This is the first anthology to thematize the dramatic upward and downward shifts that have created the new social theory, and to present this new and exciting body of work in a thoroughly trans-disciplinary manner. It is also the only approach to place the ideas of leading theorists directly into dialogue with one another, while establishing the broad thematic commonalities that tie them together.

In this deeply revised second edition, readers are provided with a much greater range of thinkers and perspectives, including new sections on such issues as imperialism, power, civilization clash, health, and performance. The first section sets out the main schools of contemporary thought, from Habermas and Honneth on New Critical Theory, to Jameson and Hall on Cultural Studies, and Foucault and Bourdieu on poststructuralism. The sections that follow trace theory debates as they become more issues-based and engaged:

* the post-foundational debates over morality, justice and epistemological truth;

* the social meaning of nationalism, multiculturalism, globalization;

* identity debates around gender, sexuality, race, the self, and post-coloniality.

This new edition provides more ample biographical and intellectual introductions to each thinker, and substantial introductions to each of the major sections. It has been finely tuned to ensure readers have the best access to the most recent developments in social theory. The editors introduce the volume with a newly revised interpretive overview of social theory today which, in the previous edition, was recognized as a major intervention in the contemporary intellectual field. *The New Social Theory Reader* is an essential, reliable guide to current theoretical debates.

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Sociology/Social Theory

Cover image: 'South Africa 3', painted by Morel Morton

The New Social Theory Reader

Second Edition

Edited by

Steven Seidman
Jeffrey C. Alexander

This imaginary world is supposed to be what makes the operation successful. But, what draws the crowds is undoubtedly much more the social microcosm, the miniaturized and *religious* revelling in real America, in its delights and drawbacks. You park outside, queue up inside, and are totally abandoned at the exit. In this imaginary world the only phantasmagoria is in the inherent warmth and affection of the crowd, and in that sufficiently excessive number of gadgets used there to specifically maintain the multitudinous affect. The contrast with the absolute solitude of the parking lot – a veritable concentration camp – is total. Or rather: inside, a whole range of gadgets magnetize the crowd into direct flows; outside, solitude is directed onto a single gadget: the automobile. By an extraordinary coincidence (one that undoubtedly belongs to the peculiar enchantment of this universe), this deep-frozen infantile world happens to have been conceived and realized by a man who is himself now cryogenized; Walt Disney, who awaits his resurrection at minus 180 degrees centigrade.

The objective profile of the United States, then, may be traced throughout Disneyland, even down to the morphology of individuals and the crowd. All its values are exalted here, in miniature and comic-strip form. Embalmed and pacified. Whence the possibility of an ideological analysis of Disneyland (L. Mann does it well in *Utopies, jeux d'es paces*): digest of the American way of life, panegyric to American values, idealized transposition of a contradictory reality. To be sure. But this conceals something else, and that "ideological" blanket exactly serves to cover over a *third-order simulation*: Disneyland is there to conceal the fact that it is the "real" country, all of "real" America, which *is* Disneyland (just as prisons are there to conceal the fact that it is the social in its entirety, in its banal omnipresence, which is carceral). Disneyland is presented as imaginary in order to make us believe that the rest is real, when in fact all of Los Angeles and the America surrounding it are no longer real, but of the order of the hyperreal and of simulation. It is no longer a question of a false representation of reality (ideology), but of concealing the fact that the real is no longer real, and thus of saving the reality principle.

The Disneyland imaginary is neither true nor false: it is a deterrence machine set up in order to rejuvenate in reverse the fiction of the real. Whence the debility, the infantile degeneration of this imaginary. It is meant to be an infantile world, in order to make us believe that the adults are elsewhere, in the "real" world, and to conceal the fact that real childishness is everywhere, particularly among those adults who go there to act the child in order to foster illusions of their real childishness.

Moreover, Disneyland is not the only one. Enchanted Village, Magic Mountain, Marine World: Los Angeles is encircled by these "imaginary stations" which feed reality, reality-energy, to a town whose mystery is precisely that it is nothing more than a network of endless, unreal circulation: a town of fabulous proportions, but without space or dimensions. As much as electrical and nuclear power stations, as much as film studios, this town, which is nothing more than an immense script and a perpetual motion picture, needs this old imaginary made up of childhood signals and faked phantasms for its sympathetic nervous system.

David Harvey

THE CONDITION OF POSTMODERNITY

THERE HAS BEEN A SEA-CHANGE in cultural as well as in political–economic practices since around 1972.

This sea-change is bound up with the emergence of new dominant ways in which we experience space and time.

