

Chapter 1 : Age of Anger: A History of the Present by Pankaj Mishra

Dec 08, Â· Welcome to the age of anger Cut Composite: cut/ALAMY The seismic events of have revealed a world in chaos - and one that old ideas of liberal rationalism can no longer explain.

Share via Email Supporters cheer for Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump during a rally last year. In this highly topical polemic, Pankaj Mishra describes a global pandemic of rage. He thinks the phenomenon of continuous terrorist attacks can be attributed to resentment – a word taken from the French by Kierkegaard, with no ready meaning in English beyond the sense that chippiness can somehow exist to the power of a thousand, morphing into permanent, murderous rage. Voltaire, in his interpretation, is a precursor of neoliberal snottiness, a nouveau-riche snob, an elitist and admirer of progressive tyrants, while the countercultural, proleish, permanently enraged Rousseau gives good reasons for the current plague of world violence. Rousseau got the habit of anger on the road from Paris to Vincennes while pondering an essay on the function of culture in the creation of society. He became convinced of the unfairness and inauthenticity of the contemporary world of salons and knowledge. Mishra thinks that the world abounds in anonymous Rousseaus incubating such moments of self-discovery. How do they react to punitive wars perpetrated by rich nations in the name of freedom and democracy? Or indeed to the casual wrenching of millions and millions from traditional poverty? The new underground men according to his account, violence still appears to be a predominantly male vocation inhabit a trackless, confusing modernity in which contemporary life offers little in the way of hope or guidance beyond the smartphone and police batons. They have no reason to care very much when the rest of us think. Others, such as Sir Isaiah Berlin, or indeed Albert Camus, have tracked the currents of revolutionary nihilism. But they were writing during the cold war, and inevitably their analyses carried a degree of west-east bias, and were confined to an examination of the European past. We should pay attention, to be sure, to the bigoted, primitively formulated millennial Muslim rhetoric of Isis and fellow Islamists, but see these upheavals primarily as responses to the contemporary condition. The great strength of this deeply challenging book is that it allows the reader no easy get-out. This is our world, Mishra tells us, and, as must be evident from daily news from the terror front that surrounds us, we have no other. It may be wrong, too, to wish to set aside the Islam of Isis on the grounds that militants are bad or ignorant Muslims. Look at the internet. Will it be Trump? Blame for the epidemic, Mishra concludes, can be spread in every direction. Did anyone, for instance, imagine that mass literacy could be combined with the blocking-off of individual opportunity without terrible consequences? Or that the removal of traditional belief systems would somehow lead to a universal acceptance of our own worldview? Nonetheless, I feel that Voltaire was a better, less complacent man than Mishra is prepared to allow. It was Voltaire who campaigned against the judicial murder of Protestants broken on the wheel after show trials. By no means all of the western enlightenment project is demeaning or ridiculous. If it was as foolish as Rousseau believed, and as Mishra now concludes, it would have collapsed in ruins long ago. Mishra ends this belligerent, scalding peroration with the warning, now widely shared by commentators of all stripes, that something terrible is about to happen. He tells us that Pope Francis, with his holistic, spiritual socialism, is among the only people on the planet capable of squaring up to the challenges we face. Maybe he should have a try himself, before the horror which he is predicting finally engulfs us.

Chapter 2 : NPR Choice page

Age of Anger: A History of the Present is a nonfiction book by Indian author Pankaj Mishra. Mishra accounts for the resurgence of reactionary and right-wing political movements in the late s.

