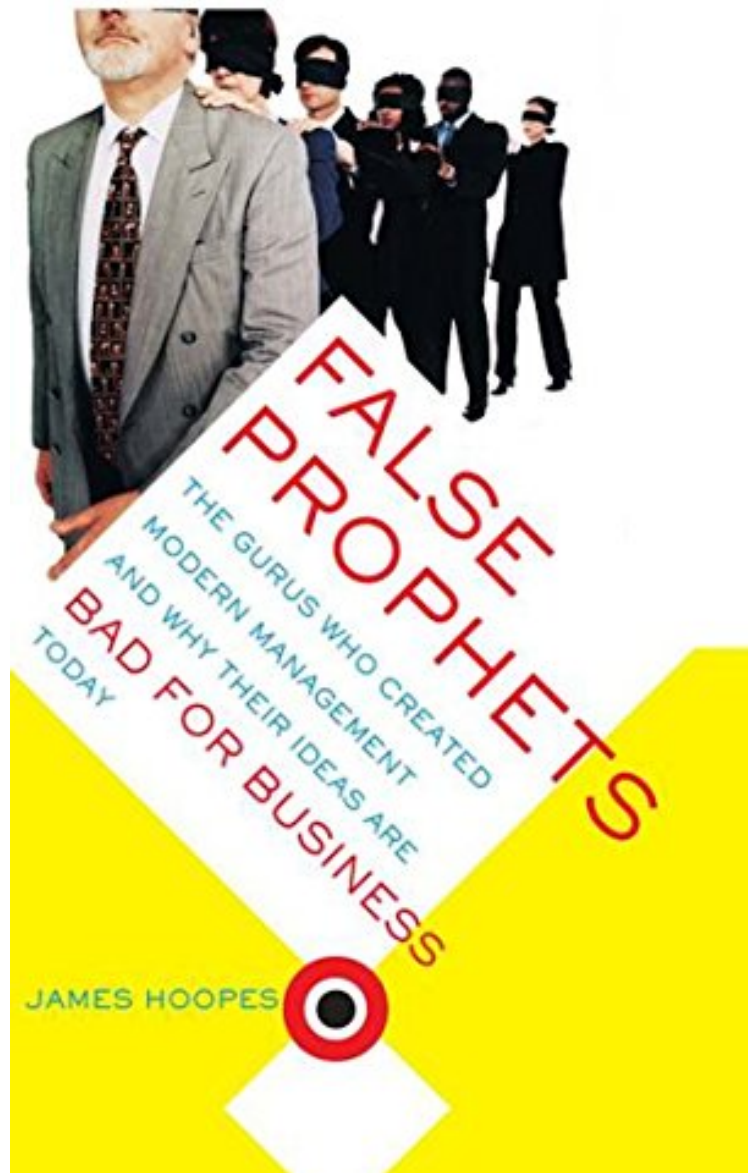


## False Prophets

*James Hoopes*

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**James Hoopes : False Prophets** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised False Prophets:

9 of 10 people found the following review helpful. Management Is Anti-DemocraticBy Etienne RPHoopes' book presents a gallery of management thinkers and introduce their work through the lenses of a political science perspective. Political scientists who use the concept of power to describe economic or social mechanisms are

