

20 Books That Have Mattered to Me

BY DANIEL H. PINK

INTRODUCTION

If human beings, at least in part, are the sum of our experiences, then what we think and believe, at least in part, is the sum of what we've read. So as a dual act of self-reflection and sharing, I've compiled a list of the books that have influenced me the most over my life. They aren't necessarily the "best" in any objective sense. They're simply books that mattered to me. Had I not read them, I would be a different person. Here they are in alphabetical order by author.

Maya Angelou
I Know
Why the
Caged Bird
Sings

Foreword by
Oprah Winfrey

I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings

MAYA ANGELOU

The late poet's autobiography is harrowing, studded with trauma that makes you wince. But it's also a story of hope – with a title metaphor that is powerful and enduring.

GET THIS BOOK

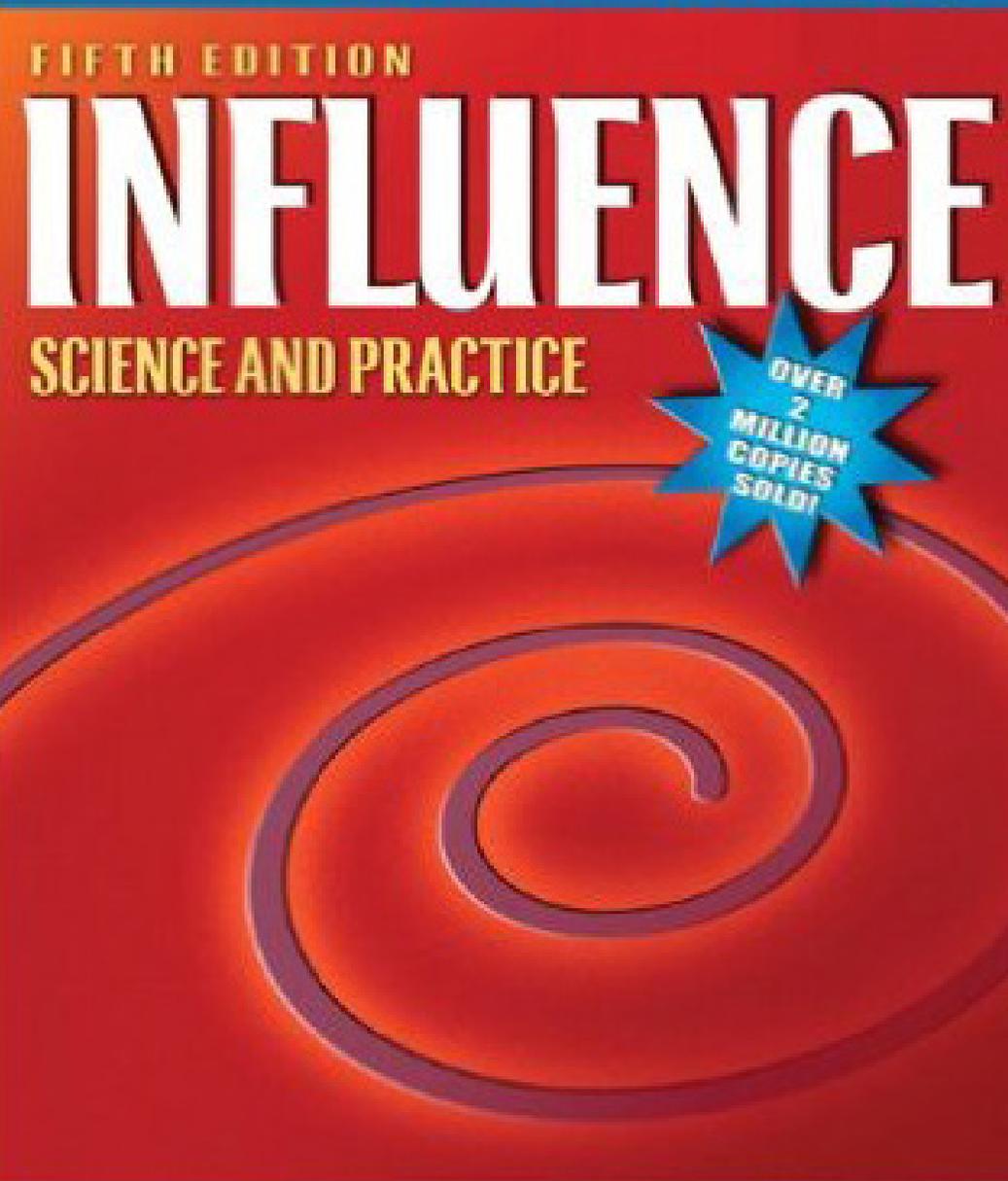
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INDIEBOUND

"If everything were on the line in a negotiation, I can't think of anyone I'd rather have advising me than Bob Cialdini."

—TOM PETERS, The Tom Peters Group



Influence: Science and Practice

ROBERT CIALDINI

If you're in the persuasion business – and all of us are – you need to read Cialdini.

