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Postmodernity and New Social Movements

by

Ali Hassan Zaidi ©

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and
Research in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree of Master of Arts

Department of Sociology

Edmonton, Alberta

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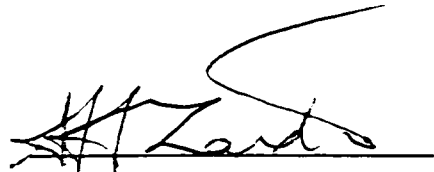
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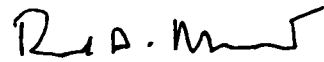
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Abstract

This thesis examines the debates that have emerged in the respective literature on Postmodernity and New Social Movements about the emergence of a new type of society, a new epoch. Although the debate on postmodernity emphasizes cultural changes, the literature omits the role of moral-political values in cultural change. It is argued that this omission is rectified if we compare and synthesize the literature on postmodernity with the literature on New Social Movements. A comparison and synthesis is offered by examining identity-based movements in the light of three postmodernist themes: the death of the subject, the end of metanarratives, and the aestheticization of reality. Baudrillard, Lyotard, Touraine, Castells and Inglehart are classified as discontinuity theorists arguing in favor of a new society, while Jameson, Harvey, Calhoun, Offe and Cohen are classified as continuity theorists arguing against the emergence of a new society.

In the name of Allah, the Most Compassionate, the Most Beneficent

For my parents, who gave me a sure footing when I was young; for my brothers, who are the most motley but fun lot ever put together; for my in-laws for their respect and kindness and especially for Ashie for her love and support.

Acknowledgments

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Chapter One – Introduction

Lo! Allah changeth not the condition of a folk until they (first) change what is in their hearts...

(Quran 13:11)

To speak of an epochal change is to suggest that the whole reality (ourselves and the world in which we live) is undergoing, or beginning to undergo, a transformation similar to what brought it into being in the first place from a previous epoch.

(H. L Finch 1995: 17)

Epochal Claims: Postmodernity and New Social Movements

Understanding epochal shifts has long been the fascination of social philosophers as each generation, each society and each era attempts to come to terms with its own distinctive features. A pioneer in sociological thinking, Ibn Khaldun, had postulated in the 14th century of the common era (CE) that seven epochs had existed in the history of humankind. Comte, the father of modern Western sociology, postulated that in the 17th century CE humanity was entering the third and final epoch, which would witness the end of all theological and metaphysical forms of thought to be replaced by scientific and social scientific explanations of all phenomena. In this century, Sorokin's work on the three major types of culture, the ideational, the sensate and the idealistic super-systems of culture stands out perhaps as the epochal theory par excellence. According to Sorokin, we are 'at the end of a brilliant six-hundred-year-long Sensate day' (quoted in Ragab 1997:

13). But while only a handful of devout theorists pay attention to Sorokin's work now, as we approach the end of the second Christian millennium there is an ever-growing clamor about the supposed end of the modern epoch and the beginnings of a new one. Ironically, or is it more than a coincidence, the discussion of epochs and periodization is occurring side-by-side with the debate on the future of sociology as a discipline and more broadly on the nature of social scientific knowledge.

In sociology the converging din on the new epoch has its source in at least two very different theoretical streams. Although the recent literature on postmodernity and the literature on the new social movements (NSMs) begin with fundamentally very different objects of analysis, there is a debate in both sets of literature about the emergence of a new epoch. For instance, while the literature on postmodernism began with claims about the changing nature of narratives, artistic and literary criticism, and architectural styles, these debates quickly spread to include epochal claims about the entire socio-cultural set up of advanced industrialized societies in Western Europe and continental North America. Hence, many in the academy have become familiar with Lyotard's notion of postmodernity as the incredulity towards metanarratives, with Baudrillard's ideas of a postmodern 'hyperreality', with Jameson's extension of Mandel's third stage of capitalism, and with Harvey's 'condition of postmodernity'.

It is very peculiar and quite ironic that those who write on postmodernity have largely ignored the NSMs literature because the NSMs literature has been concerned from its inception with a putative epochal shift. Al-

though less noticed nowadays, a debate has been occurring in the NSMs literature about whether the whole host of social movements that sprang up since the 1960s in Western Europe, continental North America and Australia are in fact really novel movements or not and whether they indicate the emergence of a new epoch or society. The various eco-pax movements, i.e. the ecological, anti-war and peace movements, the identity-based movements of women, blacks and other ethnic groups and gay and lesbian groups, and the new age spiritual and religious movements, all these movements are viewed by some NSMs theorists as pointing towards a new epoch. Touraine, for example, has been arguing since the late 1960s that the NSMs indicate a shift in people's values and a move to a 'programmed society' which marks a radical break with modernity. Melucci, although not endorsing Touraine's radical discontinuity thesis, has similarly written about the move towards a 'complex society', which involves a reassessment by people of their lived experiences and their modern values. Another former student of Touraine's, Castells, has been working on a theory of the 'network society' in which NSMs are seen as collective actors creating resistance identities. Even Inglehart's work on the rise of 'postmaterialist values' in NSMs can be read as an epochal argument because he argues that the generation that grew up in the post-WW2 economic boom experienced material sufficiency to such an extent that there was a corresponding change in their values and in the meaning that people of this generation sought from their involvement in NSMs.

Inferring the epochal thesis from the respective literatures on post-modernity and NSMs is not an original insight. Kumar (1995), for instance, has explored the relationship between the arguments for a postmodern society and the arguments for a postindustrial society, which arises in part out of Touraine's and Melucci's work on NSMs.[1] Kumar astutely notes that while both sets of literature feed upon the heightened *fin de siècle* hopes and mood, he suggests that the recent literature on postmodernity encompasses the claims of the older postindustrial society literature and goes beyond it to make broader claims about the very nature of knowledge and Western civilization. In examining the postindustrial society thesis, Kumar devotes his attention to various strands of the post-Fordist theories, for example, Sabel's and Piore's work on 'capitalist flexible specialization', Lash's and Urry's work on 'disorganized capitalism', the New Times school of theorists' work on the political and cultural changes that accompany the move towards flexible specialization and globalization of capitalism, and argues that all of these post-Fordist theories emphasize both the fragmentation of the old social classes and mass working class movements and the rise of new social movements based on new collective identities derived from region, race or gender or on single issue politics (e.g. the anti-nuclear movement) as derivative of the new capitalist reality.

The literature on postmodernity, however, goes beyond the economistic accounts of the post-Fordist strand of the post-industrial thesis and

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[1] In fact, Touraine originated the term 'post-industrial society' to indicate the emergence of a new type of society (mentioned in the foreword by Richard Sennett to Touraine 1981: ix). The postindustrial thesis also arises, in part, from Daniel Bell's work on the shift to a knowledge/service society.

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posits that epochal changes are linked as well with the decline of dominant cultures and of the nation-state (ibid.: 121). Kumar argues that in the literature on postmodernity the decline of mass political parties and class based identity leads to the emergence of NSMs based on gender, race, locality and sexuality, movements which challenge the idea of a dominant national identity and culture.

Clearly, for Kumar postmodernity is not simply an issue of the changing face of capitalism, though he avers that it is the most central aspect of the debate on postmodernity (ibid. 194-95). It is, moreover, a tension between the global and the local, a tension between the universal and the particular, that is expressed by the NSMs. For Nicholson and Seidman (1995) the death of the subject, so pronounced in poststructuralist and postmodernist theories, is linked with the deconstruction of essentializing identities that takes place in the real lives of social movement activists. They argue that the emergence of voices of difference within NSMs facilitated the deconstruction of essentialized identities and facilitated the politics of difference. Therefore, Nicholson and Seidman argue that postmodern social theory and the activities of NSMs are closely connected (Nicholson and Seidman 1995: 34). Kumar writes that,

...the post-Fordist insistence on the changing character of ideologies and alliances, and on the decline of class politics... also highlights the postmodern theme of the importance of new social movements, as compared with older agencies such as trade unions and political parties. In raising questions of ecology and of human rights, the new social movements are about the 'politics of difference' so strongly featured in postmodernist writing. They stress plural and multiple identities, what divides us by gender, sexuality, ethnicity, locality. As against the universality and generality of ecology and the global environment, they draw our attention to the particularities of group, place, community and history. The new social movements are an example of a more general feature of post-modernity: the interaction, or ten-

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sion, between the global and the local. Here too much is made of the connection with the operations of contemporary capitalism (ibid.: 186-87).

So far, so good. But what we have in Kumar's work is only the germinal seeds that need to be developed into a *more sustained analysis of the links between the respective literatures on postmodernity and NSMs*. Kumar's analysis, though excellent, takes for granted that NSMs are proof of the emergence of a new epoch called postmodernity. But he fails to point out that theorists in the NSMs literature have been making epochal claims without resort to the idea of postmodernity. Meanwhile he also ignores the voices of dissent by many theorists, for example, Calhoun, Cohen and Offe, in the NSMs literature who dispute the novelty of these social movements and who dispute, too, the emergence of a new epoch. Another problem with Kumar's analysis, like that of many other writers, is that he lumps together all forms of social movements under the label NSMs' when what is required is a more refined and cautious approach that distinguishes between those movements that are specifically implicated with issues of the local and the particular, for example identity and subjectivity, from those other movements that are concerned with issues of the global and the universal, for example the eco-pax movements. A final shortcoming in Kumar's analysis is that he overlooks the fact that while normative issues, for example moral-political values, are central in some of the NSMs literature, postmodernism privileges aesthetics over values and in the literature on postmodernity aesthetic issues are privileged over normative ones (Harvey 1990: 116).

In view of these shortcomings what is required then is a better understanding of the kinds of epochal claims and counter claims made by the

exemplars in each of the respective literatures, as well as a comparison and synthesis of the claims of Lyotard, Baudrillard, Jameson and Harvey in the light of the older, more established NSMs literature. However, developing a sustained analysis that compares and synthesizes the respective epochal claims is not an easy task for the various theorists often talk past each other. That is to say, they often ignore the insights and counter-claims of other theorists both within and without their own literature. For instance, while Baudrillard furthers the post-structuralist claim for the death of the conscious, active, transformative subject, Touraine and Castells point to the rejuvenation of the collective subject and its potential for transformative change; while Lyotard writes about the end of liberal-humanist values, Offe and Cohen argue that the NSMs seek to retain those same values and have them applied to traditionally marginalized groups; and where Jameson and Harvey respectively posit the increasing concern with images and the aestheticization of reality, the entire NSMs literature claims that social movement activists are more than ever concerned with meaning-infused and meaning-seeking behavior. Trying to find some common ground on which to compare and synthesize the respective literatures requires a broad and extensive analysis of some of the issues involved, as well as an acceptance of the necessarily inchoate and rudimentary terrain that will be defined. In laying out the basis for a comparison and synthesis I follow Calhoun's (1993) lead. Calhoun, who provides one of the best critiques against postmodernity as a new epoch, argues that the 'new social movements' are very advantageous for discussion because they link 'nearly all the different dis-

courses contributing to the postmodernist potpourri, and ha[ve] been a topic of discussion outside of the postmodernist debate' (Calhoun 1993: 76). He writes that,

This purported transformation of the ways in which people try collectively to improve their lives and change society is linked to the broader postmodernist problematic by several joint themes: *decentring of the subject, problematizing of identity, rejection of overarching telos or order, emphasis on experimentation and play* (Calhoun 1993: 86).

Of course, comparing and synthesizing the literature on postmodernity with the literature on NSMs is not an entirely objective exercise for, in one sense, it privileges the NSMs because it presupposes a type of analysis that may be antithetical to the postmodern claims that conventional social scientific knowledge (as represented, for example, by the NSMs literature) cannot shed light on the postmodern condition. Comparing and synthesizing the respective literatures is also problematic because of the diversity of positions within each respective literature, especially in the literature on postmodernity. Yet although I am aware of these dilemmas, I do not view this as a reason to avoid the analysis that follows because I think that it is important to check the various claims against each other so that we may not only have a rapprochement between the two sets of literaure, but that we may also arrive at a better understanding of what is actually happening in the contemporary situation. I agree with Kumar writes when he writes that,

Postmodernism to be fair to it, must to some extent be assessed on its own, post-modernist, terms, according to its own self-understanding. But initially at least we need to be more modern and less post-modern in our approach. We have to ask historical questions, about origins and sources. We have to ask sociological questions, about the plausibility and validity of the assertions that are made about contemporary society: is post-modern theory *true? We may even need to ask political and moral questions*, about the atti-

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tudes and intentions of post-modern theorists. *That many of the questions would be regarded as irrelevant or inappropriate by post-modern theorists themselves cannot prevent their arising in the minds of most of us* (Kumar 1995: 104, emphasis added).

A Conceptual Schema: Continuity and Discontinuity

One way of dealing with epochal claims and periodizing concepts is to divide theorists into two camps: one camp for those theorists who argue for a radical disjunction between eras and another camp for those theorists who argue for continuity. We can argue that there is, on the one hand, a radical discontinuity thesis which posits a radical disjunction between the modern and post-modern eras such that the latter is entirely devoid of modern elements (Heelas 1996: 3-7). Lyotard and Baudrillard could be situated in this camp. On the other hand, the continuity thesis posits that although significant changes may have taken place these changes are in keeping with the principles of modernity. Jameson and Harvey could be situated in this camp. Similarly, from the NSMs literature Touraine and Castells can be located in the discontinuity camp, while Calhoun, Cohen and Offe can be situated in the continuity camp.

This basic conceptual schema is a victim, of course, of the binary dichotomous thinking against which postmodern thinkers such as Baudrillard and Lyotard have reacted so vehemently. For instance, although in his early work Lyotard argued for radical discontinuity, his later work indicates a shift towards the continuity thesis. Jameson's work is also problematic because although he argues for the continuity of the capitalist system under a new guise, his emphasis on the new socio-cultural formation has

meant that his work has been read by some as support for radical disconti-
nuity. This schema is somewhat problematic for the literature on postmod-
ernity because the work of some writers cannot be so easily categorized, for
example Giddens (1990) and Beck (1992) who substitute 'late', 'high' or
'reflexive' modernity in place of postmodernity to emphasize continuity, who
often depict the current situation as a vantage point from which to critically
assess modernity, but who also hold out the possibility that a new epoch
may yet develop.

However, despite its shortcomings the merit of this schema is that it
demonstrates that despite the wide gulf separating Baudrillard, Lyotard,
Touraine and Castells they are all proposing the emergence of a new epoch
or society that marks a radical break with modernity. Similarly, while
Jameson, Harvey, Calhoun, Cohen and Offe are writing in different fields,
with many different foci, what unites their respective works is their empha-
sis on the continuity between modernity and the contemporary situation.

Cultural Modernity

Given that the main task of my thesis is to link the two sets of literature by
examining the arguments for and against continuity, it should be clear how
I conceive of modernity. For Hegel who first used the term 'modernity' in an
epochal sense, modernity is clearly a periodizing concept delineating the
medieval period from the 'new age', which begins in the 16th CE but it is
only in the 18th century that the modern age as a new epoch takes firm
shape (Habermas 1987a:5). More generally, modernity refers to the series of

interrelated socio-cultural changes that originally took place in Europe roughly in the period during the 18th and the 19th century CE, but that were also instrumental in the later development of continental North America. These socio-cultural changes followed in the footsteps of the Renaissance, the Reformation, the Scientific Revolution and the Enlightenment periods and put a final end, the nail in the coffin, to the feudal era. Although changes in the economy such as the rise of capitalism, technological changes such as the growth of industrialism, institutional changes such as the rise of bureaucracy and military warfare (Giddens 1990), and socio-political changes such as urbanization and the rise of the nation-state have conventionally been the mainstay of social scientific discussions, I want to focus on those changes that relate to the rise of Enlightenment rationality and liberal-humanist values, e.g. equality, liberty, citizenship, autonomy, etc. (Nicholson and Seidman 1995: 32) with their concomitant emphasis on the individual self as the philosophical foundation of all things. For aside from the material and institutional changes modernity also directly altered the way people understood their place in history and altered their understanding of themselves and their relationships with others.

The rise of Enlightenment rationality is associated with the rejection of the medieval cyclical conception of history and the secularization of the Christian idea of history as linear, teleological and leading to salvation. Thus in modern times history comes to be viewed as a process that leads in a uni-linear, unstoppable manner, not to some religious apocalypse, but to the secular ideal of Progress which is to be achieved through the use of hu-

man Reason. Progress itself comes to be seen as a process leading to greater and greater Emancipation through Revolution under the guidance of human Reason (Kumar 1995:80-83).

