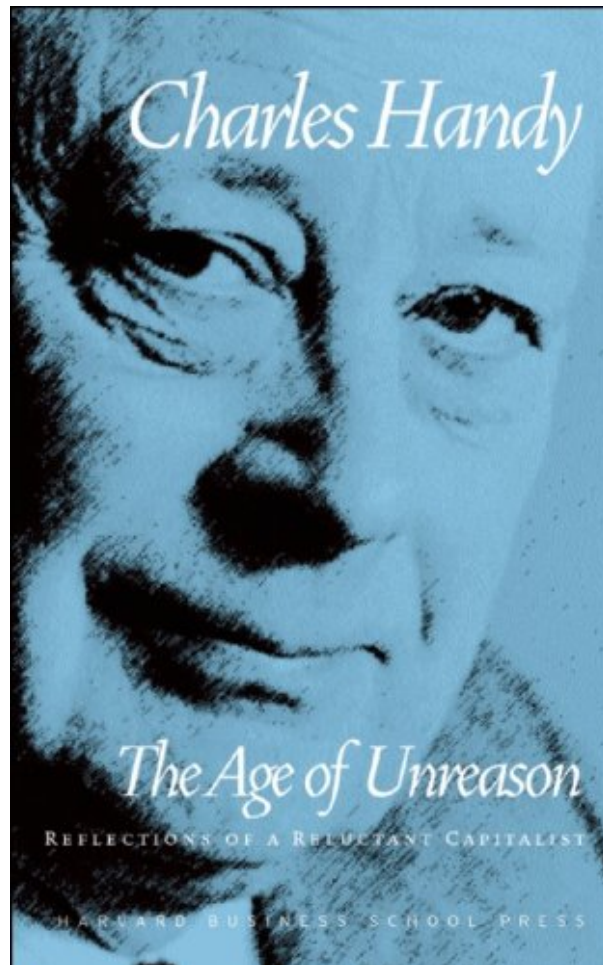
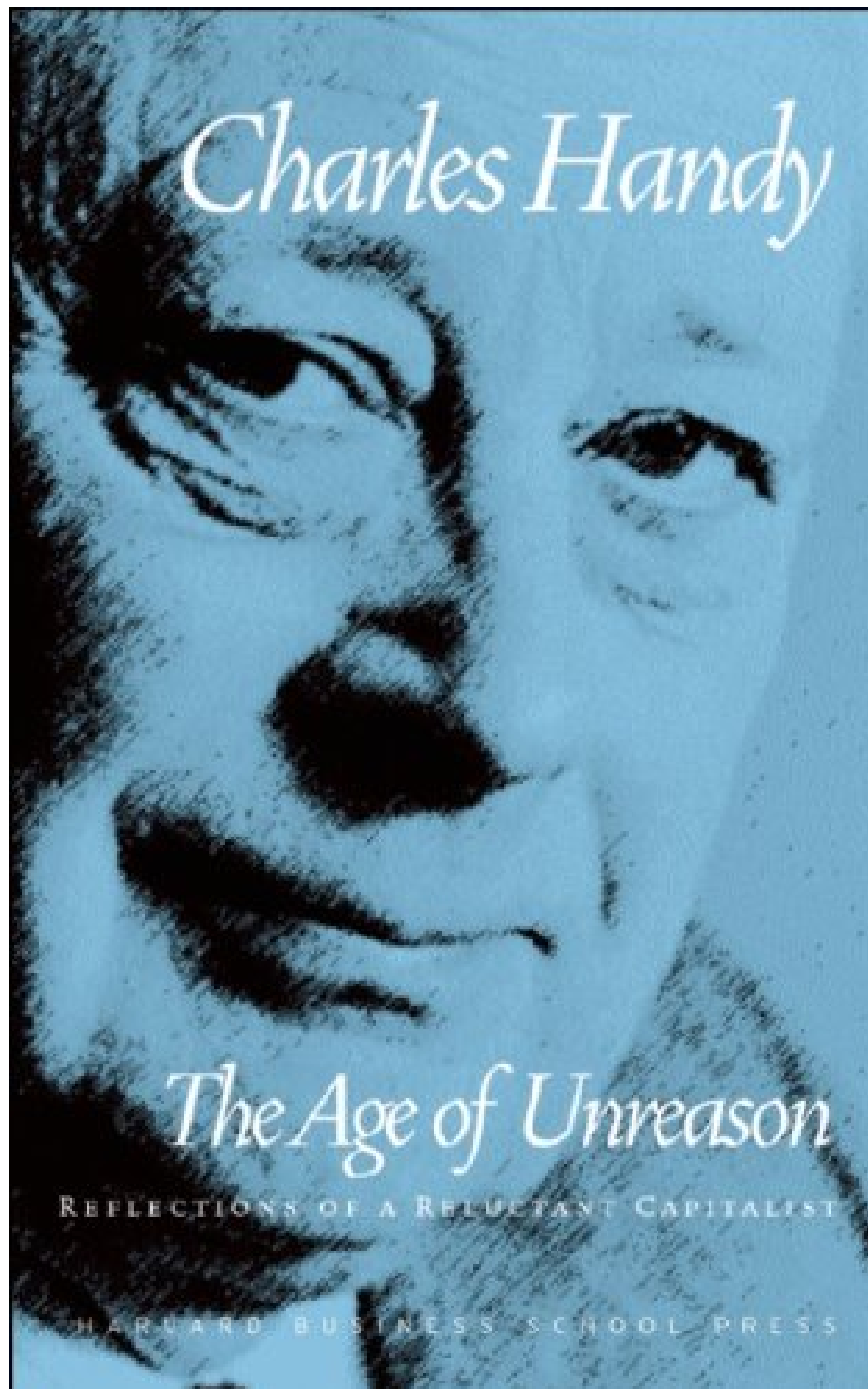


