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The Fear Of Insignificance: Searching For Meaning In The Twenty-First Century



Synopsis

This book shows how, after the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, the Gospel of the free market became the only world-religion of universal validity. The belief that all value needs to be quantifiable was extended to human beings, whose value became dependent on their rating on the various ranking-scales in the global infotainment system.

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Customer Reviews

"The fear of insignificance" explores the popular mindset today--one that includes obsession with celebrity, status, and one's position in the world. Strenger analyzes the dangers of being dwarfed by the have-alls, and feeling insignificant and unhappy with one's own life as a result. The book is divided into three parts: "The Defeat of Mind," "From the I Commodity to the Dreams of Individuality," and "Reclaiming Our Minds." The first part delves into the popular belief system advocated by the modern media, most notably the "just do it" campaigns where celebrities, while marketing a product, are held up as heroes while they preach that anything is possible if one just reaches for the stars. The problem with such a popular belief system, as Strenger analyzes it, is that

it's very easy to believe but not as realistic in life. The second part of the book puts emphasis on refraining oneself from seeing their life in terms of satisfying others and how much money one makes, but instead working on getting a satisfaction with the life one has. Stenger reflects that everyone is born with some limitations, and the people who make it to the top are no exceptions: they either had connections, luck, or some other unpredictable factors that lead them to success. Instead of buying into the star and dream obsessed media culture, Stenger advises people to avoid seeing themselves as "commodities," shun away from comparing themselves to others, and venture throughout their own lives with an open heart and mind--something discussed more in the third part of the book, along with religion. Overall, I thought Stenger's convincing argument was very relevant to today's "keeping up with the Jones's" world.

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