Postmodern Social Theory

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Modernity is already postmodern. The postmodern is not after the modern nor is it opposed to the modern; instead, it is in the modern. We could not, however, call the postmodern the secret heart of modernity. The heart of the modern is its dream of transparency. Its belief that it can, ultimately, know and therefore take control of itself. For social theory, the modern is the belief that the hidden processes of society can be revealed and perhaps even manipulated to bring about a new and better society. Postmodern social theory is *opposed* to, is *after*, this dream of transparency.[1]

Postmodern theory is a recognition of the intractable contingency in modernity—that

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[1]Postmodernity is "in" the modern in another sense altogether. It is something like the food of the modern, but that part of the food that is indigestible, which cannot be easily incorporated into the system of modernity. Postmodernity is a recognition of the indigestible *contingency* in modernity. It is in modernity, but it is what is left over after the dream of transparency drops away. Perhaps, then, it is appropriate to refer to the postmodern as the *excrement* of modernity.

This is a reference with which many critics of postmodernism can agree, for we often have heard them compare postmodern theory to the excrement of certain barnyard animals. To those familiar with Freudian theory, this scatological analysis explains many sociologists' relation to postmodernism. The relation is determined by that stage, the anal, in which control is the primary issue. To give up the modern dream of transparency is to give up the fantasy of control. As the anonymous revolutionary so succinctly expressed the concept of postmodern contingency, "shit happens," or the Latin variant, "Fex urbis, lex orbis" (Saint Jerome).

Seeing postmodernity as the excrement of modernity also suggests a relation between postmodern theory and the ecological movement. After centuries of ignoring our own refuse, we are finally being forced to deal with it or else be buried in it. This is because our modern civilization has expanded so that there is no longer any place outside of it where our refuse can be safely dumped. Burning, burying, sinking, and transporting only moves it to another location or changes it to another form. There is no outside in which it can be discharged and ignored.

Similarly, the modern has expanded to include our entire consciousness. We can no longer blame archaic traditions or primitive thinking for the failure of modern plans. (Although some now try to blame postmodernism.) There is no outside to modernity, no other place where we can locate the contingency that unsettles our schemes. No matter how we analyze or trace its transformations, contingency remains within the modern. The contingency is internal to modernity and it becomes fully recognizable as modernity expands to its fullest extent. This intractable contingency is the place from which to begin to understand postmodern theory because postmodern theory is what recognizes the contingency in the modern. The postmodern is both the modern to its fullest extent and the failure of the modern dream of transparency.

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society could be different than it is and that the current situation is the product of a series of historical accidents rather than essential forces. If, in fact, contingency is intractable, there are two ways to deal with this theoretically. On the one hand, theorists can bracket the contingency and focus on what can be determined, even if never completely. They can speak of trends, probabilities, all-things-being-equal. They can make deterministic assumptions and build models that approximate a contingent reality. On the other hand, theorists can focus on the contingency by using theory to show that current formations could be otherwise. Let us call the first approach modern and the second approach postmodern.

For a modern sociology, success is defined by the increased transparency of the social object—the revelation of essential underlying forces and processes. For a postmodern sociology, success is defined by the revelation of society's radical contingency and the opening up of new subject positions and local social projects.

It is not immediately apparent that postmodern sociology can be defined by its focus on contingency, especially since postmodernism is notoriously difficult to define at all. One of the reasons for this difficulty is that few of those we commonly think of as postmodernists (e.g., Foucault, Baudrillard, Virilio) identify themselves as such. Another is that they regularly employ such rhetorical devices as hyperbole, irony, and studied vagueness so that it is difficult to say what one postmodernist believes, let alone what the group as a whole professes. Postmodernism itself is plural as are the interpretations of it. This has led many theorists to simply give up on any attempt at precise definition and equate postmodernism with vagueness, ambiguity, and obscurantism.

Nevertheless, we argue that the characteristics that make postmodern theory (in)famous can be seen as related to a focus on contingency: skepticism toward grand narratives, abandonment of any basis for claiming certainty, rejection of universal standards, playful rhetoric, a subversive approach, and an emphasis on the irrational. All are connected to an attempt to reveal that things could be otherwise. They all proceed from a belief that the objective of theory is not to show why things are as they are, but simply to open up alternatives. However, a common focus on contingency does not establish a set of definitive concepts, nor does it delimit a particular theoretical frame; but it does structure the types of questions that can be fruitfully asked and the key controversies.

Postmodern theories can be approached in two ways that can be themselves categorized as modern and postmodern. A modern approach to postmodern theories would allow for a mapping of postmodern social theories, seeing such a map as useful for providing an overview of possible theoretical tools. A postmodern approach, however, would be skeptical of any attempt to locate, fix, classify, or structure contingency and the theories that attempt to exploit it. Such a postmodern sociology can only work in the margins or perhaps the footnotes of social theory (and this chapter).[2]

[2]Here postmodern theory will not take the form of a critique of modern social theory. We do not intend to produce a postmodern theory of modern theory. Such an attempt can only represent modern theory as something more coherent and rational than it ever has been. Instead, we would like to steal the effects of modern theory.

The effects of modern social theory are not at all tied to its coherence and rationality. The effects appear inconsistently here and there: in the biographical detail of the theorist, in the strangely chosen phrase, in the incongruous metaphor. The force of Weber's Protestant ethics, of Marx's fetishism of commodities, of Durkheim's mechanical solidarity, for example, do not lie at all in their rigorous positivity but in their very ambiguity—Weber's tangled relation to both his mother and his culture, Marx's use of a religious phrase that Freud was to so thoroughly sexualize, Durkheim's argument that social changes associated with the industrial revolution and its mechanization should destroy the society he chose to call mechanical. Postmodern theorists would like to simply appropriate these effects without any pretense to consistency.

After all, what can a postmodern theorist say about modern theory? That it is a myth? a paradox? an

One of the authors of this chapter previously has created a map of postmodern theory (Ritzer, 1997) that focused almost entirely on theorists (other efforts at mapping postmodern theory include Huyssen, 1984; Bertens, 1995; Antonio, 1998; Crook, 2001). In this chapter, we will instead map the *ideas* associated with postmodern social theory. While identifying postmodern ideas can be as difficult and ambiguous as identifying postmodern theorists, we have the advantage that social analysts in a wide variety of fields have selectively recognized and employed these ideas to enrich otherwise modern works. Ritzer (1999), to take one example, has done a very modern analysis of the "new means of consumption" utilizing several concepts that are central to postmodern theory: simulations, implosion, time, and space.

