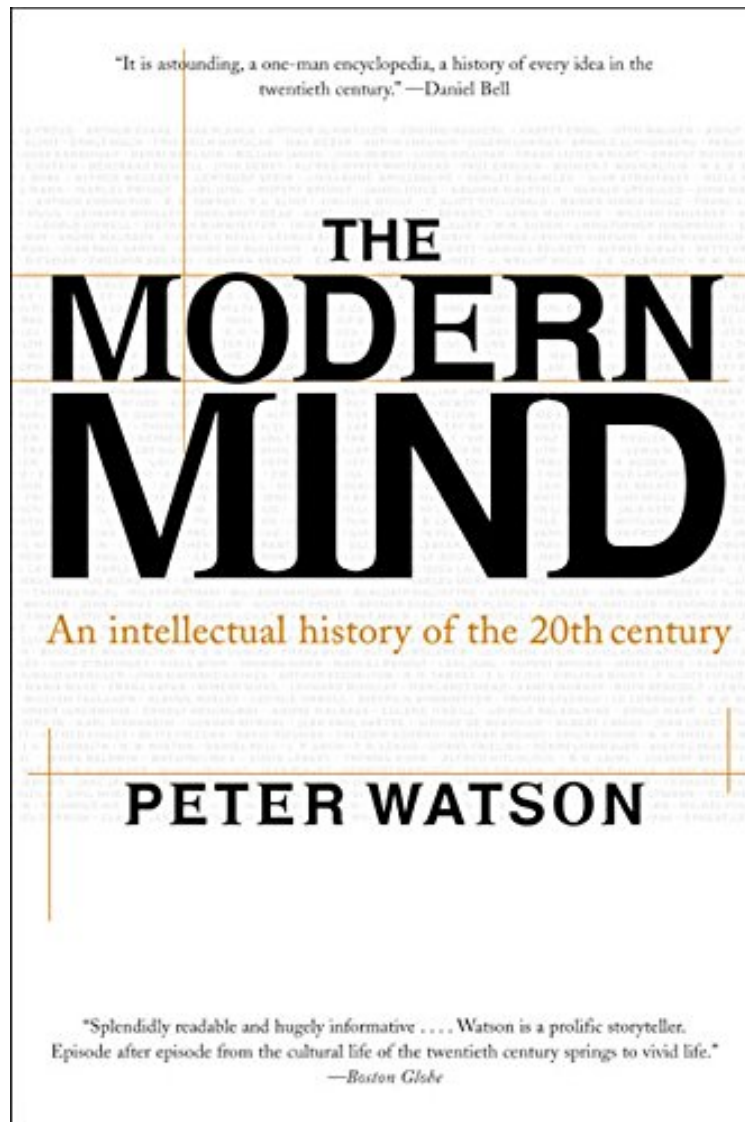


The Modern Mind: An Intellectual History of the 20th Century

Peter Watson

ePub | *DOC | audiobook | ebooks | Download PDF



#339916 in Books 2002-07-23 2002-07-23 Original language: English PDF # 1 9.25 x 1.38 x 6.13l, 2.13 #File Name: 0060084383864 pages | File size: 38.Mb

Peter Watson : The Modern Mind: An Intellectual History of the 20th Century before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Modern Mind: An Intellectual History of the 20th Century:

4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. Hands down the most interesting and useful 1-volume history of just about every big idea that formed the 20th century. By Mitch Orfuss Peter Watson has pulled off a second miracle--essentially completing what he started in his "Ideas: ...From Fire to Freud." "The Modern Mind" has just the right depth for me--not too much and not too little. It seems that no important idea of the 20th century was skipped. The

book has the speed of a good novel, and is smart without a hint of pretension. The conversational tone is that of a smart, synthetic, enthusiastic college lecturer. I keep going back to Watson with renewed excitement, and so will you. Fine bibliography suggests further reading. In short: If all first-year college students were given the opportunity to read and discuss this book during Spring semester (after completing its prequel "Ideas:..." during Fall semester)--supplemented perhaps by some primary readings--they'd come away with a really terrific grounding in world history, civilization, philosophy, religion, invention. In short, an education between covers.8 of 8 people found the following review helpful. giftBy HydraThis book would make a great graduation gift for any high school student as he begins a liberal arts education. They would also be essential for business or engineering graduates who of necessity might have missed a humanities education altogether. Perhaps the book is too ambitious, but it is well written and a compelling read. My only criticism is that towards the end one senses his reliance on the great popular work in the sciences written in the 1990's. (Dawkins, Weinberg, Wilson, Pinker, Dyson et al - great stuff, but more essential material has been added in the last 10 years particularly in astrophysics and the neurosciences.) But the core questions as Watson defines them still hold. This is the kind of book that needs to be rewritten every 10 years and is due for an update which I very much hope is coming soon. (Also check out his more recent book "Ideas" which is even more ambitious). These books follow in the tradition of Tarnas or Jacob Bronowski and deserves to become even more admired. Few people are capable of writing, or can be trusted to write.... these kind of intellectual Uber-histories. Watson has done a wonderful job.7 of 7 people found the following review helpful. Pretty Much as AdvertisedBy Herbert L CalhounDense, erudite and challenging, but never boring: An 800-page panoramic view of the intellectual history of the 20th Century. It follows both the paradigms and the paradigm shifts in the arts, humanities and most of all in the sciences -- paradigms and shifts that have taken place over the 20th Century mostly in the Western world.All of the big ideas and the people that introduced them are present, accounted for, and are neatly and economically summarized, in context. The core elements of most of the key intellectual ideas and theories across a vast expanse of the intellectual landscape -- from Freud to Nietzsche, and Darwin to Einstein -- that have driven us from Modernism to Post-modernism are given with the historical connective tissue left in.Importantly, the author makes a distinction between "cultural" and "intellectual" history and advances; between "big ideas" and "big people" and "big events" that normally drive history and uses these distinctions as a tool for ignoring the latter two; thus paring down his selections to a manageable size. As a result, the book has a unity that is simply uncanny in its utter coherence and precision.What an exhilarating ride. Intellectual history doesn't get much better than this. Read and enjoy. AmenFive Stars

