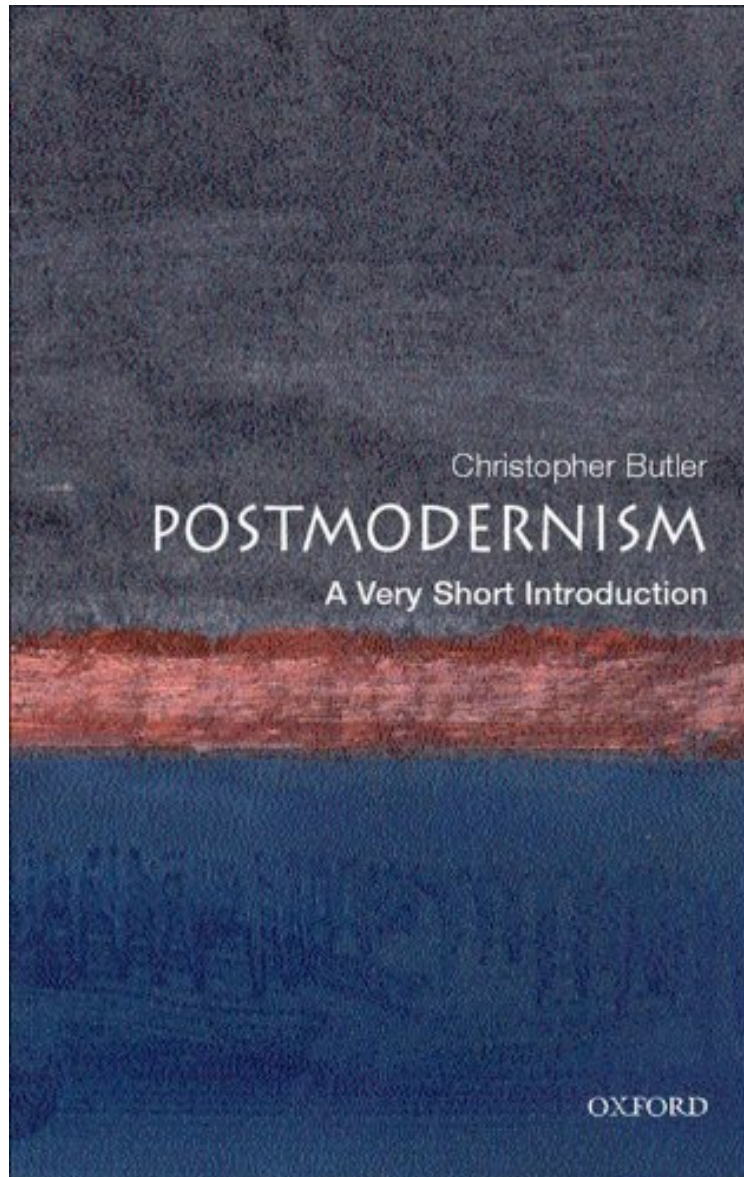


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## Postmodernism: A Very Short Introduction (Very Short Introductions)

*Von Christopher Butler*  
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**Von Christopher Butler : Postmodernism: A Very Short Introduction (Very Short Introductions)** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Postmodernism: A Very Short Introduction (Very Short Introductions):

KundenrezensionenHilfreichste Kundenrezensionen3 von 3 Kunden fanden die folgende Rezension hilfreich. Critical