This effort to map postmodern concepts will be divided into three parts. First, we will deal with some of the *epistemological* concepts associated with postmodern social theory. Second, we will deal with a set of critical and ironic *analytical* tools that explore the new world that is emerging with the demise of modernity. In contrast to those who view postmodernists as unrelenting nihilists, we believe that the most useful legacy of postmodern theory may be its creation of a series of critical views of the contemporary world. One of the most important of these critical views is irony. Third, we will look at the relation between postmodern theory and consumer society.

EPISTEMOLOGICAL CONCEPTS

Decentering and Deconstruction

The focus on contingency leads to several postmodern epistemological concepts. First, there is *decentering*, a notion closely associated with Jacques Derrida (1977). Perhaps the most general meaning of decentering involves the surrender of the idea that there is a center, a source, a point of origin that determines subsequent and peripheral phenomena. Modern theory has been characterized by a series of searches for origins, be it Weber's search for the origins of modern capitalism in Calvinism or Durkheim's effort to find the source of mechanical solidarity in the increase in dynamic density. Decentering also involves surrendering the futile search for the "essence" of a social phenomenon as exemplified in modern social theory by Marx's view that the exploitation of the proletariat by the capitalists was the essence of the capitalist system or Wallerstein's neo-Marxist effort to find that essence in the exploitation of peripheral nations in the world system by those that lie at its core. Thus, modernists (e.g., Freudians, structuralists, Marxists) are obsessed by the idea of finding and unraveling the core phenomenon that will end in the discovery of the secret force or event that determines everything else. Postmodernists reject the idea of any such core phenomenon and urge, instead, that observers focus on what is presented as marginal and derivative.

Closely related is the notion, also tied to Derrida, of *deconstruction*. This involves an analysis that demonstrates that phenomena that are presented as marginal and derivative are always necessary for "propping up" what is presented as central and originary. For example,

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impossibility? As though postmodern theory were not. What is a postmodern theorist to do with modern theory? Perhaps we were given modern theory, but like the borrower in the old joke, we have given it back and now we will admit to nothing: "Jean borrowed a kettle from Karl. Karl accused Jean of damaging the kettle. Jean's reply: first there was no kettle; second, I never borrowed it; and third, it was already damaged when I got it." There never was such a thing as modern theory, and besides, postmodern theory never borrowed it, and finally it was damaged when we got it.

Derrida (1974) is famous for deconstructing the way in which speaking has been presented as original and immediate, while writing has been presented as derivative and indirect. Derrida demonstrates, however, that speaking is better seen as a species of writing. Speaking is a material medium of arbitrary sound marks that is no more immediate and directly interpretable than writing. Presenting speaking as original and immediate allows for a central point from which to derive social rules, as seen from Plato to Garfinkel to Habermas. Once it is realized that all communication proceeds through an arbitrary material medium, the social rules derived from it are revealed as themselves arbitrary and contingent.

Perhaps the key point about deconstruction is what it does *not* involve; postmodernists reject the idea of deconstructing in order to establish a new construction. The latter would be more consistent with a modern approach to disassembling extant theories. Postmodernists reject it because it would simply involve the creation of a new oppressive and hegemonic theory that would in turn need to be deconstructed. The point Derrida makes is not that writing is more central than speaking, but that neither can anchor nonarbitrary social rules. For the postmodernist, deconstruction is to be followed by further deconstructions without end.

This relates to another fundamental difference between postmodern and modern social theory. Modern theory and more generally modern science are about the finding of the answer; the discovery of an underlying truth. Thus, the endless deconstruction of theories cannot be acceptable to modernists because it is of no help in discovering the truth. When they take extant theories apart, modernists only do so as an intermediate step toward the creation of a new theory that offers the answer. The contrary objective of the postmodernists is described by Richard Rorty (1979) as "continuing the conversation" rather than discovering the truth. Only the constant generation of new insights is able to reveal contingency rather than obscure it.

Totalizations and Grand Narratives

Two of the ways that modernists have obscured the contingency of society are through totalizations and grand narratives. *Totalizations* involve an effort to locate an underlying force, experience, or phenomena that explains most, or all, of the social world. Examples are legion in modern social theory and they include Parsons's structural functionalism, Blumer's symbolic interactionism, Luhmann's system theory, Giddens's structuration theory, and Coleman's rational choice theory. *Grand narratives* involve efforts to explain much or all of social history by making social change appear predictable or necessary. Among the modern examples are Weber's rationalization theory, Simmel's tragedy of culture, and various evolutionary theories including those of Comte, Spencer, Parsons, and Luhmann. For postmodernists, totalizations are only useful in order to make "war on totality" (Lyotard, 1993, p. 16) and the only useful grand narrative is "a grand narrative of the decline of the grand narratives" (Lyotard, 1993, p. 29).

Lyotard traces the evils of Nazism and Stalinism to grand theories of the ultimate triumph of the Aryan race and of the proletariat. Thus, totalizations and grand narratives, whether they exist in the social world or in the social sciences, are seen as terroristic and to be avoided at all costs. Wherever they are found they are to be deconstructed.

Overdetermination and Secondary Rationalizations

Postmodern epistemology is often described as *antirepresentational*. All language, including theory, is seen as unable to represent a reality that is external to it. Strangely enough,

this is sometimes criticized as a kind of idealism, but far from it; the postmodern theory of language is radically materialist. For the postmodernist, language is not some ideal domain that is privileged over the material; instead, language is itself a material domain with its own history, determinants, and effects. The postmodern argument is that the material history of language has little to do with the history of the natural world. The relationship between language and the world is determined by contingency and pragmatism, it is not a relationship of representation and most especially not a relationship of truth.

Truth cannot possibly describe the relation between language and the world. Only an idealist theory of language can believe that language represents the world in a way that could be described as true. Contrary to the *X Files*, the truth is not out there. Reality is out there (and, for all we know, flying saucers might be out there), but truth is entirely in language. The relation between language and the world can only be useful or not useful. It cannot be true or not true.