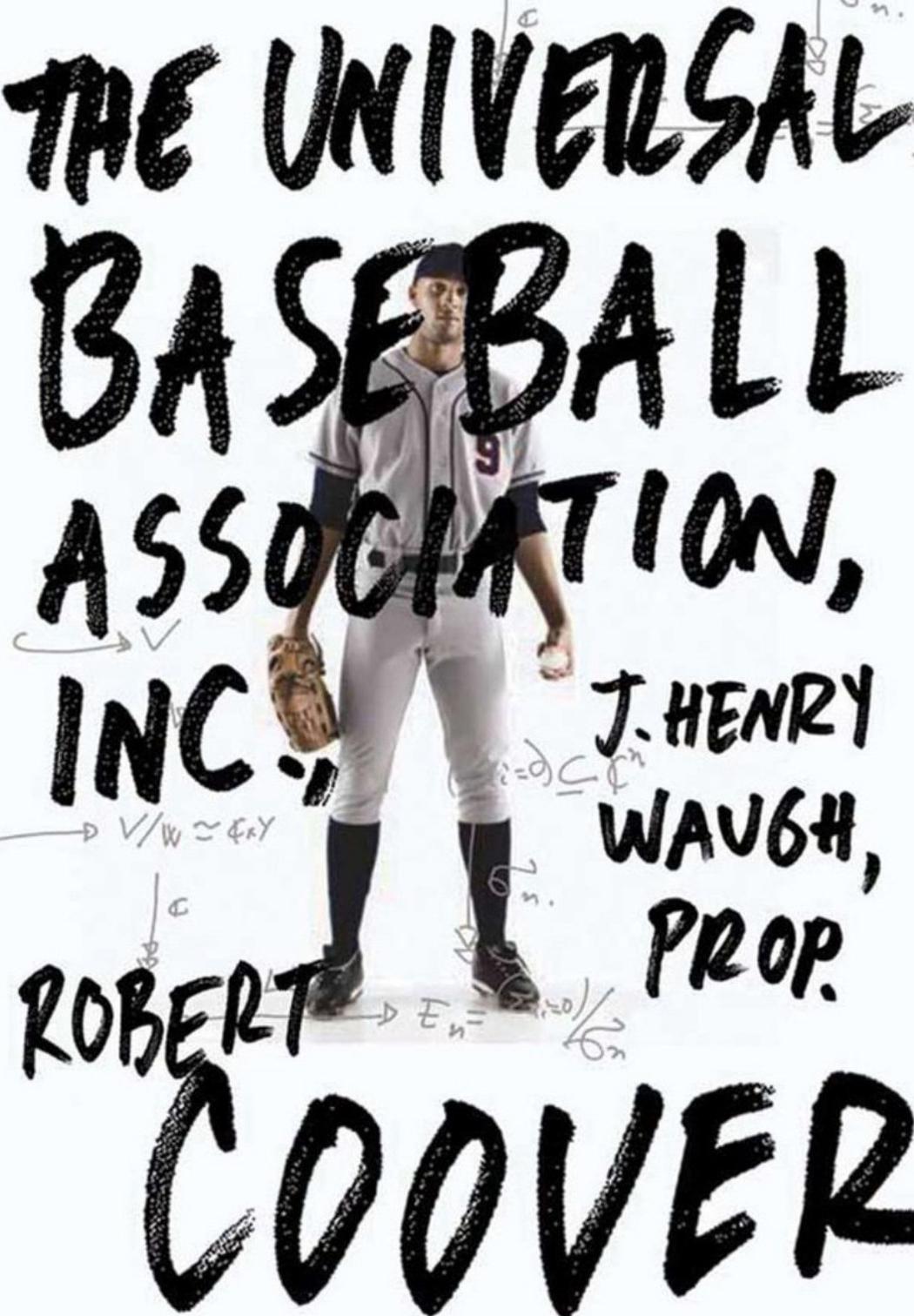
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ROBERT B. CIALDINI



The Universal Baseball Association, Inc., J. Henry Waugh, Prop.

ROBERT COOVER

This novel is about a man obsessed with an intricate dice baseball game he's invented. I devoured it as a young teenager obsessed with sports, statistics, and a real game called Strat-O-Matic. Only when I read it again as an adult did I realize the book was about something else altogether.

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national bestseller

flow

mihaly
csikszentmihalyi

the psychology of

optimal experience

“Important. . . .

Illuminates the

way to happiness.”

—*New York Times*

Book Review

P.S.
INSIGHTS,
INTERVIEWS
& MORE...

Flow

MIHALY CSIKSZENTMIHALYI

The legendary psychologist describes those moments when the challenge we face is so exquisitely matched to our capabilities that we lose our sense of time, even our sense of self.

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PENGUIN  CLASSICS

CHARLES DARWIN

The Origin of Species

The Origin of Species

CHARLES DARWIN

You know how in college you're supposed to read a book that changes your life? Well, for me, this was that book.

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*Reader beware of this false
A Northernmer,
Signed a Northernmer but
an ass in a lion's skin the
discover the character of the
animal*

NARRATIVE

LIFE

OF

FREDERICK DOUGLASS,

AN

AMERICAN SLAVE.

WRITTEN BY HIMSELF.

BOSTON:

PUBLISHED AT THE ANTI-SLAVERY OFFICE,
No. 25 CORNHILL
1845.

Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave

FREDERICK DOUGLASS

The way I'd learned history early in school was stiff and sterile. But this first-person account of being a slave was vastly different – so vivid (and occasionally horrifying), it made abstractions come alive.

