

Haiti and Human Nature

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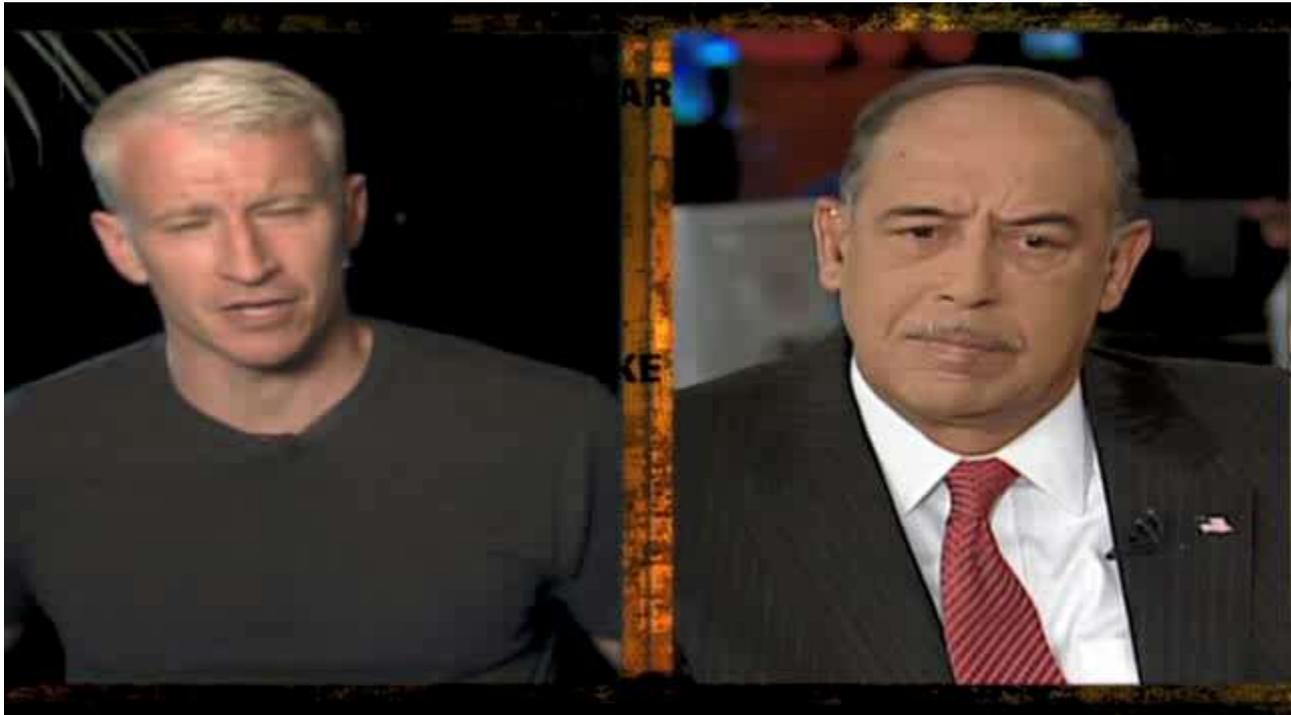
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7 February 2010

Compare and Contrast

- [Newsclip #1: 72 hours post-quake](#)
- [Newsclip #2: 72 hours post-quake](#)





The most important date in Haitian history?

- 1791 pact with the devil?
- 1804 declaration of independence?
- 1806 US trade embargo?
- 1825 French demand for reparations?
- 1915 US occupation?
- 1947 last payment to France?
- 1957 Duvalier re-indebts Haiti?
- 2004 Aristide demands French reparation?
- 2010 IMF cancels Haitian “debt”?





Why do pundits
immediately
turn to Hobbes in disasters?



You can't have it both ways

- You can't invoke Hobbes, and then complain about “lawlessness”
- “when the Sovereign Power ceaseth, Crime also ceaseth”
 - *Leviathan*, Ch27
- There is no “looting” in the state of nature!

Or is there?

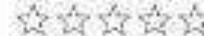


AP Associated Press AP - Tue Aug 30, 11:31 AM ET

A young man walks through chest deep flood water after looting a grocery store in New Orleans on Tuesday, Aug. 30, 2005. Flood waters continue to rise in New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina did extensive damage when it

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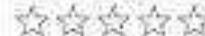


3:47 AM ET

Two residents wade through chest-deep water after finding bread and soda from a local grocery store after Hurricane Katrina came through the area in New Orleans, Louisiana. (AFP/Getty Images/Chris Graythen)

