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## Cognitive Mapping and the Adventures of the Postmodern

Kellner Douglas

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# 认知图绘与后现代的历险

道格拉斯·凯尔纳

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**摘要:** 上世纪八、九十年代有关现代与后现代的争论,涉及它们之间的差异,是否不同的历史时期,在艺术上的分野有何表现。现代与后现代理论界定了像大学这样的西方知识空间中的关键理论问题。杰姆逊便是有关后现代争论的一个始作俑者,他引入认知图绘这一概念对当下时刻进行理论描述。本文将讨论这一争论中的理论与图绘概念,并试图厘清后现代话语的适当使用,当代理论中后现代转向的有用性,以及对这一话语的滥用。首先,本文提出,在更广泛的议题下对现代与后现代加以区分可以凸显当下时刻中的种种新鲜事物并强化与过去的断裂,然而现代与后现代的这一区分必须明确地解释清楚。本文认为后现代话语能为当前社会、文化与理论中的主要新鲜事物与发展提供理论图绘和社会叙述,并能清楚说明当代时刻与过去的承继与断裂。最后,本文还认为现代与后现代话语的多元性有助于说明当前时刻的复杂性,而我们可以运用的理论越有力,我们的理论与批评就能做得越好。

**关键词:** 后现代; 认知图绘; 杰姆逊; 鲍德里亚; 当代时刻

**作者简介:** 道格拉斯·凯尔纳,批判理论家,洛杉矶加州大学杰出教授,教育哲学系主任,著作等身,其中出版于1990年代的《后现代转向》和《后现代理论:批判性质疑》被翻译介绍为中文,在我国学界产生较大影响。他最近的著作包括《汉子与枪械杀人狂》(2008年美国教育研究协会最佳教育图书奖,《电影战争》(2010年)以及《媒体景观与2011年起义》(2012年)。他的个人网页网址: <http://pages.gseis.ucla.edu/faculty/kellner/>

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**Title:** Cognitive Mapping and the Adventures of the Postmodern

**Abstract:** During the 1980s and 1990s, debates about the differences between modernity and postmodernity as historical epochs; modernism and postmodernism in the arts; and wars between modern and postmodern theory defined key theoretical problematics in intellectualized spaces of the West, like the University. Fredric Jameson was one of the initiators of debates over the postmodern, and introduced the concept of cognitive mapping to describe theoretical accounts of the contemporary moment. I discuss conceptions of theory and mapping in the modern and postmodern debates and sort out appropriate uses of the discourse of the postmodern, and the usefulness of the postmodern turn in contemporary theory, as well as some abuses of the discourse. I first suggest that distinctions between the modern and the postmodern in a wide range of issues can highlight novelties in the contemporary moment and discontinuities with the past, but that the distinction in question between the modern and the postmodern must be clearly explicated and the differences articulated. I argue that postmodern discourses help provide theoretical mappings and social narratives of the major novelties and developments in contemporary society, culture, and theory can articulate continuities and discontinuities with the past in the present moment. Finally, I'll argue that a multiplicity of modern and postmodern discourses helps illuminate and articulate the complexity of the present moment and that the more strong theories we have at our disposal, the better work we can do as theorists and critics.

**Key words:** postmodern; cognitive mapping; Jameson; Baudrillard; contemporary moment

**Author:** Douglas Kellner is George Kneller Chair in the Philosophy of Education and Distinguished Professor at UCLA and is author of many books on social theory, politics, history, and culture. His most recent publications include *Guys and Guns Amok: Domestic Terrorism and School Shootings from the Oklahoma City Bombings to the Virginia Tech Massacre* (2008 AESA award as the best book on education), *Cinema Wars: Hollywood Film and Politics in the Bush - Cheney Era* (2010), and *Media Spectacle and Insurrection, 2011: From the Arab Uprisings to Occupy Everywhere!* (2012). Kellner's website is at <http://pages.gseis.ucla.edu/faculty/kellner/>

From the early 1980s into the 1990s, debates over the modern and the postmodern were the hottest theoretical game in town. Passionate controversies raged over the differences between modern and postmodern theory and the relative merits and defects of each; over whether we lived in a modern or postmodern epoch, or a hybrid transition period; and over the differences between modernism and postmodernism in the arts and which was more appropriate to the contemporary moment. Fiercely one-sided postmodern polemics excoriated modernity and the Enlightenment as repressive, exclusionary, and legitimating reductive positivism and scientism in theory, and bureaucratic, rationalizing, and normalizing social domination. Postmodernists, by contrast, celebrated postmodern difference, novelty, pluralism and ludic hedonism. Modernists retorted with attacks on alleged postmodern irrationalism, relativism, and the nihilism or superficial irony that characterized some versions. Battles ensued between modernists who insisted on grand theory, demeaned as totalizing grand narratives by postmodern theorists, contrasted to micronarratives and fragmentary discourse championed by postmodernists. Players in the theory game were forced to take sides with the Pomos or Mos, or sit on the sidelines and miss out on the fun (and conference invitations, publications, and academic capital).<sup>①</sup>

By the end of the 1990s, something of a truce emerged between advocates of the modern and the postmodern. In the realm of theory, it was recognized that classical modern theory and the Enlightenment had its progressive and regressive features, as did postmodern discourses, and many contemporary theorists begin drawing on both traditions, although rabid partisans remained on each side. In social theory, the distinction between the modern and postmodern was normalized as a legitimate form of conceptualization, although differences remained over its usefulness in general and whether specific phenomena were or were not postmodern. Likewise, debates continued over whether we were or were not living in a postmodern era, and while serious differences remained, one could discuss the issue without the partisan overtones and passions of the previous period and mediate between the one-sided positions. Likewise, in cultural theory, debates over modernism and postmodernism in the arts continued, although some found the contestations confusing and not particularly useful.

In this paper, based on my own more than two decades of involvement in the controversies and work on a trilogy of interrogations of the postmodern with Steven Best (Best and Kellner 1991, 1997, and 2001), a book and a reader on Jean Baudrillard (Kellner 1989 and 1994), two Fredric Jameson readers (Kellner 1988 and with Sean Homer 2004), and countless articles on the topic, I sort out appropriate uses of the discourse of the postmodern, and the usefulness of the postmodern turn in contemporary theory, as well as some abuses of the discourse. I first suggest that distinctions between the modern and the postmodern in a wide range of issues can highlight novelties in the contemporary moment and discontinuities with the past, but that the distinction in question between the modern and the postmodern must be clearly explicated and the differences articulated (although in some cases there may be an overlap between continuities and discontinuities that blur the issue). Next, I'll argue that postmodern discourses help provide theoretical mappings and social narratives of the major novelties and developments in contemporary society, culture, and theory and can articulate continuities and discontinuities with the past in the present moment. Finally, I'll argue that a multiplicity of modern and postmodern discourses helps illuminate and articulate the complexity of the present moment and that the more strong theories we have at our disposal, the better work we can do as theorists and critics.