This is why postmodernists argue that theories, which are part of language, cannot represent nature. Theories about nature have a contingent relationship with nature because they are different orders of materiality. Language is produced by the manipulation of oral and graphic inscriptions embedded in the historical and social contexts of human interactions. Nature is a separate domain of materiality. To some extent, nature can be made to determine pragmatically our theories about it—this is the point of experiments—but the theory is always underdetermined by the experiments. We can always think of other theories to adequately explain the experiments. We may choose a definitive explanation because it is more elegant or simpler or mathematical, but these have everything to do with the domain of language and nothing to do with nature.

However, this argument does not apply to the relation between society and theories about society. These two are of the same domain. In fact, language and society are so intertwined as to be inseparable. Nevertheless, discussing whether or not a theory about society is true is still seen as an unprofitable topic for a postmodernist. We can certainly discuss whether a theory is able to make accurate predictions about society, but this is not the same as being true. This difference is especially obvious when discussing the moral value of a theory: truth is its own good, while being able to make accurate predictions about human beings can be regarded as objectionable, especially if the prediction is successful because the theory is a reflection of a culturally pervasive domination. It is one thing, for example, to say that rational choice theory makes accurate predictions because it is true. It is another to say that rational choice theory makes accurate predictions because the theoretical assumptions reflect the domination of the capitalist economic system.

Despite the shared domain of language, postmodernists would argue that there is also a contingent relation between theory and society; this time not as a result of underdetermination, but by what Freud called "overdetermination." In dreams, Freud tells us that elements are overdetermined. This does not mean they are strongly determined, but that they can be seen as determined by multiple, contradictory systems. For example, a dream of being chased by a giant hotdog might refer to the dinner one had eaten, as well as a friend we had thought of named Frank, and a dachshund that we had as a child. It is even conceivable that Freud could add some sexual interpretation here.

Similarly, postmodernists would argue that theories about society and the language they are expressed in are overdetermined by the society from which they emerge and that they purport to study. The elements of the theory and the choice of words in which they are expressed are part of multiple contradictory systems. At one and the same time, they can be seen as determined by the biography of the theorist, the contemporary social context, the history of sociological theory, and the contingencies of linguistic, biographical, social, and

historical accidents. Postmodernists believe that the force of a theory comes precisely from these overdeterminations.

Furthermore, postmodernists suspect that, like the dream, theory is subject to secondary rationalization. Although the importance of the dream lies in its shocking displacements and juxtapositions, the dreamer begins, soon after awakening, to rearrange the dream into a more rational structure. This tends to obscure the real force of the dream. Postmodernists see something similar happening with theory. The powerful and shocking juxtaposition and combinations of ideas are rationalized and their force is obscured by constructing an explanatory theoretical system. Postmodernists are interested in the original elements' ability to reveal the contingency of the present rather than constructing a secondary rationalization that explains the present and therefore makes it appear inevitable.[3]

Rather than creating a rational system, postmodernists focus on the contingency in language in order to reveal the contingency of the status quo. Postmodernism is interested in the effects of the circulation of overdetermined theoretical elements, but it does not want to rationalize them into a system. In this way, postmodern social theory is just like postmodern architecture, which "randomly and without principle but with gusto" cannibalizes all the styles and theories of the past and combines them "in overstimulating ensembles" (Jameson, 1991, p. 19).

The theoretical effect that postmodernists are most interested in is the creation of new possibilities. But this means that any ideas of theory revealing the true nature of society in the sense of essential underlying laws, forces, or processes must be abandoned. Such a revelation

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[3]Let us take as an example the very theoretical element we are discussing: the "postmodern." We can understand this word as a contingent overdetermination within a material language system. The prefix "post" is usually taken to mean *after* modern, but this too is overdetermined by multiple linguistic meanings and the choice of any one meaning is contingent. For example, it is also true that the "post" could have the same relationship to the word "modern" that it has to the word "card" in "postcard."

In "postcard," the card carries the message and "post" indicates that it is circulating within a delivery system in which it can be freely read by everyone even if they are not the addressee. Accordingly, postmodern would mean a system that circulates the modern as a message and it would remain "post," i.e., in circulation, as long as it is not delivered to the intended addressee. Postmodern then is the modern that has gotten lost in the mail, is forever circulating, whose delivery is always delayed, and which is always being read by someone who is not the intended addressee. It is, as Baudrillard (1984, p. 25) says, "a game with the vestiges of what has been destroyed.... So we must move in it, as though it were a kind of circular gravity. We can no longer be said to progress."

In addition, postmodernists suspect that the message can never be delivered or else the whole circulating system will collapse. Let us take, for instance, the message that Mannheim circulated within the post system of sociological theory: that all social theories, both ideologies and utopias, are determined by the society from which they emerge. At least implicitly, this message has always circulated within sociology. We cannot imagine sociological theory without it being in circulation, but it can never be finally delivered or else sociology will collapse. What could be said after that message is delivered? What sociologist wants to simply be a mouthpiece for the status quo? Instead of accepting final delivery, we read its message and pretend that we are not the true addressee.

We are not saying that Mannheim, under this definition, was postmodern, but that sociology becomes postmodern so long as it has modern messages circulating within it that can never be delivered. It is these eternally deferred messages that make sociological theory a collection of effects rather than a fully rational system. In this sense, many modern social theories are postmodern in that they have central messages circulating within them that cannot be delivered. For example, exchange theorists look at social actions as a product of reinforcement schedules. The message that never can be delivered is that the theory itself must be a product of reinforcement schedules. If this message is delivered, then debates among the proponents of exchange theory should take the form of an exchange of food pellets or whatever passes as reinforcement. Rational debate would be a performative contradiction.

Of course, this meaning of "post"-modern makes a mockery of almost all criticisms of postmodernism. Every critic without exception has misunderstood the denotative meaning as a connotative meaning. "Post" does not mean after, but postal. We might say that, with this definition, postmodern theory has gone postal and the critics are among its victims.

(assuming it was a possibility) would place limits on what can be done. Instead, postmodernists believe that the essential nature of society is contingency and the role of theory is to reveal that. Theory should not tell us what *is to be* done but what *can be* done. Totalizing theoretical systems obscure the first brilliant flashes of new possibilities.

Theoretical Pluralism

Since theories are used as tools for revealing possibilities rather than for revealing essential underlying forces, postmodernists may juggle several descriptions of the same event without asking which one is correct. Instead of theoretical consistency, postmodernists ask whether the use of a particular theory gets in the way of our use of other theories. If Marxist macro theory and ethnomethodology make contradictory predictions, that is no reason not to use them together, so long as their conjunction opens up new possibilities.

