



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

By Peter Watson

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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.

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The Modern Mind: An Intellectual History of the 20th Century By Peter Watson Bibliography

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Just 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 founts 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 François 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.

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From Library Journal

In 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

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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*
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Users Review

From reader reviews:

Brandy Hagaman:

What do you concerning book? It is not important together with you? Or just adding material when you require something to explain what your own problem? How about your free time? Or are you busy man? If you don't have spare time to perform others business, it is make you feel bored faster. And you have time? What did you do? Every person has many questions above. The doctor has to answer that question since just their can do which. It said that about book. Book is familiar on every person. Yes, it is appropriate. Because start from on kindergarten until university need this *The Modern Mind: An Intellectual History of the 20th Century* to read.

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Teresa Hanson:

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