Gergen (1991), whose work informs postmodern discussions of the self, argues that changes in socio-cultural conditions are felt quite personally in the way personal identity is understood (ibid.: xi). In different times and in different places different vocabularies and languages are used to define and describe how the self is viewed. For instance, on the one hand, according to Gergen, the Enlightenment period conceived of the self mechanistically, separating mind and body, as a tabula rasa or an empty vessel into which whatever was poured in the early stages of life would become the mould for the remainder of one's life. On the other hand, in the reaction to Enlightenment thought represented by Romanticism, the self was conceived of as containing an essence, a depth that was the 'true self', which required great introspection to try to understand but that was always out of reach; a self that was given to passion, creativity and moral fiber. Morality was not dependent upon rationalism and the ability of people to think through for themselves what was moral, rather morality was an innate 'moral feeling' or 'moral sentiment' (ibid.: 25), what Rousseau, who stood on the edge of both Enlightenment and Romantic thought, referred to as the 'divine conscience'. Gergen further argues that the modern period was dominated by the return of Enlightenment values (ibid.: 20) which conceived of the self as a machine governed not by an essence but by the conscious ability to reason, to shape one's beliefs and opinions. In modern con-

ceptions, the self was to be predictable, honest and sincere (ibid.: 6). Gergen's characterization, however, contradicts other theorists' views that essentialism and identity is one of the defining characteristics of modernity. Thus, Calhoun writes that discourse about identity is intrinsic to and partially defining of the modern era (Calhoun 1994: 9). In breaking-up or reducing to near irrelevance most 'all-encompassing identity schemes' (ibid.: 11) the modern era assigned a cognitive (e.g. Decartes' 'cogito ergo sum') and moral weight (e.g. the secular version of the Judeo-Christian notion of individual salvation and morality as located in the self) to the self and self-identity. Modernity also problematized the construction, establishment, maintenance and recognition by others of one's identity (ibid.: 10). Calhoun is not arguing that all pre-modern, all-encompassing identity schemes are erased in modernity, but as the continuity thesis posits, that old and new identity schemes begin to exist simultaneously. He writes that

The modern era brought an increase in the multiplicity of identity schemes so substantial that it amounted to a qualitative break, albeit one unevenly distributed in time and space. In the modern era, identity is always constructed and situated in a field and amid a flow of contending cultural discourses (Calhoun 1994: 12).

Socio-Cultural Change

It is precisely these issues: post-Enlightenment metanarratives, liberal-humanist values, the modern notions self and identity, that have become the contested terrain in both the NSMs literature and the literature on postmodernity and which are addressed in this thesis. Therefore, using the terminology of continuity and discontinuity, introduced above, I compare and synthesize respective literatures with respect to the themes identified

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by Calhoun, namely, the decentring of the subject and the problematizing of identity, rejection of overarching metanarratives, and emphasis on image and the aestheticization of reality (Calhoun 1993: 86). My conclusion is that while the discontinuity theorists quite correctly direct our attention to the novel features of the contemporary situation, they overstate their case. Hence, I agree with the continuity theorists that a radical, epochal break is not occurring. But the main point of this project is not to decide dogmatically on the issue of continuity or discontinuity. Rather, the point is to find and elaborate the rudimentary terrain, whereby we may compare and synthesize the various contradictory claims.

My primary argument, therefore, is that regardless of whether or not one accepts the claims for a new epoch, the literature on NSMs should become more central to the debates on postmodernity for three reasons: one, it will restore a normative element, i.e. the issue of moral-political values, that are implied by postmodernism, e.g. in 'the incredulity towards metanarratives', in the 'death of the subject' and in the 'aestheticization of everyday life', though undeveloped in the writings of Lyotard, Baudrillard, Jameson and Harvey. Secondly, making the literature on NSMs more central to the literature on postmodernity provides an empirical grounding whereby we may assess the often too-abstract and pie-in-the-sky claims of Lyotard and Baudrillard. Thirdly, I think that the significant works of Touraine, Castells, Melucci, Cohen, Offe and Calhoun, which have hitherto been marginal in the debates on postmodernity, can be drawn upon for more informed insights into broader questions on the nature of social change in the contem-

porary situation. That is, we can use these latter theorists' works to inquire into how much quantitative and qualitative change is required at the normative level, i.e. at the level of moral-political, before we may write meaningfully about epochal shifts. Additionally, if it is true that endless change and innovation is the very principle of modernity, what then is the role of NSMs in attempting to create a new epoch and how can we ever claim that modernity will ever be surpassed? Honneth, for instance, argues that once postmodernism is taken out of the debates on art and architecture and transplanted into debates in the social sciences, then the term needs to be re-defined above all as a determination of a time-frame, which can serve as a contrasting historical epoch, just as functionalist architecture or modern art are used as determining of a dominant trend in other areas (Honneth 1985: 148). Coming to terms with such problems may lead to a broader, and better, understanding of the nature of social change.

Chapter Outline

My thesis proceeds as follows: chapter two is a literature review of the four most important thinkers on postmodernity. Following Featherstone, I begin by tracing the origins of the term 'postmodernity' and its various cognates. Next, I review the work of the leading discontinuity postmodern thinkers, Baudrillard and Lyotard, paying particular attention to the implicit connection between the fragmentation of social identities and the disbelief in metanarratives as reflective of the erosion of modern values. Then, a review of the claims of the continuity theorists, Jameson and Harvey, demonstrates

their focus on the aestheticization of reality, the postmodern focus on experimentation and play and it also demonstrates that their works have largely ignored the role of NSMs in postmodernity.

Chapter three resolves the question of continuity-discontinuity from the point of view of the literature on NSMs. I begin by reviewing the debate surrounding the definition of the term 'new social movements'. Next, I draw upon the work of Touraine, Castells and Inglehart as discontinuity cultural theorists who all argue that the NSMs reflect the struggle for, and embody, new cultural values. The work of Cohen and Offe, as continuity theorists arising out of the 'civil society' tradition, rejects the argument for new values and a new society. The analysis that emerges out of the various claims and counter claims is that while certain elements of the NSMs are new, I think the evidence favors the continuity thesis.

In chapter four I attempt to compare and synthesize the insights of the two respective literatures. Having already decided in favor of continuity in the previous chapter, I explore how the themes identified by Baudrillard, Lyotard, Jameson and Harvey hold up when applied to the specific case of the identity-based social movements. I compare and synthesize the respective literatures in three categories that I think allow exploration of the themes of postmodernity: the first set of questions interrogates Baudrillard's take on the death of the modern, essentialist subject and the emergence of a postmodern self by comparing it with the views of Touraine and Castells, among others. My comparison shows that where Baudrillard views the death of the subject as the point of departure for the new epoch, Touraine

and Castells argue that the new epoch is being brought about by the active struggles of NSMs. The second set of questions deal with Lyotard's claim of the end of metanarratives and the particularization of language games. I inquire into whether the identity-based movements provide evidence for or against this thesis by invoking or rejecting liberal-humanist values. Here the comparison shows that Lyotard's insistence on the end of all metanarratives, especially the end of liberal-humanist values, is convincingly rejected by Offe's, Cohen's and Calhoun's arguments that the identity based movements strive to be recognized within those same liberal-humanist values. The third category of comparison and synthesis inquires into whether the identity-based movements provide evidence for Jameson and Harvey's emphasis on the postmodernist theme of the aestheticization of reality. In attempting to disseminate their message identity-based movements rely on the use of images, icons and slogans, but does the focus on image override the focus on moral-political issues? Using the case of ACT-UP, an AIDS/gay rights advocacy group, I suggest that the aestheticization argument raises significant concerns because the increasing dependency on visual media erodes the impact of the moral-political message of the NSMs.

In conclusion, I suggest that the literature on postmodernity provides useful tools for the analysis of culture, 'race', gender and sexuality, but that in pointing to social change it fails to account for the role of normative issues. In so doing, the literature on postmodernity denies the redemptive, transformative role of culture. The role of moral-political values is much better dealt with in the literature on NSMs, which offers hope for the re-

demptive, transformative role of culture. Finally, I recommend that perhaps periodizing one's own time as continuous or discontinuous is better left to posterity and is not all that significant a concern for lay-people as they attempt to alter the conditions of their everyday lives.

Chapter Two – Postmodernity

> The great obsession of the nineteenth century was, as we know, history: with its themes of development and suspension, of crisis and cycle, themes of the ever-accumulating past, with its great preponderance of dead men and the menacing glaciation of the world... The present epoch will perhaps be above all the epoch of space. We are in the epoch of simultaneity: we are in the epoch of juxtaposition, the epoch of the near and far, of the side-by-side, of the dispersed. We are at a moment, I believe, when our experience of the world is less that of a long life developing through time than that of a network that connects points and intersects with its own skein.
>
> Foucault cited in Kumar 1995: 147

Surveying the entire gamut of claims with regard to postmodernity is of course beyond the scope of this thesis, but it will be worthwhile to examine the claims that have been made by the most prominent thinkers and theorists at the heart of the debate. In this chapter I summarize the works of Baudrillard and Lyotard on the one hand, and Jameson and Harvey on the other. More specifically, I review their works in light of three questions: how does each theorist conceive of postmodernity, what does each theorist view as bringing about postmodernity and what does each theorist have to say if anything about issues of subjectivity and identity.

To facilitate the survey it will be useful to first define in a rough, sketchy manner the term 'postmodern' and its various cognates in contrast to the term modern and its cognates. Featherstone (1991), whose analysis I am following in this section, makes the following distinctions: modernity-postmodernity, modernization-postmodernization and Modernism-postmodernism. After the survey I try to put the various disparate claims

together into some kind of a whole, like putting together pieces of a puzzle. Here I follow Webster's (1995) reconstruction.

A Brief Etymological Review

Like a small brush fire on a dry, windy day, discussions that originally started in architecture and the humanities with the relatively narrow idea of postmodern architecture[2] and postmodern art and literature[3] the idea of the postmodern soon gained momentum and ferociously spread to encompass almost all possible academic topics: extending to discussions of postmodern families[4], lifestyles and identities[5], postmodern sexuality[6], the postmodern Gulf War[7], and even 'postmodernist fundamentalism'[8]. Of course, this expansive postmodern turn has had its fair share of critics, too, who argue that the idea of the postmodern has now become nothing more than a cliché (Lash 1990: 2). Yet the idea of the postmodern, which was once narrow in scope and considered to be a mere fad, has proven itself to be both controversial and pertinacious – and some would even suggest pernicious for the social sciences. The controversy arises in part because of the enormously

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[2] See for example, C. Jencks, *The Language of Post-modern Architecture* (NY: Rizzoli, 1977).
[3] See for example I. Hassan, *The Dismemberment of Orpheus: Towards a Postmodern Literature* (Madison: Wisconsin University Press, 1982, 2nd rev. ed.).
[4] e.g. single-parent families, reconstituted families, parents with 'astronaut children', etc. See, for example, J. Stacey's *Brave New Families: Stories of Upheaval in Late Twentieth Century America.* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1990) and D. Cheal's *New Poverty: Families in Postmodern Society.* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1996).
[5] See, for example, M. Featherstone (1991 and 1994) and Z. Bauman (1992) and Mark Poster's idea of identity based on data files (1990).
[6] e.g. cyber-sex
[7] e.g. Baudrillard's *La Guerre du Golfe n'a pas eu lieu.* (Paris: Galilée, 1991).

encompassing suggestion that technologically advanced, capitalist, liberal-democratic societies are undergoing such thorough changes in the economic, political and cultural realms as to indicate a new historical epoch. Quite naturally, such sweeping claims have met with opposition and rejection by other social theorists who suggest that although many changes may have taken place in such societies, these changes are in keeping with modernity and certainly do not amount to an epochal shift.

Modernity, as I stated in the introduction, is a periodizing concept referring to the series of socio-cultural changes that began to take firm shape in the 19th century. It is not surprising then that 'postmodernity' was first used in 1947 by Toynbee to designate a new cycle in Western Civilization (Featherstone 1991: 30, Crook et al. 1992: 42, fn.1), although it was only after the publication of Lyotard's *The Postmodern Condition* (1984) that the term 'postmodernity' became popularized as referring to an epochal break (Featherstone 1991 :4). However, there are other writers, e.g. Giddens (1990) and Beck (1992), who use the term 'postmodernity' to indicate not a radical break with modernity, but to suggest a vantage point from which we can critically reflect upon the successes and failures of the processes of modernity. Extending this argument further is Bauman (1992) who states that postmodernity is the critical reflection of modernity that gives rise to a postmodern mood, a postmodern frame of mind. Lyotard himself has come closer to adopting this position after being roundly criticized for implying a radical discontinuity thesis. Although these latter views of postmodernity

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8 F. Rahman cited in A. Ahmed, *Postmodernism and Islam: Predicament and Promise*. (London: Routledge, 1992: 160). See also Jameson 1991: 388-91.

have gained in popularity, the idea of a radical break with modernity lingers. As a result, to avoid the radical discontinuity thesis some writers hyphenate the term, 'post-modernity, implying thereby not a break with the modern epoch, but a condition that makes sense only when it is considered in relation with the modern. Thus, Tester writes that, 'It implies that the post-modern is not distinctly different but that, rather, it can only exist in relation with the modern. The modern and the post-modern are not divisible; they go together' (Tester 1993: 29). Yet regardless of which usage we accept, postmodernity or post-modernity, both suggest a periodization based upon the all encompassing changes in culture, in politics, in the social structure and economy. In this expansive context Bryan Turner writes that postmodernity refers to the 'social condition that is an effect of information technologies, globalization, fragmentation of lifestyles, hyperconsumerism, deregulation of public utilities, obsolescence of the nation-state, and social experimentation with the traditional life course' (Turner 1994: 14-15, see also Kumar 1995:144).

Two other terms that are seldom used in the literature but that significantly relate to the periodization argument are 'modernization' and 'postmodernization'. 'Modernization' arises out of modernization theory and refers to the stages of societal development based on industrialization, the growth of science and technology, the modern nation-state, the capitalist world market, urbanization, etc., (Featherstone 1991: 6). Furthermore, in the sociology of development 'modernization' also refers to the effects of economic development on traditional social structures and values. Thus, in

the Parsonian structural-functionalist model of development modernization becomes an ideologically loaded, periodizing concept because it posits a teleological, linear argument about how all developing societies *should* follow the process of differentiation already taken by the developed world if progress is to occur. As we will see, it is this very notion of a teleological, linear progression of history that postmodern thinkers reject so vehemently. In contrast to modernization 'postmodernization' was used in the late 1980s in the field of urban studies by Cooke and Zukin to refer to the restructuring of socio-spatial relations by new patterns of investment and production in industry, services, labour markets and tele-communications (Featherstone 1991: 6). Crook et al. also use the term in the title of their book to focus on the processes of change not on the vision of a fully formed new society, though they believe that one is coming about (Crook et al. 1992: 2). By emphasizing a processual, restructuring of relations 'postmodernization' implies that it is too early to theorize a radically new epoch, but that all we can do is to hint at certain processes. Although not used frequently in the literature, 'postmodernization' has the merit of indicating a processual change with degrees of implementation rather than an immediate, radical epochal break. For Crook et al. postmodernization means the extension of modern principles to the extreme point of reversing them. Thus, the extension-cum-reversal is seen in hyper-differentiation, hyper-rationalization and hyper-commodification leading to de-differentiation, de-rationalization and de-commodification (Crook et al. 1992: 47).