THE AGE OF UNREASON BY CHARLES HANDY



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From Library Journal

Handy, a British specialist in organizational management, predicts that the 21st century will be the Age of Unreason. In an era when changes in business and society will be "discontinuous" or patternless, he suggests that our thinking must become discontinuous or "unreasonable" in order to use such changes to our advantage. While his thesis is generally in line with strategists like Tom Peters (*In Search of Excellence*, LJ 2/15/83), Handy focuses more on the philosophy, rather than the mechanics, of adaptive change in society. His examples from the business world are interestingly extended to social institutions like marriage and family. Nicely written, this should be popular with open-minded management types. A good addition to management collections.

-Mark L. Shelton, Columbus, Ohio

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Review

Named one of "The 25 Most Influential Business Management Books" by TIME Magazine (TIME.com)

From the Back Cover

In this fascinating book, Charles Handy shows how dramatic changes are transforming business, education, and the nature of work. We can see them in astounding new developments in technology, in the shift in demand from manual to cerebral skills, and in the virtual disappearance of lifelong, full-time jobs.

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THE AGE OF UNREASON BY CHARLES HANDY PDF

In an era when change is constant, random, and, as Handy calls it, discontinuous, it is necessary to break out of old ways of thinking in order to use change to our advantage. Handy examines how dramatic changes are transforming business, education, and the nature of work. We can see it in astounding new developments in technology, in the shift in demand from manual to cerebral skills, and in the virtual disappearance of lifelong, full-time jobs. Handy maintains that discontinuous change requires discontinuous, upside-down thinking, and discusses the need for new kinds of organizations, new approaches to work, new types of schools, and new ideas about the nature of our society.

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Most helpful customer reviews

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful.

Progress Depends on the Unreasonable Man!

By O. Halabieh

As best described by the author: "The purpose of this book is to promote a better understanding of the

changes which are already about us, in order that we may, as individuals or as a society, suffer less and profit more. Changes, after all, is only another word for growth, another synonym for learning. We can all do it, and enjoy it, if we want to. The story or argument of this book rests on three assumptions:

1) That the changes are different this time: they are discontinuous and not part of a pattern; such discontinuity happens from time to time in history, although it is confusing and disturbing, particularly to those in power.

2) that is the little changes which can in fact make the biggest differences to our lives, even if these go unnoticed at the time, and that is the changes in the way our work is organized which will make the biggest differences to the way we all will live; and

3) that discontinuous change requires discontinuous upside-down thinking to deal with it, even if both thinkers and thoughts appear absurd at first sight."

The book covers the various aspects that these changes affect including professional (organizations where we work), personal, and government. The author's main objective is: "If people start to think unreasonably and try to shape their world the way they think it ought to be, then I shall be content."

A very deep and insightful analysis of the world we are living in, and the necessary shift in the way we think and act within it. The breadth of areas covered in this book and its completeness are to be commended.

Below are key excerpts from the book that I found particularly insightful:

1- "It is best, I realized, to think of learning as a wheel divided into four parts: questions, theories, testing, and reflections. I describe it as a wheel to emphasize that it is meant to go round and round. One set of questions, duly answered and tested and reflected upon, leads on to another."

