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# Perspectives

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## The Relevance of Honor in Sociology

*Vern Baxter and Anthony Margavio, University of New Orleans*

Scholarly attention is rightly directed to the moral basis of social action. There is much concern today that moral relativism evident in selfish pursuits corrodes and even kills character and the pursuit of virtue in a fragmented social order void of normative commitments. Modern ideals of civility, commitment, and mutual recognition among equals are challenged by the depth of avarice and corruption, and the frustrated demands of the dispossessed to be treated with dignity and respect. Recent events from the terrorist attacks of 9/11/01, to restrictions of civil liberties that followed the attacks, and waves of business and political scandals can hardly be contained within an explanatory frame that blames a few misguided individuals. Extensive inquiry is warranted into the moral bases of social action and the social bases of moral action.

We are moved to defend honor as a theoretical construct in sociology against critics who consider it an archaic way to link individual character and social action. Honor is an internalized concern for social approval that links reputation and self-esteem

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## Why Postmodernism is Here to Stay: Or, The Mainstreaming of a (Semi-) Radical Idea

*Charles Edgley, Oklahoma State University*

“The secret of theory is there is no truth” —Jean Paul Baudrillard

Baudrillardian hyperbole aside, science, as Stone & Farberman remind us, “is a graveyard of theories—problems persist; theories die.” (Stone & Farberman 1981). But for the near future, at least, that peculiar form of theorizing called “postmodernism,” like many ideas and concepts in contemporary social thought, seems to be undergoing not a death, as many predicted (and some fervently hoped), but something more akin to gentrification or mainstreaming.<sup>1</sup> Many of its central tenets are rapidly becoming part of the basic conceptual apparatus of sociology. Terms such as *deconstruction*, *de-centering*, *discourse*, *hyper-reality*, *implosion*, *logocentric*, *narrative*, *performativity*, *privileged*, *project*, *simulacrum*, *voice*, and *totalizing* are now regularly used in sociological discourse.

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with character and conduct in social groups. Honor includes external reputation achieved and sustained in the eyes of others and an internal sensibility or character that provides an ethical basis for action. Honor reflects concern about how we are evaluated by others and how that concern disciplines conduct. The connection of honor to the distribution of praise and blame in various groups makes it reflexive and social, so the investigation of honor provides insight into the moral basis of legitimate authority.

Arguments for the demise of honor are varied but the most common thread is that respect for the dignity of others has replaced honor as an ethical basis of conduct. It is frequently argued that honor was relevant when life was lived face to face in local communities where individuals had extended family ties. The obsolescence of honor is traced to the liberation of the individual from traditional status hierarchies where social esteem depends on adherence to strict behavioral codes. Max Weber ([1921] 1978) is among those who claim that status honor is a foundation of social action in traditional societies but that there is no honor in pure market exchange. The market detaches the individual from institutional roles and the disenchantment of social action fueled by reason is opposed to the emotional and personal connections that define traditional authority. Moral anonymity and rational calculation replace honor in the modern economy with impersonal but universal concerns for dignity, self interest, and justice (see Berger 1970; Berger, Berger, and Kellner 1974). Individual ac-

tors are connected by relations of dependence and a kernel of equality and dignity that operate independently of honor, which is linked to status groups and institutional hierarchies.

Axel Honneth (1995) says that dignity and prestige replace honor as motives for action in the transition from traditional to modern society. He embraces Hegel's claim of ethical cohesion based on the mutual recognition of freedom and dignity of all citizens embodied in law and the state. Central ideas of insult and revenge that regulate behavior in traditional honor codes no longer have legal standing in the modern world. They are replaced by the protection of human dignity available when one joins an ethical community under the law. Contemporary social struggles center around claims of the oppressed for dignity, recognition, and civil rights guaranteed by law.

Sociologists continue to investigate whether hedonistic impulse expressed in market competition can be reconciled with democratic ideals of equality, dignity, and moral progress. Can the ideal of equal treatment under the law provide a moral basis for social solidarity when confronted with grossly unequal outcomes in market, gender, and race relations? Functionalists offer the argument that common values inscribed in institutional roles create a concurrence of contributions, rewards, and moral evaluation in a social system. Edward Shils (1997) encourages citizens in a democracy to embrace the virtue of civility and moderate conduct with the belief that a community of contending parties can co-ex-

ist in a morally valid and unified society. Restraint of passion on behalf of the common good can regulate the temptation for some to take advantage of the unequal distribution of ability and resources and manipulate others in pursuit of self interest.

