

METAMODERNISM THROUGH THE LENSES OF EPISTEMOLOGY

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ABSTRACT

This paper interrogates the idea of metamodernism against the background of a claim for the demise of postmodernism, evaluating the extent to which postmodernist perspectives cause an implosion for its ideology, while at the same time setting the background for an elaboration of the metamodernist schema. In placing modernism, postmodernism and metamodernism on a holistic ideological scale, the paper argues for a re-conception of these terms on an ideological as opposed to a historical notation, which aids the perception of all three conceptions as being historically overlapping and existing in the same era. Thus metamodernism is treated as an offshoot of a postmodernist adoption of modernism. Furthermore, the arguments developed attempt to synergize both postmodern and metamodern ideological schemas as fundamentally grounded in an approach which sees philosophical engagements as being an integral aspect of the human culture; while at the same time pushing for a redefinition of knowledge within the subset of a virtual environment (Virtual Epistemology).

Keywords: Modernism, Postmodernism, Post-postmodernism, Metamodernism, Virtual Epistemology.

INTRODUCTION

The nature and manner of epistemic concerns are such that while the question of truth, belief and justification remain its fundamental layer for analysis, the construction of knowledge consistently evolves by refining itself into areas and limits that seem even less plausible, challenging the very conditions against which theories and presuppositions on truth and justification can be laid. One such area is the redefinition of social knowledge within the circles of what has now been termed as ‘the modernisms’; modernism, postmodernism and metamodernism. This paper intends to focus on the metamodern by examining the idea of metamodernism through an interrogation of the stylistic distinctions between the modern, postmodern and metamodern, treating them as ideological systems rather than historical periods. The paper focuses on the ideology of postmodernism in its first section, interrogating how the postmodernist idea implodes based on the objectivist relativist argument upon which a large chunk of its ideological energy has been spent. In the second section, the paper interrogates the idea of metamodernism as a post postmodernist concept, rather than a historical period, from what lenses the last two sections treat metamodernism in its own right, through a presentation of its epistemic tensions and an exposition of *Virtual Epistemology* as the central point of focus for a metamodern epistemology.

As this paper argues, metamodernism creates its scheme of operations, wherein in cyberculture; it collapses the analogue model of modernism, and the digital model of postmodernism, into a virtual model. In Knowledge construction; it combines modern objectivism with postmodern relativism and pluralism, seeing both as relevant narratives and ideological systems without committing or expressing fidelity to any. Similarly, In the Social sphere; metamodernism basks

in what Vermeulen and Akker (2010) have conceptualized as a both-neither dynamic, which embraces stark opposites and basks in the euphoria of rejection and acceptance, hostility and consolidation, etcetera. The endpoint of its interrogation is on the lack of any definite end point, its continuous flow of epistemic interrogations, its recreation of the social into the ‘new social’ vis-à-vis; the virtual, and its ability to grapple with conflicting ideologies in a much different way from postmodernism. Thus, the first point of interrogation for this paper is the idea of postmodernism, and the underlying grounds for a declaration of its demise, in the face of metamodern ideological flourish.

THE DEMISE OF POST-MODERNISM

Whether or not Postmodernism had real boundaries would remain a basic ‘problematic’, but its very intrinsic nature of being a confluence of so many alternatives cum alternate realities, factored-in ideologies, and divergent methodologies may not be unrelated to the nitty-gritty of practical chaos. An obvious juxtaposition remains its ironical non-exaltation of the human agency, and its ability to navigate a conceptualization even of a post-human world from the lenses of anti-humanism (see Braidotti, 2013). Rorty argued that a charge of relativism – a charge to which postmodernism has had its fair share of such categorization– gains traction against the background existence of objectivity. This draws the permutation that eliminating objective standards would engender the disappearance of any charge to relativism (Misak, 2011). This in a way, may be styled as a fundamental aspect of Lyotard’s conception of postmodernism as being against grand narratives, to which “we can resort neither to the dialectic of Spirit nor even to the emancipation of humanity as a validation for postmodern scientific discourse, but... the little narrative [*petit recit*] remains the quintessential form of imaginative invention” (Lyotard, 1979, p. 60).

