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POSTMODERNISM AND POSTMODERN POLITICS

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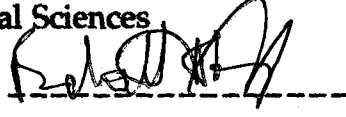
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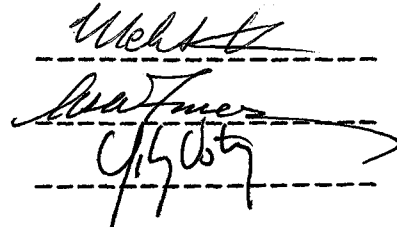


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## ABSTRACT

### POSTMODERNISM AND POSTMODERN POLITICS

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In this study it is being claimed that contemporary Western societies are reconstructed within a social structure that is quite different from the previous ages and that this social structure is to be called the postmodern society. The basic purpose of this study is to investigate the debates on the changing social structure and on its political dimension, upon a postmodern line of thought. Following the argument that postmodernism is the cultural form of post-industrial societies, it is being further claimed that the political, economic, cultural and social dimensions of postmodern society are undergoing a profound transformation. By particularly focusing upon the changes taking place in the political dimension, this study argues that the new social formations, practices and ideas have paved the way for new ways of making politics.

**Keywords:** Postmodernism, politics, contemporary transformations

## ÖZ

### POSTMODERNİZM VE POSTMODERN SİYASET

Ürkmez, İlhan

Yüksek Lisans, Siyaset Bilimi ve Kamu Yönetimi Bölümü

Tez Yöneticisi:Doçent Dr. Mehmet Okyayuz

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Bu çalışmada, günümüz Batı toplumlarının, daha önceki dönemlerden farklı bir toplumsal yapı kazandıkları ve bu toplumsal yapının postmodern olarak tanımlanabileceği savından hareket edilmektedir. Çalışmanın temel amacı postmodern bir düşünce çizgisini takip ederek sözkonusu değişimleri, özellikle de siyaset alanındaki değişimleri, irdelemektir. Postmodernizmin, post-endüstriyel toplumların kültürel biçimi olduğu iddiasına dayanarak, postmodern bir toplumun siyasi, ekonomik, toplumsal ve kültürel boyutlarının derin bir dönüşümden geçtiği öne sürülmektedir. Buradan hareketle, bu çalışma, yeni toplumsal yapıların, fikirlerin ve eylemliliklerin yeni siyaset yapma tarzlarına yol açtığını göstermektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Postmodernizm, siyaset, güncel değişimler

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Today, we are witnessing an overall change in every realm -political, economic, social and cultural- of the social structure in which we take part. By underlining the transformation from industrial society to postindustrial society or from modernism to postmodernism, it is generally being acknowledged that the overall change that can be detected in every realm of the social structure is bringing forward new social practices and formations.

Broadly stating, postmodernism intends to reconceptualize the society and its various dimensions by reinterpreting and reexplaining the social structure, politics and episteme. In doing so, it brings forward a powerful alternative to the existing approaches. This is mainly why, postmodernism should be deciphered as a discourse which intends to explain, investigate, analyse and even to legitimize the dynamics of contemporary modern society.

The basic purpose of this study is to investigate the new postmodern political formations by probing the debates concerning what is postmodernism. My contention is that the

postmodern social structure, is in all respects -political, economic, social and cultural- a new social structure which has underwent a significant transformation. It is precisely because of this transformation that postmodernism emerges as the background of the so-called post-industrial society. Therefore, in this study I will try to demonstrate how and why the political practices have changed in accordance with the newly emerging life practices and ideas. Based upon this point, this thesis is going to uphold the ongoing changes in the understanding and practice of politics.

This study argues that, just like social relations, cultural and political structures have changed in the transition of the societies from traditional structure to modern structure, the transition from the modern structure to the postmodern structure is going to give rise to a similar change in the relations and components of the society. At the basis of such an argument, lies the idea that the social structure is being increasingly fragmented, while the civil society is being increasingly expanded and multiplied.

The expansion of the civil society, has to be elaborated along with the changes introduced into the notion of "citizenship", which forms the very essence of the idea of civil society, by the postmodern understanding of society. This is mainly because, in defending the multiplicities, pluralities and differences, the postmodern idea of society opposes the modernist notion of "citizenship" which is based upon "sameness".



On the other hand, it has also been maintained that the very organisational basis and form of the society has been changed in the postmodern social structure. The pattern of a unifying and universalistic society has been replaced by a collection of small communities, -cultural, religious,...etc.- which are organised upon distinct bases. This in turn, has marked the determining force of culture. The fact that, in advanced Western countries, there has emerged a number of struggles and groups in varying sizes, has been interpreted so as to uphold this line of thinking. It has been further claimed that, the metanarratives, as J.F. Lyotard calls them, have to a large extent lost their significance and thus, there has emerged a necessity to develop new forms of making politics.

Additionally, it is being maintained that postmodernism attempts to reconceptualize both the society and its distinct dimensions, through the interpretations and approaches it pushes forward with respect to the social structure, politics and episteme. It is being widely acknowledged that in doing so, postmodernism manages to present a strong alternative to the previously existing models of explanation. Due to this, the necessity of treating postmodernism as a discourse which explains, probes, analyses and legitimizes the contemporary society, should be underlined.

In the following study, postmodernism is being

related with the changes that have taken place in the political, cultural and social spheres within the post-World War II period and especially during the last 20-30 years. The study also dwells upon the postmodern approaches to these specific realms. From here, it is being argued that postmodernism has managed to present an alternative approach for the reconceptualization and reevaluation of social life.

It is further being argued that at the basis of the postmodern social project lies the idea of pluralism, since postmodern society is composed of differences, pluralities and multiplicities. By underlining the fact that postmodern politics is based upon social discourses, it is also being claimed that politics cannot be thought apart from discourses. In sum, while the society is being composed of differences, pluralities and multiplicities, politics is being shaped by discourses. All these point out to a significant change in the content and practice of politics.

The overall organisation of the study, then, directly reflects these concerns. As such, the study is divided into two main parts, each of which are further divided within themselves.

The first part of the study, will be divided into two sections. In the first section, the question of what postmodernism is, will be clarified. This will be followed by the analysis of the different historical employments of the term "postmodern". Additionally, the

term postmodernism will be analysed further within a broadly drawn structural context. On the other hand, in order to clarify these analyses, the postmodern approaches to the notions of "time" and "place" will be also evaluated. After all, for the leading theoreticians of postmodernism, just like the transition from traditional to modern societies has changed the existing understandings of time and place, the transition from modernism to postmodernism too, has brought forward a further change in this regard. Such a change is clearly demonstrated by the fact that postmodernism intends to interpret and explain the world within a heterogeneity of spatial and temporal phenomena which will render the existing differences visible and definable.

The second section of the first part of this study will intend to elaborate the theoretical works of the leading postmodern thinkers. Thus, by elaborating the works of J. Baudrillard, J.F. Lyotard and F. Jameson, it will be discussed whether postmodernism is a theory or not.

Then, the second main part of the study will focus upon the possible meanings and implications of the postmodern understanding of politics, by highlighting postmodernism's main deductions on the subject of politics. In a quite constant way, the analysis of postmodern politics will go hand in hand with the depiction of the general panorama of the postmodern society. The evaluation of pluralism will be also introduced here, since the fact

that postmodern politics emphasizes “multiplicities” rather than “majorities” inevitably leads us to a debate on pluralism. The second part of the study will be brought to an end with the question of whether the new postmodern ways of making politics constitute an opportunity for the “left” or not. The main purpose here, is to present a broad critical analysis of the left spectrum of contemporary political life.

Having drawn the overall organisation of the study, it must be added that the main concern upon which the study itself has been shaped is to find out how and why postmodernism has managed to turn into such a powerful cultural and political discourse within the restlessly changing atmosphere of contemporary social and political life. Thus, the following study should be read and interpreted by taking this particular concern into account.

## CHAPTER 2

### WHAT IS POSTMODERNISM?

#### 2.1. Introduction

In recent years, both the daily parlance and the academic literature, especially in social sciences, has been witnessing the frequent employment of the prefix "post". Some prominent examples about the popularity of this prefix are "post-Marxism", "post-industrialism", "post-structuralism" and "post-modernism". As such, the prefix indicates a significant change that may even be interpreted as a total rupture from the particular concept immediately following it. This discursive change does at the very same time, point out to the end of the credibility of various interrelated terms, such as history, ideology and humanism, which altogether constitute the backbone of modernism.

To begin with, although postmodernism literally refers either to extending beyond modernism or to a particular historical period following it in the chronological sense, it also manages to remain as an illuminating concept in interpreting and grasping the ongoing changes in various interrelated realms, towards the end of the 20th century. Especially in recent years, the

term postmodernism has been generally used to indicate the period chronologically following modernism.(1) In this widespread employment the term has continuously functioned as an indicator of an overall change in cultural formations and as such, it has been a basic tool to explain, analyse, question and reconstruct the main elements of modernism.



## 2.2 The Content of the Term Postmodernism

According to Ihab Hassan, the term "postmodernism"<sup>1</sup> has been initially used by a Spanish author named Federico de Onis, in his "Antologia de la Poesia Espanola y Hispanoamericano" in 1934, in order to define a reaction against the modernism of 1930s.(2) In 1938, Arnold Toynbee has also used this term in his "A Study of History", for the purpose of explaining the rise of the non-Western cultures from the late 18th century onwards.(3)

In the following years, the term postmodernism has been employed by Dudley Fitts in his "Anthology of Contemporary Latin-American Poetry" published in 1942. Furthermore, in Adorno and Horkheimer's joint book named as the "Dialectic of Enlightenment", which was published in 1944, the first prominent example of the discussions on the postmodern condition can be encountered.(4)

As it is wellknown, the term postmodernism has been frequently employed in the realm of architecture. In this regard, the term has been initially used by Joseph Hudnut in his article "Architecture and the Spirit of Man", published in 1949.(5)

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<sup>1</sup> To get more information about the various distinct historical employments of the term postmodernism, Michael Koehler's "Postmodernismus: ein begriffsgeschichtlicher Überblick"(1977, p8-18) can be resorted to.

During the 1960s, the Dadaist<sup>2</sup> and surrealist movements have been shaping the base of the postmodern trend by dissolving all of the totalizing codifications in society.(6) It should be noted that in doing so, these movements were to a large extent inspired by Nietzsche. Under the influence of Nietzsche and other eminent philosophers, the term postmodernism, which has been frequently used in visual arts and especially in architecture during 1970s, has been given a theoretical content towards the end of the same period. In this regard, the leading theoretical works of D. Bell, J.F. Lyotard, J. Derrida, M. Foucault, J. Habermas, J. Baudrillard and F. Jameson have played a crucial role.(7)

Habermas, in his study which received the 1980 Adorno award, has strikingly deepened the debates on modernism and postmodernism, by defining modernism as an unfinished project.(8) During the 1980s the ongoing debates on modernism and postmodernism in the realm of arts, and on modernity and postmodernity in the intellectual realm, have further gained political and ideological meanings. As an outcome of this long and arduous process, today, the fervent debates on postmodernism have managed to hold a prominent place in the agenda of Western intellectuals.(9)

Before going any further, it should be underlined that, within the broad framework of postmodernist literature there

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<sup>2</sup> It is highly striking that Hugo Bell, who was one of the leading figures of the Dadaist movement, had written a thesis on Nietzsche.



is no single definition of postmodernism. To the contrary, there are various different definitions of the term postmodernism in respect to distinct phenomena. For instance, according to A. Touraine, postmodernism indicates the last phase of a process initiated by Nietzsche with the aim of destroying the reign of technology and instrumental reason.(10) For Lyotard, on the other hand, the term postmodernism indicates the new cultural condition which has been the outcome of a series of changes that took place in the realms of science, literature and technology from the 19th century onwards.(11) At the very same time, Lyotard argues that postmodernism is related with a new epistemology which provides the reproduction of knowledge.(12) In this way, postmodernism, as a new episteme in the Foucauldian sense, establishes a legitimate base for the reevaluation of history, humanity, knowledge and culture. On the other hand, for A. Touraine, the most visible feature of postmodernism is its initiation of a "return to subject".(13) In addition to these various approaches, there are several more which treat postmodernism as a movement that leads to an anarchic disintegration of culture in late capitalist cultures.(14) It is precisely because of such an "anarchic disintegration" that postmodern "reality" is often defined as being fragmented and multifarious.

