
BOOK REVIEWS

Editor's Introduction

In this issue of *Complicity*, we offer five book reviews that touch upon a diverse collection of themes and ideas that readers will find of interest as practitioners and scholars in the field of complexity. Briefly, the reviews address and touch upon the themes of crowds and group behaviour, the place and role of metaphors that announce particular images of organizations, a significant review of Ralph Stacey's work on complex responsive processes, and a look at the evolution of human consciousness. We also offer an extended review of a work on change and the value of metaphor to change higher education.

In the first of the book reviews, Tom Ricks presents his reading of *The Wisdom of Crowds* by James Surowiecki. This 2005 work takes up the notion of "group intelligence," which Surowiecki categorizes in terms of cognitive, coordinative, and cooperative problem solving types. As Ricks notes, the text is written for a "popular audience" and "pleasantly devoid of any scientific jargon." A look at the effects of self-organization and emergence in groups, Surowiecki's book examines how groups of individuals—even "dumb" ones—can be quite smart, as a collective, and even smarter than the smartest individual in that group.

Gareth Morgan's *Images of Organization* is one of those works which contemporary systems thinkers who draw upon or situate their work within a complexity-related framework should read. I read this book, which originally appeared in 1986, about a decade ago. Morgan, however, has updated this insightful text on metaphors and organizational dynamics, reviewed here in this issue by Matthew Lambert. As Morgan reminds us, while metaphors may bring tremendous insights into organizational dynamics, they may also be "incomplete, biased, and potentially misleading." Nevertheless, as Lambert notes, "the skillful use of this common figure of speech can be invaluable for anyone deeply involved with organizational change and leadership."

Cameron Norman takes on the challenging task of reading and reviewing Ralph Stacey's *Complex Responsive Processes in Organizations: Learning and Knowledge Creation*. As Norman points out, the literature in the past few years in systems thinking, knowledge and management sciences, and education is rather vast, but Stacey's work

stands out as potentially one of the most important works to explore and frame a way of thinking about organizational dynamics, how people in organizations learn and change as individuals and collectives. Stacey's work, framed by the notion of "complex responsive processes," certainly draws from the area of complex adaptive systems, but it also departs in rather significant and provocative ways. Norman presents a wonderful review, couching Stacey's work and thinking in a rich field of scholarly work that does not always resonate so well with Stacey's ideas.

I could not have found a better person than Anoop Gupta to review *A Mind So Rare: The Evolution of Human Consciousness* by Merlin Donald. As Gupta notes, consciousness is a phenomenon which we "need to consider, and synthesize when desirable, both sides of these debates on cognition: there are individual and social aspects to consciousness, as well as automatic and meta-cognitive dimensions of our behavior." Critical in his review and analysis of Donald's text, Gupta offers us a carefully studied view of Donald's work on the relationship between culture and consciousness.

Finally, in this issue of *Complicity*, Jayne Fleener presents an extended review of *Review of Higher Education Reconceived: A Geography of Change* by Sherrie Reynolds and Toni Craven. The reader, a text that invites us into a reflective space on change in higher education, is a series of chapters that presents, as Fleener describes, "the authors' journeys in changing ideas about the teaching/learning relationship in their university classes." The wonderful ambiguity in the phrase "changing ideas" surely is deliberate, announcing the complicity of the authors as shared through their own stories of working different university settings.

It is on this final note that I close this introduction to the book review section of *Complicity*: if you have found and read some interesting new texts that would be of interest to our readers and colleagues, please feel free to contact me to discuss a proposal for a book review for our next issue.

DARREN STANLEY, book review editor
University of Windsor (Canada)