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The works of Peter Drucker and Tom Peters

There's no single title from these two prolific authors that mattered most. It's their entire bodies of work, which are vast, insightful, and inspiring. Anybody who writes about business for a popular audience stands on their shoulders.

[GET THESE BOOKS](#)
[DRUCKER ON AMAZON](#)
[PETERS ON AMAZON](#)

“Everyone should own this book.”

—CHIP HEATH & DAN HEATH, authors of *Made to Stick* and *Switch*

mindset

THE NEW PSYCHOLOGY OF SUCCESS

HOW WE CAN
LEARN TO FULFILL
OUR POTENTIAL

1 MILLION
COPIES
IN PRINT

- *parenting
- *business
- *school
- *relationships

CAROL S. DWECK, Ph.D.

Mindset

CAROL DWECK

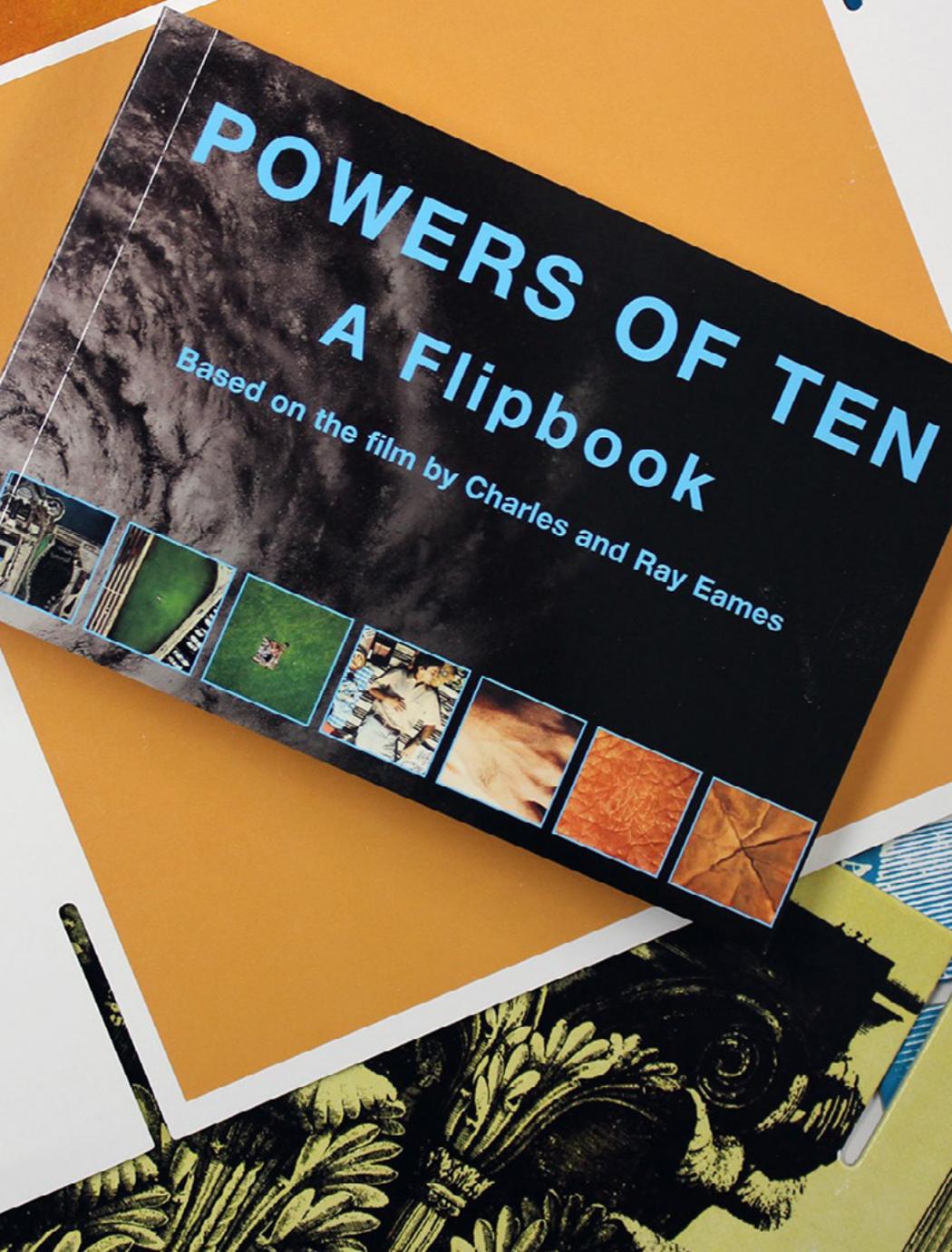
One of the most important books a parent can read. I wish Dweck’s research had been around when I was much younger.