On the other hand, F. Jameson, who views postmodernism as the new cultural logic of capital, argues that postmodernism enormously extends the "now" by dissolving time and as such, creates a schizophrenic situation in which reality

merely turns into images.(15) From the standpoint of Stuart Hall, postmodernism represents the reestablishment of the relation between modernity and capital.(16)

Just like Jameson who regards postmodernism as the recent formation of capitalism, Marshall Berman connects postmodernism with the extending capitalist world market and with its being divided into several parts.(17) Moreover, Alex Callinicos who adopts a similar position with respect to postmodernism, maintains that it is first and foremost, the restructuring of late capitalism on the basis of a "consumption society".(18) Another scholar, named as Douglas Kellner, interprets postmodernism as the theory of technocapitalism.(19)

As has been demonstrated so far, there exists various distinct definitions of the term postmodernism. In addition to these, there are also various other thinkers who claim that there are several postmodern periods instead of only one. For instance, according to A. Huyssen, there are two different postmodern periods. This is mainly due to the fact that the postmodern understanding of the 1960s is quite different from that of the 1970s. While the postmodern understanding of the 1960s has been rejecting the past and questioning the social taboos, that of the 1970s and 1980s has gained a ratificatory character by gaining an eclectic aspect.(20)

Although he upholds the assertion on two distinct postmodern periods, H. Foster places a greater emphasis on the 1960s. This is mainly because, for him, the internal crisis of modernism has unfolded itself during the 1960s, so as to give rise to a postmodern rupture.(21) On the other hand, J.W. Murphy, who agrees with the contention that the 1960s have been the period of crisis, relates postmodernism with the "existentialist" movement of post-World War II period and maintains that existentialism has played a prominent role in the development of postmodernism.(22)

In S. Lash's opinion, the main criteria that distinguishes modernism from postmodernism is the problem of "representation". This is mainly because of the fact that, while modernism sees representation as *problematique*, for postmodernism, it is reality itself which is *problematique*.(23) Stephan White on the other hand, lists the four main aspects of the postmodern *problematique* in the following way:

1. The rise of new social movements
2. The recognition of social problems
3. The mistrustment towards meta-narratives
4. The striking progress in high technology

In concluding, it may be maintained that postmodernism's significance lies in its treatment of the world within a spatial heterogeneity and a temporal multiplicity. Obviously, the nodal point of such a distinct approach is the

**acknowledgement of a multiplicity of cultures and discourses that exist side by side and altogether constitute micro discourses.(24)**



### 2.3 The Historical Employments<sup>3</sup> of the Term Postmodernism(25)

In the following part, the main focus of attention will be the different historical employments of the term "postmodernism", by different writers and at different times. The basic purpose in doing so, will be to trace the descriptive and interpretative transformations that the term postmodernism underwent in time. As it is well-known, the debates concerning the definition and content of the term postmodernism initially took place in the sphere of art and architecture. These debates have in time penetrated into various other spheres, including the social, the political and the cultural. The chronological employment of the term postmodernism, will in this regard help us in understanding how the debates on postmodernism were introduced into our intellectual agenda.

The prefix "post" in the term postmodernism, designates what comes after the modern. Nevertheless, the same prefix does also point out to a reaction against modernity. This reactions has been intially shaped in the realm of architecture. Later on, the reaction has been expanded so as to cover other spheres of modernity and modern life. At the very end, the reaction in concern has been directed against modernity entirely. This is mainly why, my basic purpose in what follows is to probe the background of this entire reaction, by tracing the different historical employments of

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<sup>3</sup> For a more detailed account of the historical usages of the term postmodernism, see Richard Kearney's "The Crisis of the Postmodern Image"(Cambridge, Cambridge Univ. Press, 1987, p113-122)

the term postmodernism and the basic transformations that the term itself underwent in time.

1934 Federico de Onis, in his article named "Postmodernismo", in which he elaborated the Spanish and Latin American poetry between 1905 and 1914, has employed the term postmodernism against the extreme development of modernism.

1939 A.J.Toynbee in his "A Study of History", has identified the post-1914 period as the "postmodern age".

1942 Dudley Fitts and H.R.Hays have used the term postmodernismo in defining Latin American Poetry.

1945 Bernard Smith has used postmodernism as a new social-realist movement against modernism.

1945 Joseph Hudnut, has used the term "postmodern house" in defining prefabric houses.

1946 D.C.Somervell, has traced back A.J.Toynbee's notion of "postmodern age" back to 1875.

1954 A.J.Toynbee, has further extended the definition of postmodern, by referring to the fall of the modern middle class and to the rise of the newly Westernized or non-Western worker class.

In addition to these, he also referred to the rise of the non-Christian religions and of the new postmodern sciences.

1959 C.Wright Mills, in his "Sociological Imagination" mentioned the existence of a postmodern period.

1960 Henry Levin, in his "What was modernism?" has questioned the non-postmodern elements.

1965 Leslie Fiedler, has employed the term postmodernism to define the anti-Rational culture of the 1960s.

1966 Nikolaus Peusner, has used the term postmodern style in order to define the new expressionist and eclectic movements in the sphere of architecture.

1968 Amitia Etzioni, has called the post-World War II period as a postmodern period, to characterize the transformations in the spheres of media and knowledge technologies in the post-World War II period.

1969 Leslie Fiedler, has discussed a new postmodern critical form by evaluating the gap between high culture and popular culture.

1971 Ihab Hassan, has employed the term postmodernism in order to define the philosophical, literary and technological

deconstruction of modernism.

1975 Charles Jenks, defined postmodernism as a move away from the modern movement.

1976 Daniel Bell, in his "The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism", has criticized postmodernism.

1977 Charles Jenks, has defined postmodernism as the new approach and style developing in the realm of architecture.

1977 Michael Koehler, categorized the historical employments of the term postmodernism.

1978 Charles Jenks, in the second edition of his "The Language of Postmodern Architecture", defined postmodern architecture as a double codification.

1979 J.F.Lyotard, in his "The Postmodern Condition", defined postmodernism as the deconstruction of the metanarratives of modernity.

1980 Charles Jenks, has developed his idea on "Postmodern Classicism" by systematizing the differences between the late modern and the postmodern.



1980 Habermas, in his study which received the 1980 Adorno award, criticized postmodernism and defended a return to modernity.

1981 J.Baudrillard, in his "On Nihilism", defined postmodernism as the disappearance of meanings.

1982 Paolo Portoghesi, in his "Postmodern: The Architecture of the Post-Industrial Society", has expressed the characteristic aspects of the post-industrial society upon a postmodern base.

1983 F. Jameson, employed the term postmodernism in order to question and criticize the post-modern architecture, which he construed as a part of the capitalist culture.

1984 Hall Foster, declared the existence of two different postmodernisms, the first of which he named as the neoconservative or humanist postmodernism and the second, the poststructuralist postmodernism.

1988 Peter Fuller, has suggested an ideal postmodernism in his "Theoria", by developing the critique of both a deconstructionist and a double-coded postmodernism.

## 2.4 What is Postmodernism?

Before delving into the debates on what postmodernism is, it may be useful to clarify the contents of the notions of postmodernity and postmodernism. To begin with, postmodernity expresses the positions and formations that go beyond the modernist forms, in the cultural, economic and social realms.(26) According to J. Baudrillard, the post-World War II period, identified as the "order of simulations" has been a postmodern period. Within this postmodern period everything has been codified and imitated. This last point becomes especially salient when we consider that the process of "production" that was so essential for modernism has been replaced by the process of "imitation".

To be sure, postmodernism does not pretend to be a new age in human history. In a similar vein, postmodernism should not be thought as a formation that is completely separate from modernism. This is mainly because, postmodernity, as used by Lyotard, has always been present in modernism itself.(27) As such, postmodernism, is the process of redefining the knowledge, politics and aesthetics centered around the subject. Put somewhat differently, postmodernism, which assumes that the contemporary human being experiences the world in a different way than his/her ancestors, is a totality of cultural practices. On the other hand, postmodernism does also indicate a new social structuring in its

references to the radical transformations that took place in Western societies during the post-World War II period. This new type of experiencing the world makes "reason" the target of its attacks because of the totalizing character of this concept. In this sense, the new type of experiencing the world and the society, radically differs from the previous one.

At this specific stage, it is possible to mention two fundamental trends that have formed the theoretical base of postmodernism. One of these trends is epistemology, while the other is phenomenology. In the history of thought, where and whenever these two trends have coincided, philosophers have managed to make big leaps.(28) If the history of thought is viewed from this point of view, two thinkers will immediately come to the fore. These are, Nietzsche(29) and Heidegger(30). Postmodernist movement has been highly inspired by the philosopher of critique, namely Nietzsche, and by Heidegger.<sup>4</sup> The existentialist deductions about the existence of the individual, together with Kierkegaard's defence of subjective knowledge against objective knowledge and Heidegger's rejection of the "ahistoric" and "absolute" understandings of Being(31) have paved the way for the formation of postmodernist thought. These and other thinkers have left a great impact upon contemporary postmodern thinkers.

While the modernist sees the world as an absolute

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<sup>4</sup> For more information on this subject see Stephen White's "Political Theory and Postmodernism".(Cambridge, 1992)

object, the postmodern understanding defines the world as a text to be read and interpreted.(32) The destruction of rationalisation, the abolishment of a unique and absolute understanding of science and the increasing importance of the subject have made fundamental contributions to the development of postmodern thought.

Various eminent thinkers, such as Ferdinand de Saussure, Levi Strauss, Michel Foucault, Derrida and F. Lyotard, claim that there is a structural relation between language, thought and society. They further contend that meaning and knowledge should be sought in the relationship between symbols.(33) It is noteworthy that in this framework the world is no longer perceived as an object, but rather as a text. The Dualist and Cartesian understandings of reality that have been marking Western thinking for so long, have finally been replaced by a new system of thought.<sup>5</sup>

Today, by referring to the crises taking place in every realm, including the political, scientific and intellectual, it is being maintained that the ongoing period is a postmodern period. The main features of the postmodern period in turn, can be named as, the rejection of the metanarratives characterizing modernist thought and the recognition of multiplicity and plurality by emphasizing the existing differences.(34)

Postmodernism rejects the positivistic standpoint

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<sup>5</sup> Ali Akay, in his "Tekil Düşünce"(İstanbul, Afa yay., 1991) has demonstrated the development of singular thought.

that has characterized the scientific studies in modernism and instead, adopts hermeneutics as an alternative.(35) In other words, instead of upholding the idea of a unique objective knowledge, it supports the methods and precedents of hermeneutics. This is mainly why, postmodernism adopts a relativistic approach by arguing that the reality changes(36) in accordance with subsequent changes in time and place. For the postmodernist, there does not exist a frozen or an absolute reality. In rejecting the idea of a unique reality, the postmodernist interprets reality as a personal phenomenon.

In strict opposition to the traditional philosophies, postmodernism tries to develop nonphilosophical critical paradigms. The main problematique of postmodernists is to focus the intellectual attention upon the present situation of philosophy and to bring forward new questioning mechanisms from here.(37) In this line of reasoning it is being claimed that neither the political nor the social structure can be adequately explained by the existing philosophies and theories. This is precisely why the totalizing philosophies and theories should be abandoned at once. One example that tries to make these assertions concrete is the critique developed by Lyotard which is in fact a nonphilosophical critique.(38)

Obviously, modernism and postmodernism have distinct discourses. As can be detected in the works of Daniel Bell,

N. Luhman and J. Habermas, the discourse of modernism rests upon the notions of progress and reason. The postmodernist discourse on the other hand, as can be seen in the studies of G. Deleuze and F. Guattari, analyses social life through paradoxical and rather ambiguous terms. In this way, the concept of the "rational control of man", which is so essential for modernist thought, is relentlessly rejected.(39)

According to J.F.Lyotard, postmodernism defines the general condition of contemporary Western civilization. More strikingly, in the postmodern condition the modernist metanarratives lose their credibility. Almost all the postmodern thinkers maintain that there have been and still are profound changes in the structure of the society, due to either short-term or long-term ruptures. The immediate question that follows from here is that what exactly are the ruptures that have paved the way for postmodernism? The search for an answer to this particular question requires to take into account the various dimensions of the recent developments. First of all, a cultural break has taken place in the post-World War II period and especially during the 1960s. The 1968 movement is an overt indication of this point. In the industrial sphere on the other hand, the break took place during the economic crisis of the early 1970s.(40) By taking these crises into consideration, A. Etzioni states that the modern times have been brought to an end by the radical changes that took place within the post-World War II period.(41)

The modern age, is an age in which both epistemology has been given a supreme position and metaphysics has been excluded from the mainstream philosophy. Modernism intends to increase human capacity by rationalizing man, whereas postmodernism restlessly questions this rationalistic approach. This is one reason why, one of postmodernism's fundamental targets has been rationality. After all, postmodernism brings along a suspicious attitude towards rationalization and scientificity. The question of rationalization and scientificity is much more complicated than it seems, since the continuously progressing technology does not only give rise to progress but to the destruction of humanity as well. This is why, reason is one of the most important targets of attack for the postmodernist thought. In the postmodern approach, the calamities of technology, such as the nuclear bombs which have the capacity to destroy the world and the extreme pollution of nature, are explained by making science a continuous point of reference. Hence, science itself is relentlessly questioned.

Within this new perspective, the strict limitations drawn by science are being attacked, since science cannot be composed of a single objective reality. Furthermore, the supremacy of epistemology is being questioned as epistemology is being substituted by hermeneutics. It is further emphasized that science did and does not give birth to freedom. To the contrary, today, science and technology turn the human beings into nonthinking

beings. In short, the freedom of human beings is strictly limited by the technological developments that surround him/her and as such, the individual in concern has been alienated from him/herself. This is the path that leads us to a new concept, namely 'market totalitarianism'.

As a cultural movement, postmodernism has a simple message: "Anything goes!". Expressed bluntly, this is to say that, you may resist to whatever you want, as long as you recognize my right to resist to whatever I want. In this way, the human being is denoted with a limitless capacity to resist and struggle. This is exactly the point which constitutes the base of the postmodern cultural movement. It is noteworthy that this cultural movement does not rest upon any political identity. From here it may be concluded that one of the distinguishing aspects of postmodernism is that it both covers and legitimizes all types of cultural, political and artistic formations.(42)

This being said, one of the most fundamental notions for postmodern thought is the notion of heterotopia. Heterotopia is ubiquity which implies the condition of being limited by neither time nor place. What follows from this notion is of critical importance since it comprises the ability to see the ongoing events from every possible viewpoint. Such elasticity curbs the power and authority of both place and time, as it insistently brings the subject to the fore.



