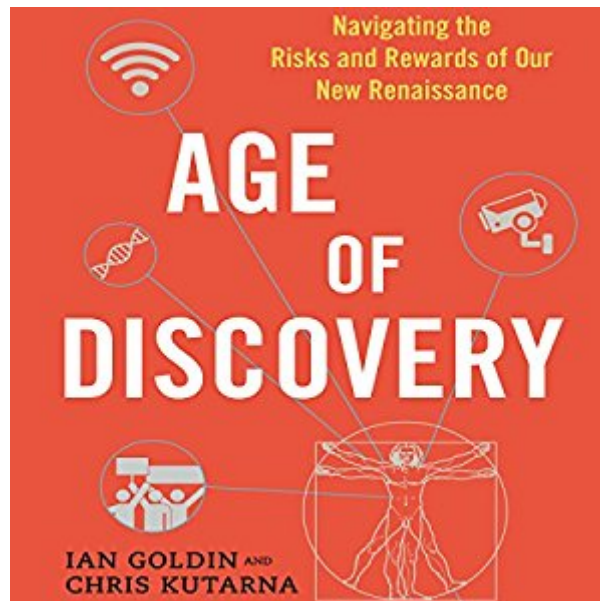


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Age Of Discovery: Navigating The Risks And Rewards Of Our New Renaissance



Synopsis

Age of Discovery explores a world on the brink of a new Renaissance and asks: how do we share more widely the benefits of unprecedented progress? How do we endure the inevitable tumult generated by accelerating change? How do we each thrive through this tangled, uncertain time? From gains in health, education, wealth and technology to crises of conflict, disease and mass migration, the similarities between today's world and that of the 15th century are both striking and prophetic: we have been here before. So what must we do to achieve our full potential, individually and altogether, this time around? Will we repeat the glories of the Renaissance, the misery, or both? In Age of Discovery, Ian Goldin and Chris Kutarna show how we can draw courage, wisdom and inspiration from the days of Michelangelo and Leonardo da Vinci in order to fashion our own Golden Age. Whether we're seized by Gutenberg or Zuckerberg, the discovery of the Americas or the rise of China, copperplate etchings or silicon chips, The Bonfire of the Vanities or the destructive fury of ISIS, the spread of syphilis or the Ebola pandemic, such Renaissance moments force humanity to give its best just when the stakes are at their highest. Turning the spotlight on the crises of our time, Age of Discovery shows how we can all define and create a lasting legacy that the world will still celebrate 500 years from now.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This is a very interesting book that covers a lot of ground. Its main theme is to draw a parallel between the Renaissance and the Present. In their view, both eras were and are associated with

immense progress, innovation, and creativity. Both eras face great challenges with advent of new diseases, wars, civil unrest, and cultural setbacks. Their mission is to provide a guide to navigate those troubled waters so that the positives of a new Renaissance Age outweigh the negatives. They derive much optimism out of our increasing interconnectedness. The flow of people, trade, capital, communication, and ideas move around the planet at an unprecedented speed. Despite related risks associated with potential disease pandemic, contagious financial systemic risks, they are hopeful the benefit from this increasing velocity far outweighs the negative in terms of innovation and all around progress. One of their main theories is the necessary three conditions for a thriving Renaissance-like era (either in the past or the present). The first one is a jump in the velocity, variety, and richness of the flow of ideas. The more that is the case, the more rapidly they can be implemented and move civilization forward. The second one is an increase in well-educated citizen to trigger and promote the mentioned jump in velocity of ideas. The third one is a strong private and social incentives to reward risk-taking. They explain that this third condition is why Europe passed right by China during the Renaissance. Europe within its social structure facilitated far more economic incentives to spur and reward innovation than did China. Patent laws were first developed in Venice in 1474. China is still struggling with the concept to this day.

I'm saying that Age of Discovery is worthwhile but not vital because the basic ideas are not new, but Goldin and Kutarna do present the ideas well. Using the Renaissance as a reference point works very well. Age of Discovery clearly presents complex ideas and issues, offering both breadth and depth. Unlike many similar books, this one is well thought out, not scattershot. The basic premise used to look at many issues is, "The kinds of forces that converged in Europe five hundred years ago to spark genius and upend social order are present again in our lifetime. Only now they are stronger, and global." There are four distinctly different parts to Age of Discovery. Part 1, The Facts of a Renaissance Age, looks at how both the printing press and the internet have allowed the rapid spread of ideas and how large gains in health, wealth, and education have been made. Part 2, Flourishing Genius, examines how "the positive legacy of the Renaissance was an eruption of genius" "exceptional achievement in European art, science and philosophy unrivaled for a millennium prior, which set Europe on course toward the Scientific Revolution and Enlightenment in the centuries that followed. We are in the midst of another such eruption, in scale and scope far surpassing theirs." This part takes a very interesting look at the enormous power of collective achievement that is possible now. Three conditions have made this possible: a much greater flow of ideas, many more educated people to use these ideas, and strong incentives to

reward risk-taking. Part 3, Flourishing Risk, looks at how these same factors increase the risk of a number of issues facing humanity.

In *Age of Discovery*, Goldin and Kutama compare the Renaissance with today, but with a disappointing twist -- a call to action for more sweeping top-down solutions from the managerial class, who will save us all from the Luthers and the Savonarolas pamphleteering on Twitter. The Renaissance spirit unlocked opportunities by working outside existing systems. With a universe of knowledge suddenly at disposal, humanism emerged, man as man placed at the center of the European imagination. This disrupted feudal hierarchies and oral religious traditions. Fast-forward to today. Like books, the internet has changed things completely. Top-down solutions look expensive, slow, unwieldy, and ineffective. A remunerative career in software development can be built for a few hundred dollars tops -- meetups, github, blogs, books, free online courses and tutorials -- while others pay over 100K learning assembly language from tenured dinosaurs. Dating? Replaced by hooking up. Iraq? Syria? American power defeated by bands of nobodies. The authors display no interest in such developments and what they mean for the future. Rather, they worry the free flow of information allows voters to organize for the purpose of rejecting mass migration, rejecting free trade, and rejecting other causes that benefit international capital. Elites today -- in education, journalism, entertainment, commerce, government bureaucracies -- increasingly serve no purpose, and they feel it. They have the same standardized education, the same international consciousness, the same materialist understanding of wellbeing, the same fungible interpretation of cultures, and the same sense of inoffensive office etiquette they mistake for virtue.

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