We come finally to the third set of contrast terms: 'Modernism' and 'postmodernism'. Modernism refers to a series of avant-garde, reactive movements (e.g. Impressionism, Dadaism, Surrealism and Atonalism) that began in the late 19th century CE. These movements arose as a critique of, what has come to be called, Classical culture and sought to problematize the realist representations of Classical culture (Webster 1995:164). As we will see below, Modernism in this vein is a precursor to the postmodern philosophical rejection of objectivity and Truth. But given the short life span of some artistic reactions, it is not surprising that in 1934 Frederico de Onis used the term 'postmodernism' – thus predating the use of 'postmodernity' by Toynbee – to describe a minor reaction to Modernism, which had by this time become the established artistic trend of the day (Featherstone 1991: 7 and 30). However, it was in the 1960s that 'postmodernism' became popularized in New York amongst a group of artists, writers and literary critics to refer to the reaction beyond Modernism, which was now being rejected because even in its rejection of realist, Classical culture Modernism had become institutionalized in museums and academia. Thus, in the Sixties Hassan, among others, used 'postmodernism' to indicate an avant-garde approach to literary theory (ibid.). Ironically, 'postmodernism' in architecture came to be used more widely in the late 1970s and early 1980s by writers such as Jencks who meant just the opposite of what Hassan was implying. Jencks writes that,

When I first wrote the book [*The Language of Postmodern Architecture*] in 1975 and 1976 the word and concept of Post-modernism had only been used with any frequency in literary theory. Most perturbing, as I later realized it had been used to mean 'Ultra-Modern', referring to the extremist novels of William Burroughs and a philosophy of nihilism and anti-

convention. While I was aware of these writings of Ihab Hassan and others, I used the term to mean the opposite of all this: the end of avant-garde extremism, the partial return to tradition and the central role of communicating with the public – and architecture is the public art (cited in Featherstone 1991: 36).

This brief etymological review demonstrates that from the time it was popularized 'postmodernism' has taken on contrary meanings in different contexts. For his part Jameson agrees that postmodernism is first of all a contentious term full of contradictions, but despite its inconsistencies he argues that it is an indispensable term because it captures by its very contradictoriness the socio-cultural issues that are being debated. The term should be used, however, being aware of its inconsistencies and the contentions surrounding it (1991: xxii and 418).

This review also alludes to the problem of avant-gardism. That is, if we view 'postmodernism' in contrast to 'Modernism', then the former refers solely to cultural changes dealing with aesthetic and genre criticism. The problem arises, then, that if Modernism was an avant-garde reaction and rejection of the realist, Classical culture of modernity, then how truly unique is postmodernism as an avant-garde reaction to Modernism? That is, if modernity gave rise to the realist, Classical culture, which spawned an avant-garde reaction known as Modernism, which itself gave rise to an avant-garde reaction known as postmodernism, are we not, in fact, keeping with a principle of modernity rather than starting something totally new? For if the essential principle of modernity is endless change and innovation, then how radically different can anything postmodern be?[9]

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[9] Jameson suggests that modernization occurs at the level of base or infrastructure, while modernism is the super-structural reaction to developments in the base. Mod-

While I hope that it has been useful for pedagogical reasons to compare the various terms to see how postmodernism clearly implies aesthetic or cultural changes and postmodernity implies a periodization, Baudrillard and Lyotard explicitly reject such binary distinctions. As they point out, such a distinction between the cultural and social spheres is a typical modernist way of perceiving the world. If we really want to express the changed nature of contemporary societies then one of the first steps is to eschew any such binary distinctions and to view the cultural and social realms as indistinguishable in the postmodern world.

Postmodern Thinkers: Baudrillard and Lyotard

In the introduction I situated Baudrillard and Lyotard into the discontinuity camp and Jameson and Harvey into the continuity camp. But while this division is useful for my overall thesis, I have already suggested some of the problems inherent in such a dichotomy. Furthermore, the dichotomy conceals significant differences amongst the four writers I will review in this survey. Therefore, in this chapter I will use another distinction. Webster (1995) argues that Baudrillard and Lyotard should be called postmodern thinkers, while Jameson and Harvey should be called theorists of postmodernity. The former reject the ability of modern social scientific methods and scholarship to convey the supposedly changed nature of technologically ad-

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ernity, he continues, is in that case the link between base and superstructure, modernity is the way modern people describe their experiences as producers and consumers of both the base and superstructure. Modernity is the sense or conviction by modern people that they are living in a new age in which all the old values and ways of doing things are transfigured. In postmodernity, then, newness and its connota-

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vanced Western societies. The theorists of postmodernity argue that while the contemporary situation may have changed, these changes are the outcome of social and economic changes brought about by modernity per se. Hence the current situation can be explained in terms of established, modern, social scientific methods (Webster 1995: 163). To use the term 'thinkers' rather than 'theorists', for Baudrillard and Lyotard, is itself instructive because these thinkers reject the ability of social theory, a systematically developed conceptual structure, to accurately represent reality (Ritzer 1997:3). Furthermore they argue that modern social science is based upon, *inter alia*, disjunction of the social and cultural realms, whereas now we live in a world where the two are intertwined; hence, it is pointless to use empirical methods of modern social science to elucidate those changes, for modern social science, and sociology in particular, is part and parcel of modernity. What we need are new, non-scientific, unsystematic, non-universalizing, postmodern ways of expressing the current situation. In fact, in the eyes of postmodern thinkers such postmodern expressions themselves evince a radically new epoch (Connor 1989).

It is worth noting also that for both Baudrillard and Lyotard the new postmodern epoch does not follow the modern one in a linear fashion. To do so would be to succumb to the Enlightenment mode of thinking, which is what both of them want to avoid. Lyotard rejects the linear conception of history and writes that 'A work can only become modern if it is first postmodern. Postmodernism thus understood is not modernism at its end but

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tion of progress no longer resonate with people because everything has become new and newness is itself no longer viewed as pristine (1991: 310-11).

in the nascent state, and this state is constant' (Lyotard 1984: 79). Furthermore, 'Post *modern* would have to be understood according to the paradox of the future (post) anterior (modo)' (Lyotard 1984:81).

Baudrillard

According to Baudrillard a new postmodern epoch has already taken shape, a new epoch that is based upon new modes of signification, upon a new linguistic reality. In fact, although in *Consumer Society* (1988/1970) Baudrillard had argued that with the expansion of consumerism and capitalism a new era in the history of capitalism had emerged, in *The Mirror of Production* (1988/1973) Baudrillard changed his view and argued that capitalism is merely the reflection of the new epoch of signification; hence, rather than being the cause of social change capitalism is merely the symptom of the new modes of signification (Poster 1988: 3-4).

Baudrillard's view of the postmodern epoch is that life is conducted in an incessant circulation of communicative signs, signs about what is happening in the world out there (e.g. the daily news, to signs about one's own identity and through what we consume). What is peculiar about this new linguistic reality is that the communicative signs are no longer grounded to actual referents, that is, to actual objects in the world 'out there'. Rather in the postmodern epoch these signs float freely not deriving meaning from their referents, nor even from other signs. They are, as Webster puts it, signs without significance. Baudrillard's point of departure for this extravagant claim is that humans have a need to seek distinction from one another and that the goods that we consume are in fact coded

signs that we use to signify distinctions of status and prestige amongst ourselves. Thus the need that humans have is not a need to consume any particular object, but a need to consume things for the purpose of distinguishing themselves from others. If the need were for an object then that need could be satiated. Since the need is for distinction rather than to consume any one object *per se*, our needs can never be satiated for the process of distinction knows no bounds. Up to this point Baudrillard's argument is a straightforward take on the poststructuralist view that signifiers do not derive their meaning from an inherent quality that links signifiers to the referent, rather signifiers derive meaning from their differences to other signifiers. What is unique about Baudrillard's argument, however, is that whereas for post-structuralists signs allude to some authentic though possibly distorted reality, for Baudrillard these object/signs do not refer to anything but themselves. In the postmodern world signs, circulating ceaselessly, no longer derive meaning even from other signs. Signs just are. They do not represent any other reality, they are signs without significance (Webster 1995: 177-80).

From there it is but a short step to the world of the 'hyperreal', 'a world where it is impossible to distinguish the imaginary from the real, the sign from its referent, the true from the false' (Kumar 1995: 123-24). The state of hyperreality also erodes, or to use Baudrillard's term 'implodes', the analytic distinction between subject and object such that in a philosophical sense the subject and object become virtually indistinguishable. A new postmodern epoch based on signification and a new world of hyperreality. It

is for these reasons that Baudrillard argues that it is impossible for us to understand the present situation using the old logic, the Enlightenment rationality, the Kantian categories of time, space, causality, etc. (Poster 1988: 6). Rather, what we have to use in the world of hyperreality is a new strategy, a new way of looking at things, one that takes the view of the object, not the subject, because in hyperreality it is the object, and in particular the simulated object, that has the privileged position to the truth.[10] Baudrillard calls this new strategy a 'fatal strategy', the implication of which is the end of subjectivity, the end of the possibility of a rational subject and its privileged position to truth:

When I use [the term 'strategy'] in the expression 'fatal strategy', it is clear that it no longer has any finality in itself. It is a type of fatal process, a process in which there *is certainly no more subject, no more subjectivity.* Fatal strategy is for me a strategy of the object... *We witness the loss of subjectivity* on the one hand, and the intervention of the object itself in the game in a fatal, decisive and determinant way... [But we do not have] a discourse of the object. Well, we do not have it. What we have is the event itself, the flow of the world itself, and there is there, if not a strategy, at least a rule of the game (Baudrillard cited in Bayard and Knight 1995, emphasis added).

Baudrillard's pessimism towards subjectivity means that active subjects cannot effectively and practically challenge the system of the 'code', a term which he never satisfactorily defines, but which refers generally to the complex systems of social differentiation. The only way that the system of the 'code' can be challenged is through silence and the refusal of meaning, which he believes is the actual winning strategy practiced by the masses in their hyper-conformist refusal of the system (Baudrillard 1988: 219).

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[10] I am somewhat puzzled by Baudrillard's argument here. If in a philosophical sense the subject and object are indistinguishable, then it holds that, analytically speaking, there can be no view of the object that can be distinguished from the view

Finally, we can perceive the truly epochal nature of his claims, epochal in the sense of transcending modern thought, by examining Baudrillard's reaction to attempts to resurrect philosophically the centered-subject of modernity. For instance, Baudrillard is very pessimistic about the liberal-humanist conception of subjectivity, very pessimistic about the possibility of subjects to accurately understand reality and to act in such a way so as to change it according to the subjects' desire. As I demonstrate in the fourth chapter, Baudrillard views any attempt to cling to an active subject as merely a tactic by scholars in the human sciences to save their subject, an attempt at the level of philosophy that has no basis in reality (Bayard and Knight 1995).

In Baudrillard's analysis there is no room for the NSMs because resistance for Baudrillard consists in hyperconformity to the system, not in active, conscious challenges as posited by NSM activists and theorists. While Baudrillard's early work shares the view with many NSM theorists that the weaker, marginalized groups such as women, Blacks, children, poets, graffiti artists represent the only hope to overthrow the current system, he did not envision a revolutionary confrontation. Rather, the overthrow would take place through acts of communication, through symbolic gifts to the system, gifts that obliterate the power of the system by refusing reciprocity (Baudrillard 1988/1976:120). However, in his later work Baudrillard (1988) adopts the masses in general as the group most likely to cause the collapse of the system by their hyper-conformity to it. By their silence and

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of the subject. It seems to me that in hyperreality there can be no choice, no strategy as to which view to take for there is only the one view: that of the subject-object.

their refusal of meaning, by their 'over-acceptance' of the system the masses push the system to its limit until it collapses from its own perfection. Hence, Baudrillard's later work is entirely opposed to the literature of the NSMs because, according to him, the new epoch is being brought into place not through active agents but through passivity.

Lyotard

Although Lyotard has been heralded as one of the leading figures in announcing the postmodern epoch, in fact his arguments are much less whimsical than Baudrillard's. Even though Lyotard's book, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge (1981)*, has been cited as a significant landmark indicating the shift towards postmodernity, the book is less monumental than popularly portrayed because it is not the postmodernist manifesto that it is made out to be. On its own the book seems harmless enough, but, I suppose, in the context of the debates being waged in academe Lyotard's book is like a fresh gust of wind on an already burning brush-fire. Even more so because of what other thinkers have read into or taken away from the book.

Despite the fact that at least twice Lyotard distinguishes between the social and cultural realms, stating that societies are entering the post-industrial and culture the postmodern age (Lyotard 1981: 3 and 37), his overall analysis, in fact, suggests the opposite -- that the two realms are conjoined. This occurs for two reasons. One, science, which once only provided the means of production, has now become a force of production – in the sense that the profits from production are put back into research and

development (i.e., into the stock of knowledge which *per se* is a cultural product). This material investment into knowledge further aids production and the cycle continues. The second reason that the social and the cultural are merged is that the performativity principle (i.e. the principle of achieving the maximum outputs for the minimum input, a.k.a. efficiency), which was at one time relegated to the economy, has now permeated all aspects of culture.

More central to Lyotard's overall argument is his notion that all acts of speech as well as any other social actions are always 'moves' within a game. Drawing upon Wittgenstein's later theory on language games, and using chess as the analogy, Lyotard argues that just as different game pieces are governed by different rules so too different types of speech, discourse or social action are governed by different rules (Lyotard 1981:10). As well, just as any move in the game of chess is always part of a 'combative strategy' (Dallmayr 1993: 32), so any 'move' in by a person or group is also always bound up in a general combative strategy. This is the 'first principle underlying our method as a whole: to speak is to fight, in the sense of playing, and speech acts fall within the domain of a general agonistics' (Lyotard 1981:10 and Dallmayr 1993: 32)

This theory of language games then becomes the basis for a broader theory of social and political life, one that is critical of typically modernist approaches that portray society as a unified totality, as a 'unicity' (Lyotard 1981: 12 and Dallmayr 1993: 32). Instead, in his postmodern theory (Lyotard 1981: 14) the social bond is understood as flexible networks of lan-

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guage games in which each person is a likened to an atom operating at the crossroads of pragmatic relationships and involved in perpetual 'moves' and 'countermoves' (Lyotard 1981:16 and Dallmayr 1993: 33). The philosophical critique of modernist approaches forms the basis of a postmodern epoch in which an incredulity towards all universalizing metanarratives, *the* defining characteristic of postmodernity, indicates a reversal of modern, Enlightenment thought (Lyotard 1981: xxiv). In particular, Lyotard argues that in postmodernity a new philosophy of science is required, one that emphasizes the search for dissension, difference (ibid.: 61) and one that recognizes science's dependency on narrative analysis for its legitimacy. For science can help us to decide between various means to desired ends, but cannot judge on questions of ultimate value. Science can legitimize and justify specific means but it cannot legitimize and justify why scientific criteria alone should be the standard by which we judge things. Thus, science, which stands in contrast to narrative forms of knowledge (e.g. myths, legends, oral traditions and religion), in fact needs to be legitimized by its own narrative history.

Lyotard translates these musing on the philosophy of science into a social context when he suggests, contra Habermas, that the idea and practice of social justice is to be found not in the search for consensus but in the search for differences and dissent. Lyotard argues that the modern quest for metanarratives which seek to unite humanity under one banner, for instance, liberty, equality, and fraternity or reason, science and prog-

ress, should be abandoned in favor of local-narratives that do not force people to accept rules created by others (ibid.: 66).

However, the crisis in science that Lyotard diagnoses, combined with his other philosophical attacks on the rational subject and the idea of society as an embodied collectivity, is a turnabout of epochal proportions according to Kumar. For it was the Scientific Revolution that gave the moderns the confidence that they could go beyond the ancients, the confidence that provided the impetus for the themes and theories of Progress, Reason, Revolution and Emancipation – all those concepts associated with modernity. Thus, the crisis in science and the death of all metanarratives is tantamount to an epochal pronouncement (Kumar 1995: 134).

Theorists of Postmodernity: Jameson and Harvey

Unlike the preceding postmodern thinkers, theorists of postmodernity argue that although the contemporary situation may be very different than 100 or even 50 years ago, it can still be explained in terms of established, modern social science methods because the current situation is the outcome of social and economic changes that were instituted by modernity (Webster 1995: 163). Moreover, these theorists argue that it is premature to be making unqualified pronouncements on the arrival of a radically new historical epoch. Hence, Jameson's account of postmodernism as the 'cultural logic of capitalism', or Harvey's account of postmodernity as the outcome of changes in capitalist regimes of accumulation both stress the continuity in the underlying principle of capitalism.

Jameson

As mentioned before, for Jameson the aesthetic and literary changes that are indicative of the postmodern condition are a result of the beginning of the third stage of capitalism. Following Mandel's periodization of the history of capitalism, Jameson argues that the current stage of late capitalism is different from the preceding stage of monopoly capitalism because of the rise of transnational business, of a new international division of labor that shifts production and the proletariat from the first to the third world, of a new dynamic in world banking, e.g. the end of the gold standard in 1973, and because of new forms of media interrelationship, computers and automation and also because of the social consequences that all these changes entail (Jameson 1991: xix).