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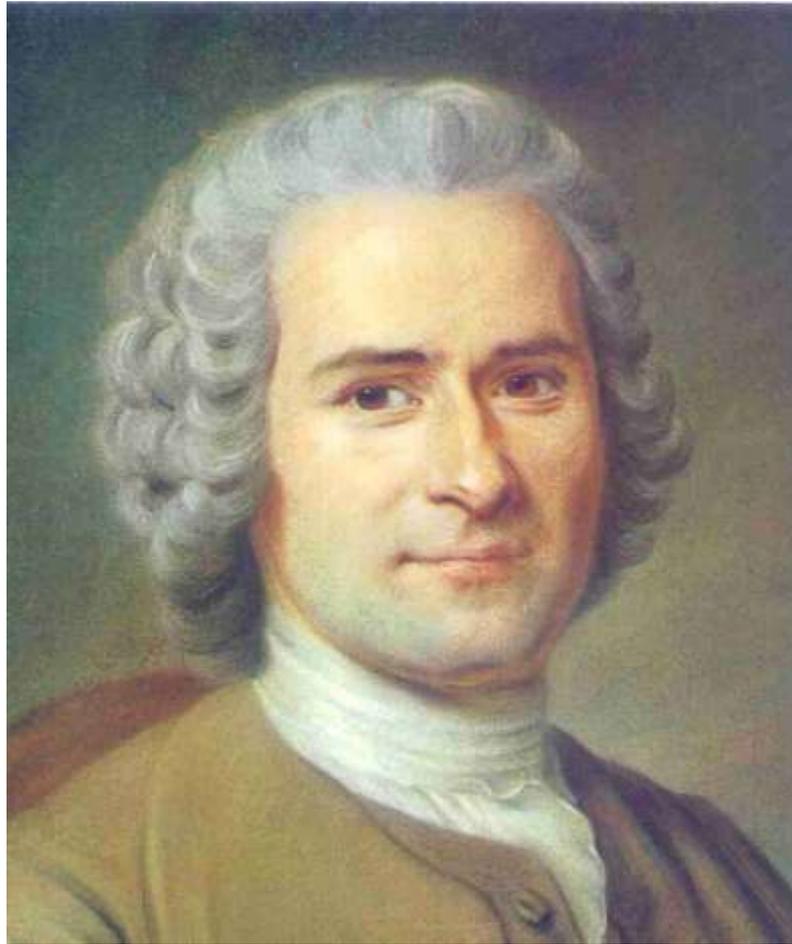


RELATED

• Katrina's Effects, at a Glance AP - Tue Aug 30, 1:26 PM ET

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Why not turn to Rousseau?



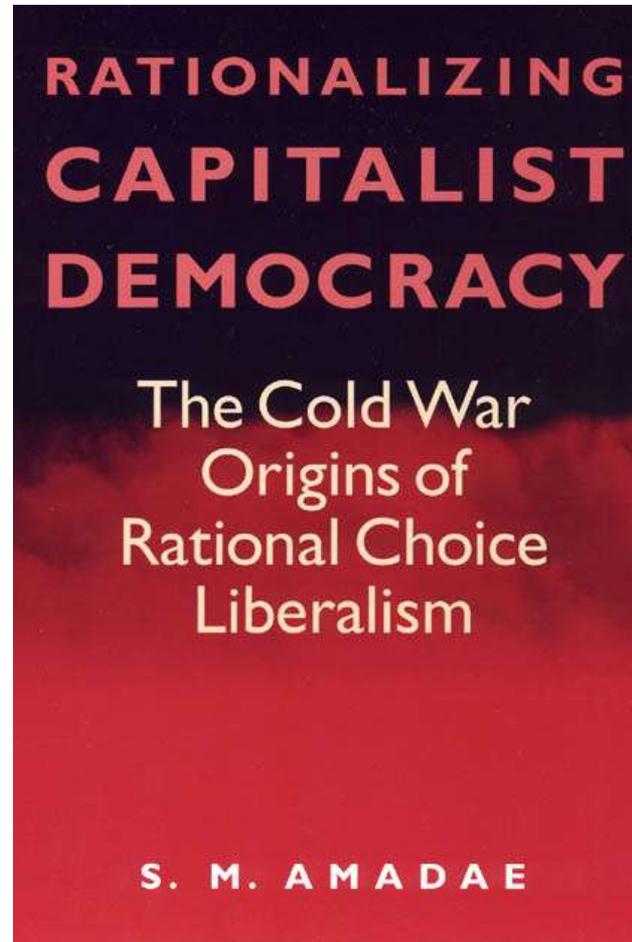
Or to Hume?



Or to Smith?



Because “Adam Smith” has been captured and put to work by neoliberals



From classical liberalism to neoliberalism

- Classical liberalism
 - Human nature:
 - Natural sympathy and self-interested exchange
- Neoliberalism
 - Human nature:
 - Rational egoist self-entrepreneur in market society

Homo economicus



Emptying out the subject

- Satz and Ferejohn, “Rational Choice and Social Theory,” *J Phil* 91.2 (1994)
- RCT only predictive in constrained / coercive social environments
- No need to posit psychological agents

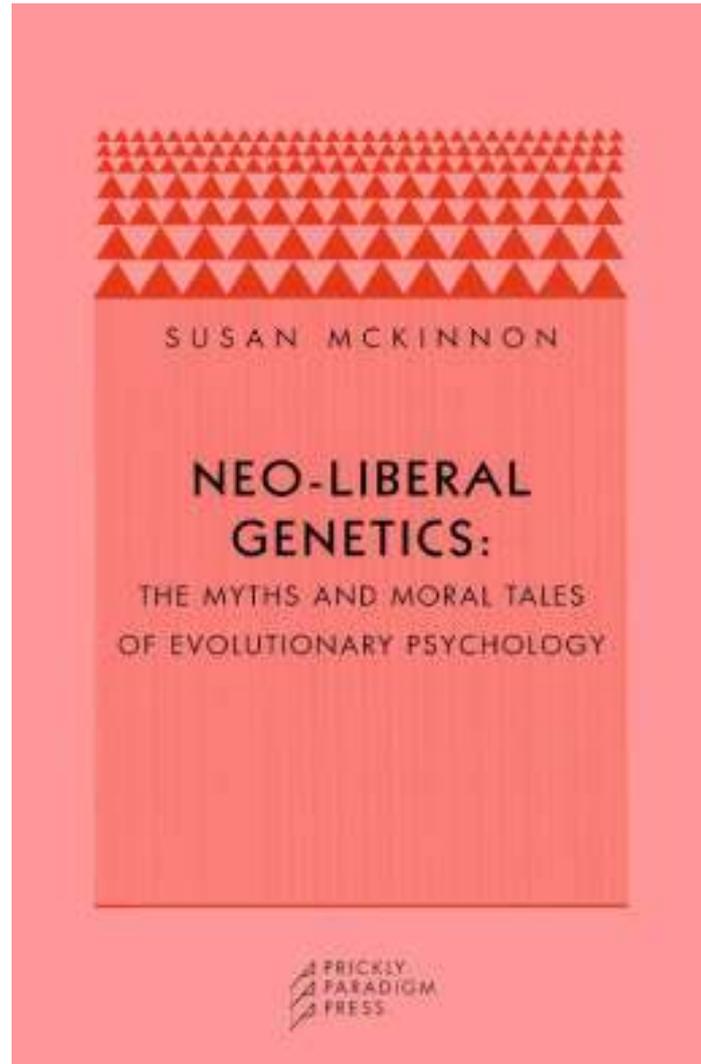
Not really a good empirical psychological theory



