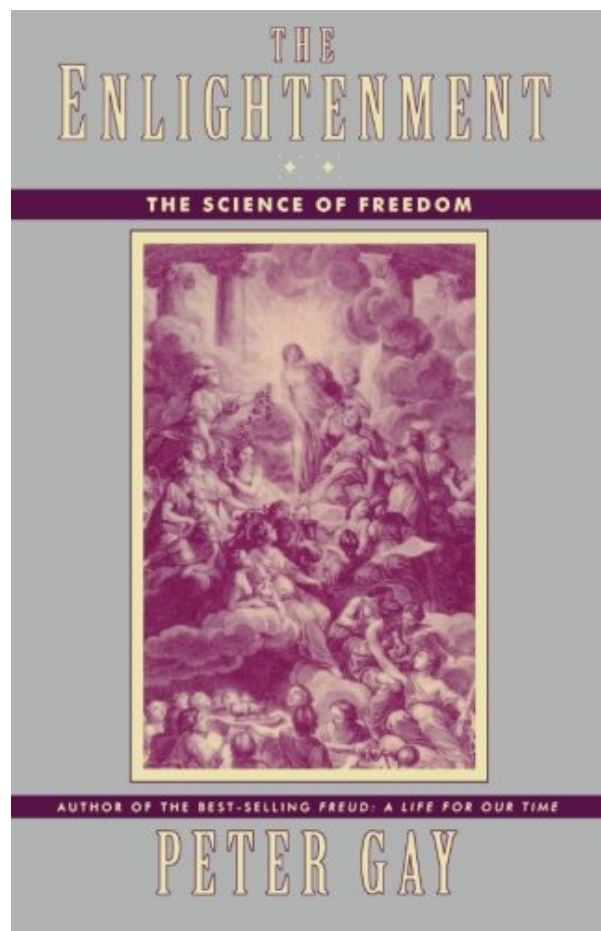
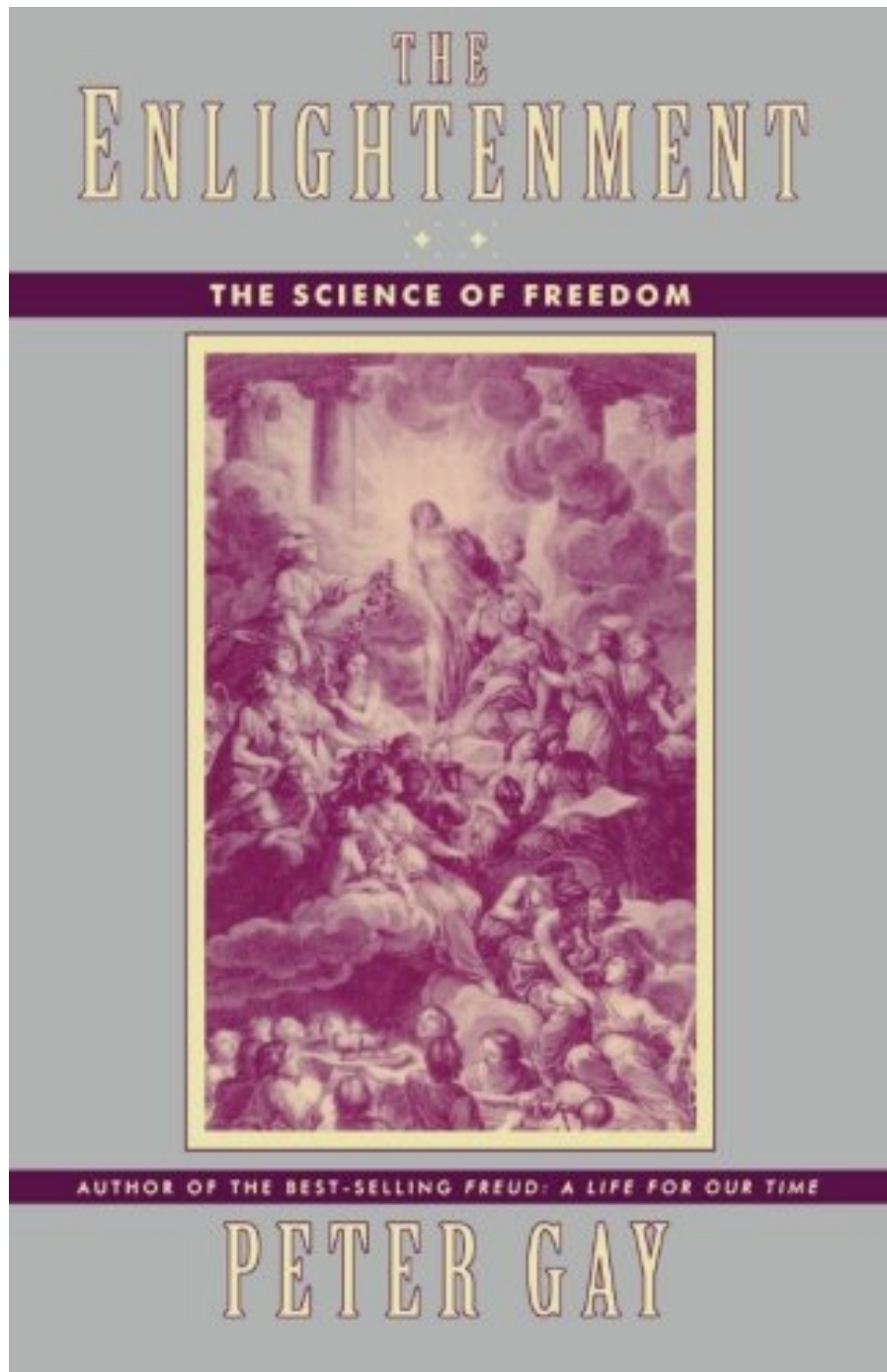


