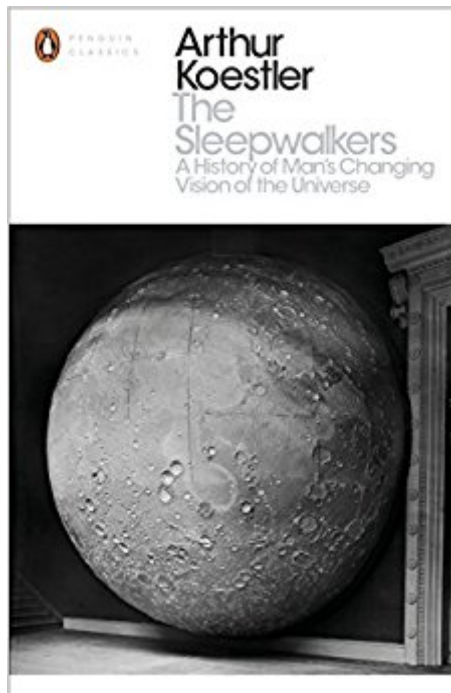




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The Sleepwalkers: A History Of Man's Changing Vision Of The Universe (Penguin Modern Classics)



Synopsis

Arthur Koestler's 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.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This is an extraordinary and valuable introduction to the history of astronomy and cosmology. I used it in a class I taught many years ago for a period of several years and recommended very strongly. Koestler 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 book *The 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 day. Finally 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 friend

Good review of the history of cosmology up through Kepler and Newton. Well written and easy to follow. Explains how mankind eventually came to understand the nature of the solar system and how it worked.

Arthur Koestler's book on the rise of modern western science is certainly controversial, for instance, his appreciation of Copernicus' work is not what we naively would expect. But the book is very good and has fascinating parts, as the one in which Koestler puts the blame on Plato for the human obsession with circles and spheres that delayed for centuries the emergence of the correct view of the Solar System. The shrewd analysis of Copernicus' and Kepler's as men assures the reader that science is after all a very human endeavor. And there is much more. I enjoyed it and recommend it.

I have only rudimentary knowledge of the history of astronomy. Koestler's book may be on or off base in parts. I simply do not know -- though I suspect from the nature of the reviews and the praise from it has received from friends I trust who do have the requisite knowledge, although Koestler's treatment of Galileo may be unduly harsh, the overall treatment of the topic is wonderfully composed and written in a fashion that makes it hard to put down. A definite recommendation.

This is a fantastic read. You quickly get addicted not just to the history, but also to the enthralling writing style.

Excellent book. I read it the first time many years ago, and recently reread it. It is an engaging

recounting of man's evolving understanding of the universe around him notwithstanding religious preconceptions, written in a way that is easily comprehended by non-astrophysicists and cosmologists.

Still remember it 35 years later. Reads like a mystery and you learn so much about the history of the universe.

great, fine

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