But a theory of coercive social conditions



Naturalizing neoliberalism



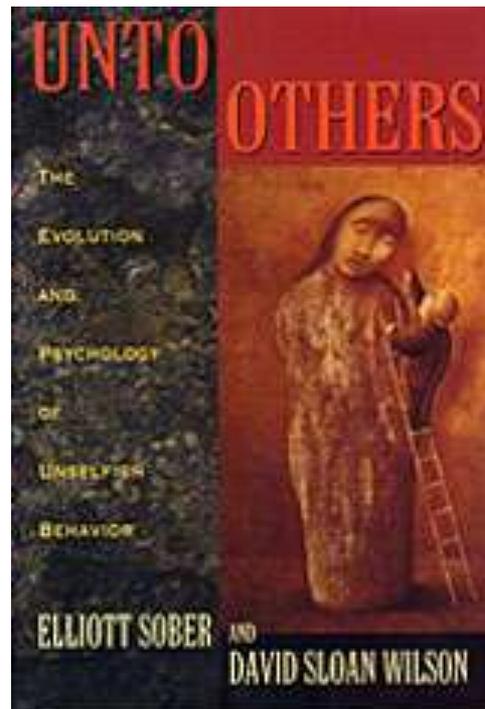
Ghiselin, *The Economy of Nature and the Evolution of Sex* [1974]

- “The economy of nature is competitive from beginning to end.... Given a full chance to act in his own interest, nothing but expediency will restrain him from brutalizing, from maiming, from murdering—his brother, his mate, his parent, his child. Scratch an ‘altruist,’ and watch a ‘hypocrite’ bleed.”
- Human nature = psychopaths in genetic market

Homo naturalis



Breaking the taboo on altruism



- Kin selection and direct reciprocity
- Repeated PD games: reputation
- Enlightened self-interest
- Indirect reciprocity

Group selection

- Genes: population structure is key
- Cultural evolution: memes vs behavioral traits
- Gene-culture co-evolution
- Subjectification practices
 - DST (Developmental Systems Theory)
 - Extra-somatic inheritance

Transition from neoliberalism?

Elinor Ostrom



2 contributions of Ostrom

- Neo-institutional rational choice
 - *Governing the Commons*
- Behavioral political economy
 - "Policies that Crowd out Reciprocity and Collective Action." In Gintis et al., *Moral Sentiments and Material Interests* (MIT, 2005).
 - Mixed adult population
 - Rational egoists / external motivation
 - Strong reciprocators / internal motivation



Moral Sentiments and Material Interests

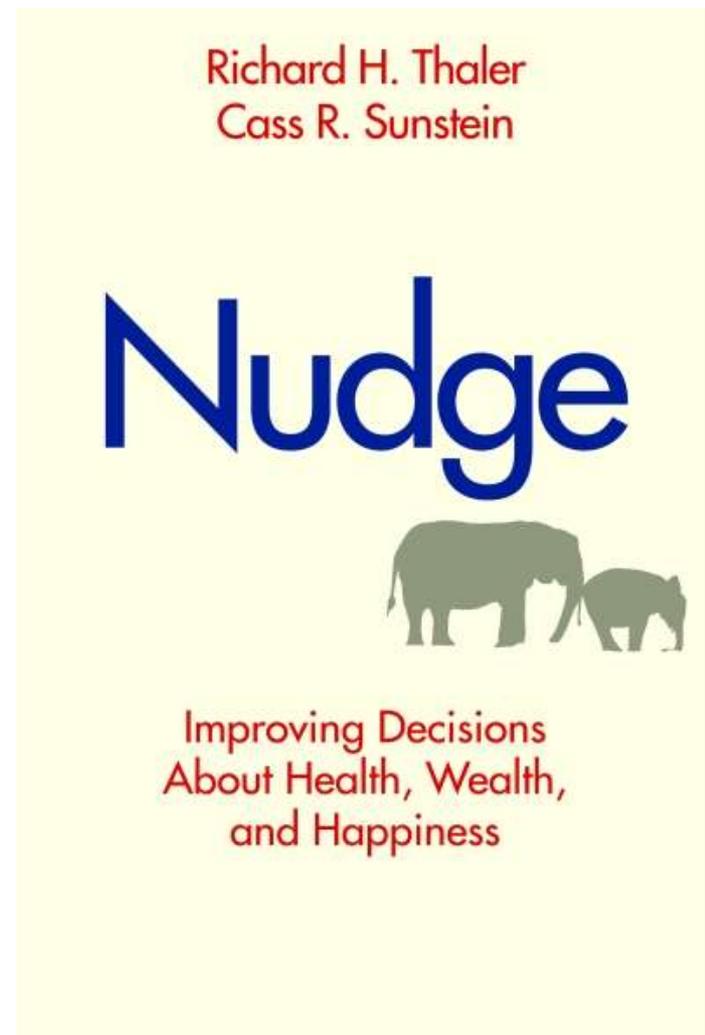
The Foundations of Cooperation in Economic Life

edited by
Herbert Gintis
Samuel Bowles
Robert Boyd
and Ernst Fehr

Producing what you assume

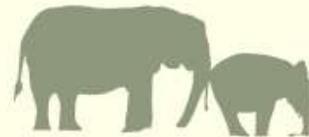
- Neoliberal practices foreclose cooperation
- Producing rational egoist “human nature”
- Projected onto nature via Ev Psych
- Atomized population / transcendent control
 - Neoconservative wolf in neoliberal sheep’s clothing