But, to what extent can such a conception be said to exist within the subset of a world which grapples after the objective? In all sectors of the mind processes, something tangible seems an obvious reality, and reality itself becomes something tangible. On reasonable ground, one might call G. E. Moore's truisms an assertion of this reality. For example; in his conception, certain aspects of the human entity and experiences were true as they were, undeniable in the very word of it, for which any attempt at a definition could lead to a naturalistic fallacy (Moore, 1903). Moore argued that certain basic elements were undeniably objective in nature, “for example that he has body, (meaning that a material body exists at least), that he lives on the surface of the earth (meaning that the earth exists), that he was born a certain number of years ago (meaning that time exists and is real), that the earth itself existed for several years before he was born, and so on” (Omoregbe, 1991, p. 112). Moore’s simple style of making these common-sensical arguments though seen in some quarters as naïve, yet paved the way for a clear realization that philosophy could and should appeal to common sense. This meant that philosophy had to deal with the world as it were, rather than appeal to some abstract and metaphysical phenomenon which had no bearing on human reality. Although his argument was pushed against the extreme metaphysical presuppositions of the British idealists (Datta, 1961) the basic juxtaposition of his truisms draws on the very nature of reality, wherein certain commonsensical ideas could serve as an obvious refutation to other forms of extremities existing within the human thought process. However, Russell's perspective of shedding doubts even on reality within the subset of his logical atomistic position, most especially embedded in his notion of viewing reality as a product of logical fiction, wherein he argues that “in all cases where you seem to have a continuous entity persisting through changes, what you have to do is to ask yourself what makes you consider the successive appearances as belonging to one thing. When you have found out what makes you take the view that they belong to the same

thing, you will then see that that which has made you say so, is all that is *certainly* there in the way of unity.” (Russell, 1918, p. 115) This unity as he argues can be more categorized as being logical fictions ; “those things which are supposed to be part of the ultimate constituents of the world, but not to be the kind of thing that is ever empirically given.” (Russell, 1918, p. 113, see also p. 115). Still, Russell’s obvious downplay of his position serves to presume it is a product of some far-pushed metaphysical presuppositions. While on the one hand, Moore’s position affirms reality to which Russell’s idea of logical fiction serves to tune down the strength of commonsensical arguments, a basic line of synergy between both juxtapositions draws on the methodology (in accepting the existence of something objective; commonsensical for Moore, and Fictional for Russell) which could be of an advantage in accurately capturing reality, than the obvious inconsistencies within the later-postmodernist narrative wherein all attempts at comprehending reality becomes factored into the dynamic of ‘relative realities’. This poses a basic question as to how exactly the benchmark for truth could be measured if every permutation about reality is factored in as being true.

To some extent, Rorty’s epistemological behaviourism can be seen as playing a vital role in providing some clarifying arguments. Rorty argued that knowledge could be conceived as being a product of social agreements; thus the essence of epistemological behaviourism serves to look at the construction of knowledge from the perspective of what society lets us say rather than what there is, as he opines; “Explaining rationality and epistemic authority by reference to what society lets us say, rather than the latter by the former, is the essence of what I shall call ‘epistemological behaviorism’” (Rorty, 1979, p. 174).

While an obvious reality of Rorty’s position is its obvious reality; that is, Rorty’s assertion served to describe what plays out in the real world, thus bringing to bear a wholesome explanation for the differences in understanding divergent perspectives on reality and conceptions on the nature of things. Rorty’s position of social construction for knowledge does not negate the existence of certain aspects within even differing constructions, which overlap each other. This becomes the fulcrum of arguments on the very existence of concepts in philosophy, culture and religion, which can be deemed to transcend cultural boundaries, vis-a-vis; concepts seen as universal in nature (Fayemi, 2010; see also Wiredu, 1996) on what grounds it becomes quite difficult to fault the epistemic idea of universally existing concepts, or even the Kantian notion of categorical imperative (although this is not always the case), yet the existence of certain universal truisms (if we may borrow Moore’s terminology); such as similarity in the biological constructions of all humanity, the ability of each human entity to rationalize and come to reasonable conclusions on issues or situations et al, tends to portend the reality of a common universal concept of ‘humanity’ shared by all. On this premise, we may bluntly say to a denier of objectivity; that at least something which is non-relative is brazenly known.

