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# Dirty Rotten Strategies: How We Trick Ourselves and Others into Solving the Wrong Problems Precisely (High Reliability and Crisis Management)

By Ian I. Mitroff, Abraham Silvers



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**Dirty Rotten Strategies: How We Trick Ourselves and Others into Solving the Wrong Problems Precisely (High Reliability and Crisis Management)** By Ian I. Mitroff, Abraham Silvers

People and organizations are perfectly capable of making the most outrageous missteps. But, how does a person, organization, or society know that it is committing an error? And, how can we tell that when others are steering us down wrong paths? *Dirty Rotten Strategies* delves into how organizations and interest groups lure us into solving the "wrong problems" with intricate, but inaccurate, solutions. Authors Ian I. Mitroff and Abraham Silvers argue that we can never be sure if we have set our sights on the wrong problem, but there are definite signals that can alert us to this possibility. While explaining how to detect and avoid dirty rotten strategies, the authors put the media, healthcare, national security, academia, and organized religion under the microscope. They offer a biting critique that examines the failure of these major institutions to accurately define our most pressing problems. For example, the U.S. healthcare industry strives to be the most *technologically advanced* in the world, but, our cutting-edge system does not ensure top-quality care to the largest number of people. Readers will find that far too many institutions have enormous incentives to let us devise elaborate solutions to the wrong problems. As Thomas Pynchon said, "If they can get you asking the wrong questions, then they don't have to worry about the answers." From a political perspective, this book shows why liberals and conservatives define problems differently, and demonstrates how each political view is incomplete without the other. Our concerns are no longer solely liberal or conservative. In fact, we can no longer trust a single group to define issues across the institutions explored in this book and beyond. *Dirty Rotten Strategies* is a bipartisan call for anyone who is ready to think outside the box to address our major concerns as a society?starting today.



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## **Editorial Review**

From Publishers Weekly

Starred Review. A pleasant surprise for anyone frustrated with the way complex problems are misconstrued and dumbed-down in daily life, this challenge from business scholars Mitroff and Silvers goes out to media, higher education, health care, and American institutions ranging from government to celebrity, to demonstrate the relevance of concepts in statistical analysis known as "type three" and "type four" errors. Though they're given to philosophical ranting, the authors never struggle with their complex ideas, keeping the text readable for anyone with problems to solve, resolve, absolve or dissolve (i.e., everyone). Those familiar with statistics will find their frustrations with the false type-one/type-two error dichotomy well articulated and addressed, but the theories will connect with anyone who enjoys thinking outside the box. The pair also advocates a new way of considering problems, not just a way of prioritizing them, demonstrating the necessity of new modes of critical thinking when approaching the orthodoxy of American institutions.

Review

"Ian Mitroff and Abraham Silvers nail one of the most pressing challenges of our time. In a deeper way, they show how we can get so distracted by our assessment of a problem that no matter how well-executed the solution it can be a complete waste of time, often making the problem much worse! The "War on Drugs" comes to mind as an example[]This book is a wake-up call for problem solvers." (John Renesch *futurist and author of Getting to the Better Future: A Matter of Conscious Choosing*)

"Ian Mitroff and Abraham Silvers have written one of the definitive books on the tragedy of well-considered, well-meaning and well-researched error. The great merit of their non-technical, powerful book is the clarity with which they demonstrate that many of the most disastrous decisions are made by brilliantly solving wrongly defined problems. Using a prodigious range of examples from politics, health care, organizational disasters, and national security, they show how cognitive and emotional factors conspire to produce what they term the 'Type Four Error,' in which we mislead not only ourselves but others to act and think in ways directly opposed to generally agreed objectives and values. The book's main contribution is to train us to question the ways we define problems, and to help us avoid some of the errors that we all too easily lapse into. It will be of great value to all those who are perplexed by human ability to repeat mistakes in any field of action and thought." Yiannis Gabriel, The School of Management, Royal Holloway University of London, author of *Organizing Words: A Critical Thesaurus for Social and Organization Studies*

"*Dirty Rotten Strategies* is insightful, provocative, and important." (-Karen Armstrong *Best-selling author of The Spiral Staircase*)

"Ian Mitroff has done it again; He and Abraham Silvers have opened our eyes. Here's a lucid and thoughtful account of why we fail to be adequately lucid and thoughtful and what we can do about it. Bravo!" (Robert B. Reich, Professor of Public Policy, University of California at Berkeley and former U.S. Secretary of Labor)

"Mitroff and Silvers suggest that our current challenges are 'wicked problems' that can only be managed by mixing conventional and highly unconventional ways of looking at the world. Incisive and original, *Dirty Rotten Strategies* demonstrates just how valuable systematic thinking can be in helping America to clean up

all of its 'messes.'" (Morley Winograd *Executive Director of the Institute for Communication Technology Management, USC Marshall School of Business and co-author of Millennial Makeover*)

"A bracingly powerful book, which should be required reading for all professionals and experts of every stripe. It will liberate all readers from the tyranny of conventional reasoning. The authors give new meaning to Veblen's classic phrase, "trained incompetence." (-Warren Bennis *University Professor, University of Southern California and co-author of Transparency and Judgment*)

#### About the Author

Ian I. Mitroff is an Emeritus Professor from the University of Southern California, where he taught for 26 years. He is currently the President of Comprehensive Crisis Management, a consulting firm which offers an integrated approach to Crisis Management. Mitroff is also the author of several well-received books, including *Crisis Leadership* (2003) and *Why Some Companies Emerge Stronger and Better From a Crisis* (2005). Abraham Silvers was Associate Professor of Statistics at Baylor College of Medicine and Adjunct Professor of Statistics at the University of California at San Francisco Medical School. Having written over 100 papers and book chapters, Silvers was elected a Fellow of the American Statistical Association (ASA) in 1988 for his contributions to clinical trial methodology. In 1993 he received the distinguished medal in environmental statistics from the ASA. He currently provides environmental statistical consulting and support in the design, database management and analysis of health studies and clinical trials.

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Information is provisions for people to get better life, information today can get by anyone in everywhere. The information can be a expertise or any news even restricted. What people must be consider while those information which is inside the former life are difficult to be find than now could be taking seriously which one is acceptable to believe or which one the particular resource are convinced. If you receive the unstable resource then you buy it as your main information there will be huge disadvantage for you. All those possibilities will not happen with you if you take *Dirty Rotten Strategies: How We Trick Ourselves and Others into Solving the Wrong Problems Precisely (High Reliability and Crisis Management)* as your daily resource information.

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