Quintessence of neoliberalism



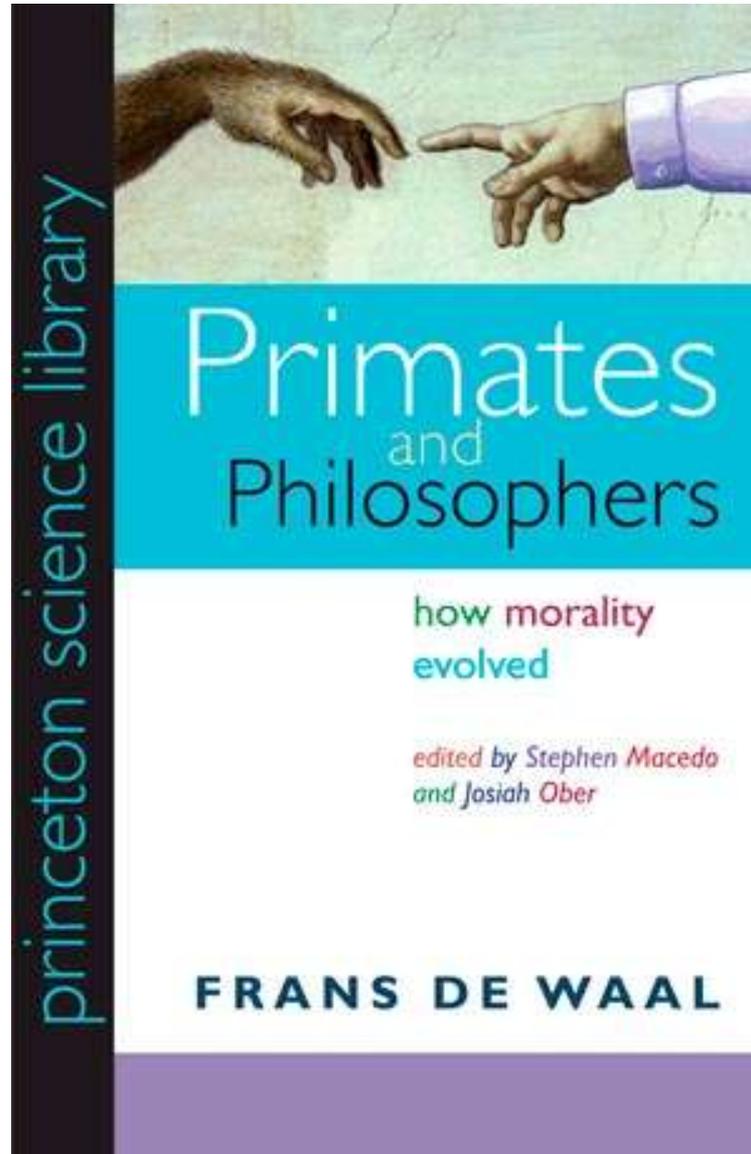
Richard H. Thaler
Cass R. Sunstein

Nudge

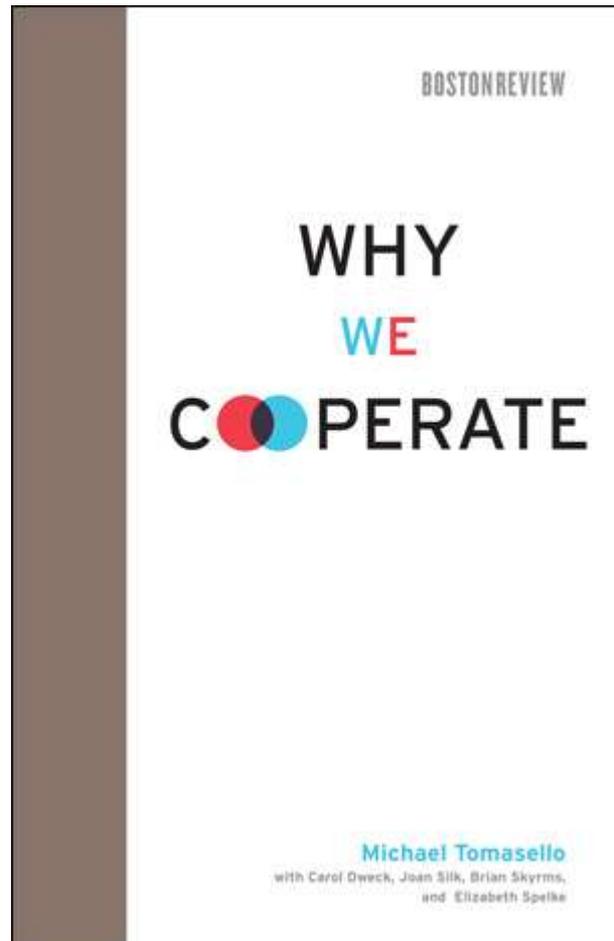


Improving Decisions
About Health, Wealth,
and Happiness

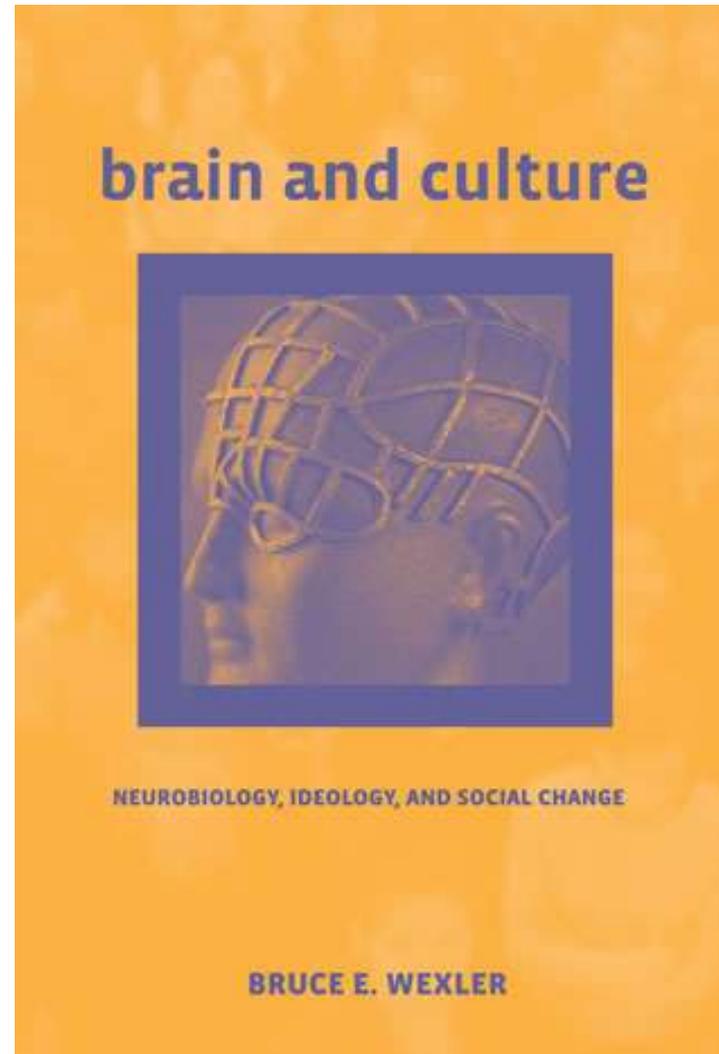
Evolution of prosociality



Rousseauian infants, Smithean children -- and rational egoist chimps



