the reason that inscribes their difference. The latter would be reason without an opposite, a free-floating power without definite shape. As Foucault suggests, this free-floating mystery might be represented in the ship of fools motif, which, in medieval times, represented madness. Such is the paradoxical structure of historical transformation.
In his later writings, most notably in *The Use of Pleasure* (Foucault 1985 [1984]), Foucault employs historical research to open possibilities for experimenting with subjectivity, by showing that subjectivation is a formative power of the self, surpassing the structures of knowledge and power from out of which it emerges. This is a power of thought, which Foucault says is the ability of human beings to problematize the conditions under which they live. For philosophy, this means \"the endeavor to know how and to what extent it might be possible to think differently, instead of legitimating what is already known\" (Foucault 1985 [1984], 9). He thus joins Lyotard in promoting creative experimentation as a leading power of thought, a power that surpasses reason, narrowly defined, and without which thought would be inert. In this regard, Foucault stands in league with others who profess a

postmodern sensibility in regard to contemporary science, art, and society. We should note, as well, that Foucault's writings are a hybrid of philosophy and historical research, just as Lyotard combines the language games of the expert and the philosopher in *The Postmodern Condition*. This mixing of philosophy with concepts and methods from other disciplines is characteristic of postmodernism in its broadest sense.

Hermeneutics

Hermeneutics, the science of textual interpretation, also plays a role in postmodern philosophy. Unlike deconstruction, which focuses upon the functional structures of a text, hermeneutics seeks to arrive at an agreement or consensus as to what the text means, or is about. Gianni Vattimo formulates a postmodern hermeneutics in *The End of Modernity* (1985, in English 1988 [1985]), where he distinguishes himself from his Parisian counterparts by posing the question of post-modernity as a matter for ontological hermeneutics. Instead of calling for experimentation with counter-strategies and functional structures, he sees the heterogeneity and diversity in our experience of the world as a hermeneutical problem to be solved by developing a sense continuity between the present and the past. This continuity is to be a unity of meaning rather than the repetition of a functional structure, and the meaning is ontological. In this respect, Vattimo's project is an extension of Heidegger's inquiries into the meaning of being. However, where Heidegger situates Nietzsche within the limits of metaphysics, Vattimo joins Heidegger's ontological hermeneutics with Nietzsche's attempt to think beyond nihilism and historicism with his concept of eternal return. The result, says Vattimo, is a certain distortion of Heidegger's reading of Nietzsche, allowing Heidegger and Nietzsche to be interpreted through one another (Vattimo 1988 [1985], 176). This is a significant point of difference between Vattimo and the French postmodernists, who read Nietzsche against Heidegger, and prefer Nietzsche's textual strategies over Heidegger's pursuit of the meaning of being.

On Vattimo's account, Nietzsche and Heidegger can be brought together under the common theme of overcoming. Where Nietzsche announces the overcoming of nihilism through the active nihilism of the eternal return, Heidegger proposes to overcome metaphysics through a non-metaphysical experience of being. In both cases, he argues, what is to be overcome is modernity, characterized by the image that philosophy and science are progressive developments in which thought and knowledge increasingly appropriate their own origins and foundations. Overcoming modernity, however, cannot mean progressing into a new historical phase. As Vattimo observes: \"Both philosophers find themselves obliged, on the one hand, to take up a critical distance from Western thought insofar as it is foundational; on the other hand, however, they find themselves unable to criticize Western thought in the name of another, and truer, foundation\" (Vattimo 1988 [1985], 2). Overcoming modernity must therefore mean a *Verwindung*, in the sense of twisting or distorting modernity itself, rather than an *Überwindung* or progression beyond it.

While Vattimo takes post-modernity as a new turn in modernity, it entails the dissolution of the category of the new in the historical sense, which means the end of universal history. \"While the notion of historicity has become ever more problematic for theory,\" he says, \"at the same time for historiography and its own methodological self-awareness the idea of history as a unitary process is rapidly dissolving\" (Vattimo 1988 [1985], 6). This does not mean historical change ceases to occur, but that its unitary development is no longer conceivable, so only local histories are possible. The de-historicization of experience has been accelerated by technology, especially television, says Vattimo, so that \"everything tends to flatten out at the level of contemporaneity and simultaneity\" (Vattimo 1988 [1985], 10). As a result, we no longer experience a strong sense of teleology in worldly events, but, instead, we are confronted with a manifold of differences and partial teleologies that can only be judged aesthetically. The truth of postmodern experience is therefore best realized in art and rhetoric.

