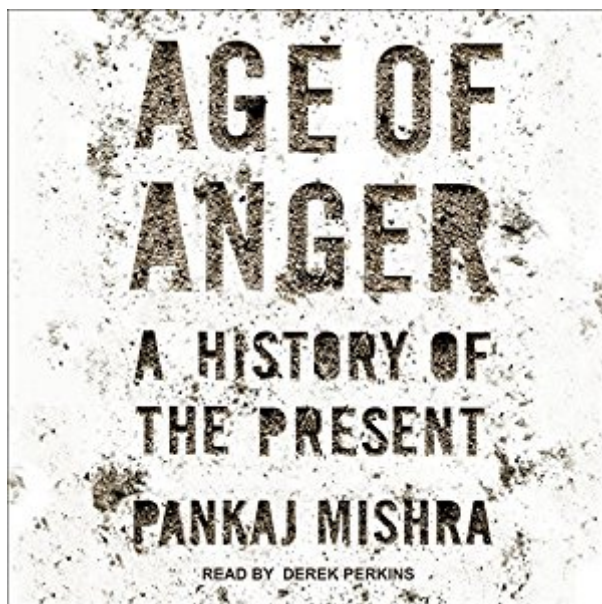


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# Age Of Anger: A History Of The Present



## Synopsis

How can we explain the origins of the great wave of paranoid hatreds that seem inescapable in our close-knit world - from American shooters and ISIS to Donald Trump, from a rise in vengeful nationalism to racism and misogyny on social media? In *Age of Anger*, Pankaj Mishra answers our bewilderment by casting his gaze back to the 18th century before leading us to the present. As the world became modern, those who were unable to enjoy its promises of freedom, stability, and prosperity were increasingly susceptible to demagogues. It was from among the ranks of the disaffected that the militants of the 19th century arose - angry young men who became cultural nationalists in Germany, messianic revolutionaries in Russia, bellicose chauvinists in Italy, and anarchist terrorists internationally. Today, just as then, the embrace of mass politics and technology and the pursuit of wealth and individualism have cast many more billions adrift, uprooted from tradition but still far from modernity - with the same terrible results. Making startling connections and comparisons, *Age of Anger* is a book of immense urgency and profound argument. It is a history of our present predicament unlike any other.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Not only timely but also original, bold, and very perceptive. Here's Mishra's thesis: "The scope of this universal crisis is much broader than the issue of terrorism or violence. Those routinely evoking a worldwide clash of civilizations in which Islam is pitted against the West, and religion against reason, are not able to explain many political, social and environmental ills. And even the exponents

of the "clash" thesis may find it more illuminating to recognize, underneath the layer of quasi-religious rhetoric, the deep intellectual and psychological affinities that the gaudily Islamic aficionados of ISIS's Caliphate share with D'Annunzio [Italian proto-fascist who inspired Mussolini and Hitler] and many other equally flamboyant secular radicals in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries: the aesthetes who glorified war, misogyny, and pyromania; the nationalists who accused Jews and liberals of rootless cosmopolitanism and celebrated irrational violence; and the nihilists, anarchists and terrorists who flourished in almost every continent against a background of cosy political-financial alliances, devastating economic crises and obscene inequalities. We must return to the convulsions of that period in order to understand our own age of anger." Mishra creatively disrupts the common narrative (associated with Samuel Huntington and Bernard Lewis) of the West versus Islam. He finds the roots of ISIS not in a supposedly backward Islam but in the discontents of Western modernity, a discontent including such iconic Western rebels as Rousseau, Nietzsche, and Nechayev, as well as proto-fascists such as d'Annunzio. "Pushkin, looking for a model freedom fighter in exile in the year of Byron's death, alighted on the Prophet Mohammed in his cycle of poems, Imitations of the Quran." And, unafraid of the critics, he connects both Jewish and Islamist fundamentalists to mid 20th Century European communists and fascists. As an Indian, he is especially interested in (and horrified by) Hindu ultra-nationalists. It was the election of Narendra Modi in India that spurred him to begin writing the book, which he delivered to his publisher the week Donald Trump was elected President of the United States. Few writers have the breadth and daring to connect the multiple political pathologies we are witnessing. Mishra does. His book is a major contribution to those who want not only to understand but also to resist.

Difficult to read because there is hard truth in its pages. Hard, because neo-liberalism has created an increasingly polarized world in which a few geographic and genetic lottery winners have created trajectories benefiting their relatively small demographic, while the vast majority of souls become further non-participatory; alienated and frustrated. It's like there are two earths growing farther and farther apart, while the one true earth that holds us all together is, itself, being poisoned by these same neo-liberalist trajectories. The poisoning of the many, of the commons, by a tiny minority, ultimately for no other reason than pure greed.

very learned analysis

a bit too intense for me but he certainly gets his point across about why so many people are mad

these days. So if you're interested and want to read about the historical perspective of this anger, give a try.

An interesting side trip into areas and aspects of history which are not usually linked together. My impression is that the ideological lenses used for this study to understand anger and distrust in today's world were perhaps overused, producing perhaps reductionism.

Very interesting history of Western philosophy that I wish I had understood in college. It is a very difficult read and I am still working my way through it. Hope I get a better understanding of this anger if I finally finish the book.

Places Islamic anger in the context of a lot of other angers around our world. Highly information and very readable. The author, a rather brilliant fellow and terrific writer, brings us a badly needed perspective.

Mishra's book and bibliography are impressive. Could he possibly have read those hundreds of books? This is a clear picture of the nature of man and an explanation of our present political culture. I wish there had been more than only one passing reference to Thomas Hobbes who it seems to me captured the true nature of man he called hostile and man's inhumanity to man but for the Leviathan, the taming influence. And, of course, Shakespeare in describing human nature's preoccupation with war and power. I think Mishra's infatuation with the romantic nature of Rousseau is a bit naive but his contrast between him and Voltaire serves to set up his thesis that the elite (basically cruel) minority always wins out over the (basically powerless) majority. What makes this book important to me is that it describes (over the last 2 centuries) why in the West so many believe that government can do no good and in the East that modernity is evil. I have read a review or two of the book and agree that much of Mishra's cynicism is cyclical (like waves rather than sea change as one reviewer put it) and that it fails to give liberalism (e.g. the New Deal) its due. But when you add up his depressing evidence, he makes a compelling argument that helps to explain how we (sadly) got to be where we are now.

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