Chapter V: Cultural Capitalism or Post-Marxist Liberalism

The debate on globalization leads us logically to the issue of the culture of global capitalism in what is deemed to be a Post-Marxist age. It is therefore necessary to identify the characteristics and functioning of the global cultural economy. The rapid spread of commodity culture and the flows of flexible capital in a liberalized global economy networked with computers and telecommunication give one the impression that the world is now totally integrated into one single system. It appears therefore that globalization has made possible a unification of the world which was unthinkable a couple of decades ago. The language of the globalists suggests that all national boundaries have now disappeared after complete economic deterritorialization.

While local cultures are highlighted in the media by turning them into exhibition artifacts and performances, a subtle message is being circulated that the culture of liberal capitalism is also humanistic. This attempt has a two-fold agenda: one, to make the culture of transnational capitalism more acceptable to people in the South and the other, to promote it as an alternative humanism to Marxism. This chapter will examine the political and economic aspects of globalization from a Marxist perspective to understand whether the culture of global capitalism serves as a suitable alternative to socialism. It will also examine the theoretical shifts effected by later Marxists that ultimately diluted the revolutionary character of Western Marxism.

In the initial years of liberalization and reforms even here in India, whenever there were fears expressed about the massive inflow of foreign capital and fluctuating stock markets, one would occasionally hear the familiar phrase, reforms with a human face. After the end of the cold war we have entered a new phase in history where the
world has become uni-polar. This world consists of the most powerful nations belonging to the G-7; however there exists another world consisting of Asia, South-East Asia, Africa and Latin America which together broadly designate the South. So, the conflict in globalization is essentially between the dominant West and the rest. The emergence of a world economic system based on redistributive mechanisms calls for a historical analysis of the latest form of capitalism that claims to be functioning with different normative practices. Hence, it is crucial to examine some of the specific ways in which globalization seeks to create a conducive atmosphere for its functioning. One can then proceed to a Marxist analysis of the postmodern discourse to identify some key anti-Marxist points in its rhetoric. It is important to look at some of the important aspects of the world capitalist system to understand transnational trade practices.

At the outset, one has to acknowledge the fact that at the beginning of the 21st century, a well knit system of global practice is in place which works according to a particular system of logic. This global system functions across national boundaries attempting to create acceptable forms of transnational practices. Leslie Sklair suggests that “the global system, at the end of the 20th century, is not synonymous with the global capitalist system, but the driving forces behind global capitalism are the dominant though not the only driving forces behind the global system” (Sklair 64). He identifies the transnational corporations as the primary forces responsible for the internal dynamism of global economic practices. The TNC’s (Transnational Corporations) are themselves backed by global monetary agencies like the World Bank, the IMF and other minor commodity exchange agencies. A second transnational practice which Sklair identifies is the political practice which is definitely more contentious than the other two and suggests that “the primary agent in
the political sphere is a still evolving *transnational capitalist class (TCC)*” (64) The third practice which may be more relevant to the debate on ‘cultural capitalism’ belongs to the “cultural ideological” (64) sphere, and Sklair suggests that “the institutions of the *culture ideology of consumerism*, as expressed through the transnational mass media” (64) are the primary agents responsible for nurturing and running this practice.

Sklair provides a useful methodological scheme to explain the functioning of the global system. The three primary agents that he identifies produce particular practices which contribute in a big way to the effective functioning of the global system. The TNCs produce goods and services, while the emerging transnational capitalist class produces “the political environment within which the product of one country can be successfully marketed in another” (64). The culture ideology of consumerism promoted aggressively by the media produces, “the values and attitudes that create and sustain the need for the products” (64). While such an analytical framework does help us to understand the functioning of the global system, it does not provide any empirical evidence about the effects of global practices on different national economies and cultures. Nonetheless, it clearly identifies the TNCs as the agents responsible for running the global system. It shows that they get involved in shaping the politics, economics and cultural ideologies of several nation-states. In real terms, the TNCs weave the invisible web of international relations in the 21st century to make the global system possible.

It is important to note that at this historical juncture, capitalism has changed its form from international capitalism to global capitalism. While it is true that the nation-state has not entirely disappeared despite pressures of aggressive capitalism,
there seems to be a general acceptance of the fact that capitalism is entering a new global phase. Many business magazines that publish reports and analysis of the status of global capital including speculative reports about the future have made attempts to evaluate the functioning of globalization. Sklair writes, “*Fortune* magazine identified ‘globalization’ as the first four business revolutions happening simultaneously, the other three being computers, flexible management and the information economy” (65). Therefore, it can be construed that global capitalism would continuously increase production and international trade in order to run the global system effectively. Economic actors at various levels have become conscious of the fact that transnational practices can help extend their business transactions across the globe. As a result, “the volume of economic transnational practices has increased phenomenally since the 1950’s, as evidenced by the tremendous amount of foreign trade”, (66) and it is now very clear that the transnational capitalist class is “growing stronger and more united” (66). This new capitalist class is also spreading the culture ideology of consumerism across the globe.

Sklair argues that the new capitalist class does not carry the traditional characteristics of the typical bourgeoisie in the Marxist sense since direct ownership of the means of production “is no longer the exclusive criterion for serving the interests of capital” (66). It conveniently transcends such simple formulations as its members come from a vast range of professions but share a common interest in the flexible accumulation of capital. Sklair prefers to use the term “the international managerial bourgeoisie,” (66) to refer to this class and defines it as “a socially comprehensive category, encompassing the entrepreneurial elite, managers of firms, senior state functionaries, leading politicians, members of the learned professions, and persons of similar standing in all spheres of society” (66). All such professionals
come together to form a clique of global partners in trade and finance, but, more importantly, they also function as “professional purveyors and promotional personnel” (66) whose tasks include selling “the consumerist goals of the global capitalist system to the masses” (67). This class tries to organize the global system to create the necessary conditions for furthering its own interest and the interest of the system.

Moreover, the transnational capitalist class has to engage itself with the domestic politics of host countries in order to create the necessary conditions for the functioning of global capitalism and also to expand and sustain its own identity. In many developing countries including India, mainstream politics invariably involves the issue of class though it may not be allowed to take a central position by the political ruling class. The ruling class, on many occasions, actively colludes with the TCCs to divert the issue of class from mainstream political discourse. It often promotes the idea of masses while identifying itself with the capitalist class. The TCCs adopt a political strategy to influence or “change the nature of the political struggle between capital and labour” (67). To do this the TCCs build their own transnational political organization and the TNCs interfere, directly or indirectly, in the host nation’s politics. They collude with political parties to promote and fund local NGO’s that has direct influence in local politics. The political practice of the TCCs can also be measured by the extent to which they “constrain and are constrained by the local and / transnational labour movement” (67). A second practice of this class is to downgrade some of the local practices by comparing them with the more glamorous transnational practices in order to lure some of the domestic expertise into the global practice of the TNCs. This is seen in cases of international brain drain and “the people who make up this brain drain are the backbone of the transnational
capitalist class” (67). Therefore, one can conclude that the TCCs role is to convince the converts about the superiority of its practices and create a *comprador class* in the host nation.

The culture of global capitalism relies heavily on the mass media which acts as the “purveyor of cultural products” (68) to an ever expanding public in host countries. One of the most important functions that the mass media performs for global capitalism is that, “they speed up the circulation of material goods through advertising, which reduces the time between production and consumption” (68). The mass media therefore act as the cultivator of the dominant ideology of capitalism by trying to create a conducive political and cultural environment for the sustenance of capitalism. They have systematically blurred the lines of difference between culture, entertainment, information and consumption to an extent that today almost everything is viewed as an object of consumption. The consumerist world view has transformed “all public mass media and their contents into opportunities to sell ideas, values, products” (68). In this way, global capitalism has been able to build a system of global political practice and cultural ideological practice that can best serve its own interest.

Though cultural transactions between different social groups have been commonly noticed in earlier centuries, today’s transactions are of a different order, scale and intensity altogether. Historically, cultural transactions have been restricted in terms of geography and ecology and quite often resisted in terms of ethnicity and race. However, several sustained transactions across the globe have always involved long distance trade in commodities and the related movement of merchants, travelers and explorers. Warfare and religious conversions are also two very important forces
responsible for sustained cultural transactions in the past. Hence, Arjun Appadurai, suggests that “between travelers and merchants, pilgrims and conquerors, the world has seen much long-distance (and long-term) cultural traffic. (Appadurai 220). However, all cultural transactions in the past were limited by constraints of time, distance and absence of communicational technologies. Therefore, sustaining them over a period of time, even if it was in the interest of trade, profit, or religion, required great effort on the part of the dominant partner. And, cultural difference was always “bridged at great cost” (221).

The increase in long distance trade in 18th and 19th centuries, along with European colonization and technology transfers buffeted cultural transactions in a big way. For the first time in world history, the non-European world began to experience the effect of massive cultural flows from the Euro-colonial world. These flows, first set in motion by the Spanish and the Portuguese, were continued by the English, French and the Dutch. According to Appadurai, such transactions in recent history paved the way for globalization and large-scale transfer of cultural and political ideas. European colonization “set the basis for a permanent traffic in ideas of peoplehood and selfhood, which created the imagined communities of recent nationalisms throughout the world” (323). Therefore, in present times, one notices a growing tendency in people to identify themselves with the commodities that their nations produce when they are seeking a group identity but, when it is a matter of self-identity, they seem to shift to ethnic or local / communal identity. Hence, the sudden growth in representational forms of ethnicities can be directly attributed to global projects under capitalism that unleashed cultural products with ethnic affinities to capture the imagination of the people.
The nationalisms that were generated by colonialism and the ethnicities that one sees constructed today in the age of globalization are linked by the same thread: the thread that draws the story of the empire further into a new story of one world – one currency. The currency of global transaction, needless to say, is the dollar. Moreover, the world that we live in now has moved beyond the stage of print capitalism and “imagined communities” of Benedict Anderson into a technologically advanced stage of computers, speed transport and communication. We have entered the third stage of capitalism which can be designated as ‘post-late capitalism’. Here one lives in “an altogether new condition of neighborliness” (323). Advancements in the technology of digital communication are hailed quite often as having created a “global village” by media theorists like Marshall McLuhan. However, such theories have always “over estimated the communitarian implications of the new media order” (323). Appadurai argues that every time we are tempted to speak about the global village with the media, “we must be reminded that media create communities with ‘no sense of place’” (323).

