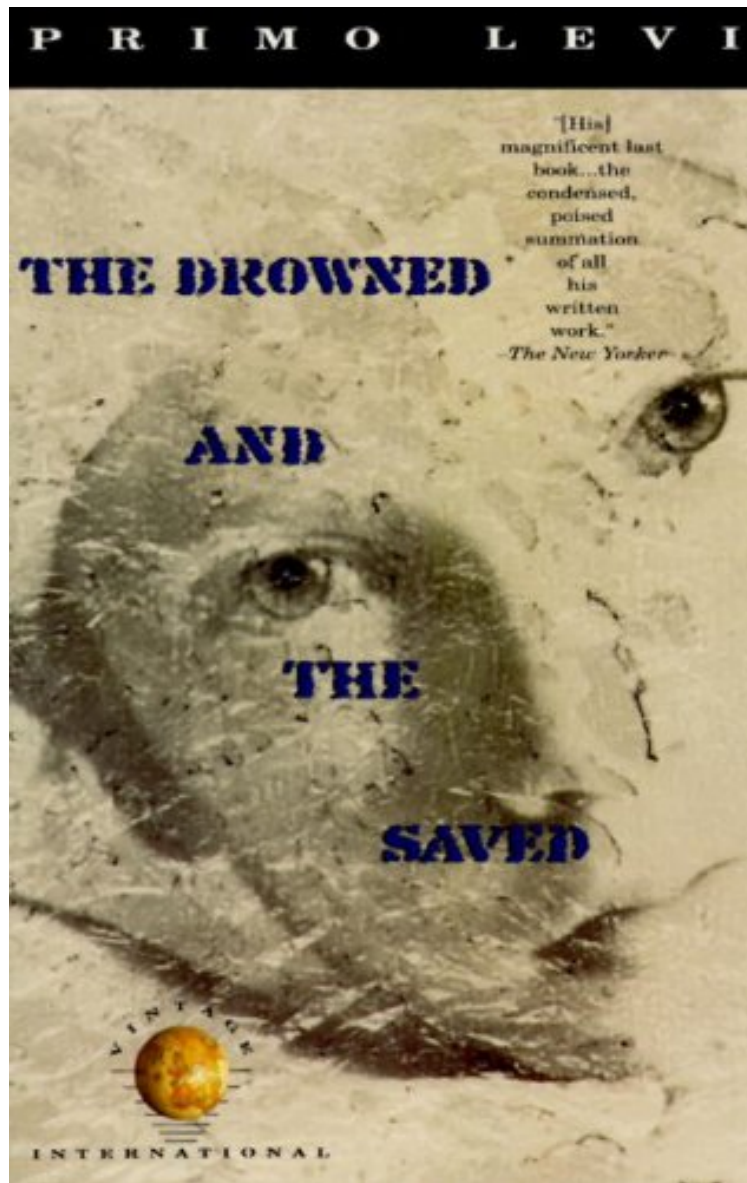


The Drowned and the Saved

Primo Levi

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Primo Levi : The Drowned and the Saved before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Drowned and the Saved:

8 of 8 people found the following review helpful. which is the book's great strength: the insights he draws from them and ...By DGBA truly sobering book. It is hard to read for long periods of time -- a break is needed just to clear one's head a bit before re-entering that time and place. Levi feared the lessons of the holocaust were being attenuated over