While simultaneity in the shifting dimensions of time and space is no proof of necessary or causal connection, strong a priori grounds an be adduced for the proposition that there is some kind of necessary relation between the rise of postmodernist cultural forms, the emergence of more flexible modes of capital accumulation, and a new round of 'time–space compression' in the organization of capitalism.

But these changes, when set against the basic rules of capitalistic accumulation, appear more as shifts in surface appearance rather than as signs of the emergence of some entirely new postcapitalist or even postindustrial society. [. . .]

How, then, should postmodernism in general be evaluated? My preliminary assessment would be this. That in its concern for difference, for the difficulties of communication, for the complexity and nuances of interests, cultures, places, and the like, it exercises a positive influence. The meta-languages, meta-theories, and meta-narratives of modernism (particularly in its later manifestations) did tend to gloss over important differences, and failed to pay attention to important disjunctions and details. Postmodernism has been particularly important in acknowledging 'the multiple forms of otherness as they emerge from differences in subjectivity, gender and sexuality, race and class, temporal (configurations of sensibility) and spatial geographic locations and dislocations' (Huyssens 1984, 50). It is this aspect of postmodernist thought that gives it a radical edge, so much so that traditional neo-conservatives, such as Daniel Bell, fear rather than welcome its accommodations with individualism, commercialism, and entrepreneuralism. Such neoconservatives would, after all,

hardly welcome Lyotard's (1980, 66) assertion that 'the temporary contract is in practice supplanting permanent institutions in the professional, emotional, sexual, cultural, family, and international domains, as well as in political affairs. Daniel Bell plainly regrets the collapse of solid bourgeois values, the erosion of the work ethic in the working class, and sees contemporary trends less as a turn towards a vibrant postmodernist future and more as an exhaustion of modernism that surely harbingers a social and political crisis in years to come.

Postmodernism also ought to be looked at as mimetic of the social, economic, and political practices in society. But since it is mimetic of different facets of those practices it appears in very different guises. The superimposition of different worlds in many a postmodern novel, worlds between which an uncommunicative 'otherness' prevails in a space of coexistence, bears an uncanny relationship to the increasing ghettoization, disempowerment, and isolation of poverty and minority populations in the inner cities of both Britain and the United States. It is not hard to read a postmodern novel as a metaphorical transect across the fragmenting social landscape, the sub-cultures and local modes of communication, in London, Chicago, New York, or Los Angeles. Since most social indicators suggest a strong increase in actual ghettoization since 1970, it is useful to think of postmodern fiction as perhaps mimetic of that fact.

But the increasing affluence, power, and authority emerging at the other end of the social scale produces an entirely different ethos. For while it is hard to see that working in the postmodern AT&T building by Philip Johnson is any different from working in the modernist Seagram building by Mies van der Rohe, the image projected to the outside is different. 'AT&T insisted they wanted something other than just another glass box,' said the architect. 'We were looking for something that projected the company's image of nobility and strength. No material does that better than granite' (even though it was double the cost of glass). With luxury housing and corporate headquarters, aesthetic twists become an expression of class power. Crimp (1987) takes it further:

> The present condition of architecture is one in which architects debate academic, abstract aesthetics while they are in fact in the thrall of the real-estate developers who are ruining our cities and turning working class people out of their homes. [. . .] Philip Johnson's new skyscraper [. . .] is a developer building, with a few applied geegaws, thrust upon a neighborhood that is not particularly in need of another skyscraper.

Invoking the memory of Hitler's architect Albert Speer, Crimp goes on to attack the postmodernist mask of what he sees as a new authoritarianism in the direction of city forms.

I have chosen these two examples to illustrate how important it is to think through exactly what kinds of social practice, what sets of social relations, are being reflected in different aesthetic movements. Yet this account is surely incomplete because we have yet to establish [. . .] exactly what postmodernism might be mimetic of. Furthermore, it is just as surely dangerous to presuppose that postmodernism is solely mimetic rather than an aesthetic intervention in politics, economy, and social life in its own right. The strong injection of *fiction* as well as *function* into

common sensibility, for example, must have consequences, perhaps unforeseen, for social action. Even Marx insisted, after all, that what distinguishes the worst of architects from the best of bees is that the architect erects structures in the imagination before giving them material form. Changes in the way we imagine, think, plan, and rationalize are bound to have material consequences. Only in these very broad terms of the conjoining of mimesis and aesthetic intervention can the broad range of postmodernism make sense.