Such a sense of not belonging to a particular place carries with it the sense of not belonging to a community of people also. Hence, this condition of rootlessness calls for psychological theories that can explain the growing sense of alienation between individuals and groups. It calls for a fresh approach to the Marxist theory of alienation rather than a theory that tries to celebrate the rhizomic and schizophrenic tendencies in a thoroughly individualistic world. Postmodern culture does exactly that in the name of celebrating pluralism. If on the one hand, the world has witnessed an extensive “McDonaldization” in the last two decades, it has also witnessed “the much subtler play of indigenous trajectories of desire and fear with global flows of people and things” (Appadurai 323) on the other. This is the crux of the problem of cultural
globalization which can be termed ‘cultural capitalism,’ since globalization is intricately connected with capitalism.

The culture of global capitalism cannot be assumed to be without contradictions. Therefore, Appadurai asserts that if a global cultural system is indeed emerging, “it is filled with ironies and resistances, sometimes camouflaged as passivity and a bottomless appetite in the Asian world for things Western” (323). While analyzing the Americanization of the Philippines, Appadurai says that Filipino renditions of some American popular songs like those of Kenny Rogers are so faithful to the original that they appear quite disturbing. They appear so because the lives of the Filipinos don’t seem to be in sync with “the referential world that first gave birth to these songs” (323). This is one of the crucial ironies of the politics of global cultural flows. It creates a “tension between cultural homogenization and cultural heterogenization” (324). Appadurai admits that most of the arguments on homogenization come from the left of the spectrum of media studies. He also suggests that many Neo Marxist theories of cultural homogenization fall short of arriving at a comprehensive account of global cultural system mainly because they are limited by other larger theories of commoditization and neo imperialism. He proposes that globalization is a two-way process where the local attempts to indigenize the global in as much as the latter tries to globalize the former. However, such arguments are not new anymore since, many theorists have proposed earlier that what we see today is actually a process of glocalization.

Nonetheless, the dynamics of globalization, one can agree, have created tensions of various kinds that are manifested in the cultural-political landscape of many nation-states today. More importantly, it must be noted that globalization, when
simplified as commoditization or Americanization, can appear like a huge monster of capitalism that has arrived on the scene to gobble up the indigenous cultural and economic practices of people in most Asian nations. It also creates a tension between the concept of the state and the nation by designating the former as a political-economic category and the latter as a cultural category. The state then, is no longer the legitimate authority in cultural matters. These matters are handed over to the experts in different fields of culture who, acting as the connoisseurs of art, entertainment and sport, will define and develop cultural practices within the larger domain of capitalism.

Global cultural practices and interfaces have become so complex today that they cannot be easily understood with the existing models. Appadurai suggests that “The new global cultural economy has to be seen as a complex, overlapping disjunctive order that cannot any longer be understood in terms of existing center-periphery models (even those that might account for multiple centers and peripheries)” (Appadurai 324). He suggests that the new cultural system that globalization has created with increased migration of people and transfer of technologies and products, does not easily lend itself to analyses from available theories of “push-pull, surplus-deficit or consumers-producers” (324). Even the most flexible Marxist theories of development have failed to give an adequate explanation for the current global cultural disorder. Appadurai suggests that they “have failed to come to terms with what Scott Lash and John Urry have called disorganized capitalism.” (324)

Therefore, it is necessary to understand the complex nature of the development of capitalism in globalization, to develop a useful critical discourse on cultural
capitalism. The disjunctures between culture, politics and economy in the current global scenario that Appadurai refers to, have to be considered seriously in order to gather the links between global capital flows and global cultural flows. The new cultural forms that invite critical attention are those that have emerged from various interfaces of culture with technology, ethnicities, geography, politics and capital. Appadurai identifies five dimensions of global cultural flows: “ethnoscapes, mediascapes, technoscapes, financescapes and ideoscapes” (324). He suggests that one must try to understand the relationship between them as also the fluidity and irregularity of their nature “that characterize international capital” (324). He also cautions that these ‘-scapes’ of culture are “deeply perspectival constructs, inflected by the historical, linguistic, and political situatedness of different sort of actors: nation-states, multinationals, diasporic communities, as well as sub-national groupings and movements” (325).

Capitalism therefore, is the one single force that has created such vast and dense flow of cultures across the globe, by intensifying migration of people across continents, increasing technology transfers, “mystifying money transfers by accelerating their speed of movement through international stock exchanges” (326), creating a global network of media companies to produce images and disseminate information in almost real time and lastly, by promoting a universal political ideology of liberal democracy aimed at capturing or influencing state power. Therefore, one can say that global capitalism has produced the notion of a global culture which is, as a matter of fact, a post enlightenment master narrative emanating from Euro-America, with no “internal coherence” (326) but operating with “a loosely structured synopticon of politics” (326). It functions in the guise of another more important master term: Democracy. This heavily ideological term that resonates from Haiti to
East Timor and China to Cuba, “sits at the center of a variety of ideoscapes, composed of distinctive, pragmatic configurations of rough translations of other central terms from the vocabulary of the Enlightenment” (326).

Democracy tries to translate the meaning of globalization to different people across different nations, but, in a paradoxical twist, it begins to get defined by the latter in terms of global capitalism. The fluidity of political ideology helps global capitalist forces to play out their game according to will in many nations where uncertainties are already well-entrenched in their political systems. Further, the fluidity of ideology is made more complicated “by the growing diasporas (both voluntary and involuntary) of intellectuals who continuously inject new meaning streams into the discourse of democracy in different parts of the world” (327). The role of intellectuals in producing and propagating political ideologies and theories will be discussed in the following chapter but for now, the discussion on the nature of global culture can be continued. The complexity of cultural flows in the last two decades is such that it almost defies rational analysis. The movement of people, technology, information and money has been so fast that each of them seems to have developed its own internal logic that defines its core dynamic. Hence, the disjunctures between them have begun to shape the dimensions of cultural flows in the present. Appadurai suggests that “the sheer speed, scale and volume of each of these flows are now so great that the disjunctures have become central to the politics of global culture.” (327)

Large scale migration of people has created different categories of Diasporas. If highly skilled technology workers like software engineers, architects, auditors, legal advisors, civil engineers and nuclear scientists compose the high-level migrant
population, unskilled workers like construction labour, waiters, chauffeurs, drivers and housemaids form the low level migrant group. The cultural identity that these diasporic groups try to build for themselves in a deterritorialized context largely influences and determines the character of global culture. Deterritorialization is “one of the central forces” that “brings laboring populations into the lower class sectors and spaces of relatively wealthy societies” (327). However, these migrant groups carry with them their native cultural identities, which, in a narrower sense, become their religious identity. Sometimes, these migrant groups exaggerate their sense of cultural alienation to influence “politics in the home state” (327). “Deterritorialization” (327) intensifies their affiliation to religious fundamentalism. Appadurai suggests that “‘deterritorialization’ whether of Hindus, Sikhs Palestinians, or Ukrainians, is now at the core of a variety of global fundamentalisms, including Islamic and Hindu fundamentalism” (327).

It has also created, at the same time, “a new market for films” (327) that bring back to these groups memories of a living historical past of their language, food, families and friends from whom they are now distanced in space and time. In a way, film makers who produce such films based on themes pertaining to cultural hybridity “thrive on the need of the deterritorialized population for contact with homeland” (327). Globalization has not only created a fetishistic culture by pushing commodities into new territories but has also created a fantastic idea of the ethnic / local by excessive mediatization of the real. Global culture carries with it the sense of loss of contact with the spatial, particular, the specific and a sense of nostalgia for the loss of the temporal. Hence, in the deterritorialized imagined space that globalization has created, culture becomes a “fragmented imaginary” that is played out now and then in the “mediascapes and ideoscapes of the modern world” (327). Elsewhere, it is a
commonplace scene “in which money, commodities, and persons are involved in ceaselessly chasing each other around the world” (327).

If this has been the general tendency of global cultural flows, the silence of Marxism amidst all this confusing noise generated by postmodernism appears perturbing. If Marxism provided some of the most useful insights into the nature of capital, wage-labour relations, commodity fetishism and philosophy in general, it could still be considered a useful methodological device for understanding postmodernism. However, there seems to be a general movement in the world today that looks at the term with a certain sense of discomfort. Some theorists like Lyotard declared the failure of the metanarrative apparatus suggesting the death of Marxism and Francis Fukuyama declared the end of history claiming that history ended with the end of class struggle. Apparently, they were in a hurry to bury Marxism so that “The Specters of Marx” (Derrida 1994) may never appear to haunt the world.

Derrida tries to reason why in contemporary western societies there is such fear of a return of Marxism. He attempts to explain why Marx’s “testament or his inheritance” (Derrida 120) continue to haunt Europe. The great desire of all political subjects and theologians after 1980’s was to get rid of Marx’s apparition. Derrida says that the coming together of so many voices resembles “a conjuration or conspiracy” (120) against Marx’s ghost. He suggests that the insistence of “deafening consensus” to conjure the ghost away “arouses a suspicion” that “the one who has disappeared appears still to be there, and his apparition is not nothing” (16). Therefore, it is necessary to examine the status of Marxism in the west today to understand why authors like Fukuyama or his readers still wish to celebrate the same “eschatological themes of ‘the end history,’ of the ‘end of Marxism,’ of the ‘end of Philosophy,’…” and
so forth” (16). Derrida nicknamed this the “Apocalyptic tone in philosophy” (16). A study of this tone will explain the celebratory mood of postmodernists on the demise of Marxism.

To begin with, it is necessary to clarify some of the common misconceptions about Marxism. More than a century after Marx’s life and death and a little over two decades after the collapse of the Soviet Union, Marxism is being castigated in the worst possible terms by global capitalist agencies. It is dubbed as old and outdated and declared a failed theory. Simultaneously however, consumer culture is hailed as the only possible liberal alternative to it. The end of an era of Soviet-style socialism needs to be acknowledged but that alone doesn’t necessarily imply that the theoretical formulation that so clearly explained the trajectory of capitalist growth has now become invalid. Further, orthodox Marxism has always been viewed as a theory obsessed with the idea of class and therefore, limited in scope to the study of economic schemas. However, such views have been commonly aired by most non-Marxist intellectuals from North America even in the past during the days of the cold war. But, somewhere in the sixties, the anti-Marxist intellectual movement gained further momentum with a gradual weakening in the European Marxist tradition and concurrent rise of Thatcherism and Reaganism in Anglo-America. This new intellectual movement also found very strong support from the media in North America where a rapid mediatization of society was taking place.

Therefore, it is crucial to examine the historical events of that time to understand the shift from critical-theoretical to liberal-pragmatic ideological schema. In France, more than a hundred years after the revolution of 1848, the intellectual scene seemed to be changing in the ‘late 1960s. The response of French intellectuals
to the students and workers protests that held the French government under siege and rocked the rest of Europe in the summer of May 1968, marks a significant shift in European thought signaling a movement away from critical praxis towards liberal individualism. In a severe indictment of some French intellectuals, especially Luc Ferry and Alaine Renault, who tried to interpret the May 60’s movement as a failure of ideology, Cornelius Castoriadis argues that the people who came out on the Parisian streets in support of the students and workers, were seeking “truth, justice and community” (Castoriadis 48), in addition to greater freedom, though “they were unable to find the institutional forms that could incarnate these views in a lasting manner”(48). According to him, the movement collapsed soon after the French trade unions signed the Grenelle agreements and just four weeks later the average Frenchman voted in favour of the government. However, the compromise with the government does not in any way underrate the nature of the movement and its contents. Castoriadis believes that it is impossible to ignore “the substance of its demands and the meaning of its forms and modes of action” (49).