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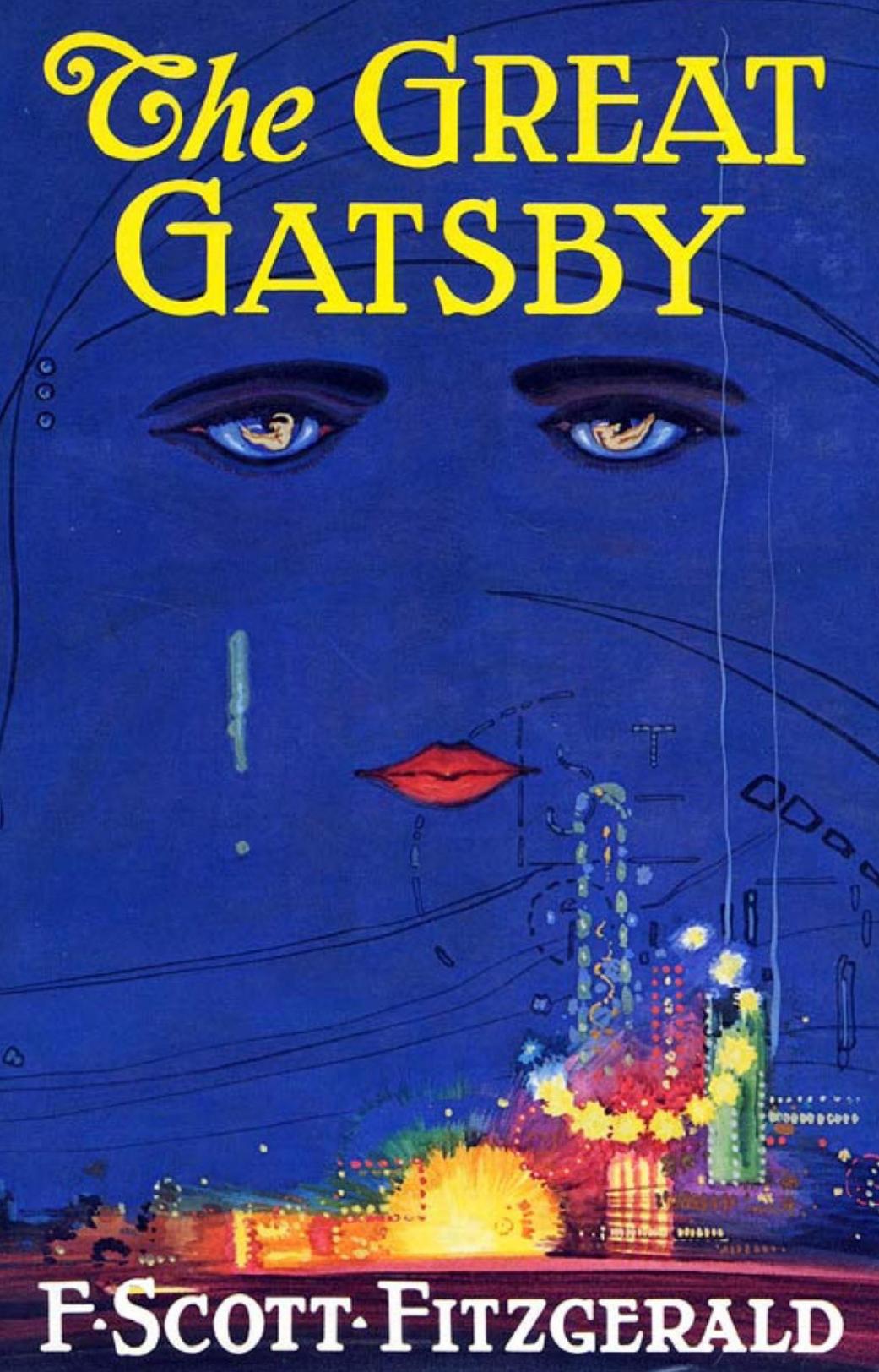
Powers of Ten: A Flipbook

CHARLES AND RAY EAMES

This is a picture book. The image on the first page shows Earth from the edge of the universe. Then each subsequent image zooms in 10 times closer. Eventually we see the contours of the continent... then the city of Chicago...then a man asleep at a picnic...and then, zooming further, his skin cells and the carbon atoms of his DNA.

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The Great Gatsby

F. SCOTT FITZGERALD

I know. A conventional choice. But I truly love this novel. I've read it 7 or 8 times.

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"The Catch-22 of the Iraq War." —Karl Marlantes

**BILLY
LYNN'S
LONG
HALFTIME
WALK**

a novel

Ben Fountain
AUTHOR OF BRIEF ENCOUNTERS WITH CHE GUEVARA

Billy Lynn's Long Halftime Walk

BEN FOUNTAIN

Written in 2012, and describing an Iraq War soldier's brief return to the U.S. for a Dallas Cowboys football game, this might be my generation's Great American Novel.

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MAN'S SEARCH FOR MEANING VIKTOR E. FRANKL

WITH A NEW FOREWORD BY
HAROLD S. KUSHNER

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IN PRINT
WORLDWIDE

Man's Search for Meaning

VIKTOR FRANKL

Trapped in a concentration camp, Frankl somehow survives and secretly creates a landmark work in psychology and personal development.