However, if we balance this above assertion with Donald Davidson's conceptual scheme, we may rather see conceptual relativity as existing on some levels of societal linings than on all levels. This infers that while conceptual schemes "are ways of organizing experience... systems of categories that give form to the data of sensation... points of view from which individuals, cultures, or periods survey the passing scene” (Davidson, 1973, p. 5), conceptual relativity should instead be viewed, not from the concept of reality as being relative to each conceptual scheme, but the ‘conception of such reality’ as being relative to each conceptual scheme. This follows Dworkin's (1986) argument that while concept would refer to the most general or abstract propositions people could agree about a particular phenomenon, the conceptions of that concept would deal with the competing positions on what the concept is.

In this regard "the contrast between concept and conception here is a contrast (of) levels of abstraction" (Dworkin, 1986, p. 71). Thus, the very idea of certain elements of society which are cross-cultural, subject to the particularistic structure of the human mind, evident in almost every individualistic cultural presumption, and can more categorically be described as cross-conceptual schemes, rather enunciates the reality that an obvious push towards extreme relativism, emplaced, and heralded (if one may be permitted to speak of this conceptualization as though in the past tense) what may be presumed as *the demise of postmodernism*.

For instance, a peek into the psychological elements of the human person, as well as the sociological subset of societal underpinning portends similarity even in 'wonderings' over the categorization of what could be termed 'the necessity of a divine entity.' Campbell (1949/2004) draws quite an intriguing argument on the similarities amongst several existing myths and mythological personages, the cross-cultural narration on their quest, struggles, achievements, and the boons they bestow on humanity. In the same vein Carlyle's argument in his Lectures "On Heroes, Hero Worship and the Heroic in History," (Carlyle, 1841/2013) further perfects the conceptualization of what has been deemed or conceived as 'heroic points,' which amplifies the very notion of existing cross-cultural wonders or schemes, cross-cultural fears, cross-cultural realities; to which each culture attempts to capture. This again brings to being the essence of Russell's 'Logical atomism'. Russell's position can serve as a perfect outline for the kind of argument we intend to build; which is such that sees the existence of the objective, as being captured by different cultures in divergent ways, but whose very substance remains the same. Hence we may more properly relate it to the medieval era substance/accident discourse, where substances serve for 'that which exist,' a point to which Russell attempted to outline within the notion of 'Particulars' as being a replacement for medieval 'substance'; even though there are clear differences between both conceptions (Russell, 1918, p.32). Thus culture, language, religion, and every other lining of the human social sphere aim to capture or draw towards capturing such objectivity. An attempt at which may result in either comprehending only an aspect of such reality or miscomprehending such aspect; from whence the contextual objective scheme could be drawn. This further amplifies Russell's argument on the existence of two propositions as being correspondent to a fact; one which is true, and another which is false.

However, our central argument remains that the categorization of Postmodernism on the baseline of a 'rejection of objectivity,' rather than its interrogation sets the obvious mark for an ideological suicide. This further draws on the permutation that the postmodern walls collapse against itself; thus it implodes, and not just explodes; and the subject of such implosion remains an obvious attempt at trying to emplace what we may term 'universal holistic relativism,' even on iota's of human culture which had more properly been seen as 'universal' in its lining. Although the postmodernist assault on an approach to reality as being dependent on a singularized methodology remains vital for interrogating and pulling down what may be categorized as unwanted objective structures, or unnecessary popular absolutist schemes such as the universal absolutism and methodology, fast flowing within the ambits of human society in the guise of professionalism and scientism.

On this note, an obvious remedy to the quagmire of postmodernism ought to be hinged on the interrogation of objective aspects of human society, and the bringing to the forefront the relative; where 'the relative' becomes a new name for differing viewpoints needing further interrogation and amplification. Thus it neither emplaces objectivity nor pushes relativism, but factors both into 'being,' and brings to bear the agency of the human in passing a verdict. This

in essence tends towards a line of thought that we may more properly classify as the 'Metamodern.'