It was a movement that was supported by a minority that believed in the possibility of a socialist revolution and carried the traditional form and content of any workers movement. Even though many who participated in the movement were confused and unsure about the practical end result, they did so “because they believed that a real revolution was taking place there, that the masses were eliminating the bureaucracy” (49). The significance of the movement lay in the form of “sit ins and public assemblies” (49) on the streets of Paris that sent a message across Europe that ideologies don’t disappear easily over time. France saw “considerable changes in social reality (and its institution) introduced by the movements of the sixties and the seventies” (49). This was the time when various concepts like the effacement of the
subject, the death of man, and the death of the author were already in circulation and “their inescapable corollary, the death of politics, could be made explicit without much effort” (51). Soon after May ’68 such views were made explicit by Michel Foucault who believed that all politics is a strategy which “could only lead to the establishment of counter powers, and therefore of powers” (51). Castoriadis rejects such interpretations of revolutionary politics and argues that the activities of May ’68 movements hardly carried any such thirst for power. He suggests that long before May ’68, the “representatives of a pseudoscientific ideology, structuralism: in chronological order, Levi -Strauss, Lacan, Barthes and Althusser” (51) had sent out their prophetic concepts of the death of the subject, man, meaning, signification etc. and interestingly, structuralism itself came to be questioned by the end of the decade. This was the general intellectual climate that soon began to produce more fashionable ideologies that better justified individualism and perverted lifestyle.

The movements of the 60’s could not ensure the institution of a new political imagination though they were able to bring a few changes by instituting certain formal rights, freedoms and guarantees. They left deep traces on the mental outlook and actual life of societies just as the revolution of 1789-92 or the Russian revolution of 1917 did to the collective imagination of the people “when the Bolsheviks seized power in the population’s absence” (55). The failure of the movements can be attributed to a general lack of interest in the ordinary citizen in the affairs of the state, as also a desire in him for individual autonomy. This autonomy, first actualizing its form in the institutions of the social sphere was to gradually percolate down to individual citizens. This development can be “clearly linked to the antinomic character of modern political imagination” (55), an imagination that distances itself from all political matters of the state, thus allowing politics to become the exclusive
domain of the state itself. The state then becomes merely a representational form, from where politics appears only as a form of “collective spasm of rage,” (55) a “paroxysm of anger” (55) against the excessive power of the state. Therefore, the events of May ’68 suggest a historical shift in European political thought: a shift that heralded the dissolution of politics as a collective activity and sought to push history out of the collective consciousness of the people.

The liberals on the right side of history tried to read the meaning of May ’68 differently. While downplaying the enormous potential the movements had to shape the collective imagination of the people, they tried to show that “May’68 has in the end been a growth in sales of pornographic video-cassettes” (55). The dissolution of the movements of the sixties heralded “the beginning of the new regressive stage in the political life of Western societies, a stage that we have been witnessing since the early 1970s.” (56) According to Castoriadis this regression has been synonymous with a new round of bureaucratization, privatization and mediatization. It has been accompanied by “a massive return of authoritarian tendencies” (56) in the new liberal oligarchies of Western societies. In the realm of culture and intellectual production, the human condition has been best expressed “in the guise of Pasqua and Fabius, Hernu and Leotard, Playboy and video-clips, pop-philosophy and ‘Postmodern’ hotchpotches” (57). In effect, the porno-pop culture of postmodernism replaced Marxist revolutionary political praxis.

Therefore, the failure of the May’68 movements signals, in many ways, the beginning of a new phase in the history of western capitalist societies. A definitive shift towards liberal politics took place during this time. It was also a time when left-wing politics was beginning to wane in the European context and the new continent of
historical materialism that Lenin had so fervently talked about, was being replaced by a new concept of liberal capitalism. Liberalism began with the announcement of the end of politics, ideology, class-struggle and more recently, the end of history. Such pronouncements obviously referred to the state of Marxist politics at that point of time, as history was drawing close to the end of the cold-war. They clearly expressed doubts about the relevance of Marxist thought to post-war European society, while at the same time, making prophetic observations about the future course and destiny of Marxism. It is important therefore, to analyze the historical impact of Marxism as it completes “its cycle of elaboration, practical deployment, institutionalization and ‘crisis’” (Balibar 155).

When in some communist parties, the dictatorship of the proletariat was discarded as an objective of the movement, it became clear that the predictions and revolutionary programmes of Marxism would never be realized. The reason being that the conditions on which they were founded “no longer existed, since capitalism had moved beyond those conditions, and thus beyond Marxism itself” (155). However, Balibar suggests that any analysis of the modes in which this superseding took place cannot ignore the fact “it was an indirect result of Marxism’s own success,” (155) especially with regard to the “rationalizations of capitalism” (155) that took place in the twentieth century as a response to the Soviet revolution. This was capitalism’s response to the socialist revolution that it always considered as its own contradictory other. Capitalism viewed the Soviet revolution as the “legitimate offspring of Marxism” (155). None can deny the fact that a particular form of Marxism that was realized through revolutions in socialist countries brought certain transformations not in those countries, but also in others where class-struggle was still an ongoing process.
It is important to note that these societies claimed that they were officially classless societies or societies without class-struggle. They claimed that they had effectively put Marxist theory into praxis. It only means that in this normative sense at least, “something of Marxism has passed, irreversibly, into actual institutions” (155). However, the notion of class continues to be the central theme on which Marxist analyses find their base. In fact, the entire identity of Marxism has depended on the “definition, import and validity of its analysis of class and class struggle” (156). Balibar argues that as long as class struggle remains one of the central principles of social transformation and historical movement, Marxism would continue to be its “inescapable corollary” (156). But, the controversy that surrounds Marxism today is precisely on the count that the notion of class that was so indispensable to Marxist interpretation of industrial society has now virtually disappeared. In late capitalist society, the notion of class struggle seems to have disappeared from the scene mainly because those who laid claim to it earlier to bargain for certain “political rights and privileges” (156) have considerably lost their bargaining power in the “changed circumstances” (156) of aggressive global capitalism.

In the complex social web of technocrats, bureaucrats and politicians, power is shared under a common agreement among them. Therefore, according to Balibar, “in the most significant political arenas, classes themselves have lost their visible identity” (156). This loss of identity of classes has only served the interest of the capitalists who, in recent times have begun to claim that the idea of class was always an unrealistic proposition that was fabricated as a theory, primarily by organizations like the trade unions who wanted to adopt it as their ideology. This belief, in its strongest and crudest form, tries to pass judgments on the history of the last two hundred years, to show that the theory of antagonistic classes was always only a myth.
However, such attempts to mythologize history can best be seen as carrying motives that “point beyond history” to a “future history” (156) that is almost achieved. Francis Fukuyama’s ‘End of history’ thesis points to such a state of achieved history and the end of class struggle. However, even if this is true, it only suggests that at some point of time in history, the theme of class struggle did correspond to the social reality. One can conclude that class antagonism was a feature of nineteenth century industrial society and that it still is in many post colonial societies that became full-fledged industrial societies only recently.

However, in the changed conditions of industrialism, with changes in working conditions, increased wages, education of labour and development of tertiary activities in the service sector, “the bourgeoisie, the bureaucrat and the new landed gentry—the real estate owners” (157) have so invaded the urban industrial landscape that the typical figures of the proletariat and the capitalist boss have been virtually squeezed out. Nonetheless, the declaration of the end of class cannot be without criticism, especially since it figures at a very important moment in the history of capitalist societies – the 1970’s and 80’s. This was the time of a huge global economic crisis which was compared by economists to the great slump of the 1930’s. From a Marxist perspective, the crisis had all the characteristics of exploitation and class struggle since it resulted in “massive pauperization and unemployment to the accelerated rundown of the former bastions of capitalist industrial production” (Balibar 157). It also saw the devaluation of capital along with an increase in monetary speculation across stock markets of the world. Further, the monetary policies of governments reflected all the characteristics of class politics, with privatization of public enterprises and liberal economic policies. This change in public policy decisions of governments across the globe only showed that they were more
concerned about the economic health of some major corporations than about the ‘welfare’ of society. In fact, ‘welfare’ took a back seat in the new economic programmes of governments which was a decisive shift from the Keynesian economic model that was still functional till the 1970s.

Therefore, one can say that the elements of class struggle got incorporated in the policy objectives of the state and this should have intensified ‘class-struggle’ in the social realm. However, this did not happen because there was no proper “articulation between the social, the political and the theoretical” (157). As a result, class struggle remained invisible. During this period, one observes a consolidation of liberal and neo-conservative forces in government. It was accompanied by a simultaneous delegitimation and disorganization of institutional forms of labour movement and class struggle. Such a weakening of organized labour movement makes even considerably strong labour struggles look like minor, isolated instances of social unrest. Therefore, in the decades following the 70’s, international labour movement suffered a serious setback due to organizational weakness. Labour could no longer convincingly articulate its political ambitions to a bourgeoisie that had come to call itself ‘new labour’. It also failed to convey the meaning of class to the individual worker who had already begun to lose his class moorings.

Hence the 70’s decade can be regarded as a significant moment in history when labour lost faith in its organizational ability to dream and shape a collective future for itself. At the same time the idea of social conflict began to assume different forms such as generational conflicts, conflicts between technological development and environment, “so called ‘ethnic’ and ‘religious’ conflicts and endemic forms of war and transnational terrorism” (Balibar 158). Balibar suggests that the last case
then “would be perhaps the most radical version of ‘the disappearance of classes’” (158). He argues that the gradual fading away of “antagonistic hierarchies” (158) would mean that “class would cease to be politically central” (158) to any social conflict having been reabsorbed into the “multiform conflictual fabric of society” (158). Moreover, social conflict expands its meaning to become so vast and ubiquitous that society would appear as having “no hierarchical divisions, no visible differences, no final determining moments or conjunctures, no other vector of transformation except the outcome of technological constraints, ideological passions and interests of state” (158). Balibar suggests that such transformation can be better explained by the Hobbesian method than by Marxism. Therefore, a reworking of some of the theoretical postulates of Marxism is necessary to answer questions on the nature of political and social conflicts of our times. But, before one does that, it is important to analyze the features of what is referred to as the post-industrial society.

