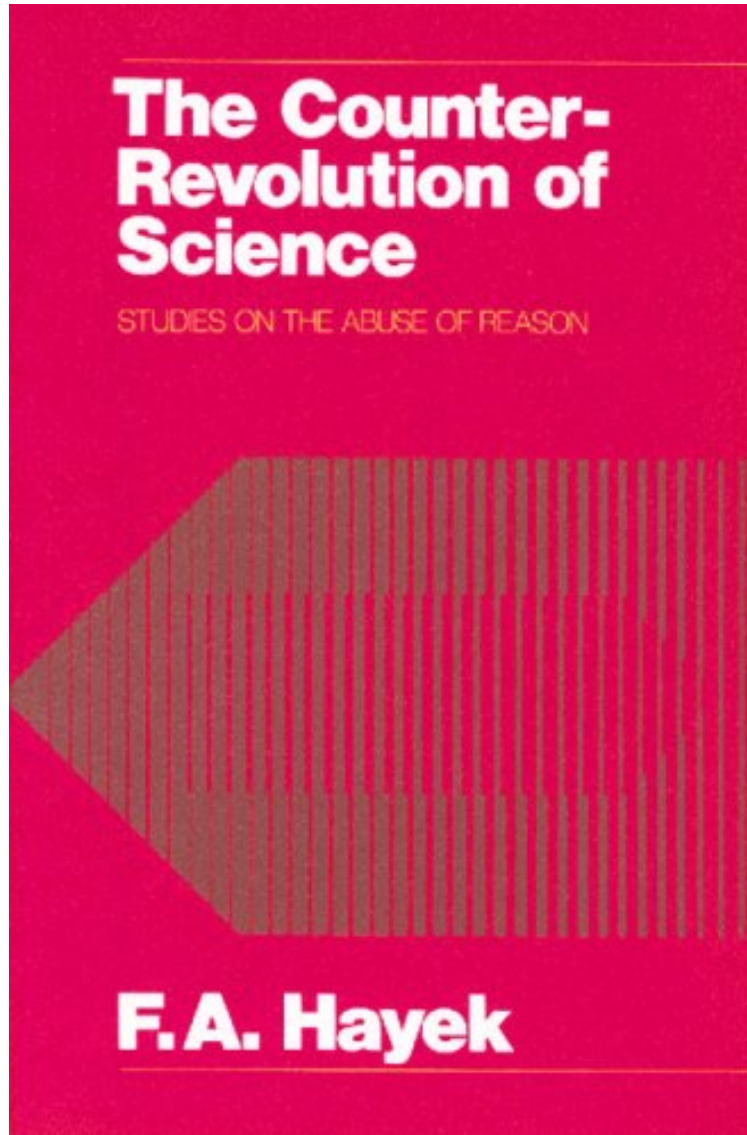


(Download) Counter Revolution of Science

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F A HAYEK

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F A HAYEK : Counter Revolution of Science before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Counter Revolution of Science:

12 of 12 people found the following review helpful. Hayek on the Sciences By James F. Mueller The other reviewers on have done an excellent job summarizing the main points in this book. I will briefly contribute to this discussion by detailing the arguments that stood out to me. First of all, the book is divided into two sections: (1) Scientism and the Study of Society; and (2) The Counter-Revolution of Science. The former expounds the differences and peculiar

histories of both the social and natural sciences, while the latter seeks to understand the historical development of "scientism", finding its roots in the rationalistic tradition of French (continental) thought. The first part is the more important section, and should be read carefully. Hayek traces the long escape of natural science from the anthropomorphic thought that characterized the Middle Ages. External events were believed to possess some transcendental reality. Slowly, however, science began to discover explanations of external reality that differed from our common sense perceptions. "Facts", it was argued, are different from "appearances." Note that in this discussion Hayek is not attacking the character of science when it is conducted in its own proper sphere. Science has much to say about the relation of material things to other things (cause and effect, etc.). Scientific study errs, however, when it begins to substitute material explanations for human affairs. There are some phenomena that cannot be explained by their material characteristics. In fact, most phenomena involving human opinions and beliefs cannot be explained by natural science. Hayek gives several illuminating examples to illustrate his case: "words", "sentences", "crimes" "family", "exchange", "money" etc. clearly can only be understood by finding out what people think about these things and not from their objective characteristics. In this book Hayek shows that the social sciences are fundamentally distinct from the natural sciences because men can only be understood through their beliefs and opinions. A very important work.

