City Research Online

City, University of London Institutional Repository

**Citation:** Susen, S. (2015). Introduction. In: Susen, S. (Ed.), The 'Postmodern Turn' in the Social Sciences. (pp. 1-38). Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan. ISBN 9780230579293

This is the accepted version of the paper.

This version of the publication may differ from the final published version.

**Permanent repository link:** https://openaccess.city.ac.uk/id/eprint/18983/

**Link to published version**:

**Copyright:** City Research Online aims to make research outputs of City, University of London available to a wider audience. Copyright and Moral Rights remain with the author(s) and/or copyright holders. URLs from City Research Online may be freely distributed and linked to.

**Reuse:** Copies of full items can be used for personal research or study, educational, or not-for-profit purposes without prior permission or charge. Provided that the authors, title and full bibliographic details are credited, a hyperlink and/or URL is given for the original metadata page and the content is not changed in any way.

City Research Online: http://openaccess.city.ac.uk/ publications@city.ac.uk

‘Simon Susen has done a first-class job in bringing some order into postmodern thought, which is notorious for its programmatic disorderliness. He has succeeded in doing so on the basis of research that is of unprecedented width and depth. The resulting compendium of thoughts and thinkers may well serve as a crucial point of reference for people contributing to or affected by the “postmodern turn” – that is, the rest of us.’
— Zygmunt Bauman, *University of Leeds, UK*

‘More commonly associated with the humanities, postmodernism has also had major impacts in the social sciences. Rather than choosing one narrow interpretation, Simon Susen takes a broad and inclusive look at a whole series of important debates and shifts of direction. The result is a timely account not just of past controversies but also of changing presuppositions shaping future scholarship.’
— Craig Calhoun, *London School of Economics and Political Science, UK*

‘Simon Susen’s magisterial critical organization of diverse insights, ambiguities, and problems in the fields of both modern and postmodern thought is a great gift. He provides a solid conceptual platform from which to launch tomorrow’s progressive (yes!) social theories, policies, and practices.’
— Sandra Harding, *University of California, Los Angeles, USA*

‘Simon Susen’s detailed, systematic, and precise description of the “postmodern turn” in all its dimensions – from identity politics to cultural studies – provides a diagnosis of where we stand today in the social sciences. We all need this book in order to engage in a serious assessment of our theoretical (and practical) predicament. There is no excuse – everyone has to read it!’
— Slavoj Žižek, *University of Ljubljana, Slovenia*

This book examines the impact of the ‘postmodern turn’ on the contemporary social sciences. Here, the ‘postmodern turn’ is conceived of as a paradigmatic shift from the Enlightenment belief in the *relative determinacy* of both the natural world and the social world to the – increasingly widespread – post-Enlightenment belief in the *radical indeterminacy* of all material and symbolic forms of existence. The far-reaching importance of this paradigmatic transformation is reflected in five influential presuppositional ‘turns’: (I) the ‘relativist turn’ in epistemology; (II) the ‘interpretive turn’ in social research methodology; (III) the ‘cultural turn’ in sociology; (IV) the ‘contingent turn’ in historiography; and (V) the ‘autonomous turn’ in politics. On the basis of this five-dimensional approach, the study provides a systematic, comprehensive, and critical account of the legacy of the ‘postmodern turn’.

**Simon Susen** is a Senior Lecturer in Sociology at City University London, UK.

palgrave
macmillan

ISBN 978-0-230-57929-3
90101
9 780230 579293

www.palgrave.com

Cover image © Johner Images / Alamy

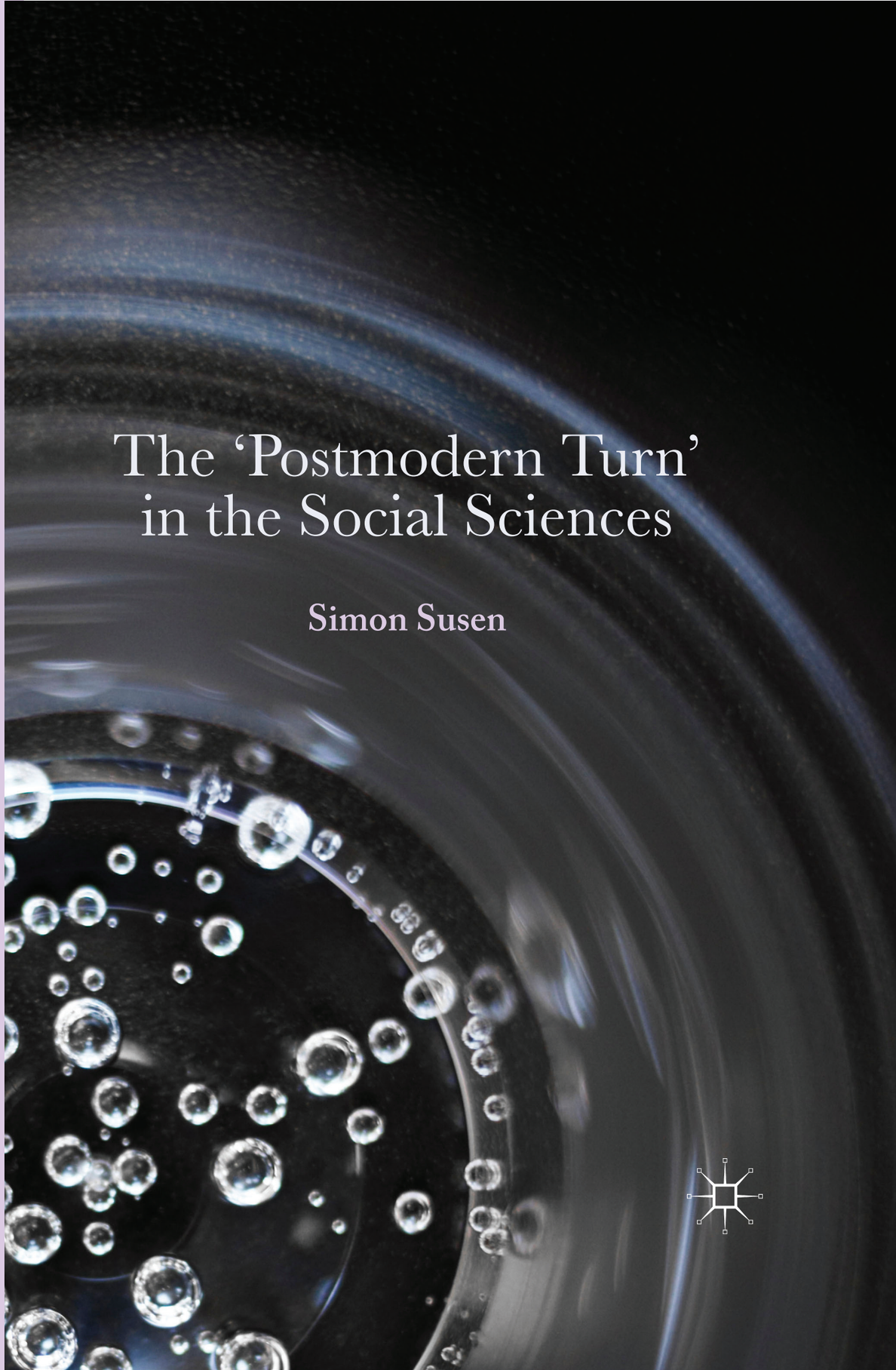
palgrave
macmillan

The ‘Postmodern Turn’ in the Social Sciences

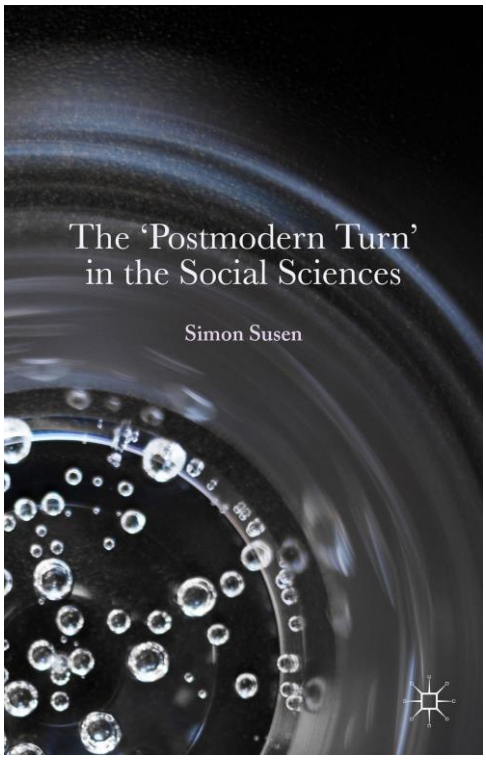
Simon Susen

# The ‘Postmodern Turn’ in the Social Sciences

Simon Susen



palgrave
macmillan




Hardback 9780230579293
Jul 2015 £70.00 $110.00 $115.00CAN

522 pp 234 mm x 156 mm

Ebook(s) available from Palgrave Connect

**Simon Susen is a Senior Lecturer in Sociology at City University London, UK. He previously held lectureships at Birkbeck College (University of London), Newcastle University, and Goldsmiths College (University of London). He is an Associate Member of the Bauman Institute and, together with Bryan S. Turner, Editor of the *Journal of Classical Sociology.***

CONTENTS

Introduction
1. From Modern to Postmodern Epistemology? The 'Relativist Turn'
2. From Modern to Postmodern Methodology? The 'Interpretive Turn'
3. From Modern to Postmodern Sociology? The 'Cultural Turn'
4. From Modern to Postmodern Historiography? The 'Contingent Turn'
5. From Modern to Postmodern Politics? The 'Autonomous Turn'
6. Critical Reflections on Postmodern Thought: Limitations of the 'Postmodern Turn'
Conclusion

# The 'Postmodern Turn' in the Social Sciences

## Simon Susen

"*The 'Postmodern Turn' in the Social Sciences* presents an authoritative treatment of a significant phenomenon. Simon Susen's book is a real *tour de force*: it is remarkably comprehensive, analytically rigorous, and it develops a thorough critique of postmodern thought."
**- Patrick Baert, University of Cambridge, UK**

"Simon Susen has done a first-class job in bringing some order into postmodern thought, which is notorious for its programmatic disorderliness. He has succeeded in doing so on the basis of research that is of unprecedented width and depth. The resulting compendium of thoughts and thinkers may well serve as a crucial point of reference for people contributing to or affected by the 'postmodern turn' – that is, the rest of us."
**- Zygmunt Bauman, University of Leeds, UK**

"More commonly associated with the humanities, postmodernism has also had major impacts in the social sciences. Rather than choosing one narrow interpretation, Simon Susen takes a broad and inclusive look at a whole series of important debates and shifts of direction. The result is a timely account not just of past controversies but also of changing presuppositions shaping future scholarship."
**- Craig Calhoun, London School of Economics and Political Science, UK**

"Simon Susen's magisterial critical organization of diverse insights, ambiguities, and problems in the fields of both modern and postmodern thought is a great gift. He provides a solid conceptual platform from which to launch tomorrow's progressive (yes!) social theories, policies, and practices."
**- Sandra Harding, University of California, Los Angeles, USA**

"Simon Susen has written an original and comprehensive review and critique of the 'postmodern turn' in the social sciences – an investigative project that is particularly important in relation to current intellectual developments in the United States. This work's depth and systematicity promise to play a major role in reversing the unfortunate decline in interest in, and attention to, postmodern thinking since the late 1990s. Early-21st-century social science, especially sociology, needs the insights and correctives of postmodern thinking more than ever. A careful reading of this book will make that clear and hopefully spawn a much-needed revival of interest in this important body of work."
**– George Ritzer, University of Maryland, USA**

"Postmodernism may no longer be the provocation it was two decades ago, but it remains a profound challenge to the enlightenment dreams of 'reason' and 'progress'. Simon Susen's *The 'Postmodern Turn' in the Social Sciences* provides a smart and reader-friendly account of this transformational shift in contemporary critical thought."
**- Steven Seidman, State University of New York, USA**

"*The 'Postmodern Turn' in the Social Sciences* offers a lucid account of relevant debates and developments in epistemology, social research methodology, sociology, historiography, and politics and provides an insightful discussion of the work of thinkers who have been closely associated with postmodernism."
**- Barry Smart, University of Portsmouth, UK**

"Simon Susen's detailed, systematic, and precise description of the 'postmodern turn' in all its dimensions – from identity politics to cultural studies – provides a diagnosis of where we stand today in the social sciences. We all need this book in order to engage in a serious assessment of our theoretical (and practical) predicament. There is no excuse – everyone has to read it!"
**- Slavoj Žižek, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia; The Birkbeck Institute for the Humanities, UK; New York University, USA**

### About the book

The main purpose of this book is to examine the impact of the 'postmodern turn' on the contemporary social sciences. Here, the 'postmodern turn' is conceived of as a paradigmatic shift from the Enlightenment belief in the *relative determinacy* of both the natural world and the social world to the – increasingly widespread – post-Enlightenment belief in the *radical indeterminacy* of all material and symbolic forms of existence. As illustrated in this enquiry, the far-reaching importance of this paradigmatic transformation is reflected in five influential presuppositional 'turns', which have arguably been taking place in the social sciences over the past few decades and which are inextricably linked to the rise of postmodern thought: (I) the 'relativist turn' in epistemology; (II) the 'interpretive turn' in social research methodology; (III) the 'cultural turn' in sociology; (IV) the 'contingent turn' in historiography; and (V) the 'autonomous turn' in politics. On the basis of this five-dimensional approach, the study provides a systematic, comprehensive, and critical account of the legacy of the 'postmodern turn', notably in terms of its continuing relevance in the twenty-first century.

**Order online at www.palgrave.com**

UK, Europe, & ROW (excl. Australia & Canada):
Direct Customer Services,
Palgrave Macmillan,
The Macmillan Campus,
4 Crinan Street
London, N1 9XW, UK
Tel: 0207 418 5802
Email: orders@palgrave.com

USA:
Palgrave Macmillan, VHPS,
16365 James Madison Highway
(US route 15), Gordonsville,
VA 22942, USA
Email: consumerorders@mpsvirginia.com

Australia:
Customer Services,
Palgrave Macmillan,
Level 1, 15-19 Claremont St,
South Yarra
VIC 3141, Australia
Tel +61 3 9811 2555 (free call)
Email: orders@unitedbookdistributors.com.au

# Introduction

The main purpose of this book is to examine the impact of the 'postmodern turn'[1] on the contemporary social sciences. More specifically, the study seeks to demonstrate that the development of the social sciences in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries has been substantially shaped by key assumptions underlying theoretical approaches that defend both the epistemic validity and the historical significance of the 'postmodern turn'. Here, the 'postmodern turn' is conceived of as a paradigmatic shift from the Enlightenment belief in the *relative determinacy* of both the natural world and the social world to the – increasingly widespread – post-Enlightenment belief in the *radical indeterminacy* of all material and symbolic forms of existence. As shall be illustrated in the following chapters, the far-reaching importance of this paradigmatic transformation is reflected in five influential presuppositional 'turns', which have arguably been taking place in the social sciences over the past few decades and which are inextricably linked to the rise of postmodern thought:

I. the 'relativist turn' in epistemology;
II. the 'interpretive turn' in social research methodology;
III. the 'cultural turn' in sociology;
IV. the 'contingent turn' in historiography; and
V. the 'autonomous turn' in politics.

With the aim of shedding light on both the centrality and the complexity of these normative transitions, the analysis is structured as follows.

The principal objective of the preliminary sections, succeeding the chapter outline, is to reflect on three cornerstones of the following study: (i) *social theory*, (ii) *the modern*, and (iii) *the postmodern*. (i) To what extent is social theory, by definition, a 'modern' undertaking? And to what extent is it possible to conceive of social theory, in the contemporary era, as a 'postmodern' project? (ii) What does the concept of 'the modern' stand for? What are the key dimensions of 'modernity'? And of what does 'the ambivalence of modernity' consist? (iii) What does the concept of 'the postmodern' refer to? Who are the scholars whose works are

commonly associated with this concept? How can we make sense of the intellectual scope and influence of postmodern thought? And, finally, what are the key dimensions of 'postmodernity'? In addition to responding to the previous questions, these introductory sections will elucidate why, from a terminological point of view, it is useful to distinguish between the concepts of 'modernity', 'modernism', and 'modernization', as well as – in parallel – between the concepts of 'postmodernity', 'postmodernism', and 'postmodernization'.

The first chapter explores the impact of postmodern thought on contemporary debates in *epistemology*. Questions concerning the nature of knowledge ('What is knowledge?'), the possibility of knowledge ('How is knowledge acquired?'), and the validity of knowledge ('To what extent is a particular type of knowledge reliable?') have been pivotal to the development of the social sciences from the very beginning of their existence. Arguably, contemporary conceptions of knowledge have been profoundly influenced by what may be described as the *relativist turn* in epistemology. According to epistemological relativism, the nature, possibility, and validity of all knowledge are contingent upon the spatiotemporal specificity of the sociohistorical context in which it emerges. This view can be regarded as an attack on the Enlightenment trust in both the representational capacity and the explanatory power of scientific knowledge and, therefore, as an assault on one of the epistemic cornerstones of modern social theory. As shall be shown in this chapter, the presuppositional differences between modern and postmodern conceptions of knowledge become apparent in three epistemological tensions: (i) *truth versus perspective*, (ii) *certainty versus uncertainty*, and (iii) *universality versus particularity*. By means of a thorough enquiry into these antinomies, a distinction can be drawn between *positivist* and *postpositivist* conceptions of knowledge. Offering an overview of the main presuppositions underlying these diametrically opposed accounts of knowledge acquisition, the chapter examines the core reasons for the gradual *shift from positivist to postpositivist epistemological agendas* in the contemporary social sciences.

The second chapter looks into the impact of postmodern thought on central issues in social research *methodology*. Without intending to do justice to the intricacies attached to the elaboration of alternative – and, arguably, postmodern – research strategies in the social sciences, this chapter shall be limited to focusing on the principal dimensions of a methodological approach that has not only gained increasing influence on contemporary forms of sociological investigation but also shares a number of fundamental assumptions with postmodern thought: *discourse analysis*. To a noteworthy extent, contemporary approaches to human enquiry have incorporated insights obtained from what may be termed the *interpretive turn* in social research methodology. Similar to postmodern approaches in the social sciences, discourse analysts emphasize the normative significance of the *meaning-laden* dimensions of everyday life. Although it would be simplistic to portray the discrepancies between modern and postmodern approaches to social research methods in terms of clear-cut conceptual separations, the following three tensions are worth reflecting upon in some detail: (i) *explanation versus*

*understanding*, (ii) *mechanics versus dialectics*, and (iii) *ideology versus discourse*. By virtue of a critical consideration of the pivotal premises that undergird these antinomies, a distinction can be drawn between *structuralist* and *poststructuralist* conceptions of social research methodology. Based on a synoptic account of a series of binary presuppositional tensions, the chapter aims to unearth the principal grounds on which the gradual *shift from structuralist to poststructuralist methodological agendas* in the contemporary social sciences has sought to be justified.