These destructive forces have their roots in the obliterating of social, cultural and religious traditions by modernization and the consumer society, the disastrous attempts by the United States to carry out regime change, often through coups and wars, and the utopian neoliberal ideology that has concentrated wealth in the hands of a tiny cabal of corrupt global oligarchs. He is the result of a market society and capitalist democracy that has ceased to function. They are cut off from their past. They live in crushing poverty, numbing alienation, hopelessness and often terror. Mass culture feeds them the tawdry, the violent, the salacious and the ridiculous. They are rising up against these forces of modernization, driven by an atavistic fury to destroy the technocratic world that condemns them. This rage is expressed in many forms—Hindu nationalism, protofascism, jihadism, the Christian right, anarchic violence and others. But the various forms of resentment spring from the same deep wells of global despair. They see in the extreme nationalists, religious fundamentalists and jihadists an inchoate and inexplicable irrationality that can be quelled only with force. They have yet to grasp that the disenfranchised do not hate us for our values; they hate us because of our duplicity, use of indiscriminate industrial violence on their nations and communities and our hypocrisy. The dispossessed grasp the true message of the West to the rest of the planet: We have everything, and if you try to take it away from us we will kill you. The more that Western elites are attacked, the more they too retreat into a mythological past, self-glorification and willful ignorance. Thus, in the very places [in the West] where secular modernity arose, with ideas that were then universally established—individualism against the significance of social relations, the cult of efficiency and utility against the ethic of honour, and the normalization of self-interest—the mythic Volk has reappeared as a spur to solidarity and action against real and imagined enemies. Its political resurgence shows that resentment—in this case, of people who feel left behind by the globalized economy or contemptuously ignored by its slick overlords and cheerleaders in politics, business and the media—remains the default metaphysics of the modern world since [Jean-Jacques] Rousseau first defined it. And its most menacing expression in the age of individualism may well be the violent anarchism of the disinherited and the superfluous. The proponents of globalization promised to lift workers across the planet into the middle class and instill democratic values and scientific rationalism. Religious and ethnic tensions would be alleviated or eradicated. This global marketplace would create a peaceful, prosperous community of nations. All we had to do was get government out of the way and kneel before market demands, held up as the ultimate form of progress and rationality. Neoliberalism, in the name of this absurd utopia, stripped away government regulations and laws that once protected the citizen from the worst excesses of predatory capitalism. It created free trade agreements that allowed trillions of corporate dollars to be transferred to offshore accounts to avoid taxation and jobs to flee to sweatshops in China and the global south where workers live in conditions that replicate slavery. Social service programs and public services were slashed or privatized. We were always condemned to lose. Our cities were deindustrialized and fell into decay. Our working class became impoverished. Endless war became, cynically, a lucrative business. Kleptocracies, such as the one now installed in Washington, brazenly stole from the people. Democratic idealism became a joke. In one of the most important parts of his brilliant and multi-layered analysis of the world around us, Mishra explains how Western ideas were adopted and mutated by ideologues in the global south, ideas that would become as destructive as the imposition of free market capitalism itself. Nowhere is this more true than with the modern calls for jihad by self-styled Islamic radicals, most of whom have no religious training and who often come out of the secularized criminal underworld. Anwar al-Awlaki, who preached jihad and was eventually assassinated by the United States, had a penchant for prostitutes. Abu Mohammed al-Adnani, a senior leader of Islamic State before he was killed, called on Muslims in the West to kill any non-Muslim they encountered. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City in , killing , including 19 children, and injuring And when the American was imprisoned in Florence, Colo. The hagiography of the U.

An angry and alienated underclass, now making up as much as half the population of the United States, is entranced by electronic hallucinations that take the place of literacy. These Americans take a perverse and almost diabolical delight in demagogues such as Trump that express contempt for and openly flout the traditional rules and rituals of a power structure that preys upon them. Those who opposed us simply learned to speak our language. Americans in the global war on terror resorted to cruel interrogation methods that the Soviet Union had patented during the Cold War. This intellectually nuanced and philosophically rich book shows that ideas matter. It is the quintessential product of a radical process of globalization in which governments, unable to protect their citizens from foreign invaders, brutal police, or economic turbulence, lose their moral and ideological legitimacy, creating a space for such non-state actors as armed gangs, mafia, vigilante groups, warlords and private revenge-seekers. ISIS aims to create a Caliphate, but, like American regime-changers, it cannot organize a political space, as distinct from privatizing violence. Motivated by a selfie individualism, the adepts of ISIS are better at destroying Valhalla than building it. The will to power and craving for violence as existential experience reconciles, as [philosopher and social theorist Georges] Sorel prophesized, the varying religious and ideological commitments of its adherents. The attempts to place them in a long Islamic tradition miss how much these militants, feverishly stylizing their murders and rapes on Instagram, reflect an ultimate stage in the radicalization of the modern principle of individual autonomy and equality: Once we no longer acknowledge or understand our own capacity for evil, once we no longer know ourselves, we become monsters who devour others and finally devour ourselves. He knows what endless wars, waged in the name of democracy and Western civilization, engender among their victims. He knows what drives people, whether they are at a Trump rally or a radical mosque in Pakistan, to lust after violence. History informs the present. And as we sleepwalk into the future, the steady deterioration of the ecosystem will ultimately lead to total systems collapse. A Kickstarter Campaign Worthy of Your Donation Truthdig columnist Chris Hedges, a longtime teacher in prisons, is working with 28 of his students to stage a play the incarcerated men collectively created. Now the Pulitzer-winning journalist and the students are engaged in a special project to stage the play for the first time and to produce a book about the endeavor. One of the 28 is now a free man and a key force in the effort. Your support is essential. Go to Kickstarter now to help put this extraordinary stage work before the American public. This is the world we cover. Because of people like you, another world is possible. There are many battles to be won, but we will battle them togetherâ€”all of us. Common Dreams is not your normal news site. We want the world to be a better place. If you can help todayâ€”because every gift of every size mattersâ€”please do.