The idea of an emerging post-industrial society was proposed by several sociologists in the early 1970’s. The Harvard sociologist Daniel Bell is one of the best known proponents of the theory which he elaborated in his book *The Coming of the Post-Industrial Society*. These theories insisted that the 70’s decade was significant for registering a shift in industrial society. A transformation of classic industrialism had taken place and the kind of industrial society “analyzed by Marx, Weber and Durkheim, the kind of society inhabited by most Westerners for the past century and a half,” (Kumar 3) was now defunct. Further, post-industrial theory finds its continuity in theories of information society or knowledge society. The idea of such a society is related to the development of new information technologies and their application to all sectors of society. However, the proponents of post-industrial theory belong to a tradition of liberal, progressivist thought. They believe that the growth of knowledge
ensures greater freedom and efficiency and claim that this signals an epochal shift. The positivism of such belief, however, makes their claim about “a radical shift in societal arrangement” (3) appear inconsistent. Therefore, Kumar suggests that this view of a post-industrial society “continues the line of thought inaugurated by Saint-Simon, Comte and the positivists” (3).

There is another view of the new society that emerged from the left of the political spectrum. As expected of Marxists, this view began by denouncing the original idea of a post-industrial society, terming it as “the clearest demonstration of late bourgeois ideology” (3). However, very soon they developed their own version of the post-industrial theory which is now more commonly expressed in the term “post-Fordism” (3). While holding on to the traditional Marxist view that all social transformation is essentially linked to some form of change in the development of capitalism, they began to view the changes as new forms of capitalism as compared with the old. However, the changes observed in what they perceived as the “second industrial divide” (3) were so “sharp and momentous,” (3) and the differences between the old and new forms of capitalist practices so “vast and complex” (3) that they felt an urgent need for a thorough reexamination of orthodox Marxist theory.

A third view of the post-industrial, being more ambitious in its desire to embrace all forms of change, be it social, economic, political or cultural under one umbrella, is postmodernism. By trying to subsume post-industrial, post-Fordist and information society theories under its highly eclectic theorization of the contemporary world, postmodernism becomes one of the most elusive theories in the Post Marxist sphere that we all occupy. In order to understand the nature of work and workers in
such a society, it is important to analyze the so called knowledge or information society.

The concept of information became very important during the war years of 1940’s and 50’s, when its most eminent proponent Norbert Weiner claimed that the control and communication of information would determine the meaning and purpose of all human life in future. It is important to note that such grand claims about the significance and relevance of the concept of information sprang from “certain revolutionary developments in the technology of control and communication – ‘information technology’, or IT, as it came to be called” (Kumar 7). This happened in the United States, when electronic components like miniature circuits were specifically developed to meet the military requirements like “proximity bomb fuses … ballistic calculations and atomic bomb analysis” (7). The concept of information was linked to the development of the computer just as the latter was linked to the “command and control” (7) requirements of modern warfare.

In the years following World War II, as the world-wide military role of the United States grew bigger and wider, so did the development of more sophisticated systems of information technology. The post-war years also saw a significant increase in the operations of American multinational corporations. With a world-wide network of production and distribution, the American MNC’s were faced “with a command and control’ problem similar to that confronting its military counterpart….like the Pentagon” (7). The requirement of MNC’s being identical with the requirement of the American military, a massive computerization of every sphere of society appeared inevitable. Hence, what began as a secret military experiment, ended up as a larger revolution encompassing the whole world. The military origins of the information
revolution does not, in any way limit its effects on other non-military spheres of society though origins of revolutions do “tell us something about the motivating force and shaping influences” (8). Kumar argues that “the emergence, in the 1950’s, of a military-industrial-scientific complex is not the whole story of the information society. But it is a central part of that story” (8).

The emerging concept of information society was extensively popularized by the mass media and other journalistic best-sellers, just as the idea of a post-industrial society found its explication in scholarly journals and dominated academic debates in conferences and seminars. Popular accounts of information society came in the form of novels like Megatrends (1984) by John Naisbitt and Future Shock and The Third Wave (1981) by Alvin Toffler. The information society theorists consistently argue that the knowledge of “producing and disseminating information” (12) will be the driving force of all future economics. It will bring about drastic change at the most fundamental level of society. They contend that it “initiates a new mode of production. It changes the very source of wealth creation and the governing factors in production” (12). If the information society has indeed initiated a change in the mode of production, then it means that the earlier relations between labour and capital that were crucial determinants of the character of industrial society have also undergone certain changes.

Information society theorists, right from Daniel Bell to Hazel Henderson to the leading Japanese exponent of the theory –Yoneji Masuda, argue that “labour and capital, the central variables of the industrial society are replaced by information and knowledge as the central variables” (12). They argue that the labour theory of value that was so carefully formulated by classical thinkers like John Locke and Adam
Smith and David Ricardo and Karl Marx has now been replaced by a knowledge theory of value. Masuda argues that the computer as the core of information production and utility systems will replace the factory as the symbol of society. It will have “the fundamental character of an infrastructure and knowledge capital will predominate over material capital in the structure of the economy” (Masuda 626).

So, the central argument of most of the information society theorists is that the new society is replacing the earlier industrial society just as the latter replaced the agrarian society in the past. According to Bell, all three societies emerged in more or less revolutionary ways and they can be analyzed using the same schema of structure and function, though they maintain certain distinct characteristics in the modes of production they practice. However, of all the theorists of information society, Bell appears to be more guarded than democratic utopians like Tom Stonier and Yonegi Masuda who believe that the information society developed by humans and thinking machines has inaugurated a new era of democracy and egalitarianism where everyone is able to enjoy a life of learning and leisure. Through the idea of such a computopia, theorists like Masuda offer visions of a future world where individuals will be freed from labour by automation and a truly classless society will be established. These utopian visions of a future society of perfect equality far surpass every vision of a Marxist utopia that was dreamed under socialism. Hence it is necessary to approach information society theory from a material-historical angle, to develop a useful critique of the same. It means that one needs to assess the social impact of information technology.

Referring to the emergence of the notion of information society, Tessa Morris Suzuki argues that, in the Japanese context, the concept was developed in response to
the industrial crisis that hit the nation in the 1960’s. It was an ideological weapon designed to handle the crisis, nevertheless it continues to serve the interest of the capitalists even in the current phase of monopoly capitalism where information activities have become so crucial to its functioning that it can very well be called “information capitalism” (Morris Suzuki 116). She argues that “information capitalism” is “the private accumulation of social knowledge” (116). This has resulted in a “softening of the economy” (116) in capitalist countries where industries involved in the production of non-material goods such as software and data services have significantly increased when compared to industries producing material goods. This gives one a clear idea about the movement of corporate capital in present times.

However, does this actually mean that the so called information society is so different in character from the industrial society that preceded it? Kumar suggests that the command and control mechanism introduced into industry through computerization and robotics is nothing new. He points out that such central control mechanisms were well in place almost a hundred years ago even in the industrial society of the 20\(^{th}\) century. If the increased pace of industrial production required constant monitoring of the movement of material, the increased number of workers engaged in production called for scientific methods of labour management. “The pace of material through-put in factories called forth the moving assembly line (Fordism) and the scientific management of labour (Taylorism)” (Kumar 18).

Hence the application of similar control techniques in the service sector need not be taken as a major control revolution; on the contrary, it has to be seen only as the application of Taylorism in the service sector. So, one of the most serious charges made against the information society theorists is that they are “historically
shortsighted” (19) in their claims about the inauguration of a new and different society. Kumar suggests that as early as 1974, “Harry Braverman had already shown that much service work is as ‘Taylorized’ as work in manufacturing industries. The office, it turned out, could be industrialized as readily as the workshop; much white collar work was subjected to the same routinization, fragmentation and deskilling as blue collar work” (19). Therefore, the claims made by information society theorists about the beginning of a new era of professionalism in work, especially in the service sector, cannot be taken on face value. There is no such observable change in the basic principles of work under the capitalist system. On the contrary, we find an even more exploitative system which forces people into a regimented work culture transcending the earlier ‘work hour’ time limits and schedule. Now there is no observable time and this redefines the concept of wage-labour relations.

Further, the deskilling of workforce meant that all levels of work, from lower to middle managerial work, was to be standardized and simplified and all possible brain work had to be shifted to the planning department. This was the basic plan of Taylor for whom the science of scientific management “was not to be the possession of the generality of managers but only of a specialized core concerned with overall planning” (19). The deskilling of many middle-level managers which resulted in the “loss of overall comprehension and control of their work,” (Kumar 19) was one of the central principles of Taylorism. While it was confined to the manufacturing sector till the middle of the 20th century, computerization helped its expansion to other areas of human activity like office and clerical work. The extension of Taylorism not only increased the gulf between unskilled and skilled labour, it also threw many out of their jobs.
In what can be seen as the cruelest ironic twist in recent times, the machine which was invested with human knowledge and skill began to overpower the very people who invented it. The people who designed and operated the new technology were themselves at risk of losing their jobs, just as Kurt Vonnegut had so vividly illustrated in *Player Piano* (1952) more than 50 years ago. In the novel, Vonnegut presents his fictional computer EPICAC echoing the world’s first digital computer ENIAC. He explores the immense possibility of the thinking machine in a conversation between a character Paul and his compatriots. When he is asked by one of them if he supposed that “there will be a third Industrial Revolution”? (*Player Piano* 15) he answers it with “I don’t know exactly. The first and the second ones must have been sort of inconceivable at one time” (15). He continues to wonder, “To the people who were going to be replaced by machines may be. A third one, eh? In a way, I guess the third one’s been going on for some time, if you mean thinking machines. That would be the third revolution, I guess – machines that devaluate human thinking” (15).

How does this affect employment opportunities? This question is answered a little later in the novel by another character who says that “citizens employed by the government…have the same rights as other citizens – free speech, freedom of worship, the right to vote. Before the war they worked on the Ilium works, controlling machines, but now machines control themselves much better” (20). Machines outdo human skill and thinking and throw devalued labour out of jobs. The character muses: “And any man who cannot support himself by doing a job better than a machine is employed by the government, either in the army or in the Reconstruction and Reclamation corps” (20-21). In essence, computopia promises very highly paid jobs for a few in the service sector but takes away the low and medium paid jobs in other
sectors. The same is the predicament of “highly skilled engineers who, having taught
the computer their skills, put themselves out of a job” (Kumar 21).

