



The Soul of the Marionette: A Short Inquiry into Human Freedom

By John Gray

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Compared with that of humans, the life of the marionette looks more like an enviable state of freedom

In his brilliantly enjoyable and freewheeling new book, John Gray draws together the religious, philosophic, and fantastical traditions that question the very idea of human freedom. We flatter ourselves about the nature of free will and yet the most enormous forces logical, physical, metaphysical constrain our every action. Many writers and intellectuals have always understood this, but instead of embracing our condition we battle against it, with everyone from world conquerors to modern scientists dreaming of a "human dominion" almost comically at odds with our true state.

Filled with wonderful examples and drawing on the widest possible reading (from the Gnostics to Philip K. Dick), "The Soul of the Marionette" is a stimulating and engaging meditation on everything from cybernetics to the fairground marionettes of the title."

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Editorial Review

Review

“[*The Soul of the Marionette*] is pervaded by the signature skepticism of its author, a British philosopher. Trapped in bodies, burdened by mortality, and ‘cursed with self-reflective thought,’ we are limited in our freedom. Gray dismisses modern rationalism, with its faith in human progress, as a kind of Gnosticism made from ‘scraps of decayed Christianity,’ whose central myth is that knowledge will set us free. Spirited tours through the lives and work of various artists add texture to his provocative arguments.” *The New Yorker*

“Illusion-piercing sobriety.” *Booklist (starred review)*

“[A]n intelligently written, thought-provoking book.” *Publishers Weekly*

“Gray connects the dots among science fiction (including that of Stanislaw Lem), Borges, the human-sacrificing Aztecs, global warming, and the loss of privacy (and freedom) that the cyberrevolution has wrought, challenging readers to make some leaps of logic and come to counterintuitive conclusions.” *Kirkus Reviews*

About the Author

John Gray is the author of many critically acclaimed books, including *Straw Dogs* and *Al Qaeda and What It Means to Be Modern*. A regular contributor to *The New York Review of Books*, he is a professor of European thought at the London School of Economics.

Users Review

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Greta Harty:

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Albertha Lemons:

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