A charge of relativism is simply irrelevant here. The relativism of the present society is precisely the goal of postmodern theory. Rather than revealing deep forces, postmodern theory reveals the contingency of present configurations by making comparisons with other attempts at social organization, both historical and utopian.[4]

The Subject

Postmodern contingency even invades the core of modern epistemological thought, the subject. Modern social theory has notoriously taken the subject, the human actor, as its assumed foundation. This is manifest in such diverse approaches as Freudian theory with its focus on the ego, Marxian theory and its central concern with species being and the proletariat, and Giddens's structuration theory with its focus on the empowered actor. Postmodern social theory, on the other hand, is rife with examples of subversions of the subject.

Foucault (1976, p. 16), for example, sought to create "a method of analysis purged of all anthropologism." He saw the focus on humans as subjects and objects as a relatively recent (18th century) development in the human sciences. For Foucault, modernity is precisely that era that produced the subject that is also an object. Under Foucault's definition, modernity began when human nature was seen as constituted by a social history. Rather than studying the

[4]In fact, most of the criticisms of postmodern theory, such as being contradictory and embracing relativism, are simply the projection of disputes that are internal to modern theory. What modern sociologist does not already use an array of contradictory theories? The charge of relativism assumes that there is an agreed upon foundation, but what foundation have modern theorists agreed on? Modern theory requires that the messages of sociology's intractable contradictions and always deferred foundation never be delivered. These circulate as post elements within the modern system. Each sociologist reads the message, uses the information, but never acknowledges receipt.

Postmodern theory does not create the contradictions, the relativism, or the contingency; it merely points them out. This is what the critics of postmodernism find most objectionable; like the man who came in to his doctor complaining of constantly farting, although they were at least silent and did not smell.

"In fact," said the patient, "since I've been here, I've farted no less than 20 times." The doctor gave him pills and instructed him to return next week. When the man returned, however, he was livid.

"I don't know what was in those pills, but the problem is worse! I'm farting just as much, and they're still soundless, but now they smell terrible! What do you have to say for yourself?"

"Calm down," said the doctor soothingly. "Now that we've fixed your sinuses, we'll work on your hearing."

Postmodern theory simply attempts to use theoretical effects to reveal the stench of contingency in the contemporary situation. It does this by focusing on the always deferred messages, the shocking juxtapositions, the overdeterminations, while trying to avoid any secondary rationalizations.

social history *of* human nature, it became necessary to understand human nature *as* social history. History and society were not something that happened to us, but something that we were. It was this change in perspective that made sociology possible.

Not only did human nature become a historical and social object of study, it also was fragmented into different specialized objects. Human nature existed within a biological organism of unfathomable complexity, at the center of an economic system whose products weighed upon it (him or her), embedded in a social system to which it (he or she) never agreed, lodged in a language whose history shaped its (his or her) thoughts. Each aspect required its own specific study. Rather than there being a unified human subject, there was the possibility of multiple human objects in different epistemic locations. The economic, linguistic, biological, historical, and social location of human nature were studied by different specialized sciences.

Modernity could no longer believe in a pure, direct apperception of the self. The knowledge of our fragmented self could only be secured through our very finitude. We can know the history of our being because we are historical beings; we can know society because we are social; and we can know biology because we are biological. Each of these positive forms in which one can learn that she is finite is given to her only against the background of her own finitude.

In what Foucault calls the classical age, one could believe in Descartes' simple equation of "I think" and "I am." In the modern age, the very language in which this is expressed becomes a problem. The words are seen as having a sociohistorical position, an indexicality, without which they are meaningless. The knowledge of ourselves is not given to us in the form of a pure language. The self's being and thinking are constituted by a social history that precedes that self and escapes any attempt to grasp it as a totality. In modernity, there is no guarantee that the "I" that thinks and the "I" that is are the same "I." In fact, the modern concept of the unconscious argues that they are not. The use of the same word to refer to both these selves is historically contingent. Consequently, the manifest philosophical truth that founded Descartes' system depends on a linguistic accident that is subject to change.

According to Foucault (1970, p. 316), the modern view of the subject creates an "interminable to and fro of a double system of reference." In the sciences that study humanity, humans appear as both the determined object of study and the free subject that knows. On the one hand, humans create history, society and language; on the other hand, we are produced by them and can only know ourselves through them and possibly we can only know them. From the second paragraph of Marx's (1926) *Eighteenth Brumaire* to Giddens' concept of structuration, modern sociology has never found a way to resolve this basic paradox, only clever ways to restate it.

In sociology, human nature appears both as a socially determined object and as a freely chosen project. This paradox threatens to undermine any sociological analysis, since the analysis itself may be the determined product of a social ideology. The paradox can be avoided only if the subject matter for sociological study is delimited ahead of time so that it excludes a self-reference to the theory being used. This is why sociologists cling so desperately to their traditional areas of study, for example, class, inequality, and production. A sociological analysis that is allowed to go outside these limited areas threatens to be self-refuting because sociology itself could be seen as a socially determined ideology.[5]

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[5]These problems with the modern subject are projected onto postmodernism, which is criticized for suggesting that the subject is contingent. But the impossible place of the subject is a modern problem. Postmodernism is not concerned with the true nature of the subject, only with the way in which the subject circulates within a system that cannot

Modern sociology's solution to the impossible position of the subject has been an exhortation to get on with the important work of sociology. "Don't look behind the curtain," we have been told. That little object, who is also the wizardly subject, is of no importance. But the work we would get on with depends on which side of the ambivalent view of the self we use.

Beyond Positivism and Eschatology

In keeping with this double reference, we see two kinds of analysis in sociology: (1) a positivism that views human beings as determined objects; and (2) a political eschatology that sees human nature as a project of freedom. Modern sociology has been divided into positivists, surveyors, and economic historians on the one side and humanists Marxists, liberals, feminists, and multiculturalists on the other. While it may seem as if these two are alternatives, they really operate as a "fluctuation" (Foucault, 1970). Positivists have always nourished a hidden political eschatology and humanists have always reached for empiricism. A discourse attempting to be both empirical and critical must be both positivist and eschatological. Without both of these, modern sociologists lose their motivation to do sociology.