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“A landmark contribution to humanity’s understanding of itself.”
—*The New York Times Book Review*

THE RIGHTEOUS MIND

WHY GOOD
PEOPLE ARE DIVIDED
BY POLITICS AND
RELIGION



JONATHAN HAIDT

The Righteous Mind

JONATHAN HAIDT

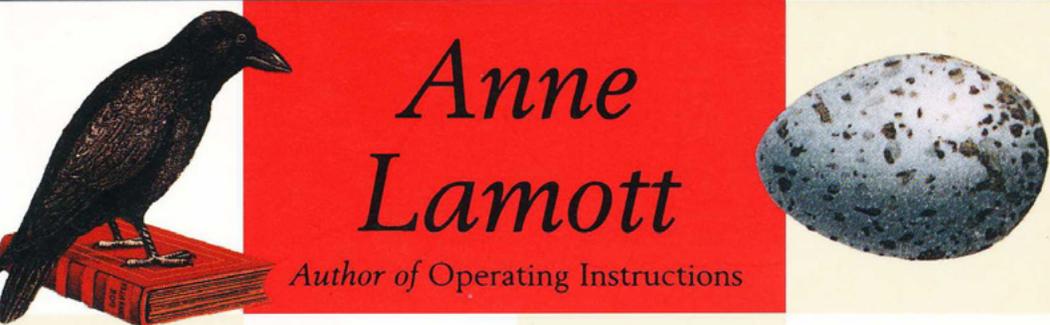
To make moral decisions, we don’t reason our way to conclusions. Instead, we jump to quick, emotional judgments and then use reason to justify our visceral beliefs. This book changed the way I think about politics.

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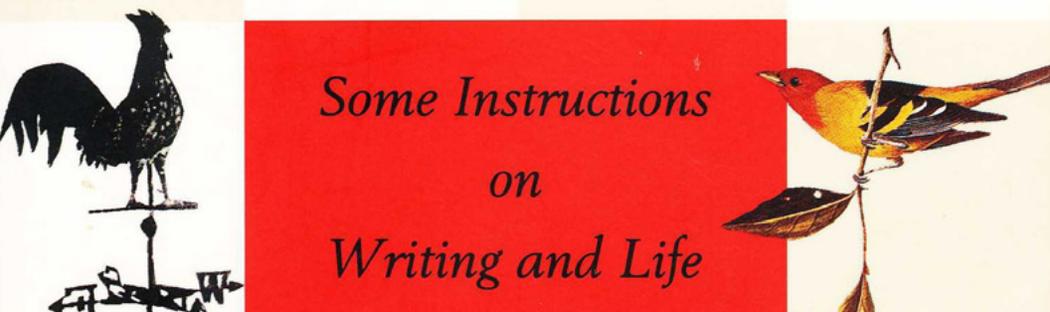
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b i r d

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*Some Instructions
on
Writing and Life*

Bird by Bird: Some Instructions on Writing and Life

ANNE LAMOTT

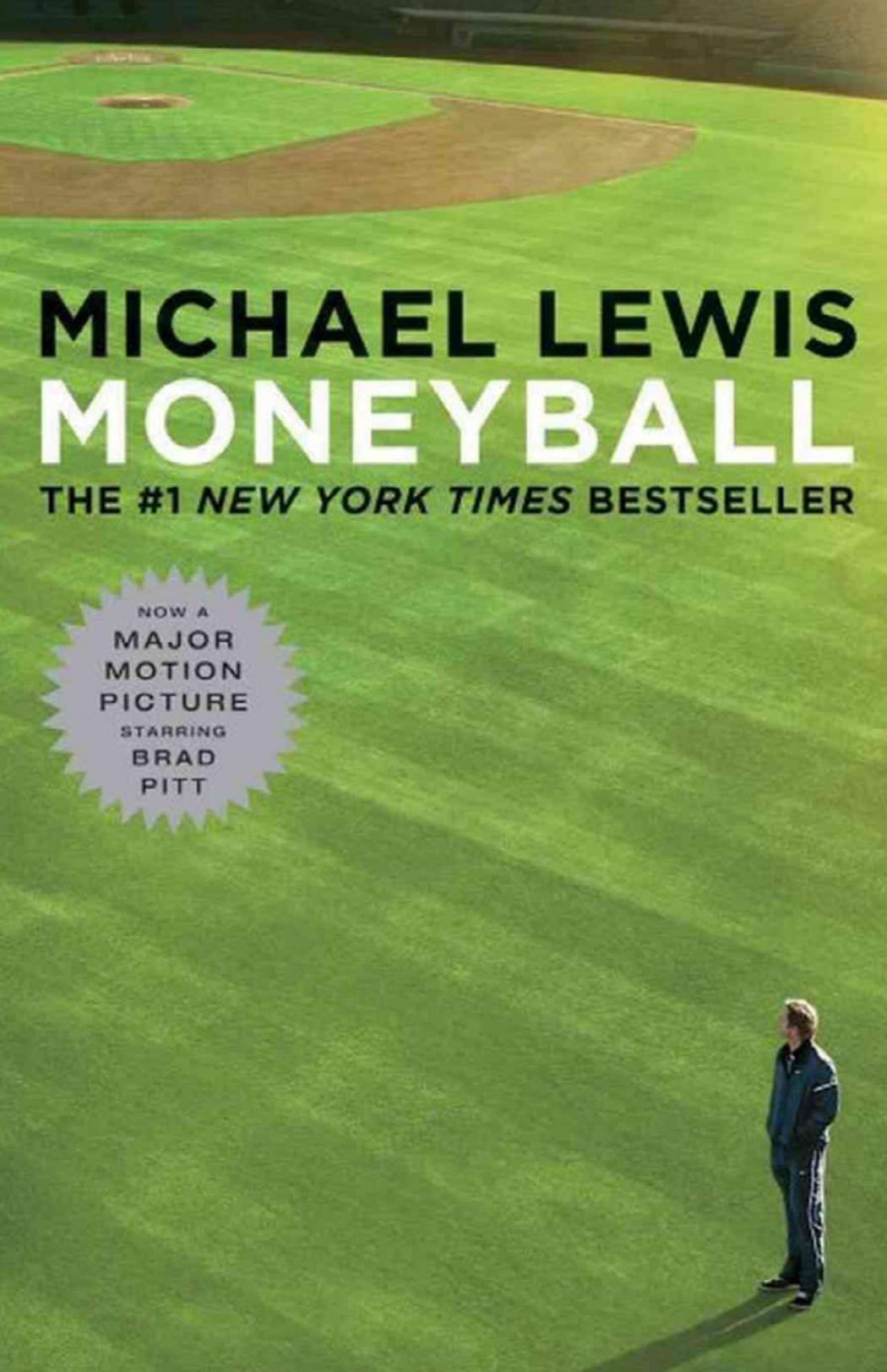
Whenever I'm stuck — which is pretty much all the time — I think of this book's core lesson. Then I take it bird by bird.

