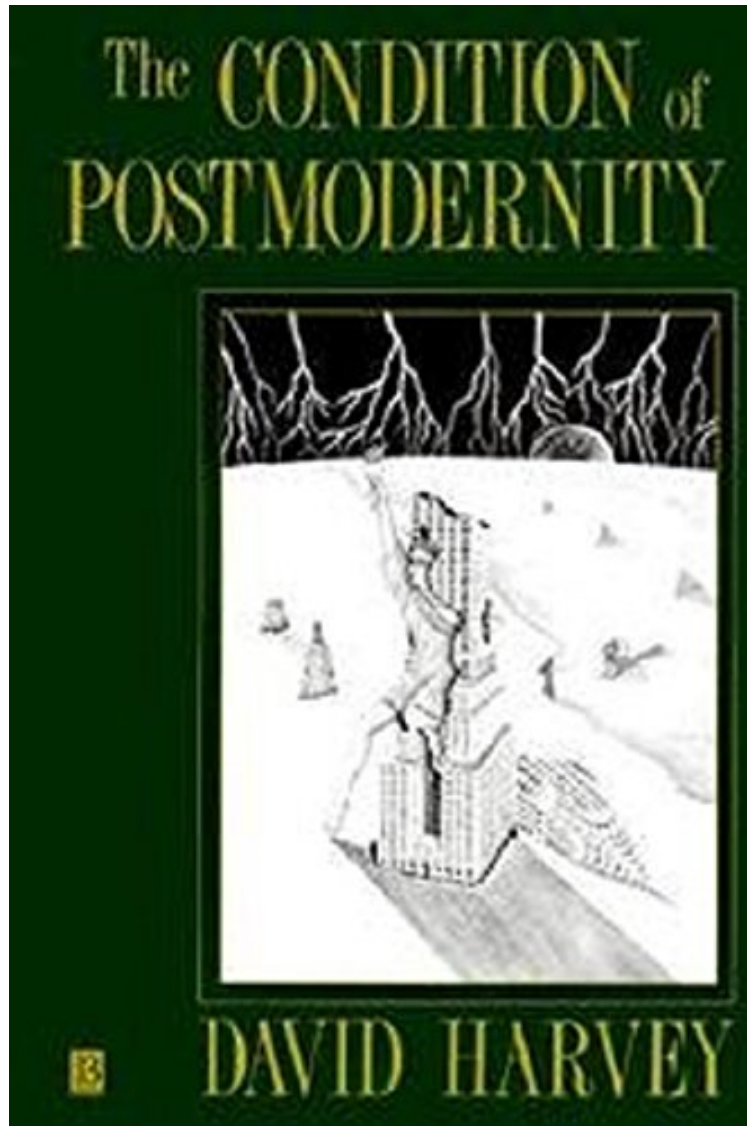


The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change

David Harvey

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David Harvey : The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change:

1 of 2 people found the following review helpful. One of the best books I've read in my life!By Miriam Ayala SolsHarvey does an excellent job describing how time and space is measured within various perspectives thourgout