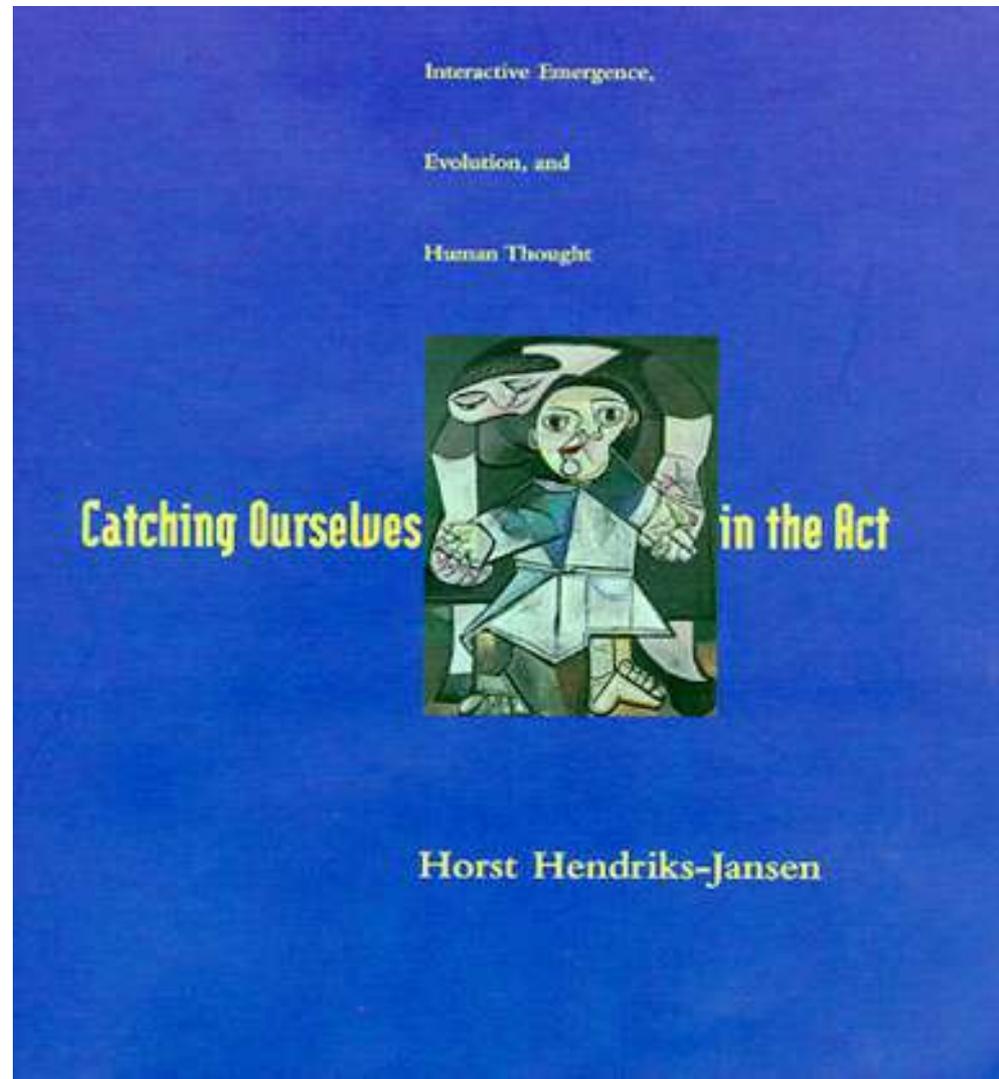
Socially-mediated neuroplasticity



Primary and secondary intersubjectivity

- Secondary intersubjectivity
 - Tomasello: shared intentionality from collaborative activities
- Primary intersubjectivity
 - Trevarthen: rhythmic turn-taking in infant / caregiver interaction: “natural musicality”

