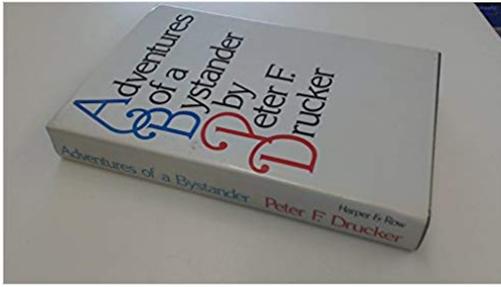


Adventures of A Bystander *by* Peter Ferdinand Drucker



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The author 'writes with wit and spirit about the people in his life..some great like Sigmund Freud, some well-known like Henry Luce, or Bucky Fuller when they were still only voices crying in the wilderness'. This book 'reflects the author's vitality, curiosity and interest in people, ideas and the forces behind them'.



Reviews of the [Adventures of A Bystander](#) *by* Peter Ferdinand Drucker

Kendis

"Freudian psychoanalysis represents a giant effort to hold together in one person the ultra-rationalist Freud, the child of the enlightenment, and Freud the dreamer and poet of the 'dark night of the soul.' . . . The systems of the nineteenth century that have had a major impact on the western world - Marx, Freud, and Keynes - all have had in common the synthesis between the scientific and the magical, and the emphasis on logic and empirical research leading to the - 'I believe because it makes no rational sense.'" (97)

This personal conclusion, at the end of his chapter on Freud, examples Drucker's willingness to offer opinions after providing background. Easy to understand. Direct without arrogance.

Preface -

"The totalitarian regimes in which everybody was to conform, to think, write, and paint the same, to be centrally controlled - the Nazi's called it 'switched to the right track' - were but the head of a universal current. It swept over the democracies as well." (vii)

Drucker's book "whether dealing with politics, philosophy or history" stresses pluralism and diversity.

"The people [here] were all chosen because each of them, in his or her own highly personal way, reflects and refracts the thirty crucial years from the end of WWI to the first post-WWII decade - the thirty years that largely formed the world in which we now live

Drucker highlights personal stories more than political movements. Nevertheless, he knows his life and everyone else, were driven by the huge undercurrents of the postwar world. This work wants to show how we got here. He succeeds (even if more can be told).

Prologue: a bystander is born

I - Report from Atlantis
Grandmother and the twentieth century
Hemmed and Genia
Miss Elsa and Miss Sophy
Freudian myths and Freudian realities
Count Traunek and the Actress Maria Mueller

II - Young man in an old world
The Polanyis
The man who invented Kissinger
The monster and the lamb
Noel Brailsford - the last of the dissenters
Ernest Freedburg's world
The bankers and the courtesan

III - The Indian summer of innocence
Henry Luce and Time-Life-Fortune
The prophets: Buckminster Fuller and Marshal McLuhan
The professional: Alfred Sloan
The Indian summer of innocence

The Vienna of Drucker's youth populated the western world with thinkers who created modernity. Drucker's friends included Mises and the Polanyis. He was closer to Karl than the others. Karl wanted to condemn western civilization and praise primitivism. Researched for years - and found. . .

"it simply is not true that slave trade and slave raids were forcibly imposed by wicked outsiders on a freedom loving and harmonious black tribal society. The black kings and chieftains brought in the slavers and organized, conducted, and supported the slave raids." (138)

Karl was 'profoundly shocked'. Preconceived ideas are the hardest to break.

"If there was one article of the faith to which all the Polanyis subscribed it was that the 'laissez-faire' Liberals were wrong. . . . All Polanyis searched for another alternative, whether Otto's early fascism, Adolph's romantic Brazil, Mousie's 'rural sociology', Micheal's stoic, or Karl's 'social principles'." (138)

These ideas had significant influence. But what did Karl's serious study uncover?