The new knowledge society continuously devalued old modes of work even
as it expanded the workforce in the knowledge industry by creating new kinds of
work there. The impact of information technology on employment became a
debatable matter around the 1980’s. The industrial capitalist continued to vouch for
the new technology as he viewed it as another investment opportunity though
pessimistic views on the same came mostly from trade unions and academics who
sensed the threat of job cuts with increasing computerization. With increase in the
number of scientific, technical and professional workers, the service sector emerged
as one of the fastest growing occupational areas. Universities and research centres
became the power houses producing such professionals just as factories produced
goods during the early industrial period. The bourgeoisie was undergoing a
transformation under a new phase of disorganized capitalism. It began to adapt itself
to the changes in the functioning of the capitalist system, even as it adopted a new
invisible identity of the proletariat. This ideology helped the new bourgeois class to
erase, in theory, the last remnants of contradiction in capital. It is crucial to note that it
is the new class of knowledge workers who comfortably carry this ideology.

However, the thrust of the critique of information society is that the
development and spread of information technology has not shown any new direction
to society; on the other hand, it seems to have increased and magnified existing social
inequalities. Functioning under the already existing patterns of political and economic
framework, a further mechanization, industrialization and routinization of work and
leisure activities can be observed in the so called information age. “Taylorism became
the hub of a new technocratic ideology that did not stop at the factory or office but moved out to the world at large. Having conquered production it now turned its sights on consumption” (Kumar 32). Scientific techniques of management became a useful tool to regulate consumer needs, satisfaction and desire with the help of mass advertisements on cable and satellite television. The social impact of Taylorism was indeed huge for it changed the identity of the ordinary citizen to that of a consumer. Further, methods of surveillance, propaganda and public opinion polls, that were so useful for the effective running of the market, became standard tools in government and public administration. Hence, the former public sphere which was, so far, a free political space open to debate and dialogue also became Taylorized. “The open public sphere of former liberal polities, the space made available for public discussion and debate, increasingly gave way to the administered sphere, dominated by technical expertise and narrow concepts of instrumental rationality” (33).

Therefore, the information society seeks effective managers of information and people to run public administration. In other words, liberal democratic governments are to be run by technocrats and experts in the field of information management since information is the core of postmodern societies. Therefore, in advanced capitalist societies, it is increasingly the managers of big business and other knowledge elites who try to get into politics to wield enormous political power. If this has been the influence of the upsurge in information technology on the politics of the developed world, there is also an accompanying echo in the social sphere that calls for a radical restructuring of the relations between culture and society. In late capitalist societies, culture is now being pushed to the centre of society just as the latter is pushed to the margins of the markets. The process of modernization had to continually struggle against nature, even as it tried not to be much distanced from it...
and that was the paradox of modernity. But, post-modernity has no such paradox for it has made culture its second nature. All practices — “social, economic, political and also psychic” (33) — are now being invested with some cultural meaning or the other.

However, it is not possible to relate postmodern culture to late capitalism in a simplistic manner because the form of capitalism that we are now witness to, is a completely different one which shows signs of disorganization in the process of production and distribution even as it organizes itself around the notion of a common culture of consumption. “It is a form of capitalism in which what Marxists would traditionally have called the ‘superstructure’ – knowledge and culture – seems to have moved to the core of the society, if not indeed to have become its ‘base’” (Kumar 116).

Therefore, Jameson himself is doubly careful while analyzing postmodernism as the culture of late capitalism. He rather insists that it is more important to study the series of transformations that capitalism itself has undergone through the ages, to arrive at the latest stage of multinational capitalism. Drawing heavily on Ernest Mandel’s book Late Capitalism, Jameson insists that theories of the postmodern have a strong resemblance to all those “sociological generalizations” (Postmodernism or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism 3) which talk about the inauguration of a whole new type of society more often designated as “consumer society, media society, information society, electronic society or high tech, and the like” (3).

The most virulent resistance to postmodernism obviously comes from the left of the political spectrum. Marxists argue that theories like the postmodern carry an ideological mission of demonstrating that “the new social formation in question no longer obeys the laws of classical capitalism, namely the primacy of industrial
production and the omnipresence of class struggle” (3). However, American Marxists like Jameson believe that capitalism has not undergone a complete transformation; on the other hand, there are minor modifications in the modes of production. We have entered what Ernest Mandel referred to as a purer stage of capitalism than any that preceded it. Therefore, Jameson suggests that “every position on postmodernism in culture – whether apologia or stigmatization – is also at one and the same time, and necessarily, an implicitly or explicitly political stance on the nature of multinational capitalism today” (3). Other accounts of postmodernism also speak of its intrinsic relation with the current stage of capitalism.

Scott Lash and John Urry have a very useful critique of contemporary capitalism in the book *The End of Organized Capitalism* (1988). They demonstrate how the “spatial (and partly temporal) structurings of the division of labour and of the civil society in a given nation-state have profound effects upon the capacities of different social groups to enter into and sustain forms of collective action” (Lash and Urry 92). Making a study of working class populations and their ability to organize themselves as a class, they suggest that changes in industrial capitalism effected changes in the structure of these societies. In the case of Britain for example, they argue that “these changes were reflected in the temporal and spatial restructuring of British society” (93). One of the most significant effects of “economic, demographic and spatial transformation was to produce ‘self-regulating working class communities’ in the newly developing urban/industrial centres” (96).

Lash and Urry identify some important features of “spatial organization” of “organized capitalism” in Britain. First “a fairly clear set of regional economies had developed based upon particular products” (97). For example “cotton textiles and
textile machinery in the north-west, coalmining and steelmaking in South Wales” (97) and so on that produces “distinctively ‘radical regions’” (98). Another important “feature of organized capitalism was the accelerating physical expansion of large towns and their increasing influence over adjacent countryside” (98). It took several centuries for the systematic organization of capital so, what could be the reason for its disorganization? Lash and Urry suggest that “the spatial transformation which began in Britain in the 1960’s,” (99) clearly show “an array of interconnected processes which disorganize or literally deconstruct social and political life” (99). A major factor that contributed to these changes that followed that decade “has been the collapse of employment in manufacturing industry – this fell from 8 million in 1971 to 5.5 million in 1984” (99). Such an analysis of contemporary capitalism is very useful for our understanding of postmodernism. It focuses on some crucial developments in post-industrial society such as, “the break up of working class cultures and community life, decentralization of cities; break up of mass social movements and the resurgence of individualism” (Kumar 116). Kumar points out that they are able to establish a “relation of ‘compatibility’ or of an ‘elective affinity’, between postmodern culture and contemporary capitalist society” (116).

These developments have resulted in the creation of a new bourgeois class which can be identified as the post industrial bourgeoisie. This is a highly Yuppified class “having its base in the media, higher education, finance and advertising” (117). It builds and promotes its own notion of culture and aggressively disputes the “primacy of society with the old bourgeoisie of organized capitalism” (117). Unlike the culture of the older bourgeoisie of organized capitalism, postmodern culture tries to appeal to its members and prospective converts in the name of “‘de-differentiation” (117). The post-industrial bourgeoisie begins by claiming that it makes no distinction
between class and mass or high and low. Kumar suggests that postmodernism is itself 
“the result of a continuing process of ‘de-differentiation’ whose origins are to be 
found in the social and cultural changes of the 1950’s and 1960’s” (117). And, the 
new bourgeois class – the knowledge elite that emerged with the ‘post-industrial’ 
society – did play a significant role in shaping and promoting postmodern culture. 
Therefore, it is important to understand the characteristics of the new bourgeoisie in 
order to estimate its role in building the Post-Marxist utopia. The yuppified bourgeois 
is now the prime representative of postmodern culture.

The bourgeois has been at the centre of much economic and political activity 
right from the medieval times in Europe. “The medieval bourgeois was neither lord 
nor peasant, he came eventually to be thought of as a member of an intermediary 
class, that is, the middle class” (Wallerstein 135). However, the conventional 
bourgeois was distinguished by his style of life, consumption patterns and his ability 
to acquire wealth. While the bourgeois has been celebrated by some for the social role 
he played as a ‘creative entrepreneur’, employing people for wages and selling his 
products in the market, “there have been those who have denounced the vices of this 
social role –the bourgeois as parasitical exploiter” (136). Nonetheless, both critics 
and admirers of the bourgeois commonly agree that “this bourgeois the capitalist, has 
been the central dynamic force of modern economic life” (Wallerstein 136) ever since 
the nineteenth century. Moreover, being thoroughly independent, the bourgeois 
represents a progress over the earlier feudal system, even as he marks the threat of 
building a socialist utopia.

Wallerstein suggests that this definition of the bourgeois “was itself a 
phenomenon of the nineteenth century, which thought of itself and has been thought
of ever since by most people as the century of bourgeois triumph” (137). However, many from among Marxists and liberals would agree that the reality of the twentieth century does not exactly match the nineteenth century descriptions of “the economic role of the bourgeois” (140). Moreover, the new corporate forms of enterprise that emerged in the twentieth century not only changed the structures at the top of the enterprise; they also brought about change in the whole social structure. It resulted in what is termed as the “embourgeoisment of the proletariat” just as it also heralded a simultaneous “proletarianization of the bourgeoisie” (140).

Marx was right in many ways when he said that in the course of capitalist development, there would be a growing polarization of classes, so that, eventually only two would remain – the bourgeois and the proletariat. In practice, the minority group of bourgeoisie would turn into large-scale entrepreneurs and the majority consisting of proletarians would be wage earners. However, sociologists have observed that since the second world war, the membership of these two classes has been steadily decreasing, so much so that it is difficult to distinguish between the two in categorical terms. It became commonplace to hear that the old middle class was being replaced by the new middle class. But who were the people that constituted this class? They were largely “salaried professionals who occupied managerial or quasi-manegerial positions in corporate structures by virtue of the skills in which they had been trained at universities” (140). Therefore, Wallerstein suggests that there is a need to redefine the bourgeoisie taking into account the present realities.

The first clarification is about the linguistic term: the middle class that refers to a particular “intermediate stratum” (140) of society. Wallerstein suggests that the new middle class is now located somewhere between the capitalist or the top
management and the proletariat or the workers, but “in the terminology of the
twentieth century, the term is used to describe the top stratum, in a situation in which
many still refer to three identifiable strata”(140). This confusion about the
omenclature “was compounded in the 1960’s by attempts to rebaptize the ‘new
middle classes’ as the new working classes, thereby seeking to reduce the three strata
to two” (141). However, the change in name was largely a political move which
sought to keep the identity of the bourgeois in a fluid state. Nonetheless, such a move
pointed to a very important changing reality: the diminishing difference between the
salaried professionals and the skilled worker in terms of life-style and income levels.
The second clarification about the new middle classes is about the characteristics they
carry which render them inappropriate for analysis under nineteenth century
categories. Wallerstein proposes that the new bourgeois were well-to-do and pursued
“their own interests economically and politically” (141). They were compared with
wage-workers because they lived mainly on their present incomes and not on rent
received from property and “to that extant they were ‘proletarian’” (141). In addition,
their “hedonistic life style” was antagonistic to the puritan strain always associated
with bourgeois culture and showed much resemblance with the aristocratic culture.
The new bourgeoisie carried such contradictory elements that it became extremely
difficult to designate it as a class category in the emerging system of corporate
capitalism.