The Nietzschean sense of overcoming modernity is \"to dissolve modernity through a radicalization of its own innate tendencies,\" says Vattimo (Vattimo 1988 [1985], 166). These include the production of \"the new\" as a value and the drive for critical overcoming in the sense of appropriating foundations and origins. In this respect, however, Nietzsche shows that modernity results in nihilism: all values, including \"truth\" and \"the new,\" collapse under critical appropriation. The way out of this collapse is the moment of eternal recurrence, when we affirm the necessity of error in the absence of foundations. Vattimo also finds this new attitude toward modernity in Heidegger's sense of overcoming metaphysics, insofar as he suggests that overcoming the enframing lies with the possibility of a turn within the enframing itself. Such a turn would mean deepening and distorting the technological essence, not destroying it or leaving it behind. Furthermore, this would be the meaning of being, understood as the history of interpretation (as \"weak\" being) instead of a grounding truth, and the hermeneutics of being would be a distorted historicism. Unlike traditional hermeneutics, Vattimo argues that reconstructing the continuity of contemporary experience cannot be accomplished without unifying art and rhetoric with information from the sciences, and this requires philosophy \"to propose a ‘rhetorically persuasive’, unified view of the world, which includes in itself traces, residues, or isolated elements of scientific knowledge\" (Vattimo 1988 [1985], 179).

Vattimo's philosophy is therefore the project of a postmodern hermeneutics, in contrast to the Parisian thinkers who do not concern themselves with meaning or history as continuous unities.

8. Postmodern Rhetoric and Aesthetics

Rhetoric and aesthetics pertain to the sharing of experience through activities of participation and imitation. In the postmodern sense, such activities involve sharing or participating in differences that have opened between the old and the new, the natural and the artificial, or even between life and death. The leading exponent of this line of postmodern thought is Mario Perniola. Like Vattimo, Perniola insists that postmodern philosophy must not break with the legacies of modernity in science and politics. As he says in *Enigmas*, \"the relationship between thought and reality that the Enlightenment, idealism, and Marxism have embodied must not be broken\" (Perniola 1995, 43). However, he does not base this continuity upon an internal essence, spirit, or meaning, but upon the continuing effects of modernity in the world. One such effect, visible in art and in the relation between art and society, is the collapse of the past and future into the present, which he characterizes as \"Egyptian\" or \"baroque\" in nature. This temporal effect is accomplished through the collapse of the difference between humans and things, where \"humans are becoming more similar to things, and equally, the inorganic world, thanks to electronic technology, seems to be taking over the human role in the perception of events\" (Perniola 1995, *viii*). This amounts to a kind of \"Egyptianism,\" as described by Hegel in his *Aesthetics* (see Hegel 1823–9, 347-361), where the spiritual and the natural are mixed to such a degree that they cannot be separated, as, for example, in the figure of the Sphinx. However, in the postmodern world the inorganic is not natural, but already artificial, insofar as our perceptions are mediated by technological operations.

Likewise, says Perniola, art collections in modern museums produce a \"baroque effect,\" where \"The field that is opened up by a collection is not that of cultivated public opinion, nor of social participation, but a space that attracts precisely because it cannot be controlled or possessed\" (Perniola 1995, 87). That is, in the collection, art is removed from its natural or historical context and creates a new sense of space and time, not reducible to linear history or any sense of origin. The collection, then, is emblematic of postmodern society, a moment of its \"truth.\" Furthermore, Perniola insists that baroque sensibility is characteristic of Italian society and culture in general. \"The very idea of truth as something essentially naked,\" he says, \"is at loggerheads with the Baroque idea, so firmly rooted in Italy, that truth is something essentially clothed\" (Perniola 1995, 145). This corresponds to a sensibility that is intermediate between internal feelings and external things. \"The Italian enigma,\" he says, \"lies in the fact that the human component is equipped with an external emotionality that does not belong to him or her intimately, but in which they nonetheless participate\" (Perniola 1995, 145). To account for this enigmatic experience, the philosopher must become \"the intermediary, the passage, the transit to something different and foreign\" (Perniola 1995, 40). Hence, philosophical reading and writing are not activities of an identical subject, but processes of mediation and indeterminacy between self and other, and philosophical narrative is an overcoming of their differences.

These differences cannot be overcome, in Hegelian fashion, by canceling them under a higher-order synthesis, but must be eroded or defaced in the course of traversing them. In *Ritual Thinking*, Perniola illustrates this process through the concepts of transit, the simulacrum, and ritual without myth. Transit derives from a sense of the simultaneity of the present, where we are suspended in a state of temporariness and indeterminacy, and move \"from the same to the same\"; the simulacrum is the result of an endless mimesis in which there are only copies of copies without reference to an original; and ritual without myth is the repetition of patterns of action having no connection to the inner life of a subject or of society. Thus Perniola sees social and political interaction as repetitive patterns of action having no inherent meaning but constituting, nonetheless, an intermediary realm where oppositions, particularly life and death, are overcome in a to-and-fro movement within their space of difference.