Postmodernism is usually supposed to be on the side of political eschatology, since its focus on contingency can be seen as preparing the ground for a new regime of human freedom. However, modern political projects usually take the form of totalizing theories that are based on assumptions about human nature that postmodernism would question. In this one sense, postmodernists show a certain humility. They do not believe that any theory can provide the motivation for social change. This must come from the local situation. Theory can only reveal the contingency of the present and the multiple possibilities of the future.[6]

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deliver its message without collapsing: the positions it (he or she) can assume, the rules for its (his or her) circulation, the symptoms caused by its (his or her) nondelivery. For the postmodernist, the goal of this analysis is not to understand the subject, but to understand what can come after the subject.

In the circulating system of modern sociology, the self functions as a postmodern element. A central tenet of modern sociology is that the subject is a socially determined object, a social fact. This, however, is a message that can never be finally delivered to at least one set of subjects, that is, to sociologists. Sociologists can only believe in the importance of what they do if they can pretend that the message is not addressed to them. Otherwise, if the sociologist is herself a socially determined object, what can she say that is not simply a reflection of her social position? This constant circulation of the always deferred message makes for peculiar symptoms in sociology's depiction of the human subject. As Dennis Wrong (1961) pointed out, the sociological subject always seems "oversocialized."

[6]Conversely, postmodernists are usually supposed to be against positivism. However, in a strange way, postmodernists and positivists seem to need each other. Both are marginal to sociology but each feels compelled to present the other as dominant. Nevertheless, despite the rhetorical flights of animosity, postmodernism is not *necessarily* opposed to positivism.

Positivism can be defined in two ways. First, it can be defined, as Habermas (1971) does, as an aversion to reflexivity. Second, it could be defined, as Turner (1992) does, as a focus on invariant laws. Postmodernism, with its focus on contingency, would reject the first and be skeptical but interested in the second.

It is easy to see why Habermas would define positivism as an aversion to reflexivity. Not only do positivists not engage in reflexivity, but they go to great rhetorical lengths to dismiss it as navel gazing, solipsism, unresolvable metatheorizing, German idealism, French foolishness, American pseudorevolutionary ranting, and so forth. In many ways, positivism seems to be structured around an attempt to evade the paradox of the modern subject. There is a complete lack of consideration of what it means if the invariant laws discovered by the sociologist also apply to the sociologist. This is precisely what the positivist wants to dismiss as navel gazing. For the postmodernist, these sorts of paradoxes are a primary source of contingency, and therefore they are to be studied and elaborated on, rather than dismissed with catchwords.

On the other hand, anyone concerned with revealing contingency must also be interested in what is not

There are many other important epistemological ideas associated with postmodern social theory—*essentialism, difference, genealogy, intertextuality, representation, text, difference, alterity*, to name just a few—but we lack the space here to deal with more of them. The essential point is that the postmodernists have developed a wide array of epistemological concepts that lead them to take a very different approach to social theory than the modernists.

ANALYTIC CONCEPTS

In this section, we will look at a second set of the most important postmodern concepts: those concepts that can be used to critically analyze social phenomena in order to reveal their contingency. Modern sociological concepts are often compared to a set of analytic tools. These are used to investigate epiphenomena in order to reveal underlying forces and categories. Postmodern concepts can be seen as a set of "special effects" used to reveal the contingency of the phenomena. As in cinematic special effects, the audience is not asked to believe in the reality of the effect, but on the contrary to suspend belief in reality.

The difference between the two can be illustrated in the film that many consider to be the epitome of postmodernism, *Blade Runner*. *Blade Runner* is about discerning the difference between true humans and the manufactured simulations called replicants. This is a life and death difference, since the job of the hero of the film is to "retire," or murder, the replicants. In the film, the difference is established by an analytical tool that supposedly magnifies the eye of the subject in order to examine emotional responses to a set of preselected questions. However, when we watch the movie closely, we notice that the eye being examined is not so much magnified as simulated. Even when different eyes are being tested, their simulation on the screen of the analytical tool is always the same and the color of the simulated eye does not match the eye of the subject.

The eye as the site of analysis for revealing the underlying truth is one of the central themes of the movie. We see the factory where the replicants' eyes are manufactured; the "father" of the replicants (their primary designer and founder of the manufacturing company) is killed by putting out his eyes; and the final emotional appeal from the dying replicant is in terms of what his eyes have seen. But most importantly, the entire enterprise of distinguishing between humans and replicants is subverted. By the end of the movie, we know that the replicants are more human than the originals.

If modern sociologists appeared in this movie, we could imagine them refining the analytical test, improving the preselected questions, and perfecting the eye's simulation, but the sociologists would not notice the inescapable contingency of the distinction that they are investigating. The distinction between humans and their simulation is a brutal contingency with fatal consequences for those on the wrong side of the historical accident. Any search for an underlying force used to distinguish between the real and the simulation simply serves to

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contingent. Positivism's invariant laws would indicate both those social elements that cannot be contingent and the framework for increasing contingency for the rest. Nevertheless, it is difficult not to be skeptical about this goal. After over a century of pursuing it, sociological positivism has yet to produce one nontrival, generally accepted, invariant sociological law. By its own criteria, it has failed.

The problem for positivist might be called the $n+1$ dilemma. It is easy enough for positivists to propose n laws that seem to govern the local situation, but their hope is always to find the $n+1$ rule that governs the application of the n rules, and therefore is invariant. Postmodernists also believe in an $n+1$ rule, but for them it functions like Lecercle (1990, p. 93) describes the rules of grammar. For any natural language, there are n rules that describe correct language use and there is always an $n+1$ rule that "allows any or all of the n rules to be broken." In other words, the invariant law that the positivists search for is contingency.

justify the contingency and its brutality. The application of this insight to such staples of sociological investigations as race, gender, and class should be obvious. While a modern analysis takes these as independent variables and investigates their consequences, a postmodern analysis reveals the contingency of the categories.

Genealogy

This, for example, is the point of Foucault's use of *genealogy*. Genealogy is opposed to the search for origins, for the real, for the hidden truth. According to the genealogist, there is no essential secret behind history, except the secret that there is no essence, "or that the essence was fabricated in piecemeal fashion from alien forms" (Foucault, 1984, p. 78). Genealogy traces this piecemeal fabrication and shows historical change to be as contingent as the relation between generations in a family. This is not to say that the present inherits nothing from the past, but that the relation is as likely to be a reactionary reversal, or a mythical recreation as a straightforward adaptation.

In his analyses of punishment (Foucault, 1979) and sexuality (Foucault, 1980), Foucault's genealogies never reveal the truth of punishment or sex but rather their contingency. His history of sexuality, for instance, does not aim to locate the true nature of sex and then analyze its repression; instead, he reveals the historical contingency of our present notions of sex in order to open up the possibilities for new configurations of pleasures.