introduction to a fascinating topic! Von Michael Dienstbier Postmodernism is one of these terms that many people like to use in order to sound sophisticated. Few, however, are in a position to define what they actually mean by it when being asked. Christopher Butler's "Postmodernism" comes up with a very fine first approach to that topic and at the time delivers a critical account of the cultural as well as ethical implications made by postmodernism. It is, much to the dismay of many people, impossible to define the term postmodernism in one or two sentences since there just are too many aspects which make up the cultural and philosophical movement known under the name of postmodernism. One, if not the most important, constituent part of postmodernism is its distrust towards metanarratives as being defined by the philosopher Jean-Francois Lyotard: "I define postmodernism as incredulity towards metanarratives" (13). The most well-known metanarratives are religions, the Enlightenment as well as Marxism which all come up with a theory that explains what life is actually all about and what we have to do in order to reach the goal of ultimate happiness and salvation. Postmodernism defies this illusion. The main reason for this critical attitude towards concepts such as 'truth', for instance, lies in its view towards language as not being able to define anything in positive terms: "[T]he relationship of language towards reality is not given, or even reliable, since all language systems are inherently unreliable cultural constructs" (17). According to this view language does not reflect an external reality. It rather constructs it. And since language embodies the views, moral standards and ideals of a given cultural community, the reality constructed by language is always a product of the power relations that pervade a society which need to be, and here comes another notorious term, deconstructed: "It is the central use of deconstruction to subvert our confidence in logical, ethical and political commonplaces that has proved most revolutionary - and typical of postmodernism" (21). What makes this introduction more intriguing than other ones is that it seems to be highly critical towards the concept of postmodernism. Butler especially criticises the ethical relativism of many supporters of postmodernism. Thus he attacks the postmodern criticism of the Enlightenment: "Indeed, postmodernists tend to argue that Enlightenment reason, which claimed to extend its moral ideals to all in liberty, equality and fraternity, was "really" a system of repressive, Foucauldian control, and that Reason itself, particularly in its alliance with science and technology, is incipiently totalitarian" (60). Butler argues that not everything can be considered to be a cultural construct or the result of the random play of free-floating signifiers. He makes the case for something universal which does not depend on a special culture but is valid for everybody in the universe: "The beliefs which lead to the public stoning to death of an 'adulterous' woman are not just to be shrugged off as a symptom of 'the way they do things over there' as opposed to 'round here'" (121). What is universal, according to Butler, is the fact that we all have a body, that we all are capable of feeling pain and that we all want to be free of any pain being inflicted upon us. Postmodern relativism must end at this point, Butler argues, and he certainly has a point there. Conclusion: Very short but very good introduction to this difficult but fascinating topic. What distinguishes this book from other introductions to the thematic field of postmodernism is its critical approach to that topic. Thus, "Postmodernism" is as informative as well as thought-provoking as one could wish. Readers who find this book of interest might also have a look at Terry Eagleton's *The Meaning of Life: A Very Short Introduction* (Very Short Introductions) and Catherine Belsey's *Poststructuralism: A Very Short Introduction* (Very Short Introductions) which focus on some of the issues that have been touched here.

5 von 5 Kunden fanden die folgende Rezension hilfreich. zu wenig Einföhrung, zu viel Kritik Von Sikander Was als eine Einföhrung in die Thematik der Postmoderne tituliert ist, wirkt oftmals sehr voreingenommen. Es ist zu bemngeln, dass der Autor Christopher Butler nicht aus einer neutralen Rolle heraus argumentiert, sondern Seite bezieht, und dies oftmals nicht zugunsten des Postmodernismus. Der Verlag Oxford University Press htte gut daran getan einen geeigneteren Autor fr diese Einföhrung zu whlen, als jemanden der seine Antipathie gegenber Ricardo Bofills "Les Espaces d'Abraxas" damit zum Ausdruck bringt, dass er es schlicht als "a kind of pastiche fascist monumental architecture" verwirft. Letzteres Zitat bringt damit zum Ausdruck, dass "Criticism of Postmodernism: A Very short Introduction" ein weitaus sinnvollerer Titel fr dieses Buch gewesen wre. Generell mchte ich in Frage stellen, ob sich solch eine komplexe und nicht einheitliche Epoche wie der Postmodernismus (Butler selbst spricht vom Postmodernismus als ein "party manifesto", dessen Grundannahmen nicht von allen Postmodernisten geteilt werden), auf weniger als 130 Seiten einföhrend darstellen lt. Aus meiner Sicht wrde eine einföhrende Aufsatzsammlung zu dieser Epoche weitaus sinnvoller erscheinen, da sie die Sicht mehrerer Autoren bzw. Theoretiker wiedergeben wrde. Neben all der Kritik sind das Kapitel zu "Deconstruction" und die zahlreichen Beispiele postmoderner Kunst positiv hervorzuheben.

