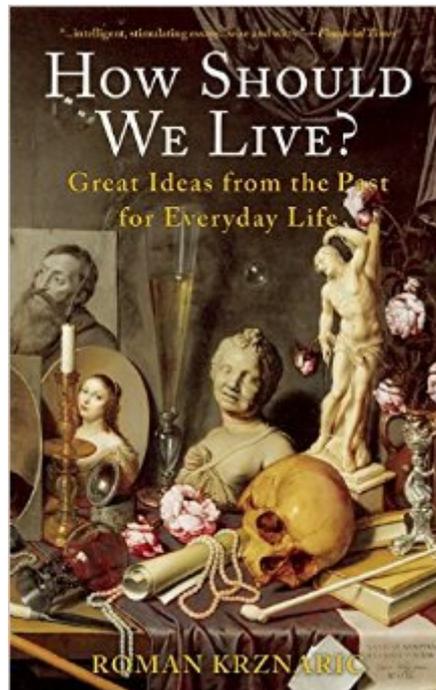


The book was found

How Should We Live?: Great Ideas From The Past For Everyday Life



Synopsis

There are many ways to try to improve our lives; we can turn to the wisdom of philosophers, the teachings of spiritual guides, or the latest experiments of psychologists. But we rarely look to history for inspiration; and when we do, it can be surprisingly powerful. In *How Should We Live?* the cultural historian Roman Krznaric explores twelve universal topics; including love, family, and empathy; work, time, and money; by illuminating the past and revealing the wisdom we have been missing. There is much to be learned from the ancient Greeks about the different varieties of love, for example, from medieval and Renaissance Europeans about living with passion and facing the realities of death, from various indigenous cultures on bringing up our children, and from Japanese pilgrims on the art of travel. Whether it is the different uses of the senses or nature across time, or changing attitudes to belief and creativity, *How Should We Live?* is full of ideas and stories from the past. A wonderful work of practical history, it sheds invaluable light on the decisions we make every day and shows what history can teach us about the art of living.

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Customer Reviews

Modern Western society is caught up in a whirlwind of materialism fueled by unquenchable consumerism, prompted by an abundance of choices and an unending variety of options; where to live, what to wear, what to eat, what to drive, or where to vacation and recreate. The choices of education, career and jobs is sometimes baffling. Even the accessibility to potential mates, romantic partners or spouses presents an array of candidates thru personal contacts or the technology of

social media. The abundance of so many alternatives is a blessing of modern times but may also be a curse. Where can we find the time, within the constraints of a lifetime, to partake from it all? Time has become our obsession and our currency; we parcel it to our interests and activities, to our friends and significant others, but often unequally and frequently "rob Peter to pay Paul". This book teaches that the fast paced and stressful life is not conducive to happiness or fulfillment. The author, cultural thinker and philosopher, Roman Krznaric, believes that we must consciously 'deprogram' ourselves to achieve a satisfying life and look to the "Ancients" for guidance. "I think of history as a wonderbox, similar to the curiosity cabinets of the Renaissance -- what the Germans called a Wunderkammer. Collectors used these cabinets to display an array of fascinating and unusual objects, each with a story to tell..... There is much to learn about life opening the wonderbox of history." In the Introduction, Krznaric writes, "How to pursue the art of living has become the great quandary of our age. I believe that the future of the art of living can be found by gazing into the past.

"How Should We Live?" by Roman Krznaric is an enjoyable book, interesting, well-written, encouraging, hopeful, uplifting, entertaining, and informative. The tone is conversational, even witty and clever at times. The occasional light-hearted remarks and humorous observations are appreciated, as this is the kind of material that writers tend to over-intellectualize (i.e. make boring and / or incomprehensible) or over-simplify (i.e. insult the reader by wasting their time). Krznaric questions the status quo and provides historical context for aspects of our modern lives that we may have grown so accustomed to we take them for granted. When dealing with topics such as family, work, time, and creativity, Krznaric often clearly and concisely identifies 4 or 5 contributing factors, kinds, or types of things, then discusses the relationships between them and the influence they've had on each other in ways that sometimes seem commonsensical but which may never have occurred to the reader (and even if some of the conclusions are not ground-breaking, it's nice to be reminded). His engaging volume challenges the reader to reconsider and evaluate alternative ways to be / live, and he offers sound, practical suggestions for making day to day life more rewarding. I refer to his insights as suggestions rather than solutions or advice, because, in his effort to connect with his audience, he clearly recognizes some ideas will resonate more than others with different people. Krznaric is clearly a curious person, a talented writer, and a well-read thinker, as the comprehensive bibliography, quality illustrations, and chapter notes demonstrate. The notes do not interfere with the flow of the text.

If you've ever taken a history course you've probably been told that one good reason to learn history

is that it will help you live your life better. There are many variations on this argument and they are all good. But, they are not persuasive. I suspect part of the problem is that these arguments are not supported with good examples. Since we mostly think of learning history as a matter of learning about important people, places, and events it seems difficult to appreciate that history could hold many lessons for everyday people and their everyday lives. After all, we aren't going to live like George Washington, Alexander The Great, or any other famous person from history. But, we actually can benefit from learning about how people in the past lived and the ideas that were important to them that are also important to us. Roman Krznaric's book provides us with the concrete examples of ideas and their history that we can use. One of the best insights we can gain from this book is that virtually everything we think and do is driven by ideas. And these ideas are not fixed and eternal. They have a history and that history shows that people in other places and times thought quite differently about those ideas and because of that lived differently as well. If you change your ideas you can change your life. But, it's not immediately obvious that we really can change our ideas about family, time, work, love, money, travel, or death. It's not obvious until we see examples of people who lived in the past with different ideas about these things. The point of looking to the past is not simply to go back to living in the past or to learn the lessons of history so that we don't repeat them.

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