The title of Jameson's book, *Postmodernism or the Logic of Late Capitalism*, indicates that in Jameson's view postmodernism is the cultural logic of the third stage of capitalism and that analysts emphasize the continuity in the underlying principles of capitalism from modernity to postmodernity (ibid.: xix). Therefore, postmodernity represents a new stage, but not a new epoch. Using the Marxist base and superstructure model, when it is no longer fashionable to do so, Jameson argues that as economic changes take place, owing to the shift from monopoly capitalism to 'late' capitalism[11], they are reflected in cultural shifts, e.g. from linguistic modes of representation to visual. However, as Kumar correctly notes, Jameson's claim to keep the social and the cultural realms distinct as per the base-superstructure model is, in fact, not justified by his analysis, which suggests that the social

and cultural realms are joined in some manner. For instance, Jameson writes that postmodern culture is the super-structural expression of American military and economic domination (ibid.: 5), yet he also writes that [the] 'cultur[al] and [the] economic collapse back into one another' (ibid.: xxi), and 'every position on postmodernism in culture is also a position on the politics and economy of postmodernism' (ibid.: 3). Jameson also suggests that the sphere of culture is no longer autonomous, rather there has been 'a prodigious expansion of culture throughout the social realm, everything has become cultural including the structure of our psyche' (ibid.: 48); and in other instances he writes of the prodigious expansion of capital into culture (ibid.: 25-26), the implication of which is that culture can no longer provide the critical distance by which we may critique the social realm (ibid.: 48-9). Thus, rather than accepting Jameson's claim for the continued validity of the base-superstructure model at face value, we need to realize as he himself does implicitly, that culture and economy are intertwined to produce the commodification of culture itself.

All of these economic changes result in postmodernism the supreme feature of which is depthlessness, a new kind of superficiality that exists both on a theoretical and physical level. Postmodernism can be seen above all in architecture where the theme of aesthetic populism effacing the distinction between high and low culture is most pronounced. The Westin Bonaventure Hotel in downtown Los Angeles best exemplifies the populist appeal with its various back-door entrances inviting both global traveler and

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[11] Note that 'late' is being used to imply both continuity and change (ibid.: xix and xxi).

local alike, but which never lead one directly to any central space in the building (ibid.: 41-43). In a similar fashion, postmodern theoretical discourse repudiates depth models as ideological or metaphysical. Stigmatized are the hermeneutic model of the internal and the external states of the subject; the dialectical model of essence and appearance; the Freudian model of latent and manifest; the existential models of authenticity and inauthenticity, and alienation and disalienation; and finally the semiotic model of signifier and signified. All these theoretical models are replaced by a postmodern emphasis on surface appearances (ibid.: 11-12).

The implications that this has for subjectivity is clear. With the demise of the depth models, concepts such as anxiety and alienation are no longer relevant to describe the subject. Indeed, 'the alienation of the subject is displaced by the latter's fragmentation' (ibid.: 14). But the poststructuralist announcement of the death of the subject implies not only the end of alienation and anomie but also the end of other kinds of feelings because there is no longer a self left to 'do the feeling' (ibid.: 15). However, Jameson argues that postmodernism, as an heir to post-structuralism, should not claim that 'centered-subjects' never existed. Instead the task for postmodern thinkers and theorists alike is to understand anew the historical conditions that made the concept of the centered-subject possible in the first place (ibid.: 306).

Harvey
Like Jameson, Harvey's conception of the new postmodern epoch also revolves around the changes taking place due to capitalism. Drawing upon

the work of the Regulation School of theorists, Harvey argues that capitalism in the 20th century has gone from Fordist modes of accumulation to flexible accumulation, which produces a sense of flux and ephemerality in the goods and services that are produced and equally in the overall cultural sensibility, or what Harvey calls the 'structure of feeling' (Harvey 1989: 41).

Harvey argues that since 1972 profound changes have occurred in the cultural and political-economic practices of people in the advanced industrialized societies. These changes are related to the compression of experiences in both space and time. However, while the changes are profound, they do not betoken a new epoch for these changes are occurring at the surface level and do not fundamentally alter the basic rules of organization in capitalist societies. Even the compression of experience that is part and parcel of a new postmodernist 'structure of feeling', is merely the latest wave in a trend that has been occurring for centuries (ibid.: passim). Thus, postmodernity is not a new epoch, but a cultural condition that reflects profound changes in the 'structure of feeling' (ibid.: 40). The condition of postmodernity is one in which there is another round of time-space compression and this is accompanied with a crisis of representation of space and time, a crisis in which new ways of thinking and feeling have to be created (ibid.: 322).

If postmodernity is the crisis brought about by a new wave of time-space compression, then postmodernism is the cultural response to that crisis. Postmodernism is an aesthetic movement in various fields, e.g. philosophy, art and architecture, that privileges aesthetic values over moral or

ethicai ones (ibid.: 116). It is the cultivation of judgment and tastes that focuses upon aesthetics over ethics. Furthermore, Harvey argues that postmodernism is an aesthetic movement that is continuous with Modernism except that postmodernism is

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 skepticism as to any particular prescriptions as to how the eternal and immutable should be conceived of, represented, or expressed (ibid.: 116).

But while postmodernism is continuous with Modernism, the former does not just reproduce the latter for 'real revolutions in sensibility can occur when latent and dominated ideas in one period become explicit and dominant in another' (ibid.: 44). That is to say fragmentation, ephemerality, discontinuity and chaotic change, which have become dominant in postmodernism, were all part and parcel of modernity but were latent in the earlier periods of capitalism and dominated by ideas of unity and eternity. Thus in postmodern thought Harvey, following Jameson's lead, also avers that the signifier is emphasized over and above the signified, the surface over the roots, an inability to unify past, present and future leads to a schizophrenic self. No longer can subjects be regarded as alienated as in the classical Marxist sense because this presupposes a centered, coherent self, rather than the fragmented self of postmodernity (ibid.: 53-4).

Clearly, Harvey is operating with the categories of historical materialism in which changes in the cultural sphere are brought about by changes in the economic sphere. He writes that, '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' (ibid.: 113). But he qualifies these remarks by also arguing that postmodernism is also an aesthetic intervention in its own right in politics, economy and social life. Thus, it is both mimetic and an active intervention in the social sphere (ibid.: 115). However, the origins and causes of this mimesis and intervention reside in the economic and political forces. The effect of the aesthetic intervention in the social realm is that it promotes an apolitical stance and an economy in which cultural products become commodified.

By the end of his book Harvey even suggests that postmodernity is on the wane, 'perhaps reaching a point of self-dissolution into something different' (ibid.: 358), but it is unclear what the new state of affairs is. For his part Harvey would like to see a renewal of historical materialism and the Enlightenment project, a renewal that accommodates otherness, understands the power of image and aesthetics and the problems associated with a new round of time-space compression.

A Narrative of Postmodernity

In this last section I will re-describe the disparate elements explored in the preceding sections into a new and more complete narrative. Although not all elements can be reconciled easily in such a manner, this narrative follows Webster's reconstruction of the arguments surrounding postmodernity[12].

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[12] A similar type of analysis is provided by Stevenson (1995) who summarizes postmodernism as encompassing the following 6 areas: 1)contestation of philosophical concerns such as objectivity and the referential function of language; 2) the frag-

Both Kumar and Webster agree that what makes postmodernism so distinctive and challenging as a movement is its philosophical rejection of Enlightenment rationality. For instance, just as postmodern thinkers reject the claim that we can accurately represent reality behind the symbolic form, so they reject the ability of social science to tell us how people really behave and what changes are really taking place. They reject, too, the Enlightenment tradition of thought that searches for rationalities underlying social change and behavior, reject claims to have found the 'true motors of history' because these are subjective constructs by theorists rather than objective, accurate portrayals of reality. Therefore, postmodernists tend to be indifferent to the past as 'real' history. The past is to be dealt with in an aesthetic manner not as an accurately historical enterprise. Lyotard's claim of the death of metanarratives also suggests that history or the past is no longer a story within which we can find a beginning, a middle or an end (also in the sense of a culmination or purpose), no claim can be made that history is an unfolding process leading to Progress and Emancipation. Since there is no such significance in history, it is pointless from the postmodern thinkers point of view to situate postmodernity in a periodizing scheme (Webster 1995: 137). Postmodern thinkers reject such totalizing accounts of social change, i.e. grand or metanarratives, as these do not demonstrate the truth but implicitly recommend directions for the present and future (ibid.: 167). Furthermore, Webster argues that transferring this philosophical rejection

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mentation of modern subjectivity; 3) the preservation of difference against homogenizing impulses; 4) the rejection of totalizing perspectives; 5) the denial of teleological notions of social change; and 6) the skepticism of all utopian political stances that promise an end to social forms of antagonism.

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of all-overarching Truth-claims into the social realm we find that amongst lay people, there is a corresponding mood of rejection of judgments from experts and elites. Since philosophically there is no one Truth, but *only versions of truth*, in the social realm people reject judgments from experts because their judgments are viewed as only biased, interested judgments or versions of truth rather than objective statements of reality (ibid.: 168). Webster adds that the hierarchical, classical culture of modernity, in which modernist enthusiasm for genres and styles -- which would have served to situate worthwhile art and help to identify good taste -- is rejected and mocked for its pretensions bringing about a democratization of tastes because everyone is able to judge for him/herself. This point is exemplified, for example, by Jameson's emphasis on the effacement of the distinction between high and low culture. From this mocking of established styles arises the postmodern penchant for parody, tongue-in-cheek reactions, for a pastiche mode which delights in irony and happily mixes and matches in bricolage manner (ibid.: 168-69). The postmodern cultural milieu, then, abandons the search for 'authenticity, for the genuine, for the *real* meaning of things, for the good life' (ibid.: 170). The modernists' questions, 'what does this really mean?' and 'who am I?', are pointless because there is an implicit assumption that there is an essential core of meaning, that the real meaning of things can be discerned through objective sustained analysis. However postmodern thinkers reject any notion of essentialism as naïve because there is no one essential truth discernible to the objective learned observer, instead there are only differing interpretations. From the point of

view of postmodern thinkers, since there are only differing constructions and interpretations, therefore people abandon the quest for meaning and take pleasure in the experience of being (ibid.: 172). It is only intellectuals who get worried about the 'true meaning' of things. Ordinary people are creative and playful and are already aware of the multiple meanings of things. Postmodernism emphasizes differences of interpretation, in ways of life, in values, as a concomitant of the abandonment of belief in the authentic. Postmodernism emphasizes that difference and fragmentation can be enjoyed without worrying too much about mixed and conflicting messages.

Chapter Three – New Social Movements

We need, in short, to broaden, enrich and improve our theory and concep-
tualizations, without leaping to a claim of epochal historical transforma-
tion... There are some qualitative novelties in recent history, but so far
these have not been sufficient to overturn basic organizational tendencies of
the epoch... All this is not to say that nothing has changed, but that
changes have been overstated and poorly conceptualized.

(Calhoun 1993: 88-89)

In this chapter I explore the arguments for continuity versus discontinuity

in the literature on new social movements. These accounts address NSMs

'within a theoretical framework for societal transformation' [13], specifically

those claims and counter claims that deal with NSMs as struggles for the

establishment of new cultural values and a new society. For the most part

this literature derives from Western European accounts which 'reserve the

term new social movements for fundamental or emancipatory transforma-

tions of society' (Mayer and Roth 1995: 300-301). Given that the discussion

in this chapter is focused on continuity versus discontinuity in light of the

literature on NSMs, I deal with many different types of social movements,

rather than any one type of movement. In the next chapter, however, the

discussion is limited to identity-based movements since these types of

movements are more amenable to an analysis of postmodernity. Thus, along

with the identity-based movements of women, Blacks and Gay and Lesbi-

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[13] As such, I have excluded the resource mobilization theory accounts, predominat-
ing in American theory, which focus more on organizational structure and the abil-
ity of NSMs to mobilize resources and their impact on political and economic poli-
cies, ignoring the historical grievances that NSMs seek to address, the meaning for

ans, this chapter includes discussions of the 'green' and eco-pax movements, that is, the ecological, conservation, anti-nuclear and peace (anti-war) streams of activism (Pakulski 1993: 152, fn. 5).

I begin this chapter by providing a general overview of the debate surrounding the definition of a new social movement followed by a list of the putative characteristics of NSMs. Calhoun argues that this list of characteristics could also be found in older social movements and argues that this is evidence for the continuity argument. However, I suggest that taken to the extreme the argument for continuity loses credibility and a closer inspection of the claims for discontinuity is needed. Therefore, I review the work of three discontinuity theorists: Touraine, Castells and Inglehart. This is followed by a review of the work of two continuity theorists: Cohen and Offe. The final section provides a deeper analysis of the continuity-discontinuity claims.

Defining a New Social Movement

As with 'postmodernity', so with 'new social movements', the problem of conceptual clarity applies. As a point of departure Scott (1990) provides the following definition of social movements:

A social movement is a collective actor constituted by individuals who understand themselves to have common interests and, for at least some significant part of their social existence, a common identity. Social movements are distinguished from other collective actors, such as political parties and pressure groups, in that they have mass mobilization, or the threat of mobilization, as their prime source of social sanction, and hence of power (Scott 1990: 6; cited also in Lindberg and Sverisson 1997: 2).

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participants or collective identity, and ideology of the movement (Mayer and Roth 1995: 299 and Pakulski 1993).

Scott adds that this is not a new definition and was used as early as 1951 by Heberle, who held that social movements attempt to bring about fundamental change in the social order. Scott modifies Haberle's emphasis by arguing that NSMs can also strive to maintain a given social order (Scott 1990: 6). But what is lacking in this and other such definitions is what notion makes certain social movements *new*. In fact, no consensus has yet been reached on the matter.

Cohen (1985) neatly sums up the state of disarray when she writes that although the term 'new social movements' has been used by theorists since the early 1970s,

There is little agreement among theorists in the field as to just what a movement is, *what would qualify theoretically as a new type of movement*, and what the meaning of a social movement as distinct from a political party or interest group might be (ibid.: 1, emphasis added).

While there is yet no consensus, Mayer and Roth point out that in attempting to pinpoint the novelty and defining characteristics of NSMs some authors allude to the non-legal, non-political, non-economic concerns of NSMs, i.e. to the fact that NSMs focus on 'lifestyles, cultural politics, identities and politics of everyday life'. Other authors refer to the more informal and egalitarian forms of organization, while others yet refer to the lack of a shared class base amongst activists (Mayer and Roth 1995: 301). They add, however, that all these generalizations can be challenged empirically.

Even more specifically than Mayer and Roth, Calhoun's work provides an inventory of eight characteristics that are assumed to be the key features of the new social movements (Calhoun 1993: 86-87).

i) There is a focus on identity, autonomy and self-realization rather than material benefits, resources and instrumental goals. In this regard, the NSMs are thought to limit themselves to the civil society rather than engaging with political or economic actors.

ii) Mobilization is more defensive than offensive; hence, less negotiable than abstract utopian social projects.

iii) Membership cuts across class lines as socioeconomic categories lose their importance.

iv) Organizational forms are less hierarchical than other organizations; in fact, transforming the traditional organizational forms are themselves a focus of attention of the NSMs.

v) Membership is only part-time, with potentially multiple and over-lapping commitments.

vi) Activities are outside the legislative system and use unconventional means.

vii) Everyday aspects of life that were formerly outside of the political arena are themselves politicized.

viii) NSMs are not likely to unify under some larger umbrella form or still less a master narrative of collective progress.

Calhoun then goes on to argue that, in fact, all these supposedly key features of the *new* social movements were present in ethnic, nationalist, religious, anti-slavery, women's and public education movements in the past. For example, he argues that identity was crucially at stake in the Catalan nationalism and nationalism itself is a movement that cuts across class

lines. The abolitionist movement was involved with direct action outside of the official legislative system. The fight for public education politicized aspects of everyday life that were traditionally outside the purview of politics, as did the early labor movements at a time when their struggle was not considered properly political. Nor did any of these movements show any tendency to unify under some broader umbrella form (ibid.: 88). Therefore, the eight characteristics that are assumed to be the key features of the *new* social movements are, in fact, applicable to older social movements in the 19th and early 20th centuries (ibid.).