METAMODERNISM AS A POST-POSTMODERNIST CONCEPT

While the very idea of metamodernism takes its roots in culture theory, as well as draws on what seem to be noticeable trends in the arts and architecture, entertainment, and cyber-culture, its basic underlining permutation is hinged on the notion that the world has moved on from a postmodernist perspective, and currently trends a part which does not fit into the box of postmodernist discourses and as such requires a new conception, that of metamodernism. This conception whose most recent usage became popularized by Timotheus Vermeulen and Robin van den Akker, in their 2010 paper 'Notes on Metamodernism', attempts to herald a victorious course for the successful naming of an era whose patterns and mannerisms had remained hitherto unnamed, or whose naming had only resulted in several forms of declined popular usage; from Alan Kirby's conception of the era as digimodernism (see Kirby, 2009), or Pseudo modernism, to Robert Samuel's automodernism (see Samuels, 2009), to Post-postmodernism, the very idea has being that; the world has outlived the postmodernist boundaries and as such deserves to move on. But isn't this very acclaimed desire a product of that which the post-modernist ideology attempted to grapple with? That is; the very idea of modernity depicts "a cultural epoch and 'episteme' founded in a humanistic belief that the world is one. This belief, codified in centuries of realist art, representational politics and empirical science, is tantamount to the assertion that a common denominator can be found for all systems of belief and value: that the world is a unified field, explicable by a single explanatory system" (Ermarth, 1998, p.6742), of which such explanatory system gave rise to universal conceptions of reality an opening for which science filled and upon which scientism had its rooting. However, can such a desire for objectivity be said to have been abandoned in the acclaimed postmodernist era?

The basic problem with nomenclatural denotations has remained its ability to conceptualize or attempt to conceptualize the 'should-be' rather than the 'is.' This argument is hinged on the permutation that without adequately conceptualizing the 'is', scholarship seems more eagerly desirous of announcing an end of the 'is' and a beginning of the 'should-be', much in the same way Rorty attempted to presume an end of philosophy as practised (see Rorty, 1979), but what followed was not an end of philosophy in itself but rather an attempt to create such end by pointing out inconsistencies and hoping such inconsistencies could bring to bear such 'end.' Hence in a much similar vein, it can be argued that Lyotard's 'the postmodern condition,' which although seen as the heralding point of postmodernism, was in itself prescriptive rather than being realistically descriptive. However making an argument for the non-existence of a post-modern culture may seem too difficult to elucidate, but in adopting a seemingly simple approach to such reality, one may ask its defendant to point out a single realistic artefact of the postmodern relic, and all that may be seen could be some good books, numerous scholastic articles, and if the pointer attempts to drive home his point with a more convincing form of practicality, he may illustrate that by pointing to some movies, or music, or artworks, or architectural masterpieces, etcetera, but in the real world, what changed or has changed or is in the process of changing? This may bring to bear an obvious similarity with Rorty's pathos. Where in his conceptualization;

Intellectuals cannot live without pathos. Theists find pathos in the distance between the human and the divine. Realists find it in the abyss separating human thought and language from reality as it is in itself. Pragmatists find it in the gap between contemporary humanity and a utopian human future. In which the very

idea of responsibility to anything except our fellow humans has become unintelligible, resulting in the first truly humanistic culture. If you do not like the term "pathos" the word "romance" would do well. Or one might use Thomas Nagel's term "the ambition of transcendence." The important point is that both sides of contemporary Philosophy are trying to gratify one of the urges previously satisfied by religion. (Rorty, 2002, p.31)