sometimes prone to its abuse: they see politics everywhere, and they consider all references to general ideals or moral sentiments as stratagems used by rulers to obfuscate the brutal exercise of top-down authority. Power is indeed a key concept for political scientists, as interest is for economists, and both concepts may help them to build theories or propose models of corporate behavior. But management scholars are practically oriented, and they know that power or interests can sometimes be bad for practice. That is why politics is a bad name in a private business setting, and motivation takes many forms other than paycheck retribution. According to Hoopes, the simple existence of top-down management power contradicts the democratic political values at the heart of American culture. "Ordinary citizens get their closest exposure to undemocratic government when they go to work for a corporation." The book argues that remembering that contradiction, rather than covering it up, as many management theorists have done, is the best way to manage well. "Top-down power and its potential abuse are here to stay in corporate America. It is foolish to think otherwise." So it is better to admit that we live two lives, one as free citizen and one as submissive employees, and that instead of extending corporate values in our democratic institutions we should build checks and balances in our political system to limit the abuse of management power. Unfortunately this is not the direction that management gurus have taken. Hoopes begins his tour of portraits with Frederick W. Taylor, the founder of scientific management. Taylor is now considered mostly an embarrassment in the history of management, and he serves as a negative milestone against which later approaches were constructed. But his emphasis on efficiency, low costs, and pay to performance still makes sense today. Better, Taylor can be portrayed as a pioneer of knowledge management, as he saw knowledge as a key resource that had to be properly managed by teams of experts. His success owes much to the state of management education at his time: "new business schools such as Harvard had embarrassingly little systematic knowledge to teach and desperately embraced Taylorism to fill class time (...) Students' attention could be concentrated on instruction cards, slide rules, and time study, lending business schools a facade of science and academic rigor." The other scholar who took Harvard Business School by storm is Elton Mayo, whose human relations movement imposed a new curriculum in management education. The Australian social psychologist is cast as the villain in Hoopes's story: he is depicted as lying about his curriculum, and as substituting intellectual aloofness for academic rigor. His dream was to replace democracy with therapy: he treated Bolshevism as a mental illness, and labor grievances as symptoms of deeply-held neuroses. HBS, where his recruitment owed more to his ability to attract money from the Rockefeller foundation than to his scientific credentials, gave him the institutional power to develop and sell his ideas, which reinforced the managerial profession's claim for social status based on its dedication to human service. Although he only supervised the study from afar, he is mostly remembered for the Hawthorne experiment at General Electric, which demonstrated that gentle and caring supervision created better group dynamics. But he is still considered as the founder of Organizational Behavior, a discipline that has become a part of every business school curriculum. By contrast, Mary Parker Follett gets many praises as a shining personality and a brilliant social theorist. Trained as a political scientist, she contributed original insights to social theory and business management by trying to integrate the opposite interests of bosses and workers. Using her social work experience as a new model of political democracy, Follett eventually came to believe that a corporation at its best is a person. According to her, "the group, because it means a larger life than our single, separate lives, thrills us and raises us to new levels of efficiency and power." She believed that all employees should contribute to management, and she may have erred in her confidence in leadership as a substitute for power, yet her thoughts reflected the better aspects of corporate life. Finally, Peter Drucker, whose portrait closes the volume, is the only management expert who deserves the title of guru, used generously throughout the book. His mix of social theory and practical business advice attracted a cult following, not only in the United States but also in Japan and in Europe. Fleeing central Europe's descent into chaos in the 1930s, Drucker began his career as a journalist and did some fieldwork at General Motors before moving to academia, where he became the quintessential business guru. In the 1960s, he first called attention to the growing role of knowledge workers; in the 1970s, he pioneered management by objectives and called attention to Japanese companies' distinctive practices; in the 1980s, his increasing disenchantment with corporate America led him to turn his focus to nonprofit organizations, which were in bad need of rigorous management techniques. Drucker also played a role of the ubiquitous social critic for business managers who usually have little time for sociological treatises and philosophical thought. My impression upon reading this book is mixed. The introductory chapter presents a strong thesis, namely that management gurus obfuscate the anti-democratic nature of corporate power, but this basic insight covers only a limited aspect of the management doctrines that are reviewed in the subsequent chapters. It is not obvious that the author has actually read all the material that he covers--not that the management books of these mostly forgotten authors are worth re-reading anyway. If you need a critical introduction to the thoughts and doctrines of management gurus, I find *The Witch Doctors* by John Micklethwait and Adrian Wooldridge a much more pleasant and informative read. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Interesting tidbits about management gurus. I could understand the ...By Mariano Carrea Interesting tidbits about management gurus. I could understand the author's viewpoint but there it shows how complicated management and leadership is. There is no one formula. These guys were able to exploit an idea they had. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Interesting By CathyMikeGood arrival time, great packaging and a great read if this is what you need. I needed it for school and it came just when I needed it and

the information was very helpful. I would recommend buying it.