time. I enjoyed every letter in it. 3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. *Paradigm Shift of Capitalism: How Novel is Postmodernity?* By David Harvey characterized transformations of capitalist system since 1973 as from managed to flexible accumulation. Harvey argued that since the Great Depression, Fordism emerged as not only a regulation model of production but also a whole package of social and political lifestyle. Fordism bundled centralized, scientific and rational control of production with standardized and all-round incentives and welfare packages to encourage mass consumption of surplus products (pp.125-127). Technological and organizational progresses derived from World War II were widely adopted as new boosters of productivity (p.132). States across the globe were transformed into authoritarian, bureaucratic, rational political machines that simultaneously cracked down on radical working class movements and rationally managed economy through combination of fiscal, monetary and political strategies (pp.136-138). De-radicalized trade unions serve as collective bargaining and enforcement coordinators between workers and employers (pp.128). Social aesthetics correspondingly favored efficiency, rationality and collective progression (p.136). All in all, this stable Fordism social contract relied on state intervention and international coordination based on Keynesian economics, organized consent of workers and hierarchical standardized production. It was both a spatial fix based on collective long-term, large-scale efforts as well as controlled devaluation and accumulation of wealth, and a temporal fix based on expanding capitalist world (p.139 and pp.184-185). Harvey went on to compare flexible accumulation with Fordism. According to Harvey, the 1973 oil crisis, coupled with rising competition from matured alternative centers in East Asia and Western Europe and decline in US power signaled the end of rigid Fordism (pp.141-142 and p.145). Flexible accumulation emerged as short-term, flexible and segregated employment strategies of labor (pp.150-151) and production strategies as well as new industries based on information and in-time production (p.154), coupled by short-term, fast-changing and diverse consumer aesthetics (p.156). De-regulation from the state prompted more flexible organization of production (p.155) and freer movement of capital across the globe (160-161). Competitive individualism and entrepreneurship replaced collective aesthetics and progression (p.171). Most importantly, innovation in financial tools and expansion of global financial market provided new spatial fix of moving capital around the globe to chase the profit and new temporal fix of reaping short-term profit in disregard of long-term debt accumulation and risks (pp.161-163, and p.186). Harvey's theory makes a dialogue with Giovanni Arrighi's longue duree cycles of capitalism. Harvey complemented Arrighi's financialization perspective with the story on the production and labor side. Temporal and spatial fixes are also the two primary perspectives of capitalist transition shared by Harvey and Arrighi. On the other hand, while Arrighi saw repetitiveness of financial expansion (with compressed temporal and spatial cycles) based on longer historical cycles, Harvey highlighted financial innovation and expansion as a novel spatial and temporal fix technique. He also paid much more attention to consumption pattern and aesthetics as part of social contract of particular accumulation models. There is no need to ask the simple question of who is right or wrong, but the convergence and contrast between Arrighi and Harvey does lead us to contemplate the mechanism of paradigm shift in capitalist social systems and whether post-modernity is a mere extension of modern capitalist system or a significant rupture from it. 14 of 15 people found the following review helpful. An all encompassing 'must buy' for the social sciences. *The Condition of Postmodernity*, although suffering from the author's modernist attitude, provides a vital and continually influential work on the perceived shift towards a postmodern cultural epoch. This shift is equated with the economic change from Fordist to Post-Fordist economies and the new regime of flexible accumulation. The book draws on theoretical examples as diverse as the work of Michel Foucault and Karl Marx and brings together empirical examples that are equally wide ranging. It has to be said that although Harvey provides a substantial appraisal and critique of the postmodern condition the meta-narrative employed leaves the author as the outsider looking in rather than the insider looking out.

In this new book, David Harvey seeks to determine what is meant by the term in its different contexts and to identify how accurate and useful it is as a description of contemporary experience.

The Condition of Postmodernity is David Harvey's seminal history of our most equivocal of eras. What does postmodernism mean? Where did it come from? Harvey, a professor of geography and a key mover behind extending the scope and influence of the discipline of geography itself, does a thorough job here delineating the passage through to postmodernity and the economic, social, and political changes that underscored and accompanied it. As he clearly states, the rise in postmodernist cultural forms is related to a new intensity in what Harvey terms "time-space compression," but this new intensity is a qualitative rather than quantitative change in social organization, and it does not point to an era beyond capitalism as "the basic rules of capitalistic accumulation" remain unchanged. Unlike Fredric Jameson (whose equally rewarding *Postmodernism* stands as the twin pillar to Harvey's critique), who explicitly relies on Ernest Mandel's periodization of late capitalism, Harvey eschews a narrowly economic focus, the limits and contradictions of production that have led to the rise in the service sector, and takes a more multidisciplinary approach to his history. As comfortable discussing Manet as he is labor markets, Harvey is an excellent writer, and *The Condition of Postmodernity* is an exceptionally informative and enjoyable read. --Mark Thwaite, .co.uk From Library Journal Harvey presents an illuminating and powerful critique of postmodernism, arguing that it represents the

cultural manifestation of late capitalism and specifically that it emerges from a transformation of time and space to accommodate a shift from a political economy based on Fordism to one based on flexible accumulation. Harvey moves with ease and authority over a wide range of cultural forms from architecture and urban planning to painting and literature. He is well versed in currents of postmodernist theory but avoids the pitfalls of jargon and obscurity. The book is both penetrating and accessible, an important contribution to the postmodernist debate. See also *Postmodern Genres*, reviewed below.--Ed.- T.L. Cooksey, Armstrong State Coll., Savannah, Ga. Copyright 1990 Reed Business Information, Inc. "Devastating. The most brilliant study of post-modernity to date. David Harvey cuts beneath the theoretical debates about postmodernist culture to reveal the social and economic basis of this apparently free-floating phenomenon. After reading this book, those who fashionably scorn the idea of a 'total' critique had better think again." Terry Eagleton "Few people have penetrated the heartland of contemporary cultural theory and critique as explosively or insightfully as David Harvey." Edward Soja "David Harvey's book is probably the best yet written on the link between ... economic and cultural transformations." *Financial Times* "David Harvey's engrossing book is probably the most readable, ambitious, and intelligent work on postmodernism yet published." *Voice Literary Supplement* "In Harvey's skilful hands various strands of contemporary life, normally held far apart by specialized scholarly interests, come together again and are shown to fit with each other ... a marvellous, enjoyable and mind-opening book." *Times Literary Supplement*