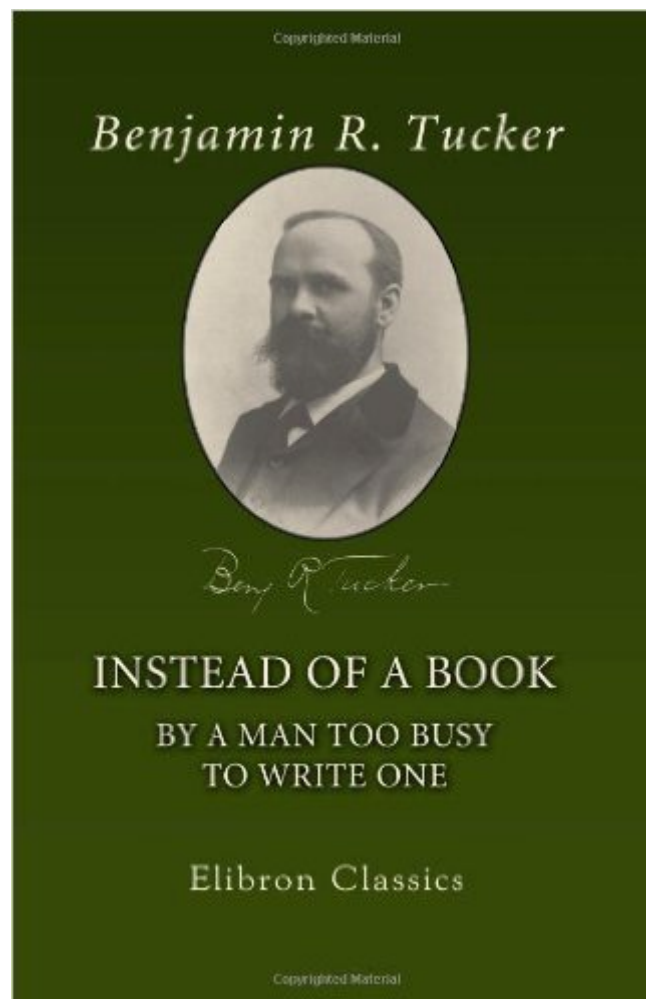


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Instead Of A Book By A Man Too Busy To Write One: A Fragmentary Exposition Of Philosophical Anarchism



Synopsis

This Elibron Classics book is a facsimile reprint of a 1897 edition by Benj. R. Tucker, New York.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Benjamin Tucker is one of the more interesting American political thinkers. I have earlier reviewed The Federalist Papers, John C. Calhoun, and Herbert Croly, among other important American political tracts, and Tucker deserves to be read as well. His one major book-length work has a beguiling title, "Instead of a Book, by a Man too Busy to Write One." What's that all about? As Tucker says (Pages ix-x): "Anarchism. . . lacks a systematic text-book. . . . [H]owever, I have been too busy, and there is no prospect that I shall ever be less so." In short, he was too busy to write a proper, formal book--but he did publish a volume with his (and others') "greatest hits" from his biweekly journal, "Liberty." Tucker calls himself an anarchist, but he is probably more aptly called an American libertarian. He reads Kropotkin out of the anarchist camp and adopts a more individualist orientation, consistent with American thinkers like Paine and Jefferson and Spooner and Warren. The very first essay in this non-book lays out Tucker's basic philosophy. Entitled "State Socialism and Anarchism: How Far They Agree, and Wherein They Differ," he notes the clear dividing line between Marx and his own vision. While he admires Marx' devotion to ordinary people (as per an essay mentioned later) and his attacks on the powerful, he cannot countenance Marx' idea of a strong government to work on behalf of the people (his "dictatorship of the proletariat," for example). He describes state socialism as (Page 7) ". . . the doctrine that all the affairs of men should be managed by the government, regardless of individual choice." Au contraire, Tucker's contrary perspective is anarchism, defined as (Page 9): ". . .

Most standard histories of the labor movement in the United States discuss Samuel L. Gompers and the founding of the AFL. They portray this branch of the labor movement as moderate and well suited to American values, while the few studies that portray dissident traditions in American labor history tend to focus on small Marxist or utopian groups. Few are today aware that for much of the 1800s, radical labor was not wedded to statism but instead supported what would be today considered a radical libertarian perspective. The foremost exponent of this distinctly American "philosophical" anarchism was Benjamin R. Tucker, editor of the periodical "Liberty" from 1881 to 1908. Tucker began his radical career by following Victoria Woodhull, the radical feminist candidate for President in the 1870s. Later, however, he drew on a radical American tradition of voluntary cooperation and free (from state control) money to promote a labor agenda. Creatively mixing the ideas of P.J. Proudhon, Josiah Warren, Stephen Pearl Andrews and later the German existentialist philosopher Max Stirner, Tucker for nearly 30 years provided a consistent voice for liberty and against oppression. He opposed the Spanish American War (imperialism), the rise of the trusts, predecessors to today's corporations, and supported such causes as ending censorship and birth control. Indeed, he once published the then banned Walt Whitman classic, *Leaves of Grass*, and dared the Post Office to prosecute him. And all the while, his journal *Liberty* remained one of the most powerful and intellectually stimulating journals of the era. Tucker was often asked to write a book describing his political thought, but his commitments never gave him the time he felt the project deserved.

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