Yet postmodernism sees itself rather more simply: for the most part as a willful and rather chaotic movement to overcome all the supposed ills of modernism. But in this regard I think postmodernists exaggerate when they depict the modern as grossly as they do, either caricaturing the whole modernist movement to the point where, as even Jencks admits, 'modern architecture bashing has become a form of sadism that is getting far too easy,' or isolating one wing of modernism for criticism (Althusserianism, modern brutalism, or whatever) as if that was all there was. There were, after all, many cross-currents within modernism, and postmodernists echo some of them quite explicitly (Jencks, for example, looks back to the period 1870–1914, even to the confusions of the 1920s, while including Le Corbusier's monastery at Ronchamp as an important precursor of one aspect of postmodernism). The meta-narratives that the postmodernists decry (Marx, Freud, and even later figures like Althusser) were much more open, nuanced, and sophisticated than the critics admit. Marx and many of the Marxists (I think of Benjamin, Thompson, Anderson, as diverse examples) have an eye for detail, fragmentation, and disjunction that is often caricatured out of existence in postmodern polemics. Marx's account of modernization is exceedingly rich in insights into the roots of modernist as well as postmodernist sensibility.

It is equally wrong to write off the material achievements of modernist practices so easily. Modernists found a way to control and contain an explosive capitalist condition. They were effective for example, in the organization of urban life and the capacity to build space in such a way as to contain the intersecting processes that have made for a rapid urban change in twentieth-century capitalism. If there is a crisis implicit in all of that, it is by no means clear that it is the modernists, rather than the capitalists, who are to blame. There are, indeed, some extraordinary successes in the modernist pantheon (I note the British school building and design programme in the early 1960s that solved some of the acute housing problems of education within tight budget constraints). While some housing projects were indeed dismal failures, others were not, particularly when compared with the slum conditions from which many people came. And it turns out that the social conditions in Pruitt–Igoe — that great symbol of modernist failure — were much more at the heart of the problem than pure architectural form. The blaming of physical form for social ills has to rest on the most vulgar kind of environmental determinism that few would be prepared to accept in other circumstances (though I note with distress that another member of Prince Charles's 'kitchen cabinet' is the geographer Alice Coleman, who regularly mistakes correlation between bad design and anti-social behaviour with causation). It is interesting to note, therefore, how the tenant population in Le Corbusier's 'habitat for living' at Firminy-le-Vert has organized into a social movement to prevent its destruction (not, I should add, out of any particular loyalty to Le Corbusier but more simply because it happens to be their

home). As even Jencks admits, postmodernists have taken over all of the great achievements of the modernists in architectural design, though they have certainly altered aesthetics and appearances in at least superficial ways.

I also conclude that there is much more continuity than difference between the broad history of modernism and the movement called postmodernism. It seems more sensible to me to see the latter as a particular kind of crisis within the former, one that emphasizes the fragmentary, the ephemeral, and the chaotic side of Baudelaire's formulation (that side which Marx so admirably dissects as integral to the capitalist mode of production) while expressing a deep scepticism as to any particular prescriptions as to how the eternal and immutable should be conceived of, represented, or expressed.

But postmodernism, with its emphasis upon the ephemerality of *jouissance*, its insistence upon the impenetrability of the other, its concentration on the text rather than the work, its penchant for deconstruction bordering on nihilism, its preference for aesthetics over ethics, takes matters too far. It takes them beyond the point where any coherent politics are left, while that wing of it that seeks a shameless accommodation with the market puts it firmly in the tracks of an entrepreneurial culture that is the hallmark of reactionary neoconservativism. Postmodernist philosophers tell us not only to accept but even to revel in the fragmentations and the cacophony of voices through which the dilemmas of the modern world are understood. Obsessed with deconstructing and delegitimating every form of argument they encounter, they can end only in condemning their own validity claims to the point where nothing remains of any basis for reasoned action. Postmodernism has us accepting the reifications and partitionings, actually celebrating the activity of masking and cover-up, all the fetishisms of locality, place, or social grouping, while denying that kind of meta-theory which can grasp the political—economic processes (money flows, international divisions of labour, financial markets, and the like) that are becoming ever more universalizing in their depth, intensity, reach and power over daily life.

Worst of all, while it opens up a radical prospect by acknowledging the authenticity of other voices, postmodernist thinking immediately shuts off those other voices from access to more universal sources of power by ghettoizing them within an opaque otherness, the specificity of this or that language game. It thereby disempowers those voices (of women, ethnic and racial minorities, colonized peoples, the unemployed, youth, etc.) in a world of lop-sided power relations. The language game of a cabal of international bankers may be impenetrable to us, but that does not put it on a par with the equally impenetrable language of inner-city blacks from the standpoint of power relations.