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The book cover for 'Moneyball' by Michael Lewis features a high-angle, wide shot of a baseball field. The green grass is vibrant, and the brown dirt of the infield is visible. In the bottom right corner, a man in a dark jacket and pants stands on the grass, looking towards the field. The title 'MONEYBALL' is written in large, bold, white letters, with 'MICHAEL LEWIS' above it in smaller, bold, black letters. Below the title, it says 'THE #1 NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER'. A starburst graphic on the left side contains the text 'NOW A MAJOR MOTION PICTURE STARRING BRAD PITT'.

MICHAEL LEWIS

MONEYBALL

THE #1 *NEW YORK TIMES* BESTSELLER

NOW A
MAJOR
MOTION
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STARRING
BRAD
PITT

Moneyball

MICHAEL LEWIS

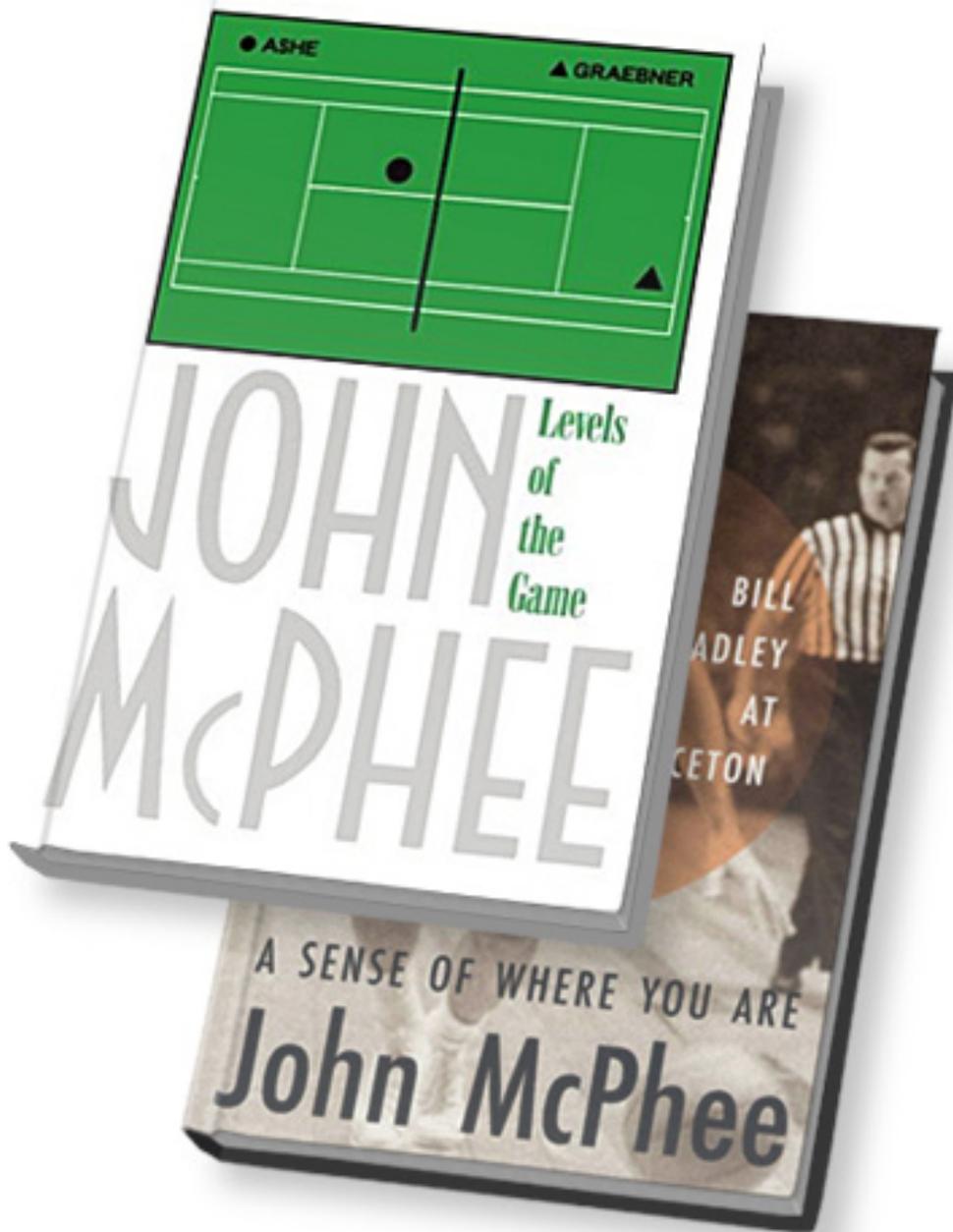
An excellent book about sports. An incredible book about the power of challenging conventional thinking.