It can be inferred that in attempting to keep itself relevant to the discursive field, we may more properly replace contemporary philosophy for social critics. Hence the basic question remains, was there ever a postmodern world or a postmodern idea? This is hinged on a permutation that certain writers have attempted to chronologize both the previous and present centuries by alluding to some form of constructive flow of society from one epoch – say modernism – to another; postmodernism, and then to an emerging new order, which is that of the metamodern, thus creating an actual historical connotation rather than an ideological sequence. My argument is hinged on the notion that; no historic categorizations of these periods can be made, as they weren't in any way actual historical epochs but just presumed ideological shifts. To which a counter-question could follow; how then do we categorize what is now being known as the Age of Enlightenment? Our best reply would be; just as a nomenclatural denotation of a presumed age, even though it were real. This is to say nomenclatural denotations of what may seem actual categories do not in themselves quantify those categories, but serve only to designate them. However, our argument on postmodernism attempts to designate it as an idea, rather than a real period of human history, ; that the postmodern debate could be best seen as an ideological concoction rather than a historical designation as the acclaimed 'age of enlightenment' may denote. On this premise, postmodernism thus becomes an approach to evaluating the conversations of mankind, a style or perspective of viewing human culture, rather than an actual system of existing culture. This means that neither the culture, its structures nor its physically existing constituent parts ever changed, but the perception towards, as well as approach to it, slightly or hugely became in some way altered. In this way, one can more properly understand the reality of 'overlapping,' as being overlapping not of times, but of ideas. This infers that neither the time nor prevalent systems or conditions of those times change in some ways, but the existing ideas about them could be deemed to have done so. Thus we may more properly create designations for each of these ideas, and fit them as entirely prevalent ideas dominant in this age of present-day humanity.

Hence modernism becomes an approach to reality based on the prevalence and belief in existing 'objectivities,' 'universally comprehensible realities,' and the prevalence of what Lyotard called 'grand narratives' (Lyotard, 1979). On the other hand, Postmodernism would more properly be seen as a reaction to the modernist ideology, which is based on the rejection of objective schemes, and a constellation and acceptance of even seemingly conflicting ideas, and worldviews. This does not necessarily transcend into relativism, as has been the most popular assault against the postmodernist position. Preaching tolerance of viewpoints doesn't necessarily transcend into acceptance of such viewpoints. Thus while affirming that there isn't a definite objective schema against which activities could be judged, postmodernism –as argued within some circles– does not affirm that every activity is a right one, but rather; every activity should most importantly be considered against the background of its own merits. This further infers that the existence of different methods of judging or coming to terms with reality does not mean that a method may not be superior to another, but rather that all methods should be treated as being valuable against the standards of its own defined boundaries and methodological paradigms. In a similar vein Le Cunff (2021) has associated modernism with

the age of the radio, postmodernism with the age of the television, and metamodernism with the age of the internet, which although may not be necessarily true, is not entirely false. This may be seen in terms of how these different viewpoints and ideologies arose, and how they influenced or were influenced by the prevalent technologies of their time, but to define such phenomenon in terms of its existing technologies alone may portend a notion of stiffening up the holistic nature of a wide-ranging ideology for a categorical explanation of its appearance, thus becoming another form of a categorical mistake.

Linguistically, Vermeulen and Akker's conceptualization of metamodernism hinged on two basic levels; the ontological and epistemological. While in its most basic explication, they conceived of metamodernism as a form of "oscillation between a typically modern commitment and a markedly postmodern detachment," (Vermeulen & Akker, 2010, p.2) the usage of the word 'meta' in their juxtaposition attempts to affix within; similar linguistic conceptions such as 'with' 'between' and 'beyond', however the situational lining of the concept places it ontologically 'between', epistemologically 'with' and historically 'beyond' postmodernism (Vermeulen & Akker, 2010). Here, our concern with a presumed historical placement again comes to bear; this as premised above is hinged on the notion that the placement of metamodernism as historically beyond postmodernism overlooks the permutation that its very conceptualization preceded a popularization of the postmodern dictum. As Baciú, Bocos, and Baciú-Urzica (2015) opines; while the term "postmodernism" first entered the philosophical lexicon in 1979, with the publication of "The Postmodern Condition" by Jean-François Lyotard, Metamodernism was introduced in 1975 by Zavarzadeh who considered it as an emergence from the aesthetics field. This brings to bear the complexity of situating metamodernism within a historical rather than an ideological bracket.