To illustrate these concepts Perniola refers to practices associated with Romanism, particularly Roman religion. \"Ritual without myth,\" he says, \"is the very essence of Romanism\" (Perniola 2001, 81). It is a passage between life and death via their mutual simulation, for example, in the labyrinthine movements of the ritual known as the *troiae lusus*. These movements, he says, mediate between life and death by reversing their pattern of natural succession, and mediate their difference through actions having no intrinsic meaning. Unlike Vattimo's project of constructing meaning to overcome historical differences, Perniola's concept of transit into the space of difference is one of \"art\" in the sense of artifice or technique, and is not aimed at a synthesis or unification of opposing elements. In this respect, Perniola has an affinity with the French postmodernists, who emphasize functional repetition over the creation of meaning. However, as Perniola's notion of ritual without myth illustrates, the functional repetitions of social interaction and technology do not disseminate differences, but efface them. This is clear in his account of the ritualized passage between life and death, as compared with Baudrillard, who calls for strategies introducing the irreversibility of death into the system of symbolic exchange.

The term \"postmodern\" came into the philosophical lexicon with the publication of Jean-François Lyotard's *La Condition Postmoderne* in 1979 (in English: *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, 1984), where he

employs Wittgenstein's model of language games (see Wittgenstein 1953) and concepts taken from speech act theory to account for what he calls a transformation of the game rules for science, art, and literature since the end of the nineteenth century. He describes his text as a combination of two very different language games, that of the philosopher and that of the expert. Where the expert knows what he knows and what he doesn't know, the philosopher knows neither, but poses questions. In light of this ambiguity, Lyotard states that his portrayal of the state of knowledge \"makes no claims to being original or even true,\" and that his hypotheses \"should not be accorded predictive value in relation to reality, but strategic value in relation to the questions raised\" (Lyotard 1984 [1979], 7). The book, then, is as much an experiment in the combination of language games as it is an objective \"report.\"

On Lyotard's account, the computer age has transformed knowledge into information, that is, coded messages within a system of transmission and communication. Analysis of this knowledge calls for a pragmatics of communication insofar as the phrasing of messages, their transmission and reception, must follow rules in order to be accepted by those who judge them. However, as Lyotard points out, the position of judge or legislator is also a position within a language game, and this raises the question of legitimation. As he insists, \"there is a strict interlinkage between the kind of language called science and the kind called ethics and politics\" (Lyotard 1984 [1979], 8), and this interlinkage constitutes the cultural perspective of the West. Science is therefore tightly interwoven with government and administration, especially in the information age, where enormous amounts of capital and large installations are needed for research.

Lyotard points out that while science has sought to distinguish itself from narrative knowledge in the form of tribal wisdom communicated through myths and legends, modern philosophy has sought to provide legitimating narratives for science in the form of \"the dialectics of Spirit, the hermeneutics of meaning, the emancipation of the rational or working subject, or the creation of wealth,\" (Lyotard 1984 [1979], xxiii). Science, however, plays the language game of denotation to the exclusion of all others, and in this respect it displaces narrative knowledge, including the meta-narratives of philosophy. This is due, in part, to what Lyotard characterizes as the rapid growth of technologies and techniques in the second half of the twentieth century, where the emphasis of knowledge has shifted from the ends of human action to its means (Lyotard 1984 [1979], 37). This has eroded the speculative game of philosophy and set each science free to develop independently of philosophical grounding or systematic organization. \"I define *postmodern* as incredulity toward meta-narratives,\" says Lyotard (Lyotard 1984 [1979], xxiv). As a result, new, hybrid disciplines develop without connection to old epistemic traditions, especially philosophy, and this means science only plays its own game and cannot legitimate others, such as moral prescription.

The compartmentalization of knowledge and the dissolution of epistemic coherence is a concern for researchers and philosophers alike. As Lyotard notes, \"Lamenting the ‘loss of meaning’ in postmodernity boils down to mourning the fact that knowledge is no longer principally narrative\" (Lyotard 1984 [1979], 26). Indeed, for Lyotard, the de-realization of the world means the disintegration of narrative elements into \"clouds\" of linguistic combinations and collisions among innumerable, heterogeneous language games. Furthermore, within each game the subject moves from position to position, now as sender, now as addressee, now as referent, and so on. The loss of a continuous meta-narrative therefore breaks the subject into heterogeneous moments of subjectivity that do not cohere into an identity. But as Lyotard points out, while the combinations we experience are not necessarily stable or communicable, we learn to move with a certain nimbleness among them.