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Levels of the Game

A Sense of Where You Are

JOHN MCPHEE

Two more books I read as a kid. They helped show me that writers could take on topics that were actually interesting – in this case, basketball and tennis! – and write about them in smart, compelling ways.

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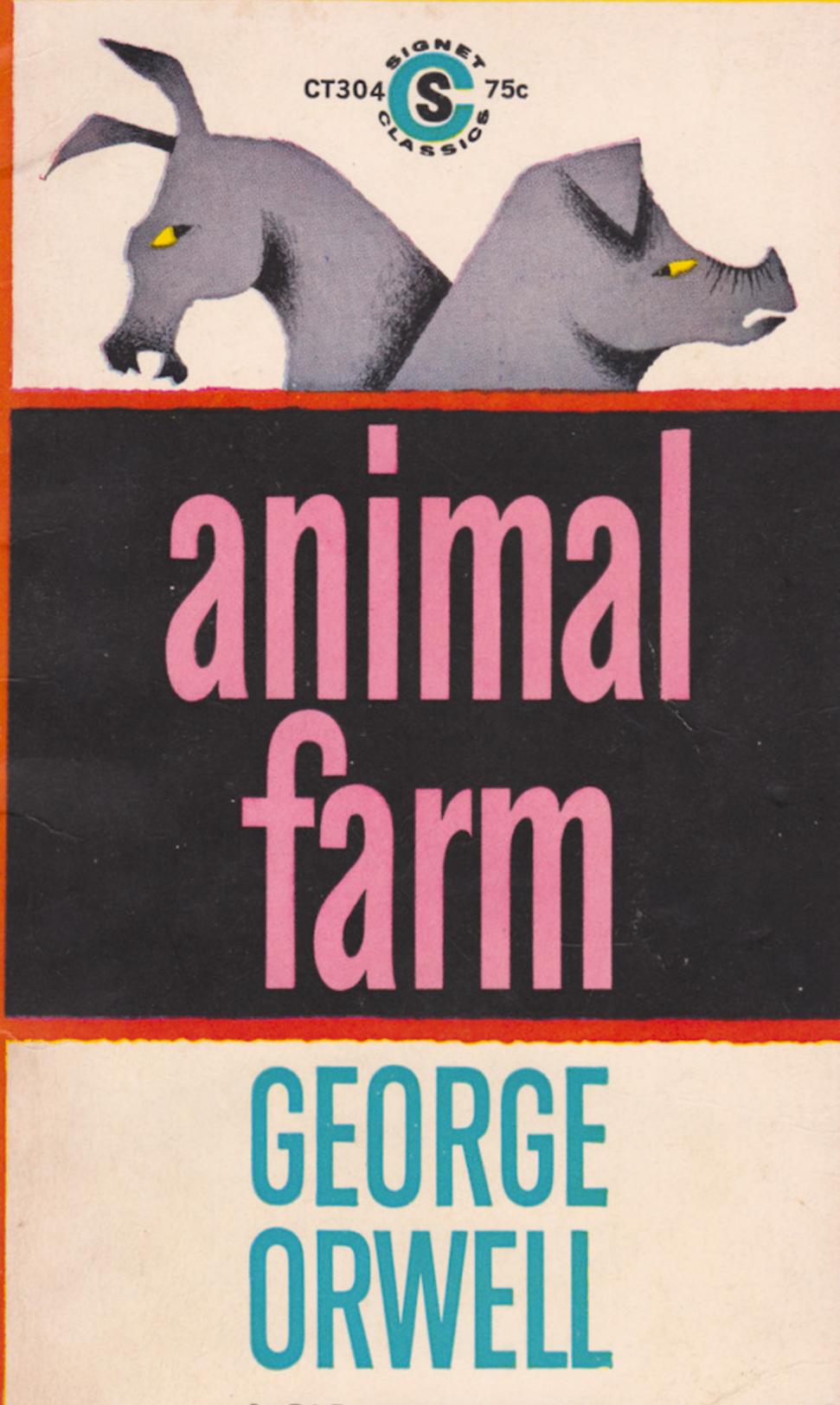
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Animal Farm

GEORGE ORWELL

You might think it's a fable about totalitarianism. But it's really a primer on organizational behavior.

