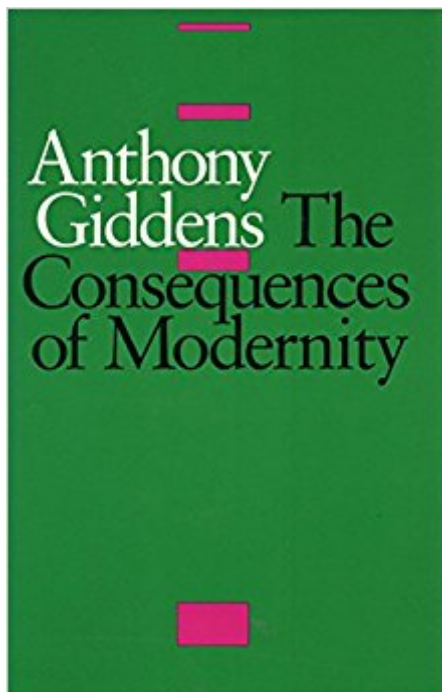The book was found

The Consequences Of Modernity

Synopsis

In this major theoretical statement, the author offers a new and provocative interpretation of institutional transformations associated with modernity. What is modernity? The author suggests, "As a first approximation, let us simply say the following: 'modernity' refers to modes of social life or organization which emerged in Europe from about the seventeenth century onwards and which subsequently became more or less worldwide in their influence."We do not as yet, the author argues, live in a post-modern world. The distinctive characteristics of our major social institutions in the closing years of the twentieth century suggest that, rather than entering into a period of post-modernity, we are moving into a period of "high modernity" in which the consequences of modernity are becoming more radicalized and universalized than before. A post-modern social universe may eventually come into being, but this as yet lies on the other side of the forms of social and cultural organization that currently dominate world history.In developing a fresh characterization of the nature of modernity, the author concentrates on the themes of security versus danger and o trust versus risk. Modernity is a double-edged phenomenon. The development of modern social institutions has created vastly greater opportunities for human beings to enjoy a secure and rewarding existence than in any type of pre-modern system. But modernity also has a somber side that has become very important in the present century, such as the frequently degrading nature of modern industrial work, the growth of totalitarianism, the threat of environmental destruction, and the alarming development of military power and weaponry.The book builds upon the author's previous theoretical writings and will be of great interest to those who have followed his work through the years. However, this book covers issues the author has not previously analyzed and extends the scope of his work into areas of pressing practical concern.

Book Information

Paperback: 188 pages

Publisher: Stanford University Press; 1 edition (March 1, 1991)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0804718911

ISBN-13: 978-0804718912

Product Dimensions: 5.5 x 0.5 x 8.4 inches

Shipping Weight: 9.6 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.0 out of 5 stars   12 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #93,598 in Books (See Top 100 in Books)   #56 inÂ Books > Politics & Social

Customer Reviews

In this major theoretical statement, the author offers a new and provoctive interpretation of institutional transformations associated with modernity. What is modernity? The author suggests, â œAs a first approximation, let us simply say the following: â ˆmodernityâ ™ refers to modes of social life or organization which emerged in Europe from about the seventeenth century onwards and which subsequently became more or less worldwide in their influence.â •We do not as yet, the author argues, live in a post-modern world. The distinctive characteristics of our major social institutions in the closing years of the twentieth century suggest that, rather than entering into a period of post-modernity, we are moving into a period of â œhigh modernityâ • in which the consequences of modernity are becoming more radicalized and universalized than before. A post-modern social universe may eventualy come into being, but this as yet lies on the other side of the forms of social and cultural organization that currently dominate world history.In developing a fresh characterization of the nature of modernity, the author concentrates on the themes of security versus dangerand o trust versus risk. Modernity is a double-edged phenomenon. The development of modern social institutions has created vastly greater opportunities for human beings to enjoy a

secure and rewarding existencethan in any type of pre-modern system. But modernity also has a somber side that has become very important in the present century, such as the frequently degrading nature of modern industrial work, the growth of totalitarianism, the threat of environmentsal destruction, and the alrming development of military power and weaponry.The book builds upon the authorâ ™s pevious theoretical writings and will be of great interest to those who have followed his work through the years. However, this book covers issues the author has not previously analyzed and extends the scope of his work into areas of pressing practical concern.