The third chapter scrutinizes the impact of postmodern thought on recent developments in *sociology*. The influence of postmodernism on contemporary debates and controversies in sociological analysis has manifested itself – perhaps, most conspicuously – in the rise of *cultural studies* over the past few decades. If there is such a thing as a postmodern sociology, its conceptual tools and presuppositional frameworks are intimately intertwined with a significant paradigmatic shift that has contributed to reaching across disciplinary divides within the social sciences and the humanities: the *cultural turn*. Recent major trends in sociology cannot be understood without taking into account the extensive influence of cultural studies on cutting-edge variations of social and political analysis. It would be erroneous, however, to regard the thinkers and scholars whose writings are linked to the 'cultural turn' as proselytizing members of a homogenous intellectual movement. Whatever one makes of the normative presuppositions underlying the 'cultural turn', it is difficult to ignore its profound impact on contemporary sociology, in general, and on numerous attempts to develop a postmodern sociology, in particular. As shall be illustrated in this chapter, at least three central tensions are at stake in the controversies over the alleged differences between modern and postmodern conceptions of sociology: (i) *industrialism versus postindustrialism*, (ii) *productivism versus consumerism*, and (iii) *economism versus culturalism*. Aware of the fact that these antinomies designate major historical developments that have been taking place in recent decades, a distinction can be drawn between *materialist* and *postmaterialist* conceptions of society. Questioning the validity of the thesis that there has been a gradual *shift from materialist to postmaterialist sociological agendas* in the contemporary social sciences, this chapter provides an in-depth analysis of the degree to which the rise of postmodern thought has significantly shaped present-day understandings of *culture*, *the self*, and *globalization*.

The fourth chapter is concerned with the impact of postmodern thought on present-day disputes in *historiography*. Critical interrogations regarding the nature of history ('What is history?'), the development of history ('How does history evolve?'), and the study of history ('How can or should we make sense of history?') have always been, and will always continue to be, vital to the elaboration of research programmes in the social sciences, owing to their paramount interest in the interplay between processes of reproduction and processes of transformation. As explained in this chapter, the increasing popularity of postmodern approaches to the study of social developments can be seen as an expression of the *contingent*

*turn* in historiography. In light of the postmodern emphasis on spatiotemporal contingency, it appears that there is no underlying storyline that determines the course of history. In fact, such a view suggests that there is no such thing as a 'course of history', since it conceives of temporal development as a conglomerate of largely accidental, relatively arbitrary, and discontinuously interconnected occurrences. From this vantage point, the collapse of state socialism in Eastern and Central Europe at the end of the twentieth century is indicative of the deep historical contingency and political questionability of all meta-ideological formations. As argued in this chapter, the following three tensions are crucial for assessing the relevance of postmodern thought to contemporary accounts of history: (i) *necessity versus contingency*, (ii) *grand narratives versus small narratives*, and (iii) *continuity versus discontinuity*. With these antinomies in mind, a distinction can be drawn between *reconstructivist* and *deconstructivist* conceptions of historiography. The chapter scrutinizes the rationale behind the gradual *shift from reconstructivist to deconstructivist historiographical agendas* in the contemporary social sciences. In doing so, it aims to identify the key presuppositional components of a 'postclassical historiography'.

The fifth chapter grapples with the impact of postmodern thought on contemporary conceptions of *politics*. Arguably, the rise of the *politics of identity* – often characterized as the *politics of difference* or, alternatively, as the *politics of recognition* – is symptomatic of the increasingly widespread acceptance of the notion that the quest for human autonomy lies at the heart of any societal project aimed at challenging the legitimacy of traditional ways of coordinating human practices. In this context, the role of postmodern thought in the development of critical approaches to politics is reflected in what may be referred to as the *autonomous turn*. As illustrated in this paradigmatic shift, the discrepancy between modern and postmodern politics stems from three principal tensions: (i) *equality versus difference*, (ii) *society- as-a-project versus projects-in-society*, and (iii) *clarity versus ambiguity*. Considering these – as well as several other – antinomies, a distinction can be drawn between *traditional* and *post-traditional* conceptions of politics. The chapter looks into the reasons behind the gradual *shift from traditional to post-traditional political agendas* in the contemporary social sciences. To this end, a detailed enquiry into the constitutive ingredients of a *postmodern politics* will be undertaken. The chapter goes on to formulate *15 theses on cosmopolitanism*. In addition, it examines significant points of convergence between *cosmopolitanism* and *postmodernism*, arguing that the comparative analysis of these two intellectual traditions permits us to grasp paradigmatic developments in present-day forms of social and political analysis. The chapter draws to a close by suggesting that the principal issues at stake in current debates on cosmopolitanism and postmodernism cannot be divorced from the rise of *transnational public spheres*.

On the basis of the above-outlined investigation, the sixth and final chapter offers various *critical reflections* on postmodern thought. While acknowledging the important contributions made by, as well as the useful insights gained from, the aforementioned paradigmatic turns, it is vital to provide a comprehensive account of the shortcomings and flaws of postmodern approaches in the social sciences.

Conscious of the challenging nature of this task, the final chapter proposes to question the validity of postmodern thought by bringing to light its (i) *analytical*, (ii) *paradigmatic*, and (iii) *normative* limitations.

Before embarking upon an in-depth study of the 'postmodern turn', however, it is essential to clarify the meaning of three concepts that are central to the following enquiry: (i) *social theory*, (ii) *the modern*, and (iii) *the postmodern*.

## (i) Social Theory: 'Modern' or 'Postmodern'?

In mainstream sociological literature, social theory tends to be conceived of as a 'modern' endeavour. In recent decades, however, the view that social theory may be – and, indeed, may already have been – converted into a 'postmodern' venture has become increasingly influential. Let us, for the sake of conceptual clarity, consider the presuppositional underpinnings of these two positions.

### The Idea of a 'Modern Social Theory'

Social theory is both a product and a carrier of modernity. As a product of modernity, it can be considered as an analytical endeavour concerned with the numerous structural transformations that led to the rise of modern *formations* of society. As a carrier of modernity, it can be regarded as a discursive vehicle contributing to several debates on modern *conceptions* of society. In brief, social theory is an integral component of both the *real* and the *representational* constitution of the modern world.

What is social theory? *Social theory is the attempt to provide a conceptually informed – and, in many cases, empirically substantiated – framework designed to (1) describe, (2) analyse, (3) interpret, (4) explain, and (5) assess the constitution, the functioning, and the development of social reality, or of particular aspects of social reality, in a more or less systematic fashion.*

Just as '[s]ocial theory broadly encompasses the general concern with the nature of the social in modern society',[2] 'sociology is part and parcel of modernity'.[3] Just as '[i]t is born in modernity, its mission is to theorize about modernity.'[4] The coming-into-being of social theory is due to the rise of modern society: the former is a systematic attempt to grasp both the material and the ideological complexity of the latter. Hence, the *theoretical problematization* of reality in contemporary intellectual thought cannot be dissociated from the *practical transformation* of society owing to the emergence of modernity.

One of the principal aims of modern social theory is to provide conceptual tools and illuminating frameworks for examining both the processual and the structural conditions underlying the construction of human reality. Over the last few decades, however, 'throughout the social sciences and humanities there has been a profound change in the conceptualization of the social which in fact reflects *a deep uncertainty about the development of modern society*'.[5] This feeling of doubt and ambiguity is – perhaps, most obviously – expressed in the crisis of the trust and belief in the terminological adequacy and epistemic authority of social-scientific enquiries. In light of this legitimacy crisis, it appears that 'the status of

social theory vis-à-vis the social sciences has […] become increasingly uncertain and needs to be reassessed'.[6] It is important to emphasize, however, that the lack of clarity regarding the purpose and function of social theory is not necessarily a sign of its decline, let alone of its irrelevance for the creation of conceptually sophisticated and empirically substantiated research agendas. Rather, it is indicative of a paradigmatic shift concerning the analytical scope and elucidatory power of sociological investigation:

> *Is sociology dead?* As a *grand theory*, or set of theories that *explain everything* in a particular society, probably *yes*. As an *impulse* to develop a *critical understanding* of what makes human society possible, of how being human is constantly being redefined, probably *no*.[7]

In other words, rather than conceiving of sociology as a scientific endeavour aimed at providing a comprehensive account of both the constitution and the evolution of the human universe, it is now widely perceived as a critical project that is attentive to the *complexity* of relationally constructed realities. As such, its defenders tend to be suspicious of conceptual models aimed at delivering catch-all explanations of causal patterns that are believed to shape, or even determine, the nature and development of human societies. As shall be demonstrated in the following chapters, the crisis of the universalist ambitions of modern social theory is inextricably linked to the advent of the 'postmodern turn'[8] in the contemporary social sciences.[9] In order to substantiate the validity of this claim, we need to confront the challenging task of exploring the fundamental differences between modern and postmodern forms of social analysis.

### The Idea of a 'Postmodern Social Theory'

It is far from uncontroversial whether or not there is such a thing as a 'postmodern social theory'.[10] The defence of this project, however, tends to be based on ten key assumptions.

**(1)** Postmodern social theory is an *interdisciplinary* endeavour. The 'advocacy of social theory',[11] inspired by the 'critique of sociological theory',[12] is motivated by the conviction that we need to overcome disciplinary boundaries and cross-fertilize the knowledge generated within different epistemic comfort zones, in order to do justice to the fact that there is no analytical approach that can claim to possess a monopoly on ultimate representational adequacy, let alone on the capacity to capture the entire complexity of human reality.[13]

**(2)** Postmodern social theory is a *foundationless* endeavour. There appears to be more and more of a consensus among contemporary scholars in the social sciences that 'the quest for foundations and for a totalizing theory of society'[14] is not only pointless, but also potentially dangerous.[15] The search for objective, normative, or subjective grounds on which to justify the possibility of modern science turns out to be groundless, if we accept that – in the face of inescapable socio-cultural diversity – we cannot identify, let alone endorse, context-transcending standards of epistemic validity. Grand sociological theories, obsessed with the

system-building task of grasping the complexity of society by virtue of big-picture explanatory ideologies,[16] seem to have lost credibility in a world characterized by multiplicity and heterogeneity, rather than by uniformity and homogeneity.

**(3)** Postmodern social theory is a *directionless* endeavour. To be sure, 'directionless' – in this context – does not signify 'meaningless', 'pointless', or 'clueless'. Rather, it indicates that we, as critical researchers, should resist the temptation to invent conceptual apparatuses that lead to the 'false closure'[17] of theoretical frameworks, preventing us from 'prying open present and future social possibilities'[18] and from 'detecting fluidity and porousness',[19] rather than discovering determinacy and eternity, in the daily construction of human reality. A social theory without guarantees 'carries no promise of liberation […] of a society free of domination',[20] thereby rejecting the teleological spirit underlying classical accounts of human emancipation.[21]

**(4)** Postmodern social theory is a *public* endeavour. As such, it cannot make any major claims about the constitution of society without empirically engaging with the everyday processes that shape the development of reality. It will lose its wider 'social and intellectual importance'[22] if 'it is disengaged from the conflicts and public debates'[23] taking place on a daily basis. The 'plea for a "public sociology", which uses expert knowledge to promote debate with and amongst various non-academic publics',[24] is aimed at recognizing the following: to the extent that sociological analysis 'has turned inward and is largely self-referential',[25] it runs the risk of degrading itself to an elitist language game, whose autopoietic conceptual frameworks are disconnected from everyday concerns and experiences. Postmodern social theory, however, is public not only in the sense that it engages directly with quotidian realities 'on the ground', but also in the sense that it rejects the clear-cut separation between 'common sense' and 'expert knowledge'. In this regard, the distinction between '*traditional* public sociology' and '*organic* public sociology' seems useful.[26] The former 'addresses an amorphous, invisible and mainstream public', whereas the latter 'actively engages with a specific, visible and politically organized group of people'.[27] Not only do we need to avoid a scenario in which '[s]ociological theory […] is produced and consumed almost exclusively by sociological theorists',[28] and not only do we need to discard mainstream notions of 'professional sociology' and 'policy sociology',[29] but, moreover, we need to take on the challenge of *cross-fertilizing academic and non-academic discourses*. This can be achieved by doing away with the traditional division of labour between the 'scientific enlighteners', who direct and control their epistemic inferiors 'from above', and the 'ordinary to-be-enlightened', who follow and obey their epistemic superiors 'from below'.[30]

**(5)** Postmodern social theory is a *situationist* endeavour. Owing to its interest in the spatiotemporal specificities of locally experienced realities, it 'speaks the language of particularity',[31] rather than obeying the logic of the search for lawfulness and universality. In this sense, it is driven by 'the more modest aspiration of a relentless defense of immediate, local pleasures and struggles for justice'[32] instead of aiming 'to uncover a logic of society',[33] 'to discover the one true vocabulary that mirrors the social universe'[34] and 'to find a universal language, a conceptual

casuistry that can assess the truth of all social languages'[35] and thereby 'articulate humanity's universal condition'.[36] On this view, the cognitive and affective sensibility for situational idiosyncrasy obliges us to face up to the irreducibility of all life-worldly realities. What matters to the postmodern eye is what happens on the groundless grounds of diversified social practices, rather than in the sterile and abstract frameworks of foundationalist social theories. If we abandon the futile project of defining 'our principal task as providing foundations for sociology',[37] as 'giving ultimate reasons',[38] and as delivering 'a universal epistemic rationale that provides objective, value-neutral standards',[39] then we are in a position to recognize that the complexity of materially and symbolically differentiated realities cannot be captured in terms of the context-transcending frameworks and principles of grand sociological theories.

**(6)** Postmodern social theory is a *pragmatic* endeavour. Given its anti-foundationalist and anti-universalist outlook, the 'postmodern spirit' – if we may characterize it as such – 'suggests that the search for ultimate or universal grounds for our conceptual strategies should be abandoned in favor of local, pragmatic justifications'.[40] Such a pragmatist approach to social existence is interested in discursive processes accomplished by ordinary actors capable of mobilizing their cognitive resources in relationally constituted – and, hence, sociologically diverse – contexts. A 'pragmatic turn'[41] in social theory has various significant advantages, notably that '[i]t expands the number of parties who may participate more or less as equals in a debate about society'[42] and, therefore, permits us to do justice to the fact that human actors – that is, both experts *and* laypersons – are equipped with reflective, critical, and moral capacities.[43] In fact, the analysis of ordinary practices of justification reinforces the postmodern commitment to the aforementioned principles:

- different academic disciplines and different intellectual traditions generate different standards of validity (*interdisciplinarity*);
- different life forms produce different language games sustained by incommensurable normative criteria (*foundationlessness*);
- different individual and collective actors are motivated by different interests and aspirations, lacking a common denominator in terms of one overarching telos shared by all of them (*directionlessness*);
- different societies are shaped by different struggles taking place in different forms of public life (*publicness*);
- different objective, normative, and subjective concerns arise in different contexts (*situatedness*); and
- different grammars of justification emanate from – and, in turn, reinforce – different regimes of action (*usefulness*).

In short, the 'pragmatic turn' draws attention to the existential significance of *social practices*.

**(7)** Postmodern social theory is an *ethno-conscious* endeavour. To be aware of the cultural specificity of one's epistemic claims to validity requires recognizing

that the very attempt to overcome ethnocentrism confirms its inevitable impact upon all forms of knowledge production. In this regard, the point is to take the following insight into consideration: since human beings are socially situated actors, their symbolically mediated encounter with the world is embedded in spatiotemporally specific background horizons. Hermeneutics, in this sense, is not exclusively a theoretical matter of scholastic interpretations, developed and codified by professional philosophers, but also, more importantly, a practical affair of everyday understandings, constructed and mobilized by ordinary actors. Indeed, all modes of knowledge generation – irrespective of whether they are scientific or non-scientific, academic or non-academic, based on expertise or guided by common sense – represent *culturally specific* practices performed by spatiotemporally embedded entities. If we accept the sociocultural particularity underlying all epistemic claims to validity, then we are obliged to face up to the structuring power exercised by the ineluctable weight of historicity. 'The notion that foundational discourses cannot avoid being *local* and *ethnocentric* is pivotal to what has come to be called postmodernism'.[44] The major difference between foundationalist and anti-foundationalist approaches, then, is not that the former transcend, whereas the latter remain trapped in, the culturally specific background horizons of their emergence; rather, they are divided by the fact that the former deny, whereas the latter recognize, the *spatiotemporal contingency* of all epistemic claims concerning the constitution of reality. To be ethno-conscious means to be aware of the fact that all modes of cognition – including the most reflexive ones – are influenced by context-dependent prejudices, preconceptions, and presuppositions.

**(8)** Postmodern social theory is a *socio-conscious* endeavour. As such, it insists not only upon the cultural specificity that shapes epistemic communities, but also, in a broader sense, upon the *relational contingency* underlying the seemingly most liberating forms of human agency. Indeed, it is due to this relational contingency that the human condition is permeated by radical indeterminacy: highly differentiated societies produce intersectionally constituted actors expected to take on multiple roles, develop plural identities, and carry various coexisting – and, often, conflicting – selves within themselves. In light of this relational contingency, characterized by varying degrees of social intersectionality, one of the key epistemological questions posed by the postmodern mind is the following:

> How can a *knowing subject*, who has particular interests and prejudices by virtue of living in a specific society at a particular historical juncture and occupying a specific *social position* defined by his or her class, gender, race, sexual orientation, and ethnic and religious status, produce concepts, explanations, and standards of validity that are *universally valid*?[45]

The answer given by postmodernists in response to this query can be summarized as follows: since *all knowledge claims are relationally contingent* in terms of both their *formulation*, by a particular actor, and their *reception*, by other actors, *there are no universal criteria against which to judge the adequacy of epistemic validity*.

Put differently, the attainment of epistemic validity cannot be divorced from the assertion of symbolic authority emanating from the need for the recognition of social legitimacy. To be sure, in the social world, recognition can be granted explicitly or implicitly, consciously or unconsciously, deliberately or inadvertently; whatever their performative specificity, however, claims to epistemic validity are imbued with relationally constituted struggles over social legitimacy. The question of whether we consider a statement right or wrong depends not only on *what* is being said, but also on *who* says it *when*, *where*, and *to whom*. For *objectivity* ('What?') is – inevitably – a matter of *social authority* ('Who?'), *spatiotemporal contextuality* ('Where and when?'), and *interactional relationality* ('To whom?'). The idea of abstract epistemic universality evaporates when confronted with the multilayered constitution of normative – that is, value-laden, meaning-laden, perspective-laden, interest-laden, power-laden, and tension-laden – realities.