Rational choice theories assume that actors are motivated by interests and that the individual inevitably pursues conduct that promises to maximize net benefits. Despite assumptions that individuals are ultimately autonomous, trust and commitment still emerge from exchange relations. James Coleman (1990) is among those who argue that the decision to trust another person is a rational calculation based on cost/benefit logic. Cooperation and collective action do not rest on honor, dignity, or collective interests but rest instead on private interests derived from the application of selective incentives and sanctions that ensure compliance with group norms.

The recent focus of exchange theorists on trust, commitment, and informal compliance norms signals renewed interest in reputation as a form of social control. Robert H. Frank (1988) argues that identities are tied closely to competition for recognition from those we care about most. Social emotions like guilt, shame, and pride originate with concern for how others view us, and they operate as internal commitment devices that stabilize collective action. Natural selection may even be at work to connect social emotions with a concern for reputation which then regulates impulse so individuals can balance long-term benefits against the immediate gratification available from opportunistic conduct.

The work of Frank (1988), Macy, Cook, Nesse and others on reputation and commitment is encouraging but it is still limited by the assumption that collective action always rests on individual incentives to maximize some benefit. Karl Polanyi ([1944] 1957) provides the counter-argument that economic life is typically sub-

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# Sociology in the Empire of the Senses: From Sense to Sensuality of Social Action

Helmut Staubmann, University of Innsbruck, Austria

“I don’t care about a philosophy that could neither explain music nor love.”

It was Alfred Schütz, no less, who took up this Nietzschean aphorism in order to reflect the way in, and the extent to which *sociology* was coming to terms with these phenomena. About half a century later the issue still seems to be unresolved and as relevant for us now as it was for Schütz then. In the pursuit of an answer, one soon feels in danger of getting lost in the “thicket of the conceptual world” of sociology. Although everyday experience clearly proves that music and love frequently appear together, does this fact also justify subsuming them under one conceptual frame, thus suggesting that there are structural similarities? The attempt to legitimize such a unity leads directly into the field of aesthetics which, as a scholarly discipline, in turn can easily compete with sociology regarding a problem that one of its contemporary proponents, Wolfgang Iser, elegantly termed “semantic polyvalence.” Modern aesthetics has its historical and semantic roots in the ancient Greek expression of *aisthesis*, sensual perception. It was not until the 18<sup>th</sup> century that an *aisthetike episteme* was founded as an independent sub-discipline of philosophy understood as the science of sensual knowledge. Ever since attention has been drawn to the ontological or conceptual status of the senses, a peculiar bifurcation can be found. One line of thought focuses on a specific quality of sensual perception, namely on beauty which narrows the discipline of aesthetics to a mere reflection on the arts and the beautiful. The sociology of the arts, of music, of fashion, and of taste has developed along this strand. The other line of thought leads to epistemology and to the question of the contribution of the senses to scientific knowledge which eventually results in empiricism, namely in the idea that our knowledge is ultimately grounded in sense experience. In sociology we are here concerned with what is called empirical research methods. But neither beauty nor empirically-based research exhaust the significance of the senses for sociology and for the social world.

For the mainstream of sociological inquiry, the senses and corporality have never played an important role. This has often been deplored and it is generally quite easy to come to a consensus that views the neglect of the body and its senses as a deficiency of sociology. However, the real problem starts with the question, how and if at all, the senses can be regarded as “social facts;” a question that challenges the most elementary theoretical foundations of sociology. For the most part, sociology secured its identity precisely by delineating itself against the corporality of social actors. And if one dared to go beyond the analysis of social meaning, normative meaning patterns, or a cognitively understood intentionality to the senses and the body, one was confronted with the accusation of “biological reductionism.” And who is not familiar with the professional and political implications of such an accusation? Equations like culture = meaning = social order belong in only slightly modified form to the broadly accepted axiomatics of sociology. Out of these axioms traditional textbook concepts such as social role or institution can be deduced, but also today more favourable concepts such as – the more-or-less radical – “social constructivism,” its theoretical sibling deconstruction, or the idea of the possibility of constituting communicative self-programming of a lifeworld. Insofar as a sociology which is based on such anthropological prejudices permits a view of the senses, these appear as something pre-social although as something socially malleable by social norms and meanings. One can conceive of the “civilization of the senses” as their increasing normative subjugation or simply as the regulation of the senses or the use of those “feeling-rules” produced by the economic-capitalistic demands of the market or of class interests. In these cases just cited, the sensuality of human beings remains something that is exterior to their sociality in the same way as it remains exterior to the real Ego in analogously modelled psychological identity-concepts that attribute sensuality to a so-called Id. This corresponds to the common understanding of the senses as disruptive factors that give others the opportunity to seduce persons to acts that they did not “really” intend.