### Use and Abuse of the Postmodern

Since my first article on the postmodern in a 1988 article "Postmodernism as Social Theory: Some Prob-

lems and Challenges ,” and through my work with Steven Best , we insisted that if the discourse of the postmodern were to be analytically responsible , there should be distinctions between modernity and postmodernity as historical epochs; modernism and postmodernism in the arts; and modern and postmodern theory. For a distinction between the modern and postmodern to have force in any domain , there must be a clear distinction between what is modern in a specific case and what is postmodern. The latter has often been used , however , as a cover concept for a variety of novelties of the past decades , but without adequate analysis and articulation.

There is little doubt but that the contemporary moment has been one of great transformations and novelties , with the past several decades exhibiting vertiginous change , turmoil , and upheaval. Dramatic metamorphosis and surprising novelties are characteristic features of the present age. This “great transformation” ( see Polyani 1957) , comparable in scope to the shifts produced by the industrial revolution , is moving toward a postindustrial , infotainment , and biotech mode of global capitalism , organized around new information , communications , and genetic technologies. As we enter the Third Millennium , scientific and technological revolutions are key elements of the global restructuring of capitalism which includes: the growth of far – reaching transnational corporations; intensified competition on a planetary scale; the moving of industry and manufacturing to the developing world , while investment flows into the overdeveloped world; trade laws which protect transnational corporations at the expense of human life , biodiversity , and the environment; computerization of all facets of production and distribution , along with expanding automation; heightened exploitation of labor; corporate downsizing; greater levels of unemployment , inequality , and insecurity; and the advent of a digitized and networked economy and society. The scientific – technological – economic revolutions of the era provide new financial opportunities , openings for political amelioration , and a wealth of ingenious products and technologies that might improve the human condition——and they are producing at the same time explosive conflict , crisis , and catastrophe. Hence , the turbulent transmutations of the current condition are highly contradictory and ambiguous , with both promising and threatening features ( see Best and Kellner 2001) .

After the terror attacks on the US in September 11 , 2001 and the resultant Terror War launched by the Bush administration , striking first at Afghanistan and then Iraq , the contemporary situation is a highly perilous one , rendered more uncertain and frightening after George W. Bush’s 2005 Inaugural Address which threatened to strike anywhere and anytime in the name of “freedom” ( see Kellner 2005) . Globalization has met its Other in Islamicist radicalism and with Bush’s unilateral militarism the global world is increasingly Hobbesian with life ever more nasty , brutal , and , for many , short. Globalization itself simultaneously creates friends and enemies , wealth and poverty , and growing divisions between the “haves” and “have nots” ( Kellner 2002 and 2003) . Yet , the downturn of the global economy , intensification of local and global political conflicts , repression of human rights and civil liberties , and general increase in fear and anxiety have certainly undermined the naïve optimism of globophiles who perceived globalization as a purely positive instrument of progress and well – being.

The novel permutations and mutations of globalization and the contemporary era are sometimes subsumed under the label of the “postmodern ,” although few discussions link the condition to the constellations of the wide – ranging scientific and technological revolutions , the global restructuring of capitalism , and a turbulent world of political conflict. <sup>②</sup> From this perspective , the concept of the “postmodern” serves as a marker to highlight the new , to call attention to discontinuities and ruptures , and to signal that an extensive range of novelties are appearing which require fresh analyses , theories , and practices. But for the postmodern to have theoretical and political weight , it must be articulated with the profound alterations of the day in order to be given concrete substance and force. If the term is to be used responsibly and to illuminate the novelties of the present moment and discontinuities between the present and past , clear distinctions must be made between the modern and the postmodern in specific fields.

The concept of the postmodern is most constructive when it calls attention to something new, to a distinctive difference from modern phenomena, and thus illuminates what is unique and characteristic in the present age. For example, in *The Postmodern Adventure* (2001), Steven Best and I argue that the emergence of a new technoculture is a genuinely novel and arguably postmodern phenomenon. Emergent technoculture involves original spaces such as the hyperreality of television or computer cyberspace. It involves new global modes of communication and culture like the Internet, e-mail, and social networking, and innovative forms of business like e-commerce and virtual money. It encompasses new modes of work and capital valorization, as well as a global dispersion of labor in out-sourcing. Technoculture has produced original forms of research and education, and novel modes of commercially and technologically-mediated communities.

Life on-line thus constitutes one important emergent form and space of the technoculture, providing the matrix for novel identities and communities. This sphere has been explored in ongoing studies by Sherry Turkle (1984, 1995, and 2012), who, in the mode of ethnographic social science, describes the emergence of personal computer technologies and the novel forms of interaction, identities, and experiences that they are producing. She interprets the shift from big computers to personal computers as symptomatic of a postmodern shift to an innovative type of computer technology and novel forms of subjectivity and culture. For Turkle, big IBM mainframe computers are bound up with centralization, massification, hierarchy, big government or corporations, and are thus a figure for modernity itself. Further, modern computers are connected with mechanistic science that is universalist, rationalist (there is one way to do it), and top-down, with a cult of experts and hierarchy; it is also for Turkle rooted in hard masculine science which is logical and abstract.

By contrast, Turkle claims that personal computers are bound up with a postmodern logic and aesthetics. On her account, postmodern computer technologies are “soft” and “feminine” (e.g. more concrete and ductile), subject to tinkering, more graphic, and more expressive, merging art and technology. Whereas modern mainframe computers required highly specialized knowledge and were only accessible to a techno-elite, postmodern personal computers are “user-friendly” and lend themselves to experimental activity in a wide range of multi-media and promote creative and multifaceted selves. PCs thus nourish a postmodern culture of the iconic surface, for while old modern computers required depth-oriented thinking and in-depth technological know-how to get behind the screen, current computers operate on the surface, requiring only that one point and click to navigate cyberspace.

Furthermore, personal computers, on Turkle's analysis, enable a more decentralized, individualist, and variegated culture which can generate postmodern selves—multiple, fragmented, constructed and provisional, subject to experiment and change. “Windows” for Turkle is the privileged metaphor for postmodern subjectivity—dispersed, decentered, and constructed. Computer software windows open the subject not only to the workworld of texts and word-processing, but also to the emerging realms of simulation, cyberspace, interactive multimedia culture, and social networking. The result is awareness of the variety of roles we play and dimensions to our subjectivity. So, for example, in one window Jeannot does wordprocessing and is a professional or academic self. In another, he does e-mail and is a private person, although one can go back and forth from personal to professional or mix them together. In Internet chat rooms, Jeannot can assume whatever identity he wants and can take on multiple identities: a young black lesbian in the morning, a liberal male politico in the afternoon, and a transgendered literary critic at night. Switching to a multimedia window, Sherry can be a more ludic and aesthetic self, playing music, and downloading tunes from i-Tunes, looking at film or video clips, accessing aesthetic images from art galleries and museums, or engaging new digital art forms. In surfing the web, she can be a flaneur or slacker self, cruising, browsing, and navigating—interesting metaphors themselves worthy of scrutiny. Or, in her Internet web window, she might be doing serious re-

search , enhancing her professional and scholarly subjectivity and cultural capital , blogging her personal life , or producing digital art.