GET THIS BOOK

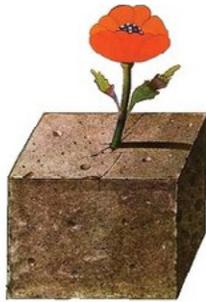
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INDIEBOUND

the WAR of ART

Break Through the Blocks
and Win Your
Inner Creative Battles



STEVEN PRESSFIELD

“A vital gem...a kick in the ass.” —*Esquire*

The War of Art

STEVEN PRESSFIELD

How do you overcome resistance in the quest for mastery? Pressfield has the answer.

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"[A] PATHBREAKING EXPLORATION OF 'THE EXTRAORDINARY DREAMS OF ORDINARY PEOPLE.'" —THE NEW YORK TIMES

STUDS TERKEL

WORKING

PEOPLE TALK ABOUT WHAT THEY DO ALL DAY AND
HOW THEY FEEL ABOUT WHAT THEY DO

Working

STUDS TERKEL

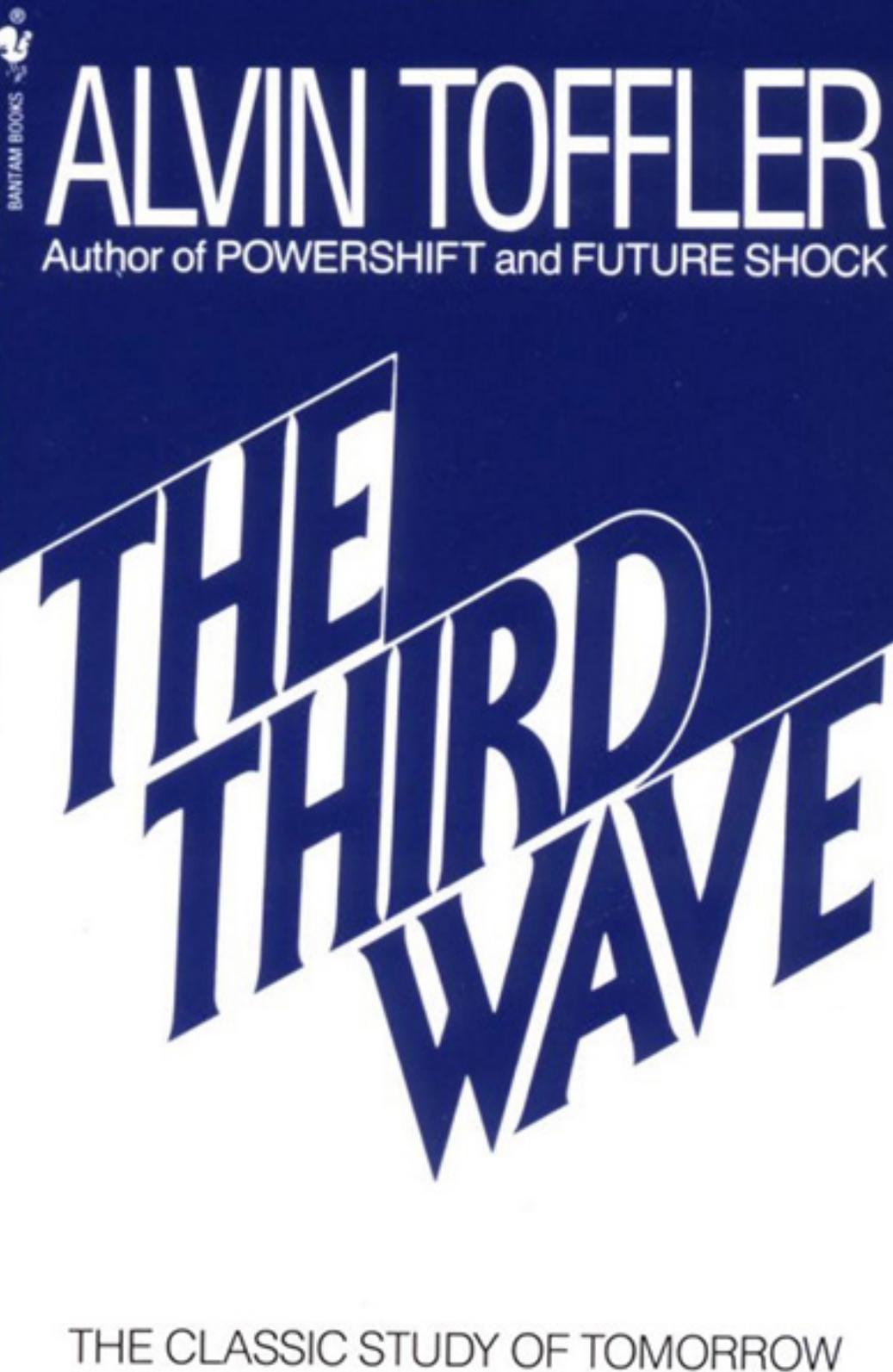
When I read this book as a kid, I found that hearing about people's work was exhilarating. I still do.

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The Third Wave

ALVIN TOFFLER

Toffler's ability to see trends before anyone else is stunning, his ability to synthesize vast amounts of material breathtaking.

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DANPINK.COM



Because this is a personal, idiosyncratic list, it reflects my own biases. You'll notice: among the authors, men outnumber women; most of the authors are American; and only a few are not white. That's something for me to ponder and you to consider in making your own reading choices.