As it has been indicated before, postmodernism does not only reject the notion of reason, which had been so much extolled by modernism, but its entire ideological and sociocultural background as well. This rejection is reminiscent of the rise of a new age of reason.(43) By rejecting epistemology and substituting it with hermeneutics, postmodernism manages to dissolve epistemology. Consequently, hermeneutics gains the character of a "linguistic game", which highly resembles the writings of Foucault.(44) The declaration of the end of epistemology is at the very same time the announcement about the end of the metaphysical understanding of human being.

Postmodernism is against all types of subject-centered understandings that have been deeply-rooted in the modernist thought. This is exactly how determinism is substituted with coexistence and contextual analysis. Consequently, the notions of continuity, totality and homogeneity are altogether being replaced by the notions of disintegration, chaos, difference, ambiguity, temporality and discontinuity. Furthermore, postmodernism does also criticize the notion of "essence" which is too often expressed in modernist discourse. One of the leading postmodernist thinkers, namely R. Barthes, even indicates that the notion of "essence" is in fact, the epistemological glue of the bourgeois order. Since the concept of essence played a key role in the development of positivistic sciences of the modernist times, the debate centered on this concept reveals out an important aspect of postmodernism.

This aspect is the nonexistence of either a spatial or a temporal bond. This particular point will be recurrently evaluated in the course of this study.

If postmodernism's rejections are accepted wholeheartedly, some conclusionary remarks may be obtained from here. One of these remarks is related with historicity. After all, postmodernism rejects the idea of being determined by and within history. It also rejects the possibility of a social progress. This is partly why, the notion of historicity gains a particular significance in postmodern discourse. To put this in more rigorous terms, while the modernist thought looks for a precise chronological ordering of historical events and phenomena, postmodernism interprets the notion of historicity in such a way so as to declare the quest for precision unnecessary. The inevitable result that follows from here is a break from history.(45)

Today, technological developments have managed to create a society that is fundamentally different in structure from the previous ones. This society is characterized by a technoculture and an information revolution. Moreover, the electronic information culture makes the present world the arena of bitter confrontations. The scientific myth of the modernists is quite different than the myth of information revolution. Put differently, while the scientific myth of the modernists gains victories against the nature, technology itself does not only gain a victory against

science but against the epistemological models as well. In this way, although it is science itself which had originally created technology, today, technology has somehow managed to cover science. It should be kept in mind that technology is a commodified form of science. This is all the more obvious in the case of the technology of information, which has managed to legitimize its ideological implications within the market structure.

Herbert Marcuse intends to underline the potential dangers of technology, by arguing that only in a technological ambient can the nature be replaced by the human being and that technology is the most important instrument of reification.(46) As the scientific myth of modernism relies more and more heavily upon data-process, this science tends to become not the master of nature but the technology of the existing order. It is widely accepted that the computer's power of dataprocess has destroyed the logic of classical physics. Thus, the mechanical representation of the events has ceased to exist and chaos theories have been invented. In a similar fashion, the notions of postmodern culture and chaos have been the internal dynamics of late capitalism. In other words, the existence of a fragmented, disintegrated, nonlinear and chaotic system is today an undeniable reality of late capitalism. While the theory of chaos struggles to legitimize the scientific definitions of the elements that are relatively too small to be calculated, postmodern theory strives for the maintenance of a compromise among pluralities and multiplicities.

Technology's giving rise to chaos should be paid special attention. This is mainly because if the consciousness of the future is going to be shaped within a technological structure, the implications and effects of technology should be primarily and seriously investigated. Obviously, the ever increasing computerizing aspect of technology and culture will directly influence the social consciousness. This in turn, seems to be a handicap in which the postmodern or information society will be inevitably trapped.

As a consequence, postmodernism should be seen as the inevitable outcome of various juxtaposed cultural systems. Needless to say, different cultural structures have distinct modes of subject formation. Therefore, every cultural formation has its own perspective, construction and expression of reality. Likewise, there are texts, discourses and images which are quite different from one another. In the face of these, postmodern thought opposes the modernist process of otherisation and identification. The theoretical preference made by postmodernism in its critique of modernism is to uphold the other one without making it dependent on anything. Actually, there seems to be a paradox here since "the other one" cannot exist without "the one".

## **2.5 The Postmodern Notion of Time**

### **( The Transformation from Metaphysics to Post-Metaphysics)**

Various prominent thinkers, including Nietzsche, Heidegger and then Foucault, Deleuze and Lyotard, have opposed the idea of progress and Enlightenment. Since Nietzsche and Heidegger, the idea that history moves along a progressive line, has been continuously debated and questioned. The postmodern understanding of time<sup>6</sup> and time philosophy, radically departs from modernity's linear understanding. Here, there is rather an understanding of history which moves in circles. All these points become more salient when we consider that postmodernism is linked with geography rather than history. As such, it has no temporal hierarchies. This is why, in this framework, time is replaced by place. The postmodern age wants to give an end to the idea of explaining historical phenomena by resorting to their direct correspondance in historical process.(47) The postmodern age intends to curb the existing debates by the discourse on "new times".(48)

These "new times" point out to a nonprogressing and nonmoving time. Here, there is neither a "before" nor an "after". In a spatial sense there is solely geography. There is not even history. In a sense, the present moment is the moment in which

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<sup>6</sup> For an enriching study on the postmodernist understanding of time see Steven Connor's "Postmodernist Culture"(Basic Blackwell, 1989, p260-308, 327-328, 350-353)

"history ends" .<sup>7</sup> The moment in which the end of history is realized and experienced is in fact a "moment of crisis". The world in which the human being has been the subject is being disintegrated. While the technological and scientific developments keep dissolving the "subject", humanism, which is certainly one of the outcomes of the metaphysical understanding of modernism, is also being disintegrated as well. This is why, postmodernism implies post-metaphysical features. In a quite constant way, the fundamental problem in postmodernism is the disintegration of the totality and the making visible of the parts within the whole. This is in fact, a post-metaphysical situation. For instance, Paul Virilio, in using dromology to overcome metaphysics, intends to disintegrate the totality of the text. Additionally, there is another concept, namely pataphysics, that is noteworthy in this regard. Pataphysics is the will to overcome metaphysics.(49)

As a consequence, the postmodern paradox expresses a condition in which reason and subject can be interchanged, disintegrated and deterritorialized. In modernism there is no "subject", whereas in postmodernism there is a quest for the redefinition of the subject. While the modernist "subject" has a totalizing aspect, in postmodernism the subject is fragmented, multiplied and disintegrated.(50)

The idea of "now", which is frequently expressed in

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<sup>7</sup> The expression of the "end of history" is not reminiscent of F.Fukuyama's understanding in which the victory of liberalism is announced.

postmodern thought, is an eternal "now". In this regard, Marshall Berman's "All That Is Solid Melts Into Air", written in 1982, is of critical importance.(51) Berman has made the expression used by Marx and Engels in Communist Manifesto the title of his book. It seems to be an irony to reuse an expression used by Marx and Engels, 134 years before. This also seems to conform to postmodernism's rejection of the past and the future, and its extension of the "now". In a sense the "past-present" is revitalized in the "present-present". This situation, seems to indicate the ever increasing circularity of the "present-present". As a matter of fact, the postmodernist seem to be looking for a Foucauldian archaeology of the "now".(52)

### CHAPTER 3

#### IS POSTMODERNISM A THEORY?

Although in the realm of sociology there is a visible vitalization thanks to the subsequent works of various thinkers, such as Immanuel Wallerstein(53-54), Jurgen Habermas(55-56), Anthony Giddens(57-58), Mann(59) and Stuart Hall(60), to a large extent this vitalization is attributed to the impact of postmodernism. Postmodern theory<sup>8</sup> is the outcome of a long historical process of "language analysis" which evolved from the structuralist thought of Ferdinand de Saussure, underwent a transformation with Bernard Russell, L. Wittengstein and Martin Heidegger, and then entered into a new stage with post-structuralism. Obviously, language is given a prominent place within this long process since it is language itself which produces knowledge. Put differently, knowledge is produced and reproduced by linguistic games.(61) As such, the instrumentalist aspect of language comes to the fore. All the taken-for-granted things in a particular society, including the prohibitions, rules and culture, are transmitted to the human beings through language.

Postmodernism is the expression of the existing

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<sup>8</sup> For a detailed and rich study on postmodern theory, Steven Seidman and David G. Wagner's (eds) "Postmodernism and Social Theory"(Basic Blackwell, 1992)



social, sociocultural and technocultural condition.(62) While today's world is dominated by technoculture, the question of what the world will be like in the future cannot be answered. This is not surprising given the fact that postmodernism lacks a project for the future. This point underlines the fact that postmodernism is the "eclectic" outcome of a position analysis. Moreover, postmodernism's possessing an eclectic character which lacks a project for the future, is one of the greatest obstacles in front of its becoming a theory. There is however, another obstacle which will be discussed at the end of this chapter. This obstacle in turn, is related with the fact that postmodernism defines itself as a counter-theory.

In the history of thought, subsequent theories have proceeded by falsifying one another. For instance, the relation between two well-known theories can be given as an example. These are the natural and the symbolic models of society. The epistemological assertions of the natural model have been shaped by positivism, whereas those of the symbolic model have been inspired by hermeneutics.(63) According to positivism, both the natural and the social sciences rest upon empirical observation. In this sense, the social world is not much different from the natural world. As a result, the methods of the latter can be adequately implemented in the realm of social sciences. According to hermeneutics however, the social world cannot be treated like the natural world. This is due to the fact that, unlike nature, the society has a certain symbolic and cultural system. This implies to say that

the natural laws are substantially different from social laws.

In postmodernism, modern science's(64) positivist viewpoint(65) is being abandoned, while at the same time the paradigm of knowledge is being substituted by the paradigm of understanding. This is why, postmodernist understanding tries to develop paradigms of new social critique which do not rest upon the mainpillars of traditional philosophy.(66) In this endeavour, postmodernism does also question the position of philosophy. Furthermore, as a result of postmodernism's critiques, science ceases to exist as the very centre of reality. By being against science, the postmodernists have also managed to destroy the metaphysics of knowledge. After all, we are living in a new age of science, which can be validly named as the age of postmodern science.(67) In the 1970s new modern social theories have been developed. For instance, Jean Baudrillard has argued that an industry of simulations and images has created a new culture and society.(68)

Another example can be given from the writings of J.F.Lyotard, who is one of the leading figures in postmodern literature. Lyotard argues that in accordance with the social theories and revolutionary politics anticipated by modernity, a period has ended and a new one has been initiated.(69) In this regard, there are some other thinkers that can be briefly alluded here. For instance, just like L. Wittengstein and Martin Heidegger, poststructuralists and J. Derrida maintain that the tradition of great metaphysics has

ceased to exist. Especially Derrida argues that the metaphysical phenomena have lost their credibility.(70)

There are some other theoreticians who regard postmodernism, not as a social theory but as the cultural logic of capitalism. Undoubtedly, the most important of these thinkers is F. Jameson. According to Jameson, postmodernism is the inevitable cultural logical outcome of a new phase in capitalism.(71) On the other hand, various thinkers, such as Habermas, who is one of the most important and last advocates of the Frankfurt School and who argues that modernism has not ceased to exist, maintain that there is no postmodern break in history. Needless to add, these thinkers are highly critical of postmodernism.(72) As a matter of fact, for Habermas, postmodernism is a theoretical condition. Nevertheless, its practical implications are caused by its ignorance of the modern projects and theories. While such critical accounts cannot possibly be ignored, the thesis on postmodern social theory, initiated by J. Baudrillard, has been adopted by various other thinkers some of which will be analysed below.

### 3.1 Jean Baudrillard and Postmodernism

The eminent French sociologist J. Baudrillard<sup>9</sup> has focused his attention on the society of consumption and on the technological developments, media and cybernetic systems that make this society continuous.(73) The 25-30 year studies of Baudrillard on postmodern theory have formed the base of postmodern theory in general. Baudrillard names the present Western post-industrial society as a "totalitarian" society and as a "hyperreality". In doing so, he underlines the main characteristics of the postmodern age.(74)

In postmodern society the demarcation lines between "image" and "reality" and between "high" and "low" culture have been blurred.(75) Furthermore, the boundaries that were thought to be sharp and insurpassable have been gradually abolished. Now, the differences are given a prominent place. Postmodern society is undergoing a process of social disintegration. The most crucial aspect that distinguishes postmodern society from modern society is its being characterized by "simulations" and not by "production". The simulations which have penetrated into every sphere of social life have at the end recreated the society on the basis of a "hyperreality".(76) In the postmodern society, created as a hyperreality, the definition of "reality" has underwent a significant change. Now, "reality" is the name for the endless production and

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<sup>9</sup> For a more detailed study on Baudrillard see Madan Sarup's "Post-Yapısalcılık ve Postmodernizm"(İstanbul, Ark yay., 1994, p191-200)

reproduction of images.