**(9)** Postmodern social theory is a *pluralist* endeavour. To assume that 'epistemic suspicion is at the core of postmodernism'[46] means to acknowledge that, far from seeking to invent 'a universally valid language of truth',[47] it is concerned with the critical exploration of, and active involvement in, '*heterogeneous struggles*'[48] around a multiplicity of sociological variables – such as class, gender, ethnic- ity, age, and ability. Viewed in this light, one of the most serious limitations of classical sociological thought is that its 'flat, contentless general categories seem inevitably to ignore or repress social differences'.[49] Highly differentiated societies are centreless formations in the sense that they lack a structural, ideological, or behavioural epicentre from which all institutions, discourses, and practices derive and upon which peripheral areas of interaction, or derivative forms of existence, are parasitical. In the postmodern jungle of flows, networks, and diversified local events, the human actor is '*a self with multiple identities and group affiliations, which is entangled in heterogeneous struggles with multiple possibilities for empowerment*'.[50] Given both the real and the representational complexity of materially and symbolically differentiated societies, we need to abandon the modern project of developing big-picture ideologies and face up to the existence of situation-laden normativities created in response to relationally constituted realities. In the postmodern universe, there is no such thing as an overriding agenda that can justifiably declare to possess a normative monopoly in the landscape of decentred and diversified subjectivities.

**(10)** Postmodern social theory is a *historicist* endeavour. One of the main limitations of classical sociological thought, undermining its applicability to the study of highly differentiated forms of sociality, is its 'quest for foundations',[51] which is expressed in 'the project of creating a *general theory*',[52] understood as 'an overarching totalizing conceptual framework that would be true for *all times* and *all places*'.[53] In this respect, three issues are particularly worth mentioning:

A. *Ethnocentrism*: '*Human history* in these modernist tales really meant *Western history*.'[54] Their capacity to conceal 'the mark of their own national origin'[55] permits them to present their explanatory insights into social developments 'as if their particular pattern were of world-historical importance'.[56]

B. *Evolutionism*: In classical sociological thought, '[n]on-Western societies [are] relegated to a marginal position in past, present, and future history'.[57] Following this modernist logic, historical events and trends can be measured against the teleological benchmark of 'Progress',[58] which can be defined in numerous – notably, social, cultural, political, economic, technological, scientific, religious, demographic, and civilizational – terms. 'The *grand narratives of industrialization, modernization, secularization, democratization*, these sweeping stories that *presume to uncover a uniform social process* in a multitude of different societies […] should be abandoned.'[59]
C. *Dichotomism*: Teleological metanarratives are 'stories with […] simplistic binary schemes',[60] such as *These* versus *Antithese* (Georg W. F. Hegel), *Gemeinschaft* versus *Gesellschaft* (Ferdinand Tönnies), *Kapitalismus* versus *Sozialismus/ Kommunismus* (Karl Marx), *Wertrationalität* versus *Zweckrationalität* (Max Weber), or *solidarité mécanique* versus *solidarité organique* (Émile Durkheim) – to mention only a few examples.[61] Universalist evolutionary and binary categories artificially homogenize the heterogeneously constituted constellations of historical realities. If, however, we acknowledge the sociohistorical specificity underlying all epistemic claims to validity, then we are obliged to expose the spatiotemporal relativity permeating the symbolic authority asserted by universalist accounts of history.

## (ii) 'The Modern'

The concept of 'the modern' is not simply a recent – or, tautologically speaking, an exclusively 'modern' – reference point; rather, it has a 'premodern' history. 'The word *modern* is said to derive from the Latin word *modo*, meaning "just now". Thus, modern implies belonging to the present or to recent times, and the word has been part of the English language since at least 1500.'[62] 'To be *modern* was to be *contemporary*, to witness the *present moment*. The idea of "the moment" is central to the *time consciousness* of modernity and expresses a tension between present and past'.[63]

Just as it is important to be aware of the etymological roots of the word 'modern', it is crucial to recognize that the idea of 'the modern' has been on the agenda long *before* the rise of what is commonly described as 'modern society'. In fact, the members of *any* epoch may characterize themselves as 'modern' insofar as they consider the historical phase in which they find themselves situated as a *contemporary* period. In every spatiotemporal context, 'the now' is unavoidably constructed within the temporal horizon of 'the already'; 'the present' necessarily exists in relation to 'the past'; 'being' always develops in the lap of 'the hitherto-been'. 'The word "*modern*" was first employed in the *late fifth century* in order to distinguish *the present*, now officially *Christian*, from the pagan and Roman past.'[64] 'For the *Christian* thinkers of the early medieval age, the modern referred to the contemporary *period of the early Church*. *Modernity* was thus defined *in opposition to the pagan period*, which had been overcome.'[65] Hence, the present of modernity is situated in relation to the past of antiquity. The self-consciousness of a new epoch

arises through its explicit disassociation from, and transcendence of, the historical phase by which it is preceded. What distinguishes *modernity* from premodern eras, then, is not its awareness of the present as such, but its awareness of a *specific* – that is, *unprecedented* – kind of present. The question that poses itself, therefore, is to what extent it is justified to characterize modernity as a historical stage based on a set of unparalleled societal features.

In a broad sense, *the concept of modernity 'refers to modes of social life or organisation which emerged in Europe from about the seventeenth century onwards and which subsequently became more or less worldwide in their influence'*.[66] In other words, modernity is inextricably linked to the structural and ideological transformations which began to take place in Europe towards the end of the seventeenth century and which led to the gradual consolidation of a radically new type of society, not only in Europe but, eventually, across the globe. One of the most challenging ambitions in sociology has always been to make sense of this historical transition by seeking to identify and examine the key factors that, eventually, resulted in the rise of modernity.

Without a doubt, the founding figures of the sociological project – Karl Marx, Émile Durkheim, and Max Weber[67] – diverge substantially in terms of their interpretation of modernity. Yet, they share not only the *ontological* assumption that modern society is inherently dynamic and progressive, but also the *methodological* conviction that the causal mechanisms shaping the course of modern history can be systematically and empirically studied. Modern society may be driven by the *productive forces of capitalism*, as maintained by Marx;[68] it may be hold together by the *organic solidarity brought about by industrialism*, as suggested by Durkheim;[69] or, it may be tantamount to an increasingly *disenchanted world*, owing to the preponderance of *bureaucratic rationalization*, as claimed by Weber.[70]

Irrespective of the considerable differences between their explanatory approaches, the three thinkers converge in their aim to *shed light on the underlying structural forces that govern the development of modern society*. In doing so, their writings illustrate that, although previous epochs may also be characterized as constantly developing historical formations, one feature of modernity is particularly striking: namely, the fact that its *transformative potential* – in terms of its *nature*, *pace*, *scope*, *impact*, and civilizational *significance* – is *unprecedented*.[71]

With this interpretation in mind, the postmodern critique of classical social theory is not primarily concerned with the conceptual and methodological differences that exist between the founding figures of sociology. Rather, it focuses on their common presuppositional ground, notably by taking issue with the assumption that the modern world is driven by a 'big story', which can be disclosed through the scientific study of social structures and social processes.

In general terms, *the project of modernity*[72] stands for a normative endeavour in that its advocates believe that the course of history can be both understood and shaped by *conscious subjects capable of purposive action and critical thinking*. On this account, reason enables human beings not only to *reflect upon* and *interpret*, but also to *act upon* and *change* the world in accordance with individual and societal needs. The project of modernity is inextricably linked to '*the project of the*

*Enlightenment*'.[73] In essence, the latter represents a discursive manifestation of the former. From an Enlightenment perspective, *the emancipatory potential of modern society is rooted in people's ability to take on their role as morally responsible entities capable of replacing the prejudices permeating traditional and dogmatic worldviews with insights gained from discursive forms of critical reasoning*. '*Modernity*, as the self-consciousness of the *Enlightenment*, was self-evidently the *emancipation* of human beings from the prejudices of tradition. Modernity is thus defined by reference to the *critique of tradition*.'[74] Put differently, modernity can be conceived of as a historical condition allowing for people's emancipation from preconceptions based on tradition and common sense and, hence, for the construction of a society whose destiny is determined by the species-distinctive potential of rationality and oriented towards the realization of human autonomy.

From a postmodern standpoint, however, intellectual thought that is inspired by the Enlightenment project is problematic to the extent that it is motivated by three key ambitions: (a) the ambition to uncover the underlying mechanisms that determine both the constitution and the evolution of *society*; (b) the ambition to give a coherent account of the nature and the development of the human *subject*; and (c) the ambition to explore the preconditions for the possibility of social *change*, understood as a historical process steered by the species-constitutive power of reason and expressed in the conscious transformation of human reality.[75] Modern social theory is the systematic attempt to explore the extent to which human actors are not only situated in, and constrained by, their social environment but, in addition, have the capacity to determine the conditions of their existence by virtue of purposive reason (*Verstand*) as well as the ability to imbue their lives in accordance with justifiable principles derived from normative reason (*Vernunft*). Human beings, then, are confronted with the species-constitutive task of coming to terms with both the intuitive 'withinness' and the reflective 'beyondness' of their tension-laden existence. Modernity is a historical condition constructed by subjects capable of acting upon, attributing meaning to, and constantly reinventing their unique place in the universe.

### Key Dimensions of Modernity

Given the complexity of large-scale historical developments, it is no surprise that different social theorists focus on different features of the modern condition. Surely, some factors have been more significant than others in terms of their overall impact upon the rise and development of modernity; indeed, it remains open to debate how the historical role of each of these factors should be interpreted. Whatever the disagreements sparked by such a dispute may be, however, the following six levels of analysis are particularly important for a comprehensive understanding of the sociohistorical conditions that led to the rise of modernity.[76]

**(1)** On the *economic* level, the rise of modernity is inextricably linked to *industrialization*. The rapid expansion of industrial capitalism, from the eighteenth century onwards, has been a key driving force of the modern age. As an unprecedentedly dynamic economic system, industrial capitalism – notably in terms of its capacity to generate constantly evolving production, distribution,

and consumption patterns – has had a profound impact upon the development of modernity, directly or indirectly affecting every sphere of social life. The drive for continuous invention, innovation, and transformation lies at the heart of industrial capitalism, illustrating that its productive forces are more dynamic and powerful than those of any previous economic system in the history of humankind.

**(2)** On the *epistemic* level, the rise of modernity is intimately interrelated with *rationalization*. Modern rationalization processes are inconceivable without the unstoppable growth of systematic forms of knowledge production, epitomized in the massive influence of *science* on both private and public dimensions of social existence. The production, growth, and refinement of scientific knowledge have several far-reaching implications for the development of modernity, essentially on two levels: on the *discursive* level, the power of science allows for *theoretical progress*, based on logical arguments, empirical research, expert controversies, and the testing of truth claims through methodical processes of verification and falsification; on the *material* level, the power of science manifests itself in *practical progress*, leading to technological advancements driven by the ceaseless transformation of the means of production, forces of production, and relations of production. Owing to both the theoretical and the practical impact of science, the influence of traditional sources of authority – such as religion – has been undermined both *ideologically*, in terms of interpretation and legitimation processes, and *institutionally*, in terms of ritualization and habitualization processes.

**(3)** On the *political* level, the rise of modernity is intimately interrelated with *ideologization*. To be sure, this is not to contend that political ideologies did not exist before the rise of modernity; nor is this to affirm that 'politics' can be reduced to 'ideology'. Rather, this is to recognize the fact that *modernity* – arguably, more so than any previous historical period – *has been crucially shaped by the elaboration, justification, divulgation, application, institutionalization, and constant revision of political programmes founded on ideological principles*. Indisputably, the dynamics arising from the theoretical and the intellectual rivalry, as much as from the practical and the strategic competition, between different political ideologies have left a pluralist mark on modern history. Rightly or wrongly, one may come to the conclusion that liberalism constitutes the triumphant political ideology of the early twenty-first century. Whatever one makes of this assessment, however, there is little doubt that at least five major political ideologies have substantially shaped the development of modern history: *anarchism, communism/socialism, liberalism, conservatism, and fascism*. Of course, it is possible to identify significant points of convergence and divergence, as well as noteworthy points of partial integration and cross-fertilization, between these prominent ideologies.[77] Notably, they can be compared and contrasted in terms of their respective conceptions of 'humanity', 'society', 'the economy', 'the polity', and 'history', but also – more fundamentally – in terms of the role they have played in the development of modernity. However one may wish to evaluate, or even measure, their past and present impact on society, recent history cannot be understood without the study of modern political ideologies.

**(4)** On the *organizational* level, the rise of modernity cannot be divorced from large-scale processes of *bureaucratization*. The modern quest for the control over reality by virtue of instrumental rationality is epitomized in the spread of bureaucracies in various domains of society, particularly the economy and the polity. *Economic* power is expressed in the control over the constitution of a particular mode of production. *Epistemic* power manifests itself in the influence over the composition of paradigmatic forms of cognition. *Political* power is reflected in the capacity to shape real and representational structures, as well as material and ideological resources, mobilized to determine the coordination of social practices. *Organizational* power is crucial to the efficient, and more or less predictable, administration of institutional domains in large-scale societies. Regardless of whether one conceives of modernity as an era characterized by the emergence of a partly or totally administered world, the instrumental rationality underlying advanced types of bureaucracy constitutes an integral element of modern societies.[78] Surely, bureaucracies have existed for a long time; it is due to the unprecedented degree of systemic complexity that they reached in the context of modernity, however, that powerful – that is, above all, authoritarian – political regimes in the twentieth century succeeded in exercising totalitarian control over their societies.

**(5)** On the *cultural* level, the rise of modernity is accompanied by processes of *individualization*. As Durkheimian scholars point out, the transition from 'traditional society' to 'modern society', expressed in the replacement of 'mechanic solidarity' by 'organic solidarity', led to a shift in existential focus from 'the cult of God' to 'the cult of the individual'.[79] With the emergence of the modern age, the normative expectations thrown at human actors began to change dramatic- ally. According to individualist parameters, people are not only allowed but also required to pick and choose from a menu of identities and thereby develop a sense of personality. There is a long list comprising *sources of identity* that are crucial to the construction of personhood in modern society: class, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, 'race', cultural preferences, life-style, religion, age, ability, or political ideology – to mention only a few. Paradoxically, individualization processes are inconceivable without socialization processes, and vice versa.[80] A person can develop a sense of identity only in relation to society, just as society is an indispensable resource for the creation of both individual and collective identities. Granted, the constraining power of social structures, institutions, norms, and expectations continues to exist within the historical framework of modernity. Compared to traditional life forms, however, modern societies – particularly its liberal variants – offer substantially more room for individual freedom – and, hence, for people's capacity to convert themselves into protagonists of their own destiny – than its premodern counterparts.

**(6)** On the *philosophical* level, the rise of modernity cannot be separated from processes of *emancipation* inspired by the Enlightenment.[81] 'In the most general sense, the concept of emancipation refers to an entity's liberation from control, dependence, restraint, confinement, restriction, repression, slavery, or domination.'[82] Thus, in Enlightenment thought, emancipation processes are commonly associated with 'the *transition from heteronomy to autonomy, from dependence to freedom, or from*

*alienation to self-realization*'.[83] The view that human beings have the capacity to convert themselves into protagonists of emancipation, which is central to the project of modernity, is expressed in several intellectual traditions that are based on different notions of *the subject*. Among the most influential conceptions of 'the subject' in modern social and political thought are the following: 'the thinking subject' (René Descartes), 'the rational subject' (Immanuel Kant), 'the recognitive subject' (Georg W. F. Hegel), 'the working subject' (Karl Marx), 'the unconscious subject' (Sigmund Freud), 'the linguistic subject' (Martin Heidegger, Hans-Georg Gadamer, and Paul Ricœur), 'the experiencing subject' (Edmund Husserl), 'the political subject' (Hannah Arendt), and 'the communicative subject' (Jürgen Habermas).[84] As reflected in the variety of these approaches, the question of what kind of processes can, or should, be characterized as 'liberating' remains a cause of controversy. '[T]here is little doubt, however, that one feature that all forms of emancipation have in common is that they involve an individual or a collective entity's assertion of *sovereignty* and its exemption from one or various sources of relatively arbitrary control'.[85] Although there has never been a universal consensus on the nature of human emancipation in Enlightenment thought, the attempt to create a society capable of giving its members the opportunity to realize their species-constitutive potential can be regarded as a normative cornerstone underpinning the project of modernity.

The above overview, which comprises the key factors that have contributed to the rise of modernity, is far from exhaustive. It nevertheless illustrates the following: in order to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the principal components that led to the emergence, and allowed for the rapid development, of modern societies, a *multifactorial* analysis of different, interrelated, and – to some extent – overlapping dimensions is needed. Moreover, such a multilevel examination suggests that, paradoxically, the aforementioned elements constitute both *reasons for* and *consequences of* the rise of modernity: as contributing factors, the pivotal role that they play in the unfolding of historical developments has made the modern condition possible; as tangible outcomes, they have been shaped by the historical circumstances that they have themselves brought about. Hence, the dialectics of modernity emanates from the interplay between numerous – notably (1) economic, (2) epistemic, (3) political, (4) organizational, (5) cultural, and (6) philosophical – factors. These factors constitute, at once, the *precondition for* and the *result of* the emergence of modern societal formations, which came into being in Europe from the seventeenth century onwards and which, subsequently, began to have a substantial impact upon civilizational developments across the world.

**The Ambivalence of Modernity**

As several commentators have pointed out, modernity is a historical condition characterized by the existence of different levels of *ambivalence*.[86] Three levels of ambivalence are particularly worth mentioning when reflecting upon the condition of modernity.

**(1)** On the *ontological* level, we can distinguish between a *modernity in itself* and a *modernity for itself*. The former describes modernity 'as a historical event, a social

condition, an epoch in historical time'.[87] The latter, by contrast, refers to modernity 'as an idea […] a cultural impulse, a time consciousness'.[88] In other words, modernity exists both as an *objective* mode of being, which comes to the fore in the presence of substantive realities, and as a *reflexive* mode of being, which is aware of its own constellation as a symbolically mediated and phenomenologically represented actuality.

**(2)** On the *normative* level, we can distinguish between a *dark modernity* and a *bright modernity*. The former denotes the ensemble of the *repressive* facets of modernity, which emanate from the quest for domination, epitomized in the historical impact of *instrumental reason*. These are intimately associated with variations of control – such as power, authority, order, discipline, obedience, enclosure, and heteronomy – and materialize themselves in social processes of domination, regulation, exploitation, alienation, fragmentation, exclusion, and discrimination. The latter, on the other hand, designates the *emancipatory* aspects of the modern condition, which can be uncovered by *critical reason*. These are expressed in Enlightenment ideals – such as progress, tolerance, liberty, equality, solidarity, dignity, sovereignty, and autonomy – and manifest themselves in social processes of liberation, self-determination, and unification.[89]

**(3)** On the *spatiotemporal* level, we can distinguish between a *backward-looking modernity* and a *forward-looking modernity*. The former is *oriented towards the past*: it is imbued with 'a nostalgia and sadness for the passing of an unretrievable organic unity'[90] and deeply suspicious of the 'great faith in the promise of reason to bring about freedom'.[91] Conversely, the latter is *oriented towards the future*: indeed, 'the secular concept of modernity expresses the conviction that the future has already begun: it is the epoch that lives for the future, that opens itself up to the novelty of the future'.[92] In light of this spatiotemporal ambivalence, which expresses a schizophrenic idealization of both the past and the future, it appears that '[t]he idea of modernity is […] a projection backwards as much as forwards',[93] as illustrated in the tension-laden impact of both conservatism and utopianism upon the development of modern history. To conceive of modernity, first and foremost, as a transformative historical condition that seeks to come to terms with the present by retrieving seemingly lost elements from the past means to consider the *restoration* of vanished social arrangements, practices, and values as a precondition for the salvation of the present and for the avoidance of the decline of the West.[94] By contrast, to define modernity 'as an *epoch turned to the future* conceived as likely to be different from and possibly better than the present and the past'[95] means to interpret the orientation towards the yet-to-come as a key motivational ingredient of a distinctive period.