Yet common sense also has the opposite understanding at hand and without ever taking notice of this paradox. Once a decision has been made for a sensually motivated act so the decision for the alternative act appears as a normative demand coming from outside, as duties, the performance of which psychoanalytically trained experts often tend to advise against their fulfilment since they would stand in the way of the desideratum of *self*-fulfilment and, in the long run, would merely increase culture’s discontent. As in the former case, the body and the senses of human beings are separated from their sociality and culture in a mechanistic way and set in opposition to their “real” Ego, and consequently to the social and cultural world, so here one can speak of a direct identification of sensuality and personal identity. And, also for such an understanding of common sense, sociology has a

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paradigmatic equivalent, namely the apriori conceptual arrangement of hedonistic utility maximization as the primary action criterion, and concomitantly, even if only implicitly, association of the Ego and sensuality as found in a variety of versions of utilitarian behaviorism. The will of a person gained from sensual-hedonistic utility optimization (even if conceived of by means of rationality) is then contrasted to an exteriorly understood (in theory) or tiresomely felt (in everyday life) morality.

With respect to the Janus-faced nature of sociology's relation to sensuality, in one of his early writings, Georg Simmel hit the nail right on the head: "Whereas sensuality otherwise falls under the category of egoism and a sensually determined person in general appears as immoral, the desire to project immorality as an exterior power out of ourselves precisely leads us to view sensuality as something situated outside our soul and as a force that attacks our Ego." (Simmel 1989: 108) Simmel's solution to the problem was a conceptual differentiation into what he called "form" and "content" or "substance." This was the basic idea of his well-known formal sociology; a concept that can easily be transposed to a concomitant formal psychology or formal identity theory, as well as a formal theory of culture. According to it, neither personal identity nor socio-cultural phenomena can be adequately understood or defined via a "substance." Therefore it is not a mere coincidence that, among the founders of sociology, it was only Georg Simmel who included a chapter on the sociology of the senses in his introductory book on sociology concluding, "The social question is not only an ethical one but also a question of the nose." Whatever terminology one prefers to use, Simmel's core idea of a conceptual differentiation appears as an absolutely necessary correlate of a genuine sociology of the senses.

Traditional theoretical schools in sociol-

ogy are distinguished by their view on which substance constitutes the social world: norms, meaning, material interests, rationality, etc. Each of these decisions creates a sort of theoretical immune system against the acknowledgement of the pure sociological character of other factors of the human condition. Alfred Schütz, to take up only one example, clearly felt that when musicians play together their communication and coordination must be closely related to a mutual sensual perception: "The basic problem lies in the question, whether the communicative process really is the basis of all possible social relations, or whether, on the contrary, all communication presupposes the existence of a kind of social interaction, which, although being an absolutely necessary condition of all possible communication, does not partake in the process of communication and also cannot be covered by it" (Schütz 1972:131). With this, Schütz enhances the status of the senses without grasping them as a genuine component of the communication process. Analogous conclusions can be drawn by dealing with rationality biased concepts in the phenomenological tradition such as "understanding," definition of the situation, social action, etc., all of which demand the inclusion of the sensual and bodily aspects.

Simmel wrote in a letter to Heinrich Rickert that he had gained several of his general theoretical insights "via the detour on reflections on the essence of art." It seems to me, that a detour via aesthetics and, more generally, via the empire of the senses is still to be recommended to all those doing foundational theoretical work in contemporary sociology.

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### Tracing Postmodern Thought

First introduced by a diverse group of French intellectuals headed by Jean-François Lyotard, Jacques Derrida, Jean Paul Baudrillard, and Michel Foucault, the work of these theorists, their supporters, and those who follow in their wake, promises to remain in the theoretical lexicon for some time to come. Small wonder. If one of the central tasks of theory is to provide interpretive sense of the world around us, then the postmodern lens gives us a view of fundamental changes in world culture that no other framework is able to provide in precisely the same way.