"But the more delved into prehistory, primitive economics, and classical antiquity, the more proof did he find for the hated and despised market creed of Ricardo and Bentham, and also of Karl's contemporary bogeymen, Ludwig Von Mises and Frederick Hayek." (138)

This personal experience seems included to highlight the conflict of the twentieth century disputes over freedom and collectivism. Fascinating!

Another insight -

"Our society has shifted to seeing symbols as real: money, trades and deals, interest rates, and Gross National Product. Our whole society assumes, in the words of the medieval logician: that symbols have substance while the objects they represent are mere shadows." (211)

What! Symbols (mental constructs) are more important than physical (observed) reality?

"Dr. Samuel Johnson once said, 'A man is never so innocently employed as in making money.' . . . Dr. Johnson did not say that the man who makes money is doing good. He says did the least harm. He does not seek power, he does not seek to dominate people or to make them squirm, he does not seek to amass possessions." (212)

Why?

"He is content with the symbols and lets reality go."

What reality?

"They were making things, scheming for power, dominating people or being dominated. They saw in money with the classical economists the 'veil of reality'."

This was centuries ago. Now?

"Is the ultra-nominalism that treats symbols and images as ultimate reality, and people and things as mere shadows, still so 'innocent'?" (212)

(Herbert Butterfield wrote against 'worshipping abstract nouns'. Seems similar.)

Vojar

This book tells stories about figures in Drucker's life that influenced his thinking. The book is partitioned in episodes relating to the times he spent in Vienna, Frankfurt, London and the US. Drucker was forced to make up his mind on the Nazi threats while living in Vienna and Frankfurt. He left for England and later for the US, when the Nazis came to power in 1933. He realized that the liberal 19th century had definitely come to an end and that not only his future but that of Western civilization was at stake. Some of his intellectual companions portrayed in the book shared his concerns but came to different conclusions on how to abate the danger facing Germany and Europe. The book opens with portraits of Viennese people like his grandmother and teachers that inspired him in later life. Intellectual forces in his youth like Freud, Marxism, Stalinism, rural sociology and Prussian Junckerdum are discussed by describing persons holding these ideas. However, he rejects them all as ideologies that wanted to achieve salvation by society. The world of investment banking he encountered in his London years is painted by pictures of men, who made decisions unbridled by ideology. His US years also portrays men of action. Drucker's management theory can be understood as a theory of decision making. Management wants to achieve results and not heaven on earth. His ideas on management were influenced by practitioners like Alfred Sloan of GM. This book gives interesting insights on how Drucker's ideas on management evolved in a discourse with other people and ideas.

IGOT

Adventures of a Bystander is an excellent read. I have read several of Drucker's works, and I found this one even more enthralling than all the others. This book looks at history, as it meshes with Mr. Drucker's life. It compares Drucker's world view against his observations of political and historical business ideas and personalities.

The book is full of gems like this: "... The truly "great man" and genuine "leader" -- looks completely different and acts completely different from the "great man" of popular myth. He does not lead by "Charisma"... The truly strong man leads by hard work and dedication. He does not centralize everything in his hands, but builds a team. He dominates through integrity, not through manipulation. He is not clever, but simple and honest."

I love historical biographies... and this one is a wonder.

Skrimpak

If you wanted to understand how Drucker came to many of his concepts, this book WILL give you that insight. This memoir sheds light on many of the experience he had that influenced his thoughts and many of his works. A great read on the man behind the ideas.

Kefym

I have given away copies of every edition of this book over the last 15 years since I first read it -- anyone in business knows of Drucker and this volume is invaluable in explaining how he came to his insights. More important, it is great fun to read -- like having a very intense conversation with the man himself. Warning -- it may send you back to his work, or to economic historians such as Karl Polanyi. My favorite character is the man who made Kissinger.

Tto

Thank you!

Ghile

This was a fine gift purchase.

Unfortunately Mr. Drucker is no longer with us. He was a very lucid writer as a student of human nature including their foibles.

I feel that not many corporate managers have delved into his works.

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