The aforementioned levels of ambivalence are central to the era commonly characterized as modernity. In ontological terms, modernity exists both as an *objective* and as a *reflexive* condition. In normative terms, modernity exists both as a *disempowering* and as an *empowering* condition. In spatiotemporal terms, modernity exists both as a *backward-looking* and as a *forward-looking* condition.

Owing to this paradoxical complexity, and far from being reducible to a one-dimensional historical reality, modernity can be conceived of as a tension-laden

age pervaded by existential ambiguity. In fact, the tensions arising from the contradictory relationship between 'being-there' and 'being-aware', between 'being-dominated' and 'being-emancipated', and between 'being-as-always-already-been' and 'being-as-yet-to-come' concern modernity not only as a collectively constructed moment of society but also as an individually experienced reference point of historically embedded subjectivities. On this account, it appears that every ordinary human entity is (1) both an *objective being* immersed in reality and a *subjective being* aware of reality, (2) both a *constrained being* struggling with the limitations imposed upon it by the world and a *purposive being* seeking to act upon the world, as well as (3) both a *regressive being* yearning to retrieve the past and a *progressive being* looking forward to the future. Existential ambivalence may be regarded as a constitutive feature of human selfhood;[96] in the context of modernity, it is has been elevated to the status of a foundational condition permeating the entirety of a historical era.

### (iii) 'The Postmodern'

For at least the past three decades, the concept of 'the postmodern' has been a major source of debate in the social sciences.[97] Taking into account that the concept of 'the modern' is highly contentious, it is not difficult to imagine that the concept of 'the postmodern' is hardly less controversial than its predecessor. However one interprets the concept of 'the postmodern', there is little doubt that it is generally associated with the idea of *epochal change*: 'The *discourse of the post* is sometimes connected with an *apocalyptic sense of rupture*, of *the passing of the old and the advent of the new*.'[98] The 'postization' of a whole variety of different sociological concepts appears to have been a fashionable trend in social and political thought from the late twentieth century until the present. Yet, the semantic creativity of contemporary academic discourses is not necessarily a sign of their intellectual originality. The validity of the gradual 'postization' of the social sciences should not be taken for granted; rather, it has to be critically examined in order for its analysis to move beyond the status of provocative rhetorical speculation.

The list of the contemporary proliferation of neologisms that contain the prefix 'post' is long: postmodernism, poststructuralism, postrationalism, post-foundationalism, post-transcendentalism, postcolonialism, postmaterialism, postindustrialism, post-Fordism, post-Keynesianism, postsocialism, postcommunism, post-Marxism, postutopianism, postsecularism, and posthumanism – to mention only a few. The thriving multiplicity of these catch-all concepts seems to suggest 'that we […] live in *a post-something era*'[99] or, in a more holistic sense, in *a post-everything*[100] *period*, characterized by a *diffuse sense of afterness*.[101] The ontology of the contemporary world, then, is frequently portrayed as a post-ontology. Nevertheless, the prefix 'post' is problematic in at least three respects.

**(1)** There is a *definitional* problem. As a periodizing term, the prefix 'post' delineates a concept *negatively* in terms of what it is *not*. Its only affirmative feature is its temporal delimitation concerning a condition that succeeds – that is, comes 'after' – something else. Thus, it defines a state of affairs in opposition to another – hitherto

existing – situation, yet without indicating what it actually stands for. As a result, one gets the impression that '[w]e are living in a new world, *a world that does not know how to define itself by what it is*, but only by what it has just-now ceased to be.'[102] Hence, the prefix 'post' tells us what the present age is *not*, rather than what it *is*. 'The post-mode is itself a temporal concept, implying a "before" and an "after".'[103] This is not to posit that postmodern thought necessarily lacks a conception of the present; this is to recognize, however, that its understanding of the 'here and now' is based on the assumption that *the contemporary era constitutes a historical condition characterized by radical indeterminacy*.

**(2)** Closely related to the previous point, there is an *interpretive* problem. If historical periods are defined primarily on the basis of the prefixes 'pre' and 'post', and thus in terms of a 'before' and an 'after', then the nature of the *now* is in danger of being systematically *faded out*. To historicize society by relying exclusively on 'post-istic' readings of social reality is problematic to the extent that such a *prefix-dependent view* 'leaves unquestioned the position […] of the present from which one is supposed to be able to achieve a legitimate perspective on a chronological succession'.[104] A thorough analysis of the 'after', however, must imply an equally conscientious study of the 'now'. If the present is to be characterized in terms of whatever form of 'afterness', we need to provide a systematic account of what this alleged 'afterness' represents. A comprehensive reflection upon 'the present' must entail a thorough consideration of 'the past', just as a critical examination of 'the past' is inconceivable without conscious attentiveness to the historical conditions of 'the present'. In order to understand what society *is*, we need to grasp what society *has become*. A 'post-istic' conception of the present must prove that it does not fall into the trap of interpreting the present exclusively in terms of the future. *History is imbued with the temporal continuum between past, present, and future.*

**(3)** There is a *normative* problem. Paradoxically, if we define one concept in opposition to another concept, we run the risk of creating a sense of *terminological heteronomy*. No matter how radical the transformation of the 'now' into the 'after' may be, the latter can emerge only within the temporal horizon of the former. To define the present as 'postmodern' means to acknowledge the powerful status of 'the modern'. If the notion of 'the postmodern' is understood, literally, as a condition characterized by an 'after-now', then the ineluctable dependence of the 'after' upon the 'now' becomes evident. The concept of 'the postmodern' does not discredit or undermine, but, on the contrary, implicitly acknowledges and reinforces the continuing relevance of the concept of 'the modern'.[105] Of course, contemporary thinkers may contend that we have moved *beyond* the condition of modernity. Notwithstanding the question of whether it is real or imagined, however, the epochal transition to postmodernity cannot be dissociated from its intrinsic connection to modernity, for the former stands *within* the horizon of the latter. *The transcendent power of postmodernity is inseparable from its historical attachment to the condition of modernity.*

We have already briefly considered the meaning of the term 'modern'. In a similar vein, we need to take into account the *etymological development* of the term

'postmodern'. Interestingly, the first instances of the use of the word 'postmodern' can be found not in sociology or social theory, but in *art and literature*. To be precise, the initial employment of this term in modern writings can be traced back to the realms of visual art and poetry:

> In the earliest usage unearthed thus far, around *1870* an English painter, John Watkins Chapman, described as 'postmodern' *painting* that was supposedly more modern than French impressionism […]. The concept was similarly employed in literature in *1934* and again in *1942* to describe a related tendency in Hispanic *poetry* […].[106]

Referring to experimental tendencies in Western *arts and architecture* from the *1940 or 1950s* onwards, *postmodernism* stands for both the continuation and the transcendence of modernism, representing an eclectic mixture of different traditions of both the immediate and the distant past. By contrast, debates on the nature of *the postmodern* in the *social sciences* constitute a relatively recent phenomenon, that is, a discursive feature of the *late twentieth century*.[107] As shall be demonstrated in the present study, these disputes are crucial to understanding the paradigmatic shifts that have significantly reshaped the social sciences over the past few decades.

To the extent that conceptual definitions are supposed to be rationally justifiable and objective, and to the extent that postmodernists question the possibility of providing epistemic foundations for the representational validity of rationality and objectivity, *the attempt to develop a non-modern description of postmodernity appears to be a contradiction in terms*. On the face of it, there is no conceptual definition of postmodernism capable of escaping the presuppositional logic of modern intellectual thought. The scepticism towards the idea of imposing 'modern' standards upon 'the postmodern', when conceptualizing the latter from the viewpoint of the former, is reflected in statements such as the following:

> Already in such a reading, *modern values of clarity, consensus and convergence* are privileged over *heterogeneous* ways of thinking that accept and work with ambiguities, uncertainties and complexity. The very idea that the postmodern has to *mean* something, that this *meaning* is to be *clear*, and that any movement that is postmodern in orientation is to be necessarily *one* and *unified* in aim is already to work from *modernist value presuppositions*, and to promote these over any alternative perspective.[108]

> Post-modernists are loath to define […]. *Definitions* engage with those very qualities of *rationality* and *objectivity* that post-modernists are at pains to deny.[109]

> It is difficult to avoid giving a modern definition of the postmodern; in fact, virtually any *definition* of postmodernism will turn out to be *modernist*.[110]

Furthermore, it is striking that various critical commentators insist that, owing to its eclectic intellectual roots and its diversified relevance to different areas of

study, it may be *pointless to try to define the term 'postmodern' in a clear and unambiguous manner*:

> […] the label 'postmodern' is *problematic*, lumping together often conflicting theorists and practices.[111]
>
> Postmodernism is a contemporary movement. […] I]t is *not altogether clear what the devil it is*. In fact, clarity is not conspicuous amongst its marked attributes.[112]
>
> […] the term postmodern […] *lacks* any *conceptual prevision*, or any empirical grip on *so-called 'reality'*.[113]
>
> 'Postmodernism' is a term that defies *simple definition*.[114]
>
> Postmodernity is *The-Whatever-It-Is* that succeeds that modernity.[115]
>
> […] postmodernism […] has *no fixed meaning* […].[116]
>
> […] postmodernism *defies all simple definitions*.[117]

In addition to this definitional problem, it is worth mentioning that, although – for at least the last three decades – it has been common to make use of the term 'postmodernism', it seems to be *unpopular to be classified as a 'postmodernist'*, given that only very few theorists identify openly and explicitly with this label.

> It is a *dangerous provocation* to be a post-modernist, in academic circles at least. There are far more books and articles telling us what is wrong with post-modern theory than there are statements in its favour.[118]
>
> One of the curious features of the discussion which has developed around the controversial idea of postmodern social and philosophical thought is that the analysts most closely identified with the idea of the postmodern might be described as, at best, *reluctant participants*.[119]

In short, as elucidated in the above passages, *the concept of 'the postmodern' appears to be difficult – or, perhaps, impossible – to define in (a) non-modern and non-logocentric, (b) unambiguous and concise, and (c) outspokenly favourable and unequivocally sympathetic terms*. Whatever one makes of these objections and reflections, all definitional and methodical attempts to make sense of 'the postmodern' are fraught with difficulties. Far from constituting a coherent ideological tradition or clearly definable school of thought, *'postmodernism' has been shaped by an eclectic and heterogeneous intellectual movement, whose supporters share one significant characteristic: namely, radical scepticism towards beliefs and principles associated with the project of modernity in general and with Enlightenment thought in particular*. What advocates of 'postmodernism' also have in common, however, is that – paradoxically – they are intellectually and socially attached to the historical horizon from which they seek to detach themselves: the condition of modernity. It is not the existence of 'the postmodern' that has given rise to the notion of 'the modern'; rather, it is the existence of 'the modern' that precedes the rise of the idea of 'the postmodern'.[120]

To be sure, there is no point in denying the considerable influence that postmodern thought has had, and continues to have, on key debates and controversies in the contemporary social sciences. It is nonetheless important to acknowledge that both the referential relevance and the discursive force of postmodern approaches are largely due to their provocative – and, in many ways, intellectually enriching – opposition to modern traditions of thought, notably those inspired by, or representative of, the Enlightenment. As illustrated in the multifaceted history of intellectual thought, *a crucial indicator of the impact of hegemonic discourses on society is their capacity to trigger the emergence of counterhegemonic discourses*.[121] It is because of, not despite, the fact that postmodern thought has been immensely influential that it has been substantially criticized in numerous ways and by various scholars with diverse disciplinary backgrounds. Thus, the multifaceted forms of criticism levelled against postmodern thought should be regarded not only as a sign of its substantive weaknesses and limitations, but also as a manifestation of its considerable strengths and contributions.

The definitional elasticity of the term 'postmodern' is symptomatic of both the theoretical complexity and the wide-ranging scope of the 'postmodern turn'.[122] In fact, one may contend that the postmodern insistence upon the *empirical* indeterminacy of the contemporary world is reflected in the *conceptual* indeterminacy of postmodern thought. Given its commitment to theoretical eclecticism and its opposition to the usage of 'totalizing' analytical straitjackets, it is difficult to offer a comprehensive – let alone a universally applicable – definition of postmodern thought. Be that as it may, one of the key characteristics of postmodern approaches is to be suspicious of seemingly coherent, exhaustive, and reliable definitions aimed at offering adequate conceptual accounts of particular material or symbolic aspects of reality. Since supporters of the 'postmodern turn' set themselves the task of escaping the 'totalizing parameters' imposed by Enlightenment thought, their provocative writings open up a discursive space for discussions on the social conditions and hermeneutic presuppositions underlying the production of meaning. Considering its subversive ways of *destabilizing* and *deconstructing* commonsense knowledge and taken-for-granted assumptions, it comes as no surprise that '"[p]ostmodernism" was for a time a darling of the "Left"'[123] and that various commentators insist upon direct or indirect links between *postmodernism and critical theory*[124] as well as – perhaps, less surprisingly – upon obvious or subtle connections between *postmodernism and feminism*;[125] some critics are even inclined to argue that valuable insights may be gained from cross-fertilizing *postmodernism and Marxism*.[126] Whatever the theoretical or practical benefits from creating paradigmatic alliances between postmodernism and other intellectual traditions may be, we still need to address one central question: *Who are these 'postmodernists'?* The following section shall grapple with this issue.

**Who Are These 'Postmodernists'?**

The list of scholars whose works are – directly or indirectly, explicitly or implicitly, rightly or wrongly – associated with the rise of postmodern thought is long. In alphabetical order, we may mention the following scholars who – in many cases,

contrary to their will, or, in some cases, posthumously and, hence, without their knowledge – appear to have played a noticeable role in the construction and development of postmodern thought:

> Perry Anderson (1938–), Jean Baudrillard (1929–2007), Zygmunt Bauman (1925–), Steven Best (1955–), Judith Butler (1956–), Gilles Deleuze (1925–95), Jacques Derrida (1930–2004), Mike Featherstone (1946–), Michel Foucault (1926–1984), Francis Fukuyama (1952–), Félix Guattari (1930–92), Donna J. Haraway (1944–), Sandra Harding (1935–), Nancy Hartsock (1943–2015), David Harvey (1935–), Ihab H. Hassan (1925–), Martin Heidegger (1889–1976), Ágnes Heller (1929–), Linda Hutcheon (1947–), Andreas Huyssen (1942–), Luce Irigaray (1932–), Fredric Jameson (1934–), Keith Jenkins (1943–), Douglas Kellner (1943–), Ernesto Laclau (1935–2014), Scott Lash (1945–), Bruno Latour (1947–), David Lyon (1948–), Jean-François Lyotard (1924–98), Michel Maffesoli (1944–), Doreen Massey (1944–), Chantal Mouffe (1943–), Linda J. Nicholson (1947–), Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900), Richard Rorty (1931–2007), Steven Seidman (1948–), Hugh J. Silverman (1945–), Edward Soja (1940–), Keith Tester (1960–), John Urry (1946–), Gianni Vattimo (1936–), Robert Venturi (1925–), Wolfgang Welsch (1946–), Ludwig Wittgenstein (i.e. the later Wittgenstein) (1889–1951), Iris Marion Young (1949–2006), and Slavoj Žižek (1949–).

Of course, the above list is necessarily selective and, thus, not exhaustive. Since the present study aims to provide a thematically organized, rather than an author-focused, account of the key assumptions underlying the 'postmodern turn', there is not much point in giving a comprehensive overview of the main intellectual contributions made by the thinkers whose oeuvres are – rightly or wrongly – considered to have played a central, or at least a marginal, role in the creation of a postmodern tradition of thought. A wide range of useful introductions to their works can be found in the literature, allowing us to appreciate the relevance of their writings not only to the development of postmodern thought but also, more widely, to contemporary forms of social and political analysis. The question that poses itself in this context is to what extent the names of the critics and researchers whose works are inextricably linked to the rise of postmodern thought can be *classified* in a meaningful manner, in order to capture the intellectual scope and significance of their oeuvres. The following criteria appear to be particularly important in this regard.

**(1)** One can classify the scholars whose works are associated with the 'postmodern turn' in terms of their *geographical origin*:

- *African* (e.g. Hassan);
- *Anglo-European* (e.g. Anderson, Featherstone, Harvey, Jenkins, Lyon, Massey, Soja, Tester, Urry);
- *continental European* (e.g. Baudrillard, Bauman, Deleuze, Derrida, Foucault, Guattari, Harvey, Heidegger, Heller, Huyssen, Irigaray, Latour, Lyotard, Maffesoli, Mouffe, Nietzsche, Vattimo, Welsch, Wittgenstein, Žižek);

- *North American* (e.g. Best, Butler, Fukuyama, Haraway, Harding, Hartsock, Hassan, Hutcheon, Jameson, Kellner, Lash, Nicholson, Rorty, Seidman, Silverman, Soja, Venturi, Young);
- *South American* (e.g. Laclau).

Interestingly, the overwhelming majority of the most influential scholars associated with postmodern thought are *continental European* or *North American*.

**(2)** One can classify the scholars whose works are associated with the 'postmodern turn' in terms of their *national origin*:

- *Argentinean* (e.g. Laclau);
- *Austrian-British* (e.g. Wittgenstein);
- *Belgian* (e.g. Mouffe);
- *British* (e.g. Anderson, Featherstone, Harvey, Jenkins, Lyon, Massey, Soja, Tester, Urry);
- *Canadian* (e.g. Hutcheon);
- *French* (e.g. Baudrillard, Deleuze, Derrida, Foucault, Guattari, Irigaray, Latour, Lyotard, Maffesoli);
- *German* (e.g. Heidegger, Huyssen, Nietzsche, Welsch);
- *Hungarian* (e.g. Heller);
- *Italian* (e.g. Maffesoli, Vattimo);
- *Polish* (e.g. Bauman);
- *Slovenian* (e.g. Žižek);
- *US-American* (e.g. Best, Butler, Fukuyama, Haraway, Harding, Hartsock, Hassan, Jameson, Kellner, Lash, Nicholson, Rorty, Seidman, Silverman, Soja, Venturi, Young).

What is striking in this respect is that the majority of those widely considered as 'founding figures' or 'reference figures' of the postmodern project are *French* or *US-American*.