Calhoun may have a point but taken to an extreme the argument for continuity can become somewhat ridiculous and blind to subtle, though meaningful, changes. For instance, in developing their 'Nine Theses on Social Movements' (1987), Frank and Fuentes compare all social movements, including the ecological movement, the women's movements, the peace movement, fundamentalist-religious and spiritualist movements, student movements, class-based workers' movements, movements for minorities such as the Black civil rights and Latin Chicano movements in the United States; meanwhile other authors write about nationalist movements in the developing world within the broader rubric of NSMs.[14] Such discussions lose their persuasive force because they end up discussing every kind of movement and denying any inkling or even possibility of discontinuity. It is no wonder, then, that Frank and Fuentes argue that most of the new social movements are not new. They write that 'peasant, localist community, eth-

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[14] See, for example, the articles in Frans J. Schuurman, ed., *Beyond the Impasse: New Directions in Development Theory.* (London and New Jersey: Zed Books, 1993).

nic/nationalist, religious, and even feminist/women's movements *have existed for centuries and even millennia* in many parts of the world' (Frank and Fuentes 1987:1503, emphasis added). Furthermore, although they acknowledge that the ecological/green movements and the peace movements can be termed 'new' because these movements have arisen to meet needs which have only recently occurred due to world development, Frank and Fuentes insist that world capitalist development has historically caused severe environmental degradation in many parts of the developing world and has been met historically with resistance through social movements (ibid.). No doubt, by casting such a large net we can capture all old and recent phenomena and claim that there is nothing new under the sun. However, the limitations of such an analysis are obvious. Dealing with everything we end up dealing with nothing in substantive detail or specificity and distort empirical reality, hence a more balanced approach is needed to address the question of continuity vs. discontinuity.

Discontinuity Theorists: Touraine, Castells and Inglehart

Touraine

As mentioned in the introduction, the literature on NSMs arises in part out of Touraine's work on the 'post-industrial society', which he more precisely called a 'programmed society' (Touraine 1981: 6). 'Programmed society' is so called because it reflects people's capacity to create their own models for social change, people's capacity for self-production and self-transformation, without resort to some meta-social principles such as divine rule, natural

law or progress (Mayer and Roth 1995: 302, 316). Touraine's theory of the 'programmed society' begins by shifting the site of sociological inquiry from social structure to social relations. In stark contrast to the reified views of society, Touraine argues that society is comprised of a system of action, that is, of actors who are defined by their cultural orientations and their social relations (Touraine 1981: 2). Therefore, the study of society should be focused on uncovering the system of social actions, the new social relations that are produced in the 'programmed society', not on social structure per se (ibid.: 32). The best way to do this is Touraine avers is to study the NSMs because they are 'more than ever the principal agents of history' (ibid.: 9) and which reflect the new conflicts of the new social relations that emerge with the 'post-industrial society' (ibid.)[15].

Conceptually, Touraine distinguishes between three types of social movements: 1) social movements are those that struggle to gain control of the production of culture; 2) historical movements are those, e.g. Green political parties, that interact with the State to control the direction of change from one societal type to another (However, in this case the social movement gives way to the State as the main agent of historical transformation.), and 3) cultural movements are those in which the transformation of culture involves social conflicts within the movement itself. The women's movement is a good example because the struggle to change the status and image of women divides women between liberal feminists who aim at achieving equality of opportunity that accepts and

[15] Touraine and his research group have studied the student movement of 1976, the anti-nuclear movement, worker's movements, the peace movement in France and

imitates the dominant male model (ibid.: 776-780). This conceptual trichotomy aside, in practice all *new* social movements reflect a particular type of conflict in which the stake 'is the social control of the main *cultural patterns* through which our relationships are *normatively organized*" (Touraine 1985: 754-55, emphasis added, see also 760).

Touraine's work has been heavily critiqued, however, for his notion that each society or epoch is witness to *a* central conflict (ibid.: 761). Touraine's notion of a central conflict has been critiqued for being teleological but Touraine responds by arguing that his notion is not an evolutionary progression of society, for social movements may struggle for different, though not necessarily better, societies (ibid.: 773). For instance, he avers that in modernity the central conflicts revolved around economic issues and were reflected by the labor movements. His work suggests, therefore, that the labor movements accepted the pre-existing dominant cultural codes but were striving solely for a more just distribution of economic resources. However, in the 'programmed society' the central conflict revolves around 'the *production of* symbolic goods and information, i.e. of *culture itself* (ibid.: 774).

While it is clear that in the eyes of Touraine what is *new* about the NSMs is that they are struggling for the control of 'historicity', i.e. the cultural orientations by which social relations are normatively organized, Touraine seems of late to have given up the idea of discovering the central conflict and its new cultural orientations in favor of the recognition of the

Solidarity in Poland, among others (cited in Mayer and Roth 1995: 316, fn. 6).

plural character of social movements (Touraine 1992 and Mayer and Roth 1995: 303).

Castells

A former student of Touraine's, Castells (1997) argues that a new society is coming into being with the globalization of economic activities, by the development of networking forms of organization, new media systems, transformation of space and time and new forms of social organization all of which combine in the Information Age to give us the 'network society'. Countering these developments are the new social movements which provide *new powerful expressions of collective identity* in terms of cultural singularity and which offer to their activists, in a world of fast-paced change, control over their own lives and environment. He writes that,

Social movements emerging from communal resistance to globalization, capitalist restructuring, organizational networking, uncontrolled informationalism, and patriarchalism – that is for the time being, ecologists, feminists, religious fundamentalists, nationalists and localists – are the potential subjects of the Information Age (Castells 1997: 361).

Identity takes on central importance for it builds interests, values and projects around experiences by linking nature, history, geography and culture. Identities refuse to dissolve in the face of technologically induced globalization, capitalist restructuring, organizational networking and uncontrolled informationalism. Social movements arise as collective expressions of identity because in the network society power resides *'in the codes of information and in the images of representation around which societies organize their institutions, and people build their lives, and decide their behavior'* (ibid.: 359, emphasis in original). Since power resides in information and images, the

struggles for the cultural codes of society take place ultimately in people's minds. Social movements are intimately connected with these struggles since they are the producers and distributors of cultural codes and their purposive collective actions transform, in victory as in defeat, the values and institutions of society (ibid.: 3). In Castells' view, what is new is not only the struggle for the cultural codes and new expressions of identity, but in the 'network society' the movements are marked by networking and de-centered forms of organization and intervention. That is to say, no single concerted strategy exists nor a single mastermind at the center of it all who runs the show. In this lies Castells major break with Touraine, that Castells does not posit the existence of a central conflict, nor the idea of a predeter-mined path in which social movements will necessary transform the social order. Rather he states that the fight for the cultural codes may or may not be successful.

Inglehart

Like Touraine and Castells, Inglehart's work (1990) focuses on cultural change as the defining quality of the new social movements. But while Touraine's work takes a cultural determinist position, both Castells and In-glehart acknowledge the importance of economic and political factors as well. While stressing the emergence of new cultural values as reflective of inter-generation change, Inglehart simultaneously argues that cultural fac-tors are closely related with economic, technological, social and political factors and that it is pointless to argue which of these is the ultimate causal factor that drives the others. Inglehart writes that

...culture is an essential causal element that helps shape society – and a factor *that today tends to be underestimated.* Its importance is underrated, in part, because it is difficult to measure. We have relatively abundant data on economic factors, and contemporary social science is largely data driven; we tend to explain in terms of what we can readily measure (Inglehart 1990: 14, emphasis added).

Inglehart's argument is that what motivates people to participate in NSMs can be analyzed from different perspectives, e.g. from the point of view that there are objective problems that need redress such as the environment, the exploitation of women and the danger of war; or from the point of view that isolated individuals cannot engage in effective political action and that they need some sort of organization to coordinate the actions of many people. However, Inglehart reminds us that what motivates people to act or participate in NSMs is not merely the existence of an objective problem or organizations, but a *value system or ideology* that motivates such action (ibid.: 371). He writes that,

The rise of new social movements is not a result of values alone; to some extent, the emergence of these movements also reflects explicitly ideological indoctrination. But to pose the question as one of values or ideology is a false one. It is both (ibid.: 374).

Nevertheless, what is new about the NSMs is that the NSMs reflect the 'post-materialist' values of the post-WW2 generation, born during the years of 1946-66. Inglehart calls this generation the 'postmaterialists' because they take for granted the fulfillment of their material needs and focus on restoring a sense of balance in the physical and social environment that was lost during the industrialization process. Given the relatively high standard of living in the industrialized countries following WW2 and especially during the early, 'formative' years of the 'postmaterialists', this generation has a

sense of physical and economic security that did not exist for most of history; hence, the 'postmaterialists' do not put as much emphasis on economic growth as did the 'materialists', and put more emphasis on the quality of life which cannot measured by economics. What the 'postmaterialists' value, then, is concern for the natural and social environments, as exemplified by the environmental movement and in the more egalitarian, more intimate and informal relations that occur in NSMs (ibid.: 373).

According to Inglehart 'postmaterialist' values underlie many of the new social movements – for the 'postmaterialists' emphasize fundamentally different value priorities from those that have dominated industrial society for many decades' (ibid.). Therefore, he avers, the political parties that emerged during industrial society did so when class conflict was the main theme on the political agenda, but now these political parties are not well suited to address the issues raised by the eco-pax movements, e.g. problems related to the environment and nuclear war, or by the women's movements and assertion of their rights. Thus, the 'postmaterialists' turn to the NSMs to (re)present their values on the political scene. Using survey research statistical data, Inglehart's empirical study demonstrates that while actual participation measured in levels of membership may wax or wane depending upon events in specific countries, 'postmaterialists' consistently are more likely to approve of eco-pax movements and to be members (ibid.: 380). Furthermore, after controlling for other variables such as age, income, religiosity, closeness to a political party, and for Left-Right placement in terms of ideology, *the evidence still indicates that the emergence of new val-*

ues is the strongest predictor of activism in NSMs (ibid.: 389-90). Thus, this counters the argument raised by some critics of research on NSMs that the NSMs reflect a continuity of the older class struggles. In fact, according to Inglehart's position NSMs are not manifestations of older class struggles, for the survey research

demonstrates the fact that these new social movements are genuinely new; the established political parties, which for decades have played a crucial role in mobilizing political participation, are only a marginal factor in building support for these new movements. The new social movements represent a different type of political participation, one that is less elite directed than has generally been true of participation in the past, and one that is shaped to a far greater degree by the individual's *values, ideology, and political skills. The new social movements are new not only in their goals but also in their political style and the factors that mobilize their activists* (ibid.: 392, emphasis added).

'Civil Society' Theorists: Offe and Cohen

The work of Cohen (1985) and Offe (1985) on NSMs follows Habermas' influential reconstruction of the concept of 'civil society', which 'refers to social practices which are 'private', outside the sphere of political activity and the state' (Pakulski 1993: 148). In his magnum opus *The Theory of Communicative Action, vol. II (1987b)*, Habermas devotes some pages to NSMs but does not go into the analysis at length. Other theorists do. Cohen and Offe carry the baton of 'civil society' into the terrain of the NSMs[16].

Offe

Offe (1985) utilizes Habermas' 'civil society' thesis to argue that in their politics the NSMs seek to reconstitute a 'civil society' that is not under the

authority and regulative eye of the state. Thus, the practices of the NSMs belong neither to the private realm nor to the state level politics but help to emancipate the 'civil society' from state intervention (ibid.: 820). By stressing non-institutional politics, the NSMs render irrelevant classical liberal political theory that assumes that all action can be split solely into the public and private realms (ibid.: 826). Thus, the message of the NSMs is that the conflicts and contradictions in late industrial society cannot be resolved in meaningful and promising ways by the state or through other bureaucratic authorities (ibid.: 819).

Most notable for our discussion is Offe's insistence that the NSMs do not signal discontinuous value shifts. He argues that despite the great diversity and seeming incoherence in the demands of the various social movements, the issues that the movements deal with are rooted in and continuous with modern values and principles. Thus, although the eco-pax and identity-based movements raise diverse concerns with respect to degradation of physical territory and the life-world on the one hand, and issues of body health and sexual, cultural, ethnic, national and linguistic identity on the other, all these issues have a common root in the values of autonomy and identity which he argues *are not new, or discontinuous, values. Rather they are inherently modern values that take on a different emphasis and urgency in NSMs* (ibid.: 829). The participants of the NSMs demand social arrangements that derive from 'specifically modern values such as individual freedom, humanistic and universalistic principles', arrangements that can-

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16 The section on NSMs from Habermas' opus has been published separately as an article in *Telos* (49, Fall 1981), 33-37 (cited in Pakulski 1993: 154, fn. 29).

not be fully realized by the centralized, bureaucratized and technology-intensive forms of organization (ibid.: 840-841). Demands for new social arrangements reflect an urgency to defend *existing* needs that are not being fulfilled as they used to be, rather than the emergence of new values (ibid.: 843). Therefore, Offe writes that,

it could very well be claimed that *what is least new in today's social movements is their values*. For there is certainly nothing new in moral principles and demands such as the dignity and autonomy of the individual, the integrity of the physical conditions of life, equality and participation, and peaceful and solidaristic forms of social organization. *All these values and moral norms advocated by the proponents of the new political paradigm are firmly rooted in modern political philosophies...*of the last two centuries, and they are inherited from the progressive movements of both the bourgeoisie and the working class. *This continuity would suggest that the new social movements are, in their basic normative orientation, neither 'postmodern' in the sense that they emphasize new values which are not yet shared by the wider society* nor, on the other side, 'premodern'... (ibid.: 849, emphasis added).

Modern values are not rejected outright, instead they are selectively radicalized. What is new and at stake, then, is the concern that these modern values will not be put into effect by the existing dominant institutions. The rise of NSMs, therefore, is due not to a clash of old and new values but to increasing inconsistencies in the implementation of modern values.

To defend his argument he points to three examples. His first example shows that despite the fact that the postwar years 1945-65 witnessed the greatest advances for women (e.g. easier access to higher education and the labor market, smaller families and reduced home work load, liberal attitudes and legislation towards birth control and abortion and divorce), the women who most benefited from these changes were also the most easily mobilized for the feminist movement. This occurs he argues because it is

only after women have experienced considerable progress toward liberalization through unintended modernizing developments that they can critique the logic of male dominated institutions. His second example relates to the ecological movement. These movements use the evidence created by institutions that use scientific, economic and political rationality; that is, they use modern rationality to critique the potentially deadly consequences if that very rationality is left to continue as it is. His third example relates to the peace activists who only express publicly the doubts that are already thought by some elite military and strategic experts about the risks and contradictions built into the current defense strategies. In all these cases, the actors in the NSMs rely upon changes in the social structure, or pieces of knowledge, or legitimation that are created or provided by members of the ruling elite who employ a typically modern rationality, rather than from any notion of a postmodern future (ibid.: 854-55).

Cohen

Cohen's thesis, like Offe's, is that NSMs attempt to prevent the increasing encroachment of the state and market economy on the 'civil society'. According to Cohen, what is new in NSMs is a self-understanding among participants that the existing political and economic systems cannot be overturned through a revolution but that the best hope lies in structural reform, along with a defense of 'civil society' that limits the incursion of the state into people's private lives (Cohen 1985: 664). The target of NSMs, therefore, is not the political realm of the state, nor the economic realm of the market, but the social domain of 'civil society' in which issues are raised about the

democratization of everyday life and about the forms of communication and collective identity (ibid.: 667). The final goal for NSMs, thus, is not a revolutionary new system *a la* the New Left, but 'democratically structured associations and public spaces, [and] a plurality of political actors and action with 'civil society" (ibid.: 670). Hence, while she does not deny that there may be something new about NSMs, she maintains that this newness does not amount to a new set of values and it is even less reflective of a new society or epoch (ibid.: 665).

She argues that while these types of issues have been raised by the New Left and are mislabeled by Inglehart as 'postmaterialist values' (ibid.: 668), there are significant differences between contemporary movements and the New Left. The latter had revolutionary dreams of overturning the capitalist system and presented totalizing alternatives (ibid.); whereas the contemporary movements, on the contrary, are distinguished by their self-limiting character, that is to say, they do not envision a grandiose overturning of the system but limit their struggles to the defense of civil society, to the defense of socially autonomous spaces not dominated by the state or the market (ibid.: 669). Hence, while many activists in the movements accept the existence of democratic states and the market economy, they do attempt to re-draw the lines between the economy, the state and the public and private spheres (ibid.: 670). Moreover, although the movements struggle in the name of autonomy, plurality and difference, they do not renounce modernist goals of egalitarianism or the universalistic principles of modern democratic states, nor do they renounce the public-private split that is

characteristic of modernity (ibid.). Furthermore, although the participants in the movements *contest certain values and norms*, they are willing to limit their own values and relativize them in discussions and negotiations amongst themselves 'through discussion on goals and consequences' (ibid.: 670)[17].