Our argument for a conception of metamodernism as being a form of post post-modernism should not be seen as a subscription to the syntactically correct but semantically questionable phrase "post-postmodernism," but rather as a designation which attempts to fit in metamodernism as an ideological concept spiralling from a discontent with the postmodernist worldview. Thus the entirety of our argument is an emphasis on these concepts as being prescriptively descriptive rather than a historically descriptive juxtaposition of the human condition. However, the baseline conception of metamodernism remains as a reaction to postmodernism. While Baciú, Bocos, and Baciú-Urzica, see metamodernism as a trend "which attempts to unify, to harmonize and to settle the conflict between modern and postmodern by supporting the involvement in seeking solutions to problems and the desirable positioning towards existing theories, not only combating or questioning them" (2015, p. 35), Vermeulen and Akker's definition has remained a pretty fundamental one to any discourse on this subject. In their coinage;

Ontologically metamodernism oscillates between the modern and the postmodern. It oscillates between modern enthusiasm and postmodern irony, between hope and melancholy, between naïveté and knowingness, empathy and apathy, unity and plurality, totality and fragmentation, purity and ambiguity. Indeed, by oscillating to and fro or back and forth, the metamodern negotiates between the modern and the postmodern. (2010, p.6)

This presumed midway position is seen in the light of being a form of "pendulum swinging between 2, 3, 5, 10, innumerable poles. Each time the metamodern enthusiasm swings toward fanaticism, gravity pulls it back toward irony; the moment its irony sways toward apathy, gravity pulls it back toward enthusiasm" (Vermeulen & Akker, 2010, p.6).

On the other hand, epistemologically, metamodernism holds an "as if" position, that is; a view of reality that it never expects to come to terms with, but keeps revelling in its everlasting chase. It is like the Sisyphean task of continuously pushing a boulder which would come rushing back to the ground the moment one gets to the top; only that in this position there is no top, neither is there any goal but an "as if" presupposition. Here the individual acts as if there were a goal, lives as if there were some reality, becomes as if there were a becoming, acts moral as if there were morality, believes as if there were some truth, and attains heights as if those heights existed. It seems like a form of Nihilistic disillusionment engendered by an absurdist carefreeness. Thus as Vermeulen and Akker postulate, on its epistemological basis;

Metamodernism moves for the sake of moving, attempts in spite of its inevitable failure; it seeks forever for a truth that it never expects to find. If you will forgive us for the banality of the metaphor for a moment, the metamodern thus willfully adopts a kind of donkey-and-carrot double-bind. Like a donkey, it chases a carrot that it never manages to eat because the carrot is always just beyond its reach. But precisely because it never manages to eat the carrot, it never ends its chase, setting foot in moral realms the modern donkey (having eaten its carrot elsewhere) will never encounter, entering political domains the postmodern donkey (having abandoned the chase) will never come across. (Vermeulen and Akker, 2010, p.5)

In a more simplistic term, Le Cunff (2021) writes; "we went from modernism – "make it new!" Let's shape history! To postmodernism... nothing matters! To – metamodernism: maybe things are not this black and white? Maybe there's a middle ground." Hence metamodernism pushes for a future it never is sure of coming to terms with, but keeps hoping even in the very obvious non-existence of such reality. As Turner (2015) juxtaposes;

Ours is also an age in which increasingly speculative modes of thought are thriving, with philosophies such as Speculative Realism and Object Oriented Ontology, as well as movements like Occupy, Black Lives Matter, and the rise of extremist political factions (for better or worse, as in the case of the so-called 'alt-Right'), empowered by network culture... metamodernism does not, then, propose any kind of utopian vision, although it does describe the climate in which a yearning for utopias, despite their futile nature has come to the fore.

SITUATING METAMODERNISM

We may situate metamodernism in the existing historic times but not as a distinct period of human history. It may be also situated as a leading ideology and a guiding philosophy, but not as a style of doing philosophy. In this vein, metamodernism is conceived of; as a consolidation as well as the abandonment of methods at the same time. It is an enactment of processes but still a rejection of those processes, an appeal to objectivity and a denunciation of the objectivity it appeals to. Thus it portends an admixture of different categories, a conglomeration of divergent contents, a rejection and an acceptance, an affirmation and a denial, a form of modernist postmodernism. By a metamodern philosophy, we espouse an existent position in the human thought-process, a midpoint amidst seeming alternatives, a merger between perceived extremities, which factors both sides of the divide, taking from both without necessarily pledging loyalty to any. It is an enactment of a yes mixed with the loud affirmation of a no, a meeting point between existing opposites, a rejection of both relativism and pluralism without an acceptance of absolutism. Yet it neither espouses a denial of commitment nor a

confirmation thereto, it takes no responsibility but neither does it reject any form of responsibility, it emphasizes on the futuristic and at the same time treats with levity any attempt at taking the future as being relevant. Hence it can be further categorized as an unserious seriousness, an ironic truism, conformity and a rejection of conformity, a reliance on methods without any acceptance of the methods relied upon, it is a dispassionate outlook on the nature of things, and as Vermeulen and Akker (2010) affirms; it is a both-neither dynamic.