This situation is, in Baudrillard's terms, "the order of simulations". Within such an order, every single thing has a countless number of simulations.(77) Thus, such a society in which the simulation is identified with the reality, is in fact the society of a cybernetic order.(78) In Baudrillard's opinion, just like the language which provides communication is codified, the society too has been codified through social organisation codes and models. As such, the individual beings are confronted with a strictly codified system in which the greatest leap that they can make is to choose one of the two alternatives. This is tantamount to a system in which a limitless number of "yes" and "no" are selected from a limited number of alternatives.

Any particular society includes certain "codification" mechanisms which can be grasped in a given social structure. These codification mechanisms strictly codify the individuals in a given social organisation. In doing so, their basic purpose is to make possible the control of these individuals when and wherever it is necessary. From Baudrillard's viewpoint, these codification mechanisms are the instruments which enable codification and daily life simultaneously.

Baudrillard insists upon the point that, within a postindustrial society which proceeds into a cybernetic social order,

the modernist theories, such as "class struggle theories" and "social change theories" will inevitably lose their meanings and credibilities. This is mainly because such theories have virtually no chance of survival in a postindustrial social order. The intrinsic features of a cybernetic society are continuously dissolving the movements that pretend to be located outside the system. A cybernetic society manages to reorganise and remanipulate itself without the help of outside interventions.

In the postmodern condition the world lacks meanings. This is the real dynamic behind Baudrillard's expression of "who lives with meaning dies with meaning". What is primarily concerned here is this precise moment of meaninglessness.(79) In the highly fragmented postmodern society, the only thing that the individual can do is to learn to live with imitations. (80)

For Baudrillard, within the postmodern social structure, politics is constituted by simulation as well. After all, politics is now being carried out as the reproduction of the previously produced practices and theories. A closer insight will demonstrate that what is really going on is merely the individual's interplay among forms. By questioning the notion of "reality" Baudrillard establishes his postmodern social theory, which he defines as the "end of the social", upon the positive and negative implications of high technology. Obviously, there have been various thinkers who have criticized Baudrillard's theoretical

standpoint. For instance, D. Kellner, sees Baudrillard's theory as a weak theory constructed at the level of high abstractness.(81) In concluding, although Baudrillard's theory may imply weak points, it still manages to demonstrate the main dynamics of contemporary postmodern theory.



### 3.2 J. F. Lyotard and the Postmodern Condition

J.F.Lyotard<sup>10</sup> has elaborated the state of knowledge in developed countries in his study named "The Postmodern Condition". Although his main concern here was to investigate the state of knowledge, he was in fact pushing forward the problematique of the postmodern social theory.(82) Thus today, he is generally admitted to be a leading philosopher who has introduced the term postmodernism into the debates on philosophy, politics and social theory.

According to Lyotard, the postmodern condition is strongly related with a new form of knowledge. Put differently, the postmodern condition is the general condition of Western civilisation.(83) As can be easily detected, this assertion departs from the viewpoint of Baudrillard, in which the postmodern condition is thought to be a new form of social structure.

In developing a new epistemology, Lyotard necessitates a postmodern social theory. He demonstrates this necessity by stating that societies and cultures have entered into a new postmodern age.(84) This point is quite salient. Here, Lyotard aggress with Baudrillard who explains the postmodern by referring to the postindustrial society. For Lyotard, the postmodern society is one that undergoes a swift transformation at the end of which it

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<sup>10</sup> For a detailed analysis of Lyotard's account of postmodernism see Peter Dews' "Logic of Disintegration"(Verso, 1987, p109-138)



will proceed towards Baudrillard's cybernetic society. It should be noted that Lyotard<sup>11</sup> rejects all the meta-discourses which legitimize the restriction and codification of both the individuals and the society. Likewise, he argues that there is neither a unique nor a binding reality in the society. Rather than that, there are various different discourses of varying contents and sizes, which are restlessly moving in the society. It is the very existence of these discourses that enable plurality and multiplicity in the society. Lyotard pays more attention to these small discourses which make the differences visible and noticeable. Throughout the "Postmodern Condition" he makes micro analyses on these interrelated and multifaceted small discourses.(85)

In carrying out these analyses Lyotard resorts to "linguistic games". He stresses that these linguistic games should be grasped in order to understand the very nature of distinct small narratives, every one of which has its own linguistic games and rules. Lyotard further contends that the linguistic games function as the cement that holds the society together.(86) Unlike J. Derrida, Lyotard assumes that the discourse made by pushing the speech to the fore is a kind of battle. In Lyotard's theoretical framework, the individual is a fighter or a struggler within the various linguistic games composed by the micro discourses in a given society. In short, it may be contended that Lyotard sees the linguistic games as the realm of endless confrontation and struggle.

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<sup>11</sup> For more information on Lyotard, please refer to Margaret Arose, p53-65.

Postmodern thought does not accept the reproduction of the world through images. Postmodernism's purpose is not to place the individual in front of the world and thereby provide the reproduction of the world through images, but to put the reality of the "language" in front of the individual. The more the individual produces images to explain the world, the further s/he gets from it. Modernity's explanation of the world through images has created a gap between the world and the human being. Postmodernism, in turn, intends to abolish this gap. This in turn, implies to situate the human being inside the world, rather than outside of it.

On the other hand, it is possible to encounter certain paralogisms in Lyotard's postmodern epistemology. Lyotard's analysis on "postmodern science" should be seen in accordance with T. Kuhn's "paradigm change" or Foucault's "episteme". The postmodern science is the condition whereby the legitimization of "science" is investigated.

By placing a greater emphasis upon micro narratives, Lyotard questions metanarratives. For him, the dichotomic constructions that have been characterizing modernist discourse are no more valid in the sense of being correct or incorrect. Lyotard's fundamental suspicion about the metanarratives stems from their modernist potential of becoming political programmes. On the other hand, for Lyotard, the "knowledge" in dualistic

structures has a metaphysical position situated outside of daily life. This in turn, reveals out another distinguishing feature of postmodernism, since in postmodernism "knowledge" is employed to define the daily life. In other words, for postmodernism, knowledge has a social significance. Viewed from the perspective of postmodern social theory, "knowledge" is being created not through a social consensus but through the recognition of the existing social differences. In a similar vein, rendering the differences visible means rendering knowledge visible. (87)

In arguing that the legitimizing meta-narratives should not be upheld anymore, Lyotard states that neither the epistemological nor the political legitimacy should be sought in metanarratives.(88) If this is the case, where should epistemology and politics, which have lost their base of legitimacy, searched then? If and when neither epistemology nor politics can be legitimized on the basis of a metanarrative, are there going to be new sites of legitimacy? Lyotard probes the question of legitimacy in his "Postmodern Condition". For him, in the postmodern period legitimacy has been diversified and thus, has gained a local character. This is to say that, in the postmodern period, there is no unique, comprising and legitimizing metadiscourse anymore. Rather, there are various discourses, each of which may have a different base of legitimacy. Hence, there can be no political or social theory and no all-powerful, macro justice. In the postmodern society the only justice that can be referred to is the "justice of

multiplicities”.

Just like Lyotard, various other theoreticians do also claim that the philosophies and theories of the modern times cannot be able to breed contemporary political and social critique. In a similar fashion, Lyotard maintains that the Marxist understanding of capitalist society is unable to explain the plurality of oppositions in contemporary society. For him, Marxist theory, being based upon the notion of “production” has tended to ignore the human practices that take place outside this area. In this way, the Marxist theory is a metanarrative since it comprises the totality of the human history and remains at the theoretical level.

Lyotard criticizes Marxist theory upon this base. He further argues that the central Marxist notions, such as “consciousness”, “structure-superstructure”, and so on, cannot be able to provide an adequate explanation of the society. Neither the internal dynamics nor the structure of the society can be explained by these concepts. A society consists of various distinct discourses which differ from one another in size and content. Within this broad framework, the social bond is the network composed by the totality of these discourses. As every single discourse has its own practice, in every social bond there are inevitably various distinct discursive practices that conflict with one another.

Understandably, within such a framework the

individual can be the representative of various practices rather than only one practice. Thus, the discursive confrontations take their most serious form not somewhere outside the individual but rather inside him/her. This being the case, it is no more possible to talk about a "social totality" which totalizes and codifies the individual living in the midst of a multiplicity of discursive practices. As the site where the social structure coincides with the multiplicity of discursive practices, the "individual" has obtained a heterogeneous character.

The critiques brought towards Baudrillard have been made for Lyotard as well. Here, too, it is being claimed that the nature of the break between modernism and postmodernism is insufficiently probed.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> For a richer analysis of the critiques directed towards Lyotard refer to Madam Sarup's "Post-Yapısalcılık ve Postmodernizm" (İstanbul, Afa yay., 1994, p183-186)

### **3.3 F. Jameson and Postmodernism as the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism**

Just like Baudrillard and Lyotard, Jameson too, asserts that there are certain ruptures in the social structure and thereby the "Postmodern Age" has inevitably emerged. In his study entitled "Postmodernism or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism", Jameson intends to develop a postmodern social theory on a Neo-Marxist explanation.(89)

According to Jameson, although postmodernism is a new stage in capitalism, it is at the same time the cultural logic of late capitalism. In order to strengthen and prove this thesis, he investigates the four main dimensions possessed by every society in a given situation. These dimensions are the political, economic, cultural and social dimensions. And this is exactly the point which distinguishes Jameson from both Baudrillard and Lyotard. As such, Jameson draws the postmodern debates and postmodern theory into the realm of social theory.<sup>13</sup> In investigating the phases of the development of capitalism, Jameson arrives at the conclusion that in modernism "monopoly capitalism" is more dominant, whereas in postmodernism a "multinational consumption capitalism".(90)

On the other hand, in his "Reification in Mass Culture and Utopia", written in 1979, Jameson mentioned the simulative character of the contemporary consumption culture. In

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<sup>13</sup> For more information on this subject see Margaret A. Rose, p65-85.

doing so, he had explained the points that Baudrillard was going to reevaluate four years later in 1983. (91) For instance, for Jameson, the consumption society is replete with images.(92)

In making the definition of a new capitalist social model, Jameson connects postmodernism to this model. Moreover, in making a classification on postmodern culture, he makes the distinction between postmodern culture and high modern culture. Jameson, who makes explanations about the political, economic, cultural and social dimensions, argues that postmodern formations do also change the very nature of politics. This is how new forms of representation have emerged. Jameson suggests the idea of making a "Social Mapping" in order to grasp the ongoing developments and the transformation towards a postmodern society.(93)

In this way, Jameson makes an analysis of the postmodern society by using a "cognitive map" by the help of which the transformations in the political, cultural, economic and social dimensions can be easily grasped. It is highly striking to find out that in doing this analysis, Jameson adopts a Marxist standpoint and connects these changes to the changes in the sphere of production.<sup>14</sup> Lastly, another distinguishing feature between Jameson and the other postmodernists is his usage of the fundamental social codifications.(94)

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<sup>14</sup> Jameson has been greatly influenced by Ernst Mandel. Please refer to Ernst Mandel's Late Capitalism.(London, New Left Books, 1975)

### 3.4 Conclusion

Postmodernism has an "eclectic" nature which relentlessly criticizes and questions the past. It is mainly because of this "eclectic" aspect that postmodernism rejects the modernist value hierarchy and assumes that the only definable reality is the one situated at the "present moment". Postmodernism makes a theoretical endeavour to demonstrate that modernism's search for "novelty" has been exhausted.(95)

Postmodernism owes its genuine strength to its endeavour to explain the changes in the daily cultural practices of various social groups. In this regard, Scott Lash's notion of de-differentiation, which is used to highlight the "Postmodern Regimes of Signification" is a significant emphasis placed upon the nature of the above mentioned cultural practices.(96) Needless to say, today's world enables the cultures to make global travels and to increase their influence by extending themselves. In a globalized world, in turn, the human being acquires a universalistic character by overcoming the spatial and temporal limitations imposed by the sociocultural framework in which s/he takes part. This being the case, there are no more binding realities.

As a matter of fact, postmodernism has an anti-theoretical aspect since it situates itself against all the existing theoretical frameworks. To clarify this point, it is worth recalling



that postmodernism refrains from both a subject-oriented and a centralized theoretical structure. Nevertheless, it may be asked whether the fact that postmodernism is the general name of a body of literature that has been a constant subject of debate since the 1970s, brings postmodernism akin to the point of becoming a theory or not. At the very first glance, the answer to this question should be “no” since postmodernism is overtly against all the subject-centered theories. On the other hand, the question can also be answered in a positive way since thanks to the accumulation of the studies that have been made so far, the postmodern discourse has at least a potential to turn itself into a theoretical framework. It should also be noted that to be against the system and especially against modernism, requires to develop a theory strong enough to sustain itself. Lastly, there is one further comment that can be made about the above asked question. This particular point is related with the inherent conflicts of postmodernism itself. To be sure, postmodernism is neither a homogenous nor a stable entity. Then, what the future will be for postmodernism will be determined by these internal conflicts. Another noteworthy point of emphasis is that in defining postmodernism as the end of metanarratives, many thinkers tend to resort to a postmodern metanarrative.(97) This tendency seems to be the weakest point of postmodernism.

What gives legitimacy to postmodernism is the ever changing nature of “knowledge”. Knowledge is no longer an end in itself.(103) Moreover, while knowledge is being produced in order

be sold and consumed, the modernist definition of the "subject" as the "knowing subject" is also undergoing a profound change. This process is a real transformation that gives legitimacy and strength to postmodern discourse. In fact, a movement that opposes the existing system should be expected to enter into the stage with an alternative. Postmodernism however, does not intend to bring an alternative but solely to question the existing system. At the end of the process of questioning, we can only encounter meanings.(99) This is mainly why, all that can be said about postmodernism is not that postmodernism is faced with the problem of turning into a theory in the future, but that at the present moment, it is a body of discourses which are sound enough to survive.