**(3)** One can classify the scholars whose works are associated with the 'postmodern turn' in terms of the *linguistic specificity* of their major writings, that is, on the basis of their main working language(s):

- *Anglophone* (e.g. Anderson, Bauman, Best, Butler, Featherstone, Fukuyama, Haraway, Harding, Hartsock, Harvey, Hassan, Heller, Hutcheon, Huyssen, Jameson, Jenkins, Kellner, Laclau, Lash, Lyon, Massey, Mouffe, Nicholson, Rorty, Seidman, Silverman, Soja, Tester, Urry, Venturi, Wittgenstein, Young, Žižek);
- *Francophone* (e.g. Baudrillard, Deleuze, Derrida, Foucault, Guattari, Irigaray, Latour, Lyotard, Maffesoli, Mouffe);
- *Germanophone* (e.g. Heidegger, Huyssen, Nietzsche, Welsch, Wittgenstein);
- *Hispanophone* (e.g. Laclau);
- *Italianophone* (e.g. Vattimo).

What is noticeable in this regard is that it is, by and large, *Francophone scholars* whose writings are regarded as the *path-breaking works* of the postmodern

tradition, whereas renowned *Anglophone scholars* appear to have taken on the role of *recyclers and creative interpreters* of this intellectual current.

**(4)** One can classify the scholars whose works are associated with the 'postmodern turn' in terms of their *epochal situatedness*. Broadly speaking, we can distinguish between *early modern*, *modern*, and *late modern* or – tautologically speaking – *postmodern* postmodernists:

- scholars whose works were produced in the *early modern* period (approx. 1600–1920), whose writings anticipated the rise of postmodern thought, but who did not necessarily have the intention of doing so, let alone of using the term 'postmodern' (e.g. Nietzsche);
- scholars whose works began to have an impact on social thought in the *modern* period (approx. 1920–70) and whose writings appeared to indicate a conscious move into a new and unprecedented intellectual or historical horizon (e.g. Heidegger, Wittgenstein);
- scholars whose main works emerged in a historical context that some would already characterize as *late modern* or *postmodern* (approx. 1970–present) and who aim to radicalize the historical condition associated with postmodernity (e.g. Anderson, Baudrillard, Bauman, Best, Butler, Deleuze, Derrida, Featherstone, Foucault, Fukuyama, Guattari, Haraway, Harding, Hartsock, Harvey, Hassan, Heller, Hutcheon, Huyssen, Irigaray, Jameson, Jenkins, Kellner, Laclau, Lash, Latour, Lyon, Lyotard, Maffesoli, Massey, Mouffe, Nicholson, Rorty, Seidman, Silverman, Soja, Tester, Urry, Vattimo, Venturi, Welsch, Young, Žižek).

As illustrated above, some highly influential *early modern and modern* scholars are *posthumously* – and, hence, *without their knowledge* – associated with postmodern thought (notably Nietzsche, Heidegger, and the later Wittgenstein). Moreover, the key *recent or contemporary* figures whose ideas are – rightly or wrongly – brought into connection with postmodern thought have produced their major writings, roughly speaking, *from 1970 onwards*.

**(5)** One can classify the scholars whose works are associated with the 'postmodern turn' in terms of their *generational belonging*:

- those born in the first part of the nineteenth century (1800–1850) (e.g. Nietzsche);
- those born in the second part of the nineteenth century (1850–1900) (e.g. Heidegger, Wittgenstein);
- those born in the 1920s (e.g. Baudrillard, Bauman, Deleuze, Foucault, Hassan, Heller, Lyotard, Venturi);
- those born in the 1930s (e.g. Anderson, Derrida, Guattari, Harding, Harvey, Irigaray, Jameson, Jenkins, Laclau, Rorty);
- those born in the 1940s (e.g. Featherstone, Haraway, Hartsock, Hutcheon, Huyssen, Jenkins, Kellner, Lash, Latour, Lyon, Maffesoli, Massey, Mouffe, Nicholson, Seidman, Silverman, Soja, Urry, Welsch, Young, Žižek);
- those born in the 1950s (e.g. Butler, Fukuyama);
- those born in the 1960s (e.g. Tester).

As demonstrated above, most of the intellectual figures whose works are not only linked to postmodern thought but, in addition, likely to remain *influential in decades, and possibly centuries, to come* were born either in the *nineteenth century* (e.g. Nietzsche, Heidegger, Wittgenstein) or in the *1920s or early 1930s* (e.g. Baudrillard, Bauman, Deleuze, Derrida, Foucault, Rorty). Of course, this is partly due to the fact that it can take decades until a scholar – insofar as he or she succeeds in making a groundbreaking contribution to his or her field of expertise *and* happens to be widely recognized for this achievement – is commonly regarded as a 'big name'. More importantly, however, this illustrates that the *late twentieth-century 'big names'* related to postmodern thought experienced their intellectual upbringing in the *post-War era* and produced their principal writings in the period leading to the end of the Cold War, which – in the context of the collapse of state socialism – has led to the increasing delegitimization of ideological grand narratives inspired by Marxism.

**(6)** One can classify the scholars whose works are associated with the 'postmodern turn' in terms of the *context-specific impact* of their main works, that is, in terms of the period in which they were particularly prolific and began to have a substantial influence on Western intellectual thought:

- in the late nineteenth century (e.g. Nietzsche);
- in the 1930s (e.g. Heidegger, Wittgenstein);
- in the 1960s (e.g. Venturi);
- in the 1970s (e.g. Baudrillard, Deleuze, Derrida, Foucault, Guattari, Heller);
- in the 1980s (e.g. Bauman, Featherstone, Haraway, Harding, Hartsock, Harvey, Hassan, Hutcheon, Huyssen, Irigaray, Jameson, Laclau, Lash, Latour, Lyotard, Massey, Mouffe, Rorty, Urry, Vattimo, Welsch);
- in the 1990s (e.g. Anderson, Best, Butler, Fukuyama, Jenkins, Kellner, Lyon, Maffesoli, Nicholson, Seidman, Silverman, Soja, Tester, Young, Žižek);
- in the first decade of the new millennium (see 1990s).

What is remarkable in this respect is that *the most influential twentieth-century figures associated with postmodern thought published their masterpieces in the late 1970s and 1980s*. In other words, most of them – and this applies particularly to French representatives of postmodern forms of analysis – produced their key writings in the *aftermath of 1968*, which had led to a radical restructuring of both established institutional arrangements and hegemonic ideological discourses in the West.

**(7)** One can classify the scholars whose works are associated with the 'postmodern turn' in terms of their *discursive positioning*. (a) *Posthumous and unwitting participants* are those scholars whose works began to be linked to postmodern thought long after their death. (b) *Reluctant and non-proselytizing participants* are those thinkers who do not explicitly identify with the label 'postmodern', or – in some cases – even reject it, but whose works are nevertheless associated with this term. (c) *Moderate sympathizers* are those theorists who, while they do not necessarily proclaim the advent of postmodernity or of the 'postmodern turn', endorse the postmodern project, no matter how vaguely defined. (d) *Enthusiastic supporters*

*and contributors* are those who explicitly advocate, and actively participate in, the creation of a postmodern paradigm and the construction of a postmodern society. According to this categorization, it is possible to classify the scholars whose works are associated with the 'postmodern turn' as follows:

- *posthumous and unwitting participants* (e.g. Heidegger, Nietzsche, Wittgenstein);
- *reluctant and non-proselytizing participants* (e.g. Butler, Deleuze, Derrida, Foucault, Fukuyama, Guattari, Harvey, Heller, Irigaray, Jameson, Laclau, Latour, Massey, Mouffe, Rorty, Urry, Young);
- *moderate sympathizers* (e.g. Anderson, Baudrillard, Bauman, Best, Haraway, Harding, Hartsock, Hutcheon, Huyssen, Kellner, Lash, Lyon, Maffesoli, Tester, Vattimo, Venturi, Welsch, Žižek);
- *enthusiastic supporters and contributors* (e.g. Featherstone, Hassan, Lyotard, Jenkins, Lyotard, Nicholson, Seidman, Silverman, Soja).

What is noticeable when considering the above classification is the following: although there are only a handful of *posthumous and unwitting participants*, given that they are widely regarded as 'classical figures' of Western intellectual thought, their works are of *canonical significance* to the postmodern project. Furthermore, the *vast majority* of thinkers whose writings are linked to the 'postmodern turn' can be described either as *reluctant and non-proselytizing participants* or as *moderate sympathizers*. Ironically, then, the principal intellectual figures whose names are associated with postmodern thought do not unambiguously identify with this label. Critics may legitimately argue that, in this light, the 'postmodern turn' is a project that lacks explicit, strong, and widespread support among those who are considered to be key representatives of its intellectual spirit. It comes as no surprise, therefore, that *self-declared, open, and whole-hearted supporters* of the 'postmodern turn' represent a clear *minority*.

**(8)** One can classify the scholars whose works are associated with the 'postmodern turn' in terms of their *oppositional attitude(s)*:

- the critique of *anthropocentrism* (e.g. Best, Foucault, Latour, Lyotard);
- the critique of *binaries* (e.g. Butler, Foucault, Haraway, Hartsock, Irigaray, Latour, Nicholson, Rorty, Young);
- the critique of (and a certain fascination with) *consumer capitalism* (e.g. Best, Featherstone, Harvey, Jameson, Kellner, Lash, Tester, Urry);
- the critique of *disciplinary power and surveillance* (e.g. Foucault, Lyon);
- the critique of *essentialism* (e.g. Butler, Deleuze, Derrida, Foucault, Guattari, Haraway, Harding, Hartsock, Irigaray, Mouffe, Nietzsche, Seidman, Young);
- the critique of *foundationalism* (e.g. Butler, Foucault, Latour, Nietzsche, Rorty, Seidman, Silverman, Young, Žižek);
- the critique of *heteronormativity* (e.g. Butler, Foucault, Haraway, Harding, Hartsock, Irigaray, Nicholson, Seidman, Young);
- the critique of *logocentrism* and *representationalism* (e.g. Derrida, later Wittgenstein);
- the critique of *metanarratives* (e.g. Lyotard, Seidman);

- the critique of *metaphysics* (e.g. Heidegger);
- the critique of *modern reason* (e.g. Foucault, Guattari, Heidegger, Lyotard, Nietzsche, Rorty, Seidman, Silverman);
- the critique of *modernity* (e.g. Bauman, Foucault, Hassan, Heidegger, Hutcheon, Huyssen, Lyotard, Maffesoli, Seidman, Tester, Vattimo, Venturi, Welsch, Žižek);
- the critique of *orthodox Marxism* (e.g. Anderson, Deleuze, Foucault, Fukuyama, Guattari, Harvey, Heller, Jameson, Kellner, Laclau, Lash, Lyotard, Massey, Mouffe);
- the critique of traditional notions of *sociality* (e.g. Maffesoli, Seidman);
- the critique of *teleologism* (e.g. Foucault, Fukuyama, Jenkins, Laclau, Lyotard, Mouffe, Nietzsche, Seidman, Silverman, Welsch);
- the critique of *the instrumental organization of space* (e.g. Harvey, Massey, Soja, Venturi).
- the critique of *the political economy of the sign* (e.g. Baudrillard);
- the critique of *the subject* (e.g. Foucault, Heidegger, Laclau, Latour, Lyotard, Mouffe, Nietzsche, Rorty, Seidman, Silverman, Žižek).

As illustrated in the above list, the cultivation of an eclectically minded 'oppositional attitude' is crucial to the 'postmodern spirit'. In this sense, the postmodern endeavour is an attempt to break away from the canonical presuppositions of Enlightenment thought. While the opposition to orthodox Marxism is vital to the 'postmodern spirit', it is striking that most Francophone thinkers whose writings are brought into connection with the postmodern project come – both politically and intellectually – from a Marxist tradition and are, as a result, often described as 'post-Marxists'. Of course, as demonstrated above, the subversive nature of postmodern thought has many facets. Its opposition to the grand narrative of 'scientific socialism', however, is particularly important for the following reason: it indicates that the *crisis of Marxism* and the *rise of postmodernism*, in the early 1990s, *historically coincide*.

**(9)** One can classify the scholars whose works are associated with the 'postmodern turn' in terms of their *thematic contributions*:

- postmodern *epistemologies* (e.g. Best, Derrida, Foucault, Haraway, Harding, Hartsock, Hassan, Heidegger, Irigaray, Kellner, Laclau, Latour, Lyotard, Nicholson, Nietzsche, Rorty, Seidman, Silverman, Urry, Vattimo, Welsch, later Wittgenstein, Young, Žižek);
- postmodern *methodologies* (e.g. Foucault, Haraway, Harding, Hartsock);
- postmodern *sociologies* (e.g. Baudrillard, Bauman, Featherstone, Foucault, Haraway, Hartsock, Harvey, Heller, Jameson, Kellner, Lash, Lyon, Lyotard, Maffesoli, Massey, Nicholson, Seidman, Soja, Tester, Urry, Vattimo);
- postmodern *historiographies* (e.g. Foucault, Fukuyama, Heidegger, Heller, Jenkins, Lyotard, Nietzsche, Vattimo, Žižek);
- postmodern *politics* (e.g. Fukuyama, Haraway, Hartsock, Harvey, Heller, Irigaray, Kellner, Laclau, Mouffe, Nicholson, Seidman, Soja, Young).

More specifically:

- postmodern theories of *actor–network relations* (e.g. Latour);

- postmodern theories of *deconstruction* (e.g. Derrida, Heidegger);
- postmodern theories of *desire* (e.g. Deleuze, Guattari);
- postmodern theories of *gendered performance* (e.g. Butler, Foucault, Haraway, Hartsock, Irigaray, Nicholson);
- postmodern theories of *hyperreality* (e.g. Baudrillard, Lash);
- postmodern theories of *literature* (e.g. Hutcheon, Huyssen).
- postmodern theories of *parody* (e.g. Hutcheon);
- postmodern theories of *power* (e.g. Butler, Haraway, Hartsock, Laclau, Nietzsche, Foucault, Lyon, Mouffe, Nietzsche, Seidman);
- postmodern theories of *space* (e.g. Harvey, Massey, Soja, Venturi);
- postmodern theories of *the economy* (e.g. Anderson);
- postmodern theories of *the media* (e.g. Tester);
- postmodern theories of *the self* (e.g. Bauman, Deleuze, Foucault, Guattari, Haraway, Harding, Hartsock, Irigaray, Maffesoli, Seidman, Tester).

The above list illustrates that *the thematic areas covered by postmodern thought are impressively wide-ranging*. In fact, *the 'postmodern turn' has shaped* – albeit to different degrees and with different results – *key debates and controversies in almost every single discipline in the social sciences and, arguably, also in the humanities*. Moreover, it is ironic that, despite their anti-foundationalist spirit, *all* postmodern approaches – in any academic discipline and in any thematic area – share a foundational motivation: namely, the epistemologically inspired relativization of cognitive, normative, and aesthetic standards. Put differently, *epistemic relativism* constitutes the paradigmatic cornerstone of postmodern approaches in the social sciences.

**(10)** Somewhat more contentiously, one can classify the scholars whose works are associated with the 'postmodern turn' in terms of their *philosophical or ideological positioning*:

in terms of *classical big-picture ideologies*:

- anarchist (e.g. Deleuze, Derrida, Foucault);
- conservative (e.g. Fukuyama, Heidegger);
- fascist or quasi-fascist (e.g. Heidegger);
- liberal (e.g. Fukuyama, Hassan, Rorty);
- Marxist or post-Marxist (e.g. Anderson, Baudrillard, Derrida, Foucault, Harvey, Heller, Jameson, Kellner, Laclau, Massey, Mouffe, Vattimo, Žižek);
- social-democratic/Weberian (e.g. Bauman, Lash, Tester);

in terms of *issue- or paradigm-specific ideologies*:

- animal rights (e.g. Best);
- cosmopolitan (e.g. Derrida);
- differentialist (e.g. Butler, Featherstone, Harding, Seidman, Silverman, Soja, Vattimo, Young);
- feminist (e.g. Butler, Haraway, Harding, Hartsock, Hutcheon, Irigaray, Nicholson, Young);
- Freudian (e.g. Deleuze, Guattari);

in terms of *anti-ideological ideologies*:

- cynical ironist (e.g. Hutcheon, Latour, Rorty);
- nihilist (e.g. Nietzsche);
- relativist (e.g. Huyssen, Jenkins, Lash, Lyon, Lyotard, Maffesoli, Urry, Venturi, Welsch, later Wittgenstein).

One curious paradox of various postmodern approaches in the social sciences – and, arguably, in the humanities – is their *post-Marxist anti-Marxism*: heavily influenced by Marxist thought, they question the validity of its key ideological assumptions, thereby aiming to move away from this intellectual tradition. More importantly, however, we are confronted with another paradox when reflecting upon the philosophical or ideological underpinnings of postmodern thought: although the rise of postmodern approaches tends to be associated with the historical consolidation of a 'postideological age', an epoch in which classical big-picture ideologies appear to have lost legitimacy, most thinkers associated with the postmodern project have not only developed their approaches within, rather than outside, particular ideological frameworks, but also continue to endorse specific worldviews. Thus, the 'postmodern spirit' is permeated by a form of *pseudo-post-ideological anti-ideologism*: it is thoroughly ideological, rather than postideological, not only because even an intellectual paradigm that claims to be opposed to ideological thinking remains – by definition – ideological,[127] and not only because postmodern thinkers emerged out of ideologically shaped intellectual traditions, but also because – similar to other ideologies and intellectual '-isms' – *postmodernism can, and has been, cross-fertilized with other ideological frameworks*. Its *ideological elasticity* is reflected in the various attempts at marrying postmodernism with other '-isms': postmodern anarchism; postmodern Marxism; postmodern social democracy; postmodern Weberianism; postmodern liberalism; postmodern conservatism; postmodern fascism; postmodern feminism; postmodern Freudianism; postmodern moralism; postmodern cosmopolitanism; postmodern globalism; post- modern cynicism; and postmodern nihilism. In short, postmodern thought is as adaptable as a living chameleon.

**(11)** One can classify the scholars whose works are associated with the 'postmodern turn' in terms of their *disciplinary background(s)* or *disciplinary speciality(ies)*:

- *philosophy* (e.g. Best, Butler, Deleuze, Derrida, Foucault, Guattari, Haraway, Harding, Hartsock, Heidegger, Heller, Irigaray, Kellner, Laclau, Latour, Lyotard, Mouffe, Nietzsche, Rorty, Silverman, Welsch, later Wittgenstein, Žižek);
- *sociology* (e.g. Baudrillard, Bauman, Featherstone, Irigaray, Jameson, Kellner, Lash, Latour, Lyon, Lyotard, Maffesoli, Massey, Nicholson, Seidman, Tester, Urry, Vattimo);
- *historiography* (e.g. Anderson, Foucault, Jenkins, Nicholson);
- *politics and political theory* (e.g. Anderson, Fukuyama, Foucault, Guattari, Haraway, Harding, Hartsock, Jameson, Kellner, Laclau, Mouffe, Nicholson, Young, Žižek);

- *economics* (e.g. Fukuyama, Jameson);
- *geography* (e.g. Harvey, Massey, Soja);
- *anthropology* (e.g. Harvey, Latour);
- *architecture* (e.g. Venturi);
- *literary theory* (e.g. Butler, Derrida, Hassan, Hutcheon, Huyssen, Jameson, Lyotard);
- *cultural studies* (e.g. Featherstone, Irigaray, Jameson, Lash, Latour, Žižek).