From this perspective , what those in the cyberculture call RL ( e. g. “real life” ) , is just one more window , one more perspective or domain of interaction , one more mode of subjectivity and identity. For Turkle and Mark Poster ( 1990 and 2006 ) , computer technologies create novel identities , subjectivities , and realms of experience and interaction such as cyberspace , as well as original forms of communication and social relations within the emergent technoculture. Such theories , however , exaggerate the rupture with the past , failing to note continuities , and the ways that such novelties are rooted in the structures of modernity ( e. g. that the new technoculture is a part of a new stage of capitalism and integrally connected with globalization ) .<sup>③</sup>

Distinctions between the modern and the postmodern can also be illustrated in terms of analyses of contemporary war , although as in all the domains of debates over the modern and postmodern , there are quite different analyses of what constitutes postmodern war and what actual historical events would encompass and illustrate postmodern war. The Vietnam war has been frequently described as “postmodern ,” signifying its qualitative difference from previous “modern” wars , but one could argue that such characterizations are often unwarranted. Fredric Jameson , for example , has claimed that Michael Herr in his Vietnam book *Dispatches* ( 1978 ) evoked “the space of postmodern warfare. ”<sup>④</sup> Jameson argues that:

The extraordinary linguistic innovations of this work may still be considered postmodern , in the eclectic way in which its language impersonally fuses a whole range of contemporary collective idiolects , most notably rock language and black language: but the fusion is dictated by problems of content. This first terrible postmodernist war cannot be told in any of the traditional paradigms of the war novel or movie——indeed , that breakdown of all previous narrative paradigms is , along with the breakdown of any shared language through which a veteran might convey such experience , among the principle subjects of the book and may be said to open up the place of a whole new reflexivity. ( Jameson 1991: 45 )

Jameson is alluding here to the postmodern critique of representation and the insight that concepts , narratives , and theories do not merely reflect “the real ,” but construct their own reality. He claims that Herr’s *Dispatches* suggests that the Vietnam war unfolded in an entirely original and unrepresentable postmodern space , which transcended all the older habits of bodily perception , representing a “virtually unimaginable quantum leap in technological alienation” ( 1991: 45 ) . Jameson takes Herr’s book on Vietnam as evidence of the impossibility of mapping the “postmodern” space of Vietnam and as itself part of the cultural logic of the postmodern. One could argue , however , that Vietnam was in some ways a modern war with a national liberation movement colliding with a colonial puppet regime and neo – imperialist superpower. Yet with Jameson one also indicate how Vietnam points to more fully postmodern war and see it as a transitional event between modern and postmodern war.

For the term “postmodern war” to have analytical substance , it must be distinguished from modern war and its defining features need to be clearly delineated. Fully postmodern war would be high – tech war in an electronically – mediated battlefield that radically fuses humans and technology , while increasingly replacing people with machines. A postmodern military would be reorganized to fight new types of war with new technologies. Yet the term “postmodern war” can be easily misused and abused. In general , utilizing the term “postmodern” in a meaningful way requires that one develop a systematic contrast with the “modern. ” In this way , postmodern wars would be conceptualized as a rupture with previous forms of modern war , although continui-

ties should also be emphasized. This requirement has not been met in many texts which have presented the Vietnam and Gulf wars as “postmodern.”

Bruce Cumings, for example, describes the 1991 Persian Gulf events as “our first postmodern” war (1992: 127). Although he mentions a “postmodern optic” through which the war was perceived (103), and “postmodern facsimile” of the war with its media constructions and iconography (127), he does not provide a systematic analysis of what makes the war “postmodern.” Indeed, claiming that the “victory celebration in New York was distinctly postmodern,” with its theme music from *Star Wars*, sky battle between Scuds and Patriots, and colossal fireworks display, overlooks the media hype of all victory celebrations (which simply didn’t happen in Vietnam) in modern societies and wars. This sort of media spectacle was congruent with the contrived political extravaganzas of the Reagan years that manipulated good old modern advertising and PR techniques that have been around for a long time. Unless the concept of “postmodern” is rigorously theorized, it is just an empty slogan with no real cognitive content, and obscures more than it clarifies.<sup>⑤</sup>

In general, the discourse of the postmodern often intimates that something needs to be theorized, that it is novel and does not fit conventional theories, that it is a perplexing and troubling new phenomenon that requires further analysis. Yet just using the term “postmodern” as a buzzword short-circuits such analysis. It is a way of avoiding theorizing and is a sign of lazy thinking, or a facile attempt to be faddish and au courant. Thus, although the concept of a postmodern war can be provided with empirical content, one might resist making a totalizing claim for the Vietnam war and the 1991 Gulf war as “postmodern” in the sense that they embody an absolutely new type of warfare. Consequently, while the 1991 war against Iraq anticipates a form of postmodern war in its successful construction of a media spectacle and in the further advancement of the implosion of humans and machines and movement toward more high-tech forms of combat, the continuities with modern wars are sufficient to characterize it as between the modern and postmodern rather than as an entirely new stage of warfare or history (see Kellner 1992 and Best and Kellner, 2001).

Hence, the discourse of the postmodern is valuable in forcing critical theorists to question previous theories and accounts and to attempt to describe and analyze the novel phenomena of the computer, media, and technological society, and/or continuities with the past. If the concept of postmodern war illuminates what is new and original about military technology and practice in the contemporary moment, the discourse effectively calls attention to important transformations.

In the realm of theory, the postmodern turn consists of a movement away from the mechanistic and positivistic conception of modern science, along with a repudiation of Enlightenment optimism, faith in reason, and emphasis on transcultural values and human nature. Postmodernists typically reject foundationalism and transcendental subjectivities within theory, the modernist emphases on innovation and originality in art, and a universal and totalizing modern politics. With the belief that modern theories and politics have become reductive, illusory, and arrogant, diverse postmodern theorists, artists, and activists emphasize counter-values of multiplicity and difference, anti-realism, aesthetic irony and appropriation, ecological perspectives, and a proliferation of competing forms of struggle.

From the 1980s to the present, I have been sympathetic to many of these postmodern critiques of modern theory, and will indicate in the course of this text what I think is most valuable, but also advocate the advancement and reconstruction of the best elements of modern theory, culture, society, and politics, rather than their negation, as in some extreme versions of postmodern theory. Thus I would reject one-sidedly affirmative or negative stances toward assorted postmodern theories and have attempted to extract and develop what I and my collaborators consider to be valuable postmodern positions, while criticizing problematic ones. Rather than pursuing the modern logic of the either/or (e. g. either the modern or the postmodern), one can

pursue a postmodern logic of both/and , drawing on both modern and postmodern traditions and situating the present era between the modern and the postmodern—a position I'll explicate in the following analyses.

