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LASTING CONTRIBUTION:

How to Think, Plan, and Act to Accomplish Meaningful Work

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A self-help guide that assembles scholarly and scientific material to illustrate why things happen, why people act and how those people can plan actions that make a difference.

Unlike the average motivational guru who seems to have read a single book—the one he or she has just written—Waddington has read them all, so readers will learn what ancient thinkers, religious leaders, modern scientists and rival motivational guides teach about human behavior. Waddington wants to understand why people do what they do before they do it, so he reaches back to Aristotle, who wrote that every action has four causes: the material (for example, the physical parts of a car), the efficient (the work that produces the car), the formal (the blueprint) and the final (transportation). The author is successful in converting this 2,300-year-old theory into practical advice. Your resources make up the material cause of your contribution; you have more than you think, and much of it is inside you.

Efficient cause means taking action, and this is invariably more complicated than you may think. It involves both efficiency (doing the job with minimum effort) and its opposite, redundancy (using multiple resources when failure of one would doom the project). The formal cause is a plan. It should include all four causes as well as an assessment of what could go wrong and how to correct it, and it concludes with what feedback you need to confirm you're getting results. All this leads to the final cause: a goal. Its details must be absolutely clear in one's mind because people who don't know what they want get what they don't want. This thin volume contains wisdom, scientific facts and insights from great figures, all in the service of planning a meaningful future.

A thought-provoking work that bears rereading.