Most of the 'founding figures' of the postmodern project are French social philosophers. More specifically, they tend to be regarded as scholars who are philosophically trained, sociologically oriented, politically motivated, culturally sophisticated, and rhetorically refined. It comes as no surprise, then, that the disciplinary relevance of postmodern thought is concentrated in the areas of philosophy, sociology, political science, cultural studies, and literary theory.

**(12)** More controversially, one can classify – and, indeed, rank – the scholars whose works are associated with the 'postmodern turn' in terms of their *intellectual influence*:

- *highly influential* (established 'classics', 'paradigm inventors', and 'game changers') (e.g. Foucault, Heidegger, Nietzsche, later Wittgenstein);
- *very influential* (very prominent contemporary scholars) (e.g. Anderson, Baudrillard, Bauman, Butler, Deleuze, Derrida, Fukuyama, Guattari, Jameson, Laclau, Latour, Lyotard, Maffesoli, Mouffe, Rorty, Žižek);
- *influential* (prominent contemporary scholars) (e.g. Best, Featherstone, Haraway, Harding, Hartsock, Harvey, Hassan, Heller, Hutcheon, Huyssen, Irigaray, Jenkins, Kellner, Lash, Lyon, Massey, Nicholson, Seidman, Silverman, Soja, Tester, Urry, Vattimo, Venturi, Welsch, Young).

Surely, league tables aimed at capturing the impact of particular scholars in academic fields and subfields are not only contentious and relatively arbitrary, but also potentially dangerous and counterproductive. If we are willing to accept, however, that – for the right or the wrong reasons – some intellectual figures are, overall, more influential than others, then we are confronted with a striking phenomenon when examining the wider significance of scholars whose works are associated with postmodern thought: only some of them may be characterized as *'pioneering' early modern or modern* thinkers; quite a few of them may be conceived of as *'pioneering' late modern or postmodern* thinkers; yet, a noticeably large proportion of postmodern advocates and sympathizers can be classified as *influential 'commentators' and 'recyclers'*, rather than as 'paradigm inventors', within contemporary intellectual disputes.

**The Intellectual Scope and Influence of Postmodern Thought**

The variety of academic and non-academic approaches to 'the postmodern' is overwhelming. One may go as far as to suggest that, over the past three decades, the 'postmodern spirit' has succeeded in colonizing almost every discipline and

every research area in the social sciences, especially in circles of debate and controversy dominated by Anglophone scholars: '*the spectre of postmodernism spread its wings over almost every subject imaginable* […]: postmodern finance, postmodern housing policy, postmodern algebra, the postmodern library, the postmodern brain and the postmodern Bible'.[128] We may now speak of a 'postmodern Marx, or Durkheim, or Simmel, or Parsons, or feminism'.[129]

Given this wide-ranging impact, most studies of postmodern thought emphasize the *conceptual elasticity*, *discursive multiplicity*, and *interdisciplinary applicability* that characterize their object of enquiry. The key question that remains in this respect, then, is whether or not the engagement with postmodern thought can still be regarded as a worthwhile investigative endeavour in the early twenty-first century. When examining the *sociogenesis of postmodernism*, it appears that the in-depth interest in postmodern thought within the social sciences and humanities reached its peak in the mid-1990s:

> […] the flow of publications with postmodern/postmodernism/postmodernity in their title increased from a tiny stream in the 1970s to a huge flood in the 1990s. It expanded from a total counted number of 37 publications in the 1970s to 534 in the 1980s and 4219 in the 1990s.[130]

One may speculate about the reasons why, '[f]rom the early 1980s into the 1990s, debates over the modern and the postmodern were the hottest theoretical game in town',[131] and why, furthermore, *postmodernism reached its most influential point in time in the mid-1990s*. Undoubtedly, 'the intellectual crisis of Western Marxism',[132] shortly before and after the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, played a pivotal role, as postmodernism appeared to fill an ideological and political 'power vacuum caused by the collapse of Marxism'.[133] In the context of an increasingly globalized world, in which, for many observers and commentators, *viable* alternatives to the hegemony of liberal-capitalist systems had lost all credibility and legitimacy, postmodernism was perceived, by many, as an attractive – and, allegedly, postideological – paradigm able to account for the chaotic and disorganized constitution of an epoch in which teleological conceptions of history served, at best, as simplistic templates for the reductive interpretation of fundamentally directionless and unpredictable societies. The end of the Cold War – triggered by the collapse of state-socialist regimes in large parts of the world – appears to have led to the creation of a postmodern jungle whose inhabitants are, consciously or unconsciously, motivated by the slogan 'anything goes'.[134] The 'anything-goes-world'[135] is a universe of limitless social, cultural, and political diversity in which there is no room for big-picture ideologies. Hence, announcements regarding the beginning of the era of postmodernity are intimately interrelated with provocative proclamations about 'the end of ideology'.[136]

Just as one may hypothesize as to why the engagement with postmodern thought peaked in the mid-1990s, one may wonder why 'around 1997 or so the tide started to turn'.[137] In this respect, one may favour one of the following explanations:

1. The social world is no longer 'amenable to analysis as postmodern'.[138] According to this contention, the idea of 'the postmodern'[139] is now an *anachronism*.
2. Debates and controversies concerning postmodern forms of being may be regarded as outdated because 'we are all postmodernists nowadays'.[140] On this account, given that postmodernity has, by this point, become an omnipresent reality and 'our, more or less, universal condition',[141] the idea of 'the postmodern'[142] has, in relation to most aspects of society, converted itself into a *tautology*.
3. The obsession with postmodernism 'was a publishing phenomenon and the academic publishers pulled the plug on titles with the word because the profit margin could not be guaranteed'[143] and because every form of paradigm-surfing, whether intellectually or commercially driven, has to come to an end. From this perspective, since '[b]oredom was bound to come [and…w]e get tired of buzzwords',[144] the idea of 'the postmodern'[145] is tantamount to little more than an obsolete *commodity*.

In short, although the term 'postmodern' appears to have survived and is still being used in the current literature, it is now essentially 'superseded'[146] and has become somewhat of an outmoded catchword in the contemporary context.

Thus, on the face of it, '[t]he postmodern – at least in the social sciences – has somehow disappeared from the view'.[147] Even if, however, one is willing to concede that, while '[p]ostmodernism in the social sciences expanded strongly in the first half of the 1990s, but experienced a relative decline from 1995 to 2000',[148] and even if one comes to the conclusion that 'the period of its greatest influence is now over',[149] its continuing presence in recent and current academic and non-academic discourses illustrates that its lasting impact upon cutting-edge controversies – particularly in the areas of epistemology, methodology, sociology, historiography, and politics – is undeniable. Indeed, as numerous recently published investigations illustrate, *postmodern thought continues to be relevant to a large variety of epistemological,*[150] *methodological,*[151] *sociological,*[152] *historical,*[153] *and political*[154] *studies in the contemporary social sciences*. Therefore, the following chapters shall demonstrate that 'the spectre of postmodernism'[155] is still very much with us and that, rather than prematurely announcing a 'post-postmodern *post mortem* to postmodernism',[156] we need to face up to the fact that recent paradigmatic developments in the social sciences cannot be understood without considering its overall impact upon present-day forms of critical analysis.

Of course, the 'postmodern turn' is not the first paradigmatic shift that has been announced in the social sciences. In fact, it appears to be a common feature of academic research to be constantly shaped and reshaped by the proclamation of intellectual changes and transitions, which tend to be conceived of as 'path-breaking' by those who endorse them. Not much may be gained from counting the amount of paradigmatic 'turns' that have been proclaimed in the social sciences over the past two centuries. It is nevertheless useful to mention at least some of them, in order to illustrate that the invention of intellectual traditions

and presuppositional frameworks is a widespread characteristic of academic forms of knowledge production.

Among the most influential paradigmatic 'turns' advocated in the social sciences since the *Methodenstreit*[157] are the following: the 'interpretive turn',[158] the 'linguistic turn',[159] the 'relativist turn',[160] the 'deconstructive turn',[161] the 'contingent turn',[162] the 'liquid turn',[163] the 'cultural turn',[164] the 'autonomous turn',[165] the 'identitarian turn', the 'reflexive turn',[166] the 'empirical turn',[167] the 'spatial turn',[168] the 'performative turn',[169] the 'pragmatic turn',[170] the 'existentialist turn',[171] the 'vitalist turn',[172] the 'affective turn',[173] the 'postsecular turn',[174] and – more recently – the 'digital turn'.[175] As should become clear from the analysis developed in the remainder of this study, one of the noteworthy features of the 'postmodern turn' is that it is intimately linked to at least five of the above-mentioned paradigmatic shifts.

**Key Dimensions of Postmodernity**

Considering the intellectual controversies sparked by the rise of modernity, it is not difficult to imagine that even those who endorse the view that, over the past few decades, we have been witnessing the arrival of the postmodern condition have not been able to reach a consensus regarding the defining features of the contemporary age. Furthermore, to the extent that most commentators who defend the idea of 'the rise of the postmodern age' stress the *chaotic* and *disorganized* constitution of this allegedly unprecedented historical period, it appears even less viable to grasp the arbitrarily and irregularly arranged elements of the current epoch in a systematic fashion. Nonetheless, following the thematic structure of the preceding enquiry concerning the nature of modernity, it makes sense to point out that six levels of analysis are especially important to exploring the principal characteristics of postmodernity.[176]

**(1)** On the *economic* level, the rise of postmodernity is associated with *deindustrialization*. The emergence and unstoppable development of postindustrial capitalism can be considered as one of the central driving forces of the postmodern age. In the context of postindustrialism, it is not the case that the 'primary sector' and the 'secondary sector' have disappeared. In other words, the agricultural and industrial areas of production, distribution, and consumption have *not* ceased to exist. Owing to the rapid growth of the *tertiary sector* since the second part of the twentieth century, however, postindustrial modes of economic activity have become the preponderant productive force in the contemporary world. In postmodern societies, informational, technological, and cultural goods are the main sources of economic production, distribution, and consumption as well as the crucial resources at stake in terms of economic expansion, competition, and development.

**(2)** On the epistemic level, the rise of postmodernity cannot be divorced from the gradual *derationalization* of society in general and of people's lifeworlds in particular. To be sure, derationalization processes under postmodern parameters do not involve the weakening, let alone the disappearance, of science in terms of its influence upon both the macro-organizational and the micro-experiential realms of society. On the contrary, due to the pivotal role played by expert knowledge and high technology in the economic and cultural developments of postindustrial

societies, it appears that, in the contemporary world, science is more influential than ever before. One key feature of postmodern historical formations, however, consists in the fact that, in terms of its epistemic validity, *science is regarded as one 'language game' among others*. The postmodern condition, then, is a polycentrically constructed universe in which no particular type of meaning-laden horizon of reference points – irrespective of whether it is institutional or ephemeral – can claim to possess an epistemic monopoly on the interpretation of reality. The derationalized world of postmodernity is shot through with competing discourses: economic, political, ideological, cultural, philosophical, artistic, religious, or scientific – to mention only a few. Each of these discourses is based on a set of interconnected – yet, both irreducible and incommensurable – assumptions, whose acceptability is contingent not upon the constraining parameters of logical or evidence-based rationality, but upon context-specific criteria of validity emerging out of relationally assembled constellations that are sustained by relatively arbitrary codes of social legitimacy.

**(3)** On the *political* level, the rise of postmodernity manifests itself in processes of *deideologization*. Some would go as far as to assert that, because we have been witnessing the decline of traditional political ideologies, we now effectively live in a *postideological age*.[177] To be clear, this is not to posit that individual and collective actors have ceased to generate ideas or to mobilize more or less coherent sets of background assumptions when attributing meaning to, and interacting with, the world. Rather, this is to acknowledge that, in the context of postmodernity, big-picture ideologies – such as anarchism, communism, socialism, liberalism, conservatism, and fascism – have lost the considerable influence they once had. The delegitimization process of classical political ideologies is reflected – perhaps most notably – in the historical events leading to the end of the Cold War: the deep historical contingency and political questionability of all meta-ideological formations is epitomized in the collapse of state socialism in Eastern and Central Europe at the end of the twentieth century. As a result of these major historical events, it appears that, effectively, capitalism is 'the only game in town'[178] and that, paradoxically, if there is any victorious worldview in the 'postideological age', it is a political liberalism absolved from having to compete with its most challenging historical rivals, namely socialism and communism. To put it bluntly, while the modern period was the age *of* ideologies, the postmodern era is an epoch seeking to move *beyond* ideologies.

**(4)** On the *organizational* level, the rise of postmodernity is expressed in the tendency towards *debureaucratization*. This, of course, is not to maintain that bureaucracies have disappeared in recent decades or that they will dissolve in the near future. On the contrary, bureaucratic forms of action coordination will continue to be crucial to the organization of highly differentiated societies, particularly with regard to their political, economic, and judicial spheres. What is striking, however, is that, at least since 'the end of organized capitalism'[179] has been announced, we have come to accept not only that the world is a less and less predictable place, but also that, in postmodern societies, large-scale bureaucracies are perceived as an obstacle to, rather than as a precondition for, the possibility of flexible, responsive,

and efficient forms of action coordination. The condition of postmodernity is an extraordinarily dynamic social reality based on *short-termism*, *risk-taking*, and *self-responsibility*, rather than a project based on long-termism, cautious planning, and institutionally sustained solidarities. If the epitome of modernity is the idea of a totally administered society, postmodernity is about facing up to the prospects and opportunities, as well as to the limitations and risks, emerging within essentially uncontrollable realities. The 'strong states' of totally administered societies appear to have given way to 'slim states' assertive enough to protect, and adaptive enough to tolerate, the playfulness of postmodern realities.

**(5)** On the *cultural* level, the rise of postmodernity emanates from, and manifests itself in, processes of *hyper-individualization*. To the extent that, according to Durkheimian parameters, the shift from premodern to modern society led to the *transition from 'mechanic' to 'organic' solidarity*, in a post-Durkheimian sense, the shift from modern to postmodern society is accompanied by the *transition from 'organic' to 'liquid' solidarity*.[180] Put differently, we have moved from the premodern 'cult of God' via the modern 'cult of the unitary subject' to the postmodern 'cult of the fragmented individual'. Postmodern actors continue to draw upon diverse sources of identity, enabling them to develop a sense of unique subjectivity: class, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, 'race', cultural preferences, lifestyle, religion, age, ability, or political ideology – to mention but the most important ones. What distinguishes the construction processes of postmodern identities from hitherto existing modes of personhood formation, however, is their degree of adaptability, changeability, diversity, and complexity, that is, their polymorphous constitution derived from relationally defined forms of *intersectionality*. In consumerist societies, *postmodern individuals* are not only expected to pick and choose from different sources of personal and collective identity; in addition, they are required to *exist as radically contingent, fluid, plural, contradictory, and knowledgeable selves*:[181]

A. As *contingent* selves, they constantly develop and adjust in relation to rapidly changing social, cultural, and historical contexts.
B. As *fluid* selves, they are in a ceaseless state of flux, lacking an ultimate and context-transcending essence.
C. As *plural* selves, they have a multiplicity of selves living within themselves and are, therefore, equipped with the capacity to take on a large variety of social roles, the number increasing with the complexity of the interactional contexts in question.
D. As *contradictory* selves, they are internally divided by mutually challenging and conflicting selves and, hence, haunted by the experience of both circumstantial and existential dilemmas triggered by objectively existing, yet subjectively suffered, processes of psychosocial fragmentation.
E. As *knowledgeable* selves, they are confronted with the challenging task of being able to mobilize both implicit and explicit, practical and theoretical, taken-for-granted and discursive, intuitive and reflexive resources of action and cognition.

**(6)** On the *philosophical* level, the rise of postmodernity cannot be understood in separation from the task of *deconstruction*. In essence, the 'deconstructive attitude'[182] endorsed by postmodern philosophy is suspicious of the Enlightenment optimism vis-à-vis the *assertive, regulative, and reflexive functions of modern science*:

A. The *assertive* function of modern science concerns its *representational* capacity to provide evidence-based – that is, epistemically adequate, analytically sound, and argumentatively convincing – accounts of the underlying mechanisms that govern both the constitution and the evolution of the natural world as well as of the social world.
B. The *regulative* function of modern science designates its *interventional* capacity to offer purposive – that is, empirically viable, practically sustainable, and technologically ever more sophisticated – models permitting both individual and collective actors to gain increasing control over their physical and cultural environments.
C. The *reflexive* function of modern science refers to its *critical* capacity to develop emancipatory – that is, conceptually insightful, intellectually enlightening, and socially empowering – knowledge equipping ordinary actors with the ability to make use of their rational faculties with the aim of liberating themselves from mechanisms of domination and, thus, from both the symbolic and the material chains of power-laden realities.

By contrast, *the age of postmodernity is characterized by radical incredulity towards the assertive, regulative, and reflexive functions of methodical enquiries and, consequently, by deep scepticism towards the representational, interventional, and critical capacities of scientific epistemologies*. The invention of the modern subject capable of epistemically accurate representation, control-oriented intervention, and emancipatory reflection appears to have lost credibility in the context of postmodernity. For the postmodern universe is composed of a multiplicity of human and nonhuman actors, none of whom occupies an epistemically privileged position. All attempts to obtain the total and unequivocal mastery of a relationally constituted – and, hence, constantly shifting – reality end up reproducing the stifling logic of ethnocentric, logocentric, or anthropocentric claims to validity. From a deconstructivist point of view, then, a world without essences amounts to a planetary context of existence that does not allow for universal frameworks of representation, explanation, and emancipation. For the spatiotemporal specificities of locally anchored realities are irreducible to epistemic models oriented towards the discovery of context-transcending generalizability.

Just as the foregoing overview of the main factors contributing to the rise of modernity is far from complete, the above outline regarding the principal aspects of the postmodern condition is not intended to be exhaustive. What such a synopsis illustrates, however, is that the contention that we have entered a 'postmodern era' needs to be assessed in terms of its multifaceted presuppositional underpinnings. Thus, similar to the critical examination of the 'condition of modernity', we need to engage in a *multifactorial* analysis capable of grasping

the various interrelated – and, to some extent, overlapping – dynamics that have, arguably, led to the emergence of postmodern societies.