Therefore, one can conclude that the new bourgeois class emerged from the
interplay of contradictory forces in capitalism, even as capitalism struggled to free
itself from those internal contradictions. The new bourgeois, given his new consumer
identity and an insatiable desire for an aristocratic lifestyle, begins to acquire
monopoly and control of the capitalist system. In the bargain, he tries to eliminate his
competitor – the old industrial capitalist. Though this is a slow process, owing to the many counter-currents that “constantly oppose monopolies and quasi-monopolies” (148), it has shown verifiable results in the form of growth of large corporate enterprises in the twentieth century. The process continues in the twenty-first century as the new bourgeoisie increases its influence in the administration of corporates, even as it expands its influence on the political machinery of the state. With this, the idea of control of the means of production, which was central to Marxist theory, becomes considerably weakened. As the process of “embourgeoisment” (149) of capitalist enterprise structure continues, “the role of the legal owner becomes less and less central, eventually vestigial” (149).

Such a competition of the bourgeois with the capitalist aristocracy which leads eventually to the overthrow and replacement of the industrial capitalist aristocracy signals the “aristocratization of the bourgeoisie” (148). The postmodernists take advantage of this crisis in Marxism to appropriate some of its central features and invert it to justify late capitalism. This implies a farce – a political farce played out by the new bourgeois which ironically denies the class its functional role in history. The bourgeois, in the classical sense, would have been expected to keep the class contradiction of capital alive. However, the post-industrial bourgeoisie, by attempting to strike out the difference of social stratification, signals the “betrayal of the historic role” (148) it was expected to play as the prime representative of the collective conscience of intellectual workers.

However, by trying to imitate the aristocracy in life-style and manners the bourgeoisie creates a distance between itself and the proletarians. Moreover, it continues to enjoy the benefits of surplus value created by the proletarian. So, what if
the bourgeois does not have direct control over the means of control? They surely have something else that places them in a better position socially, when compared to the proletarians – the knowledge to fuel and run the enterprise effectively and convert that knowledge into capital. Hence, one comes across another quasi-economic concept of human capital in recent debates in development economics. The bourgeoisie has plenty of human capital for they have acquired it through training in educational institutions that function primarily as agents for the reproduction of the bourgeoisie. They help maintain the existing structures of capitalist relations.

In the twenty first century, this new bourgeois class has increased in number owing to their easy employability in the corporate service sector. If this is the case with the bourgeoisie, the proletarians are experiencing an altogether different situation caught as they are in the ruthless mechanism of faster economic exchange. As more and more manufacturing industries begin to replace human labour with superior machines and automation, the proletariat is faced with the worst crisis ever in its history. The threat of total decimation of human labour power looms large on the “third-industrial” (Rifkin 140) horizon. Many working class men and women “find themselves trapped between economic eras and are increasingly marginalized by the introduction of new labor saving technology” (140). In what appears like a prophetic declaration, Jeremy Rifkin suggests that by the mid decades of the twenty first century, “the blue collar worker will have passed from history, a casualty of the Third Industrial Revolution and the relentless march towards ever greater technological efficiency” (140).

It is in such a scenario of a fast disappearing proletarian class and an equally fast growing new bourgeoisie that one notices the emergence of a new cultural
ideology famously baptized postmodernism. The emergence of postmodernism as a
theory and its complex articulation in culture coincides with the latest developments
in the capitalist modes of production. The relation between them has been well
explored by both Jameson and Harvey. However, while Jameson identifies “the
emergence of postmodernism with the 1960’s and the emergence of consumer
capitalism” (Smart 191), Harvey, in contrast tries to trace the emergence of the
condition of postmodernity to the period of the 1970’s when the post-war economic
boom went bust. He traces it “to the break up of the ‘Fordist- Keynesian’ post-war
configuration after 1973” (190). This economic disaster forced economists in the
Western World to abandon the Keynesian model.

Postmodernism has a positive edge to it as long as it is concerned with
communicational difficulties between different groups of peculiar complexity and
specific interests, cultures and places. However, such a potential positive influence is
effectively undermined when it is engaged in exaggerating its differences with
modernism or when it shows “an excessive preoccupation with the deconstruction and
delegitimation of arguments and validity claims” (193). Further, postmodernism also
loses its authority to speak truth to its adversaries who still hold on to the now
decimated grand recits or grand narratives, when it stands as a hollow depthless
narrative without any coherent politics, or when it covertly carries “the traces of a
‘reactionary neoconservatism’ manifest with an accommodation with the market and
an associated celebration of entrepreneurial culture” (193).

And so, there is a need to reconsider Marxist analysis and political strategy
that has been neglected so far in the specific instance of postmodern analysis. This
must be done not so much as a defense of Marxism against its pulverization by a
whole range of postmodern and post-structuralist theories, but by reformulating some of its strategies to explain the political implications of postmodernism. The question about the depth and reach of political economic processes in our daily life needs to be addressed especially at a time when the superficial reality of commodities seems to negate the other reality of its own production. Therefore, Smart points out that, even for Lyotard, “the postmodern condition of knowledge is articulated with developments in the capitalist mode of production” (194). Lyotard denies universality, and totality despite the fact that his own discourse is located within the master discourse of capitalism. The postmodernists are faced with the strange predicament of the impossibility of predicking possible futures for capitalism because their future is itself implicated there. Caught in the emptiness of a political vacuum of their own making, they are incapable of suggesting any political alternative. The supposedly apolitical game of the various postmodernisms rests in their claims that they have no universal global theory to offer that can stand the test of time. On the contrary, “the idea of ‘the social’ as a totality is itself deconstructed within such analyses”.(Smart 195). Postmodernism mostly adopts a touch-and-go strategy *vis a vis* the political economy.

Postmodernists would always like to have us accept the multiple partitioning of the social and the reification of the latest form of individualism. It is also known to celebrate “the activity of masking and cover-up, all the fetishisms of locality, place or social grouping, while denying that kind of meta-theory which can grasp the political-economic processes” (Harvey117). Processes like “flash money flows, international divisions of labour,” (117) and operations of global financial markets that are becoming “ever more universalizing in their depth, intensity, reach and power over daily life,” (117) are hardly reckoned by the postmodernists as crucial elements for
cultural analysis. Instead, by engaging themselves in an endless play of language games, they avoid confronting such real political issues. Harvey argues that the “rhetoric of postmodernism is dangerous for it avoids confronting the realities of political economy and the circumstances of global power” (117). And through this argument, he makes a strong case for meta-theory by pointing out that even the most resolute of postmodernists like Lyotard is ultimately forced to make some universalizing gesture such as his “appeal to some pristine concept of justice” (117). Others who are faced with a compulsion to avoid universalization, lapse “like Derrida, into total political silence” (117). Hence, Harvey asserts that “Meta-theory cannot be dispensed with. The postmodernists simply push it underground” (117).

If meta theory cannot be dispensed with, then there is still a case for Marxism in the postmodern debate. In fact, as Lorraine Y. Landry rightly points out in his book *Marx and the Postmodernism Debates* (2000), “…the postmodernism debates can be seen as fueled, to a greater degree than is cursorily thought, by complex responses to Marx’s legacy” (141). He argues that the linguistic paradigm proposed as a “model of critique,” (142) by the postmodernists is connected to Marx’s own materialist critique. However, the relation between the two turns out to be paradoxical. Postmodernism shares the same platform with Marxism by jumping into a debate on enlightenment thought, but shies away from a debate on the political implications of modernity. While Marx’s materialist critique could politically engage itself with modernity, the postmodern rhetoric “opposes the approach to modernity espoused by it” (142). This tells one something about the different approaches adopted by thinkers who have contributed to the postmodern debate. On the one hand, we have Habermas, Jameson and Eagleton who belong to the left camp and post-structuralists like Derrida, Foucault and Lyotard who form the other.
If people in the second camp are bitterly critical of enlightenment rationality and its consequences, those in the first attempt to make a weak defense of reason, even as they try to highlight the inherent contradictions in modernist development. Moreover, these camps are not homogeneous groups. Each one within the group maintains his own specific position on the question of enlightenment. Therefore, we find that both the camps “are divided on the nature and value of Marx’s contributions to questions about the Enlightenment and modernity” (143). This poses a difficulty in relating not only postmodernism and Marxism but also the former’s critique of enlightenment with Marx’s own materialist critique of capitalism. Nonetheless, it may still be possible to relate them if as Lorraine Y. Landry suggests, one could “review some of the presuppositions in the postmodernism debates in relation both to the enlightenment and to Marx’s materialist critique” (143).

Most postmodernist critiques attempt to debunk “Marx as a productivist with a teleological view of historical change and as preeminently an Enlightenment rationalist” (142). However, their preoccupation with Marx only reveals “both the degree of their aversion to Marx’s response to modernity and the extent to which their own critiques are connected to Marx” (142). But before one takes up for discussion the postmodernist leap into a linguistic-philosophical discourse and its dismissal of the productivist logic of Marx, it is necessary to understand a very important dimension of the postmodernist stand on enlightenment. As already pointed out in the second chapter, the story of enlightenment is well connected to “the disenchantment of the modern world” (143). Modern Western philosophy that emerged from this disenchantment is broadly construed as “both instigator and consequence of the dissolution of overarching systems of religious understandings of the world” (143). Postmodernism challenges the claims of enlightenment philosophy and tries to revive
the cultural in the hope of reenchanting the world. This raises the crucial question of postmodernism’s dubious relationship with religion, the very important metanarrative that it refuses to deal with. Obviously, religion has been the most potent literary metanarrative with a long history beginning with the medieval times.

Therefore, postmodernism’s silence on religion raises serious questions about its intentions and possible vested interests in attacking Marxism. In fact, there is a serious need to inquire into the growing religious fundamentalism in the so-called technologically advanced postmodern age. Philippa Berry strikes a note of caution in her opening statement in “Postmodernism and Post-Religion” when she says that the “society and culture we inhabit today, at the start of the third millennium, appear at first glance to be the most secular the world has yet known” (Berry 168). She elaborates further to suggest that there are tendencies of religious revivalism that accompany postmodernism on an equal footing. Another dimension of the postmodernist stand vis a vis the enlightenment is its antagonism to science. As Marx’s materialist philosophy lays claim to the status of a science, it can be presupposed that part of the postmodernist opposition to Marxism stems from such an antagonism. Therefore, these two strands in postmodernism which lie subsumed under its larger discourse on the metanarrative apparatus of enlightenment need further exploration.