Postmodern sensibility does not lament the loss of narrative coherence any more than the loss of being. However, the dissolution of narrative leaves the field of legitimation to a new unifying criterion: the performativity of the knowledge-producing system whose form of capital is information. Performative legitimation means maximizing the flow of information and minimizing static (non-functional moves) in the system, so whatever cannot be communicated as information must be eliminated. The performativity criterion threatens anything not meeting its requirements, such as speculative narratives, with de-legitimation and exclusion. Nevertheless, capital also demands the continual re-invention of the \"new\" in the form of new language games and new denotative statements, and so, paradoxically, a certain *paralogy* is required by the system itself. In this regard, the modern paradigm of progress as new moves under established rules gives way to the postmodern paradigm of inventing new rules and changing the game.

Inventing new codes and reshaping information is a large part of the production of knowledge, and in its inventive moment science does not adhere to performative efficiency. By the same token, the meta-prescriptives of science, its rules, are themselves objects of invention and experimentation for the sake of producing new statements. In this respect, says Lyotard, the model of knowledge as the progressive development of consensus is outmoded. In fact, attempts to retrieve the model of consensus can only repeat the standard of coherence demanded for functional efficiency, and they will thus lend themselves to the domination of capital. On the other hand, the paralogical inventiveness of science raises the possibility of a new sense of justice, as well as knowledge, as we move among the language games now entangling us.

Lyotard takes up the question of justice in *Just Gaming* (see Lyotard 1985 [1979]) and *The Differend: Phrases in Dispute* (see Lyotard 1988 [1983]), where he combines the model of language games with Kant's division of the

faculties (understanding, imagination, reason) and types of judgment (theoretical, practical, aesthetic) in order to explore the problem of justice set out in *The Postmodern Condition*. Without the formal unity of the subject, the faculties are set free to operate on their own. Where Kant insists that reason must assign domains and limits to the other faculties, its dependence upon the unity of the subject for the identity of concepts as laws or rules de-legitimizes its juridical authority in the postmodern age. Instead, because we are faced with an irreducible plurality of judgments and \"phrase regimes,\" the faculty of judgment itself is brought to the fore. Kant's third *Critique* therefore provides the conceptual materials for Lyotard's analysis, especially the analytic of aesthetic judgment (see Kant 1790).

As Lyotard argues, aesthetic judgment is the appropriate model for the problem of justice in postmodern experience because we are confronted with a plurality of games and rules without a concept under which to unify them. Judgment must therefore be reflective rather than determining. Furthermore, judgment must be aesthetic insofar as it does not produce denotative knowledge about a determinable state of affairs, but refers to the way our faculties interact with each other as we move from one mode of phrasing to another, i.e. the denotative, the prescriptive, the performative, the political, the cognitive, the artistic, etc. In Kantian terms, this interaction registers as an aesthetic feeling. Where Kant emphasizes the feeling of the beautiful as a harmonious interaction between imagination and understanding, Lyotard stresses the mode in which faculties (imagination and reason,) are in disharmony, i.e. the feeling of the sublime. For Kant, the sublime occurs when our faculties of sensible presentation are overwhelmed by impressions of absolute power and magnitude, and reason is thrown back upon its own power to conceive Ideas (such as the moral law) which surpass the sensible world. For Lyotard, however, the postmodern sublime occurs when we are affected by a multitude of unpresentables without reference to reason as their unifying origin. Justice, then, would not be a definable rule, but an ability to move and judge among rules in their heterogeneity and multiplicity. In this respect, it would be more akin to the production of art than a moral judgment in Kant's sense.

In \"What is Postmodernism?,\" which appears as an appendix to the English edition of *The Postmodern Condition*, Lyotard addresses the importance of avant-garde art in terms of the aesthetic of the sublime. Modern art, he says, is emblematic of a sublime sensibility, that is, a sensibility that *there is* something non-presentable demanding to be put into sensible form and yet overwhelms all attempts to do so. But where modern art presents the unpresentable as a missing content within a beautiful form, as in Marcel Proust, postmodern art, exemplified by James Joyce, puts forward the unpresentable by forgoing beautiful form itself, thus denying what Kant would call the consensus of taste. Furthermore, says Lyotard, a work can become modern only if it is first postmodern, for postmodernism is not modernism at its end but in its nascent state, that is, at the moment it attempts to present the unpresentable, \"and this state is constant\" (Lyotard 1984 [1979], 79). The postmodern, then, is a repetition of the modern as the \"new,\" and this means the ever-new demand for another repetition.

One of Foucault’s aims was to undermine the notion that the emergence of modern political liberalism and its characteristic institutions (e.g., individual rights and representative democracy) in the late 18th century resulted in greater freedom for the individual. He argued to the contrary that modern liberal societies are oppressive, though the oppressive practices they employ are not as overt as in earlier times. Modern forms of oppression tend to be hard to recognize as such, because they are justified by ostensibly objective and impartial branches of social science. In a process that Foucault called \"normalization,\" a supposedly objective social science labels as \"normal\" or \"rational\" behaviour that society deems respectable or desirable, so behaviour deemed otherwise becomes abnormal or irrational and a legitimateobject of discipline or coercion. Behaviour that is perceived as odd, for example, may be classified as a symptom of mental illness. Foucault viewed modern bureaucratic institutions as exuding a spirit of rationality, scientific expertise, and humane concern but as really amounting to an arbitrary exercise of power by one group over another.

