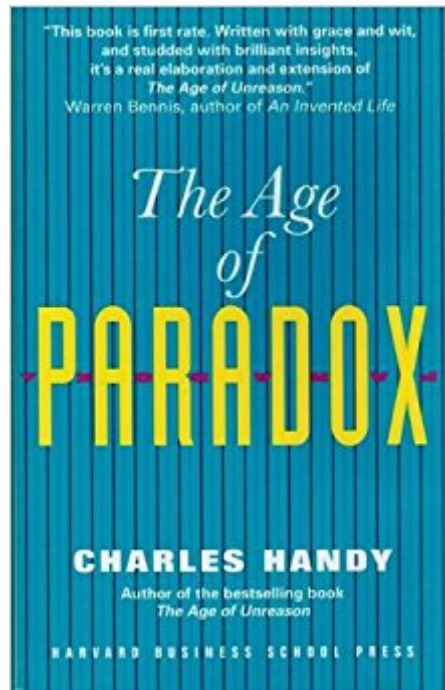


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The Age Of Paradox



Synopsis

In a widely acclaimed book, the bestselling author of *The Age of Unreason* contends that what society needs is a new ethic--one based on a renewed humanism, a fresh interpretation of capitalism, and a belief in proper federalism.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Handy (*The Age of Unreason*) here surveys the state of the world--and his observations are unsettling. People have been adversely affected by change; capitalism "has not proved as flexible as it was supposed to be

Handy is a respected management expert and author of the frequently cited *Age of Unreason* (1989). In that book, he used George Bernard Shaw's observation that the reasonable man adapts himself to the world, but the unreasonable one attempts to adapt the world to himself. Handy argued the need to break out of traditional ways of thinking in order to adapt to constant change and use change to advantage. Now, five years later, many of the changes Handy foresaw have taken place but with unanticipated, paradoxical consequences. Using well-chosen anecdotes and keen observations, he identifies the paradoxical consequences of intelligence, work, productivity, time, riches, organizations, aging, the individual, and justice and suggests how to work with them. David Rouse

While the Age of Paradox was written more than 15 years ago, it is just as relevant today as it was then - perhaps even more so. Charles Handy makes engaging arguments as to how individuals and businesses should conduct themselves. While the book has a philosophical bent, it is also a practical guide. Charles Handy frames up many emerging trends that were less clear in the early 1990's but in many situations have come to fruition during the last decade. I had to chuckle when he described the turbulence of the times (1990's). Looking back, it all seemed pretty tame compared to today. His discussion on The Sigmoid Curve and the need to create new Curves as you go through life is fascinating. Equally compelling are his discussions about the purpose of a business. The book points out that profit for the sake of profit is destructive in the long-run. But profit as a means to make things better, more abundant, and create long-term wealth is the best model. As you read his words, you can appreciate how a culture of short-term profit maximization during the last decade led to not only a destruction of shareholder wealth but crippled this nation's competitive advantage on the global stage. This book is a classic masterpiece that will help you gain a better appreciation of who you are or can become both as a human being and as a person in business.

Charles Handy does an excellent job in setting forth his case that we live in an age of paradox. The need for organization is greater than ever yet the need for remaking our organizations is also greater than ever. He has many ideas and suggestions which may be helpful in refitting our organizations. The concepts that the new capital of organizations is their intellects and that there needs to be a new 'federalism', an era of 'twin citizenship' between the local and the center, are both interesting and challenging. It is a good read and a provocative one. One weakness is that Handy seems to posit the need for greater local control while speaking of social changes which only a new power center (the government) will truly be able to implement. He seems to be caught in a paradox of his own creation.

This is one of those books you must read in this age of turmoil. Opens your eyes in so many ways. I insist, a must read!

Everything was okay.

Cool!

From the first page it is obvious that the author has an incredibly diverse background of experience and knowledge which enable him to take a high level view of the world. Most books dive right into a subject and never explain where they are going. Handy tries to fit all of our life experiences into a model by stating that life is a series of paradoxes. And therein lies the key--we cannot make a perfect working model of life because things are always paradoxical in nature. Take the paradox of justice--Handy's discussion of this phenomenon allows you to finally come to grips with why issues such as affirmative action can seem so compelling to both sides. If you are interested on the ideas of capitalism and whether or not it is a best solution the book provides some real insights. Take for example Handy's simple explanation about Adam Smith and The Wealth of Nations. Having personally done some reading on the subject, Handy was the first to inform me that Smith was actually a professor of moral philosophy. He thought that the market would work, but it would require social responsibility on the part of society. I think this simple point is rarely discussed when using Smith's invisible hand in defense of capitalism. As an avid reader who gets disinterested after the first chapter of most books, this is the first one in a long time worthy of being finished. Handy has an amazing ability to incorporate our experiences in life: love, money, work, family, etc. into a model which serves to explain it all. While I'm sure Handy himself would agree that his model is incomplete, the thought excites me and I can't wait to see what "age" he publishes next. This book may not be the newest book out there, but it is certainly one of the best.

A book that attacks the very core for some of our most reverential beliefs, exposes our modicum of understanding about the rationale in doing some of the things we do (assuming there is one) and puts across some eye-opening, some egregious thoughts without rancour or religious fervour in a cogent and organised manner. But I must add in the same vein that in my opinion, the most difficult thing to do after wooing an audience is assuring that one's attention remains unequivocally rivetted to the machinations of the author's thinking. To that extent, Handy flounders as his line of reasoning gets more and more nebulous. Even then, for sheer novelty, impact and articulate ratiocination, *The Age of Paradox* takes some beating.

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