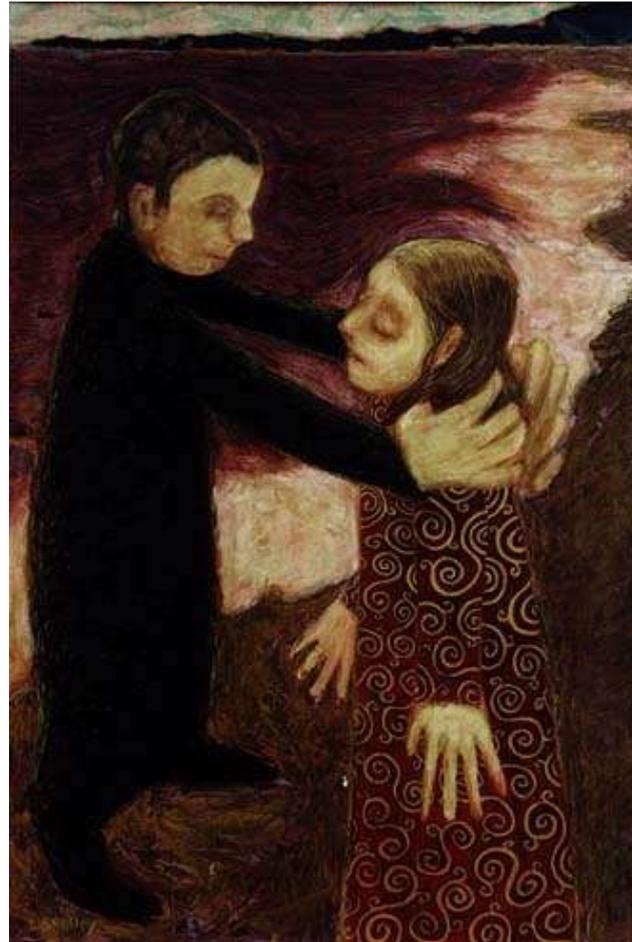
Scaffolding infants into an intentional world



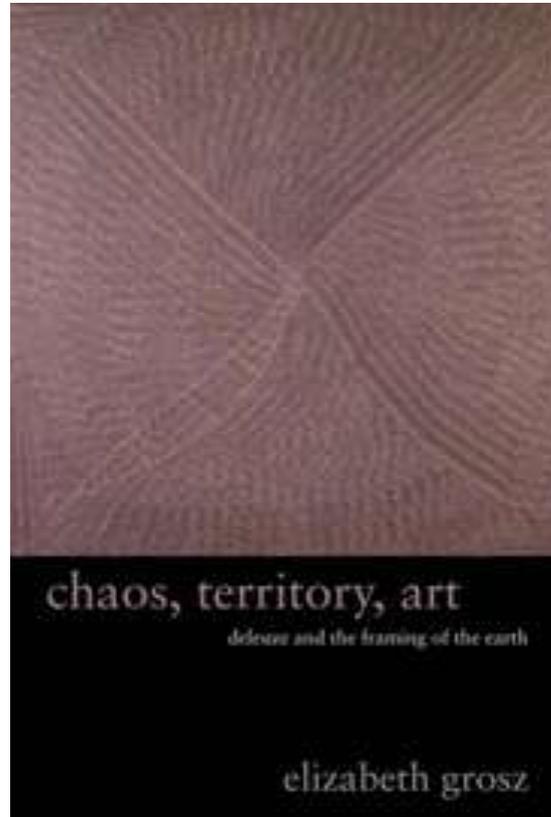
Intersubjectivity already?
Or scaffolding?



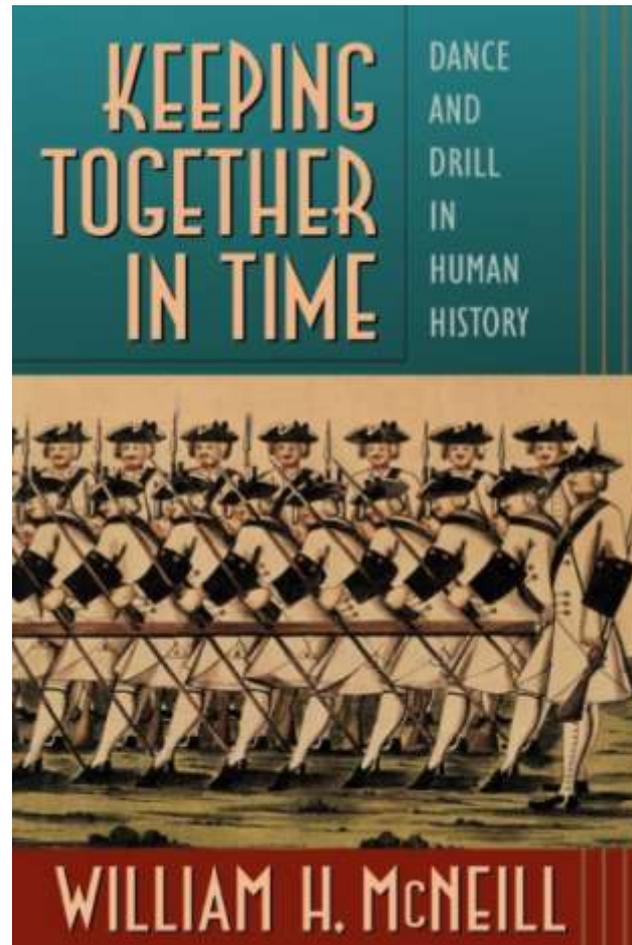
Mirror neurons and empathy: a neuroscience of prosocial human nature?