This draws the line of disparity between the three unrelated terms; modernism, postmodernism and metamodernism. However, if modernism exalts objectivity, and postmodernism; plurality, metamodernism tends to exalt socially-based individuality, on the basis that the person becomes both the subject and narrator of his own story, within the space of a socially constructed communal framework. It is no more a case of “all aspects of social processes goes,” nor is it a lone categorization of knowledge as being a product of social agreements as reflected in Rorty’s epistemological behaviourism, the term social has now taken a new name, becoming itself a vague and ambiguous term. While in both a modernist and postmodernist usage it could refer to society as it were; holistic and comprising the human agency as a product of social connections and location-bounded proximity, in a metamodernist sense, the social (*vis-à-vis*; society) becomes non-location bounded, and has gone virtual. It exists in a space where neither rules nor morality applies, and where an individual can take up any form. The virtual individual in this fast-emerging reality becomes a sum-total of the roles played, and not a person 'being.' This virtual construction spirals into a presumed system of globalization, whose only point of direction is in its being directionless. Championed by a new form of interconnectivity as heralded by the digital space, the metamodern idea creates a mirror, shadow and imagery of a self-defined reality, immersed in a confluence of disparate identities or semblances of an identity, pushed beyond the limits of personality boundaries. As Le Cunff (2021) argues;

Metamodernism is about genuine connection, empathy, and community. While modernism is about creating something completely new (which you could argue is an illusion); postmodernism is about deconstructing the past and rejecting the future; pseudo-modernism is about mindless online consumerism – metamodernism is about creating something new with what was created before, while acknowledging the inherent ephemerality of the human condition.

On the individual stage, metamodernism becomes a new form of becoming which isn't tied to either existing social norms, or standardized societal practices, nor a glorified scientific procedure, rather it portends a subjective interpretation of reality projected onto a phase which neither accepts nor rejects objectivity. Thus one’s subjectivity could metamorphose into a subjective definition of an objective reality.

Taking society off its nominal hinges, metamodernism deconstructs and at the same time reconstructs the world as we knew it, creating a stratum where society becomes a community of persons within a virtual space sharing common or similar ideologies. This brings to bear the very notion that in this new socialized context, society becomes creatable and discardable by the individual. It is subject to the person and has no filial connection or communal underpinning, nor does it necessarily have any form of location-bounded proximity. Thus the individual becomes the creator and discarder of his society, choosing that which aligns best with one’s notions and permutations, and creating a pedestal where neither transcendent reality, nor location-bounded barriers serve as a hindrance to personhood. Virtual life becomes as real as real life, human connections digitalized, much that individuals could rise to heights in this newfound clime, without being subjected to any form of social structures nor boundaries

society had earlier put in place to determine the process of ‘any’ such rise. Thus the term social determinism would more properly be replaced by an even stronger boundless form ; virtual determinism, bringing to being the question if metamodernism bears within a stronger form of determinism, who determines? However a more pertinent question should be; if there is the potentiality of determinism in a metamodern ideology, to what extent can such determinism impede human progress; in more nuanced terms if virtual determinism can be said to exist, then how exactly can knowledge be constructed within the subset of a metamodern ideology?

METAMODERNISM AS VIRTUAL EPISTEMOLOGY

It may not be quite easy to rule out the necessity of pushing an epistemic inquiry beyond the boundaries of the social into the virtual. Social epistemology has been conceived as “the conceptual and normative study of the relevance to knowledge of social relations, interests and institution... (This) revolves around the question of whether knowledge is to be understood individualistically or socially” (Schmitt, 1998, p.8063), with Goldman pushing the bar even higher by distinguishing the revisionist, preservationist and expansionist social epistemology, as cited by Kusch (2011) who in criticizing Goldman's differential attitude towards classical epistemology, argued for a diagnostic program in social epistemology which tries to analyze, explain and criticize the foundations of classical epistemology. The very notion of a world beyond the limitations of social ascriptions and physical descriptions; a virtual world occupying boundless space, draws within the necessity of pushing epistemology further, beyond the social into the new-social, or virtual; which thus brings to terms the need for conceptualization of a new epistemic approach; *Virtual Epistemology*.