Chapter 3 : The Age of Anger by Pankaj Mishra – review | Books | The Guardian

The current age of anger is basically a reaction against too much rapid change, of the breaking of traditional work cultures couple with the rise of individualism which in the age of the Internet is inevitable.

And comparing the merits of competing stories is tricky. Each story carries with it its own criterion of verification and presents its facts accordingly: Jews are responsible for our financial problems; look at all the Jewish names in banking. Immigrants undermine society; drugs come from the same places they do. One way to judge such a narrative therefore is its inclusion of more facts than its competitors. Particularly telling is the inclusion of apparently contradictory facts which are otherwise unexplained: The Jewish names on the door front largely Christian organizations. Immigrants and drugs come from the places that have been impoverished through globalization. Only a few are likely to have his breadth of cultural experience, so his choice of resentment as the key to global sentiment seems inspired to me. Both socialism and capitalism have created societies in which material advantage has been offset by enormous economic, racial, and sexual inequities. What young, thinking, even vaguely aware, person could avoid the conclusion that those in charge are either frauds or crooks? Contingency not fate rules the world. It is the young especially who perceive the absurd gap between any ideology that suggests it knows the destination of human society and the obvious mess of reality. Neither proletarian nor consumer utopia has ever been in sight; the Second Coming has been unconscionably delayed. A sort of negative idealism, a rampant nihilism, beckons. Mishra quotes Walter Benjamin for effect: If not, then it is essential to recognise Trump not as anomaly but as epitome. He is what we have become, in all his vileness. He is a symbol, one hopes not of the moral standards of modern society, but certainly of the existential deficiency of all of our conventional political and cultural narratives. As surely as Kant, Trump deserves the title of *der alles Zermalmender*, the All-destroyer. Resentment is a symptom of despair among populations who still long for the comforts these myths provide. Their loss makes us all sick, although it is generally the young and the psychotic who act out most readily. It is the young and the psychotic who first spot how facile and self-satisfied these myths are. The rest of us resist like the Boers resisted in South Africa, by doubling down on the myths. Hence the apparent paradox of simultaneously increasing secularisation and religious fundamentalism - in Alabama, and Moscow, as well as Aleppo; the economic dissatisfaction among those who are the wealthiest on the planet; the drive to roll back democratic institutions by those democratically elected to safeguard them. Can we exist as cognitively gifted social animals without myths? Can we find better ones? The Age of Anger is far too rich with historical, literary, and cultural facts to summarise easily. Its conclusions are less than precise and directive. But I find this both consistent and convincing rather than a flaw. It is a narrative which denies its own definitiveness and begs for additions and modifications and reversals. Perhaps it is a model for the kind of myth we now need to keep us from exterminating one another.

Chapter 4 : Welcome to the age of anger | Pankaj Mishra | Politics | The Guardian

"In Age of Anger: A History of the Present, Pankaj Mishra offers a panoramic survey of the populist wind roiling the world and a genealogy of the ressentiment propelling it. Lucid, incisive and provocative, the book may be the most ambitious effort yet to diagnose our social condition.

