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The Ascent of Man

J. Bronowski

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J. Bronowski : The Ascent of Man before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Ascent of Man:

7 of 7 people found the following review helpful. Past its prime but still sets the standardBy PhredJacob Bronowski's The Ascent of Man was one of several documentary style miniseries that created a market for and set the standard for thoughtful television programs of the type we should expect from the History Channel or Arts and Entertainment. The Ascent of Man along with the Civilization Series, Connections, and Cosmos proved that there was a large market for intellectually challenging and enlightening discussion extending over many weeks and many topics. These were not the first efforts in this direction, I can remember Leonard Bernstein doing televised lectures about music some time before the above mentioned programs but these took hold and proved that there was in fact a market for quality programming.This however is a review of a text only version. This book reprodes Prof. Bronowski's lectures with very few of the visuals. In these lectures, rather 13 chapters the reader is taken from the beginning of man as a social, culturally artistic and technologically inventive being up into at least the 1970s, when this book was first published, and what was then emerging as the DNA driven understanding of human biology.I am deeply impressed with the depth and breath of the authors intellect plus his immense skill with English. He was Polish born and did not come to English until he was much older. His original background shifted from a specialty in the mathematics of physics into a later career in biology while gaining recognition as a poet, historian, philosopher and (this is new to me) a "theater author". All of these skills were powerfully displayed in the television series and this is the source of my reservation over a fifth star for the book. My memories of this program from almost 30 years ago are tied to what were then some

very high-tech graphics. The absence of the visuals affected my ability to appreciate the text. The power of Bronowski's language is here; unfortunately the text has not been scrubbed of all references to the images not carried over into the text. Others have mentioned that science is moved forward, indeed leaped forward since this text was put in print. It is remarkable how much of what is here remains valid in itself or at least as a document of where our understanding was before it got to where it is. The very name of the book suggests that human progress is ongoing. A major theme of this book is that a failure to press ahead represents an ending for that culture but not an ending for human progress. Accepting that some of the science is dated, my recommendation is based on the powerful use of language and the opportunity to spend time with a deeply thoughtful and passionate thinker. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Very interesting perspective. By Jeff Kotowski If you like James Burke and history from a technology point of view, you will like this book! Here is an example of one of the things I found interesting in this book. The wheel is always rated as humans' greatest invention; largely because every other invention (almost) uses the wheel. But people used logs to move heavy stones and, to me, the wheel always seemed fairly obvious. But Bronowski points out that the great part of the invention of the wheel is not really the wheel, it is the axle. The axle is what allows the wheel to work. This significantly changed my perspective! 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. A very worthwhile read. By Daphnis 176 As impossible as it might seem to condense the historical/scientific/cultural development of human beings in only 13 hours of TV (or 13 chapters in a book), Mr. Bronowski does so in a sensitive and provocative manner. This overview was created almost 50 years ago for the BBC, so the very most recent elements in this "ascent" are not included. Nevertheless, one cannot fail to be stimulated by his insights and perspectives, even if they provoke occasional disagreement. In our age of myopic overspecialization, we often miss the opportunity to step back from our individual specialties to absorb the diversity of knowledge and thought that a liberal arts education once provided. Mr. Bronowski provides an excellent opportunity to rectify that trend.

Dr. Bronowski's classic history of humankind. Dr. Jacob Bronowski's groundbreaking book *The Ascent of Man* traces the development of human society through its understanding of science. First published in 1973, it is considered one of the first works of "popular science", illuminating the historical and social context of scientific development for a generation of readers. In his highly accessible style, Dr. Bronowski discusses human invention from the flint tool to geometry, agriculture to genetics, and from alchemy to the theory of relativity, showing how they all are expressions of our ability to understand and control nature. *The Ascent of Man* inspires, influences and informs as profoundly as ever.