### The Politics of Mapping

An aesthetic of cognitive mapping—a pedagogical political culture which seeks to endow the individual subject with some new heightened sense of its place in the global system—will necessarily have to respect this now enormously complex representational dialectic and invent radically new forms in order to do it justice [...] The political form of postmodernism , if there ever is any , will have as its vocation the invention and projection of a global cognitive mapping , on a social as well as a spatial scale. —Fredric Jameson<sup>⑥</sup>

To some extent , while the concepts of the modern and modernity are primarily Western discourses , they had analogues and anticipations throughout the world. And while there is a shadow side to modernity , hidden by its legitimating ideologies , there is also a heroic aspect , as modern explorers roamed the unknown world in search of fame and fortune. Voyagers needed reliable maps of the heavens , seas , and land , and themselves sketched the parameters of the unmapped worlds they sought and surveyed. A world market was appearing with the dawn of modernity , cities were proliferating which required mappings and orientation , and desacralized modes of science were investigating nature and the cosmos. Once fully developed by the eighteenth century , modern discourse sought to eradicate premodern religious ideologies and to replace mystical qualitative modes of thought with alternative quantitative scientific models that emphasized mathematics and the experimental method.<sup>⑦</sup> Modern science gravitated toward a mechanistic outlook that eradicated all traces of life and purpose from the universe , seeing nature as mere matter in motion and resources for human colonization. The modern scientific method was ruthlessly deterministic and reductionistic , describing a simple and static world of regularities , constants , and fixed laws of nature.

Thus , the commercial bourgeoisie were not the only adventurers of the modern world , for the other principal pioneers were the discoverers who charted the heavens , the seas , the land , and the hidden laws of nature. From Copernicus to Newton , from Columbus to Magellan , and from Mason and Dixon to Lewis and Clark , the architects of the modern world uncovered and mapped previously unknown spaces , and made it possible to generate and reproduce modernity , for others to follow in their footsteps , and for new worlds and experiences to be constantly opened , investigated , and sketched.

The quantitative mania of modern science quickly spilled over into the nascent “social sciences” as , by the 18th century , there were attempts to construct a “social physics” or “social mathematics ,” to locate the “laws” of human behavior so that culture could have the same order and regularity as nature. As Foucault ( 1975 and 1980) revealed in his genealogies of modern types of power in the form of discipline and normalization of subjects' bodies and minds , mapping is a capturing and mastering of the recalcitrant and unpredictable , an attempt to impose constructed order on heterogeneous phenomena , reducing multiplicity to identity , and otherness to unity.

Modern mapping was not neutral or innocent by any means; rather , the cartographical projects of modernity were attempts to gain domination over nature and society and were intimately implicated with the “primitive accumulation of capital” ( Marx) .<sup>⑧</sup> Science was driven not only by a “desire for truth ,” but also by the pragmatics of the political and economic objectives of colonialism. Foucault's ( 1977) emphasis on the dialectic of power/knowledge is evident during the early colonial period of modernity. Numerous kinds of scientific



and technological knowledge——relating to navigation , astronomy , agriculture , and so on——were necessary for the colonial “adventures” to be possible in the first place. They were stimulated by the need , for example , to improve the ability to travel by land and sea , to mine minerals , and to identify useful plants. Imperialist conquests also provided a laboratory for the fledgling efforts of modern science and technology , generating vast amounts of wealth and resources for the accumulation of knowledge.

The European colonialists are not known for their honesty and generosity. In the case of modern science , once conquerors like the Spaniards plundered the knowledge of the “old world” cultures , they slaughtered or enslaved their people and stigmatized them as backwards and inferior. Today , many cultural theorists and activists are calling for a “multicultural science” ( see Best and Kellner , 2001 , Chapter 3 ) , yet the irony , as Sandra Harding ( 1999 ) observes , is that modern “European” science has been multicultural since its inception , and , however “original” Western culture may be , the distinction between western/nonwestern is now highly contested and a key part of the culture wars. The alleged universality of European culture is in fact a disguised locality , the product of distinct ideologies and institutions belonging to modern European nations. For the sake of accuracy , it might be preferable to say that “Western science” is a bricolage of stolen knowledges , from Egypt to Islam to China , along with its own local contributions and its mechanistic and quantitative mappings.

Maps are often seen as translucent windows to the world , but this realist conception misses the limited perspective of every such “window” and the interests of the architect who designs it. As Denis Wood writes , “‘Mirror,’ ‘window,’ ‘objective,’ ‘accurate,’ ‘transparent,’ ‘neutral’: all conspire to disguise the map as a [···] reproduction [···] of the world , disabling us from recognizing it for a social construction” ( 1992: 22) . But perhaps a window is not an inappropriate metaphor since , while the glass may not be translucent , windows are , after all , small and selective openings to the world. By opening one portal , maps close others; even a massive world map attains its impressive scope by obscuring regional details. The central irony of cartography is that for a map to be accurate and useful , it inevitably misleads. As Wood states , “Not only is it easy to lie with maps , it’s essential. To portray meaningful relationships for a complex , three - dimensional world on a flat sheet of paper or a video screen , a map must distort reality” ( 1992: 76) .

Indeed , a map is made to scale , and thus is a simulation of the territory it visualizes. The paradigm shift in postmodern cartography involves a move from seeing maps as objective representations of the world to understanding them as rhetorical and political devices , portraying not only physical relationships , but also social relationships. That maps are made from an interested standpoint , that they are political , is clear if one considers the construction of modern nation - states that arbitrarily drew borderlines through contested terrains , often driving off original inhabitants who were forced to emigrate because of their ethnicities or religions. A more local U. S. example would be the demarcation of geographical boundaries through gerrymandering , whereby politicians outline their districts in a way that determines who votes and which votes count , altering social space to match selective criteria of class , race , or ideology. Certainly one of the most blatant instances of the politicization of maps involved those of seventeenth century North America , as drawn up by Spanish , French , and English colonialists , who neglected to designate the territory as already belonging to a myriad of Native American Indian cultures.

In general , maps have both cognitive and political functions. To draw a map is to make sense of the world , to enable individuals to visualize and control their environment. But it also establishes relations of power , delimiting territoriality and constructing artificial boundaries , instructing people where they are safe and at home and where it may be risky and forbidden to dwell. Maps comprise attempts by observers to discern the contours and nature of the world in relation to the individual and specific social groups. They are optics and

ways of seeing that enable people to perceive their world from a perspective useful to the viewer ,but they are often constructed by ruling social and political forces. All maps ,therefore ,have both objective and subjective dimensions. To avoid an overly literal notion of mapping as mere picture making ,it is crucial to emphasize that mapping is essentially a cognitive and political process and that there are numerous modes of mapping ,not only geographical and scientific ,quantitative and qualitative ,but also religious ,philosophical ,literary ,and political forms. Each mapping constitutes a distinctive attempt through which individuals and groups try to situate themselves within society and nature ,or even the cosmos at large.

Quantitative maps are produced by scientists ,geographers ,archaeologists ,and explorers ,relying on mathematical methods and technologies such as the compass ,telescope ,and computer. Scientific maps include astronomical maps of the heavens ,navigational maps of the oceans and seas ,geographical maps of the land ,neurological maps of the brain ,medical maps of the body ,genetic maps of chromosomes ,such as have been assembled by the Human Genome Project and Celera corporation ,and even representations of the prodigious World Wide Web by cybergeographers in search of more efficient ways to transmit information. The “end of science” debate in effect is an argument over whether or not the modern mapping adventure basically has drawn to a close ,and whether there is agreement over which are the best and most reliable forms of mapping ( see Best and Kellner ,2001 ,Chapter 3) .