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Review

Extraordinary and brilliant. — R. R. Palmer (Journal of Modern History)

About the Author

Peter Gay (1923?2015) was the author of more than twenty-five books, including the National Book Award winner *The Enlightenment*, the best-selling *Weimar Culture*, and the widely translated *Freud: A Life for Our Time*.

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- Sales Rank: #632829 in Books
- Published on: 1996-02-17
- Released on: 2013-03-08
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 8.20" h x 1.40" w x 5.50" l, 2.15 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 744 pages

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One of the most brilliant account of the Enlightenment

By W.T. Oosterveld

The Enlightenment by Peter Gay (2 volumes: *The Rise of Modern Paganism* and *The Science of Freedom*) surely ranks among the most brilliant accounts of eighteenth-century philosophy ever written. It is a sweeping account of the intellectual history of the 18th century, from its origins right into the French and American Revolutions. It traces the struggle of the small clique of 'philosophes' -a dispersed group of intellectual giants such as Voltaire, Hume, Lessing and Beccaria- as they fight against corruption, superstition and ignorance, which has kept Europe slumbering since the demise of the Roman Empire. The book vividly illustrates the ideas of the 'philosophes' and how they wanted to bring their reform programs into practice, and thereby spread the ideals of liberty and the pursuit of knowledge. Peter Gay deftly describes the cultural background of the 'philosophes' and explains how they came to challenge the establishment in order to bringing about these much needed changes so as to give their ideals a chance to

prevail. The book has an extensive and well-readable bibliography with many good suggestions. This account of the Enlightenment is among the best ever written in the twentieth century, along with Paul Hazard's *European Thought in the 18th century* and Ernst Cassirer's *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment*. I do recommend all to read both volumes of this book.

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful.

Conclusion to the most erudite treatment of the Enlightenment!

By Igor Faynshteyn

This is the second and final installment of Peter Gay's most erudite, learned and comprehensive treatment of the Enlightenment in Western Europe. The first volume focused largely on what the "little flock of philosophes" read and thought. This volume's focus is more centered around the implementation of their ideas into discernible programs in science, art, education and politics.

Like the first volume, this volume is not organized by chronology, but rather by topical treatment. It focuses largely on a couple of dozen or so philosophes and their writings and philosophies, some more deeply covered than others. The most covered ones include: Voltaire, Hume, Gibbon, Rousseau, Lessing and Diderot. The other less covered are Adam Smith, Newton, Locke, Condorcet, Paine, Beccaria, Bentham, Montesquieu, Holbach, D'Alembert and Kant. There is also a mention of the some of the American revolutionaries, like Franklin, Hamilton, Madison, Adams and Jefferson (toward the end of the book).

Also like the first volume, this is an interpretational intellectual history; a synthesis of a sort. There are no events described (except tangentially to make a point about something else); no dates to follow and memorize. Thus, it's not a typical and popular history of a period.

Like the first volume, the work is a challenging read. It took me almost 4 months to finish it. The prose is relatively fluid, but takes some time getting used to the language, as Peter Gay is of Germanic origin and was writing back in the 1960's. But don't allow this to deter you from reading it. This is one of the most intellectually sophisticated and for that reason satisfying works of intellectual history ever written.

5 of 8 people found the following review helpful.

Enlightenment.

By Don Artz

I picked up a copy of Peter Gay's *Enlightenment* as a discard from our public library. It was a terrific book, but I noticed it was "Volume 1." So I had to go to Amazon to find volume 2 (They are not labeled as volume 1 or 2, they have different subtitles.) It, too was fine, better than fine. This is history writing at its best - great accomplishment for Peter Gay.

Don

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