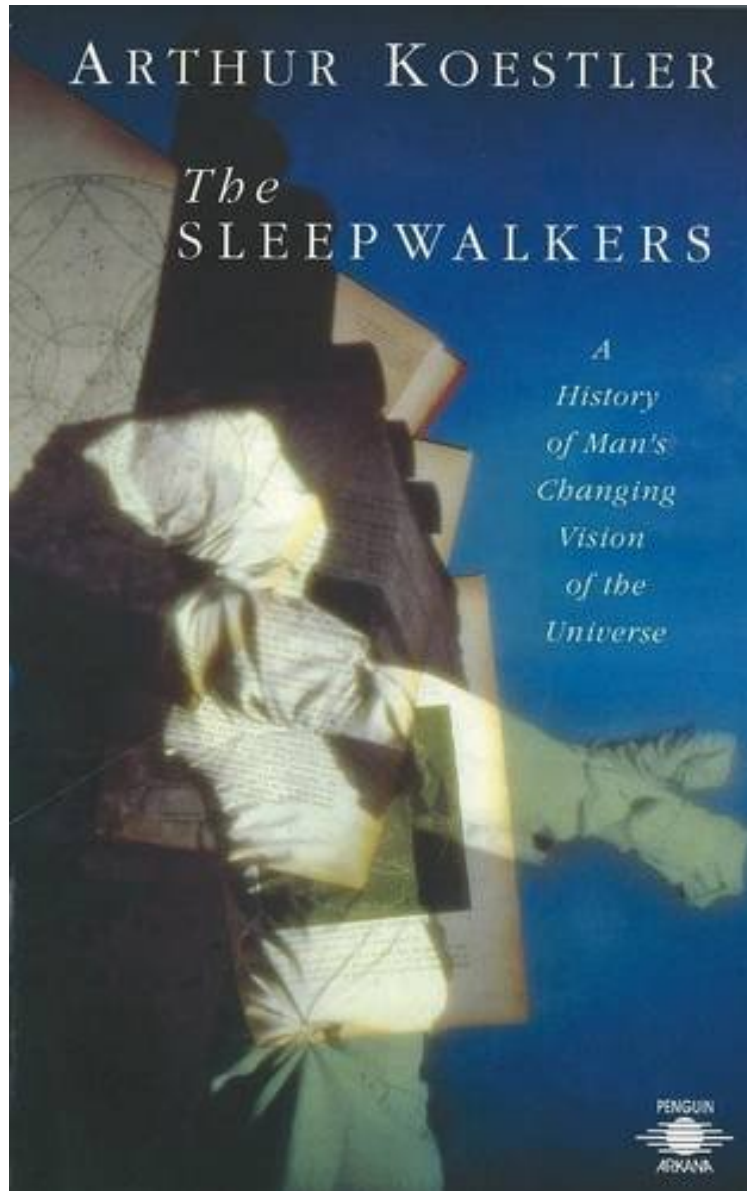


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The Sleepwalkers: A History of Man's Changing Vision of the Universe (Compass)

Arthur Koestler

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Arthur Koestler : The Sleepwalkers: A History of Man's Changing Vision of the Universe (Compass) before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Sleepwalkers: A History of Man's Changing Vision of the Universe (Compass):

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Five StarsBy JJCgreat, fine9 of 9 people found the following review helpful. This is an extraordinary and valuable introduction to the history of astronomy and cosmology.By Donald J. WeinhankThis is an extraordinary and valuable introduction to the history of astronomy and cosmology. I used in a class I taught many years ago for a period of several years and recommended very stronglyKoestler was the well-known novelist ("Darkness at Noon" and many other works), who, in his later years turned to writing about the history of science.His bookThe Watershed enjoyed a great deal of critical acclaim at the time. Some years later, Koestler decided to wrap around that book with a very extensive treatment of the history of astronomy and cosmology, the present volume.I so admire this time of Koestler's because of its treatment of Galileo. Gone are the simplistic treatments of Galileo's conflict with the church. For example, Galileo was not tortured, but "to be shown the instruments of torture." In the context of times. This is no small distinction.Furthermore Koestler makes clear that there were many within the church who were prepared to accept Galileo's ideas, provided that he advance them as an hypothesis rather than as absolute fact. Not to put too fine a point on it, there are several deficiencies to Galileo's theory. For example, in particular, only one tide a dayFinally Koestler makes it clear that a Galileo did some of his best work in retirement. a.k.a. under house arrest.This is an absolutely enthralling book, which I used in class for many years and heavily annotated. I purchased this volume to give to a friend4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. One of the finest works on the history of scienceBy Thomas C. FletcherI first read this almost 40 years ago for a course in the history of science at Ohio State University. I still read it from time to time. It's not only well-written, but shows the author's abilities as an astute observer of human nature. He really does see things well -- not that he's always correct, but he always makes me think again.He sums up Copernicus as someone who summarized what others had done that's correct. It was Kepler who came up with the ideas and mathematics that really solved the problem and he worked with Tycho's data -- Tycho was easily the best observational astronomer of his time. Copernicus neither observed very much, nor came up with the idea of elliptical orbits, but he did get the debate begun and for that he deserves to be remembered.Galileo is given his due -- he was a physicist and not really an astronomer and his last work was his best (though Sidereus Nuncius on his astronomical observations was very good). His failings were in not listening to Kepler -- he stuck with circular orbits despite Kepler's work, came up with explanations for the tides that were dead wrong (even flaunted the very laws of dynamics that he had discovered) and, possibly most importantly, did not suffer fools gladly -- unfortunately in some cases he was the more foolish. Yet, despite his shortcomings the world is much better off for his having been here. I just wish he had been a little more wise and forgiving when he talked about those who disagreed with him. Had he been a little wiser he would never have had trouble with the Church.This book takes the reader through all of the story in a good deal of detail, even beginning with the ancients and leaving off the tale with a mention (true, not much of one) of Isaac Newton who himself was both a crystallizer and a creator of new ideas.Despite the fact that it's well over half a century old, this book is still well worth the time and effort. Most of the reviewers here give it 5 stars and I agree.I would recommend reading Owen Gingerich's book "The Book that Nobody Read" which discusses how, despite Koestler's claim that it was not read, Copernicus's book was indeed read and commented on by many intellectuals of the time.

An extraordinary history of humanity's changing vision of the universe. In this masterly synthesis, Arthur Koestler cuts through the sterile distinction between 'sciences' and 'humanities' to bring to life the whole history of cosmology from the Babylonians to Newton. He shows how the tragic split between science and religion arose and how, in particular, the modern world-view replaced the medieval world-view in the scientific revolution of the seventeenth century. He also provides vivid and judicious pen-portraits of a string of great scientists and makes clear the role that political bias and unconscious prejudice played in their creativity.

The Sleepwalkers is a valuable and provocative book . . . a work with a noble aim * Sunday Times * The greatest part of this massive work is a close and valuable study of Copernicus, Tycho Brahe, Kepler, and Galileo . . . He writes tensely, with passion, as though personally involved, about events that took place more than 300 years ago * The Times *About the AuthorArthur Koestler (19051983) was an extraordinary polymath, writer, and political polemicist. His most famous works include the novels Darkness at Noon and Arrival and Departure; his autobiographical writings, including Spanish Testament and Scum of the Earth; and his visionary nonfiction, including The Ghost in the Machine, The Case of the Midwife Toad, and The Sleepwalkers.Herbert Butterfield was an influential historiographer born in 1900 in Yorkshire, England. A graduate of Peterhouse, University of Cambridge, he is best known for his 1931 work The Whig Interpretation of History. He died in 1979.