Excess: beyond “fitness”



Entrainment





Coffee-and-Pie.com

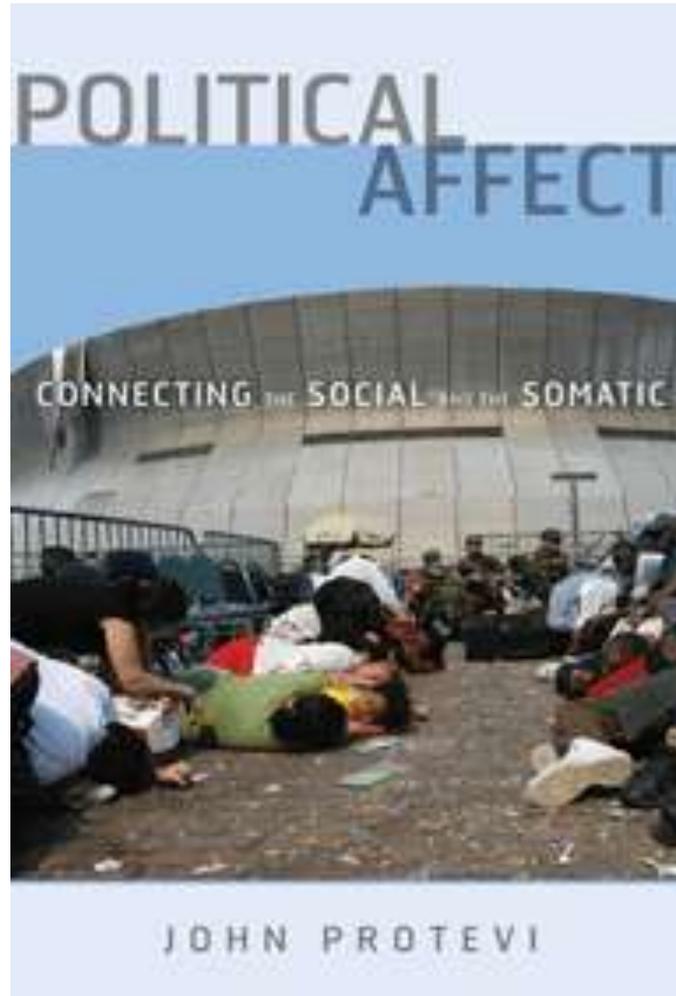


Marchers head up North Rampart street at Armstrong Park on Saturday. 'Justice After Katrina' was sponsored by activist groups banded together as the People's Hurricane Relief Fund & Oversight Coalition.

STAFF PHOTO BY JOHN McCUSKER

N.O. marchers demand action

OK, so what is human nature?



Bio-neuro-political

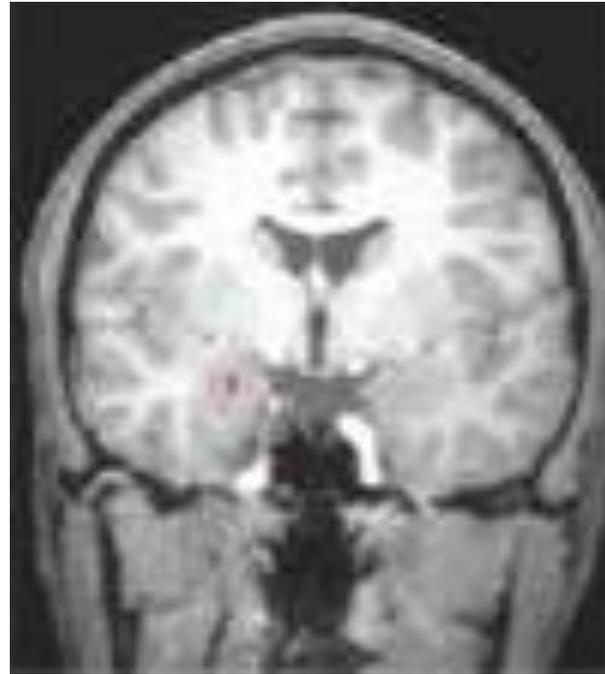
- Bio-
 - Modular inherited basic emotions (patterns)
- Neuro-
 - Culturally shaped triggers and thresholds
- Political
 - Subjectification practices
 - Patterns / triggers /thresholds of social emotions
 - Prosocial affective cognition as default
 - Rousseau (helpers), then Smith (strong reciprocators)
 - Hobbes (rational egoists) in certain conditions

Human nature in disasters



Bio-neuro-politics of racial perception

- Correll et al (2006), “Event-related potentials and the decision to shoot: The role of threat perception and cognitive control,” *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*.
- Increased amygdala activation in racialized perception = no perception of “the” other



Region of the right amygdala (centered on 24, -5, -15, with a 5mm diameter) that was more active during the presentation of dark-skinned and light-skinned Black faces and dark-skinned White faces relative to light-skinned White faces. *Soc Cogn Affect Neurosci*. 2007 March; 2(1): 39–44.



Self-fulfilling prophecy

- Haitian self-help: “their own first responders”
 - Was ignored as a resource to be catalyzed
- Delays through “security” fears
 - *Might* produce *some* instances of “Hobbesian” violence that retroactively “justifies” fears
 - Or at least produce passive victims needing help
- Neocon wolf in neolib sheep’s clothing

International second responders: search and rescue

Distance between Haiti to Iceland: **6426.4** km = **3993.2** miles

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US second responders: search and rescue



Third response militarized / securitized relief



Robert Gates

- "It seems to me that's a formula for contributing to chaos rather than preventing it.... Without having any structure on the ground, in terms of distribution, ... an air drop is simply going to lead to riots as people go after that stuff."