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## **CHAPTER 4**

### **POSTMODERN POLITICS**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

As it has been indicated in the introduction and the first part of this thesis, by questioning the social and the political structures postmodernism intends to redefine and reconstruct them. This is mainly because according to the postmodern view, the society today is highly different than before. This implies to acknowledge that the society today is not homogeneous.

As it will be discussed in what follows, the postmodern project is based upon pluralism. Social discourses on the other hand, are the very centre of postmodern politics. Viewed from the perspective of postmodernism, politics is the competition between discourses and linguistic games. The political knowledge cannot be thought apart from discourses since they are inextricably linked to one another. This is why, the government is constituted and developed by the unity of various discourses. At the outset, it should be underlined that the postmodern emphasis on discourses is closely connected to the idea that government is not constituted by individual subjects. According to postmodernism, what constitutes

the government is nothing other than the unity of discursive formations.

As it will be demonstrated here, the focus of attention in postmodern understanding of government is on rendering visible the existing differences. This is not surprising since the postmodern society is composed by differences, varieties and pluralities. In a postmodern society multiplicities do not exist "despite one another". In this framework, a more suitable term than "existence", seems to be "co-existence". The "other" which has always been excluded by the modern understanding of society becomes an indispensable part of the postmodern society. The focus of attention in the postmodern society is on meeting the other with the Other one. This is due to the fact that, within a postmodern society, unlike the modernist society, there are no significant differences between the one and the Other one.

The post-industrial social structure is highly fragmented in itself. For this reason, the new social structure, with all its multiplicities, pluralities and complexities, has altered both the content and the practice of politics. The postmodern emphasis on pluralities also stems from this contemporary fact. In the following part, it is being attempted to present the internal features of the postmodern panorama. In doing so, it is also being attempted to demonstrate the fundamental differences between the modernist understanding of democracy, which is based on "majorities", and the

postmodernist understanding of democracy, which is based on "multiplicities".

On the other hand, when the political dimension of the social structure is concerned, the emergence of new political and social movements needs to be stressed. It is generally being acknowledged that public interest politics is being replaced by private interest politics and by a politics of image. These new formations and transformations bring forward a change in the nature of politics and create new forms of making politics. For this reason, the following pages will investigate the new forms of making politics. In addition to this, the process whereby the postmodern society becomes less and less a mass society and moves in the direction of becoming a society consisting of micro groups and horizontal transits, will be also elaborated.

In the following pages, it will further be contended that the postmodern society will in one way or another face a problem of representation. This problem in turn, will be solved through the new and postmodern forms of making politics. As the modern political understanding fails to fulfill all of the contemporary requirements regarding the social structure, postmodern politics becomes more and more necessary to realize. Furthermore, in a postmodern society, which embodies the intensification of marginalities, the rendering visible of the differences and the dynamic activities of molecular groups, the idea

of civil society established upon the notion of "citizenship" has to undergo a profound change as well. This is mainly because, in my opinion, the idea of a civil society based upon the notion of citizenship, is at the same time an idea which is based on the notion of "sameness". It is from this notion that the modern civil society has searched the common good. Nevertheless, in the postmodern society, which heavily relies upon the existence of different cultures, marginal movements and heterogeneous formations, this common good cannot be shaped by "sameness" anymore. This is mainly why, the following pages will argue that the modern understanding of civil society is far from being a democratic understanding.

The second part of this study is going to probe the above mentioned problems and to present the postmodern solutions to them. In doing so, the first step will be the clarification of what postmodern politics is. The microanalysis of postmodern politics will be based upon the assertion that it is the outcome of the postindustrial society. In such an analysis, I am going to argue that as the society becomes more and more pluralized on the basis of small communities and groups that do not necessarily bear a political character, micro identities gain importance. This is how the problem of the representation of these micro identities comes to the fore in contemporary political arena. It is precisely at this point where my theses becomes significant. After all, in my contention the postmodern style of making politics is one that seeks to bring an

alternative approach to the problem of representation. One thing that supports this view is the argument that postmodern politics places a great emphasis upon the representation of small groups and individuals. In addition to these, I am further going to assert that the postmodern understanding of society as composed of different discourses renders visible the different discourses of distinct subcultures. From here, I am going to argue that the content of postmodern politics has to be situated within the domain of "Radical Plural Democracy", which is shaped by horizontal movements and egalitarianism.

Under the subtitle of "postmodern politics" of this second part of the study, it is being claimed that the majority of cultures and discourses is no longer the determining force in the postmodern society. Rather than that, what is primarily important today is the maintenance of the "multiplicity" of the existing cultures and discourses. On the other hand, it is being maintained that postmodern politics' urge for the destruction of metanarratives and emphasis on rendering visible micro narratives, should be elaborated within this context.

Under the second subtitle of this second part of the study, I have tried to explain the new forms of making politics in the postmodern society. This seemed necessary mainly because the individual beings who are the component parts of the postmodern society, no longer conceive what is going on around them in a

united way. As both the society and the individual beings undergo a profound change, it becomes highly urgent to reinterpret, reexplain and redefine politics. This is mainly because, as it was indicated previously, there emerges new forms of representation which are fundamentally different from the modern form of representation.

As this new social structure, in which marginalities continuously increase and intensify, becomes less and less a mass society, the new social movements bear less and less a mass character and turn into molecular movements. Based upon the assumption that this situation can bring forward political crises, I have tried to present the postmodern deductions to this problem. In doing so, I have explained the new forms of making politics by the help of several examples and defended their importance in this new social structure from a postmodern perspective.

Under the subsequent subtitle, I am going to question the modern understanding of democracy which is shaped by the idea of "consensus", from a postmodern point of view. I am further going to maintain that the idea of "consensus" not only totalizes the society and the individuals, but destroys the existing differences as well. From here, I am going to claim that the problem of representation stems from the fact that the modern understanding of democracy does not suit to the new social structure which demands the rendering visible of the differences and

pluralities.

On the other hand, radical democracy has various features which altogether make it suitable to the new social structure and to the new political formations. By indicating this, I am going to assert that radical democracy's concern with differences and pluralities has a fundamental importance. Furthermore, I am going to argue that the *raison d'être* of politics is not to destroy the minorities and differences in the name of consensus, but to render their existence visible.

At this point, I would like to indicate that as a researcher who adopts the postmodern perspective, my basic problematique in making the analysis of postmodern politics has been the problematique of grasping and explaining the changing cultural, social and political formations in the contemporary world. This is the reason why, I have felt it necessary to make at least a brief analysis of "left politics".

Lastly, as I try to demonstrate all throughout this study and especially in the second part of the study, postmodernism is an alternative approach which intends to define, explain, develop and analyse the post-industrial society's various dimensions, including its cultural, social and political dimensions. As such, it is an approach that is highly needed in the contemporary world.

## **4.2 Postmodern Politics**

The most paramount aspect of the postmodern period is the emergence of new social movements and formations.(1) As underlined before, within the postmodern society multiplicities are of primary importance. The society is being pluralized and diversified by being divided into small communities shaped in accordance with the elastic and nonpolitical structures of pluralism. From another point of view, postmodernism is seen as the outcome of distinct cultural systems.(2) In such a restlessly diversifying postmodern society, the communities which are being snapped from distinct sources, are functioning in such a way so as to lessen the problems of the system in general.(3)

In the postmodern society, authority loses its significance as the local identities gain more and more importance. In the postmodern formations, the society and politics are being reshaped in different ways, while subidentities and subcultures become more visible. Democracy penetrates into every single realm of the society. Thus, while the question of the representation of subcultures comes to the fore, democracy is being strengthened and reinforced.(4)

Postmodern politics, in acknowledging the different discourses composing the society and the plurality of cultures, is horizontal and thus, nonhierarchical. Furthermore, as the



postmodern society gains a pluralist character, the mass parties of the modern times will inevitably lose their power. After all, the highly rigid and hierarchical structures of these mass parties cannot possibly represent the interests of the newly shaped social formations.(5)

In the postmodern condition, the society's structure of production has underwent a transformation as well. There has been a transformation from the Fordist production mode of the modern times to the Post-Fordist production mode.(6) Just like the structure of production has changed in the postmodern society, the nature of politics has changed too. On the other hand, while the individual plays a determining role in a postmodern condition, the group or community in which the individuals take place is also becoming more and more important. Thus, the new form of making politics is giving importance to the individual and the group or community, and to the preservation of their basic rights.(7)

As remarked before, the postmodern project attributes a particular role to "pluralism". For the postmodernists, the very centre of politics is the unity of various discourses that altogether form the society. Furthermore, the various discourses within the society differ to a large extent in their content, influence and power. This diversification however is to be defended and sustained, since it is the presence of a multiplicity of discourses

which prevents the emergence of totalitarianism. Put somewhat differently, the unified and codified languages interwoven with metanarratives are said to constitute a genuine threat for the postmodern society.

In postmodern politics, the civil society is given a vast area of operation. Within the extending civil society there emerges organisation modes that are quite different from the previous ones. At the end, the political structure of the society undergoes a transformation. To be able to grasp this transformation, it should be reminded that in the modern understanding of society, the order is both centralized(8) and dualistically elaborated.(9) In the dualistic society in turn, the individuals are being tied to the society through certain norms. This is why, postmodernists see the modern world as a repressive one in the sense that it "controls".(10) They call it repressive because the modern society is at the very same time a "unilateral" society.(11)

Accordingly, within the framework of the postmodern understanding, the centre of the society is everywhere. The source of the social order is, unlike the arborescent model used by Western metaphysics, "decentralisation".(12) Hence, postmodernists are highly critical of the idea of a centralised society. In opposing this idea they also oppose realism. They further refrain from "totalizing" the society.(13)

On the other hand, the postmodernists do also oppose the idea of a modernist bureaucratic state. They insist upon the fact that the bureaucratic organisation is not the unique type of rational social organisation. After all, the bureaucratisation of the society has overtly shown that the power to rule and control the society has been concentrated in the hands of technocrats. By the help of monopolized knowledge, the bureaucrats possessing this knowledge manage to play an indispensable role for the entire system. The ultimate outcome of such a bureaucratisation is the decay of the political system. In this regard, the reason why Lyotard wants "plain organisations" is closely linked with his reserves about the dangerous results of bureaucratisation.(14) Foucault, in questioning the relation between bureaucratisation and the desire and power to rule the society, tries to demonstrate how "knowledge" undergoes a transformation precisely at this point.(15)

For the postmodernists, the society is in a sense, materialised politics. Understandably, the social order of materialised politics stems directly from discourses. The realm of discourse is in turn, defined as the "intermediate field" between the people. What defines the size of this "intermediate field" is the force of attraction between the individual beings. As such when and if the attraction strengthens, the intermediate field narrows.(16) This demonstrates the existence of an intense and mutual relation of communication among the individuals. What determines the content of discourse and its interpretive force is this "intermediate

field". On the other hand, what enables the individuals to "exist" within the society is once again, this particular "intermediate field". Given the fact that the field in concern is the site of language, it is also the site where both time and place become meaningful. Although this may seem to be rather odd at the very first glance, it should be remembered that both the spatial and temporal phenomena are constructed and reconstructed within and through language.(17) In other words, what makes the functioning of this "intermediate field" possible is nothing other than the operation of language. All these points of emphasis clearly demonstrate that the language employed in this "intermediate field" constitutes the society.(18)

In postmodernism the relations and discourses between the individual beings are given a paramount importance since the social structure is being produced and shaped through these discourses. For instance, even "power" is established upon the base of the discourses among people. Habermas, for instance, in his *Communicative Action*, argues that action is constituted through the linguistic discourses in cultures.(19)

The discourses among the people are possible only when the above mentioned "intermediate field" and the nature of language have been fully grasped.(20) This is highly necessary since the base of social life is shaped by human acts and discourses. The "linguistic connections" taking place in this "intermediate field"

form the base of the social balance.(21) Moreover, for the postmodernists, the sphere where justice is realized is also this "intermediate field". What makes the people equal and united is, on the other hand, the linguistic praxis employed in this particular field. Thus, language can be seen as the base and shaper of the system.(22) The social reality within this system, is the united expression of the different discursive practices within a highly diversified social framework. In sum, for postmodernism, what is named as "reality" is solely a metaphor which is endlessly realized in this "intermediate field" .

In a sense, such a social order is one that reproduces and reorganizes itself.(23) On the whole then, for the postmodernists, the "social order", delivered by discourses, reproduces itself through these discourses. On the other hand, power is constituted by the discourses among the people as well. Broadly stating, the discourse which conquers the "dominant sphere" does also manage to hold the dominant power in its hands.(24)

In the postmodern social life, the social behaviour that acknowledges and respects the linguistic sphere of the "other", is named as postmodern ethics.(25) Obviously, the existence of a pluralist society can be only maintained by the help of such an ethics. Unlike the modernist understanding, the postmodernist viewpoint assumes that the society is not an inhuman structure that

is being ruled by certain rules and regulations. This is mainly why, the individuals should live side by side, as existence means primarily co-existence. Nonetheless, the 20th century has been the era when the individuals have been turned into "silent masses".(26) This being the case, postmodernism intends to completely restructure the social heritage of modernism.