When Marx and Engels jointly published their monumental work The Communist Manifesto (1848) against the backdrop of the second French revolution, they announced that the “relentless logic of capitalist economics” (Berry 168) would destroy all fixities and stable concepts. As a result, “all that is solid melts into air, all that is holy is profaned.”(Marx and Engels 83) And now, when one looks back at this
statement more than a hundred and fifty years later, it appears almost prophetic. If ceaseless innovations in technology continuously outdate previous technologies, the pace of change of fashion and lifestyle devalues its own products even before they are consumed. However, if we focus more on the processes of consumption in late capitalism, we tend to overlook the more important part of that famous statement all that is holy is profaned. Neo-conservative reactions to postmodernism, like that of Bell, prove this point very clearly. They realize the threat to religion from the merciless logic of technology and join the culture debate only to try and rescue some residual religious-moral-ethical elements in culture. They accuse postmodernists of promoting bodily pleasure and desire which is hedonistic and anti-christian. In the same breath they also oppose Marxism by identifying it with the rational philosophies of the enlightenment.

The liberals among the postmodernists reject Marxism by dubbing it a metanarative of the enlightenment whereas the neoconservatives conditionally accept postmodernism as the cultural logic of late capitalism. However, both of them celebrate the demise of socialism and therefore they are curious but contrasting interlinks. These apparently contradictory responses of postmodernism and theologism find a common meeting ground in specters and spirits that hover above the material world. Philippa Berry quotes both Derrida and a “British specialist in religious studies, Ursula King” (Berry 169) to make this point about their convergence. King suggests that postmodernism can be a challenge, “even a gift for religion in the modern world,” (Qtd in Berry 169) whereas Derrida in *Specters of Marx* speaks about the spirit and the phantasmagoria: “The mystical character of the fetish, in the mark it leaves on the experience of the religious, is first of all a ghostly character. Well beyond a convenient mode of presentation in Marx's rhetoric or
pedagogy, what seems to be at stake is, on the one hand, the irreducibly specific character of the spectre” (Specters of Marx 171). Following the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of European communism, Derrida takes a strong stand against the triumphalism of economic and political neoliberalism. Berry suggests that though such contradictory statements come from “apparently incompatible positions, nothing prevents them from becoming peculiarly interwoven in the complex cultural mesh which is postmodernism” (Berry 169).

Referring to Derrida’s ruminations on Western religions and his critique of “essentialist-dualistic” (170) thought inherent in Western metaphysics, Berry suggests that in Derrida’s point of view, “the putative cultural triumph of secular reason is haunted or shadowed by its presumed opposite” (170). This presumed opposite is nothing other than “the absolutism of belief,” (170) that is religion. Derrida’s proposed relativism in semantics turns to absolutism when it comes to religion. The same absolutism that the prophet of nihilism, Nietzsche, “so fervently renounced” (170). Therefore, these movements within the postmodern discourse hint at a “return of religions” (170). Derrida argues in that “the treatment of the phantomatic in The German Ideology announces or confirms the absolute privilege that Marx always grants to religion, to ideology as religion, mysticism, or theology, in his analysis of ideology in general” (Spectres of Marx). However, postmodernism does not explicitly suggest the form in which religions may return. One of the forms which we are all witness to at the beginning of the new millennium is religious fundamentalism. Therefore, Berry argues that today it is not just “a sociological cliché,” (170) “but a startling political reality that…the recent acceleration of postmodern culture has coincided with the often violent revival of fundamentalist religious attitudes”(170). Another form of religion appears as “re-presentations of faith …of dissident cults or
of orthodox religion” (171) in postmodern forms of representation. These are nothing but deliberate appropriations of quasi-religious forms into the culture of late capitalism. In other words, they are part of the postmodern effort to co-opt the cultural contradiction of Bell’s capitalism. And so, Berry suggests that they “typically appear at the edges or the borderline of our postmodern culture” (171-172). According to her, many forms of this quasi-spirituality appear like cracks and fissures in “its confident secularism and materialism rather less obtrusively, or as it were from within” (172). One should note that the materialism referred to here is synonymous with consumerism.

The postmodern spirituality or quasi-spirituality mentioned above asserts that, it is different from traditional forms of religion. In fact, by appealing more to the cultic forms and practices in traditional religion, it tries to invent a new theology out of the existing one. Therefore, Berry suggests that such symptoms of an in-between spirituality – caught between materialism and faith – appear “on the most ephemeral surfaces” of “our culture” (172). These features of postmodern culture point to the direction in which the culture of late capitalism is heading in western societies. Zygmunt Bauman, in the introduction to his book *Intimations of Postmodernity* says that the “postmodern mind is a critique caught at the moment of its ultimate triumph: a critique that finds it ever more difficult to go on being critical just because it has destroyed everything it used to be critical about, with it off went the urgency of being critical about” (Bauman viii). Modernity was a discourse that celebrated famous dichotomies like truth / falsehood, science / art or subject / object; but postmodern mind, in Bauman’s view, seems to dissolve the most crucial boundary between subject and object.
The dissolution of object into the subject leaves nothing outside the subject just as the dissolution of the interpreter into the text leaves nothing beyond the text for Derrida. Under the influence of postmodernism “critical theory confronts an object that offers no more resistance, an object that has softened, melted, liquefied to the point that the soft edge of critique goes through with nothing to stop it” (Intimations of Postmodernity viii). Bauman argues that modernity waged a “war against mystery and magic” in the hope of “liberation leading to the declaration of reason’s independence” (x). However postmodernity tries to restore to the world all that “modernity, presumptuously had taken away” (x). In other words, postmodernity is “a re-enchantment of the world that modernity tried hard to dis-enchant” (x). This is crucial supportive evidence for the argument to prove the elusive relations of postmodernism with religion and its antagonism to Marxism. The appropriation of primitive cultic practices like tattooing, for example, into the broad spectrum of postmodern culture has made it what Berry calls “New Age culture” (Berry 172). However, from a Marxist perspective, that is, in strictly economic terms, the postmodern condition is generally understood as “the complete commodification of experience” (172). Though there is some disagreement on the identification of postmodern culture with New Age culture, Berry suggests that when contrasted with postmodern culture, “New Age culture apparently signals the extreme commodification of the religious impulse, if not of religion” (172). This argument substantiates the idea that the postmodern cultural impulse is not entirely compatible with modes of thought affiliated to secular-rational philosophies.

Marx’s own views on religion are now commonsensical knowledge. He is known in much of the Christian world not only as anti-Christ but also as an anti-Semite. His often quoted phrase “Religion is the opium of the masses,” (Collected
Works of Marx 67) shows his aversion for religion. However, Marx’s stand against Christian liberalism is seen clearly only in *On the Jewish Question* (1843), first published in Paris in 1843. It was written in response to the same question raised by Bruno Bauer, a young Hegelian of his times. Bauer had argued that the establishment of a Jewish state was not possible as long as Christianity itself was not abolished. A Jewish state could be achieved only “by disestablishing the Christian Church and by preventing the establishment of any other religion” (Hart 144). Also, the political emancipation of the Jew would be possible only by establishing a secular state. But, according to Hart, Marx would not agree with this because such an argument “only exposes a deeper and more intractable opposition between the liberal state and real freedom, between *political emancipation and human emancipation*” (144). Therefore, he suggests that all such “constraints on free citizenship” (144), religious, moral and ethical, can be overcome “only when theological questions are turned into secular ones” (145).

Further, the “political emancipation of religious man or the religious emancipation of the state,” (145) is not enough, for political emancipation is not the same as human emancipation. According to Hart, “Marx uses the Christian, Trinitarian idea to explain why liberal emancipation is not real, why it is formal and not substantive” (145). The liberal state constantly plays a political game on its citizens by dividing them as political and religious beings. As political beings they are guaranteed with certain rights under the law and, as religious beings they are granted freedom of a private sphere to practice their spiritual affairs. Hart suggests that, “political emancipation is the bifurcation of man into public and private selves: citizen and Jew, citizen and Christian, citizen and religious man” (145). It appears as if the liberal political state has “disestablished” (145) Christianity and removed all its
privileges whereas, "on the ground," in civil society, its power is unchallenged" (145).

Liberalism governs cultural matters by appropriating the religious man, while the bourgeois state continues to allow the private accumulation of capital by appropriating the citizen. Hence, Hart argues that liberalism "is a formalism that conceals the substantive operations of power and privilege" (145). It cannot escape the reality of religion because it is born out of it. "Liberalism is religious precisely because it presupposes a dualism between individual and social life, civil society and political life" (146). Marxism's opposition to liberalism is on the same ground. Liberalism produces an inversion of the world similar to the one produced by religion. It co-opts religion on to its side in an effort to establish a post-Marxist, cultural utopia. Therefore, one can propose that there is no possibility of a secular postmodern culture. And, by tilting towards religion, postmodern culture is forced to adopt an anti-scientific stand. This takes one to the second postmodernist strand mentioned earlier: its antagonism to science.

If, on the one hand, one can designate postmodernism as the cultural outcome of the latest developments in science and technology, one cannot ignore its opposition to scientific rationality on the other. This is apparently a paradox inherent in the relationship between postmodernism and science that one can possibly designate as the scientific contradiction of postmodernism. As Ursula Heise writes in her essay titled "Science, Technology and Postmodernism," "Scientific knowledge and technological rationality have been seriously challenged by postmodern modes of thought" (Heise 136). In fact, the whole thesis of Lyotard in The postmodern Condition, for example, is nothing short of a rhetorical questioning of the validity of
scientific knowledge. Heise acknowledges the fact that certain important developments in the field of science and technology in the second half of the twentieth century, “have particularly contributed to shaping the sense of a new historical age” (136).

The development of nuclear technology – both civilian and military, computer technology and the internet, and a whole range of scientific developments like “the discovery of the DNA, in vitro fertilization, the cloning of animals, the human genome project,” (137) indicate that science is indeed able to make the impossible possible. On the one hand, these developments can be taken in a positive sense to mean that science has more or less fulfilled the utopian dream of enlightenment thought: of complete mastery of nature. However, on the other hand, they can also be seen as Man’s extraordinary ambition to play God. The second proposition seems to be a worrying point for the postmodernists who would rather keep the uncertainty about the universe, in order to assert the certainty of an absolute: God. The fear of certainty, as for example, the fear of death, compels them to adopt a stand in favour of faith – whatever be its form – at the cost of the logic of reason. This is a strange paradox because it is the logic of reason, the logic of technology, and most importantly, the scientific logic of capitalist production that has made possible the complete commodification of culture.

As Ursula Heise suggests, science has become so much a part of our daily life that we hardly ask questions about the complex technologies involved in very simple gadgets of everyday use like a refrigerator, for example. Such an easy acceptance of technological products by general consumers suggests a “taken for granted” (138) attitude among them. However, it is against this background that Heise takes up the
relation between science and postmodernism for discussion. She suggests that some developments in science, particularly in the second half of the twentieth century like “information and communication technologies, biotechnology and ecology,” (138) have raised both hopes and fears among the people. And, each of these areas has also been seen as “the legacies of modernity in particular ways” (138). Hence, these areas of science attract the attention of postmodernists.