Analysis: Favoring Continuity

Clearly, for Touraine at least, NSMs reflect a new struggle for the cultural and normative orientations of a new type of society; while for Castells, NSMs are a means by which by which ordinary people fight to maintain control over their lives in the 'network society'. Inglehart, however, avoids the issue of a new societal type, yet the term 'postmaterialist values' posits a significant value shift in the post WW2 generation. Contrary to the above writers, both Offe's and Cohen's ideas on the 'civil society' refute any notion of a new historical epoch or a discontinuous value shift. But which of these two positions is more persuasive? Or is there some third option?

While I am sympathetic to the claims of Touraine, Castells and Inglehart, I find that Cohen and Offe raise important and persuasive critiques of the discontinuity position. But their 'civil society' thesis has problems of its own, not the least the denial of any inkling of discontinuity. Taking these shortcomings into account, a more shrewd analysis is offered by Melucci who offers both a continuous and discontinuous interpretation of NSMs. But first let me review the critiques of the above positions.

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[17] Cohen also raises some very important critiques of Touraine's position but I will

In arbitrating on the discontinuity versus continuity question we can begin with a critique of Touraine's work. Cohen provides the poignant insight that Touraine's theory amounts to a tautology. She points out that Touraine makes NSMs new by definition because the claim that we are already in a 'programmed society' presupposes that there are new forms of collective action and consciousness (Cohen 1985: 665). She writes that, 'Contemporary collective action is defined as new because it involves struggle around the areas opened up by postindustrial society; we know that postindustrial society is a new societal type because it triggers new forms of collective action' (ibid.). Similarly, Pakulski also critiques Touraine by arguing that since all social movements challenge the political and cultural status quo – frequently by definition, Touraine's account verges on a tautology (Pakulski 1993: 144). I find this point to be quite decisive against Touraine's work but there are other problems with his work as well.

There is also a problem with Touraine's assertion that each epoch is characterized by one central conflict, one central movement. Just as the class based workers' movement was *the* central movement during modernity, Touraine tries to search for *the* central movement of the 'programmed society'. This contradicts the emphases on plurality, difference, fragmentation and flux that seem to be the distinctive features of the current situation [postmodernity]. Although Touraine may not accept such characterizations of 'programmed society', it is clear that giving voice to plurality and difference is part and parcel of NSMs in view of the more egalitarian and less hierarchical forms of organization. For his part, Touraine differentiates be-

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pursue these in the analysis section.

tween the modernist interpretations of the workers' movements and his interpretation of *the* central movement in a 'programmed society' by arguing that the latter is not based on an evolutionist, progressive model of development. He writes that, '[t]he idea of superseding must be replaced by the search for an alternative, and this runs counter to the evolutionist ideas which governed the social thinking of the last century' (Touraine 1981: 80).

But if that is the case, then Touraine seems to be coming very close to the continuity position of the 'civil society' theorists. For as I mentioned in the summary of her work, Cohen thinks that NSMs do not seek a revolutionary overthrow of the political-cum-economic system but to change the system through structural reform and through a defense of the 'civil society'. Furthermore, given that Touraine asserts that social movements are involved in contesting structures of domination, Cohen asks rhetorically 'what is this contested social terrain which is neither the state nor the market mechanism? It is, of course, civil society' (Cohen 1985: 699). She criticizes his insistence on radical discontinuity between societal types because it is antithetical to the use of the concept of 'civil society', which as a concept has existed in the West since the 17th century. The idea of 'civil society', therefore, implies institutional and cultural continuity that is at odds with the radical discontinuous nature of historical epochs and social movements posited by Touraine (Cohen 1985: 703). She adds that Touraine's theory conceals the continuity with the past and it becomes impossible to suggest that collective actors can learn from past movements. Moreover, the concept

of postindustrial society constrains one to think of those movements that do not involve reflexive collective identity as anachronistic (ibid.).

A second set of arguments that can be raised in response to the discontinuity thesis derives from Offe's critique of Touraine. Offe agrees with Touraine that NSMs understand that society is not pre-given and can be re-created and changed by social actors through the creation of new cultural values and norms. However, this is an indication of continuity since the very idea of liberal-humanist, i.e. modern, thought is that society can be perfected through intervention. Thus, the reflexivity displayed by NSMs is a symptom of the continuation of modernity. Moreover, the reflexivity of society, Offe points out, is a methodological assumption that includes the idea that even the areas and methods in which social change might occur can themselves change. That is, if the struggle for change has shifted from production of material to symbolic goods that, too, is within the modernist assumption of reflexivity (Offe 1985: 856). Therefore, it is not a symptom of discontinuity [postmodernity][18]. But I think that this argument can also be used to critique Touraine's insistence on a central conflict and movement in each epoch. If things are contingent, then does not positing a central movement indicate some kind of pre-determined or privileged social group, which runs contrary to the current [postmodern] emphases on flux and indeterminacy?

A second set of critiques arises with respect to Inglehart's claims of 'postmaterialist' values as indicative of normative discontinuity. On the face

of it, Inglehart's study makes much sense. First of all, *it is the only empirical work specifically examining the rise of putative new values* that covers the span of most of the world's industrialized, capitalist, liberal-democratic countries *and also attempts a theoretical explanation of those values*[19]. Moreover, the idea of 'postmaterialist values' accords well with the increase in spiritual and other holistic approaches to life as exemplified through the phrases 'creating a sense of balance' and 'returning to nature and natural ways of living' that are heard with ever more frequency, especially in the eco-pax movements. The idea of 'postmaterialist values' also alerts us to the fact that most of the participants and supporters of NSMs are from the post-WW2 generation[20].

In fine, Inglehart's thesis can be read as support for the idea of discontinuity [postmodernity] because of shifts in the normative sphere, although as I mentioned earlier he avoids the issue of epochal shifts *per se*. Here Offe points to a methodological problem with Inglehart's study. On a methodological level, Offe argues that the explanatory variables and the methods, e.g. survey research, that have been used are motivational vari-

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[18] Certainly, this critique resonates with arguments raised by Giddens and Beck who write about 'high' or 'reflexive' modernity, referred to in the chapter on postmodernity.

[19] One of the limitations of the 'civil society' theorists is that they limit their analysis to only a handful of countries, but more on this later.

[20] This fact is accepted by all theorists, although Offe adds that people from 'peripheral positions' vis à vis the labor market such as unemployed workers, students, housewives and retirees, and some from the old middle class, such as farmers, shop owners and artisan producers are also part of NSMs (Offe 1985: 833- 834). Also note that much of the literature on NSMs refers to this group as the 'new middle class', which according to Giddens is 'class-aware but not class-conscious' by which he means that the participants in the NSMs come from a specific location in the socio-economic structure but that their demands are not on behalf of their class. See Giddens, *The Class Structure of Advanced Societies*. (London: Hutchinson, 1973).

ables suited to analysis at the individual level and not to the systemic or structural level. Changes at the systemic level can be better understood through historical methods or structural analysis (Offe 1985: 843). Thus, while there may have been significant value shifts between, say, 1800 and 1950 CE, there were no survey researchers around to track these shifts. Another aspect of Offe's argument that is persuasive is that the NSMs present not a 'postmaterialist' but a modern critique of modernization because both the process of modernization and its critique 'are to be found in the modern traditions of humanism, historical materialism and emancipatory ideas of the Enlightenment' (ibid.: 850). As I mentioned in the summary section, Offe thinks that the demands for 'dignity and autonomy of the individual, the integrity of the physical conditions of life, equality and participation, and peaceful and solidaristic forms of organization' (ibid.: 849) are all part and parcel of modernity. This is a much more compelling argument against the idea of discontinuity [postmodernity] than the methodological point.

Lest it seem that I am in complete accord with the 'civil society' theorists, I note here Pakulski's critiques of the concept of 'civil society'. Pakulski argues that the notion of 'civil society' is vague and lacks theoretical depth because it is descriptive not explanatory. As such, the claim that NSMs are continuous with modernity because they operate in the 'civil society' is a mere description, not an explanation, of continuity. Second, despite the desire of various theorists to produce a general theory of 'civil society', such accounts lack universality and cannot be applied outside of the west-

ern world because 'they seldom look outside Germany, France and Italy' (Pakulski 1993: 150). In as much as Cohen and Offe stress the continuity of most values they are correct. But it would be disingenuous, I think, to deny every notion of substantive discontinuity, notwithstanding Cohen's concession about the new self-understanding of NSM participants and their desire to re-draw the boundaries between the public and private spheres. Such a concession, however, really does not amount to admitting substantive discontinuity.

It is appropriate at this juncture to note the comments of Melucci. Although we could place him in the discontinuity group because of his acceptance of the emergence of a post-industrial, 'complex society' and concomitant new aspects of NSMs, he could also be placed in the continuity group. He points out that we need to understand both the synchronic and the diachronic elements of NSMs. Melucci, who refers to himself as 'one of the originators of the term 'new social movements' to sociological literature' (Melucci 1996 and 1989: 41-42), acknowledges that the term has engendered debate between those who see the movements as 'novel' and those who argue that such movements are not new but merely an extension of the workers' movements. Yet such a debate, he avers, is futile, arid and counter-productive because, on the one hand, those who argue for the novelty of the movements have a tendency to get lost in the 'myopia of the present', and, on the other hand, those who deny any substantive novelty are being disingenuous in ignoring the distinctive features of new phenomena. In both instances the social movements are viewed as having a unity that

they do not have. Rather the social movements are internally heterogeneous and fragmented (Melucci 1996: 6 and 1989: 41-42).

But there are two other points that Melucci raises that strike at the heart of Cohen's and Offe's denial of any kind of substantive discontinuity. One of the major shifts that has occurred with the NSMs, Melucci argues, is that while the modern working class movement envisioned a split between the private and the public spheres, for participants in the NSMs the private and the public spheres are seen as complementary, thus 'living differently and changing society are seen as complementary' (Melucci 1989: 206). This does not amount only to a mere re-shifting of the boundaries as Cohen suggests, but to a wholesale rejection of the distinction between the public and private spheres.

Another new factor that Melucci argues for is that even more than the *internationalist* perspective of the workers' movements, the participants in the NSMs are more aware of the inter-relatedness of the human and natural worlds and the *planetary* consequences of human action, for instance, in the peace and ecological movements.

Melucci's methodological emphasis on examining the diachronic and the synchronic, the continuous and the discontinuous elements is very refreshing and offers more than the two major alternatives explored in this chapter. Not only is it more accurate, it also allows us to hope that social groups, who have been marginalized during modernity, are struggling not only to achieve what other groups have achieved, but to transcend them in search for a better society.

Chapter Four – Postmodern Claims & Identity Movements:

A Comparison and Synthesis

You recognize any human condition by what it thinks it does not have but should have; by what it talks about obsessively since it desires it badly while being hopelessly short of the means of acquiring it. You could recognize the modern condition by its compulsive concern with order and transparency. You can recognize the postmodern one by its infatuation with community...Or, for that matter, with identity; another missing totality – or perhaps the same missing totality, only projected on another screen, that of the self. Identity is what would connect the unconnected, make a process out of random happenings, a life-project out of drifting and short-lived concerns. Postmodernity is the point at which modern untying (dis-embedding, dis-encumbering) of tied (embedded, situated) identities reaches its completion: it is now all too easy to choose identity, but no longer possible to hold it...Everything seems to conspire these days against distant goals, life-long projects, lasting commitments, eternal alliances, immutable identities.

(Bauman 1996: 51)

My analysis of the literature on NSMs in chapter three demonstrates that while there are struggles for new cultural orientations, this does not amount to epochal proportions, as the evidence for continuity outweighs the arguments for discontinuity. On the one hand, this would seem to suggest, therefore, that the arguments for discontinuity raised by Baudrillard and Lyotard in the literature on postmodernity might be discredited or disavowed by the NSMs' literature. On the other hand, however, this would also seem to suggest that the arguments for continuity raised by Jameson and Harvey would be supported by the NSMs' literature. Is this in fact the case? Or can it be that, despite favoring continuity, the literature on NSMs in some way lends credence to Baudrillard's and Lyotard's claims and in some way discredits Jameson's and Harvey's claims? In resolving these questions

I attempt a direct comparison and synthesis of the two sets of literature, by focusing on the issues surrounding identities and values.

Identity Politics

Unlike the previous chapter where the discussion included all sorts of NSMs, in this chapter I restrict my focus to identity-based new social movements for women, blacks, gays and lesbians that seek the end of domination and marginality defined by sexism, racism and homophobia (Hunter 1995: 325). Not only does this limit the discussion to a manageable breadth and avoid the pitfalls of viewing all popular movements as NSMs, but more importantly, the identity-based movements are central to current notions of identity politics, which inform and in turn are informed by post-structuralist and postmodern critiques of modern subjectivity and essentialism and Enlightenment metanarratives. Zaretsky notes that the fragmentation and flux highlighted by poststructuralist and postmodernist thinkers in their critique of essentialism was advanced by others as signs of a new epoch. He writes that,

In contrast to the totalizing Marxisms of the 1960s, for which the crucial task was mediation, the 'theorists of non-identity' of the late 1970s and 1980s sought to describe 'fragments that are related to one another only in that each of them is different, without having recourse to any sort of original or subsequent totality'. Thus, what the Frankfurt School took to be signs of decay – the loss of fixed identities, confusion over fundamental principles of order, decline of legitimate authority – *was taken by some as the harbinger of some new form of society* (Zaretsky 1994: 211, emphasis added).

Identity politics refers to the development of a form of social activism whose central premise is that identity is the main basis for political action –

political in the broadest sense of the term. Identity politics arise out of insights gained from the feminist and black movements since the 1960s and early 1970s, especially in the United States, that personal matters are not private, apolitical areas, rather they are the crucial sites where norms and values are contested. The 'meanings of everyday life and interpersonal relations, sexuality and subjective experience, lifestyle and popular culture', all these areas of life traditionally taken for granted and uncontested are now central battlegrounds for identity based new social movements (Darnovsky et al. 1995: xiii). In practicing identity politics movement activists try to rehabilitate identities that have become denigrated in the broader dominant culture by emphasizing stable, fixed boundaries and the shared attributes of specific identities, contrasting their differences with other identity groups. Identity politics, as represented by the feminist, black and gay and lesbian movements, and poststructuralist and postmodernist thought converge in that both are responses to the insecurity and instability of present times. But where identity politics seeks to build community in a chaotic environment, post-structuralism/postmodernism describes and applauds the chaos and looks for creative moments within it. They converge, too, in their mutual rejection of the Marxian notion of a central or leading social actor in history. Further, both trends share a fascination with language and symbolism (Epstein 1995:14).

These affinities notwithstanding, where movement *activists* essentialize identity and draw boundaries, movement-oriented *academics* influenced by poststructuralist and postmodernist thought criticize identity

politics as essentialist and argue that rather than being natural or given all identities socially constructed, unstable, fluid and open-to-change (ibid.). The movement oriented academics attempt to displace identity politics with a politics of difference, which is premised upon the recognition that social identities are as heterogeneous within as without and that the awareness of differences itself becomes the basis for solidarity.

I have gone into this lengthy discussion on identity politics as way to introduce the grounds on which I think a comparison and synthesis of the literature of NSMs and postmodernity is most fruitful. Let me now turn to the specific points of comparison and synthesis that I undertake in this chapter. The synthesis occurs in three broad areas. In the first area Baudrillard is taken as the exemplar and his claim for hyperreality is the point of departure. In the second set I use Lyotard as the exemplar and his claim of the end of metanarratives and the incommensurability of all language games as the point of departure. The last area inspects the theme of the aestheticization of reality that are enunciated by both Jameson and Harvey.

1. Identity Movements, Death of the Subject & the Rise of Postmodern-Selves

The first area of comparison and synthesis relates to the critiques surrounding essentialism and modern subjectivity and the implications that this has for meaningful political behavior. As I mentioned in chapter two, Baudrillard takes the poststructuralist call for the death of the modern subject to its extreme by arguing that in the postmodern state of hyperreality the essentialist subject is so overwhelmed by telecommunications and

mass media images that it actually dissolves into a network of flows, making it impossible to distinguish the subject from the object. What emerges is a postmodern subject that is characterized not by an essentialist identity but by a network of flows, unable to sustain meaning or coherency. While Baudrillard's claim is clearly hyperbolic, Gergen (1991) proposes a plausible conception and explanation for the emergence of a postmodern self.