Evidently, another basic difference between postmodernism and modernism reveals out in the postmodern understanding of time which is quite different from the modernist understanding. For postmodernism time is not linear, but periodical. This in turn, implies the endless and restless reconstruction of the "now". In this "now", the "past-present", "present-present" and "future-present" are inextricably linked to one another.(27)

In the postmodern society, the individuals do not have a past or a future. They only have extending or narrowing "present times" which are delivered by their interpersonal relationships. Therefore, in the postmodern society, the "past-present" and the "future-present" of the individuals have been turned into a "present-present" within the limits of the interpersonal "intermediate field".(28)

The "now" in which we live, implies the power both to interpret the past and to envisage the future. It is exactly this

astonishing convergence which makes the "present time" so determining and salient. It is noteworthy that, in remembering the "past-present", the individual's starting point is always the "now". At the end of this process of remembering the "past-present" is reinterpreted and reconstructed.(29) As a consequence, it may be argued that, for the postmodernists history rises from the "now" just to be continuously reinterpreted and reconstructed.

On the other hand, geography has a central role for postmodernist thought mainly because within geography, temporal hierarchies tend to disappear. As a matter of fact, postmodernism's destruction of the idea of "time", does also mean the destruction of history.<sup>15</sup> This is due to the fact that the ideas established on time, lose their significance as the very idea of time is abolished. In this sense, postmodernism may be seen as "ahistoricism". Just like there is neither past nor future in the "present", there will be neither a future nor a present time in the future. In this regard, just like there is no history at the "present", there will be no history in the "future".(30)

Leaving the postmodern constructions of time and space aside for the moment, F. Lyotard argues that political liberalism should be pushed away in order to get rid of the universalistic philosophy of the West. This is not surprising, given the fact that the postmodernists are against both the statist and the

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<sup>15</sup> On this theme Francis Fukuyama's "Tarihin Sonu ve Son İnsan"(Simavi yay., 1996) may be referred to.

liberal understandings. J. Habermas, however, as an advocate of modernism, upholds liberalism in his endeavour to sustain universalistic philosophy.(31)

In order to get rid of universalistic philosophy and its political discourse, liberalism, it is necessary to make a distinction between democracy and liberalism.(32) In fact, as MacPherson states, the liberal and democratic formations, which have been juxtaposed during the 19th century although there was no necessary bond between them, should be thought and elaborated separately.(33)

Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe's joint study, "Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards A Radical Democratic Politics" should be evaluated on the basis of postmodern politics.(34) This is evident since the epistemological dimension of the Enlightenment which played an important role in the formation of democracy has been pushed aside in this project and the concern for the creation of new politics is pushed to the fore.(35)

Gradually, the societies are becoming the arenas for the abolishment of ideologies. In such a turbulent atmosphere, the dominant social and political problems are being substituted by nonsocial problems. This is why, for instance, the "quest for identities and cultures" of those who have been excluded from the social and political spheres, are becoming prevalent today.(36) The reason why this is so, is the fact that until so far, the activities of the



excluded people have been either deliberately ignored or simply neglected. This however had profound implications because as the marginal groups were unable to show their contribution to the society in general, they returned to their cultural origins and formed their identities upon this base.(37)

The bitter feeling of being excluded from the spheres of production and consumption paved the way to the rise of an ethnic identity consciousness among these marginal groups. As a matter of fact, there is a paradoxical situation in the social and political acts of the excluded people. On the one hand, these marginal groups sustain their own cultures against the bigger counter-culture; yet, on the other hand, they always have a rather latent desire to enter into the culture that excludes them.

Unlike the previous stage, in the contemporary stage, politics does not have a problematique of changing life. This is understandable since politics is no longer made through representatives in a society shaped by multiplicities. Rather, it is being made by individual subjects who are detaching themselves from the totalizing culture in order to find out their own cultural identities.

The other side to the story is that in postmodern politics, the formal aspects of social life are more prominent. Unlike the vertical and hierarchical structure of modernist politics,

postmodern politics is horizontal and thus, nonhierarchical. Within this framework, no political dimension can have a privilege or superiority when compared with others. What follows from here is that, as the alternative social modes of existence are being developed in postmodern politics, the notion of "authority", which has been one of the greatest deficiencies of modernist societies, tends to disappear. Postmodern politics pushes aside the enormously wide organisations of traditional politics. Instead, it focuses its attention on the diverse points where the daily social practice is being formed.(38) The main reason behind this preference is the paradoxical fact that the rigidly and widely established political organisations always tend to reproduce the power structures which they have been challenging.(39)

If postmodernism is elaborated within a cultural dimension, it can be defined as the rejection of the modern movement. On the other hand, if it is regarded within a political plane, it is to a large extent, an anti-Marxist discourse. This last point will be clarified if we consider that postmodernism rejects all metanarratives. Likewise, all the universalistic philosophies, including those of Hegel and Marx, are being relentlessly criticized. For the postmodernists, these metanarratives have lost their credibility.

Metanarratives and discourses influence the thought of human beings and shape their acts. Thus, the narratives

and discourses that possess such a power manage to shape the grounds in which the political and ideological struggles take place. The narratives and discourses that dominate politics are the inevitable outcome of power relations. The discourses on the emancipation of class and the construction of a classless society, which have been given a prominent place in the modern narrative, have lost their significance in postmodernism. Yet, this is not to deny the fact that there will always be an endless struggle for power. Nevertheless, such a struggle is primarily a struggle of "interpretive power". More clearly, since the dominant "interpretive narrative" shapes the worldviews of the individuals any struggle for power is directly connected to it. On the other hand, the "interpretive narration" that tends to dominate political life never operates on its own. Rather, there are always some subnarratives which struggle for power.

Every society transmits its own culture, history and experiences from one generation to another. This in turn, is carried out by the help of narratives. This is to say that, the "culture" that dominates that particular society is in fact a narration. Narratives, discourses, texts and philosophies expand their influence only when they come to power. As a matter of fact, every narration or discourse has a power deep inside which functions as the potential to construct hegemony. The moment when this potential is actualized on the other hand, is the moment of coming to power. Furthermore, the narrations, discourses, texts and philosophies that

possess such a power, shape the political culture, while being shaped by it at the very same time.

In order to clarify the differences between modern politics and postmodern politics, the influence of narrations or discourses should be probed. This is all the more necessary since every political reproduction should firstly find a place for itself among the existing discourses, and then should manage to abolish the counter discourses, if it is to be successful in constructing a hegemony. As such, every political reproduction sustains itself only in so far as it is able to destroy the counter discourses.

In recent years computerized knowledge has been becoming the main power of production. In a quiet constant way, knowledge has been playing a fundamental role in the struggle for power in world politics. Just like Lyotard maintained, knowledge is now being produced in order to be sold.(40) The metanarratives such as the emancipation of the working class, the establishment of the welfare state and the construction of a classless society, have been only some of the various metanarratives constructed in order to dominate the nature. However, the metanarratives that were highly venerated in the modernist era, have now lost the legitimacy they once possessed. For instance, the Marxist metanarrative that has been demanding a collective struggle for emancipation, has been in a sense, dissolved today. Moreover, it has lost its compulsory ability to change the world. One reason why this has been so, is related

with the changes the society has underwent as a result of the developments in technology. Another reason is the fact that the "narrative knowledge" of the traditional societies has been substituted by "scientific knowledge".

The people living in a postmodern society, unlike the ones living in the modern society, have lost their ability to entirely understand what is going on. This is mainly because there have emerged new aesthetic forms through which new practices of representation operate. These new practices are highly different from the models of "representation" which the modern society, culture and politics once used to possess. As it was maintained before, just like knowledge has underwent a transition from "narrative knowledge" to "scientific knowledge", and has thereby acquired a distinct aesthetic form, the political representation and aesthetics have underwent a parallel transition as well.

Representation, is the aestheticized name for the political. In modern life, aesthetics is one step forward from politics. The Enlightenment has not only reduced reason to rationality, but reduced all that is political either to representation or to aesthetics as well. In a similar vein, In Germany in 1930s, not only politics but culture has been aestheticized too. Foucault presents an enriching analysis on the transformation of the understanding of aesthetics in his famous work, "Discipline and Punish".(41) Here, he demonstrates that towards the end of the 18th century, the

construction of body, as the site on which justice was practiced, had begun to change. Until then, justice was practiced on the human body by torturing it. Yet, after the late 18th century, "aesthetics" underwent a profound change and a new understanding of aesthetics has emerged. This was related with the emergence of the "legal laws". Thus,

"... a large army of technicians, guards, physicians, priests, psychiatrists, psychologists and educators have taken on themselves the administration from the executor whom was the practitioner on the "body"."(42)

Towards the end of the 18th century, there has emerged a new power that was to shape both the social and political structure. Throughout this arduous process, the idea of punishing the physical body of the human being, has been substituted by the idea of prison punishing.(43) Moreover, politics has underwent a change as well, since the idea of consensus-based politics has been aesthetically reformulated in such a way so as to be carried out by "representatives". More clearly, within the newly established framework, the delinquent was to be punished not by the entire society but by its representatives. At this precise stage, it needs to be asked what kind of consensus is this? Is it the consensus that gave birth to anti-Semitism in Hitler's Germany and legitimized this attitude upon an aesthetical base? Is it the type of consensus

reminiscent of the universalistic metanarratives that are almost worldwidely accepted today? Can there be micro aesthetics within the macro aesthetic understandings? All these questions bring us directly to the postmodern problematique of making ethics/aesthetics.

One of the most distinguishing features of postmodern politics is the increasing role of the "City", in which various different social groups and different architectural styles manage to exist side by side. The "City", as a metanarrative of the modernist project, has been the symbol of man's control over the nature, in the modernist framework. What emerges from this point is that the main features of the postmodern period should be sought in the "city", in which the end of the modernist project can be detected. At the outset, the city had played a crucial role in modernizing the societies, organizing the human beings and establishing the relations among the people and communities. Yet, today, both the individuals and the communities are postmodernizing the cities which once had modernized them.

In postmodern cities, communities are of central importance, since they directly reflect the chaos and plurality intrinsic to postmodernism. The cities have been expanding so as to create new cities within the existing ones. This complex process in turn, brought forward the disintegration of urban life and the emergence of particular urban elements operating by themselves.

The inevitable consequence of this process has been the destruction of all that is social, within the highly fragmented atmosphere of the cities.(44) Furthermore, one reason why the communities are becoming more and more important for the postmodern individual is the gradual disappearance of confidence. As such, within the highly fragmented and diversified urban panorama, the individual is confronted with "alienation".

Thus, what we are faced with now, is the fear and anxiety of the people and a widespread process of individual alienation. This however, is only half of the story. The individual will sooner or later try to get rid of the individualization that harshly imprisons him/herself. In doing so, s/he will look for the alternative ways to express her/himself. For this purpose, the individual will tend to situate him/herself in the new communities, established upon an ethnic, cultural or religious base.

In postmodern politics, the central power loses its authority, while the cities and city plannings gain more and more importance, in accordance with the principle of self-regulation. Concurrently, the capital, which is extending beyond the limits of nation-states and acquiring a global character, penetrates into urban life. Hence, the cities begin to rediscover their particular historical, cultural and social features as these will obviously help the development of an attractive market for the global capital.



Inevitably, the more the city becomes aware of its attractive force for global capital, the more the principle of self-regulation is defended and vice versa. Such a great change concerning the economic, cultural and social spheres, has been compelling national politics to carry out the required changes in the political structure.

In emphasizing the importance of a "pluralist" democracy, postmodernism criticizes the modernist democracy which values majorities and not multiplicities. In postmodern politics, on the other hand, the formation of such a cultural or political majority is not necessary since what matters primarily, is the maintenance of the plurality of the cultures and discourses that altogether constitute the society. It follows from this emphasis on pluralities, rather than on majorities, that the metanarratives should be questioned and challenged. Instead, the micro narratives should be rendered visible in every realm of social life. Thus, we have arrived at the most salient concern of postmodern politics, namely "the maintenance of differences". The strong relation between postmodernism and pluralism is established precisely on this emphasis.

In political history there have been thinkers who have rejected the idea of democratic majority in order to uphold the maintenance of differences. For instance, for Isaiah Berlin, the earliest thinkers who have uphold differences in political life have been Giovanni Battista Vico and Gottfried von Herder.(45)

Giovanni Battista Vico argued that the adequate understanding of history required the adequate evaluation of pluralities. At this precise stage, the validity of the arguments of Levi-Strauss on the pluralist aspect of the societies should be acknowledged.(46)

While politics in a postmodern political condition is being shaped upon the basis of economic problems, apolitical social movements gain importance on the basis of "identity quest". Once the fundamental notion of "politics" is undermined, then, a whole series of political practices can be constructed on a new basis. This is to say that, once the traditional ways of making politics, which directly focus their attention on seizing the power, disappear, new and micro struggles will enter into the stage. It is noteworthy that these marginal micro movements are not struggling to seize state power but merely to express their own identities and to have "a room of their own". Among these movements the most prominent are the feminists, the environmentalists and the homosexuals. These molecular movements are not directly linked to a strictly defined political ideology and as such, their distinguishing feature is their relatively apolitical standing within a pluralist framework.

