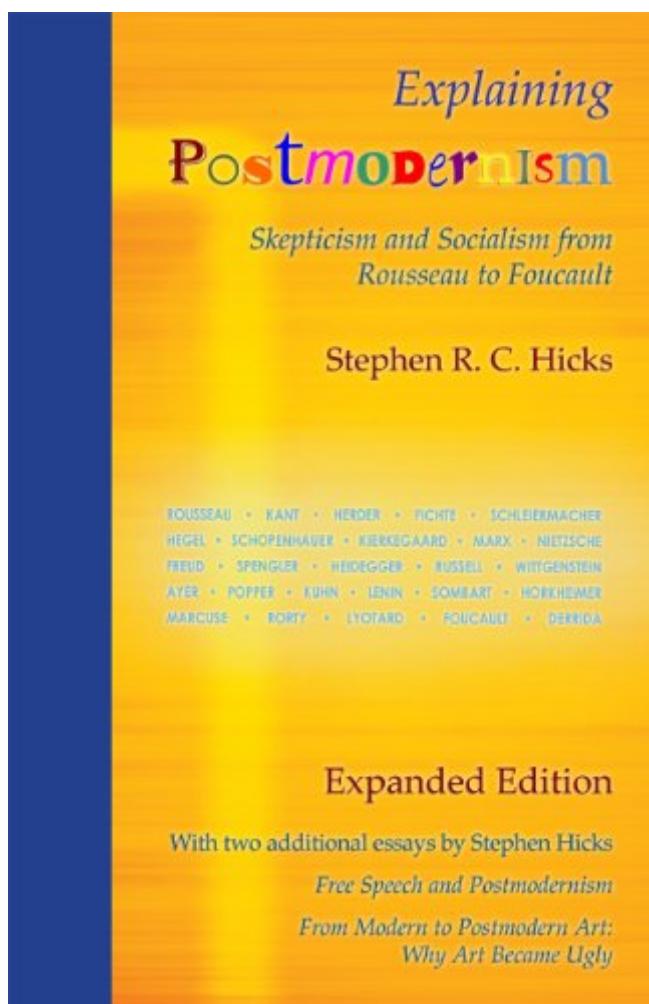


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Explaining Postmodernism: Skepticism And Socialism From Rousseau To Foucault (Expanded Edition)



Synopsis

Tracing postmodernism from its roots in Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Immanuel Kant to their development in thinkers such as Michel Foucault and Richard Rorty, philosopher Stephen Hicks provides a provocative account of why postmodernism has been the most vigorous intellectual movement of the late 20th century. Why do skeptical and relativistic arguments have such power in the contemporary intellectual world? Why do they have that power in the humanities but not in the sciences? Why has a significant portion of the political Left - the same Left that traditionally promoted reason, science, equality for all, and optimism - now switched to themes of anti-reason, anti-science, double standards, and cynicism? Explaining Postmodernism is intellectual history with a polemical twist, providing fresh insights into the debates underlying the furor over political correctness, multiculturalism, and the future of liberal democracy. This Expanded Edition includes two additional essays by Stephen Hicks: *Free Speech and Postmodernism* and *From Modern to Postmodern Art: Why Art Became Ugly*.

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Customer Reviews

This is a superb, important book, one which I have begun recommending to friends and colleagues. It is a history of postmodernism that connects its relationship to history, the history of philosophy, leftist politics and even the ugliness of contemporary art. The overarching thesis is that “the failure of epistemology made postmodernism possible, and the failure of socialism made postmodernism necessary.” From the Anglo/French Enlightenment the left turned to Kant, Hegel, Marx, Nietzsche and Heidegger. By the mid 20th century it was clear that socialism was a grand failure, leaving the world awash in millions of dead bodies. Such straightforward Enlightenment tools as reason, logic and factual evidence made that clear. The result was that hard leftists such as Foucault and softish hard leftists like Derrida and Rorty (all born in very close proximity to one another) set out to destroy those Enlightenment tools, arguing that language does not reflect reality, facts are really fiction, there is no such thing as