Foucault advocated resistance to the political status quo and the power of established institutions. But he was skeptical of any attempt to argue that one political regime or set of practices is morally superior to another. The use of rational argument to support or oppose a political view, according to Foucault, is merely another attempt to exercise arbitrary power over others. Accordingly, he eschewed any blueprint for political reform or any explicit articulation of moral or rational norms that society ought to uphold. In a 1983 interview he summarized his political attitude in these words:

My point is not that everything is bad, but that everything is dangerous, which is not exactly the same as bad. If everything is dangerous, then we always have something to do. So my position leads not to apathy but to a hyper- and pessimistic activism.

Foucault’s ideas gave rise in the 1970s and ’80s to philosophical postmodernism, a movement characterized by broad epistemologicalskepticism and ethical subjectivism, a general suspicion of reason, and an acutesensitivity to the role of ideology in asserting and maintaining political and economic power. Postmodernists attacked the attempt by Enlightenmentphilosophers and others to discover allegedly objective moral values that could serve as a standard for assessing different political systems or for measuring political progress from one historical period to another.

According to Jean-François Lyotard (1924–98), for example, this project represents a secularfaith that must be abandoned. In *La Condition postmoderne* (1979; *The Postmodern Condition*) and other writings, Lyotard declared his suspicion of what he called \"grand narratives\"—putatively rational, overarching accounts, such as Marxism and liberalism, of how the world is or ought to be. He asserted that political conflicts in contemporary societies reflect the clash of incommensurable values and perspectives and are therefore not rationally decidable.

Jameson sees our \"historical deafness\" (xi) as one of the symptoms of our age, which includes \"a series of spasmodic and intermittent, but desperate, attempts at recuperation (x). Postmodern theory itself Jameson sees as a desperate attempt to make sense of the age but in a way that refuses the traditional forms of understanding (narrative, history, the reality obscured by ideology). For postmodernists, there is no outside of ideology or textuality; indeed, postmodern theory questions any claim to \"truth\" outside of culture; Jameson sees this situation as itself a symptom of the age, which in turn plays right into the hands of capitalism: \"postmodernism is not the cultural dominant of a wholly new social order..., but only the reflex and the concomitant of yet another systemic modification of capitalism itself\" (xii). Jameson calls instead for the return of history; hence, his mantra: \"always historicize!\" Jameson pinpoints a weakening of history \"both in our relationship to public History and in the new forms of our private temporality, whose 'schizophrenic' structure (following Lacan) will determine new types of syntax or syntagmatic relationships in the more temporal arts\" (*Postmodernism* 6). As Jameson explains, the schizophrenic suffers from a \"breakdown of the signifying chain\" in his/her use of language until \"the schizophrenic is reduced to an experience of pure material signifiers, or, in other words, a series of pure and unrelated presents in time\" (*Postmodernism* 27). Our loss of historicity, according to Jameson, most resembles such a schizophrenic position.

2) a breakdown of the distinction between \"high\" and \"low\" culture. As Jameson puts it, the various forms of postmodernism \"have, in fact, been fascinated precisely by this whole 'degraded' landscape of schlock and kitsch, of TV series and Reader's Digest culture, of advertising and motels, of the late show and the grade-B Hollywood film, of so-called paraliterature, with its airport paperback categories of the gothic and the romance, the popular biography, the murder mystery, and the science fiction or fantasy novel: materials they no long simply 'quote,' as a Joyce or a Mahler might have done, but incorporate into their very substance\" (*Postmodernism* 3).

3) \"a new depthlessness, which finds its prolongation both in contemporary 'theory' and in a whole new culture of the image or the simulacrum\" (*Postmodernism* 6). This depthlessness is, of course, supported by point # 5. The depthlessness manifests itself through literal flatness (two dimensional screens, flat skyscrapers full of reflecting windows) and qualitative superficiality. In theory, it manifests itself through the postmodern rejection of the belief that one can ever fully move beyond the surface appearances of ideology or \"false consciousness\" to some deeper truth; we are left instead with \"multiple surfaces\" (*Postmodernism*12). One result is \"that our daily life, our psychic experience, our cultural languages, are today dominated by categories of space rather than by categories of time, as in the preceding period of high modernism\" (*Postmodernism* 16).