Hegemonic Articulations

Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe stress the contingency of constructing political identity. They see this as happening through a process of hegemony within a project of radical democracy. This concept of hegemony goes back to Gramsci's (1988) ambivalent definition. It is, as commonly recognized, a tool of the dominant class, but it is also the process through which diverse subaltern interests are brought together to construct a revolutionary class. In the hands of Laclau and Mouffe, hegemony becomes the solution to the problem of postmodern identity and totalizations. They take from Derrida (1972) the idea that all identity is an effect of systems of differences that are inherently unstable and decentered. And they take from Jacques Lacan (1977) the idea that human beings are essentially defined by a lack which they struggle to cover over. Identity then is not something that we have, but something that is cobbled together out of the multiplicity of subject positions that can be found within the systems of differences that make up society. Hegemonic practices provide a temporary and ultimately impossible center that allows us to construct an identity within a differential system.

Hidden hegemonic practices have been used to maintain the traditional belief in an essential identity and a totalized social field despite personal and social fragmentation. These hegemonic practices, once freed from their secret servitude to an essentialist logic, exhibit the nature of social reality as irreducibly plural and diverse. Sociological analysis can acknowledge and privilege this difference without making it an essential characteristic of individuals. This approach rejects both "the abstract Enlightenment universalism of an undifferentiated human nature" (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985, p. 36) and the Romantic celebration of individual diversity. It sees the plurality of subject positions as a product of a diversity of discourses.

Discourse comprises everything (including material objects) that is "meaningful" in a system of differences in which meaning for any particular element is given by temporarily and

partially fixing a center for that system. It is, according to Laclau (1988, p. 71), "coterminous with the 'social.' Because every social action has a meaning, it is constituted in the form of discursive sequences that articulate linguistic and extralinguistic elements." Michéle Barrett (1991, pp. 65–66) points out that the

> ... definition of discourse by Laclau and Mouffe does not, as has been immediately concluded by several materialists, represent a vertiginous leap into idealism. The concept of discourse in their hands is a materialist one that enables them to rethink the analysis of social and historical phenomena in a different framework.

Most significantly, material social structures and their meanings can be seen as linked through hegemonic practices rather than a natural and immutable relationship.

Irony and Fatal Strategies

Even genealogy and hegemonic articulations, however, are too modern for some post-modernists, since they seem to ignore the contingency of the analysis itself and are presented as the basis for a triumphant progression toward greater freedom of the subject. Instead, the most important conceptual conceits for many postmodernists is irony and many of the concepts and categories proposed by postmodernists must be understood in terms of this.

Baudrillard, for example, unable to hold onto his former Marxist hope for a revolutionary subject, instead ironically reverses the Marxist division between revolutionary subjects and the ideologically controlled masses. He assigns a revolutionary role to the masses and their fatal strategies (Baudrillard, 1990). While the masses do not want to be liberated, their silence and ability to absorb everything that is done to them makes it possible for them to drag "power down to its fall" (Baudrillard, 1990, p. 95). Such strategies are fatal because the masses respond of their own accord and it is impossible to escape from those responses. The victory of the masses will not be a dazzling revolution, "but obscure and ironic; it won't be dialectical, it will be fatal" (Baudrillard, 1990, p. 96). To attain such a revolution, fatal objects like the masses cannot take direct, conscious action. Rather, they must aim "to the side, beyond, off center"; in this way, "duplicity is strategic and fatal" (Baudrillard, 1990, pp. 77, 78).

Baudrillard's ironic conceptions mirror the irony of the contemporary world. For some, there is no other way to approach a postmodern world. This is also the basis for Lyotard's (1984) *paralogy*, which continually undermines itself through such devices as seeking out or inventing counterexamples, looking for paradoxes, and aiming at dissensus.

Simulation, Simulacra, and Hyperreality

For many, the postmodern world is associated with a type of unreality that Jean Bau-drillard (1994) has labeled *simulation*. The increasingly widespread existence of simulations erodes many crucial modern distinctions such as those between the real and the fake, the true and the false, the original and the copy. As we live more and more of our lives in simulated settings, we will increasingly lack a basis for making these kinds of distinctions. Thus, if we are born and raised in Disney's town of Celebration, or one of the many communities through-out the United States that are its clones, we will be increasingly unable to distinguish Las Vegas casino-hotels like Paris, the Venetian, and Mandalay Bay from the real thing.

Simulacra (Baudrillard, 1994) is a particularly important form of simulation. Here we

have a simulation of a simulation with no actual original.[7] For example, the concept of traditional family values used in politics today is a simulation that has its original in the type of families that existed in television programs such as *Father Knows Best*. It is thus a simulation of a simulation with little relation to actual traditional families.

With the concept of the *hyperreal*, Baudrillard argues that these simulations have become more real than real and truer than true. It is little wonder, then, that people increasingly come to prefer simulated hyperreality to the real thing. Disneyland (and Celebration) is far cleaner than the world outside its gates and the personnel under the simulated Eiffel tower in Las Vegas are far friendlier than those in France. In the hyperreal world, *Father Knows Best* becomes the basis according to which we measure our family, Las Vegas's simulations are the model for judging the authenticity of other cultures, and pornography is the standard for real sex.

Dromology

For Paul Virilio, the move to the hyperreal allows for the emergence of high-speed, global, virtual systems that are at war with reality. Pushed by technology, especially in the service of war, superspeeded virtual systems replace the slower intersubjectivity necessary for traditional political, economic, and ethical decisions. This makes all traditional sociological analysis obsolete and in need of replacement by what Virilio (1986) calls *dromology*, an analysis of the critical role played by brakes and accelerators. What is important for contemporary society is not a study of the differences between periphery and core or between urban and rural, but of the brakes and accelerators connecting the flow of images and information between the different regions.

Of special importance for this analysis is what Virilio calls vectors, those interconnections along which information and images flow. These vectors delocalize events, making distant public actions appear as private dramas. Spatial proximity becomes irrelevant and instead the speed of transmission is crucial. The tendency of vectors is toward increasing velocity, flexibility, and interconnection.