“human nature,” all comes down to questions of “power,” and so on. These strategies were ultimately designed to protect socialism from common sense criticism. This has not advanced socialism to any appreciable degree, but it has roiled our colleges and universities and served as a countercultural infrastructure for a vast machine of indoctrination, one that seeks to win a succession of tiny battles when it is clear that the larger war has long been lost. Hicks’ conclusions are this stark but his arguments are detailed. He sees this as fundamentally a failure of epistemology that has been exploited endlessly. Kant’s ultimate subjectivism and his separation of subject and object have been decisive in opening the door both to postmodernism and to romanticism. Hicks does not pursue the latter; that would require another book, but one which I would very much like to see him write. The book is one of the most lucid and accessible studies of the history of philosophy that I have ever encountered and it is particularly acute in its ability to connect the dots and trace the intellectual lineages and etiologies. If you want to see how the defense of affirmative action, speech codes, and global warming activism ultimately connects with Rousseau, Kant and Marx, et al, this is the book with which you should begin. This expanded edition adds two relevant essays:

“Free Speech and Postmodernism” and “From Modern to Postmodern Art: Why Art Became Ugly.” The latter is particularly incisive. Highly recommended.

Stephen does a very good job of reviewing modern philosophy. He makes the complex easy to understand. He does have a point of view . . . He is not a fan of "post modernism" and is a believer in reason, but he does a good job of fairly summarizing the opposition. I highly recommend this

book, especially for people who didn't study philosophy in college but should like to understand some of the important foundations for modern politics.

I quote this book weekly in one guise or another, and the few diagrams in the book are legendary on the internet. The last two chapters are required reading. What surprises me, is, that it isn't more popular than it is. And I think it's because the title is more academic than the authors means of addressing the issue. It's written to be accessible to a wide audience, but the title does not inform the reader that this is the case, and as such, the market opportunity is a bit wasted. Postmodernism is the philosophical-religious argument behind the american liberal (left) political movement. And this is the message that would have put the book on the NYT bestseller list. Very few of us understand that Postmodernism is the use of the ancient linguistic trickery of the monotheistic religions applied to deceiving us into adopting secular socialism. On the one hand, as propaganda, postmodernism is a brilliant political invention on the scale of the invention of monotheistic, scriptural, mysticism. On the other, it is perhaps the most dangerously seductive anti-scientific, anti-rational system of thought since the development of monotheistic, scriptural, mysticism. As a political philosopher, it's hard not to look at postmodernism with the terrified fascination we feel when witnessing bloody record of successful serial killers. As repulsive as it is, it's hard not to be impressed with the amazing evil that it takes to commit such horrors. Postmodernism is fascinating for the same reason.

Simply brilliant. If I would be crazy enough to encourage my kids to go to college, this book is the one I would urge them to read. And since I'm not crazy (i.e. Postmodern) I wouldn't encourage something like that. I would still urge them to read it, and anybody else for that matter. Thank you Jordan Peterson for recommending it. And thanks to the author.

This is a great book with an in depth explanation of the philosophical, cultural, and political roots of postmodernism. The book contrasts enlightenment and modernist thinking with postmodernism. I am learning a lot about different philosophies as I read. Not an easy read...but if you can read author's of the like of Carl Jung than this should not be a problem. Also helps if you are interested in philosophy, culture, and politics. Highly recommended.

An essential book for understanding the extreme polarization we're currently seeing in the West, with its quagmire of political correctness, bitter identity politics, censorship and de-platforming of speakers at universities, and the incredibly persistent zombie of a failed socialism that just won't

die. Hicks offers convincing arguments for how we got to this point, and where the split occurred in both the philosophical literature and politics. Unfortunately, he stops short of offering solutions. Highly recommended. Brilliantly written. Extremely approachable.

Dr. Hicks has written the most readable and succinct discussion of postmodernism in our time. There is only one area that seems incorrect: Thomas Kuhn is seen as siding with postmodernists in their explanation of the world. Kuhn, I believe, was discussing mainly a change in the semantics of science and not the fundamental nature of the world.

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