The rhetoric of postmodernism is dangerous for it avoids confronting the realities of political economy and the circumstances of global power. The silliness of Lyotard's 'radical proposal' that opening up the data banks to everyone as a prologue to radical reform (as if we would all have equal power to use that opportunity) is instructive, because it indicates how even the most resolute of postmodernists is faced in the end with either making some universalizing gesture (like Lyotard's appeal to some pristine concept of justice) or lapsing, like Derrida, into total political silence. Meta-theory cannot be dispensed with. The postmodernists simply push it underground where it continues to function as a 'now unconscious effectivity' (Jameson 1984).

I find myself agreeing, therefore, with Eagleton's repudiation of Lyotard, for whom 'there can be no difference between truth, authority and rhetorical seductiveness; he who has the smoothest tongue or the raciest story has the power.' The eight-year reign of a charismatic story-teller in the White House suggests that there is more than a little continuity to that political problem, and that postmodernism comes dangerously close to complicity with the aestheticizing of politics upon which it is based. This takes us back to a very basic question. If both modernity and postmodernity derive their aesthetic from some kind of struggle with the *fact* of fragmentation, ephemerality, and chaotic flux, it is, I would suggest, very important to establish why such a fact should have been so pervasive an aspect of modern experience for so long a period of time, and why the intensity of that experience seems to have picked up so powerfully since 1970. If the only thing certain about modernity is uncertainty, then we should, surely, pay considerable attention to the social forces that produce such a condition. [. . .]

[. . .] Down the left-hand side [of Table 22.1] are ranged a series of intersecting terms to describe the condition of 'Fordist modernity,' while the right-hand column represents 'Flexible postmodernism.' The table suggests amusing associations. But it also indicates how two rather different regimes of accumulation and their associated modes of regulation (including the materializations of cultural habits, motivations, and styles of representation) might hang together, each as a distinctive and relatively coherent kind of social formation. Two reservations to that idea immediately come to mind. First, the oppositions, highlighted for didactic purposes, are never so clear-cut, and the 'structure of feeling' in any society is always a synthetic moment somewhere between the two. Second, associations are no proof of historical causation or even of necessary or integral relations. Even if the associations look plausible — and many of them do — some other way has to be found to establish that they form a meaningful configuration.

The oppositions within each profile are noteworthy. Fordist modernity is far from homogeneous. There is much here that is about relative fixity and permanence — fixed capital in mass production, stable, standardized, and homogeneous markets, a fixed configuration of political—economic influence and power, easily identifiable authority and meta-theories, secure grounding in materiality and technical—scientific rationality, and the like. But all of this is ranged around a social and economic project of Becoming, of growth and transformation of social relations, of auratic art and originality, of renewal and avant-gardism. Postmodernist flexibility, on the other hand, is dominated by fiction, fantasy, the immaterial (particularly of money), fictitious capital, images, ephemerality, chance, and flexibility in production techniques, labour markets and consumption niches; yet it also embodies strong commitments to Being and place, a penchant for charismatic politics, concerns for ontology, and the stable institutions favoured by neo-conservatism. Habermas's judgement that the value placed on the transitory and the ephemeral 'discloses a longing for an undefiled, immaculate and stable present' is everywhere in evidence. It seems as if postmodernist flexibility merely reverses the dominant order to be found in Fordist modernity. The latter achieved relative stability in its political—economic apparatus in order to produce strong social and material change, whereas the former has been dogged by disruptive instability in its political—economic

Table 22.1 *Fordist modernity versus flexible postmodernity, or the interpenetration of opposed tendencies in capitalist society as a whole*

Fordist modernity	Flexible postmodernity
economies of scale/master code/hierarchy homogeneity/detail division of labour	economies of scope/idiolect/anarchy diversity/social division of labour
paranoia/alienation/symptom public housing/monopoly capital	schizophrenia/decentering/desire homelessness/entrepreneurialism
purpose/design/mastery/determinacy production capital/universalism	play/chance/exhaustion/indeterminacy fictitious capital/localism
state power/trade unions state welfarism/metropolis	financial power/individualism neo-conservatism/counterurbanization
ethics/money commodity God the Father/materiality	aesthetics/moneys of account The Holy Ghost/immateriality
production/originality/authority blue collar/avant-gardism interest group politics/semantics	reproduction/pastiche/eclecticism white collar/commercialism charismatic politics/rhetoric
centralization/totalization synthesis/collective bargaining	decentralization/deconstruction antithesis/local contracts
operational management/master code phallic/single task/origin	strategic management/idiolect androgynous/multiple tasks/trace
metatheory/narrative/depth mass production/class politics technical-scientific rationality	language games/image/surface small-batch production/social movements/pluralistic otherness
utopia/redemptive art/concentration specialized work/collective consumption	heterotopias/spectacle/dispersal flexible worker/symbolic capital
function/representation/signified industry/protestant work ethic mechanical reproduction	fiction/self-reference/signifier services/temporary contract electronic reproduction
becoming/epistemology/regulation urban renewal/relative space	being/ontology/deregulation urban revitalization/place
state interventionism/industrialization internationalism/permanence/time	laissez-faire/deindustrialization geopolitics/ephemerality/space

apparatus, but sought compensation in stable places of being and in charismatic geopolitics.