Volumes have been written—much of it highly critical and suspicious-of what has been called “the postmodern turn.” The ‘turn’ in question is an exhaustive rejection of theoretical formulations grounded in a substantive ontology, a move that critics have variously decried as *irresponsible*, *mistaken*, and even *dangerous*. But in spite of the numerous Jeremiads against postmodern thinking—to say nothing of the reams of downright nonsense that has been written about it—it is my contention that postmodernism has much in common with many quite traditional sociological arguments.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, postmodernism overcomes some of the deficiencies of classical theory that stem from its preoccupation with modernity. Moreover, postmodernism provides a framework in which to understand certain empirical events that strike many scholars as being wholly new<sup>3</sup> and therefore require novel frameworks of interpretation.

### Postmodernism: Critique and Response

Some of the criticisms are obviously well placed. Postmodernism is not an entirely clear set of ideas beginning with the term itself which appears to be a contradiction. It’s exemplars, for the most part, fought constantly among themselves. Most of them carried no torches for sociology, regarding it variously as ranging

from an abject failure, to the architect of the problems they see as inherent in modernity.<sup>4</sup> Lyotard saw the entire Enlightenment program of progress through scientific rationality from which sociology emerged as one of the hated Grand Narratives that have, in his words “almost killed us.” Baudrillard, the guru of media studies, pointedly resists all efforts to regard his work as sociological:

My point of view is completely metaphysical. If anything, I’m a metaphysician, perhaps a moralist, but certainly not a sociologist. The only ‘sociological’ work I can claim is my effort to put an end to the social, to the [very] concept of the social (Gane 1993:201).

Like it’s near-cousin, existentialism, postmodernism frequently denies itself. Derrida doesn’t like the term. Foucault denounced postmodernism, preferring to see his work as a kind of historical archeology of power. Baudrillard is an abandoned Marxist who sees postmodernism as “a most degraded phase of history” and of which he says: “I don’t see myself in all of that.”

But some of the major criticisms of postmodernism are misguided, ignoring both its connections with other kinds of sociological theory, as well as underestimating as significantly new the empirical reality to which much of postmodern theory is directed. For example, the prominent idea that postmodernism *abandons truth*, that it denies the possibility of any kind of classical preoccupation with objective knowledge, that it relativizes away reality, and that it admits to no morality—all common themes among the critics of postmodernism—are as wrong-headed as they are dismissive.<sup>5</sup> Stanley Fish, responding to Paul Rothstein’s critique of postmodernism as “challenging assertions that truth and ethical judgment have any objective validity,” has recently made the following stellar point:

...it depends on what you mean by ‘objective’. If you mean a standard of validity and value that is independent of any his-

torically emergent and therefore revisable system of thought and practice, then it is true that many postmodernists would deny that any such standard is or could ever be available.... [but] If by ‘objective’ one means a standard of validity and value that is backed up by the tried-and-true procedures and protocols of a well-developed practice or discipline—history, physics, economics, psychology, etc.—then such standards are all around us, and we make use of them all the time without any metaphysical anxiety. As Richard Rorty... is fond of saying, “Objectivity is the kind of thing we do around here” (Fish 2002:33).

### Mainstreaming the Postmodern

So the charge that postmodern thinkers deny reality or objectivity, or any standards or values is simply mistaken. Furthermore, what they do affirm about such matters seems solidly compatible with much of the classical canon. Their views about the relativity of knowledge and culture, their embrace of multiculturalism, their celebration of feminism, their well-established arguments about giving voice to the silenced, and their insistence that reality is a thoroughly socially constructed and contingent process is consistent with most mainstream sociology and not simply with, as critic Roger Kimball charges, the “*hirsute and untidy*” (Kimball 2002:238).

Even more importantly, postmodern theory speaks to a central sociological issue and it is this: *emergent processes of change are creating a new kind of society with features quite unlike the older one*. Much of it centers on the key role played by new technologies of information. The development of a cyberworld with all of its known and as yet unknown possibilities leaves many of our assumptions about “reality,” if not dead, at least thoroughly in doubt.<sup>6</sup> The world of “virtualness” is unlike any other that human beings have ever experienced, and may well alter most of what we have previously thought about key theoretical matters. Issues such as the relationship between selves and bodies, between the individual and soci-  
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merged in social relationships to such an extent that people do not always act to safeguard individual interest in the possession of material goods; they often act instead to safeguard social standing and social honor. The social nature of existence belies efforts of rational choice theorists to derive social equilibrium from hedonistic assumptions about human nature, and liberal notions that universal equality and dignity bind otherwise

autonomous individuals together. It is useful to recall Simmel's ([1908] 1950) argument that since people do come together with very different goals from very different social circles, it is the stamp of honor on conduct expected of them, not cost/benefit logic or universal human dignity, that provides the peaceful space required to sustain collective action.