### **4.3 New Ways of Making Politics in a Postmodern Society**

From what has been stated so far, it may be concluded that, all the political deductions we used to make in order to understand the world, are becoming meaningless within the postmodern paradigm.(47) The traditional divisions in political life, such as right/centre/ left, are losing their grounds of legitimacy. Both the Western modernity and its mainpillars are disappearing one by one. Since the metanarratives on which both the left and the right have been relying until now, are losing their credibility, the traditional distinctions of left and right are becoming meaningless too. On the whole then, in the postmodern world, the ways of making politics have changed.(48) Today, social and political transformations have made it necessary to develop new ways of making and analysing politics.(49) Postmodernism urges such a change with its pluralistic and individual-oriented understanding of politics.

Following L. Althusser's definition of the "Ideological State Apparatuses", the state's ideological aparatuses(50) are also going to change in a postmodern society. After all, these deeply-rooted and ages-old apparatuses cannot be expected to remain the same. The fact that the social structure and the ideological state apparatuses are changing will bring a further change in the practices of making politics as well. One good example that demonstrates this process is given by Felix Guattari and Gilles

Deleuze in *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*.(51) In this illuminating study, they indicate that two different games, namely chess and go, have different rules and strategies. To begin with, in chess, the chessmen are strictly codified. This is to say that the acts and positions of every chess man is codified before hand. Hence, the chess-men have a subjectified position. Apart from their internal characteristics, there is obviously a hierarchical structure among them. Nevertheless, the men in the play of go are far from being subjectified. They neither have internal characteristics nor a rigid hierarchy. The only thing that can be said about the go-men is that they have a particular condition at this specific moment, which is to say, at the "present moment".

Chess on the other hand, resembles a codified and institutionalized war. It is therefore, nothing other than semiology, due to the existence of strictly codified steps and strategies. Apart from these substantial differences, the areas of each game are different as well. In chess, it is necessary to expand a closed area in accordance with the previously given rules and codifications. Yet, in go, it is not possible to encounter a closed arena. There is rather an open arena, in which the players can do anything at any moment. In this sense, in go, movement is continuous and limitless. Where the go-men are proceeding cannot be possibly anticipated. It should be clear by now that the internal dynamics of the go are highly reminiscent of the postmodern understanding of time, in which there is neither a "before" nor an "after, but merely the existing

present moment. Likewise, every single movement in the game of go is made within the postmodern "now".

While chess, just like the state, tends to codify the place and time, the movements and formations, the arena of go is reconstructed by the help uncodified movements and formations. A closer look at this case will reveal out that what is going on in the game of go is in fact, a deterritorialisation in the sense of remaining within the "now" and keep creating new places from there.

If we follow the line of reasoning drawn by G. Deleuze and F. Guattari, modern politics reminds the game of chess. In both, there are strictly codified movements and formations. Within these codified movements and formations in turn, both the "time" and "place" of modern politics have been previously codified. Here we touch on a further theme that Carl Schmitt pursued with a greater intensity by maintaing that the basis of modern politics is dependent upon the well-known distinction between "we" and "you".(52) This is exactly the point around which the restless reproduction of the dichotamic construction of "the one/the Other one" revolves.

There are two distinct spheres of politics in the society, the first of which is the sphere of macro-politics, which covers the individual, his/her family and the surrounding, while the other is the sphere of micropolitics, which belongs to the

individual and to the society. In the sphere of macro politics everything is codified before hand. Here, a woman is a woman and a man is a man. In the sphere of macro politics the process of codification is also carried out by the apparatuses of the state. Nevertheless, in the sphere of micro politics the process of codification is neither rigid nor stable. Here, codifications can be destroyed at any time and new formations can emerge. Evidently, the features of micropolitics resemble the game of go. In both "anything goes!"

Within the present social structure, no organisation or movement or political party represents anything. Put differently, the contemporary movements or formations are now far from having a mass character. Rather, they are essentially molecular. Today, there are various molecular revolutionary movements, just like F. Guattari states in his "Molecular Revolution".(53) As a matter of fact, all these developments indicate a crisis of politics which is to a large extent, dependent upon the crisis of "representation". As marginality becomes more and more widespread in Western societies, the social structure loses the character of being primarily a mass society.

Various movements, such as environmentalism, feminism, human rights and disarmament, which are frequently seen in Western societies, represent the new ways of making politics. There is no doubt that the main feature of these new ways of

making politics is its nonpartisanship. As mentioned before, the new forms of making politics are not power-oriented in the sense of being concentrated on the seizure of state power. These new insights lay the basis for the questioning of an old understanding. This is to say that, the new ways of making politics reject the most fundamental features of traditional politics.

On the other hand, within these new styles of making politics, "symbols" and "icons" have gained importance. In other words, the discourses based on symbols and images have become more prominent than the classical discursive arguments. It should be clear therefore, that reality has been replaced by image. The very distinction between the "real" and "unreal" has become blurred as images have turned into realities.(54) On the other hand, the cultural and political spheres have penetrated into each other. The symbolized and iconized actors of the popular culture have simultaneously become the shapers and guides of the new political atmosphere.

There is one further point about the new styles of making politics, that needs to be clarified at this stage. This point is the idea of an incompatibility between modern understanding of civil society and the postmodern understanding. As a matter of fact, these two views *are* incompatible. Now, the civil society is first and foremost, a society of citizens. Citizenship, on the other hand, requires the establishment of "sameness" within the civil society.

All the members of the civil society are expected to constitute the "common good". This idea of the common good constitutes the very base of the modernist idea of civil society. As such, it is incompatible with the postmodern understanding of society in which the differences are continuously emphasized. In the final analysis, the idea of the "common good" is far from being democratic. From a postmodern viewpoint, if there is to be any "common good" at all, it should be elastic and heterogeneous.

On the other hand, viewed from the perspective of postmodernism, the democratic society can be only realized within the "now". Put in this way, the present moment constantly recalls the "past-present" and envisages the "future-present". As such, it is both active and prolific. Since the postmodern discourse has overcome dualistic understandings, the dichotomic construction of past and future has been abolished as well. The abolishment of this deeply-rooted dichotomy directly confronts us with the necessity of reformulating and reconstructing the economic, political and cultural aspects of the society on the basis of the plurality of "the present moment". Most intriguing of all, is the prevention of the society's being subjected to the impositions of the spatial and temporal constructions. In sum, from a postmodern viewpoint, the extension of "now" goes hand in hand with the extension of a truly democratic order.



#### **4.4 Postmodern Democracy**

The movement of globalization that has entered into the political stage after the 1980s and the fervent debates on the New World Order, are in fact emphasizing the significance of a series of changes in politics and economy.(55) The postmodernist movement that can be witnessed in every sphere of social life, does not only render visible the ongoing changes but probes them, as well.

Although the postmodernists emphasize the role of the individual, what is more significant for them is the nature of interpersonal relations. The discourses shaped by these interpersonal relations constitute the society. This is to say that, these discourses play a fundamental role in the construction of an active democracy. This is exactly why postmodern politics requires the existence of a large number of communities, based either on ethnic or religious foundations. From a postmodern viewpoint, the more the number of these communities, the more reinforced democracy is. This is due to the fact that, the plurality of the discourses which do not intend to be universalistic, is a prerequisite for the establishment of a truly democratic order.(56) Therefore, in postmodern thought, democracy is being produced and reproduced in the "intermediate field" established between various discourses.

For the relation between the social structure and the

discourses to be adequately clarified, the influence of metanarratives should be destroyed at once. This process is in a sense, the process of bringing to an end the codification of social relations by metanarratives. When the postmodernists attack the metanarratives what they are really looking for is the "clarification of codes".

The nonpolitical movements of the civil society, such as the feminist, environmentalist, homosexual, antinuclear movements, are in fact creating new areas of struggle. These areas can be named as the "cultural and discursive areas" of the new order. Unlike the modernist movements, which were primarily economical, the postmodernist movements are primarily cultural. This is not surprising given the fact that in this new postmodern or postindustrial period, culture has become a "material product" that can be bought and sold.

To review what has been underlined so far, today, parliamentarist democracies are faced with a serious crisis of representation. One fundamental implication of this crisis is the postmodern questioning of the notion of "consensus", which had been both defined and extolled as the "dominance of the majority" in modernist times. The dark side of the picture however, had been the suppression of minorities in the name of the common good of the majority. It is exactly at this point where postmodernism wages a war against the notion of consensus. If the latter is not challenged,

neither the minorities nor the "others" can find the opportunity to raise their voices in the society.

In the postmodern political condition, the power of democracy in representing the societies is being questioned as well. In this way, postmodern politics comes out with an alternative that is being concretened under the title of "radical democracy". Thus, the strength of the postmodern critique of modernist understanding of democracy revolves around the notion of radical democracy. Broadly stating, the basic purpose of the latter is to render differences visible. In a similar vein, radical democracy intends to increase social diversity and to maintain cultural plurality.(57) According to the main arguments of radical democracy, the *raison d'être* of politics is neither to suppress the existing minorities and differences nor to maintain the social consensus. Rather, the *raison d'être* of politics is to sustain the existing differences, multiplicities, and confrontations.(58) This simple demand of radical democracy has in fact fairly complex implications. One of these is that, the discourse of radical democracy cannot possibly be a universalistic discourse. As a matter of fact, a universalistic discourse is neither possible nor desirable, since no universal discourse can have the capacity to represent all the existing multiplicities.(59)

This last comment underlines the fact that postmodern society has to be more democratic than the modern society. This in turn, is highly difficult -but not impossible- to

provide, given the fact that technology is increasingly expanding so as to influence every single sphere of social life. Faced with these developments, democracy has to manage to fulfill the needs of every segment in the society. One further change that democracy has to take into consideration is related with the process of localization. The contemporary network of communications has quickened this process and thus, politics has began to acquire a local character as well. This implies to create new local centres of power outside the parliamentary. In short, the social transformations of the postmodern times are accompanied by similar changes in politics. As such, the mass parties or trade unions of the modern times are losing their grounds of legitimacy and paving the way to the construction of multiple focal points in political life. It is exactly around these multiple focal points that the identity struggle of minorities and pluralities is being organised.

#### 4.5 Are the New Postmodern Formations an Opportunity for the "Left"?

As the societies proceed from being industrial to being post-industrial, their internal dynamics are changing as well.<sup>16</sup> The table given below demonstrates the main aspects of such a process.

Table I

Political-Economic Capitalist Transformation The new capitalism according to Hall		
	The Old Capitalism (Industrial Paradigm)	The New Capitalism (Post-industrial Paradigm)
Frontier of progress	hard growth	smart growth
Organisation	mechanistic structure	market newtworks
Decision-making	authoritative command	participative leadership
Institutional values	financial goals	multiple goals
Management Focus	operational management	strategic management
Economic macrosystem	profit-centered big business	democratic free enterprise
World System	capitalism versus socialism	hybrids of capitalism and socialism

The above given table demonstrates the political and economic transformation of capitalism.(61) In this table the

<sup>16</sup> For more information on this subject, Richard Bendham's "The Sociology of Industrial and Post-Industrial Societies" can be referred to.(Current Sociology, vol 32, no 1, spring 1984, p1-94)

notions of "old capitalism" and "the new capitalism" are being used instead of the notions of "industrial society" and postindustrial society". Between the two different forms of capitalism there are significant differences. While the old capitalism relies more heavily upon clear-cut ideologies operating in the world system, the new capitalism has a much more multifaceted aspect in the sense of being formed by hybrids of ideologies. This complexity can be also detained in the institutional values of new capitalism. Likewise, while the decision making process of old capitalism is marked by authoritarian command, that of the new capitalism is shaped by participative leadership.

To be sure, in postindustrial societies(62) the content of politics is undergoing a profound transformation. The traditional oppositionary poles, named as "right" and "left" have entered into a new stage within this process of change. change. The "right" does not defend the rights of the people at the top of the sociocultural hierarchy anymore, just like the "left" does not confine itself to the advocacy of the rights of the people at the bottom of the sociocultural hierarchy. Now, the "left" tends to advocate the rights of those people defined as the "scum of the earth thrown to the sea due to the greatness of their number" by A. Touraine.(63)

Especially after the 1980s, the gravity center of the society and culture has been changed. In this complex process, new social divisions, as well as new "forms of inequality" have

emerged. Likewise the number of "the centers of resistance" has substantially increased in accordance with the emergence of new social movements and identities. Now, the ongoing change or rather, the cluster of changes tend to erode the structure of the nation-state. Likewise, the pace of international relations weakens both the modern state theories and the modern state power. It perhaps goes without saying that, the process of globalization creates new forms of intervention and participation.(64)

One of the conclusionary remarks that can be drawn out of these developments is the fragmentation of the power and sovereignty of the nation-states in terms of national and international relations.(65) Thus, the question with which contemporary politics has to tackle with is how will the international structure be shaped by politics in this newly formed framework? The search for an answer to this question has profound implications since the new aspect of politics tends to transcend the boundaries of nationstates. From one point of view, the process of globalization may bring forward a weakening of the democratic culture, since the necessity of meeting the demands of the increasingly diversifying societies is hard to be met properly. Any frustration in this respect, may weaken the faith in democracy.