4) \"the waning of affect\" (*Postmodernism* 10) and \"a whole new type of emotional ground tone—what I will call 'intensities'—which can best be grasped by a return to older theories of the sublime\" (*Postmodernism* 6). The general depthlessness and affectlessness of postmodern culture is countered by outrageous claims for extreme moments of intense emotion, which Jameson aligns with schizophrenia and a culture of (drug) addiction. With the loss of historicity, the present is experienced by the schizophrenic subject \"with heightened intensity, bearing a mysterious charge of affect\" (*Postmodernism* 28), which can be \"described in the negative terms of anxiety and loss of reality, but which one could just as well imagine in the positive terms of euphoria, a high, an intoxicatory or hallucinogenic intensity\" (*Postmodernism*28-29).

5) a whole new technology (computers, digital culture, etc.), though Jameson insists on seeing such technology as \"itself a figure for a whole new economic world system\" (*Postmodernism* 6). Such technologies are more concerned with *reproduction* rather than with the industrial production of material goods.

In attempting to pull off his argument Eagleton often reduces arguments to an oversimplification, rarely citing anything or anyone specific as making any of the arguments he rejects, favoring straw-men. \"Postmoderists say this\" and \"Postmodernists say that.\"

While arguments against postmodernism can be made (as against any other ethos), Eagleton's comes off as lazy and suffers from his apparent unwillingness to address any real postmodernists, preferring an invented, hyperbolic one.

By definition, post modernism is hard to define, as it claims no foundational tenets: it is more a method or perspective against established ideas in philosophy. As Eagleton writes, \"It is animated by the critical spirit, and rarely brings to bear upon its own propositions.\" (P.26)

A skepticism of a more thoroughgoing and exuberant kind was expressed in the writings of Jacques Derrida (1930–2004). He maintained that any attempt to establish a conclusion by rational means ultimately \"deconstructs,\" or logically undermines, itself. Because any text can be interpreted in an indefinite number of ways, the search for the \"correct\" interpretation of a text is always hopeless. Moreover, because everything in the world is a \"text,\" it is impossible to assert anything as objectively \"true.\"

Lyotard's subtitle, *A Report on Knowledge*, is key to understanding the nature of his exercise. Lyotard was not primarily prescribing what knowledge should be but attempting to describe the actual state of what passes for knowledge and its production in the late twentieth century. So when he wrote \"knowledge and power are simply two sides of the same question\" he was simply describing the way in which the control of what passes for knowledge has been captured by power. He was not saying what knowledge and truth are eternally and essentially one.

We can predict that anything in the constituted body of knowledge that is not translatable in this way will be abandoned . . . the direction of new research will be dictated by the possibility of its eventual results being translatable into computer language. (Lyotard 1979, p. 4)
Thought, then, becomes subject to 'the hegemony of computers', and the thinking subject is displaced by the inherently machinic tendencies of modern technology. Postmodernism fits into this scenario in that it embodies a critique of the subject, for whom knowledge, under the conditions dictated by technology, becomes externalised. Knowledge, transformed in this way, becomes linked to exchange value and the play of exterior forces. Lyotard thus defines the postmodern in relation to the immanent consequences of technical/scientific knowledge forms, but also in connection with alternative narrative knowledge' forms (1979, p. 7).
Scientific knowledge, Lyotard claims, is not a 'totality', but exists in relation to the larger domain of narrative knowledges, which it has a tendency to exclude. These latter, however, form the basis of social cohesion. Science requires one discursive practice in order to function, which relies on the assumed existence of criteria of evidence (the empirical level), and the belief that an empirical referent cannot provide two contradictory proofs. This, for Lyotard, is science's 'metaphysical' assumption, which it itself cannot prove. On the social level, however, this assumption, in excluding other knowledge forms, has the effect of splitting science off from the social order, and the relationship between knowledge and society 'becomes one of mutual exteriority' (pp. 24, 25). This, in turn,

demonstrates that it is not possible to judge the validity of scientific claims by reference to narrative knowledge claims, or vice versa. Questions of legitimation stem from this tension, in so far as the development of 'postmodern science' (p. 60) has demonstrated the futility of trying to construct 'grand narratives' which seek to describe the totality of experience. Experience itself thus exceeds the limits of cognitive grasp. Postmodernism steps in at this point as a pragmatic response to the problem of legitimation which attempts to provide alternative narratives, but nevertheless spurns the pretension to universal knowledge claims.

Fragmentation is, however, a consequence of science itself. Lyotard notes that, in the same way that Nietzsche's diagnosis of European nihilism turned on the idea of science as having reached the point of realising that it itself did not match up to its own criteria for truth, so, too, the search for legitimation, which defines all knowledge forms, has a natural tendency to arrive at the point of delegitimation (p. 39). In other words, knowledge always finds itself to be rooted in unprovable assumptions. Hence the possibility of error is teleologically encoded into the project of knowledge. Thus, Lyotard concludes that the destruction of grand narratives is a result inherent in the search for knowledge itself What he terms 'postmodern scientific knowledge' (p. 54) is therefore an immanent condition of all knowledge. Grand narratives are, in consequence, best replaced by 'little narrative[s]' oriented towards 'a multiplicity of finite met a-arguments' (pp. 60, 66).