Following Baudrillard, Gergen's thesis is that the modernist, Kantian distinction between subject and object has, in fact, been receding for most of this century owing to the recognition, originally made in theoretical physics but later accepted in other disciplines, that 'there is no basic unit of matter to be observed independent of those who make the observation. Subject and object are inextricably linked' (ibid.: 89). From this theoretical elimination of the subject-object distinction Gergen moves on to demonstrate how the call for the death of the subject in poststructuralist philosophy is felt quite personally by people in their day-to-day lives. Briefly, Gergen proposes that in the postmodern era people have become so saturated with new technologies that allow us to communicate and travel around the globe in a flash, technologies that allow us to become familiar with 'other' world views, morals, and forms of reasoning, that the modern essentialist subject is replaced by a postmodern relational self which is characterized by the increasing number of relationships one conducts with other people. The abundance of technologies allows people to become saturated 'with a multiplicity of incoherent and unrelated languages of the self', which they absorb into their own understanding of the self. Given that 'others' do the same, no

one single understanding of the self remains The Proper Understanding. What we are left with, then, are fragmented self-conceptions corresponding to a multiplicity of incoherent and disconnected relationships. The very concept of an authentic self with knowable characteristics is lost (ibid.: 6-7). Gergen writes that,

As we enter the postmodern era, all previous beliefs about the self are placed in jeopardy, and with them *the patterns of action* they sustain...*[T]he very concept of personal essences is thrown into doubt*...The postmodern condition more generally is marked by a plurality of voices vying for the right to reality – to be accepted as legitimate expressions of the true and the good...Under postmodern conditions, persons exist in a state of continuous construction and reconstruction; it is a world where anything goes that can be negotiated. The center fails to hold (ibid.: 7, emphasis added).

The final stage in this transition to a postmodern self is when the autonomous, independent self is replaced by the recognition that the self is only the sum of its relationships, a self that is defined only by the extent of its relatedness (ibid.: 17).

While Baudrillard's claim for hyperreality and the postmodern subject of flows cannot be taken seriously in any practical or realistic sense, his claim and Gergen's more plausible view do raise the issue of the end of modern, active agents and essentialist identities and their ability to sustain coherent identities.

Yet accepting the postmodernist version of the death of the subject becomes problematic for activists in identity based movements because at the very historical moment when women and other marginalized groups constitute themselves as empowered subjects, the postmodernist claim refuses their transformative power by abolishing the very idea of an empowered subject (Rosenau 1992: 52). Hence, a number of politically oriented

theorists take exception to the notion of a postmodern self. For instance, although Harvey describes the condition of postmodernity as characterized by fragmentation and flux, he points out that if it takes the alienated individual to pursue the Enlightenment project to bring us to a better future, then the replacement of the alienated subject by the fragmented self precludes the conscious construction of alternative social futures (Harvey 1989: 54). Similarly Kumar argues that a radical rejection of a willful subject or agent leaves society and history with no directional force, leading to an apolitical detachment from the world, an attitude of irony and amusement at the comic human drama (Kumar 1995: 131).

But there are other movement oriented academics who argue that rejecting essentialism and the loss of a coherent subject does not necessarily lead us to hyperreality and the end of political subjects. Mouffe (1995), for instance, argues that a feminist politics is possible even without an essentialist notion of women; in fact, a de-centering of the concept of women encourages a 'radical democratic politics'. Mouffe argues that a non-essentialist understanding of women allows for the construction of multiple forms of unity and common action. The construction of various nodal points provides partial fixations, rather than a totally unstable concept, and transient forms of identification can be established that provide the basis for a feminist identity and struggle. Without essentialist identities the possibility is opened up for a radical and plural democracy in which different struggles can link up and de-link as they wish. Feminist politics then becomes not a separate form of politics designed to pursue the interests of women only, for

there is no 'true' feminist politics, but a form of politics designed to pursue feminist goals and interests within the context of a wider nexus of demands. (Mouffe 1995: 328-29). Similarly, Nicholson argues that 'woman' need not be an essentialist category, i.e. having a characteristic common to all women. Rather, it should be understood, *a la* Wittgenstein's focus on the word 'game', as bearing only 'family relationships', as a complex network of characteristics, with different elements of this network being present in different contexts. For Nicholson the category 'woman' has intersecting similarities and differences with certain characteristics dominant over long periods of time but absent at other times (Nicholson 1995: 60). Phelan, too, argues that the end of a centered essentialist identity does not mean the end of a political subject. For Phelan postmodern politics means that people enter public discourse not with pre-given essentialist identities, but that they enter occupying different subject-positions. The implication that this has for coalition building is that coalition is not the strategic alignment of diverse groups over a single issue, nor does it imply finding the underlying essential unity behind diverse struggles. Rather coalition is informed by an affinity that each person embodies multiple, often conflicting identities and locations, what has come to called the politics of difference (Phelan 1995: 345).

The shift from identity politics to the politics of difference may indicate a recognition of external and internal heterogeneity against an overarching universalism. Yet if all there is *is* a recognition of difference what, then, remains of the common ground on which diverse identity based

movements can come together? Is it possible to retain the hope for a Rainbow coalition of the type that Jesse Jackson led in the 1992 Democratic convention in the United States? Hunter points out that while some identity-based movements seek political coalitions with other movements, an equal tendency is to define ever more narrowly the essential bases for identity and unity, which further leads to fragmentation for identity groups are as heterogeneous within as they are without. Within they can be riven by ideological fissures such as the debate on pornography amongst feminists, or by sociological categories, such as gender, 'race', class or ethnicity (Hunter 1995: 330).

It is quite interesting to note, however, that unlike Baudrillard two of the NSMs theorists, Touraine and Castells, argue for discontinuity and a renewed importance for the subject. Even the titles to their respective works point to this renewed importance of a coherent subject: Touraine's *The Return of the Actor* (1988) and Castells' second volume in the Information Age Series *The Power of Identity* (1997). Touraine for example, argues that it is only with the arrival of the programmed society that individuals in social movements can create their own models for self-production and self-transformation. Moreover, for quite some time Touraine insisted on the notion of a central social actor, which implies, of course, that there is a coherency and essential character to social movement identities.

Castells, though, acknowledges that while the autonomous, individual subject of modernity may be dead, a new coherent subject emerges in the form of collective social actors through which individuals reach holistic

meaning in their experiences. But for individuals as for collective social actors there may be a plurality of identities. Yet this plurality is experienced as a source of stress and contradiction in self-representation and social action. Castells maintains that in the 'network society', for individuals as for collective actors there is a primary identity that is self-sustaining across time and space. Furthermore, he argues that there are three broad types of collective social identity: legitimizing identity which rationalizes a group's domination of others; resistance identity which is identified with essentialization and identity politics; and project identity which grows out of prolonged resistance identities and which in re-defining the position of the marginalized group is finally able to transform the values and institutions of the larger society. In the 'network society' the most important and common type is resistance identity as people's search for meaning, i.e. the purpose of one's action, takes place around communal principles and provides communal resistance to the global flows of the network society.

But we know that Baudrillard is skeptical of these claims for the renewed importance of the subject. For instance, Baudrillard views Touraine's *Return of the Actor* as a last ditch attempt to resuscitate modern subjectivity, an attempt at the level of philosophy that has no basis in actual reality. This is made clear in his interview with Bayard and Knight published in the electronic journal CTHEORY:

CTHEORY: It seems clear at this point that a younger generation of philosophers, such as Luc Gerry, Alain Renaut, of social critics, such as Michel Maffesoli, or even of less young ones, such as Alain Touraine have focused on the return of th[e] subject. Certainly not in the same terms as their humanist predecessors, or their foundationalist ones, but upon the subject nevertheless, let us leave it undefined for the moment...Are you interpreting their efforts as a self-delusional journey? Or alternatively, are you inter-

preting them as a curious ecological process and re-cycling temptation for the end of a century: a bit of postmodernity, a sprinkle of liberalism, a dab of Kantian ethics with, at the end, a solid dose of optimism while facing the grief of the rest of the world?... What is your position of the so-called return of the subject?

Jean Baudrillard: My view is that what you are describing today is a form of reparation, that we all are involved in such reparations today... Such a subject, moreover, does not appear to be a divided one, a really alienated one drawing all of its energies from its alienation, but, rather a reconsti-tuted one... And among those who reactivate this subject, who turn it into an actor, even those people know that *it has lost its integrity as a subject, its conviction to adhere to its own effort to change the world.* It does not believe in it anymore, it pretends to, it is a form of strategy, a posthumous strat-egy... Of course it is all about subjectivity, as it is in the interests of all those disciplines right now, sociology, psychology, philosophy to save their subject. Then it might be the case that given the disappearance of this ac-tive subject and its passive counterpart, one presently witnesses the effects of a subject which attempts to reconstitute around itself the elements of a willpower, of a vision of the world. *I really do not believe this... I certainly do not look upon it as credible phenomenon, not for myself in any case* (Bayard and Knight 1995, emphasis added).

2. Identity Movements, The End of Metanarratives, & Diverse Language-Games

The problem of essentialism and identity politics on the one hand, and

fragmentation and the politics of difference on the other hand, brings us in

a round about way to Lyotard's claims about the incredulity towards

metanarratives and the incommensurability of diverse language games. We

know that for Lyotard all metanarratives are suspect. But where Touraine

critiques meta-social principles, e.g. divine rule, natural law or progress, as

being suspect in the programmed society, he retains, or more accurately,

adds the metanarrative of self-production and self-transformation in the

programmed society. Lyotard, however, goes further and rejects all

metanarratives, including the idea of self-production and self-transformation, as suspect in postmodernity. Unlike Foucault, whose advocacy of local struggles stressed emancipatory politics and the liberal values of freedom from power and space for the self-determination and growth of the individual, Lyotard rejects all liberal-humanist values such as liberty, autonomy, citizenship, democracy and progress, all of which he views as exerting hegemonic effects just as any other political-ethical values and systems more generally. In their place he advocates the value or Idea of Justice, not implying thereby some universal justice that would be applicable everywhere for justice does not exist in general but only in its local forms (Schatzki 1993: 51-57), but a form of justice that is translated into diversity or multiplicity. Schatzki writes that 'Indeed, Lyotard is unwilling to advocate any specific political-ethical values. He embraces the Idea of Justice as diversity because it articulates the sublime feeling 'we' experience in witnessing the dissolution of metanarratives' (ibid.: 57).

Placing this notion in the context of the NSMs it is fitting to ask whether the identity based social movements exemplify an incredulity towards the liberal-humanist metanarrative – given the demise for all intents and purposes of the other Enlightenment metanarrative, the socialist one – that is an incredulity towards the values of liberty, autonomy, citizenship, democracy and progress? Or do the identity-based movements, instead, legitimize the liberal humanist values by extending their application to include marginalized groups as well? To a large extent these questions were already answered in the previous chapter.

The continuity theorists Calhoun, Cohen and Offe all argue that the identity based movements in no way question or problematize the validity of the liberal-humanist values. As I mentioned, Offe argues that the NSMs raise diverse concerns; however, all the various concerns have a common root in the values of autonomy and identity which he argues *are not new, or postmodern, values rather they are inherently modern values that take on a different emphasis and urgency in NSMs* (Offe 1985: 829). Offe further points out that the only thing that is new is the concern that these modern values will not be put into effect by the existing dominant institutions. What is at stake is not the values *per se* but how the values are implemented. Cohen argues that although the social movements struggle in the name of autonomy, plurality and difference, the latter two being postmodern emphases to be sure, they do not renounce modernist goals of egalitarianism or the universalistic principles of modern democratic states (ibid.). Furthermore, Cohen argues that although the participants in the movements *contest certain values and norms*, they are willing to limit their own values and relativize them in discussions and negotiations amongst themselves 'through discussion on goals and consequences' (Cohen 1985: 670). The rise of NSMs therefore is due not to an incredulity towards Enlightenment values but to increasing awareness of inconsistencies in the implementation of modern values.

Ironically, even some supporters of postmodern social theory such as Nicholson and Seidman argue that social movements do not exemplify new values. They write that 'postmodern politics suggests less an abandonment

of modern values, (e.g. liberty, equality, citizenship, autonomy, public participation) than an effort to preserve these values by re-thinking the premises of modern culture and politics' (Nicholson and Seidman 1995: 32).

Clearly, Lyotard's suspicion towards the liberal-humanist values as exerting hegemonic effects is discredited by the claims of continuity theorists who point out that the NSMs seek to retain and extend those same values. At the same time, however, I believe that Lyotard's emphasis on justice is shared by the identity-movement activists as they increasingly challenge the inconsistencies in the implementation of modern values. They share, too, Lyotard's vision of local justice as no group having domination or hegemony over any other group, no hegemony of any one language game over another (Schatzki 1993: 54) and exemplified through the less hierarchical forms of organization. In propounding his notion of justice Lyotard seems to equate all social movements as equal language-games. The implication that this has for the NSMs is to suggest that the NSMs who are fighting for recognition are equated with the state which has power to repress as being merely different players in a game that is governed by different rules for different groups. Countering Lyotard's thesis that all communication and social action can be reduced to different language-games, Harvey, who is clearly the most politically-oriented theorist out of the literature on postmodernity, points out that while the language-game of international bankers may be as impenetrable as the language-game of inner-city Black youth, the two language-games cannot and should not be equated from the standpoint of power relations (Harvey 1989: 117). Finally it should be noted

that more than a few people have identified the performative contradiction in Lyotard's claim. For example, Honneth critiques Lyotard's view that the equal rights of all language-games should be grounded as a moral principle is contradicted by Lyotard's disavowal of all universal claims (Honneth 1985: 155). And Calhoun argues that while postmodernists such as Lyotard adopt a normative position 'extolling the virtues of difference and condemning the vice of repressive normalization', they also claim to have a relativist theoretical orientation that denies any non-arbitrary basis to authority (Calhoun 1993: 76).

3. Identity Movements and the Aestheticization of Reality

According to Lyotard, all forms of communication and social action are merely moves in a language game. Therefore, from this point of view the actions of the identity based movements would have to be understood merely as organizationally informed by aesthetics not ethics, as a particular genre in the overall language game of postmodernity. However, the form of aestheticization that I want to explore here is related to the claims raised by Jameson and Harvey. For instance, both Jameson and Harvey suggest that the culture of postmodernity has become so colonized by the logic and hyperconsumerism of 'late' capitalism that almost everything becomes a commodity needing to be advertised and sold in the marketplace. The image and aesthetic appeal of almost everything becomes paramount and its substantive meaning becomes irrelevant. Drawing upon Poster's (1990) work it can be argued that the aestheticization of reality may have to do with the shift

from linguistic to visual modes of representation. Certainly image takes on great importance in this media saturated world. According to Crook et al., one of the elements of the new form of politics that is represented by the NSMs is that it is heavily dependent upon mass media. They write that,

[The new politics] constitutes a mass spectacle in which appeals combine symbols and icons where images rather than discursive arguments determine outcomes, where captivating drama may be more effective and more important than systematic analysis, and where anxiety may overshadow calculation as a spur to collective action (Crook et al. 1992: 148).

Perhaps the NSMs more than others are conscious of the importance of image for their messages are often articulated through the use of symbols, icons, images, slogans, dress, etc., all of which can be easily recognized and disseminated through mass media, especially television (ibid.). Aesthetic change becomes a central means by which to persuade others to the movements' messages. Indeed this regard for symbolism and drama is the antithesis of modern bureaucratic forms of politics in which discursive platforms and programs were privileged. But is this focus on image a result of the aestheticization of reality, that is, the influence of a mass media that needs flashy, unorthodox and eccentric movements to be newsworthy? Or is it just the opposite, that the NSMs need the media, know that the best way to disseminate their message is through the mass media and, therefore, have to follow the image-logic of the media? Perhaps these questions, like the chicken and egg conundrum, are irresolvable. In any case, the aestheticization of their messages poses significant problems for NSMs because the increasing reliance on short, flashy images contradicts the deep and fundamental and long-lasting changes that the identity based movements seek

to accomplish. For instance, printing the phrase, 'Stop Racism', on colorful buttons certainly has aesthetic appeal but to what extent do these types of examples effect social change? And while these types of images may capture people's attention briefly, how long after the image has disappeared does the message remain in a person's mind?