It is imperative to be aware of the fact that, paradoxically, the aforementioned elements can be considered as both *reasons for* and *consequences of* the rise of postmodernity: as contributing factors, the central function that they serve in the unfolding of historical developments has made the postmodern condition possible; as tangible outcomes, they have been shaped by the historical settings that they have themselves brought into existence. In short, the dialectics of postmodernity stems from the interplay between several – principally (1) economic, (2) epistemic, (3) political, (4) organizational, (5) cultural, and (6) philosophical – factors. These factors constitute, at the same time, the *precondition for* and the *result of* the emergence of novel – arguably postmodern – societal formations, which came into being in the Western world from the late twentieth century onwards and which, ever since their emergence, began to have an increasing influence upon civilizational developments across the globe.

## (Post-)Modernity, (Post-)Modernism, and (Post-)Modernization

Offering preliminary short-hand definitions of the terms 'modern' and 'postmodern' involves the risk of giving a reductive account that distorts the complexity of the analytical task that lies ahead of us in the remainder of this book. In essence, this challenging – and, arguably, paradoxical – task consists in *developing a systematic account of the eclectic nature of both modern and postmodern thought*. For the sake of conceptual clarity, it is useful to be aware of the following terminological differentiation:

1. The term *modernity* shall be employed to refer to an epochal shift or break from traditional societies, implying the consolidation of an unprecedented social totality, with increasingly complex organizing principles, which began to develop in Europe from the late seventeenth century onwards and, gradually, spread around the globe.
2. The term *modernism* shall be used to denote any discursive – notably, aesthetic, cultural, political, or academic – efforts to attach meaning to modernity and capture its historical specificity.
3. The term *modernization* shall stand for any social and discursive processes that shape both the constitution and the awareness of the historical condition called 'modernity'.

In summary: (1) The term *modernity* designates the historical formation succeeding premodernity and preceding postmodernity. (2) The term *modernism* refers to the discursive practices reflecting the historical specificity of modernity. (3) The term *modernization* describes the relational processes – including the discursive practices – generating the historical phase of modernity.[183]

Analogously, the following terminological differentiation is relevant to the argument developed in this book.

1. The term *postmodernity* shall be employed to refer to 'an epochal shift or break from modernity involving the emergence of a new social totality with its own distinct organizing principles'.[184]
2. The term *postmodernism* shall be used to denote any 'aesthetic, cultural, political, or academic attempts to make sense of postmodernity'[185] and capture its historical specificity.
3. The term *postmodernization* shall stand for any social and discursive processes that shape both the constitution and the awareness of the historical condition called 'postmodernity'.

In summary: (1) The term *postmodernity* designates the historical phase succeeding modernity. (2) The term *postmodernism* refers to the discursive practices prevailing in postmodernity. (3) The term *postmodernization* describes the relational processes – including the discursive practices – creating the historical phase of postmodernity.

The main argument of this study, which weaves the following chapters together, can be summarized as follows. The 'postmodern turn' in the social sciences reflects a paradigmatic shift from the Enlightenment belief in the *relative determinacy* of both the natural world and the social world to the – increasingly widespread – post-Enlightenment belief in the *radical indeterminacy* of all material and symbolic forms of existence. The far-reaching scope and considerable impact of this paradigmatic shift manifests itself in five presuppositional 'turns' that have substantially shaped the development of the social sciences over the past few decades:

I. the 'relativist turn' in epistemology;
II. the 'interpretive turn' in social research methodology;
III. the 'cultural turn' in sociology;
IV. the 'contingent turn' in historiography; and
V. the 'autonomous turn' in politics.

It shall be the task of subsequent chapters to shed light not only upon the theoretical and practical complexity of these normative shifts, but also upon the wider impact they have had, and continue to have, upon the contemporary social sciences.

# Notes

1. On *the 'postmodern turn'*, see, for example: Best and Kellner (1997); Brown (1994b); Hassan (1987); Quicke (1999); Seidman (1994a).
2. Turner (1996), p. 1.
3. Hollinger (1994), p. 124.
4. Ibid., p. 124. On this point, see also Delanty (1999), p. 7: 'Sociology and its concept of modernity were products of the "great transformation"'.
5. Turner (1996), p. 5 (italics added).
6. Baert and da Silva (2010 [1998]), p. 285. On this point, see also Susen (2013b), p. 88.
7. Porter (2008), p. viii (italics added).
8. On *the centrality of the 'postmodern turn'*, see, for instance: Best and Kellner (1997); Brown (1994b); Hassan (1987); Quicke (1999); Seidman (1994a).
9. The impact of the 'postmodern turn' on contemporary intellectual thought is reflected in the idea of developing a *'postmodern social theory'*. On this point, see, for example: Boyne and Rattansi (1990b), esp. p. 24; Davetian (2005); Porter (2008), esp. pp. viii–xxiv and 69–77; Seidman (1994c). For *an excellent overview of the key historical and sociological challenges faced by social theorists in the context of the early twenty-first century*, see Baert and da Silva (2010 [1998]), chapters 8 and 9. See also, for example: Allan (2013 [2007]); Beck (2012 [2010]); Elliott and Turner (2012); Inglis and Thorpe (2012); Jones, Le Boutillier, and Bradbury (2011 [2003]); Turner (2013); Turner (2014).
10. Until the present day, one of the most illustrative examples of the idea of a 'postmodern social theory' can be found in Seidman (1994c).
11. Ibid., p. 119.
12. Ibid., p. 119.
13. On *the conceptual differentiation between* '*sociological theory*' and '*social theory*', see also, for example: Allan (2013 [2007]); Baert and da Silva (2010 [1998]), p. 287; Susen (2013b), pp. 81 and 88–9.
14. Seidman (1994c), p. 119.
15. On this point, see also, for instance, Baert (2005), pp. 126–45 and 146–69, and Baert and da Silva (2010 [1998]), pp. 285–307. For a critique of this position, see Susen (2013b), pp. 95–8.
16. On this point, see, for example, Susen (2014e).
17. Seidman (1994c), p. 120.
18. Ibid., p. 120.
19. Ibid., p. 120.
20. Ibid., pp. 119–20.
21. On this point, see, for instance, Susen (2015a).
22. Seidman (1994c), p. 119.
23. Ibid., p. 119.
24. Baert and da Silva (2010 [1998]), p. 302.
25. Seidman (1994c), p. 119.
26. On this point, see Burawoy (2005) and Burawoy et al. (2004).
27. Baert and da Silva (2010 [1998]), p. 302.
28. Seidman (1994c), p. 119.
29. See Baert and da Silva (2010 [1998]), p. 302.
30. On *the distinction between 'ordinary knowledge' and 'scientific knowledge'*, see, for example: Boltanski (1990b); (1998), esp. pp. 248–51; (1999–2000), esp. pp. 303–6; Bourdieu and Eagleton (1992), esp. p. 117; Celikates (2009), esp. pp. 12, 25–8, 39–40, 56, 72–81, 89–92, 116–22, 138–52, 159–60, and 187–247; Cronin (1997), esp. pp. 206–7; Mesny (1998), esp. pp. 143–90; Susen (2007), esp. pp. 25, 102, 135–7, 138, 139, 140, 146 n. 8, 153, 156, 157, 204, 205, 224, and 311; Susen (2011a), esp. pp. 448–58; (2011e), pp. 8, 27, 33–6, and 40.
31. Seidman (1994c), p. 121.
32. Ibid., p. 120.

33. Ibid., p. 120.
34. Ibid., p. 120.
35. Ibid., p. 121.
36. Ibid., p. 121.
37. Ibid., p. 122.
38. Ibid., p. 122.
39. Ibid., p. 122.
40. Ibid., p. 123.
41. Ibid., p. 125. Cf. Susen and Turner (2014a).
42. Seidman (1994c), p. 125.
43. The significance of this point is reflected in the recent impact of *Luc Boltanski's 'pragmatic sociology of critique'* on contemporary understandings of processes of justification. On this point, see, for instance: Blokker (2011); Boltanski (1990b, 1999–2000, 2009); Boltanski and Honneth (2009); Boltanski, Rennes, and Susen (2010); Boltanski and Thévenot (1991, 1999); Celikates (2009); Susen (2011a). More recently, the wider significance of Boltanski's approach has been discussed in Susen and Turner (2014a), which contains numerous critical essays concerned with his writings: Adkins (2014); Basaure (2014); Blokker (2014); Bogusz (2014); Boltanski and Browne (2014); Boltanski, Honneth, and Celikates (2014 [2009]); Boltanski, Rennes, and Susen (2014 [2010]); Browne (2014); Eulriet (2014); Fowler (2014); Fuller (2014); Karsenti (2014 [2005]); Lemieux (2014); Nachi (2014); Nash (2014b); Outhwaite and Spence (2014); Quéré and Terzi (2014); Robbins (2014); Silber (2014); Stones (2014); Susen (2014b, 2014c, 2014d, 2014 [2012], 2014 [2015]); Susen and Turner (2014b); Thévenot (2014); Turner (2014a, 2014b); Wagner (2014).
44. Seidman (1994c), p. 123 (italics added). On this point, see also, for example: Rorty (2009 [1979], 1982, 1991b, 1997a, 1997b).
45. Seidman (1994c), p. 123 (italics added).
46. Ibid., p. 124.
47. Ibid., p. 125.
48. Ibid., p. 126 (italics added). See also ibid., pp. 131 and 136.
49. Ibid., p. 127 (italics added). On this point, see also, for example: Di Stefano (1990); Susen (2010a, 2010b); Yeatman (1990); Young (1994 [1989], 1990a, 1990b). The normative implications of this issue will be discussed in further detail in Chapter 5.
50. Seidman (1994c), p. 136 (italics added).
51. Ibid., p. 127. See also ibid., p. 119, and Seidman (1994b), p. 12.
52. Seidman (1994c), p. 127 (italics added). On this point, see also Seidman and Wagner (1992).
53. Seidman (1994c), p. 127 (italics added). On *modern and postmodern conceptions of 'time'*, see, for instance, Nowotny (1994 [1987]).
54. Seidman (1994c), p. 129 (italics added).
55. Ibid., p. 129.
56. Ibid., p. 130 ('world-historical' appears without the hyphen in the original version).
57. Ibid., p. 129.
58. On this point, see, for example, Kumar (1978) and Rorty (1998a).
59. Seidman (1994c), p. 130 (italics added).
60. Ibid., p. 130.
61. On this point, see, for instance, ibid., p. 130. See also, for example, Jenks (1998) and Susen (2009b).
62. King (1998b), p. 4 (italics in original).
63. Delanty (2000b), p. 9 (italics added). On this point, see also Bennington (2001), Friese (2001a, 2001b).
64. Habermas (1996 [1981]), p. 39 (italics added). See also Smart (1990), p. 17: 'The term "modern" derives from the late fifth century Latin term *modernus* which was used to distinguish an officially Christian present from a Roman, pagan past [...]. Thereafter the term is employed to situate the present in relation to the past of antiquity, appearing and reappearing "exactly during those periods in Europe when the consciousness of a new epoch formed itself through a renewed relationship to the ancients".' Quoted passage taken from Habermas (1981 [1980]), pp. 3–4. On this point, see also Lyon (1999

[1994]), p. 25.

65. Delanty (2000b), p. 9 (italics added).
66. Giddens (1990), p. 1 (italics added). On *Giddens's conception of 'modernity'*, see ibid., esp. pp. 1–17 and 45–54. Cf. Outhwaite (2014).
67. See, for example: Craib (1997); Giddens (1996 [1971]); Hawthorn (1987 [1976]); Morrison (2006 [1995]); Sayer (1991). See also Susen and Turner (2011b).
68. See Marx (2000/1977 [1859], 2000/1977 [1857–58/1941]).
69. See Durkheim (1966/1951 [1897], 1984 [1893]).
70. See Weber (1991 [1948]), esp. pp. 196–244.
71. On this point, see Giddens (1990), pp. 6 and 53–4.
72. On *the project of modernity*, see, for instance: Habermas (1996 [1981]); Passerin d'Entrèves (1996b); Passerin d'Entrèves and Benhabib (1996).
73. On *the project of the Enlightenment*, see, for example: Honneth et al. (1992a, 1992b); McLellan (1992).
74. Delanty (1999), p. 3 (italics added).
75. On this point, see, for instance, Wagner (1992), pp. 470–8.
76. For useful accounts of *the multidimensional constitution of modernity*, see, for example: Corfield (2010), esp. p. 391; Delanty (2000b), esp. pp. 1–31; Giddens (1990), esp. pp. 1–17 and 45–54; Lyon (1999 [1994]), esp. pp. 25–45; Rose (1991), esp. p. 1; Torfing (1999), esp. pp. 57–61. On *the concept of modernity*, see also, for instance: Bauman (1991); Beck (1992); Beck, Giddens, and Lash (1994); Beck and Lau (2005); Beilharz (2000); Berman (1983); Bernstein (1985); Bhambra (2007); Craib (1997); Delanty (1999); Featherstone, Lash, and Robertson (1995); Giddens (1996 [1971], 1991); Habermas (1987a [1985], 1996 [1981]); Hall and Gieben (1992); Hall, Held, and McGrew (1992); Hawthorn (1987 [1976]); Kellner (1989a); Lichtblau (1999); Morrison (2006 [1995]); Outhwaite (2014); Sayer (1991); Thomas and Walsh (1998); Wagner (1994, 2001, 2008, 2012); Walter (2001); Wellmer (1993); Zima (1997, 2000).
77. On this point, see, for instance, Heywood (2007 [1992]). See also Susen (2014e).
78. On this point, see, for example, Beetham (1987). See also Weber (1991 [1948]), esp. pp. 196–244. Cf. Gane (2002, 2006) and Koshul (2005).
79. Durkheim (2010 [1924]), p. 59.
80. On this point, see, for instance: Habermas (1987d [1981], 1992 [1988]); Honneth (1995 [1994], 2012 [2010]); Susen (2007), pp. 90–94 and 192–198; Susen (2010d).
81. On *the concept of Enlightenment*, see, for example: Adorno and Horkheimer (1997a [1944/1969]); Friedrich (2012); Goldhammer (2001); Gordon (2001a, 2001b); Habermas (1987a [1985], 1996 [1981]); Hawthorn (1987 [1976]); Harding (1990); Honnethet al. (1992a, 1992b); Kant (2009 [1784]); McLellan (1992); Osborne (1998); Passerin d'Entrèves (1996a); Racevskis (1993); Rengger (1995); Saiedi (1993). On *the concept of emancipation*, see, for example: Antonio (1989); Apter (1992); Bensussan (1982); Harding (1992); Laclau (1992, 1996); Lukes (1991 [1983]); Nederveen Pieterse (1992a, 1992b); Nuyen (1998); Pease (2002); Ray (1993); Santos (2006, 2007); Slater (1992); Susen (2009a, 2011a, 2015a); Weiss (1997b); Wertheim (1992).
82. Susen (2015a), p. 1024.
83. Ibid., p. 1025 (italics added).

84. On this point, see Susen (2009a), pp. 84–5. See also Susen (2015a), p. 1025.
85. Susen (2015a), p. 1026 (italics in original).
86. On *the social and political challenges arising from the experience of ambivalence under modern and/or postmodern conditions*, see, for instance: Bauman (1991); Bauman and Tester (2007), esp. pp. 23–5 and 29; Hammond (2011), pp. 305, 310, 312, and 315; Iggers (2005 [1997]), pp. 146–7; Jacobsen and Marshman (2008), pp. 804–7; Kellner (2007), p. 117; Mulinari and Sandell (2009), p. 495; Quicke (1999), p. 281; Susen (2010d), esp. pp. 62–78; van Raaij (1993), esp. pp. 543–6, 551–5, and 559–61.
87. Delanty (2000b), p. 10.
88. Ibid., p. 10.
89. On this point, see Adorno and Horkheimer (1997a [1944/1969]). See also Susen (2009a, 2015a).
90. Delanty (2000b), p. 16.
91. Ibid., p. 16.
92. Habermas (1987a [1985]), p. 5. On this point, see also Delanty (2000b), p. 10, and Therborn (1995), p. 4.
93. Delanty (2000b), p. 9.
94. Perhaps, the most influential view of this position can be found in Spengler (1973 [1918/1922]).
95. Therborn (1995), p. 4 (italics in original).
96. On this view, see, for example, Susen (2010d).
97. See Lyotard (1984 [1979]).
98. Best and Kellner (1997), p. 3 (italics added).
99. Wagner (1992), p. 467 (italics added).
100. See Ashley (1994), p. 55 (italics added).
101. See Jones, Natter, and Schatzki (1993b), p. 1 (italics added).
102. Anderson (1996), p. 6 (italics added).
103. Corfield (2010), p. 385.
104. Ashley (1994), p. 55. On this point, see Lyotard (1991 [1988]), p. 24.
105. For this reason, the term 'postmodern' is often deliberately hyphenated in the literature (appearing as 'post-modern').
106. Dickens and Fontana (1994b), p. 1 (italics added). See also Gibbins and Reimer (1999), p. 12: 'Abridging her history, we can chart the first usage of the postmodern to Federico de Onís in 1934, meaning the anti-modernist current in some Spanish and Latin American poetry between 1905 and 1914, a term repeated by the editors of one anthology of such poetry in 1942'. On this point, see also, for example: Corfield (2010), pp. 387 and 394–6; Köhler (1977), pp. 8–18; Petit (2005), p. 18; Rose (1991), pp. 12–13; Sim (2002), p. 15.
107. See Boyne and Rattansi (1990b), p. 9: 'First apparently used in Spanish by Frederico de Onis [Federico de Onís] in the 1930s, it is in the literary commentaries […] that the term gained currency in the 1950s and 1960s, then acquiring both prominence and notoriety in the 1970s and 1980s, especially through the architectural criticism of Charles Jencks and the philosophical intervention of Jean-François Lyotard's *The Postmodern Condition*.' On this point, see also Mouffe (1993), p. 9: 'discussion of the postmodern, which until now had focused on culture, has taken a political turn'.
108. Gane and Gane (2007), pp. 127–8 (italics added; except for '*mean*', '*clear*', and '*unified*', which are italicized in the original version).
109. Kumar (1995), p. 104 (italics added).
110. Nederveen Pieterse (1992b), p. 26 (italics added). On this point, see also Kumar (1995), p. 104. In addition, see Alexander (1994), p. 182 n. 35, and Turner (1990b).
111. Flax (2007), p. 74 (italics added).
112. Gellner (1992), p. 22 (italics added).
113. Gane and Gane (2007), p. 127 (italics added).
114. Patton (2004), p. 11872 (italics added).

