



How to Think About the Great Ideas 1st (first) edition Text Only

Mortimer J. Adler

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A few thousand people in the San Francisco Bay Area were fortunate to have experienced something extraordinary in 1953 and 1954. Over 52 weeks, for 30 minutes each week, Mortimer Adler discussed the Great Ideas on live television, usually with a fellow named Lloyd Luckman. Because of the format, the shows took the form of conversations. This book is a finely edited transcript of those conversations, and they are definitely worth reading. The title perhaps presumes that people know how to think, and offers to guide them in applying that skill to the Great Ideas. Using that hook, even readers who don't think they can think will soon be thinking, and will be glad for it. Think, for instance, about Adler's statement "...adults are more educable than children, just as children are more trainable than adults." Hmm... then why do we send children to school instead of adults? Adler gives the answer: so they can learn how to learn. I like books that help me think better, and this one does. The focus for thinking in this book is the Great Ideas, a great idea that Dr. Adler (along with Robert M. Hutchins, who became President of the University of Chicago at age 29!) brought to life in the Great Books of the Western World (1952). Not all of the Great Ideas are discussed in this book - only 22 of the original 102 (Equality was added later) are addressed here, though some are discussed over several chapters. That is certainly a step up from "Six Great Ideas" (1981), and it is complete enough, well spoken enough, and well edited enough that any reader will be very well rewarded. The book does not need to be read front to back, and in fact you might want to read the chapter on How to Read a Book before you read any of the rest. I suspect, however, that most will do as I did - flip through and find a chapter or section that seems particularly appealing (How to Think about Beauty; How to Think about Work; How to Think about Punishment) and start there. Just my opinion thou. Enjoy!

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