2- "Learning is not just knowing the answers...It does not help you to change, or to grow, it does not move the wheel...Learning is not the same as study, nor the same as training...It is a cast of mind, a habit of life, a way of thinking about things, a way of growing...Learning is not automatic, it requires energy, thought, courage and support...Learning is not for the intellectuals, who often shine at the theorizing stage, but are incurious and unadventurous and therefore add little to their experience as they go through life. Learning is not finding out what other people already know, but is solving our own problems for our own purposes, by questioning, thinking and testing until the solution is part of our lives."

3- "I am suggesting, on the basis of good evidence, that those who learn best and most, and change most comfortably, are those who a) take responsibility for themselves and for their future; b) have a clear view of what they want that future to be; c) want to make sure they get it; and d) believe they can."

4- "...the organization of today is made up of three very different expectations, managed differently, paid differently, organized differently...The first leaf of the shamrock represents the core workers...these are the people who are essential to the organization. These are the people who are essential to the organization. Between them they own the organizational knowledge which distinguishes that organization from its counterparts...If the core is smaller, who then does the work? Increasingly, it is contracted out to organizations I call the second leaf of the shamrock...The third leaf of the shamrock is the flexible labor force, all those part-time workers and temporary workers who are the fastest growing part of the employment scene."

5- "Alongside the emerging shamrock organization we can discern the gradual development of the federal organization...Federalism seeks to make it big by keeping it small, or at least independent, combining autonomy with cooperation. It is the method which businesses are slowly, and painfully, evolving for getting the best of both worlds - the size which gives them clout in the marketplace and in the financial centers, as well as some economies of scale, and the small unit size which gives them the flexibility which they need, as well as the sense of community for which individuals increasingly hanker."

6- "The Japanese have a nice way of developing their high-potential young people. They actually have a fast-track route for them, but instead of it being a vertical fast-track up through the organization, it is a horizontal fast-track, a succession of different jobs, real jobs with tough standards to be met, but all at the same level. The advantages are that not only does the young person get a wider view of the organization, he or she gets a chance to test out their talents and skills in a wide variety of roles."

7- "The new formula for success, and for effectiveness is $I^3=AV$, where I stands for Intelligence, Information, and Ideas, and AV means added value in cash or in kind."

8- "The research made it clear that there is no optimal pattern for a marriage. All patterns are possible. It seems essential to have a joint understanding of what the pattern is, how and when it might change, what the consequences are for living in a certain pattern and what are the costs and benefits. People clearly can change their pattern and what are the costs and benefits. People clearly can change their pattern if both parties want to. Separation and divorce often seem to occur because one partner wants to change the pattern and the other does not."

9- "The upside-down school would make study more like work, based on real problems to be solved or real tasks to be done, in groups of mixed ages and different types of ability, all of them useful."

10- "Inevitably, now, government will have increasingly to deal direct with individuals rather than with organizations, will have to rethink the categories it puts people into, and find some new ways to organize the collection and distribution of wealth if the organization cannot do it for them."

11- "The Age of Unreason is inevitably going to be something of an exploration, but exploring is at the heart of learning, and of changing and of growing. This is what I believe, and this is what gives me hope."

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful.

Like all of Charles Handy's work

By Brian Honigman

Like all of Charles Handy's work, it's far ahead of its time. The Age of Unreason is no exception. A worthwhile read for those trying to understand how the way we work is organized, as well as how globalization continues to change the world for better and for worse.

16 of 18 people found the following review helpful.

Don't take it **too** literally.

By frumiousb

I had to both laugh at and give a helpful vote to the review below which accused the author of citing half-baked fragments of myths and anecdotes as evidence. To a certain degree, it's a fair cop, particularly if you're looking for a book which is going to really stunningly predict the future.

The Age of Unreason isn't about predicting the future, it's about training yourself to look at the future in ways that you might otherwise not have done. As such, I found it a valuable and interesting book which is clearly based in a lot of meditation on learning and learning theories.

Some of the things Handy mentioned turned out to have become true since the book was written. Other things didn't-- but it doesn't matter ultimately. What the book asks is this: Can you recognize the real causes for pain that you identify? Can you think differently to force discontinuous change? Is your vision of the future based on an accurate perception of the past, or are you looking past major factors because you don't recognize the role of gradual change?

People who like this book may like some of the books on developing strategies using scenario exercises. This book also contains a decent (if dated) bibliography.

See all 18 customer reviews...

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