According to Jim Hoopes, the fundamental principles on which business is based—authority, power, control—are increasingly at odds with principles of life in a democratic society—freedom, equality, individualism. *False Prophets* critically examines the pioneering theories of the early management thinkers, such as Taylor, Follett, Mayo, and Deming, which intended to democratize corporate life yet have proved antithetical to the successful practice of business. Hoopes challenges popular management movements that followed in the wake of these thinkers and accuses today's business theorists of perpetuating bad management in the name of democratic values. He urges executives and managers to recognize the realities of corporate life and learn to apply the principles of power. He also unveils a new management agenda that will be of paramount significance to modern organizations. A rich and lively read, *False Prophets* provides a refreshingly new and original overview of the history of management in the larger context of the American culture, brilliantly illustrating its evolution—from the ivory tower to the shop floor.

From Publishers Weekly  
Babson College history professor Hoopes traces American business theory's antidemocratic strain by starting with "management manuals" for slave owners and overseers, seeing plantations as among the nation's earliest forerunners of the modern corporation. The inference that modern workers are just as commodified as slaves isn't accidental; one of Hoopes's theses is that management gurus, by nature idealistic and utopian, are uncomfortable addressing the fundamental discrepancy in American culture between corporate power and political ideals. In order to avoid confronting that contradiction, they posit "bottom-up" organizational models—in one extreme case, suggesting corporate authority doesn't exist, but is conferred upon managers by employees who reject the responsibility of decision making. By examining the lives and writings of eight 20th-century business writers, Hoopes aims to demonstrate how their management theories have steered American industry wrongly. By pretending corporate power doesn't operate from a "top-down" model, management theory fails to address the moral questions that come with authority, he says. And it's that blind spot, he claims, that leads to the self-deception and self-righteousness that fuel corporate scandals. The book's biographical elements are strong, offering brief but well-rounded portraits depicting not only the successes but also the shortcomings and failures of figures like Frederick W. Taylor, whose ruthless quest for efficiency put him in conflict with the laborers he sought to regiment. He also highlights theories that still have some practical value, such as Peter Drucker's proposal to promote specific objectives rather than abstract missions. Knowing the weaknesses of popular theories is useful in its own right, but managers looking for quick fixes to ethical dilemmas won't find them here. Copyright 2003 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Booklist  
Hoopes, an academic, offers a contrarian view of today's management theory that heralds freedom and bottom-up management. He states that managerial power, while undemocratic, is a necessary evil in an imperfect world, and we check our freedoms at the workplace door in exchange for increasing productivity and wealth. Managers, like all-powerful people throughout history, can be corrupted by their power, and he recommends the need for spiritual humility, which they can get by acknowledging that they must be trusted with power but are not worthy of it. With stories about famous management gurus, including Frederick W. Taylor, W. Edwards Deming, and Peter Drucker, the book uses history to help today's managers gain a more realistic perspective on a morally ambiguous world where there has always been power and injustice. Contending that there is no resolution of conflict between management and democracy and between power and justice, Hoopes' thought-provoking views will attract both followers and critics. Mary Whaley  
Copyright copy; American Library Association. All rights reserved "A bracing new book...attacks the myth that management revolves around what workers want." -- Financial Times March 4, 2003 "Provocative and incisive." -- Harvard Business May, 2003 "Writing in an engaging style, the author uses rare historical evidence to challenge readers to look at management ideas skeptically...recommended." -- Choice 9/03 "[A] hard-hitting critique of management shibboleths... [Hoopes'] scholarly cynicism is maintained to the end...his analysis of corporate leadership is prescient." -- Financial Times 3/20/03