Qualitative maps range from religion and philosophy ,to normative social and political theory ,to fiction and other types of aesthetic mapping. Religion ,for example ,is a cosmological mapping that seeks to locate the ontological and spiritual place of the subject in the world ,rather than its spatial location ,and it requires wonder rather than mathematics or technologies ,faith rather than proof and evidence. Religion asks “What is this world in which I live? Who created it and for what reason? What purpose ,if any ,do I have here?” Of course ,spatial coordinates can figure importantly in religious mappings. Christian maps——constructed by Ptolemy ,Dante ,and others——were geocentric charts that ensconced human beings at an illusory center of the cosmos ,and thereby provided existential comfort for those who adhered to them. Modern scientific mappings sought to demolish biblically –based geocentric maps in favor of new cosmic creation stories like the Big Bang. A cosmology need not be religious ,of course ,but it does entail situating human beings within the universe as a whole ,as do new postmodern scientific cosmologies which typically combine science and narrative ,description and interpretation.

Theories too are a form of mapping ,a way of enabling individuals to see and navigate the world. The Greek word *theoria* derives from vision ,and theories help one see what exists in the natural and social worlds ,they grasp the fundamental aspects of experience ,the underlying connections and relations ,and the vast structures and processes that constitute shared sociohistorical reality. Modern philosophy and social theory arose with modernity ,mapping the novelties of modern society ,conceptualizing its basic ideas ,ways of seeing ,methods of investigating reality ,and discourses of truth and objectivity. Theories are optics or perspectives on the world that illuminate phenomena and features on which they focus intently ,though each has its blindspots ,thereby requiring multiperspectivist vision for an adequate grasp of the world. Competing philosophies ,social theories ,and other analytical discourses thus offer distinct ways of mapping ,ordering ,analyzing ,and in some cases criticizing and reconstructing the world.

Utopian maps depart from the distinction between what is and what can be ,between actuality and potentiality ,as they envision the realization of possibilities for human freedom ,charting the “not – yet.” As Ernst Bloch ( 1986) noted ,there are utopian longings in all the great philosophical ,religious ,and aesthetic mappings which embody desires yearning for a better world and that sketch visions of a good life. Judaic conceptions of law and justice ,Christian notions of community and redemption ,Enlightenment visions of equality ,

freedom , and democracy , and Marxian conceptions of communism , all project images of a superior world and yearnings for increased freedom , happiness , and community. Likewise , Bloch suggests that popular culture too contains its utopian strivings , as , for example , advertising both evinces and conditions desires for existential reformation. Indeed , following Bloch , Jameson ( 1991) argues that all media culture must present some utopian content , some fantasies of a preferable life , to attract mass audiences.

Modern literature and art constitute another key mode of qualitative mapping. Artists , whether consciously or not , often offer vivid portrayals of the social relations and ideologies of their time , as well as concrete descriptions of everyday life and human experience. For many , aesthetic maps are as valuable as scientific or sociological maps , because they render social processes and experiences in artistic form , concretely illuminating the subjective structures of experience. The novel , for instance , attempted to chart the escapades of the newly liberated modern individual seeking adventure and fortune in the exciting world of modernity , adapting to fresh experiences and fashioning a distinctive self. In the era of modernist aesthetic experimentation , starting with Baudelaire and the avant - gardes of the 19th century , constructing original styles of art and making one ' s own life a work of art provoked aesthetic adventures that constantly sought the new , the innovative , the modern , the monumental , and the revolutionary.

The result was an explosion of modernist art forms that uncovered singular universes and dimensions of experience , from the spontaneous unconscious to the carefully constructed , from the realist to the abstract , from the typical to the bizarre and extreme , often contesting traditional representational means of mapping reality. Modern art crossed previous frontiers of form and subject matter , concocting ever new figures , styles , and engagements with the full range of contemporary experience. Moreover , aesthetic maps not only concretize and dramatize the experiences of everyday life in a way that theoretical maps cannot , they also are often sources of utopian longing and normative critique. Some outstanding examples of critical aesthetic maps would be George Grosz ' s scathing satires of bourgeois life; John Heartfield ' s photomontages attacking capitalism and Nazism; and Bertolt Brecht ' s plays which relied on a theatrical technique—the “alienation effect”—that sought to promote critical reflection in the audience ( Kellner 1997) .

Thus , mapping can be conceptualized in a broad , multidimensional sense that includes various quantitative and qualitative representations , and which charts not only geographical , navigational , and astronomical spaces , but also human experience of space , time , everyday life , and socio - political transformation. Maps are spatial , temporal , and experiential; they portray existing configurations and transmutations , while tracing evolving processes in nature , society , and history. Modes of representation are therefore transitory and need to change as the conditions they seek to depict themselves unfold. Consequently , we should continually update our theoretical and practical perspectives , and if mutations are significant enough it is necessary to invent markedly innovative modes of representation. Indeed , the tumultuous transformations of the contemporary moment themselves require fresh postmodern visions , theories , and politics.

### **Crises of Mapping and Theorizing the Contemporary Moment**

Investigations of various topics and levels of abstraction that are collected here are united in the intention of developing a theory of the present society. —Max Horkheimer

What ' s going on just now? What ' s happening to us? What is this world , this period , this precise moment in which we are living? —Michel Foucault

Postmodern theory seeks novel mappings to represent emergent social conditions , economic shifts , sci-

ences , technologies , experiences , and identities in the contemporary moment. In his classic essay “Postmodernism , or the Cultural Logic of Late – Capitalism” ( 1984 , revised 1991 ) , Fredric Jameson vividly describes the disorientation of contemporary life , which includes the loss of social spatial coordinates , the confusing “hyperspace” of postmodern architecture and culture , the decline of historical consciousness , the waning of affect leading to emotional numbness and detachment , and the cooptation of resistance and abolition of critical distance. The thrust of this original historical situation entails a crisis in mapping , involving both the obsolescence of the guides to the modern epoch and the inability of subjects to maneuver their way through space and time in traversing the buildings , cities , cultural spaces , and transnational global environment which envelops them. The postmodern condition for Jameson also involves a proliferation of forms of simulation and hyperreality in a situation stranded between a buried historical past and an unimaginably different future. Realizing that diverse types of spatial , temporal , and existential vision are crucial for individuals to regain critical awareness and sociopolitical agency , Jameson concludes his essay on postmodernism with a call for new modes of “cognitive mapping. ” These cartographies for Jameson comprise both theory and fresh creations of pedagogical art: “The political form of postmodernism , if there is any , will have as its vocation the invention and projection of a global cognitive mapping , on a social as well as a spatial scale”( 1991: 54) .

In the contemporary moment , the boundaries of the modern world are breaking down and we need to discover and produce theoretical and practical guides that will help us understand and navigate the tempests and turmoil of the day. Postmodern metacartography responds to this situation by reflecting on the various processes of mapping and the contributions and limitations of the classical theories of modernity and the fledgling charting of the postmodern. Different people use distinctive maps to make sense of the world , deploying divergent ideas , models , and theories to organize their experience , to orient themselves in their environment , and to reduce multiplicity and disorder to structure and order. Mappings also help construct personal identities , pointing to ways of being in the world , existential options , and sense – making activities , as when social groups emulate “heroes of production” or “heroes of consumption” ( Lowenthal 1961 ) , or individuals follow the fashions and style of celebrities.

