



Identity Crises: A Social Critique of Postmodernity

Robert G. Dunn

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A readable analysis of postmodernity that provides a cultural context for its rise.

Though the term "postmodern" looms large on our cultural landscape, rarely do we find a systematic and impartial discussion of the circumstances of its ascendance. *Identity Crises* offers just such an accounting. In this book, Robert G. Dunn situates the intellectual currency of "the postmodern" within the larger context of social and cultural change shaping the movement over the past several decades. Along the way, he offers a necessary corrective to both the sociological and historical shortcomings of cultural criticism and the cultural myopia of social science in considering the postmodern world.

Dunn explains contemporary culture and contemporary cultural criticism as part of a distinct historical moment, one that entails new social relations as a consequence of new means of production. In place of prevailing cultural and political constructions, Dunn proposes a "social relational" approach that explicitly recognizes the structural and situational contexts of identity formation. He conceptualizes issues of identity and difference in terms of social, cultural, and political transformations in the transition from modern to postmodern society.

This provides a socio-historical perspective through which to consider the impact of consumption, mass media, globalization, and new social movements on identity-forming processes.

Unique to this undertaking and crucial to Dunn's critique of poststructuralist and postmodern theories is his application of the theory of George Herbert Mead as a more effective means of theorizing identity and difference. Dunn's focus on postmodernity as opposed to postmodernism serves to ground the analysis of identity and difference materially and socially.

Learned, evenhanded, and enlightening, *Identity Crises* is an essential demonstration of the connections between cultural theory and criticism, contemporary culture, and sociological analysis.

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