Virtual Geography

According to McKenzie Wark (1994, p. vii), this hyperreal, dromological virtual reality creates a virtual geography that "doubles, troubles and generally permeates our experience of the space we experience first-hand." In fact, the virtual reality is so much a part of our everyday life that now the real only emerges in times of extreme weirdness. For example, the stock market is now a virtual reality where crucial economic decisions are made by machines because of the amount of available information that must be processed and the premium placed on speed. We can only understand the market by looking at such times of weirdness as the crash of 1987, when there are extreme movements with no apparent basis in reality.

At those times of weirdness, we see that movements in the stock market are increasingly in response to high-speed changes in virtual representations rather than any change in the underlying reality of concrete firms. The exponential increases in the amount of information and the speed of transmission do not result in greater transparency but in a system that no

[7]Baudrillard is not consistent in this distinction between simulations and simulacra and often uses the two interchangeably.

human being can possibly understand. The high-speed virtual representations of the market become a third reality that is autonomous from the second reality of the market and almost wholly removed from the first reality of actual businesses. Since this virtual market on computer screens is everywhere and never sleeps, smart investors study the movements of the more accessible virtual market rather than trying to determine the reality beneath the representation. Increasingly, the economic well-being of the individual is as tied to the virtual reality of the market represented on their computer screens as it is to the actual business he or she may work for.

CONSUMER SOCIETY

One of the central figures of postmodernism is consumer society and it is especially here that postmodern theory begins to theorize its own condition of possibility. The postmodernism of endlessly circulating, always deferred messages is not simply an intellectual fantasy. It finds its roots in the everyday life of consumer culture where messages are overproduced and overdetermined. Advertising becomes precisely the type of "post" system that we have been discussing when the target audience takes up the ironic position of the nonaddressee of the message. Who really believes that "Coke is it" or that Nike wants you to "just do it" or that you can "have it your way?" These messages simply circulate within the system and are never delivered as modern messages to anyone.

In the ideal consumer culture, consumption does not use things up; instead, it keeps things in circulation. Commodities are taken up on whim and passed off as soon as their instant gratification begins to fade. Items are not worn out; they go out of fashion so that they can later be recirculated as nostalgia.

This creates what Baudrillard (1993) describes as a fashion system. First, capitalism transforms all objects into commodities where qualitative differences are transformed into the interchangeable quantitative differences of a monetary system. Then a similar thing happens to messages where meaningful differences between messages are transformed into an interchangeable fashion message. To wear the scarf of the *intifada* or a French beret is a fashion choice rather than a message about identity. A white bridal dress no longer indicates that one has maintained the "purity" demanded by a religious affiliation. The choice of ethnic foods has little to do with one's own background. All of these become simply another expression of fashion.

The message of fashion refers only to its own circulation. Communication is replaced by play. Changes in fashion do not represent any change in an underlying reality. This year's model refers to last year's model and the creative novelties added to it, or to last decade's model, and the ironic attitude with which it is reappropriated. The rhetoric of new and improved replaces actual change.

A fashion system makes a mockery of any attempt to analyze underlying forces. Fashion has no deep meaning and it revels in its superficiality. Analyses of class, gender, or racial determinations are likely to find themselves entering the fashion system as the latest element. Feminist critiques of fashion produced feminist fashions and then postfeminist fashions, which are actually ironic prefeminist fashions.

Baudrillard's argument is that all of our serious codes—politics, morality, sexuality, economics, science—are being transformed into a fashion system. Gore is the new and im-

proved Clinton; Bush is the new and improved Bush. Differences between candidates have more to do with style than substance.[8]

Resistance and Irony

Talk of resisting the hyperreal fashion system of consumer culture is part of the game. Resistance is already built into consumer culture in the ironic detachment that is part of its pleasure. We buy music to reflect our revolutionary pretensions, cars to escape the rat race, toilet paper to save the environment, and scented soap to enrich the Third world.

The critique of consumer culture cannot emerge from an analysis that reveals the underlying truth of advertising and consumption. The falsity of consumer culture does not lie in the difference between its facade and any underlying reality. In consumer culture, there is nothing but facade and everyone knows it for what it is. Consumers already know that advertising is not true and that fashions are superficial and they turn their same ironic attention to the ideology critiques of sociologists.

The falsity of consumer culture lies in the idea that there is something outside of the fashion system, just as the falsity of Las Vegas lies in the idea that there is an authentic Eiffel tower that is not just a tourist gimmick and the falsity of pornography lies in the idea that there is an authentic sexual encounter where bodies are no longer objectified. Modern social theorists cling to the fading hope that their revelation of underlying reality is something different from an advertisement, something that will finally be taken seriously by the ironic consumer. What can the social theorist tell consumers about their culture that they do not already know? What idea can theorists produce that will not be turned into an advertising slogan? The critical force of consumer culture emerges not from a comparison of its surface mendacity to its underlying reality. Instead, it comes from what consumer culture reveals about modernity: that modernity is an endlessly circulating advertising slogan to be taken ironically.

All the criticisms of consumer culture are true. It has lost its connection to any objective reality. It wastes energy in the pursuit of impossible fantasies. It absorbs and co-opts its own

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[8]We see this even in the intellectual world where buzzwords and catchphrases are used to sell books and attract students. Foremost among these are the terms "modernism" and "modernity." There is a constantly increasing list of books and articles that discuss modernity or modernism despite the fact that no one seems quite sure what the words mean. Most definitions are hopelessly vague and often inconsistent with each other. Modernism is, in the words of Ernst Gellner (1992, p. 22), "a contemporary movement. It is strong and fashionable. Over and above this it is not altogether clear what the devil it is." Even its supporters admit to its lack of meaning. "I have the impression that it is applied today to anything the users of the term happen to like" (Eco, 1989, p. 65). Dick Hebdige (1986, p. 78) complains that the term "modern" can be applied to "the decor of a room, the design of a building, the diegesis of a film, the construction of a record, or a 'scratch' video, a TV commercial, or an arts documentary, or the 'intertextual' relations between them, the layout of a page in a fashion magazine or a critical journal...." In a full-page sentence, he goes on to note that there are modern philosophies, modern music, modern subjects, modern styles, modern crises, modern narratives, modern technologies, modern nations, modern ages. When it becomes possible to describe all these things as modern, he concludes, "then it's clear we are in the presence of a buzzword."