Indeed , the postmodern turn involves the dissolution of older traditional and modern identities and the construction of new ones. Whereas traditional identity maintained stable roles and social functions , modernity problematized social identity , providing new possibilities to construct varied and richer subjectivities ( Kellner 1995) . The ability to switch identities intensified problems of alienation and authenticity , as individuals felt that they were being severed from their true selves while passionately seeking their genuine or higher nature. The postmodernization of identity in turn has engendered disparate searches for the authentic and real , as ersatz identities proliferate , resulting in the growth of oppositional identity subcultures and politics. An always proliferating image and media culture , supplemented by the psychological games of the Internet where one can experiment with self – construction in ludic performative modes , generates a further expansion of identity ( see Turkle 1995 and Best and Kellner 2001 , Chapter 4) .

A theory of the contemporary moment that mediates between the modern and postmodern can deploy a diversity of theories to attempt to capture the complexity and conflicts of the contemporary era. While there are clearly important continuities with the modern era ( Robins and Webster 1999 ) , the changes wrought by scientific – technological revolution and the proliferation of a new global economy effect all aspects of politics , culture , and everyday life. In this conjuncture , one encounters startling metamorphoses that have been theorized as the advent of a new postmodernity , qualitatively distinct from the modern era. These developments are highly ambiguous. On the positive side , there are exciting possibilities for fresh experiences in cyberspace , unparalleled potential for medical advances , and increased opportunities for labor and leisure. One also finds prom-

ising political openings and movements such as the protests against the Seattle WTO meetings in December 1999 , the anti - IMF and World Bank demonstrations in Washington , Prague , and Sydney in 2000 , the global movements against the Bush/Cheney administration war in Iraq in 2003 , and the movements and upheavals in 2011 from the North African Arab Uprising to the Occupy movements ( Kellner 2011) , all of which signal innovative coalitions and activism against capitalist globalization.

But there are worrisome dangers that plague the scientific , technological , economic , and other shifts and mutations of our time. In some ways , the postmodern adventure may confront us with the dystopias that have haunted the modern mind , from Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* , which anticipated genetic engineering and marketable body parts , to the futuristic visions of H. G. Wells whose *Island of Dr. Moreau* and *Food of the Gods* appears prescient concerning the biological mutations and technologically created species engendered with unforeseen consequences. Orwell's *1984* anticipated the panoptic society of the present , with surveillance techniques becoming ever more sophisticated and privacy increasingly diminished. Similarly , Huxley's *Brave New World* prefigured the prevailing situation , as eugenics looms on the horizon , cloning has arrived , and sundry brands of soma ( e. g. , Prozac , Ecstasy , and methamphetamine) and pleasure machines and multisensory spectacles are readily available in a high - tech , consumerist , pharmacopian society of the spectacle ( see Best and Kellner 2001 , Chapters 3 - 5) .

The “dialectics of the present” thus involves living through a highly chaotic and conflictual situation. Resisting both attempts to deny any fundamental ruptures or novelties of the existing sociohistorical situation , as well as hyperbolic claims for a postmodern rupture , it is best to envisage the prevailing condition in a zone between the modern and the postmodern. Here one finds continuities and discontinuities with the past , striking changes and enduring structures , peppered with perpetual conflicts between the old and the new. From this perspective , the present situation is a contradictory amalgam of progressive and regressive , positive and negative , and thus highly ambivalent phenomena , all difficult to chart and evaluate.

In the contemporary moment , society , culture and identity are all undergoing a tremendous rethinking. They currently are all in a state of crisis and confusion , largely through the impact of always - proliferating communication and genetic technologies and scientific theories and cosmologies. We are in a condition somewhat analogous to the remapping of the cosmos in the era of Copernicus , Brache , Kepler , and Galileo. Because of intense social and technological developments not only are numerous human beings reshaping their ethnic , gender , and political identities , but humanity as a species is starting to seriously rethink its status in response to ecology and environmental ethics , evolutionary theory , and “smart machines. ” With supercomputers like IBM's Deep Blue outwitting chess masters , and genetic engineering and cloning technologies transcending species boundaries and portending the fabrication of individuals in a Brave New World of designer bodies and babies , the very fate and future of the human being itself is at stake.

The postmodern moment , if nothing else , is indeed risky , and not just for a few entrepreneurs or finance capitalists; rather , the future of humanity and other complex life - forms is being mortgaged to a rampaging capitalism and profit - driven science and technological development. Nuclear waste and weapons proliferation , biowarfare , the growth of the global arms market , terrorism , DNA splicing , xenotransplantation ( inserting animal blood and organs into humans) , loss of cultural and biodiversity , the greenhouse effect , and global capitalist reorganization , to name just a few things , are leading the human race into dangerous ground and a possible endgame of social and ecological devolution. The postmodern voyage beyond the observable into the very stuff of life , past the limits of the human into novel configurations of humans and technology , provides new powers and capacities for the human species. Technoscience not only enables humans to better manipulate the natural world , but also to produce new natures and beings with highly volatile results.

Yet as contemporary societies continue to transgress ethical and ecological limits , begetting proliferating problems and intensifying crises , there is growing recognition of the need to impose limits on the excesses of capitalist modernity and its sciences and technologies , while constructing more humane and ecological values , institutions , and practices to sustain life on earth. Without this latter aspect of the postmodern adventure , the mutating dynamics of capitalist overdevelopment might bring the adventure of evolution to a tragic close , at least here on this planet. The evolution of the universe itself is the greatest adventure story of all , a 12 – 15 billion year odyssey , involving the maturation of organic matter from inorganic matter , life from nonlife , and its subsequent earthly unfolding over 4.6 billion years , advancing from carbon and hydrogen atoms to DNA and the first proteins , to plants , animals , and human beings. Evolution has generated boundless diversity and ever new and more complex forms of life.

Hence , critical reflection on the pathologies and illusions of modernity and their continuation in the present is an important part of the postmodern condition. A shift in mind – set consequently should be informed by an enhanced awareness of limits , contingency , and unpredictability , along with nonhierarchical thinking. This new gestalt also requires repudiation of the modern will to power over society and nature , revulsion toward arrogant Western – centric humanism , disenchantment with a solely disenchanting worldview , and renunciation of the fantasy of control and belief in the technofix for critical social and ecological problems. Where modernity was predicated on the values of control , endless growth , mastery of nature , and a cornucopian world of limitless resources , a key aspect of a critical theory of the contemporary moment is the systematic dismantling of this discourse and the reconstruction of the best aspects of modernity——humanism , individuality , enlightened reason , democracy , rights , and solidarities—— , to be tempered by reverence for nature , respect for all life , sustainability , and ecological balance.

