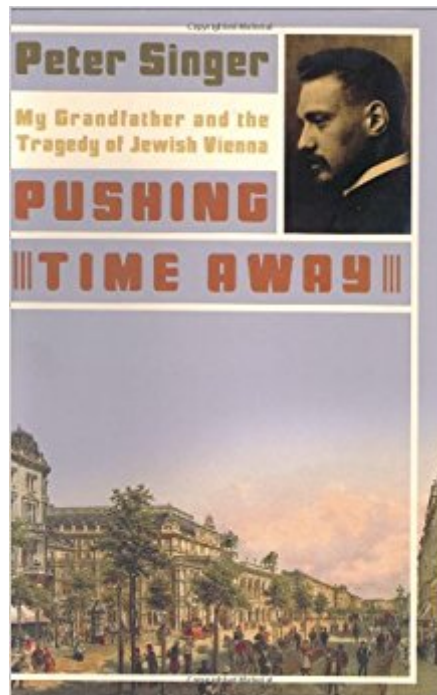


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Pushing Time Away: My Grandfather And The Tragedy Of Jewish Vienna



Synopsis

"What binds us pushes time away" wrote David Oppenheim to his future wife, Amalie Pollak, on March 24, 1905. Oppenheim, classical scholar, collaborator, then critic of Sigmund Freud, and friend and supporter of Alfred Adler, lived through the heights and depths of Vienna's twentieth-century intellectual and cultural history. He perished in obscurity at a Nazi concentration camp in 1943, separated from family and friends, leaving his grandson, the philosopher Peter Singer, without a chance to know him. Almost fifty years later Peter Singer set out to explore the life of the grandfather he never knew, and found a scholar whose ideas on ethics and human nature often parallel his own writings. Drawing on a wealth of documents and personal letters, Singer made startling discoveries about his grandparents' early romantic attachments, the basis on which they decide to marry, their professional aspirations, and their differing views of Judaism. An essay that Oppenheim co-wrote with Freud, but which was suppressed because of a bitter split within Freud's psychoanalytical society, leads Singer to explore the difficulties of following one's own ideas in the circles of both Freud and Adler. Combining touching family biography with thoughtful reflection on both personal and public questions we face today, *Pushing Time Away* captures critical moments in Europe's transition from Belle Époque to the Great War and to the rise of Fascism and the coming of World War II. Singer gives us a vivid portrait of Vienna when it was the center of European culture and new ideas, a culture that was both intensely Jewish and distinctly secular. Examining this culture and its fate forces Singer to confront one of the foundations of his own thought: How much can we rely on universal values and human reason?

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Customer Reviews

David Oppenheim was a classical scholar, a member of Freud's inner circle, and a close friend of the psychoanalyst Alfred Adler. He was also a victim of the Holocaust, and until his grandson, the philosopher Peter Singer, discovered a trove of his letters and writings, his life had been almost completely forgotten. Singer reconstructs that life in fascinating detail. He illuminates the complexities of his grandparents' difficult but successful marriage, evokes the vibrant and disputatious life of early-twentieth-century Vienna, and offers a convincing picture of the intellectual and personal battles that dominated the early days of psychoanalysis. Singer's moving book, haunted from the beginning by its terrible end, constitutes a revolt against the anonymity of the Holocaust's grim statistics. Copyright © 2005 The New Yorker

Singer, a philosopher, bioethicist, professor, and author of 16 books, is best known for the "animal liberation" movement, which deals with the ethics of our treatment of animals. He also is the grandson of David Oppenheim, a Jew and a classical scholar who lived in Vienna and died in Theresienstadt concentration camp in 1942. Oppenheim's wife, Amalie, survived the Holocaust and moved to Australia in 1946. Singer found many letters and intimate personal papers in an aunt's home in Australia and in the State Archives of Austria. They included more than 100 letters that Singer's grandparents wrote to his parents and to his mother's sister after they left for Australia in 1938. Singer describes how his grandfather became a friend of Sigmund Freud and how they discussed theories of psychology. Oppenheim later parted with Freud, following instead the first of the great heretics of psychoanalysis, Alfred Adler. Singer's book is an exceptional eulogy to his grandfather. George Cohen Copyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved

Fascinating view of the intellectual world 100 years ago from one of today's intellectuals.

My spouse picked this book

If you are a fan of Peter Singer then this is a book you will enjoy about the revelations of his grandfather.

I expected to learn about Jewish life in Vienna before World War II and to understand through the

lives of a particular family the vicious and murderous German Nazi destruction of that vibrant community. However the author spends about half of the book discussing his grandparents sex attitudes which maybe belongs in a psychoanalysis book but not in this one. There were some interesting things to learn in the latter half such as the fact that his grandfather was so far removed from his Jewish identity that he refused to even circumcise his newborn son. And even though he was so far removed from his Jewish roots, it didn't help save him from the Nazis.

Excellent book if you are interested in the Jewish population before and during the war years in Austria. I found it great as this is where my grandparents were at that particular time. This particular issue had smallish print. I would have preferred larger print as it is easier on the eye to read.

As my kind of book this was definitely hard to put down

quelle histoire!

Found it boring.

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