0 von 0 Kunden fanden die folgende Rezension hilfreich. Postmodernism for beginners (but then, aren't we all...) Von Fr Kurt Messick Postmodernism is a tricky thing to define. According to Christopher Butler, 'it is certain of its uncertainty', and he intentionally writes 'about postmodern artists, intellectual gurus, academic critics, philosophers, and social scientists...as if they were all members of a loosely constituted and quarrelsome political party.' Butler draws on the work of Derrida, Jameson, Barthes, Althusser and Foucault to provide an intellectual basis for the idea of postmodernism, but does not confine his study to critical and literary theory. The idea of postmodernism is one that has spread into politics and other social sciences, art and the humanities, and even the hard sciences in many ways. Because postmodernism is more of a method or discourse than a set theory (at least so far as typical Anglo-American concepts of theory would have it), Butler worries that some of postmodernism is lost in translation - owing so much to the French intellectual foundation, and owing much to nuance and subtle readings, the

translation of postmodern ideas has been slow to be exactly transferred. This is also in part due to the resistance of English and English-speaking intellectual constructs to permit some of the linguistic aspects of postmodernism in any easy way. One of the key issues of postmodernism is the idea of grand narratives and metanarratives, and changing the way one uses text, language and symbolic items to interpret the world. This is where deconstruction and reconstruction come into play. Butler addresses these issues in terms of philosophy, history, art and expression, as well as ethical and political theory. He claims that the ideas of postmodernism tend to be more successful in the ethical and political realm, dealing with issues of identity, selfhood, difference and autonomy, all of which tend to be linguistically constructed and supported. Butler quotes Jameson as seeing the postmodern as 'the disappearance of a sense of history', in culture and in philosophy. The question of Pontius Pilate, 'What is truth?' gets played out again and again in postmodern circles in ways the early Romans and Christians would never have thought. Butler worries for the postmodern condition, stating 'Postmodernists are by and large pessimists.' He says that postmodern thinkers are better at deconstruction than construction/reconstruction, and worries that much of what postmodernism inspires is bleak and dark. Some reviewers of this text have noted a bias against postmodernism in Butler, which is probably a bit misplaced. Butler is biased against some of the outcomes of postmodernist thinking, and goes a bit further in this Very Short Introduction that perhaps is best in describing what might be the outcome of the logical extreme. Still, this is a very good introduction to the underlying principles of postmodernist thought, with some of the applications in various disciplines of the underlying framework.

Kurzbeschreibung Postmodernism has been a buzzword in contemporary society for the last decade. But how can it be defined? In this Very Short Introduction Christopher Butler challenges and explores the key ideas of postmodernists, and their engagement with theory, literature, the visual arts, film, architecture, and music. He treats artists, intellectuals, critics, and social scientists 'as if they were all members of a loosely constituted and quarrelsome political party' - a party which includes such members as Cindy Sherman, Salman Rushdie, Jacques Derrida, Walter Dill Scott, and Richard Rorty - creating a vastly entertaining framework in which to unravel the mysteries of the 'postmodern condition', from the politicizing of museum culture to the cult of the politically correct. ABOUT THE SERIES: The Very Short Introductions series from Oxford University Press contains hundreds of titles in almost every subject area. These pocket-sized books are the perfect way to get ahead in a new subject quickly. Our expert authors combine facts, analysis, perspective, new ideas, and enthusiasm to make interesting and challenging topics highly readable. Pressestimmen "A pre-eminently sane, lucid, and concise statement about the central issues, the key examples, and the notorious derilections of postmodernism. I feel a fresh wind blowing away the miasma coiling around the topic."--Ihab Hassan, University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee "The most intellectually incisive, coherent and comprehensive meditation upon the history and significance of postmodernism that I have yet encountered."--Patricia Waugh, University of Durham "Easily the best introduction to postmodernism currently available."--Hans Bertens, Utrecht University "A pre-eminently sane, lucid, and concise statement about the central issues, the key examples, and the notorious derilections of postmodernism. I feel a fresh wind blowing away the miasma coiling around the topic."--Ihab Hassan, University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee "The most intellectually incisive, coherent and comprehensive meditation upon the history and significance of postmodernism that I have yet encountered."--Patricia Waugh, University of Durham "Easily the best introduction to postmodernism currently available."--Hans Bertens, Utrecht University