When evaluating Anthony Gidden's The Consequences of Modernity, it is useful to recognize that it was first presented as a series of lectures in 1988, when the post-modern perspective was still fairly fresh and influential. It's proponents sought to persuade us that a qualitative change in world view had occurred, with epistemological and practical consequences more dramatic than, say, the transformation from feudalism to capitalism beginning in Fourteenth Century Europe.Some of the central tenets of the post-modern perspective were not new, including radical anti-foundationalism and thoroughgoing decentering, both of which contributed to putting each of us on his or her own, uncertain of the rectitude of any moral code or ethical standards. We found ourselves alone in a chaotic world where men and women had no special claim to privileged status.Beyond that, post-modernism made the unsettling judgment that all good-faith truth claims were equally worthy of consideration, meaning that science was just one endeavor among many and should not be granted special credibility. An oft cited concept was discontinuity, meaning not only that history was not teleological, but that efforts to find consistency over time resulted in ill-conceived narratives, sloughing over ruptures and breaks that gave the lie to claims of interpretable unity.The world was an epistemological mess, and little or nothing could be known with certainty. Insofar as the ambient context provided a social and cultural home for mankind, it was a frighteningly unstable one, where identities were inherently precarious, and there was nothing to grab on to that would introduce even a modicum of knowledge-based security.Giddens understood that the post-modern point of view was not wholly without merit, but he rejected it in favor an alternative which held that what was mistaken for an epistemological revolution was, in fact, the further elaboration of modernity, making for rapid, compelling, even dizzyingly inexplicable change in the social and cultural world. Post-modernism, thus, was really an extension of themes that had existed in rudimentary form since the beginning of the modern era.The intensification of modernity, following Giddens, is best understood as a concomitant of globalization, a term we toss around carelessly, but which bears careful examination, especially with regard to the themes of capitalism, industrialization, rationality,

and reflexive monitoring.Capitalism, for example, was once an economic system that occurred in specific forms in distinct social formations. Marx, however, had long since recognized that capitalism had no boundaries, and he spoke of world markets. By the time Giddens wrote The Consequences of Modernity, it was clear that capitalism had become a world system. With the development of large multi-national corporations, their shifting investment patterns brought low-wage employment to Third World countries, while leaving once high-wage workers in the First World unemployed. Unpredictable life-altering events that financed slum life in Mumbai while transforming Detroit and Gary into de-industrialized waste lands were commonplace. Vast expanses of space were no obstacle to rationally calculable profit seeking. As the post-modernists had argued, life had become uncontrollably precarious and unstable, but contrary to their view, no new concepts were needed to account for that transformation.Globalization was also facilitated by evermore rapid and widespread industrialization, and by production of scientific and technological innovations that reconfigured existing patterns of social relations at work and elsewhere. Industrialization, an ally of capitalism, resulted in wholesale replacement of workers by machines, whether they were powered by diesel or electricity, driven by pistons or microcircuits. Fast-paced industrialization contributed to the uncertainty that accompanies rapid social change, and it demanded substantial expertise on the part of the remaining workers, as well as trust in arcane techniques on the part of those who consumed industrial processes and products. Consumers had to use their layman's knowledge to strike a balance between their trust in science and technology and the risk entailed in the knowledge that accidents happen and nothing is ever perfectly engineered.Furthermore, the expertise that makes industrialization possible could be brought to bear anywhere in the world. Again, even vast expanses of space were no obstacle, and as with capitalist production and distribution, time was irrelevant. Instantaneous communication, even before the internet, assured that everyone functioned according to the same schedule. The distinctiveness of localities that was once intrinsic to the idea of community was undercut, further exaggerating our sense of uncertainty and social and cultural homelessness.Both capitalism and industrialization give priority to rational calculability in pursuit of competitive advantage and efficiency, while constantly monitoring the world environment for hitherto unnoticed opportunities and ideas. Rationally calculable pursuit of profits and market share, moreover, easily sweeps aside tradition and established communities, leaving large numbers socially and culturally bereft. Again, constant monitoring and instantaneous communication are merely obvious extensions of ongoing capitalist development and industrialization, including the phenomena that post-modernists had misconstrued as fostering the advent of a qualitatively different world view.Giddens' argument is persuasive, though he sometimes

resorts to gratuitous use of concepts of his own in a way that turns a thematically coherent account into a by-the-numbers treatise that is a bit harder to follow than need be. His reliance on the work of Marx, Durkheim, and Weber makes his book readily accessible to anyone with a background in sociology. Those unaccustomed to reading sociological theorizing may find the book a bit slow going but still manageable. Whether or not The Consequences of Modernity was the last, best word on the decline of post-modernism, it forces us to reflect on the processes and products of social change attendant to globalization, as other reviewers have noted.