In his later writings, principally in The Differend: Phrases in Dispute (1983), Lyotard adopted a rather different approach. In this text, he develops a conventionalist philosophy of language which works in terms of what he calls 'phrases' and 'genres'. A 'phrase' can be any form of utterance and is composed of four 'instances' (an addressor, an addressee, a sense and a referent) (section 25). It is not necessary that all of the instances be 'marked' (i.e. that there be a named addressor or addressee, a determined sense, or a designated referent) in order for a phrase to function. Every phrase presents a 'phrase universe', and determines the nature of each universe according to the way in which each of the four 'instances' that constitute it function in relation to one another (section 28). There are many different kinds of phrases, e.g. cognitive, aesthetic, ethical, political. Lyotard characterises each of these phrases as belonging to different 'phrase regimens'. Phrases belonging to different regimens are heterogeneous and, cannot therefore be translated into one another (section 178).

Genres of discourse differ from regimens in that they provide rules for linking phrases together in particular ways according to particular purposes (sections 179ff). Significantly, it is not possible to validate any genre of discourse from outside itself by way of resorting to a meta-language. It therefore follows that, just as the cognitive phrase regimen is one regimen among many, the cognitive genre is likewise merely one among many genres. The legitimation of genres is therefore a matter of internal consistency and cannot be deduced from any position external to them. Regimens, in contrast to genres, do not stipulate rules of linking. They are non-teleological and contain the 'rules of formation' whereby a phrase can be characterised as being cognitive, ostensive, etc. But these rules in no way prescribe which phrase from which regimen ought next to be linked onto the preceding phrase. Linking, it follows, is necessary; but how to link is contingent (section 136). It is hence impossible to assert legitimately from a position outside the cognitive genre that one ought to link on to a cognitive phrase with another compatible with the rules of that genre. In a manner akin to The Postmodern Condition, this argument precludes any establishment of meta-narratives external to the cultural conditions under which genres are formulated and put into practice.

What Lyotard does attempt to make room for, however, are those instances of phrases which cannot be voiced within a particular genre. Such phrases would be the phrases of victims who, because of the way in which genres operate, are silenced by them. These phrases Lyotard terms 'differends'. A differend is thus characterised as 'a damage accompanied by the loss of means to prove the damage' (section 7). Lyotard here gives the example of a French citizen who is a Martinican: such a person cannot complain about the possible wrongs they may suffer as a result of being a French citizen because the genre of French law, as the only genre in which such a complaint could be lodged, prevents the possibility of making it. A differend is thus 'the unstable state and instant of language wherein something which must be put into phrases cannot yet be' (section 22). In arguing that such phrases must be phrased (as a matter of principle), The Differend announces its ethical concerns — and these concerns are presented in terms of the proper goal of culture. 'Culture', Lyotard argues in a manner once again reminiscent of The Postmodern Condition, has come to mean 'the putting into circulation of information rather than the work that needs to be done in order to arrive at presenting what is not presentable under the circumstances' (1993, p. 260). With this statement one may conclude that Lyotard's later work, in so far as it establishes its own stakes in terms of arguing for the need to voice differends, conceives of right in terms of a view of culture voiced as far back as 1962, in the essay 'Dead Letter': 'Culture is lending an ear to what strives to be said, culture is giving a voice to those who do not have a voice and whom seek one' (1993, p. 33).

For Jameson, postmodernism is a forced but highly permeating field, given that cultures are formed through mass media (\"mass culture\"). This so-called mass culture indirectly forces us to shape our ideologies and brings us under the influence of media culture—a process that Jameson calls hegemony. This hegemony however has nothing to do with the postcolonial idea of colonization; rather it is a form of hegemony in the postmodern world, where media and capitalism play the most significant role in colonizing people's thoughts and ways of life.

Jameson argues that postmodernism is the age of the end of traditional ideologies. The ending of traditional ideologies can be seen through new wave of the aestheticproductions. He uses architecture and painting as examples. For instance, he draws out the differences between mindsets of modernism and postmodernism by comparing Van Gogh's\"Peasant Shoes\" with Andy Warhol's \"Diamond Dust Shoes\".

The concept of postmodernism immediately raises the issue of periodization, entailed by the prefix \"post-\" assigned to the time of modernism. When did modernism begin and when did it end? Is it possible to set clear temporal boundaries between modernism and postmodernism? Jameson believes that it is possible to speak of cultural modes with in a defined timeline. Nevertheless, he restricts his periodization of postmodernism to the unbinding notion of cultural dominant which has a degree of flexibility which still allows for other forms of cultural production to coexist alongside it.