While the new social formations are expressing themselves in micro and macro spheres, they are being faced with the compelling force of the democratic culture which had been

previously defined on the basis of majority rule. In this new period the majorities are turned into minorities. Once the minorities will be restricted by the boundaries of the democratic culture, they will inevitably look for alternative ways of expressing themselves. This in turn, will undoubtedly extend the limits of democratic life. The result will be the emergence of new understandings and practices of democracy and new social structures.(66)

On the whole then, both democracy and the Left are being expanded in order to manage to comprise the civil society not in the name of "majority" but in the name of "multiplicity".(67) The increasing of multiplicities in turn, is not an unproblematic development. To the contrary, recent developments are replete with the seeds of discontent and crisis.

When the theoretical and practical outcomes of the Left are concerned, its decline during the 1980s is directly related with its strong relation with modernism.(68) There is in fact a triple relation between capitalism, modernism and the Left. For Marx, the process of modernisation had been initiated by capitalism and it would be accomplished by socialism. Marx was certainly aware of the problematic nature of capitalist modernity; yet, he was planning to solve these problems with a socialist solution. Nevertheless, his expectation has still not been realized towards the end of the 20th century. What covers the stage now is the ambiguity of postmodern life. It is this ambiguity that frustrates and



erodes the relation between modernism and the Left. Thus, the crisis of the Left in 1980s is directly related with the interrelationship between modernist ideology and the Leftist ideology.

Dualism, which has been the base of modernism and Enlightenment and has been shaping modernism, has made modernism double-faced. Just like Marx had stated in elaborating the relation between modernism and capitalism, today all that is solid melts into air.(69) T. Adorno on the other hand, has defined this dualist, unbalanced and contradictory aspect of modernism as the "Negative Dialectics of Enlightenment".(70)

The fact that the postmodern society is being "pluralised" by being fragmented, has given rise to the emergence of new centres of confrontation and power. These new centres of confrontation and power coincide with one another within the social structure, sometimes in an overt and sometimes in a covert way. Obviously, new organisations and organisational forms are established around these new centres. And the Left has to grasp this restlessly changing aspect of the postmodern society and to develop new policies upon this ground. For instance, today, the areas that have been excluded from politics until so far, have begun to acquire a political character. For this reason, the Left has to manage to grasp the dynamics of this "politicization of apolitical areas" if it is to propose a strong alternative. Furthermore, the Left should also manage to adequately analyse the new centres of confrontation

and resistance. The fulfillment of all these in turn, requires the careful evaluation of the theoretical works of leading postmodern thinkers, such as Foucault, Lyotard, Baudrillard..etc.(71) To put this somewhat differently, the critiques and analyses of the postmodern literature, should not be ignored by the Left, if the latter is to succeed in grasping the main dynamics of the contemporary transformations.

Within the new postmodern formation, new "attachment points" have been added to the previously established centres of power and confrontation. What is meant by this specific term, is the attachment of various distinct micro identities to political structure, for the purpose of expressing their demands and distinctive features. This in turn, bring forward further changes in the political structure. As a matter of fact, the radical change in the political relations, as well as the emergence of new centres of political resistance, have made it necessary to question what politics itself means. And this is exactly what is being done in the postmodern theoretical framework. Since the content and dynamics of politics are being reshaped and transformed within the formation of postmodern society, the postmodern theoreticians have focused their attention upon this fascinating process.

On the other hand, there is no doubt that the organisation of both the mass parties and of other political or social groups is changing. In this sense, the overall changes in the

political framework, can be further witnessed in the structures of political organisations. For instance, the table presented below demonstrates the linkages of the ongoing changes with the economic realm, production process, labour, ideology and so on. All these new insights lay the basis for the understanding of an old problem, namely the structure of the state. Leaving the enormous body of literature on the capitalist state aside for the moment, it can be asserted that the structure of the state has begun to change as well. Unlike the previous structure, the new one is elastic and dynamic, at least in relative terms. The policies of the welfare state are now being substituted by the collective privatization policies adopted in accordance with the requirements of "social security". More strikingly, the Fordist production mode of the modern times have been replaced by post-Fordism. This shift has been accompanied with a parallel shift from a more centralized structure to decentralization.

**Table 2 Contrast Between Fordism and Flexible Accumulation  
According to Swyngedouw(72)**

<b>Fordist Production</b> based on economies of scale	<b>Just-in-time production</b> based on economies of scale
<b>A THE PRODUCTION PROCESS</b>	
mass production of homogenous goods uniformity and standardization	small batch production flexible and small batch prod. of a variety of product types
large buffer stocks and inventory resource driven	no stocks demand driven
vertical and sometimes horizontal integration	quasivertical integration

**Table 2. Contrast Between Fordism and flexible accumulation  
according to Swyngedouw**

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**Fordist Production  
based on economies of scale**

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**Just-in-time production  
based on economies of scale**

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**B. LABOUR**

single task performance by worker  
high degree of job specification  
no or only little job training  
vertical labour organization  
no learning experience  
no job security

multiple task  
elimination of job demarcation  
long job training  
more horizontal labour org.  
job learning  
high employment security for  
core workers

**C. STATE**

regulation  
rigidity  
collective bargaining

socialization of welfare  
centralization  
national regional policies

deregulation/reregulation  
flexibility  
division/individualization,  
local or firm based negotiations  
privatization of collective needs  
decentralization  
territorial regional policies

**D. IDEOLOGY**

modernism  
mass consumption of consumer  
socialization

postmodernism  
individualized consumption  
individualization

The postmodern age is the age of great upheavals which undoubtedly influence every sphere of society in the sense of eroding the old formations and giving birth to new ones. In these new formations, a new form of dialogue is emerging between the political parties and the society.(73) Precisely at this point some political parties will be able to grasp the content of the new dialogues, whereas some others will fail to do so. As such, the parties that cannot conform themselves to the ever changing nature of postmodern society, will inevitably disappear from the political stage. One could go on at length in this vein. Then, it will be clear that the old type mass parties will be substituted one by one, by those parties that manage to make politics in the name of various groups of differing sizes and demands. One particular example that can be given in this respect is the political atmosphere in Italy, in which the 1996 elections have been organized with 200 political parties. Understandably, the old political and social alliances are being eroded at the moment, while the new centres of resistance are urging the political parties to reconstruct themselves on the basis of a pluralist society.

At this point a new phenomena enters into the stage. This is the notion of the "Commodification of Culture" which indicates that the party or parties possessing a commodified culture tend to emerge as the "most powerful". More significantly, those parties and formations that are powerful enough to change the culture and the society, will further change the structure of the

capitalist state. Within the contemporary postmodern political atmosphere, two trends seem to go hand in hand. One of these is the diversification, while the other is the internationalization of national politics. As the centres of confrontation and resistance increase in number, these two trends are further intensified.

Lastly, at least a few words should be said about the traditional distinction between "left" and "right". Perhaps it won't be an exaggeration to maintain that this ages-old distinction is gradually being substituted by the distinction between the distinct varieties of postmodernism. This is to say that the highly polarized structure of modern politics is being eroded by the new political and social developments. This being the case, the majority of the new social movements cannot be confined to a polarized structure. This is all the more obvious when those movements, such as feminism(74) or nationalism, that are highly varied within themselves, are taken into account. Evidently, such movements do not directly fit within the traditional patterns of either the leftist or rightist politics.(75)

In the final analysis then, such social movements give rise to the emergence of new political understandings, practices and organisations. This complex process brings forward a radical politization which is overtly different from the previous situation. The most striking aspect of this new political condition in which the

political sites are continuously being multiplied, is the disappearance of the old distinction between the private and the public sphere.(76)

All these points of emphasis demonstrate the necessity of invoking a new "political language" or a new political discourse.(77) This insistent stress on language should not be surprising, given the fact that postmodernism interprets politics as the competition and struggle among different linguistic games and the activity of finding connections among distinct speeches.(78)

In concluding, it seems necessary to once again return to the theme of time. One further necessity that the "Left" has to take into consideration if it is to succeed in a postmodern age, is the control of time. To be sure, the post-Fordist production, which has become the main mode of production in a post-Industrial society, has brought forward suitable changes in the existing temporal terminology. These changes in turn, are organised in accordance with the internal aspects of the post-Fordist production, such as divided shifts, part-time works and so on. (79) In such a dynamic framework of restructuring, the Left has to both review itself and to recall its historical mission. This implies to say that, in a postmodern age in which the scientific modernity of Fordism(80) is being fervently questioned and the Post-Fordist principles are being uphold, the Left has to manage to reconstruct itself with a critical eye, both in the theoretical and the practical sphere.

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## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSION

In this study, the question of what is postmodernism has been probed, along with the historical development of the term itself. By looking at the information provided in this process, especially the first part of the study has concentrated on whether postmodernism is a theory or not. In my opinion, postmodernism should be evaluated as a specific discourse rather than as a theory which surrenders the Western world. This implies to say that, postmodernism, as the discourse that marks contemporary Western thought, covers a variety of ideas, beliefs and practices and provides an attractive base for almost all the groups or individuals, which are in one way or another, against the modernist system. From here, I have tried to argue that, not only the structural base of the society, but its cultural and intellectual dimensions are undergoing a significant transformation. It is precisely because of this transformation that there has emerged a new political approach based upon multiplicities and pluralities.

In the second part of this study, I have defended the view that postmodern political approach best corresponds to the dynamics of post-industrial societies. This is mainly because the

postmodern world is unlike the previous stages, since the contemporary technological developments have altered not only the social structure in general but the daily cultural, political and social practices of the individual beings as well. It follows from this widespread transformation that new social and cultural practices have entered into the social stage. Within this rather complex and confusing framework, postmodernism appears as the "cultural practice" of the post-Industrial societies. In other words, it is these converging reflections on technological developments and social dynamism that provide the background for the appearance of postmodern thought and practice.

Broadly stating, social developments breed new trends in arts. This strong relation can be easily seen in the history of postmodern thought, since the latter has been initially employed in the realms of architecture, literature and painting. Yet, the postmodern thought quickly proceeded into other realms of social life, as the technological developments increasingly urged the necessity of creating an alternative culture. In this sense, postmodernism is the cultural outcome of a highly complex process that extends back to the 1970s. When viewed from a critical standpoint, postmodernism may be interpreted as the first phase of the stagnation of capitalism. As a matter of fact, postmodernism cannot be thought apart from the increasingly growing social unrest and discontent. Put differently, the dynamics of postmodernism are shaped by the "centres of resistance" that are established in order to

question and challenge the mainpillars of modernist system. As such, the ongoing changes and unstabilities can be seen as the indicators of the urge to challenge the modernist extoltation of reason in the name of "rationalization".

All throughout this study, I have tried to defend the idea that the ongoing changes in the contemporary world, bring along a real social transformation. As it has been demonstrated in this study, these changes can be interpreted in different ways. In a similar vein, there are some thinkers who tend to situate themselves within modernity and interpret the ongoing changes as the very implications of modernity itself. However, I prefer to uphold the thinkers who view the ongoing changes within postmodernity, since in my opinion the very basis of the society slides rapidly.

As it has been elaborated in the second part of this study, the political dimension of the changing social structure presents us an undeniable plurality and complexity. The emergence of new social movements, such as the cultural, ecologic, democratic, feminist, anti-nuclear...etc., movements, should be interpreted within this dynamic framework. The basic common concern of these otherwise divergent movements, has been the persistent emphasis placed upon the subject and the individual. Based upon this, it has been maintained that the notion of public politics has been replaced by a new style in which personal interests and images

play a determining role. Thus, the new approaches to solving the existing problems reject the power and capacity of the macro political formations. Rather than these, the new approaches push forward a heterogeneous political cooperation in which the molecular apolitical movements operating at the local level and defending the emancipation of individual identities, can be harmoniously integrated.

As it has been maintained in the second part of this study, the postmodern society is composed of differences, multiplicities and pluralities. Understandably, it is precisely because of this complexity that postmodern politics makes a continuous attempt to render the existing differences visible. In a quite constant way, postmodernism defends a pluralist democracy. Accordingly, it questions and challenges the modernist understanding of democracy, in which majorities, rather than multiplicities, are the main concern. This is to say that, the postmodern politics no longer seeks the dominating force created by the majority of cultures or political discourses. As I have tried to indicate in this study, postmodernism is concerned with the creation and recreation of a plurality of cultures and discourses. It is exactly because of this concern that postmodernism opposes the legitimacy and desirability of metanarratives. In a similar vein, postmodernism questions the process whereby metanarratives both shape and codify individual and social life. This is one fundamental reason why postmodernism rejects the democratic formations based upon the idea of



maintaining a consensus. After all, the maintenance of a consensus is in itself nothing other than a metanarrative. Furthermore, this consensus has been so far viewed as the dominance of the majority. This is to say that, minorities have been either ignored or suppressed in the name of consensus.

As I have tried to demonstrate in the section dealing with postmodern politics, the *raison d'être* of politics should not be the attempt to suppress minorities and differences in the name of maintaining a consensus. To the contrary, the *raison d'être* of politics should be the attempt to render the existing differences, pluralities and multiplicities visible. It is basically because of this fundamental point of emphasis, that I have indicated the suitability of radical democracy for postmodern politics. After all, radical democracy both upholds and develops the postmodern emphasis on the significance of both rendering visible the existing differences and providing the continuation of multiplicities and divergences.

In short, in this study I have tried to demonstrate the the various dimensions of the ongoing social changes in the contemporary world, as well as the novel approaches to these changes. In doing so, I have defended the idea that there are cultural and structural changes in the social sphere, which go hand in hand with the emergence of new forms of making politics. It follows from here, that postmodern politics is a significant search for giving adequate responses to the necessities fostered by the newly emerging

**social, cultural and political changes.**



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