Ostensively, Giddens offers up Consequences of Modernity as an answer or alternative to Lyotard's version of postmodernism. Thus, even though Giddens only makes direct reference to Lyotard on a few pages, Lyotard's "The Postmodern Condition" is still a prerequisite for reading Gidden's Consequences. In Lyotards postmodern world there are only lesser narratives which cannot be reintegrated. There are no longer any grand narratives to explain life, the universe and everything. The disparate narratives no longer speak the same language; they are no longer part of the same story. The construction and completion of the grand narrative was the mission of Modernity. This was the project that Bacon and the later the Encylopedists believed in. But rifts have formed and there is no longer any unifying theme. The realization of the impossibility of a single unifying grand narrative results in the acceptance of the epistemological fragmentation that is the Postmodern condition.Giddens disagrees with Lyotard. He considers the contemporary world to be the result of the ongoing unfolding of Modern themes. Instead of pointing to a shift from Modern to Postmodern Giddens points back to the shift from the Traditional to the Modern. The consequences of Modernity are still coming to fruition. We are not entering a new Postmodern Era but rather we are in the process of finally fully leaving behind the Traditional era.Giddens describes a number of discontinuities between the Traditional and the Modern. There was a shift in our understanding and experience of space and time. In the Modern era time and space became bounded and measured. Space is now meticulously mapped out. Time is now strictly kept track of down to the milisecond. This was not the case in the previous age. Knowledge and value went through a related process of refinement or what Gideens calls "dissembedding". Within the boundaries of their areas of specialization experts map out and perfect their knowledge. Value becomes disembedded with the use of the symbolic tokens that we call money.In part due to these expert systems and symbolic tokens we see a change from Traditional forms of trust to the Modern forms of trust. In Traditional times trust was more personal and intimate. It was safeguarded by concepts like honor, sin as well as traditional forms of superstition (as opposed to our Modern forms of superstition). In Modern

times trust has become abstract and anonymous. We trust now not in people but in abstract systems. We trust that there will be food at the supermarket. We trust that the plane will get us there close to on time. We trust that the house will not fall on us. This trust is based on an interwoven network of experts such as supermarket owners, pilots and architects. We in turn play the some similar impersonal expert role for others as a way of earning money. We trust in the experts because they are being paid. Thus money, as well as a sort of general faith in the overall system of experts is foundational to this Modern form of trust. These fundamental changes from Tradional to Modern forms are still playing out. We have not yet seen the final consequences of Modernity so we can hardly claim to have reached Postmodernity. Giddens presents us with a paradigm shift that allows us to see Modernity with fresh eyes. It is in effect an attempt to lay the foundations for what Lyotard would call a grand narrative. Giddens to some extent successfully restores our hope in the possibility of a unifying grand narrative but there are places in which the argument begins to dissolve; but then, the same can be said for Lyotard's attempts to convince us to abandon all hope in the possibility of a unifying grand narrative.

The Consequences of Modernity Adorned in Dreams: Fashion and Modernity Ship Style: Modernism and Modernity at Sea in the 20th Century Modernity and the Holocaust A Taste for Brown Bodies: Gay Modernity and Cosmopolitan Desire (Sexual Cultures) Modernity and Modernism: French Painting in the Nineteenth Century (Modern Art--Practices & Debates) Theology and Down Syndrome: Reimagining Disability in Late Modernity (Studies In Religion, Theology, and Disability) Theology and Down Syndrome: Reimagining Disability in Late Modernity Yellow Music: Media Culture and Colonial Modernity in the Chinese Jazz Age Jewish Music and Modernity (AMS Studies in Music) Alien Bodies: Representations of Modernity, 'Race' and Nation in Early Modern Dance How the West Won: The Neglected Story of the Triumph of Modernity Violent Modernity: France in Algeria (Harvard Middle Eastern Monographs) Rule of Experts: Egypt, Techno-Politics, Modernity Ethiopia on the Verge of Modernity: the Transfer of Power During Zewditu's Reign 1916-1930 An Amorous History of the Silver Screen: Shanghai Cinema, 1896-1937 (Cinema and Modernity) Foundations of Despotism: Peasants, the Trujillo Regime, and Modernity in Dominican History Modernity Disavowed: Haiti and the Cultures of Slavery in the Age of Revolution (John Hope Franklin Center Books) Trance and Modernity in the Southern Caribbean: African and Hindu Popular Religions in Trinidad and Tobago (New World Diasporas) Myths of Modernity: Peonage and Patriarchy in Nicaragua

Contact Us

DMCA

Privacy

FAQ & Help