In the notion of cultural dominant Jameson stays true to the Marxist tradition of tying culture with the political and economical state of society. This stance holds that the socio-economical structure of a society is reflected in a society's cultural forms.

Jamson relies on the work of Ernest Mandel that divided capitalism into three distinct periods which coincide with three stages of technological development: industrialized manufacturing of steam engines starting from the mid 19th century, the production of electricity and internal combustion engines since the late 90's of the 19thcentury and the production of electronic and nuclear devices since the 1940's. these three technological developments match three stages in the evolution of capitalism: the market economy stage which was limited to the boarders of the nation state, the monopoly or imperialism stage in which courtiers expanded their markets to other regions and the current phase of late capitalism in which borders are no longer relevant. Jameson proceeds to match these stages of capitalism with three stages of cultural production, the first stage with realism, the second with modernism and the current third one with our present day postmodernism.

Postmodernism according to Jameson is therefore a cultural form which has developed in the wake of the socio-economical order of present day capitalism. Again, postmodernism in Jameson's view is not an all-encompassing trend but rather a cultural dominant that affects all cultural productions. This approach accounts for the existence of other cultural modes of production (thus protecting Jameson from criticism) while still enabling to treatment of our time as postmodern. Other types of art, literature and architecture which are not wholly postmodern are still produced nowadays, but nevertheless postmodernism is the field force, the state of culture, through which cultural urges of very different types have to go. No one today is free from the influence, perhaps even rein, of postmodernism.

Foucault
rejected the label of \"postmodernist\" or \"antimodernist\". Responding to Kant's \"What is Enlightenment?\" Foucault affirms that he is a modernist, and that modernism is an attitude (not an era) which stands in constant critique of the assumptions which come from our socio-historical heritage. In this sense, one could never be more \"up-to-date\" than the modernists.

However, \"postmodernism\" has come to represent a variety of perspectives, most of which, which deny the ultimacy of an Enlightenment point of view. What is an \"Enlightenment point of view\"? Well, if we think of the Enlightenment as a time when human beings began to throw off some of the shackles of authoritarianism and became \"enlightened\" by the rise of science, reason, and inquiry, then an Enlightenment point of view is one that is characterized by a detacted, autonomous, objective rationality. You might want to think of this perspective as epitomized in Francis Bacon's famous statement that \"Knowledge is power\" meaning that once we've figured things out (gotten the \"facts\"), we'll be able to do what we want and know what is best.

If postmodernism is understood as a rejection of this point of view, then Foucault is surely a postmodernist. Turning Bacon on his head, Foucault affirmed that it is not the case that knowledge is power, but power is knowledge. Meaning, those people who have power (social, political, etc.)

always decide what will or will not be counted as \"knowledge.\" That's why so many of Foucault's histories (of the prison, the clinic, etc.) tell a different story from the one we're accustomed to hearing. Foucault, consistent with much postmodern thought, affirms that we can *never* escape from the shacles of some form of power. Power is a constitutive dimension of all discourse. You can see that there are good arguments on both sides for understanding Foucault as either a modernist or a postmodernist. The important issue becomes how you define modernity/postmodernity.

Michel Foucault was a postmodernist though he refused to be so in his works. He defined postmodernity with reference to two guiding concepts: discourse and power. It is with the help of these concepts that he characterizes the postmodern phenomenon. Defining discourse he says that it is the framework of thinking in a particular area of social life.

For instance, the discourse of criminality means how people in a given society think and talk about crime. And, what is important is that power works through discourse. The discourse becomes weak or strong in comparison to power. And, power according to Foucault is knowledge. Thus, in a postmodern condition, there are discourses which are shaped by knowledge.

Foucault defines postmodernity in terms of discourse and discourse is interpreted through power. He actually started with the truism: knowledge is power. He was particularly interested in knowledge of human beings, and power that acts on human beings. Suppose, we start with the statement: knowledge is power, but doubt we have any knowledge of absolute truth.

If we take away the idea of absolute truth, what does knowledge mean.' May be knowledge would be just what a group of people get together and decide is true. In one case, physical force, and in the other mutual force, is exerted by a powerful minority who are thus able to impose this idea of the right, or the true, on the majority. But, how does knowledge/power get its work done? Often, knowledge/power and physical force are allied, as when a child is spanked to teach a lesson. But primarily knowledge/ power works through language, at a basic level when a child learns to speak, he picks up the basic knowledge and rules of his culture at the same time.

Postmodernism reveals the relations between power and knowledge. It is the central theme which links all the aspects of postmodernity. Foucault defines postmodernity in terms of power, knowledge and discourse as below: Close scrutiny of the micro-politics of power relations in different localities, contexts and social situations leads us to conclude that there is an intimate relation between the systems of knowledge/discourse which codify techniques and practices for the exercise of social control and domination within the particular localized contexts.