Thus , it could be argued that we are now between the modern and the postmodern , in an interim period between epochs , where we are undergoing spectacular changes in all realms of life. Just as the Renaissance was a long period between the premodern and the modern without easily datable beginnings and endings , so too is humanity entering a period of protracted transformation between the modern era and a new era for which the term “postmodern” serves to call attention to novelties and discontinuities. Some contemporary ideologues , despite the catastrophes of the post 9/11 period , continue to project a salvationist and linear historical narrative , believing that science , technology , and capitalism will solve all human problems and create a new world of wealth , democracy , and well – being. The postmodern assault against grand historical narratives has been used to undercut the metanarrative of historical progress , but there have also been postmodern claims that we are at the “end of history” in a perfected state of capitalism and democracy ( Fukuyama 1992) .

Far from breaking with religious values and narratives , science and technology in many ways have only deepened them. For their advocates are claiming that genetics and eugenics will perfect us and bring us grace without the need for divine intervention. On the other hand , the juggernaut of capital , technology , and science undercuts religious cosmologies and provides a highly secular and materialist ethos , focusing people on surviving and succeeding in a rapidly fluxating present. As we proceed into the Third Millennium , the postmodern moment is extremely ambiguous and contradictory. There are trends within the postmodern that celebrate a return to tradition , and there has been an upsurge of religious faith and millennial thinking. But there are also new forms of postmodern identity politics , possessive individualism , and a willingness to embrace the destruction of the past and tradition for the glories of the present moment ( see Best and Kellner 1997 and 2001) .

## Transdisciplinary and Multiperspectivist Mapping

There is only a perspective seeing , only a perspective “knowing”; and the more affects we allow to speak about one thing , the more complete will our “concept” of this thing , our “objectivity ,” be. —Friedrich Nietzsche

Dialectical thought has meant the most advanced state of knowledge , and it is only from this , in the last analysis , that decisive action can come. —Max Horkheimer

Current developments exhibit so many twists and turns , and are so highly complex , that they elude simple historical sketches , reductive theoretical explications , and facile generalizations. What is required is a multi-dimensional optic on the trajectory of the present age that combines historical narrative and critical social theory. Mapping the contours of the contemporary moment accordingly involves an enterprise that crosses theoretical borders into a novel transdisciplinary and multiperspectivist space.

The social maps called classical social theories are to some extent torn , tattered , and fragmented , and in many cases outdated and even obsolete. Fresh theories need to be constructed constantly , using both the resources of past theories and salient sketches of the contemporary era to make sense of our current historical condition. Maps and theories provide orientation , overviews , and contexts. They show how parts relate to each other and to a larger whole. If something new appears on the horizon , a good theory will be able to chart and contextualize it , including sketches of future configurations of potential promises and perils. But while numerous older theories and authorities decay and are discredited , others continue to provide important guideposts for thought and action today.

Given my concerns for mapping , I would oppose the self – refuting postmodern attacks on theory that are sometimes advanced by writers like Lyotard , Foucault , and Rorty. Lyotard’s prescriptions against grand narratives and big theories are performatively contradicted by his own concept of a “postmodern condition” which surely requires a grand narrative to make and justify such a claim. Although Foucault has been presented as a critic of modern theory and advocate of micro theory and politics , surely much of his major work is a sweeping genealogical mapping , diagnosis and critique of modernity that combines micro and macro theory and politics. And while Rorty often polemicizes “against theory” tout court , much of his best work , like *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* ( 1979 ) is highly theoretical , often providing sweeping historical vistas and critique.

I would also reject extreme postmodern assaults on a “hermeneutics of suspicion” that strive to overcome social illusions , mythologies , and fetishized appearances by locating underlying forces and causes of domination and destruction.<sup>⑨</sup> Without theory , interpretation , and critique , we are as lost and hapless as Columbus on his first voyage. Theory and interpretation are necessary to the extent that the world is not completely and immediately transparent to consciousness. Since our social and cultural situation is hard to grasp , especially in a hypercapitalist culture of spectacles , simulacra , and disinformation , we need to comprehend how our lives are being shaped and controlled. Postmodern claims that “theory” necessarily commits the sin of illicitly totalizing irreducibly heterogeneous phenomena are themselves reductive and homogenizing. Ludic postmodern calls for formalistic analysis oriented toward surfaces and the aesthetic pleasures of the text disarm a cultural studies and political hermeneutics that reads culture in terms of social and ideological conflicts and contradictions. To refuse interpretative depth is to extend reification to “critique” itself by reducing analysis to description of surface and form detached from radical theory and politics ( see Best and Kellner 1987 ) . The postmodern argument for the renunciation of critique and transformative politics thus becomes a self – fulfilling prophecy.

Theory at its best can provide *social maps* and inform *historical narratives* that supply spatial and temporal contextualizations for the present age. These critical theories should study society holistically, moving from specific phenomena and modes of human experience into an ever expanding analysis. Such inquiry may extend from the individual self, to its network of everyday social relations, to its more encompassing regional environment, to its national setting, and finally to the international arena of global capitalism. Within this dialectical framework, social maps shift from one level to another, articulating complex connections between economics, politics, the state, science and technology, media culture, everyday life, and their contending discourses and practices. I still find the most powerful methodology for social analysis to be a historically informed, dialectical method that sees human reality as evolving and conflict-ridden. This outlook grasps societies and history in general as coherent wholes, while analyzing society as a differentiated structure comprised of multiple levels—economics, politics, science, technology, culture, and so on—each of which have their own history, autonomy, and conflicts.

Together, social maps and historical narratives study the points of intersection between individuals and their cultures, between power and knowledge. To the fullest degree possible, they seek to lift the veils of ideology and expose the given as contingent and the present as social constructs, while providing visions of alternative futures. Theories and narratives, then, are meant to overcome quietism and fatalism, to sharpen political vision, and to encourage translation of concepts into practice in order to advance personal freedom, social justice, and ecological preservation and reclamation. Theories and narratives should not be confused with the territories and times they analyze; they are approximations of a densely constituted human world that require theories and imagination to conceive and depict. Nor should social mappings be seen as final or complete, since they must be constantly rethought and revised in light of new information and rapidly changing situations. Mappings and narratives can thus only be provisional, reports from diverse explorations that require further investigation, testing, and revision.

On the whole, border crossing, a transgressing of boundaries between fields carefully delineated and segregated under the regime of the modern, is a productive aspect of the postmodern turn in both theory and the arts. Theoretical crossings of disciplinary borders that subvert the modern academic division of labor have given rise to a vast array of studies that have provoked novel insight and activity. Earlier attempts at both modern and postmodern transdisciplinary work tended to be carried out within the realms of cultural and social theory. Yet the revolutions in science and technology require broadening our theoretical perspectives and optics. Previously, calls for transdisciplinary work concerned integration of the perspectives and the methods of the social and cultural sciences, often without regard for significant components of the natural sciences or the new philosophies of science and technology. One might affirm, however, inclusion of both the natural and the social sciences to overcome the gap between the “two cultures” (C. P. Snow 1964), along with analysis of the impact of technological innovations, in order to provide more integrated and comprehensive frameworks for theory and critique today (Best and Kellner 2001).