Indeed, the pioneering works of sociology and psychology as well as modernist art and literature of the early 20th century were defined in part by their insistence that there is more to human beings than rational egoism, competition and acquisition, more to society than a contract between logically calculating and autonomous individuals, and more to politics than impersonal technocrats devising hyper-rational schemes of progress with the help of polls, surveys, statistics, mathematical models and technology. Writing in the 1840s, during the high noon of 19th-century liberalism, Fyodor Dostoevsky was one of the first modern thinkers to air the suspicion, now troubling us again, that rational thinking does not decisively influence human behaviour. Oh, tell me who was it first announced, who was it first proclaimed, that man only does nasty things because he does not know his own interests; and that if he were enlightened, if his eyes were opened to his real normal interests, man would at once cease to do nasty things, would at once become good and noble because, being enlightened and understanding his real advantage, he would see his own advantage in the good and nothing else? Dostoevsky defined a style of thought that was later elaborated by Nietzsche, Freud, Max Weber and others – who mounted a full-blown intellectual revolt against the oppressive certainties of rationalist ideologies, whether left, right or centre. This is an intellectual revolution that is barely remembered today – but it erupted at an emotional and political moment that would seem eerily familiar to us: This anti-liberal political uprising forced many of those we now regard as central figures of 20th-century intellectual life to question their fundamental notions of human behaviour, and to discard the positivist nostrums that had taken root in the previous century. By the late 1800s, Charles Darwin had already shattered the notion that human beings could control how they develop – let alone build a rational society. Novelists, sociologists and psychologists examining the turbulent mass societies of the late 19th century concluded that human actions could not be reduced to single causes, whether religious and ideological faith, or the rationality of self-interest. We suffer even more from this problem today as we struggle to make sense of the outbreaks of political irrationalism. Committed to seeing the individual self as a rational actor, we fail to see that it is a deeply unstable entity, constantly shaped and reshaped in its interplay with shifting social and cultural conditions. Ressentiment – caused by an intense mix of envy, humiliation and powerlessness – is not simply the French word for resentment. Its meaning was shaped in a particular cultural and social context: Even though he never used the word, the first thinker to identify how ressentiment would emerge from modern ideals of an egalitarian and commercial society was Jean-Jacques Rousseau. An outsider to the Parisian elite of his time, who struggled with envy, fascination, revulsion and rejection, Rousseau saw how people in a society driven by individual self-interest come to live for the satisfaction of their vanity – the desire and need to secure recognition from others, to be esteemed by them as much as one esteems oneself. As Gore Vidal pithily put it: In the early 20th century, the German sociologist Max Scheler developed a systematic theory of ressentiment as a distinctly modern phenomenon – ingrained in all societies where formal social equality between individuals coexists with massive differences in power, education, status, and property ownership. In an era of globalised commerce, these disparities now exist everywhere, along with enlarged notions of individual aspiration and equality. Accordingly, ressentiment, an existential resentment of others, is poisoning civil society and undermining political liberty everywhere. But what makes ressentiment particularly malign today is a growing contradiction. The ideals of modern democracy – the equality of social conditions and individual empowerment – have never been more popular. But they have become more and more difficult, if not impossible, to actually realise in the grotesquely unequal societies created by our brand of globalised capitalism. The past two decades of hectic globalisation have brought us closer than ever before to the liberal Enlightenment ideal of a universal commercial society of self-interested, rational and autonomous individuals – one that was originally advocated in the 18th century by such thinkers as Montesquieu, Voltaire, Adam