65 of 68 people found the following review helpful. Understanding the Limits of Reason By D. W. MacKenzie

The Counter Revolution of Science is an important book for several reasons. First, The CRS explains the futility of schemes to plan progress, the impossibility of efforts for the "human mind to lift itself up by its own bootstraps". What this means is that "the attempt of conscious reason to control its own development limits the very growth to what the human mind can could foresee". Freedom "releases the knowledge and energies of countless individuals that could never be utilized in a society consciously directed from the top". Second, the CRS explains how the mindset of the physical sciences, which focuses on objective factors, fails when applied to economics. Understanding economics requires an appreciation of subjectivity in human relations. Engineers pursue technical excellence according to objective scientific principles, without considering economic factors (i.e. scarcity), and worse still the application of mathematical methods from the social sciences creates a false and dangerous impression that society can itself be engineered. Third, Hayek examines the history of the development of `scientific' ideas, whereby various thinkers (especially St Simon and Comte) popularized positivism, socialism, and corporatism. Finally, reading the CRS instills an appreciation of the humility of individualism and disdain for the hubris of collectivism in the reader. Generally speaking, Hayek makes the importance of recognizing and respecting the limits of human reason abundantly clear. Hayek saw that modern collectivism was working to undo the intellectual progress made during the Age of Reason and the Enlightenment. Collectivism was antithetical to reason, and would lead us to a new Dark Age if not reversed. Persons of the left will surely find this absurd, and their revulsion to Hayek's thesis is consistent with his thesis. The Left does not reject reason explicitly, it abuses reason unwittingly. People on the Left truly believe that they are progressive and scientific, but this is a false belief. Socialists and Welfare State Liberals abuse human reason by failing to see its limits. The background to this book is simple. Hayek started his career writing technical economics. Hayek's efforts were initially met with success. Hayek initially swayed professional opinion on business cycles. Hayek also forced socialists to revise their early proposals. Yet professional opinion turned against Hayek during the mid thirties. Why? Had they proved him wrong? Did they fail to understand why he was right? How was it that intelligent and educated people could not see the strength of Hayek's arguments? Hayek's technical economics show how the capitalist system functions. Yet Hayek misunderstood the way in which his peers understood the term `technical economics'. That is, Hayek erred by underestimating the influence of positivist and other ideas. Hence Hayek turned to explaining why economists and other educated people were unable to understand correct economic theories: they had embraced a false notion of rationalism. I find the sections on Engineers particularly interesting. Hayek's views on the role of engineers in society are so diametrically opposed to Veblen's Engineers and the Price System that one must wonder why he did little more than mention Veblen in passing. The Counter Revolution of Science is one of Hayek's best books, and that is saying a lot. The Counter Revolution of Science was important in the twentieth century because it penetrated to the core of intellectual problems of that time. We live in a new century now, but the old problem of abusing reason remains. One need only look at the policies of Bush/Cheney and Obama/Emanuel to see how the social engineering mindset prevails in modern America. The CRS represents Hayek at his best, insightful, informative, and well reasoned in his conclusions. These are important ideas too, given that people still believe in false notions of rationalism, whereby most people still trust that the so-called best and brightest can best plan society. The Counter Revolution of Science should be read by the entire educated public.

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. HAYEK'S FAMOUS CRITIQUE OF "SCIENTISM" By Steven H Propp

Friedrich August Hayek (1899-1992) was an economist of the Austrian School (and once a student of Ludwig von Mises) who received the Nobel Prize in Economics in 1974. His major works include *The Road to Serfdom: A Classic Warning Against the Dangers to Freedom Inherent in Social Planning*, *The Fatal Conceit: The Errors of Socialism* (The Collected Works of F. A. Hayek), *The Constitution of Liberty*, etc. This book was originally published in 1952. Hayek wrote in the Preface to the 1959 German edition, "The essays assembled in this volume were written as part of a greater work that, if it ever should be finished, pursues the history of the abuse and decline of reason in modern times." (Pg. 9) He later explains

that the book is concerned "not with the general spirit of disinterested inquiry but with the slavish imitation of the method and language of science," and he calls this "scientism or the scientific prejudice." (Pg. 24) He argues that "The attitude which... we shall call the 'objectivism' of the scientific approach to the study of man and society, has found its most characteristic expression in the various attempts to dispense with our subjective knowledge of the working of the human mind, attempts which in various forms have affected almost all branches of social study." (Pg. 78) He suggests, "those who by the scientific prejudice are led to approach social phenomena ... are induced... to commit the mistake they are most anxious to avoid, namely, that of treating as facts what are no more than vague popular theories." (Pg. 95) He observes, "The belief that human history, which is the result of the interaction of innumerable human minds, must yet be subject to simple laws accessible to human minds is now so widely held that few people are at all aware what an astonishing claim it really implies." (Pg. 129) Later, he adds, "The universal demand for 'conscious' control of direction of social processes is one of the most characteristic features of our generation. It expresses perhaps more clearly than any of its other cliches the peculiar spirit of the age." (Pg. 153) He notes, "The ideal of conscious control of social phenomena has made its greatest influence felt in the economic field. The present popularity of 'economic planning' is directly traceable to the prevalence of the scientistic ideas we have been discussing... 'political engineering' and 'social engineering' have become fashionable catchwords which are quite as characteristic of the outlook of the present generation as its predilection for 'conscious' control." (Pg. 166-167) Hayek's later, mostly non-economic/political writings are not for everyone, but they provide a revealing window into the man's complete system of thought.

Early in the last century the successes of science led a group of French thinkers to apply the principles of science to the study of society. These thinkers purported to have discovered the supposed 'laws' of society and concluded that an elite of social scientists should assume direct control of social life. The Counter-Revolution of Science is Nobel Laureate Friedrich Hayek's forceful attack on this abuse of reason.