In their infamously ironic style, these modernists and their tongue-in-cheek critics use the term postmodern rather than modern in the above quotes, but it is clear that the postmodern is actually the truth of the modern. The meaning of the modern itself is always post, always lost in the mail, eternally deferred, and constantly circulating. There really is no such thing as the modern, only a postmodern; but nevertheless, it is useful to retain the term "modern" to designate the deferred messages circulating within postmodernity.

criticisms. But what the critics must pretend not to see is that their own visions of modernity have these same defects circulating within them as undelivered messages. Modern social theory also has trends and fads, it has also entered the fashion system. For this year's model, we see an updated Parsonsian garb (fashionable now that it is passé), accessorized with frills derived from ethnomethodology and exchange theory and, for that daring touch, a hint of postmodern decadence.

It is not the frivolous contingency of consumer culture versus the serious truth of modernity. If that is it, how can we explain why consumer culture is increasingly dominant, except with a fatalistic theory of ideological dupes? Instead, it is the frivolous, playful, ironic contingency of consumer culture against the serious contingency of modernity. The truth is that most people prefer the former. Perhaps sociological theorists prefer the seriousness of modernity because theirs is already such a frivolous profession that they feel they must prove their seriousness.

Even sociological theorists should consider shopping for a new and improved social theory. Ask yourself this: Don't you deserve a brand new social theory? Haven't you worked hard for it? You owe it to yourself! You owe it to your friends and loved ones! Hurry down and see our new models!

FUTURE PROSPECTS

Postmodernists have had a profound impact on contemporary social theory. It is difficult to do social theory today without at least knowing the basics of postmodern theory. While many use it as a negative touchstone in their own work, a not insignificant number of social theorists are employing postmodern ideas in the development of their theories and others are making unique contributions to postmodern social theory. Some forms of social theory—symbolic interactionism, critical theory, globalization theory—have proven very receptive to postmodern ideas, but others—exchange theory, rational choice theory—have been highly resistant. Others, most notably feminist theory, have been very ambivalent about postmodern social theory, with some like Judith Butler (1990) (Clough, 2000) and Donna Haraway (1990) making important contributions of their own to the theory, while other feminists (e.g., Harding, 1990) have been highly critical of theory because it undercuts some of the goals and aspirations of feminist theory. For example, while at least some feminist theorists have sought to develop a general theory of women in the contemporary world, postmodernists are seen as rejecting the very idea of a general theory. Overall, there is a very uneasy relationship between feminist and postmodern social theory.

Not only is the impact of postmodern social theory uneven across the range of theoretical perspectives, it also varies geographically. European theorists were much quicker than their American counterparts to understand the importance of postmodern social theory, to address its basic ideas in their own work, and to make positive contributions to that theory. Indeed, to this day postmodern social theory is dominated by European thinkers. There has been much more resistance to postmodern ideas in American social theory and their impact was felt much later in this country. Even when it was felt, it had far less impact on American theorists than on their European counterparts and many Americans remain unalterably opposed to postmodern theory, even if they know relatively little about it. What they know of it seems to them both baffling and threatening.

Interestingly, while postmodern social theory retains the aura of being something new in American social theory, it seems passe to many Europeans. After all, many of the most

important works in postmodern social theory (e.g., by Derrida, Lyotard, Foucault, and Baudrillard) were published decades ago and many of today's European theorists read them while they were graduate students or relatively new professors. The public uproar over postmodern ideas has long since passed and European theorists in varying ways have made their peace with them. Thus, from the European perspective, the situation in the United States seems incomprehensible. Many European theorists wonder why so much heat is being generated in the United States today over a set of ideas that is "old business" as far as they are concerned.

More extremely, many European theorists have gone beyond postmodernism to create what is known as "post-postmodernism." Thinkers associated with this perspective (e.g., Lipovetsky, 1994; Ferry & Renaut, 1990; Lilla, 1994) are well-steeped in postmodern ideas, but they are uncomfortable with many of them. They often take the position that the postmodernists went too far in rejecting various ideas associated with modern social theory—the human subject, individualism, universal rational norms, human rights, liberalism, democracy—and they seek to resurrect such ideas and give them their rightful place at the heart of social theory.

While some social theorists are just now learning the basics of postmodern social theory and others have moved beyond it, basic works in postmodern social theory continue to appear. While Foucault is dead and Baudrillard is long past his prime, Zygmunt Bauman (now in his late 70s) continues to produce works that develop his unique perspective that represents a fusion of modern and postmodern ideas. In his most recent books, *Globalization* (Bauman, 1998) and *Liquid Modernity* (Bauman, 2000), he describes a postmodern world in which the "solidity" of early modernity and the later efforts at reforming those solid structures and replacing them with new and improved ones have both passed from the scene. They have been displaced by a new form of modernity that is defined by its liquidity rather than its solidity. It is increasingly difficult for people to understand and deal with the fluidity that exists everywhere from global relations, interpersonal relationships, and even the self. This new, highly fluid world can be thought of as postmodern and in need of being conceptualized from the perspective of postmodern social theory.

While Bauman has an ambiguous relationship to postmodern social theory, Paul Virilio is more clearly associated with postmodern social theory and he, too, remains active and productive. Among his most recent books are *Open Sky* (Virilio, 1997) and *The Information Bomb* (Virilio, 2000). In these works Virilio continues his analysis of the increasing importance of speed in the contemporary world, but he brings it more up-to-date by dealing with the Internet, cyberspace, and the new information technologies.

However, the real problem facing postmodern social theory is whether it will be able to produce a second-generation of postmodern theorists who will pick up and develop the ideas created by the founding generation of Derrida, Lyotard, Foucault, Baudrillard, and Virilio. At the moment, the prospects do not appear bright; no younger theorist has emerged as the leader of the next generation of postmodern social theorists. It may be that the first generation was so idiosyncratic and their ideas so unique that they defy efforts by others to build upon them. The parallel in more mainstream American social theory is Erving Goffman whose ideas were so brilliant and idiosyncratic that no thinker ever emerged to carry forth and extend his perspective. In fact, it may be that this entire idea of building on one's predecessors is far too modern for the postmodernists; it implies some sort of grand and positive trajectory for the development of social theory. It also implies, in the ultramodern terms of Thomas Kuhn (1996), some sort of "normal science" following the "revolutionary" breakthroughs of the first generation of postmodern theorists. It may be, however, that we are more likely to see, given the postmodern perspective, another revolutionary breakthrough with only a genealogical relation to the previous one.

The future is always murky, especially using a postmodern optic; but it is clear that social theory will never be the same in the aftermath of the postmodern revolution.

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