Yet, in response to the problem of aestheticization it must be stated that image setting does not become an end in itself, image setting is merely a means by which desired ends can be reached. In attempting to transform the world I do not think that the identity based movements seek change for aesthetic reasons. Rather, identity based movements are still governed primarily by a moral-political vision, leading people to search for meaning in social movements (Reinarman 1995: 101). The goals of the identity movements is not merely aesthetic appeal, but are more substantive or political in the broadest sense of the term. The gay and lesbian parades that have become an annual affair in some of North America's largest cities, attracting thousands of participants some of whom dress in colorful and ostentatious costumes, are certainly aesthetic spectacles to some extent. But the message of the parades is more than aesthetic, it is a political message after all.

A case in point is ACT-UP (AIDS Coalition To Unleash Power), which although it is not exactly an identity-based movement, engages in direct action on behalf of gay men, in particular in pursuing broader interests related to AIDS. Aronowitz argues that ACT-UP, the leading AIDS activist movement in New York city, and which has local chapters in many large American cities, is 'the quintessential social movement for the era of post-

modern politics' (Aronowitz 1995: 361) because it avoids integration in the liberal democratic apparatus and challenges the premise that the legitimacy of the liberal state is guaranteed by electoral majorities. ACT-UP participants do not accept the procedural rationality of modern politics because they challenge the ethical legitimacy of the majority by suggesting that citizens do not need to obey the law and rules of the political game even if the majority accepts or acquiesces to institutionalized homophobia (ibid.: 361-2). An extraordinary aspect of ACT-UP is that it also avoids building coalitions with other social movements (ibid.: 376). But most important for the discussion around images is that Aronowitz argues that ACT-UP 'operates from 'post' modern premises' because it does not seek to influence voters at the ballot box, rather publicity, exposure and embarrassment of the public officials are the weapons and tactics of the movement. For the activists of ACT-UP the electoral system is a de-facto one party system offering its participants no real choice. Thus for the participants 'the battle must be joined in the new public sphere: the visual images emanating from TVs 11 o'clock news of intransigent protesters conducting in-your-face politics, street actions that embarrass public officials through exposure and other disruptions' (ibid.: 364). It can be argued that ACT-UP is concerned with image, but not so much their own image as much as shattering the pristine image of those in power. Yet all the concern with exposure and image cannot be merely for aesthetic purposes for then nothing would remain of the message. Jameson and Harvey's claims of the aestheticization of reality should be limited to the point that while image-making (and in this case, image-

shattering and marketing) is increasingly important in a media saturated world, this does not mean that all that remains is a 'depthlessness', but that the means may contradict the ends that are sought, and furthermore, part of the message may be lost in its transmission. It is ironic that this problem is raised most poignantly by Jameson and Harvey, rather than Castells, who argues that with the emergence of new media systems in the 'network society' the site for the NSMs' struggles for cultural values occurs in people's minds. Perhaps this irony reveals that the periodization model cannot handle, let alone resolve, all the issues facing us today.

Chapter Five: Concluding Remarks on Socio-Cultural Change

Most writers on postmodernity share the assumption that culturally the rise of liberal-humanist values were the foundations around which modern people constructed their identities, and that these values delineate modernity from pre-modern, feudal times in the history of the West. Yet, in privileging aesthetics over ethics most of the literature on the postmodern scene ignores what may be considered putative postmodern values, or how these putative postmodern values could help to construct postmodern identities. Despite Jameson's remark that in the postmodern condition culture is everywhere, neither the continuity nor discontinuity writers on postmodernity give us an explicit version of what new values may be emerging. For instance, Baudrillard posits that in hyperreality signs circulate freely in bizarre juxtapositions of leading to an 'implosion of meaning' whereby identities and value-systems become fragmented. But then Baudrillard refuses to speculate further as to what new values arise with the emergence of postmodern identities. Meanwhile Lyotard defines postmodernity as the rejection of all 'metanarratives', but he does not extend his analysis so far as to suggest how this philosophical rejection impinges on or erodes the values of people in their everyday lives, nor does he extend his analysis to state explicitly what new values replace the values of the so-called failed metanarratives of liberal humanism and Marxism. All that Lyotard posits is the emergence of justice in its local forms as the postmodern value par excellence. But can justice mean the retention of liberal-humanist values? Is it

even possible to have justice by labeling all social actions as equally valid language games?

As for the continuity theorists they, too, have demonstrated an equal neglect of the issue of fundamental values in favor of a superficial analysis of consumerism and lifestyles. Whereas liberal-humanist values once helped to frame centered, coherent modern identities, Jameson and Harvey point to the increasing importance of consumer objects, e.g. clothes, food, music, cars, etc., that both signify and frame the identities people construct for themselves thereby shifting the meaning that people derive from their everyday practices. Yet, if the consumption of consumer goods provides meaning and frames people's identities, then which particular modern values have been eroded and which newly emergent postmodern values have taken their place? While the discussions by these authors focus on lifestyles in the consumer culture, the issue of fundamental values that frame identities in the postmodern age remains marginal and totally undeveloped.

It is precisely this normative dimension that is sorely lacking in the changes seen through the lens of postmodernity. It is not necessary, of course, to have a normative element to every theory and I realize that the very aim of skeptical postmodernists is to eschew moralizing. However, given that the literature on postmodernity implicates the end of liberal-humanist values and modern essentialist identities through which the values were given expression, one can reasonably and fairly expect some sort of a normative discussion as part of their analyses. In rejecting Modernism and its notion that culture had a redemptive value in its separation from

politics and the economy of modernity, the postmodernists following their poststructuralist predecessors adopt an anti-utopian vision no longer believing in the redemptive quality of culture. Or, as they would argue, no longer deluded by the latent transformative qualities of culture to change the political and economic landscape. Fortunately this lack of a normative discussion is restored if we compare and synthesize the NSMs literature with the postmodern literature. For in failing to see the conceptual links between social movements and social change, postmodernity fails to provide any hope for a meaningful, human(e) transformation. Rather, its vision is for the most part an alienating one reducing humans to powerless villagers being swept along willy-nilly in a tidal wave of technological saturation or the by the consumerist logic of advanced capitalism.

The rejection of systematic social accounts by postmodern thinkers such as Baudrillard and Lyotard, among others, and their effort to create anti-theory makes their works often abstract and full of pie-in-the-sky claims. They raise anti-theory to hegemonic status making it an end in itself whose value lies in aesthetics, not in explanation of social change. Here Berman's words are apt:

Derrida, Roland Barthes, Jacques Lacan, Michel Foucault, Jean Baudrillard, and all their legions of followers appropriated the whole modernist language of radical breakthrough, *wrenched it out of its moral and political context, and transformed it into a purely aesthetic language game* (Berman 1992: 42-46, emphasis added).

But even the work of the theorists of postmodernity, Jameson and Harvey, falls short in terms of analyzing the collective or fragmented subjects who could move us beyond the grip of capitalism's logic or its regimes

of accumulation. Epstein points out cogently that in taking its cue from post-structuralism, the literature on postmodernity makes us aware of culture and ideology as aspects of domination and radical politics and provides tools for analyzing the construction of gender, 'race' and sexuality. But it is not in itself a theory or strategy for social struggle that could point to progressive social change (Epstein 1995: 14).

Given that cultural changes are at the heart of postmodernity, it is somewhat of an enigma that the NSMs have not been more central to the discussion. For NSMs are above all a cultural phenomenon of current times that are concerned, Melucci says, with transforming the physical, earthly landscape as well as our internal, mental landscape. Whether we accept the arguments of the discontinuity theorists that NSMs struggle for 'historicity', (i.e. the new cultural orientations), for 'postmaterialist' values, for resistance identities, or whether we accept the arguments of the continuity theorists that the NSMs struggle in the civil sphere (in the name of liberty, autonomy, citizenship, democracy and progress), it is clear that NSMs are central to the socio-cultural conditions we witness today and that they reflect above all the normative dimension to people's lives. That is, contrary to the technological determinism of some accounts of social change, the NSMs reflect the fact that values and meaning are still significant sources for social action and social change. The NSMs literature alerts us to the struggles that people wage in attempting to push us towards a more equitable and sustainable world. Where postmodernity denies the value of culture, the NSMs theorists actively argue for its transformative and redemptive power with the

discontinuity theorists arguing that NSMs struggle for a new set of value orientations they bring about a new society. The continuity theorists also maintain the redemptive value of culture by arguing that the struggle for the complete implementation of liberal-humanist values in the civil sphere, outside politics and economics, may actualize the promise of modernity.

There have always been conflicting trends within historical epochs, nor is it possible to avoid such conflicting trends because there will always be some groups whose interests are not served by the dominant ideology of the day. The Enlightenment, for example, gave rise to Romanticism. Contradictory trends or reactions are part and parcel of historical epochs. But probing deeper the following questions arise: When does a quantitative reaction become a qualitatively different situation? When does a conflicting trend cease to be seen as conflicting and come to be viewed as the dominant trend? Since there will always be continuity, even in the midst of revolutionary change, how do we decide when the surface changes reflect an epochal change in the fundamental values of people?[21]

In my initial research, I was very sympathetic to the idea of a radical break with modernity, sympathetic because it seemed exciting and full of optimism to believe that we live on the verge of a better, more inclusive, humane society than has been the legacy of modernity. However, having worked out this argument, I am less convinced of a radical break. In chapter three the arguments of Calhoun, Cohen and Offe appear sound: NSMs do not yet amount to an epochal break with modernity. At the same time, Me-

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[21] The inspiration for these questions derives from similar questions raised by Kumar's analysis on theories of postmodernity, see Kumar 1995: 168.

lucci soundly argues that we need to see both the continuity and the discontinuity and the synchronic and diachronic elements of NSMs. I conclude now that NSMs may only be contradictory trends or reactions to the dominant trends of modernity that have a longer history than is generally presupposed. This conclusion still retains the hope that eventually there may come a time when theorists can claim a radical break with modernity. Till then, the idea of postmodernity may not indicate a new historical epoch; but by combining the insights of the NSMs literature postmodernity becomes useful as a concept that brings to the fore, to raise our awareness of the fact that not all groups have been well served by modernity, that not all are content with the way modernity has shaped up and that there are reactions and pro-actions by groups who have been marginalized during modernity. What, then, is the usefulness of the above concept of postmodernity? Despite claims for the end of ideology and the end of history, normative struggles continue and increasingly continue at the grass-roots level.

Perhaps it does not really matter whether or not NSMs are harbingers of some new society that breaks with the organizing principles of modernity. After all, it would only be a theoretical distinction. What is more important is that the activists are trying to change the actual conditions of their own lives without these grand world-historical visions. It smacks of hubris, I believe, to attempt a periodization of one's own time, as though one has a God's eye view not only of the distant and immediate past but of the present and future. It presumes not only that we have understood correctly historical changes but also that we understand the present trajectory accurately

enough to read into the course of future change. To say that we are entering a new epoch is to be convinced that the turbulent times we are experiencing in the latter half of the twentieth century are more than a mere blip on the screen of history. I do not want to be misunderstood as suggesting that periodizing concepts are of no use. Neither am I arguing for a cavalier and irreverent attitude towards periodization as writers in the humanities are wont to do (e.g. when Hassan suggests that more than two thousand years ago Homer was already a postmodern thinker (cited in Kumar 1995: 144)). On the contrary, I seek to restore the legitimacy of periodization by arguing that we trivialize it when we insist dogmatically on either continuity or discontinuity. I believe a much more nuanced and humble attitude is needed, one that acknowledges the turbulence and transformative possibilities of present times without denying that certain core principles and values may not have changed. It is just that delineating one epoch or society from another can only be done in retrospect when sufficient time has passed to show that the blip was in fact a series of related blips forming a new trajectory. Hegel's reference to the 'owl of Minerva' reminds us that the task of periodizing present times falls more appropriately into the hands of posterity. In my view leaving the theoretical task of periodization for posterity would not, however, reduce the insights gained from the literatures on postmodernity and NSMs for both are alerting us to changes in our lived conditions.

Yet regardless of whether or not we have entered postmodernity, it seems to me that our analysis of the situation will be lacking *so long as the phenomenon of NSMs does not become more central to the debate on post-*

modernity. By re-conceptualizing the debate on postmodernity in terms of NSMs, we can avoid the over-reliance on putative political and economic changes, can see how social theory is actually played out in people's lives and can ask normative questions with reference to empirical phenomenon. It is interesting to note that hitherto in the most widely known theoretical discussions of postmodernity the authors associated with NSMs are omitted altogether or are given only a cursory mention. Why is it that the names of Touraine, Castells, Melucci, Inglehart, Cohen, Offe and Calhoun are missing from the debates? Is it merely because these authors employ other terms, such as 'programmed society', 'network society', 'complex society', 'post-materialist' values, 'civil society', and 'modernity' than the chic 'postmodernity'?

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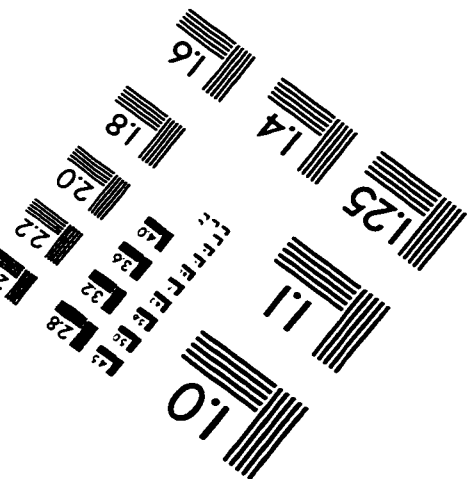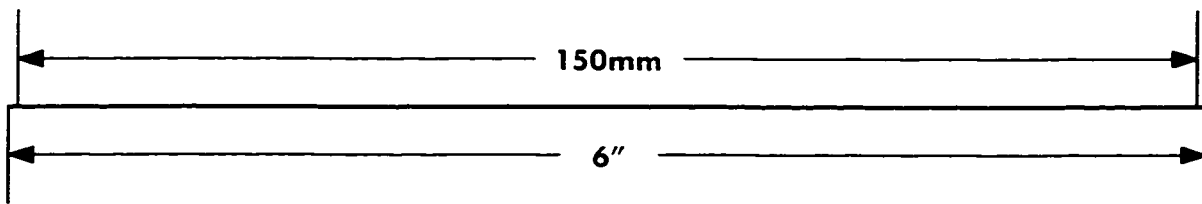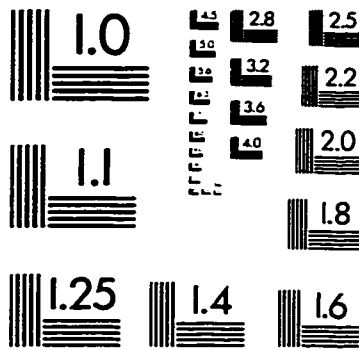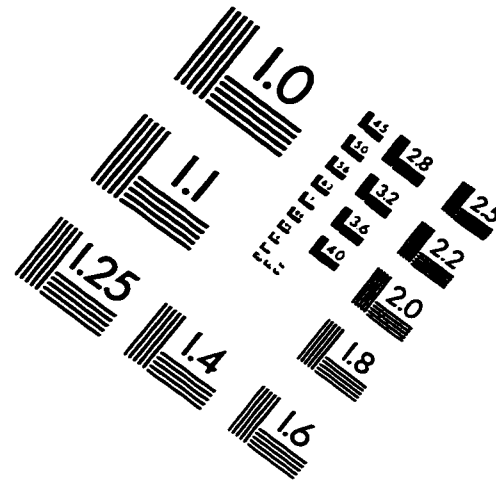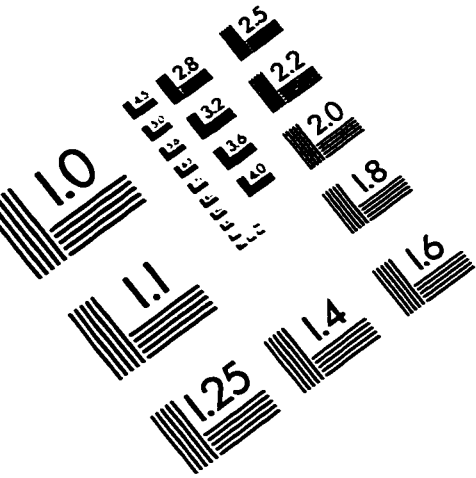
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