Peter Berger lamented the weakening of institutional constraints on individual identity and conduct when he argued that modernity creates a sense of dignity that must often be forged against institutional roles. The dialectic of freedom and bureaucratic authority plays itself out in modern institutions, but Berger still bemoaned the demise of honor amidst progress toward recognition of universal human dignity. He hoped for a re-discovery of honor in social institutions that preserve the discovery of dignity and the individual rights and freedoms associated with democracy and the market. We share this hope but suggest that the persistence of honor in traditional statuses and in modern institutions still illuminates the knotty problem of how various individual ends are contained in social hierarchies.

Modern ideals like the equality and dignity of all human beings before the law and in market competition served well the challenge of middle class European businessmen against the entrenched honor codes of feudal aristocrats. The triumph

of the bourgeoisie was uneven and further, it was accompanied by efforts of Enlightenment thinkers like deTocqueville, Hume, and Adam Smith to attach honor to work and the tempered pursuit and display of gain. However, the plutocratic excesses of industrial capitalism and the limited scope of equality and

**The obsolescence of honor is traced to the liberation of the individual from traditional status hierarchies where social esteem depends on adherence to strict behavioral codes.**

dignity in democratic republics have left many individuals, groups, and places largely outside modern ideological and institutional frameworks. We follow Shils (1997) and argue that traditions seldom die, they recede very slowly, yielding before new traditions which replace them by incorporating elements of their predecessors and assimilating them to new elements. Traditional status groups and status honor are more persistent than many sociologists care to acknowledge. Emergent universalist ideals also contain the residue of tradition as honor is incorporated into market exchange and democratic institutions. Traditional statuses like female, peasant, and Italian-American co-exist unevenly with modern ones like citizen, worker, and consumer.

Perhaps the postmodernists are right that individual identity is fragmented and disconnected from the modernist narrative of universal equality and dignity. Ideals like equality and dignity express the important hope that fair play will regulate competition between self interested individuals. The implication is that we should be free to choose affiliations and that social inequality is a consequence of failed effort and not institutional constraint. But life is still lived face to face in local communities with extended (albeit new) family ties, and competition between unequals reproduces inequality and deference in local communities and in distant corporations. The field of honor returns focus to how much people care

about the variety of emotionally drenched connections they have to others, and the extent those connections are embedded in hierarchies that require consent. Honor is not restricted to archaic roles like professor and aristocrat, nor is it derived solely from the state or the generalized other. It is derived from many traditional and modern affiliations (e.g., ethnicity, family, occupation), each of which demands some form of deference. The individual is pulled in

many directions but our claim is that each individual responds to some pull — human beings care about what some individuals and members of certain groups think of them. The relevant social circle may or may not be centered around the state with its universalist claims to cohesion based on consent of the governed. But the state also honors outstanding achievement and certifies competencies that engender trust and legitimate professional practices. These modern honor codes are embedded in institutional roles, they are just unevenly embraced as many find sustenance in traditional status hierarchies or in modern ones that contain their own unique codes of honor.

Honor is most difficult to grasp in the U.S. where the ideology of equality and individualism is so strong, but we must not go overboard and disconnect the fragmented and isolated American from the force field of social influence. Honor is important in American occupational, ethnic, and residential communities, and outside the U.S., entrenched honor codes regulate conduct within institutional hierarchies that confront the challenges of democracy, equality, and dignity. Our hope is that we can take up Peter Berger's call and learn how to reconcile the search for praise and blame contained in honor codes with social institutions that preserve universal notions of equality and human dignity. This is a worthy challenge for social theory and social action.

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 ety, between the realms of public and private, and even the very survival of a cultural community built on shared norms and values must be recast in light of the postmodern condition. The ideological triumph of both global capitalism and democratic political forms has brought about what Francis Fukuyama has called “The End of History.”<sup>7</sup> Consumerism and entertainment have invaded virtually every institution in American society. Segmented markets and virtual shopping malls—all made possible by the ubiquitous credit card—threaten to overturn all assumptions about face-to-face relationships. And, finally, the crucial idea of culture itself represents something of a crossroads in postmodern thought. If culture is, as the classical British anthropologists of the 30’s defined it, and generations of sociology texts have asserted “everything we think, do, and have as members of society,” then, of course, postmodernism is simply the latest variant. But if society and culture are defined in a more traditionally Durkheimian sense as a system of shared norms and values, then the very idea of culture is called into question.