115. Ermarth (2004), p. 68 (italics added; italics removed from '*that*').
116. Coole (1998a), p. 349 (italics added).
117. Wilterdink (2002), p. 191 (italics added).
118. Kumar (1995), p. 139 (italics added).
119. Smart (1998), p. 61 (italics added). See also Smart (1996), p. 472.
120. See Bertens (1995).
121. For *an excellent sociological analysis of paradigmatic developments in modern intellectual thought*, see, for instance, Collins (1998).
122. Cf. Mongardini (1992), p. 55: 'It has been said that the term "postmodernity" is as fascinating as it is difficult to define.'
123. Bauman and Tester (2007), p. 26.
124. On this point, see Lyon (1999 [1994]), p. 100. On *the relationship between postmodernism and critical theory*, see also, for example: Benhabib (1993); Landry (2000); Malpas (2005); Meštrović (1993); Norris (1990); Poster (1989); Soja (1989); Wellmer (1985).
125. On *the relationship between postmodernism and feminism*, see, for example: Ashenden (1997); Benhabib (1990); Bordo (1990); Butler (1990, 1994 [1990]); Comack (1999); Coole (1998b); Di Stefano (1990); Flax (1990); Fraser and Nicholson (1994 [1988]); Harding (1990); Hartsock (1990); Hawkesworth (1999); Huyssen (1990); Jagger (2005); Malpas (2001), chapters 10, 11, and 12; McGraw, Zvonkovic, and Walker (2000); Mulinari and Sandell (2009); Nicholson (1990b, 1990a); Owens (1993); Salleh (2009); Seibold (2000); Sheehy (2012); Yeatman (1990, 1994); Young (1990b).
126. On *the relationship between postmodernism and Marxism*, see, for example: Butler (1998); Callari and Ruccio (1996a, 1996b); Callinicos (1989); Carver (1998); Cloud (1994); Cole (2003); Daly (1999); Eagleton (1995); Foster (2006 [1997]); Geras (1987); Kellner (1989b, 1989a); Landry (2000); Malpas (2001), chapters 8 and 9; Malpas (2005); McMahon (1999); Mulhern (2006 [1997]); Rundell (1990); Smart (1992), chapter 6; Vakaloulis (2001); Wood (2006 [1997]); Wood and Foster (2006 [1997]).
127. On this point, see, for example, Susen (2014e).
128. Wilterdink (2002), p. 190 (italics added). On this point, see also, for instance, Jameson (2007), p. 215.
129. Gane and Gane (2007), p. 130.
130. Wilterdink (2002), p. 192.
131. Kellner (2007), p. 102.
132. Rojek and Turner (2000), p. 635. See also Turner and Rojek (2001), p. 16.
133. Rojek and Turner (2000), p. 636. On this point, see also, for example: Callinicos (1989), p. 7; Huyssen (1990), p. 253; Zima (1997), p. 82.
134. On *the slogan 'anything goes'*, see, for instance: Beck and Lau (2005), pp. 540–4; Boghossian (2006), p. 23; Butler (2002), p. 35; Clicqué (2005), esp. p. 29; Cole (2003), p. 493; Eickelpasch (1997), pp. 18–19; Elliott (2007 [2001]), p. 141; Gane and Gane (2007), p. 131; Matthewman and Hoey (2006), p. 536; Mcevoy (2007b), p. 399; Nola and Irzik (2003), p. 395; Rose (1991), pp. 3 and 60; Sokal and Bricmont (1998), pp. 78–85; Torfing (1999), pp. 275–6; van Raaij (1993), p. 560.
135. See previous note, esp. Clicqué (2005).
136. On *the 'end of ideology' thesis*, see, for example: Bell (2000 [1960]); Donskis (2000); Rubinstein (2009); Waxman (1968).
137. Bauman and Tester (2007), p. 25.
138. Ibid., p. 25.
139. See Bertens (1995).
140. Bauman and Tester (2007), p. 25.
141. Vattimo (2007), p. 32.
142. See Bertens (1995).
143. Bauman and Tester (2007), p. 25.
144. Ibid., p. 25.
145. See Bertens (1995).

146. Vattimo (2007), p. 32.
147. Gane and Gane (2007), p. 127.
148. Wilterdink (2002), p. 193.
149. Butler (2002), p. 127.
150. On *the relevance of postmodern thought to studies in epistemology and philosophy (published between 2000 and 2012)*, see, for example: Appignanesi and Garrett (2003 [1995]); Belsey (2002); Benton and Craib (2001), esp. chapter 10; Best and Kellner (2001); Boghossian (2006); Brnzeu and Sznyi (2011); Browning (2003); Butler (2002); Clark (2006); Delanty (2000b); Dods (2004); Frank (2000); Gane (2001); Gordon (2001a, 2001b); Goulimari (2007a, 2007b); Haddock (2004); Hewison (2010); Jørgensen (2002); Kersenboom (2000); Lehman (2011); Mcevoy (2007b); McGowan (2007); McKenzie (2007); McLaughlin and White (2012); Murrey (2011); Nola and Irzik (2003); Patton (2004); Peat (2007); Salleh (2009); Smith (2006); Vattimo (2007); Venturi (2007 [2001]); Welsch (2002); Zima (2000); Zižek (2000).
151. On *the relevance of postmodern thought to studies in social research methodology (published between 2000 and 2012)*, see, for example: Bartsch, DiPalma and Sells (2001); Corroto (2011); Ermarth (2004); Fendler and Tuckey (2006); Fielding (2009); Fox (2003); Janich (2006); MacLure (2006); Raese (2011); Seibold (2000); Somerville (2007); Stead and Bakker (2010); Urrutia Elejalde (2012).
152. On *the relevance of postmodern thought to studies in sociology (published between 2000 and 2012)*, see, for example: Agger (2002); Appignanesi and Garrett (2003 [1995]); Arpin (2006); Atkinson (2002); Bauman (2000b); Bauman and Tester (2007); Behrends (2005); Beilharz (2000); Broekaert, Vandevelde, and Briggs (2011); Burawoy (2000); Burstein and Negoita (2011); Butler (2002); Carp (2010); Clayton (2002); Cole (2003); Cresswell (2011); Davis (2008); Delanty (2000b); Doja (2006); Duvall (2002a, 2002b); Elliott (2000, 2007 [2001]); Evans (2011); Featherstone (2007 [1991]); Fernando (2003); Fforde (2009); Gane (2001, 2002, 2006); Gane and Gane (2007); Gillison (2010); Hammond (2011); Harrod (2011); Hoogheem (2010); Hornung and Kunow (2009); Hutcheon (2002); Ivashkevich (2011); Jacobsen and Marshman (2008); Jagger (2001, 2005); Jameson (2007); Jay (2010); Kelemen and Peltonen (2001); Kerr (2009); Kotarba and Johnson (2002a, 2002b); Koshul (2005); Landry (2000); Lash and Lury (2007); Lommel (2011); Lyman (2002); Matthewman and Hoey (2006); McGraw, Zvonkovic, and Walker (2000); McKinley (2003); Mohren (2008); Mouzelis (2008); Mulinari and Sandell (2009); Nemoianu (2010); O'Connor (2000); Oliver, Flamez, and McNichols (2011); Petit (2005); Pinheiro (2012); Porter (2008); Prior (2005); Rojek and Turner (2000); Rømer (2011); Schneider (2004); Sewlall (2010); Seymour (2011); Silverman (2012); Sim (2002); Slott (2002); Spinks (2001); Toews (2003); Vakaloulis (2001); van Reijen (2000); Walmsley (2000); Watson (2011); Welsch (2002); Wernet, Elman, and Pendleton (2005); Wernick (2000); Wilterdink (2002); Woodward, Emmison, and Smith (2000); Zižek (2000).
153. On *the relevance of postmodern thought to studies in historiography (published between 2000 and 2012)*, see, for example: Appignanesi and Garrett (2003 [1995]); Bentley (2006); Blackburn (2000); Burns (2003); Butler (2002); Carmichael (2002); Corfield (2010); Delanty (2000b); Douzinas (2007); Eaglestone (2001); Evans (2002); Flax (2007); Foster (2006 [1997]); Friedrich (2012); Gane (2001); Iggers (2005 [1997]); Kellner (2007); Joyce (2010); Laclau (2007); Macfie (2010); Magnússon (2003); Mcevoy (2007b); Osamu (2002); Pieters (2000); Raese (2011); Spiegel (2007); Thompson (2000); Welsch (2002); Williams (2010); Wood (2006 [1997]); Wood and Foster (2006 [1997]); Zagorin (2000); Zammito (2010); Zižek (2000).
154. On *the relevance of postmodern thought to studies in politics (published between 2000 and 2012)*, see, for example: Braddick (2009); Brantlinger (2011); Brants and Voltmer (2011a, 2011b); Carretero Pasín (2006); Chevallier (2008 [2003]); Coleman (2011); Cornis-Pope (2012); Depoortere (2008); Friedrich (2012); Fukuyama (2002); Hidetaka (2002); Ivic and Lakicevic (2011); MacKinnon (2000); Malik (2006 [1997]); Meschonnic

and Hasumi (2002a, 2002b); Mulhern (2006 [1997]); Parekh (2008); Paulus (2001); Poulain (2002); St Louis (2002); Taylor and Trentmann (2011); Welsch (2002); Yar (2001); Zižek (2000).

155. See Ruiter (1991), p. 27. See also Wilterdink (2002), p. 190.
156. Domańska (1998b), p. 173.
157. On *the* '*Methodenstreit*', see, for instance: Lachenmann (1995); McCarthy (2001); Neemann (1993/1994).
158. On *the 'interpretive turn'*, see, for example: Apel (1971a, 1979); Bourdieu (1993); Delanty (1997); Delanty and Strydom (2003); Dilthey (1883); Garrick (1999); Habermas (1970); Hiley, Bohman, and Shusterman (1991); Iggers (2005 [1997]); Lehman (2011); Maffesoli (1996 [1985]); Outhwaite (1986 [1975], 1987a, 1998, 2000); Susen and Turner (2011d).
159. On *the 'linguistic turn'*, see, for example: Apel (1976); Bohman (1996); Bourdieu (1982a, 1992, 1993 [1984]); Fairclough (1995); Fillmore (1985); Gebauer (2005); Goldhammer (2001); Habermas (1988a [1967/1970], 1976a); Hacking (1975, 1982); Jäger (2002); Kirk (1997 [1994]); Krämer (2002); Krämer and König (2002); Lafont (1993, 1997, 1999 [1993]); Lee (1992); May (1996); Rigotti (1979); Rorty (1967a, 1967b); Rossi-Landi (1974 [1972]); Schöttler (1997); Susen (2007), chapters 1–4; Susen (2009a, 2010c, 2013a, 2013d, 2013e, 2013f); Taylor (1991 [1986]); Wellmer (1977 [1976]).
160. On *the 'relativist turn'*, see, for example: Bernstein (1983); Boghossian (2006); Dickens and Fontana (1994a); Gellner (1982); Hacking (1982); Haddock (2004); Hollis and Lukes (1982); Laudan (1990); Lukes (1982); Margolis (2007 [1986]); Norris (1997); Rorty (1991b, 1997a); Rossi-Landi (1974 [1972]); Schroeder (1997).
161. On *the 'deconstructive turn'*, see, for example: Delanty (2000b), p. 138; Denzin (1994); Feldman (1998); Inayatullah (1990); Leledakis (2000); McCarthy (1991); Michelfelder and Palmer (1989); Norris (1997); Rorty (1991c); Smith (2006); Thompson (1993).
162. On *the 'contingent turn'*, see, for example: Bauman (1991, 1992, 1997, 2000b, 2007); Bauman and Tester (2007); Beilharz (2000); Butler (1994 [1990]); Butler, Laclau, and Zižek (2000); Cole (1994); Davis (2008); Gane (2001); Kamper (1988 [1984]); Rorty (1989); Sloterdijk (1988); Smith (1999); Veeser (1989); Zižek (2000).
163. On *the 'liquid turn'*, see, for example: Bauman (2000b, 2007); Gane (2001); Gane and Gane (2007), p. 136; Jay (2010); Taylor and Trentmann (2011).
164. On *the 'cultural turn'*, see, for example: Bauman (1999 [1973]); Bell (1991 [1976]); Bonnell and Hunt (1999); Bonnell, Hunt, and Biernacki (1999); Bouchet (1994); Butler (1998); Duvall (2002a); Eickelpasch (1997); Featherstone (2007 [1991]); Foster (1985 [1983]); Franklin, Lury, and Stacey (2000); Gillison (2010); Harvey (1989); Hassan (1987); Hoogheem (2010); Huyssen and Scherpe (1993); Jacob (1999); Jameson (1991, 1998); Kellner (1997); Lash and Lury (2007); McGuigan (2006 [1999]); McMahon (1999); Morawski (1996); Nemoianu (2010); Polan (1988); Rademacher and Schweppenhäuser (1997); Ramazanoglu (1997); Rojek and Turner (2000); Sarup (1996); Sewell (1999); Sim (2002); Smith Maguire and Matthews (2014); Solomon (1998); Toews (2003); Vattimo (1988 [1985]); Wernick (2000).
165. On *the 'autonomous turn'*, see, for example: Agger (2002); Brants and Voltmer (2011a, 2011b); Delanty (2000b); Good and Velody (1998a, 1998b); Habermas (1986); Laclau (1996); Rancière (2002); Smart (1992), pp. 176–82; Squires (1998).
166. On *the 'interpretive turn'*, see, for example: Apel (1971a, 1979); Bourdieu (1993); Delanty (1997); Delanty and Strydom (2003); Dilthey (1883); Garrick (1999); Habermas (1970); Iggers (2005 [1997]); Lehman (2011); Maffesoli (1996 [1985]); Outhwaite (1986 [1975], 1987a, 1998, 2000); Susen and Turner (2011d).
167. On *the 'reflexive turn'*, see, for example: Adkins (2003); Bassett (1996); Beck, Giddens, and Lash (1994); Bourdieu (1990, 2001); Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992); Burkitt (1997); Gane and Gane (2007), p. 136; Gingras (2004); Kögler (1997); Noya (2003); Pels (2000); Sandywell (1996a, 1996b); Wacquant (1989).

168. On *the 'spatial turn'*, see, for example: Bourdieu (1991); Butler (2012); Corbridge, Thrift, and Martin (1994); Featherstone and Lash (1995); Goonewardena et al. (2008); Gregory and Urry (1985); Harvey (1989, 2001); Hubbard, Kitchin, and Valentine (2004); Jameson (2007), p. 215; Lefebvre (1991 [1974]); Massey (2005); Robertson (1995); Simmel (1997 [1903]); Soja (1989); Susen (2013c); Thrift (1996); Urry (1985); Wiley (2005); Woodward, Emmison, and Smith (2000); Zieleniec (2007).
169. On *the 'performative turn'*, see, for example: Alexander (2004); Bourdieu (1977 [1972]); Butler (1990, 1997, 1999); Butler and Athanasiou (2013); Carlson (2004 [1996]); Goffman (1971 [1959]); Lovell (2003); Wulf (2003).
170. On *the 'pragmatic turn'*, see, for example: Aboulafia, Bookman, and Kemp (2002); Alexander (2004); Apel (1979); Baert (2003); Baert (2005), pp. 126–45 and 146–69; Baert and da Silva (2010 [1998]), pp. 285–307; Baert and da Silva (2013); Baert and Turner (2007); Blokker (2011); Boltanski (1990b, 1999–2000, 2009); Boltanski and Honneth (2009); Boltanski, Rennes, and Susen (2010); Boltanski and Thévenot (1991, 1999); Celikates (2009); Margolis (2007 [1986]); McLaughlin and White (2012); Susen (2011a, 2012b, 2013b); Susen and Turner (2014a). An influential contemporary example that is worth mentioning in this context is *Luc Boltanski's 'pragmatic sociology of critique'*. On *the wider significance of Boltanski's work*, see, for instance: Adkins (2014); Basaure (2014); Blokker (2014); Bogusz (2014); Boltanski and Browne (2014); Boltanski, Honneth, and Celikates (2014 [2009]); Boltanski, Rennes, and Susen (2014 [2010]); Browne (2014); Eulriet (2014); Fowler (2014); Fuller (2014); Karsenti (2014 [2005]); Lemieux (2014); Nachi (2014); Nash (2014b); Outhwaite and Spence (2014); Quéré and Terzi (2014); Robbins (2014); Silber (2014); Stones (2014); Susen (2014b, 2014c, 2014d, 2014e, 2014 [2012], 2014 [2015], 2015b); Susen and Turner (2014b); Thévenot (2014); Turner (2014a, 2014b); Wagner (2014).
171. On *the 'existentialist turn'*, see, for example: Kotarba and Johnson (2002a, 2002b).
172. On *the 'vitalist turn'*, see, for example: Colebrook (2010); Fraser, Kember, and Lury (2006); Greco (2005); Marks (1998).
173. On *the 'affective turn'*, see, for example: Adkins (2013); Burkitt (2014); Clough and Halley (2007); Colebrook (2010); Davetian (2005); Flatley (2008); McCalman and Pickering (2010); Thompson and Hoggett (2012).
174. On *the 'postsecular turn'*, see, for example: Abeysekara (2008); Baker and Beaumont (2011); Blond (1997); Dostert (2006); Habermas (2010 [2008]); Hamilton (2008); Martin (1996); Mavelli (2012); Milbank (1992); Mohamed (2011); Molendijk, Beaumont and Jedan (2010); Nynäs, Lassander, and Utriainen (2012); Rubinstein (2009); Smith and Whistler (2011); Vries and Sullivan (2006).
175. On *the 'digital turn'*, see, for example: Athique (2013); Baym (2014 [2010]); Belk and Llamas (2013); Burda (2011); Junge et al. (2013); Negroponte (1995); Runnel et al. (2013); Westera (2013); Zhao (2005).
176. For useful accounts of *the multidimensional constitution of postmodernity*, see, for example: Anderson (1998); Ashley (1997); Bauman (1992, 1997, 2007); Bauman and Tester (2007); Bertens (1995); Best and Kellner (1997); Boisvert (1996); Boyne and Rattansi (1990a); Burawoy (2000); Butler (2002); Corfield (2010); Delanty (1999, 2000b); Engelmann (1990a); Gane and Gane (2007); Goulimari (2007a, 2007b); Harvey (1989); Hutcheon (2007); Jameson (2007); Kaplan (1988); Kellner (2007); Kumar (1995); Laclau (2007); Lyon (1999 [1994]); Montag (1988); Rose (1991); Scott (1991); Smart (1993); Tester (1993); Thompson (1992); Wagner (1992); White (1989); Vattimo (2007).
177. See previous note on *the 'end of ideology' thesis*.
178. On this point, see Susen (2012a), esp. pp. 296 and 307. See also, for instance, Browne and Susen (2014), esp. pp. 218–20 and 228–9.
179. See Lash and Urry (1987).
180. Cf. Evans (1997a); Gafijczuk (2005); Inglis and Robertson (2008); Maffesoli (1996 [1988]); and Meštrović (1991).

181. On this *five-dimensional account of the self*, see Susen (2007), pp. 92–4.
182. See Butler (2002), p. 16.
183. See ibid., pp. 8–11.
184. Featherstone (1988), p. 198. See also Featherstone (2007 [1991]), p. 3. Cf. Giddens (1990), pp. 45–6.
185. Gibbins and Reimer (1999), p. 15 ('and' before 'academic' replaced by 'or'; the Oxford comma does not appear in the original version).