In taking deep cues from Kusch's diagnostic program for social epistemology, virtual epistemology would attempt to look beyond the contours of what qualifies as knowledge in the virtual space, how such knowledge is formed, and the extent and means through which it can be justified. A basic justification paradigm may be a redefining of contextualism into the space of the virtual, thus giving rise to the notion of *virtual contextualism*, or better-put *cyber-contextualism*. This is premised on the notion that adopting the diagnostic approach puts the inquirer into a position of analyzing rather than constructing, and explaining rather than deconstructing; although the very fundamental position of philosophic criticism remains an integral subset of this permutation. As a young system of inquiry, virtual epistemology may be content to perform the above using such limited tools, but the very notion of a virtual epistemology raises fundamental questions as to the necessity of such undertaking and the essentiality of its being an approach to epistemology. Isn't its construal an unnecessary extension of the epistemic instrument or an irrelevant deployment of epistemic concerns?

An obvious answer to the above would be hinged on the fact that whether or not scholarship denies its reality, the existence of the virtual space has come with its medium for constructing reality, a medium which if left un-interrogated may spiral into obvious distortions of the human agency, a point to which the present trend of the metamodern tends to amplify. We see this every day, in the challenge of information and disinformation, the horrors of mal-information, and the sudden rise of several movements from online trends into open defiance and street protests, knowledge no longer becomes the prerogative of the philosopher neither does it fall under the evaluative lenses of the scientist, it has become not social but virtually constructed. What soon spreads as information becomes subject to counter-information, and soon gives way to obvious disinformation leading to arbitrary construction of beliefs; which in turn is subject to the metamodern ideology of individuality and subjectivity; the epistemic agent weighs his existing information against the background of other such existing belief-systems, bringing to

bear the *cyber-contextualist approach to justification*, which thus creates a grounding for the attainment and proclamation of a certain knowledge claim.

The less engagement scholars make into the contours of knowledge formation in the virtual world; *virtual epistemology*, the more the field becomes open to infiltration and unhealthy anarchism, which in turn plagues the social sphere forcing scholastic engagement devoid of an analysis of its rooting. It is not an absurd adventure to engage with the virtual, the very idea of a post-analytic philosophy draws as important the necessity of philosophy's engagement with culture, thus creating grounding for philosophy as being a voice in the conversation of humanity. Here the virtual sphere indicates an aspect of human culture which though taking over the very contours of social existence in the very word of it, remains less interrogated from the agency of philosophic engagements.

While we may not judge metamodernism for heralding a new way of knowing—which by the way—is not a distinct expert culture, or an approach to cultural reality as postmodernism portrayed, its very intricacies having being argued in this paper portends a new way of knowing, a new approach for coming to terms with reality, a new presupposition and constructive paradigm for determining what is 'the known.' Whether in the form of artificial intelligence, or virtual realities; the metamodern ideology draws its rooting deep into these salient yet less engaged areas of human reality. To what extent then can the non-engagement of philosophy into these terrains be construed as being a fundamental part of the problem in itself?

CONCLUSION

In this paper, we have attempted to interrogate the implosion of postmodernism against the background nature of its internal inconsistencies. Whilst laying this upon the juxtaposition of metamodernism, the paper argues for a conception of metamodernism within the boundaries of an ideological rather than a historical approach and evaluates the same against the background of both modernism and postmodernism. We have argued that the very contours of metamodernism require philosophic engagement, this is laid on the background that while the metamodern can more properly be linked to the virtual space, there exists a paramount necessity for inquiring into the patterns through which knowledge is constructed in such virtual sphere; which brings to being the conceptualization of a *virtual epistemology*, and an obvious necessity for extending intricacies of philosophic engagement into this sphere.

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