If computer technology showed the possibility of a world-wide network of communication, it also raised fears about invasion of individual privacy. Similarly, biotechnology showed that it was possible to produce genetically engineered crops and fruit, while it also shocked the world by throwing open the possibility of human cloning. As a result, science was progressing dangerously close to removing all boundaries of distinction. This came to be seen as the greatest single threat from science to humanity. Science had created a fear in the minds of people in the humanities by narrowing the “boundaries between human and animal and between human and machine” (144). Hence for the first time in the history of “technoscientific advances,” (144) it was beginning to appear as if “such border crossings,” were “more than mere hypothesis” (144). Therefore, postmodernism’s antagonism to scientific logic can be understood as a reaction stemming from such fears.

The opposition to science also came from various other sources. Environmentalists argued against the use of chemical fertilizers, pesticides and polluting industries. They also criticized biotechnology for intervening too much into nature. Similarly, developments in nuclear technology and ballistics came to be regarded as potentially dangerous to humanity given their nexus with the armament industry. Such developments “contributed to public disenchantment” (147) with
science just as the general belief that “technoscientific advances helped to improve the lives of people in some privileged regions, but left the rest of the globe in abject misery” (147). Such perceptions have often projected scientists as agents of powerful governments and big businesses. If this was true, it would appear contrary to the enlightenment view that “increased knowledge furthers the individual’s emancipation and liberation” (147). So with the growing acceptance of such perceptions, there grew also a greater sceptical attitude towards the ability of science to ensure progress and emancipation of all humanity. This attitude of disbelief and discontent “from the 1960’s led to a weakening of the cultural belief in historical progress of Western societies.” (147)

The growing sceptical attitude towards science not only led to serious questioning of modern institutions of knowledge, but also gave birth to “legitimation crisis” theories, like that of Lyotard, which sought to undermine the achievements of science. Nonetheless, scientists strongly resisted all such efforts to discredit their discipline by pointing out that Lyotard’s “account falls far short of a convincing portrayal of contemporary science” (148). Lyotard’s jargon of “language games,” “legitimation” and “performativity principle,” didn’t find many takers from the scientific community of his times. But surprisingly, “it became enormously popular among scholars in the humanities and social sciences” (148). They saw in this anti-scientific rhetoric, the possibility of legitimizing their own non-scientific discourse over scientific theory.

An intense debate in the humanities over “the basic nature and social functions of scientific knowledge” (149) continued through the 1970’s in the Western academia. The publication of 

Higher Superstition

(1994) in America, by “biologist
Paul Gross and mathematician Norman Levitt...brought postmodernist critiques of science to the broad attention of scientists for the first time and triggered a wave of controversy” (149). However, the science wars reached an “intense peak with the so-called ‘Sokal hoax’” (149). This hoax which is also known as the Sokal affair has particular reference to the publication of an article by an eminent physicist Alan Sokal in 1996 in an “American journal named Social Text” (149). His purported aim was to show “connections between quantum mechanics and various strands of postmodern philosophy,” (149) but his actual intention was to expose the postmodernists’ knowledge claims about science. The journal itself was better known for publishing articles “questioning the superiority of scientific over other kinds of knowledge” (149). But Sokal’s article stirred up a huge controversy and debate when, soon after its publication its author went public and revealed that “the article was a mere hoax intended to expose the ignorance about scientific matters” (149). He went on to claim that such ignorance was characteristic of “the work of many scholars who questioned science” (149).

It was a time when many fields of knowledge, influenced by postmodern thinking, like, sociology, philosophy, literary criticism, gender studies and also cultural studies had begun to develop their own critiques of science. Of the many criticisms, the most significant one was that “scientific method and knowledge have no special cognitive status and, like many other practices, cannot be detached from the sociocultural context in which they arise” (150). The second criticism was that scientific research was not “value neutral as its advocates maintain” (150). The final argument was more a sort of a demand for a critical rethinking of “the relationship between science and other modes of knowledge” (150). The advocates of science however, responded to such arguments by pointing out that the critics of science were
“themselves trapped in the pitfalls of relativist thought” (150). They also defended the procedural forms adopted in scientific research and “the logical and empirical controls that are applied to establish the validity of a particular knowledge claim” (150). These controversies about science and its legitimacy continued till the end of 1990’s when postmodern thought began to lose its ground. All the same, postmodernism’s antagonism to science, its covert affiliation with religion and its aversion to Marxism, together form an axiomatic matrix whose analysis has revealed its controversial status in the theoretical domain.

The attacks on the epistemological foundations of science and a renewal of religion with a return to Kantian metaphysics, is accompanied by “formal shifts and thematic innovations” (Anderson 24) in Western Marxism. These shifts have also contributed to the development of postmodern thought, in an indirect way. Perry Anderson, in Considerations of Western Marxism (1976) outlines some major shifts in Marxist theory in the last decades of the twentieth century, especially after the end of World War II. The end of the war also saw the defeat of Nazi domination in Europe. After the war, the USSR that had, by then, gathered enormous strength “in international power and prestige was master of the fate of Eastern Europe” (24). A “Soviet-style industrialization was launched” (24) in the whole of Eastern Europe, with the exception of the southernmost regions of the Balkans. This development saw “an integrated socialist camp” (24) covering half the continent, while “the other half was rescued for capitalism by the American and British armies” (24).

The bourgeois state was restored in West Germany and the rest of West European countries. For the next twenty years, this part of Europe “exhibited an economic and political pattern” (24) that contrasted completely with the pattern of the
inter-war period. For the first time in the history of capitalism, “Parliamentary democracy became “stable and normal throughout the advanced industrial world” (24). Without any “catastrophic slumps” hampering its growth, World capitalism showed steady progress during this time while the “bureaucratic regimes” (24) in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe did not make “any fundamental modification of their structure” (24). Perry Anderson proposes that this was “the most rapid and prosperous phase of expansion” (25) in the history of capitalism. It was during this period of uninterrupted growth of capitalism that revolutionary Marxist theory “completed the mutation that produced what can today retrospectively be called ‘Western Marxism’” (25).

This new form of Marxism which Anderson prefers to label as “Western Marxism,” progressively cut itself off from all radical political actions. As “economic and political structures” (49) became less and less “central concerns” (49) of Marxist theory, “the whole centre of gravity of European Marxism” (49) shifted “towards philosophy” (49). This was a major shift that affected Marxism adversely. It took historical materialism a step backward to pluck Marxism’s roots in the political-economy and plant it in the desert of French intellectual thought. Therefore, Anderson argues that the whole tradition of these Marxists, “from Lukacs to Althusser, from Korsch to Colletti” (49) is predominantly made up of “professional philosophers” (49). They had effectively turned Marxism into an academic theory by displacing its political-revolutionary content. Revolutionary Marxists like Kautsky and Luxembourg expressed their strong resentment towards them at the time of the second international (In 1880, the German Social Democratic Party supported the call of its Belgian comrades, to call an International Socialist Congress in 1881. The Belgian Socialists, The French Parti ouvrier, The German Social Democracy, and the Swiss Social
Democracy participated in the preparations). The academic Marxists came to be seen as “‘professorial socialists’ teaching in the universities without party commitments” (49). But this was not the case with Marxist intellectuals like Lenin, Ryazanov or Bauer of the pre World War II era. Even “the first theorists of Western Marxism” (49) like Lukacs and Korsch followed the traditional pattern set by people like Lenin who had always maintained a “form of political unity between theory and practice” (49).

However, it was not till the end of World War II that Marxist theory “migrated virtually completely into the Universities – precincts at once of refuge and exile from the political struggles of the outside world” (50). A very important internal factor that contributed to this shift in focus of Marxist theory from political-economy to philosophy was, the “belated revelation” of a crucial early work of Marx: the *Paris Manuscripts* (1844). They were published “for the first time in Moscow in 1932” (50). In the third manuscript titled “Critique of the Hegelian Dialectic and Philosophy as a Whole,” Marx critiques Hegelian dialectic by arguing that for Hegel “the negation of the negation is the confirmation of the pseudo-essence or of the self-estranged essence in its denial” (“The Paris Manuscripts” 71). He points out that “the act of superseding” plays a peculiar role “in which denial and preservation, i.e., affirmation, are bound together (71). Marx ridicules Hegel’s dialectic by arguing that everything from civil law to the state and world history are superseded in Hegel and they exist only as “moments of motion” (71). The mobile nature of their essence lies hidden “in their actual existence” and “it appears and is made manifest only in thought, in philosophy” (71). The first two manuscripts focus mostly on issues of political economy and wage-labour capital relations. It is surprising therefore as to why only the third manuscript that focuses on Hegelian thought drew the attention of the Frankfurt school Marxists.
The Paris Manuscripts were greeted with great enthusiasm by three most important Marxist intellectuals of the time: Lukacs, Marcuse and Lefebvre. They seemed to share the view that the manuscripts had completely changed their understanding of scientific socialism. They also believed that the manuscripts had made possible a reinterpretation of Marxism based on “the philosophical foundations of historical materialism” (50). However, the actual effects of this discovery were felt only after World War II in the late 1950’s when, “the philosophical writings of young Marx” (50) began to influence a variety of themes “on the widest scale throughout Western Europe” (50).

Therefore, one might conclude that Western Marxism turned out to be an inverted form of Marxism by late 1950’s. As Perry Anderson suggests: “Western Marxism paradoxically inverted the trajectory of Marx’s own development itself” (52). Marx had progressed from his early engagement with philosophy beginning with Hegel to politics and then economics. It was a development that had inverted Hegelian dialectic to turn philosophy from idealism to materialism. But ironically, “the successors of the tradition that emerged after 1920 increasingly turned back from economics and politics to philosophy” (52). Therefore, Anderson avers that in this sense, the wheel “appeared to have turned full circle” (52). And after this turn in Western Marxism, “no philosopher…ever claimed that the main or ultimate aim of historical materialism was a theory of knowledge;” (52) on the contrary, these philosophers assumed that the preliminary aim of “any theoretical research within Marxism was to disengage the rules of social enquiry discovered by Marx” (52). If Marx was able to retrieve the rational kernel from the outer shell of the Hegelian dialectic, the successive Western Marxists from 1950 onwards put the kernel back into the shell and began to read Marx’s mind. Their “main theoretical object became
Marx’s own thought itself” (52). This can be construed as the crucial reversal in Marxist theory that is most often interpreted as the death of Marxism by postmodernists. The death of Marxist intellectuals is therefore the moment of birth of postmodern philosophers.