time and the fact that this book is hard to get is ironic confirmation of that fear. This is the last book he wrote. The realism and specificity he includes are almost numbing, but they are not gratuitous, which is the book's great strength: the insights he draws from them and the exhortations that come from those insights are personal and persuasive. I would wish this book had wider circulation -- a hard but very valuable and emotional experience "listening" to Levi unburden his heart.² of 2 people found the following review helpful. A must read for those trying to understand how it could have happened. By Lulu I read this after seeing the film "Son of Saul" which I found disturbing in a way that other Holocaust films were not. Levi's book is an amazing, thought-provoking attempt to understand what can never be understood. He teaches the reader about the complexity of the horrors that the prisoners endured, especially those who were given the most horrific tasks in the camps. I am now better equipped to answer the outrageous views of those who today believe the Jews were weaklings who went "like sheep to the slaughter."⁸⁸ of 90 people found the following review helpful. Thoughtful, intelligent, meaningful, and universal. By John Hovig "The Drowned and the Saved" is the final book of Primo Levi (1919-1987), a Jewish-Italian chemist who survived the death camp of Auschwitz, and turned to authorship in his later years. This book is a group of a half-dozen related essays, each exploring a specific aspect of Levi's view of the Holocaust's causes and effects. He begins with the concept of "good faith", wondering whether believing a lie excuses it. He notes that oppressors lie to save themselves from believing they are evil, and victims lie to save themselves from believing they suffer. He explores the moral zone between black and white, noting that anybody can be a tough killer or a foolish victim: we are all tyrants and victims in our own way. He examines survivor's guilt, and reflects on the roles of luck versus blessing in life, and discusses the ways humans need communication to survive, including the way victims bend language to disguise their intentions, and tyrants twist it to cause confusion among their victims. He tries to distinguish between rationalized evil and collective madness. He believes the spirit and mind can be injured just as the body can, and wonders how a person's perspective plays a role in their survival and psychological health. He describes the various stereotypes people hold when they imagine the stories of those who lived through WWII, e.g., the romantic hero, the evil Nazi, the prisoner who always plots escape, and so on, but explains why they are rough and inaccurate. Each chapter is like a conversation with an intelligent and qualified author. It is thoughtful, and a pleasure to read. It reflects on psychological and historical themes which are important not only to our understanding of the Holocaust, but also more generally human nature. (It appears to be a rumination on subjects discussed in his other books, collected and summarized briefly here.) It is for this reason that the book is successful. It considers the Holocaust in particular, but its themes are actually deeper and more universal. "Letters from Germans", the penultimate chapter, is the book's most powerful, noticeably demonstrating the tension between his memory of that time period, and the memory of various Germans, in their own words. He especially berates those who believe they are doing the right thing by speaking out in shame and guilt over their past, perhaps attacking them a bit harshly, but certainly with justification. The last chapter, "Conclusion", is its weakest. In the opinion of this reviewer, it over-generalizes, and tries to apply retrospective analysis to the world's future. It also calls for unwarranted conclusions, unrelated to the preceding chapters, and perhaps contradicts itself. Luckily it is brief, and does not detract from the excellence of the prior explorations. (For example, he says war is unnecessary, and mankind can settle all conflicts around a table, but only as long as we are in good faith. He then calls Hitler a buffoon, implying he cannot be taken in good faith. He next says we need not have good faith to negotiate if we are all equally in fear of war, but this sounds like he is saying war is necessary after all, even if only to remind us there are punishments for negotiation in bad faith!) Despite its conclusion (which many readers will probably enjoy, despite this reviewer's belief it over-reaches), the book is an intelligent and even-handed, but personal assessment of the Holocaust, written in an engaging and intelligent style, with brevity and wit. At 200 pages, it is easy to read. Packed with philosophy and insight, it is worth the investment.

Levi wrote of the moral collapse that occurred in Auschwitz and the fallibility of human memory that allows such atrocities to recur. Levi's last book published before his death in 1987.

.com This book, published months after Italian writer Primo Levi's suicide in 1987, is a small but powerful look at Auschwitz, the hell where Levi was imprisoned during World War II. The book was his third on the subject, following *Survival in Auschwitz* (1947) and *The Reawakening* (1963). Removed from the experience by time and age, Levi chose to serve more as an observer of the camp than the passionate young man of his previous work. He writes of "useless violence" inflicted by the guards on prisoners and then concludes the book with a discussion of the Germans who have written to him about their complicity in the event. In all, he tries to make sense of something that--as he knew--made no sense at all. From Library Journal Renowned Italian author Levi, an Auschwitz survivor, finished this contemplation of the Holocaust before his death in 1987. Observing a general loss of understanding about Nazi Germany as time passes and eyewitnesses die, he asks, "How much of the concentration camp world is dead? . . . What can each of us do so that in this world pregnant with threats at least this threat will be nullified?" Levi's answer is a thoughtful analysis of the process that was the camps, and his chilling conclusions about the conditions that created them are uncomfortably relevant to current events. Highly recommended. Starr E. Smith, Georgetown Univ. Lib.,

Washington, D.C. Copyright 1987 Reed Business Information, Inc. Primo Levi wrote about this most terrible event with a purity of spirit for which we can only feel grateful. -- The New York Times Book , Irving Howe