Our present condition seems less *cultural* in the traditional sense than it does characterized by the values of mass entertainment—relationships by ephemerality, durabilities by fragmentation, and order by chaos. In any event postmodernism does not mark the end of modernity, it is an analysis of what modernism has brought about. And what modernity has produced is far different than it promised; a society that has become increasingly “post-cultural” (Clausen 2000). Postculturalism, with its weak ties to any given structure, its pastiche blending of disparate elements, its associated problems with boundary maintenance, and its infinitely elastic citizens, shows characteristics, somewhat ironically, of an extreme version of what Marx said about modernity: “when all that is solid melts in the air.”

### The Classical Canon and the Challenge of Postmodernism

I am not for a moment suggesting that classical theory is unable to account for these events; indeed, classical theory is sufficiently broad as to be hospitable to almost anything the human condition throws its way. But its breadth and reach also leads to looking at many qualitatively different emergent phenomenon as through a rear-view mirror, for there exists today a host of events and processes at the margins which call into question the entire cultural framework of classical thinking. For example, virtual reality is not simply another variant of something else (“real reality,” as some desperately assert) but an entirely new phenomenon created by technologies that have done more than simply blur the boundaries between image and reality. Rather these technologies are increasingly obliterating the very notion of reality as a bounded ontological category. Baudrillard is even more radical in his approach to what Lyotard calls this “crisis of representation.” Images do not even necessarily follow the real—they precede it to the extent that they are already simulations of something else. Easy distinctions like image and reality collapse into a pile of conflicting narratives as the very possibility of metaphor itself disappears, since metaphor always involves positing something against something which it is not.

Everything is destined to reappear as simulation. Landscapes as photography... thoughts as writing, terrorism as fashion and the media. Things seem only to exist by virtue of this strange destiny. You wonder whether the world itself isn’t just here to serve as advertising copy in some other world (Baudrillard 1989:32).

In the Baudrillardian world, society has collapsed into its semiotic code.

Traditionalists will, as they always have, simply assert that everything new is nothing more than a variant of what always has been and thus there is no need for novel theories to clutter the neatness of received interpretations. But to the extent that sociological theory does what theory

has always done—develop a response to the inevitable “anomalies”—as Thomas Kuhn called them—of every paradigm, postmodernism will continue to challenge the received wisdom of the classical era in irritating new ways.

As the left bank architects of these theoretical provocations might say: “Ainsi soit-il.”

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### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> I have recently made the same point about the dramaturgical framework, itself arguably a precursor to postmodern thought in sociology. See Charles Edgley, “The Dramaturgical Model”, in Larry Reynolds (ed) *The Handbook of Symbolic Interactionism*. Sage Publishing Co., 2002.

<sup>2</sup> Ashley and Orenstein have claimed recently in their influential theory text that the canon of classical theory is itself a socially constructed reality stemming from a pro-  
 See POSTMODERNISM *on page 8*

## Book Announcement

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### POSTMODERNISM *from page 7*

cess they call "rational reconstruction" in which contemporary sociology is assumed to be 'good' in and of itself, and that since it is built (allegedly) on a base of classical theory, then that theory must also have been 'good.'

<sup>3</sup> I use the word "new" advisedly. Postmodernism has many precursors, some of whom are already very familiar to theorists. Nietzsche's attack on substantive ontologies anticipated much of postmodern thought; Guy Debord's "Society of the Spectacle", published in 1967, argued that late 20th century society would be driven far more by images than it would be by the production of material goods. Walter Benjamin's 1936 masterpiece *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* anticipated at least portions of Baudrillard's argument about simulated experience. Marshall McLuhan's prescient *Understanding Media* argued in the 1950's that electronic media would create a decentralized "global village," an idea that Baudrillard would later take to mean in a more negative sense that culture had "imploded"—collapsed on itself (Ward 2002:77).

<sup>4</sup> We should not forget, of course, as Ashley and Orenstein remind us, that such towering figures as Marx and Nietzsche, the former a staple of the classical canon, were not fans of sociology either.

<sup>5</sup> Though it must be admitted that postmodernists such as Baudrillard, whose hyperbolic language began this essay, have made it easy to make this charge.

<sup>6</sup> Indeed, this dis-ease has spread through so much of the culture that Boyne defines

postmodernism as "the culture of ontological doubt."

<sup>7</sup> By this term, Fukuyama means "the universalization of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government." Anyone who wishes to argue for some other kind of political system, says Fukuyama, has an impossible task.

### HONOR *from page 6*

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