– Friday 15 January 2010

- NGO claims of relief planes re-routed to prioritize military / security planes.
- US airdrops don't begin until Mon 18 Jan, 6 days after quake.



LEAVE NO MAN BEHIND

A JEFF BRUCKHEIM FILM A ROLAND ELLIOTT PRODUCTION

BLACK HAWK DOWN

SEAN PATERSON COSTUME DESIGNER
DAVID HARRIS EXECUTIVE PRODUCER
DAVID HARRIS PRODUCED BY DAVID HARRIS
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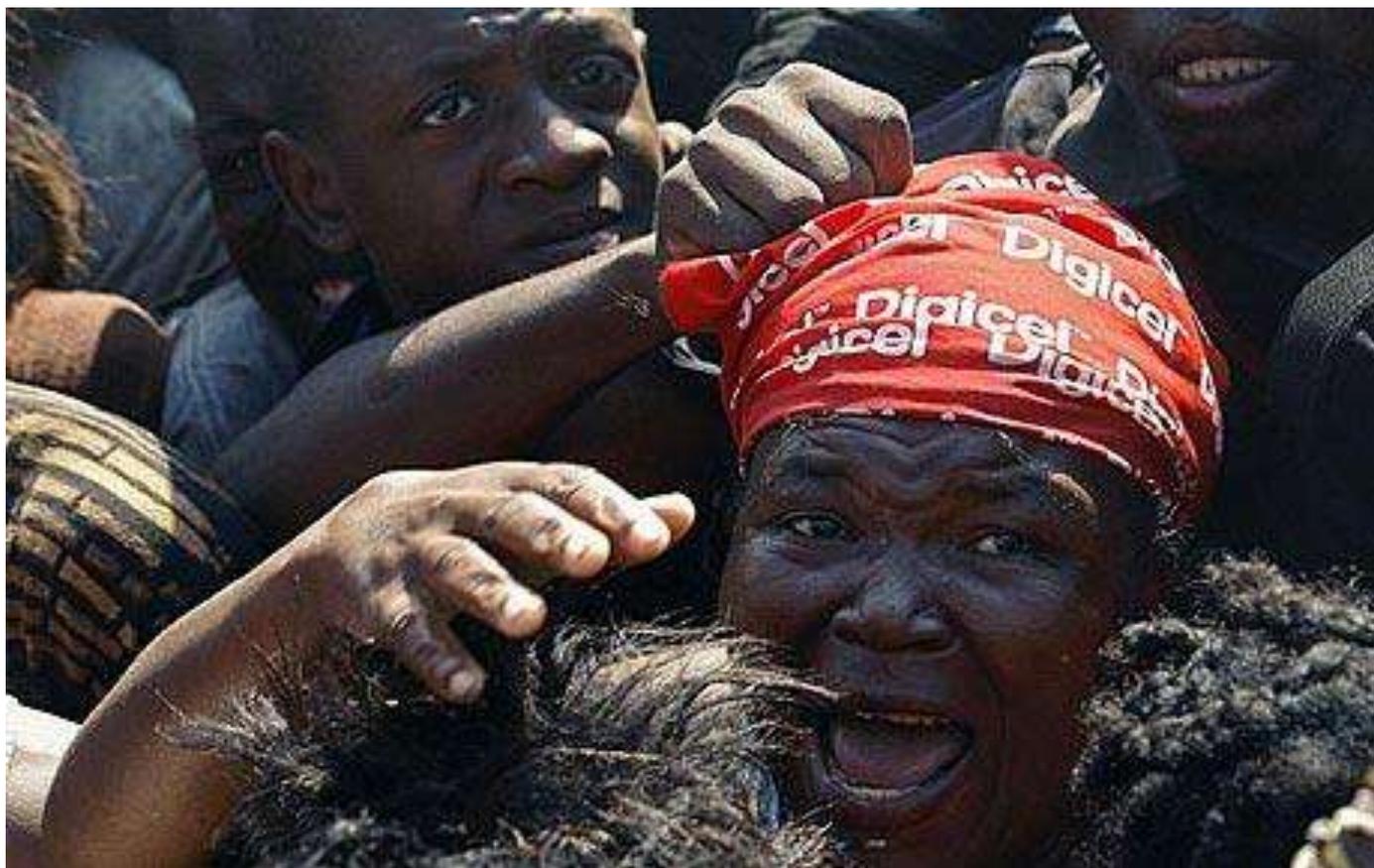












Desperate Times

A young boy makes off with new shoes during a looting spree in the downtown business district of Port-au-Prince on Sunday, Jan. 17. The capital city has been plagued with severe food and water shortages and some instances of looting in the aftermath of the deadly earthquake. TIME.com



Police try to stop looting in downtown Port-au-Prince, Haiti on Thursday, January 14, 2010. (Carolyn Cole/Los Angeles Times/MCT)



Survivors of Tuesday's earthquake **extend their arms as U.S. troops** with the 82nd Airborne Division distribute water in Port-au-Prince, Sunday, Jan. 17, 2010. The troops gave out over 9,000 bottles of water and 2,000 meals Sunday. (AP Photo/Jae C. Hong)



A mob of Haitians reach out as **goods are thrown from a nearby shop** in the downtown business district on January 17, 2010 in Port-au-Prince, Haiti.
(Chris Hondros/Getty Images)











Donate and organize!

- Medical help
 - doctorswithoutborders.org
 - www.standwithhaiti.org (Partners in Health)
- Cancel the debt!
 - www.oxfamamerica.org
 - www.jubileeusa.org