Smith, and Kant. In our own time, however, the ideology of neoliberalism – a market-centric hybrid of Enlightenment rationalism and 19th-century utilitarianism – has achieved near total domination in the economic and political realm alike. The success of this universal creed can be attested by many innovations of recent decades that now look perfectly natural. The broad intellectual revolution in which an all-knowing market judges failure and success has even more forcefully insisted on the rationality of the individual. Issues of social justice and equality have receded along with conceptions of society or community – to be replaced by the freely choosing individual in the marketplace. According to the prevailing view today, the injustices entrenched by history or social circumstances cease to matter: The rage for equality is conjoined with the pursuit of prosperity mandated by the global consumer economy, aggravating tensions and contradictions in inner lives that are then played out in the public sphere. Nevertheless, it is now commonplace among people around the world that rational considerations of utility and profit – the needs of supply chains and the imperatives of quarterly shareholder returns – uproot, humiliate and render obsolete. The widespread experience of the maelstrom of modernity has only heightened the lure of resentment. Never have so many free individuals felt so helpless – so desperate to take back control from anyone they can blame for their feeling of having lost it. It should not be surprising that we have seen an exponential rise in hatred of minorities, the main pathology induced by political and economic shocks. Rich and poor alike voting for a serial liar and tax dodger have confirmed yet again that human desires operate independently of the logic of self-interest – and may even be destructive of it. Not surprisingly, they are now unable to explain its rise. It is clear now that the exaltation of individual will as something free of social and historical pressures, and as flexible as markets, concealed a breathtaking innocence about structural inequality and the psychic damage it causes. The contemporary obsession with individual choice and human agency disregarded even the basic discoveries of late-century sociology: In this utopia, any irrational obstacles to the spread of liberal modernity – such as Islamic fundamentalism – would be eventually eradicated. Fantasies of a classless and post-racial society of empowered rational-choice actors bloomed as late as 2008, the year of the most devastating economic crisis since the Great Depression. How the education gap is tearing politics apart David Runciman Read more Today, however, the basic assumptions of cold war liberalism lie in ruins – after decades of intellectual exertion to construct flimsy oppositions between the rational west and the irrational east. The political big bang of our time does not merely threaten the vanity projects of an intellectual elite, but the health of democracy itself – the defining project of the modern world. Since the late 18th century, tradition and religion have been steadily discarded, in the hope that rational, self-interested individuals can form a liberal political community that defines its shared laws, ensuring dignity and equal rights for each citizen, irrespective of ethnicity, race, religion and gender. This basic premise of secular modernity, which earlier only seemed menaced by religious fundamentalists, is now endangered by elected demagogues in its very heartlands, Europe and the US. Where do we go from here? We can of course continue to define the crisis of democracy through reassuring dualisms: It may be more fruitful to think of democracy as a profoundly fraught emotional and social condition – one which, aggravated by turbo-capitalism, has now become unstable. This might allow us to examine the workings of resentment across varied countries and classes, and to understand why ethno-nationalist supremacy has grown alongside economic stagnation in America and Britain, even as it flourishes alongside economic expansion in India and Turkey. A rowdy public culture of disparagement and admonition does not hide the fact that the chasm of sensibility between a technocratic elite and the masses has grown. Everywhere, a majority that was promised growing equality sees social power monopolised by people with money, property, connections and talent; they feel shut out from both higher culture and decision-making. Many people find it easy to aim their rage against an allegedly cosmopolitan and rootless cultural elite. And so globalisation, which promotes integration among shrewd elites, helps incite resentment everywhere else, especially among people forced against their will into universal competition. In search of a balm for these wounds, many intellectuals have embraced nostalgic fantasies of vanished unity.

Age of Anger: A History of the Present () is his most recent title. Mishra is a columnist for Bloomberg View, a contributing writer at The New York Times, and.

Chapter 6 : Age of Anger : A history of the present

Age of Anger is a short book into which a lot of intellectual history has been packed. Apart from Rousseau and a few other major figures such as Nietzsche, Mishra writes, he has chosen to focus on.

Chapter 7 : Age of Anger Quotes by Pankaj Mishra

Mishra's new book, "Age of Anger," is a history of the present, a diagnosis that traces the violence of today to patterns set down in 18th century France and then repeated around the world.

Chapter 8 : Age of Anger - Wikipedia

Anger, Anxiety, Resentment, Stress, and Basic Humanity Your chances of consistently managing anger, anxiety, resentment, and stress, without becoming a better person, are practically zero. The.

Chapter 9 : Answers Around Our "Age Of Anger" | On Point

Feb 15, " 'Age Of Anger' Chronicles Rise Of Populist Backlash NPR's Kelly McEvers speaks with Pankaj Mishra, author of Age of Anger, about the relationship between populist movements and governments around.