But what if the table as a whole itself constitutes a structural description of the totality of political–economic and cultural–ideological relations within capitalism? To view it this way requires that we see the oppositions across as well as within the profiles as internal relations within a structured whole. That idea, outrageous by postmodernism's own standards (because it resurrects the ghost of Marxist thinkers like Lukács and appeals to a theory of internal relations of the sort that Bertell Ollman advances) makes more than a little sense. It helps explain how it is that Marx's *Capital* is so rich in insights into what the current status of thinking is all about. It also helps us understand how the cultural forces at work in, say, *fin de siècle* Vienna constituted such a complex mix that it is almost impossible to tell where the modernist impulse begins or ends. It helps us dissolve the categories of both modernism and postmodernism into a complex of oppositions expressive of the cultural contradictions of capitalism. We then get to see the categories of both modernism and postmodernism as static reifications imposed upon the fluid interpenetration of dynamic oppositions. Within this matrix of internal relations, there is never one fixed configuration, but a swaying back and forth between centralization and decentralization, between authority and deconstruction, between hierarchy and anarchy, between permanence and flexibility, between the detail and the social division of labour (to list but a few of the many oppositions that can be identified). The sharp categorical distinction between modernism and postmodernism disappears, to be replaced by an examination of the flux of internal relations within capitalism as a whole.

But why the flux? This brings us back to the problem of causation and historical trajectory. [. . .]

The oppositional relations depicted in table 22.1 are always subject to the restless transformative activity of capital accumulation and speculative change. Exact configurations cannot be predicted in advance, even though the law-like behaviour of the transformative force can. Put more concretely, the degree of Fordism and modernism, or of flexibility and postmodernism, is bound to vary from time to time and from place to place, depending on which configuration is profitable and which is not. Behind all the ferment of modernity and postmodernity, we can discern some simple generative principles that shape an immense diversity of outcomes. Yet the latter strikingly fail (as in the case of the serially produced downtown renewals) to create unpredictable novelty, even though the seemingly infinite capacity to engender products feeds all the illusions of freedom and of open paths for personal fulfilment. Wherever capitalism goes, its illusory apparatus, its fetishisms, and its system of mirrors come not far behind.

It is here that we can invoke, once more, Bourdieu's thesis [. . .] that we each of us possess powers of regulated improvisation, shaped by experience, which allow us 'an endless capacity to engender products – thoughts, perceptions, expressions, actions – whose limits are set by the historically situated conditions' of their production; the 'conditioned and conditional freedom' this secures 'is as remote from the creation of unpredictable novelty as it is from simple mechanical reproduction of the initial conditionings.' It is, Bourdieu suggests, through mechanisms of this sort that every established order tends to produce 'the naturalization of its

own arbitrariness' expressed in the 'sense of limits' and the 'sense of reality' which in turn form the basis for an 'ineradicable adherence to the established order.' The reproduction of the social and symbolic order through the exploration of difference and 'otherness' is all too evident in the climate of postmodernism.

So where, then, can real change come from? To begin with, the contradictory experiences acquired under capitalism – many of which are set out in Table 22.1 – render the novelty a little less thoroughly predictable than was the case in Bourdieu's encounter with the Kabyles. Mechanical reproduction of value systems, beliefs, cultural preferences, and the like is impossible, not in spite of but precisely because of the speculative grounding of capitalism's inner logic. The exploration of contradictions always lies at the heart of original thought. But it is also evident that the expression of such contradictions in the form of objective and materialized crises plays a key role in breaking the powerful link 'between the subjective structures and the objective structures' and thereby lay the groundwork for a critique that 'brings the undiscussed into discussion and the unformulated into formulation'. While crises in the experience of space and time, in the financial system, or in the economy at large, may form a necessary condition for cultural and political changes, the sufficient conditions lie more deeply embedded in the internalized dialectics of thought and knowledge production. For it is ever the case that, as Marx (1967, 178) has it, 'we erect our structure in imagination before we erect it in reality'.

CIVIL SOCIETY

■ Jean L. Cohen and Andrew Arato: The utopia of civil society

■ Mary Kaldor: Global civil society

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