Formerly, major philosophers from Diderot to Dewey and many in the humanities and social sciences stayed in touch with cutting-edge developments in science, looked to scientific method as the source of knowledge, and critically engaged the latest creations of scientific theory. Indeed, the major social theorists of the 18th and 19th centuries saw science and technology as the driving motors of change and progress that would lift humanity from the dungeons of premodernity. They regarded science and technology as major civilizing forces that would bring a rational society in their wake. Karl Marx championed science and technology as liberating forces and went so far as to equate human emancipation with advancement of the “productive forces” of society. Likewise, John Dewey directly linked science and democracy (1995), claiming that the scientific method of experimentation was the best pedagogy



for education and the form of a democratic society and culture.

However, with a variety of critiques of modern science developing in the 20th century, ranging from phenomenological and feminist assaults on scientific objectivity to critical theory attacks on positivism, many leading theorists and schools distanced themselves from science, ignored its developments, and did not engage its results. This was and is, however, arguably a crucial mistake. Instead, science should once again become part of a transdisciplinary optic and should be returned to its status as a valuable theoretical resource. While one should avoid the uncritical modern embrace of science and technology, such as was advanced by classical liberalism, Marxism, and pragmatism, one should also eschew totalizing critiques that reduce science and technology to one-dimensional reason and a force of social domination. Like it or not, science and technology have been major constituent forces of modernity, and similarly are key catalysts of change for postmodernity. As such, they need to be engaged in light of their momentous importance and carefully theorized so that their positive potentialities can be realized and dangers confronted through theoretical critique and political struggle.

Accordingly, critical theories of science and technology appreciate their emancipatory potential, but also critique their limitations, risks, and possible destructive effects. A critical theory of science and technology strives to overcome one-sided affirmations or rejections, produces dialectical perspectives that distinguish between positive and negative features and consequences, and grasps contradictions and ambiguities in these highly complex and significant phenomena. Critical theories of science and technology are also transdisciplinary and historical. Transdisciplinary interpretation is necessary because science and technology have shaped our society and identities to such a profound degree that they are part and parcel of our culture, the stuff of everyday life, and are interfacing with our very bodies and subjectivities in unpredictable ways. A critical theory, for example, that synthesizes philosophy, sociology, and anthropology, but ignores the impact of science and technology on culture, clearly is limited in its ability to grasp the fundamental dynamics of the current conjuncture.

Thus, a postmodern transdisciplinary theory should include reflections on science, technology, and ecology in a multiperspectivist project that integrates critical social theory, cultural studies, science and technology studies, race theory, postcolonial analysis, feminism, and environmental concerns. Such an enterprise draws on the most useful resources of both modern and postmodern theory, as well as on theoretical and fictional mappings. Consequently, a critical theory of the contemporary moment should be transdisciplinary and multiperspectivist. One of the major contributions of the postmodern turn is that in light of the complexities, contradictions, and dangers of the present moment there is a need for multiple interdisciplinary theories to capture the novelties of the present, the continuities and discontinuities with modernity, and the problems this situation generates. Thus engaging novel conditions requires new theories, while the drama of the postmodern forces us to look at new things in new ways, a condition that will no doubt continue as we enter the already approaching future.

#### Notes

①This is my first set of reflections on the topic of the postmodern since publishing *The Postmodern Adventure* with Steven Best in 2001 and my comments here draw on the work done with him (see Best and Kellner 1991, 1997, and 2001).

②Many discourses of the postmodern largely make shifts in technology responsible for the rupture with modernity, as in Baudrillard (1983 and 1993) who neglects the significance of the restructuring of the global capitalist economy. While Jameson (1984 and 1991), Harvey (1989), and others relate postmodern culture to transformations of capitalism, their initial engagements with the postmodern in the texts just referenced do not adequately engage the roles of scientific and technological revolution. Others, like Lyotard (1984), interpret the “postmodern condition” largely through mutations of discourse and culture. See Best and Kellner 1997 and 2001 which argues that if notions of postmodernity, or a postmodern condition, are to have any force, they must receive a socio-historical grounding in analysis of the conjuncture of scientific and technological revolution, the global restructuring of capitalism, the political struggles,

and new forms of culture , subjectivities , and everyday life of the contemporary moment.

③Poster argues in *Mode of Information* ( 1990) that the mode of production is now transcended in importance by the mode of information as a fundamental principle of organizing society. I would argue , however , that the modes of production and information are intertwined as a new stage of capitalism. In “Postmodern Virtualities” ( 1996) , Poster highlights the importance of perceiving the connection of postmodernity with new media and new subjectivity , but does not link these phenomena with the restructuring of capital and globalization.

④Numerous critics have followed Jameson in interpreting the Vietnam war as “postmodern”; see the studies in Bibby 2000. Likewise , many books , articles , and dissertations read Herr’s *Dispatches* ( 1978) as a postmodernist text.

⑤To give further examples , Miriam Cooke published an article “Postmodern Wars” that opened with some rather general remarks concerning their “cluster of defining characteristics” ( 1991: 27) . But although she offers a six page analysis of the war against Iraq , she presents no sustained argumentation concerning why the war should be seen as “postmodern. ” Instead , the term “postmodern” is often deployed simply to describe novel phenomenon that have not yet been theorized. Similarly , Rob Wilson ( 1992: 67f) refers to the “postmodern reconfiguration in which the Gulf War took place ,” its “postmodern register of cyborgian grandeur ,” the “postmodern night” of our current situation , the “postmodern nation – state in which these weapons were designed and constructed,” “postmodern production,” “ postmodern economy of instantaneous sign – flow and modular bricolage ,” the “ostmodern transnational scene ,” the “ostmodernity of the international market ,” of Bush senior as a “ostmodern American Adam,” “ostmodern ratification in the oil deserts of Kuwait and Saudi Arabia ,” and the Patriot missile as a “ostmodern hero of the technological sublime ,” ad nauseam , without theorizing what was “ostmodern” about any of this.

⑥The following sections on mapping are influenced by Jameson 1988 and 1991 , and draw upon work with Steven Best.

⑦See Crosby 1997 for illuminating discussion of the turn to quantitative modes of representation in Western Europe during the early modern age and the contrasts with earlier premodern modes of mapping the world.

⑧In *Violent Cartographies* ( 1997) Michael J. Shapiro argues that maps are functions of power in which borders and terrain are artificially constructed and legitimated in ideological discourses and narratives. Part of the challenges of the contemporary moment involves undoing the violent cartographies of modernity ( nation – state , national borders , scientific and academic disciplines , forms of culture , identities , and so on) in the contemporary era , and the construction of alternative mappings and border – crossing.

⑨Ironically , at the very time in which the epochal transformations that generated the postmodern debates were becoming evident , a mode of postmodern theory , promoted by followers of Lyotard and a misunderstood Foucault , argued for the suspension of “rand narratives,” “otalizing theory ,” and the more global and macrotheories of classical theory in favor of local narratives , microtheory and politics , and more modest theoretical perspectives ( see Lyotard , 1984 and Best and Kellner , 1991) . Against this version of postmodern theory , I and my collaborators have long argued for a reconstructed type of the global and critical perspectives of classical social theory that is necessary to theorize contemporary social and theoretical developments. Yet one could also combine global and local projects , micro – and macrotheory and politics , thus mediating modern and postmodern perspectives ( see Best and Kellner , 1991 , Ch. 8 and Cvetkovitch and Kellner , 1996 , “ntrodction”.

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