From Freud to Babbitt, from Animal Farm to Sartre to the Great Society, from the Theory of Relativity to counterculture to Kosovo, The Modern Mind is encyclopedic, covering the major writers, artists, scientists, and philosophers who produced the ideas by which we live. Peter Watson has produced a fluent and engaging narrative of the intellectual tradition of the twentieth century, and the men and women who created it.

From Publishers WeeklyJust as the 20th century dawned with an unparalleled optimism regarding the moral, social and scientific progress of humanity, it ended with an unshakeable confidence in the promises of technology and the power of free-market economics to deliver a better life for all humankind. British journalist Watson's (War on the Mind; The Caravaggio Conspiracy; etc.) panoramic survey traces various 20th-century ideas and their power to bend and shape society and individuals. At a frenetic pace, he gallops through the modern intellectual landscape, pausing long enough to graze the fountains of philosophy (from Wittgenstein to Richard Rorty to Alasdair MacIntyre), literature (Kafka, Woolf, Mann, Rushdie), literary criticism (F.R. Leavis to Jacques Derrida), art (Picasso to Warhol), economics (Milton Friedman to John Kenneth Galbraith), science (Linus Pauling to E.O. Wilson) and film (D.W. Griffiths to Francois Truffaut). He also briefly examines the significance of a wide range of political and cultural movements, such as socialism, communism, fascism, feminism and environmentalism. Watson's rich narrative covers every corner of intellectual life in the 20th century, yet the style is so breezy and anecdotal that it lacks the deep learned elegance of a history of ideas by, for example, Isaiah Berlin or Jacques Barzun. Unfortunately, for all the book's breadth, Watson's workmanlike approach has the feel of a handful of school assignments cobbled together from encyclopedia articles rather than of work drawn from years of thoughtful reflection and an intimate acquaintance with, and love of, ideas. Copyright 2001 Reed Business Information, Inc.From Library JournalIn this long and astonishing narrative, British journalist Watson presents an unconventional history of the 20th century, which, he argues, "has been dominated by a coming to terms with science." Although this massive volume is packed with a multitude of events, ideas, and influential people, Watson's infectious writing carries the reader swiftly along. The mosaic he creates can best be illustrated by this typical sentence: "On 25 October 1900, only days after Max Planck sent his crucial equations on a postcard to Heinrich Rubens, Pablo Picasso stepped off the Barcelona train at the Gare d'Orsay in Paris." In 42 chapters, Watson travels from Freud to the Internet, from pragmatism and relativity to Brave New World and Hiroshima, while considering the impact of the arts, existentialism, feminism, sexuality, genetics, medicine, the Great Society, race, AIDS, and more. Key people and ideas are highlighted. It is hard to spot any major omissions, though post-World War II music seems to get overlooked. While this work is reminiscent of Paul Johnson's

Modern Times (LJ 5/1/83), Watson's scope goes far beyond politics and history. This book will be read and consulted for many years. Thomas A. Karel, Franklin Marshall Coll. Lib., Lancaster, PA Copyright 2001 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Booklist Watson, a contributor to the Observer, The Times of London, and the New York Times, presents an engaging though lengthy record of the intellectual history of the recently completed century. While examining the currents of twentieth-century thought, he vividly portrays the period's great scientists, sociologists, economists, poets, philosophers, and other influential thinkers, and concludes that there were three dominant intellectual forces in the twentieth century: science, free-market economics, and the mass media. He follows the evolution of strictly scientific and humanistic pursuits in such fields of study as sociology, psychology, and gender studies. He examines such questions as why no new generation of public intellectuals has emerged since the 1960s. He touches on pretty much everything, from psychoanalysis to Kosovo, that has developed or happened during the 100 years he covers. Moreover, he seems inexhaustible at interconnecting names and ideas, so that fans of James Burke's TV series--The Day the Universe Changed and the rest--in particular will find Watson's big book enthralling, illuminating, and intellectually titillating. Michael Spinella Copyright American Library Association. All rights reserved