
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. Interestingly, a number of the book reviewers in this issue were identified through connections with the Plexus Institute, a non-profit organization in New Jersey that does work in the area of healthcare and complexity. The institute, like many other organizations, looks and operates rather fractally. But, more importantly, I learned a tremendous amount about the fields of complexity and health while I worked there. For me, this collection of book reviews is what it is because my prior connections with and to a number of Plexus friends.

The book reviews in this issue of *Complicity* address and touch upon the themes of quantum theory, the mind, educational research and teaching and learning, organizational management, and an important 1995 text by Cohen and Stewart on complexity.

In the first of the book reviews, Rhanda Khattar and Carol Anne Wien take up a text that many education folks will recognize. That said, if you should not recognize Brent Davis and Dennis Sumara's book *Complexity and Education: Inquiries into Learning, Teaching, and Research*, you might wish to run out to get a copy for yourself right now. (Well, read these book reviews first and then go out and get a copy.) To be sure, Davis and Sumara's work offers some important insights drawn from complexity thinking that question the assumptions of more traditional approaches to education. This co-authored book review offers a playful conversation between two text readers with some shared and different views of the text.

Stephanie Tait, a former MEd student at the University of Windsor, had completed a graduate course I was teaching when I invited her to read and write a review for Jack Cohen and Ian Stewart's book, *Collapse of Chaos: Discovering Simplicity in a Complex World*. Stephanie's interest in biology, education, and complexity meant that not only would she appreciate this text, but her ability to communicate to others complex ideas in a coherent fashion would produce a clear and honest review of this text. I think that you will agree.

Marge Benham-Hutchens, a Plexus Institute connection, was happy to read and compose a review of DiSessa's *Changing Minds: Computers, Learning, and Literacy* where the author answers the question, "Can education—in particular, science education—be transformed by the computer so that children can learn more, learn more easily at an earlier age, and learn with pleasure and commitment?" As Benham-Hutchens notes: "*Changing Minds* promotes computational literacy as the foundation of day-to-day problem solving."

The next book review, a review of Ralph Stacey, Douglas Griffin, and Patricia Shaw's *Complexity and Management: Fad or Radical Challenge to Systems Thinking?*, is written by Beverley Simpson. Another Plexus connection, Bev has been exploring complexity and complex adaptive systems theory for many years, especially as they relate to teamwork and leader behaviour and relationships. Simpson notes that the authors, who put forward the notion of "complex responsive processes," draw on complexity principles such as emergence and self-organization as sources of analogy, and interpreting them using relationship psychology and particularly the work of Hegel, Mead and Elias. The book, which, like the others in the series, is not the easiest to read, but offers a rather different complexity-inspired understanding of organizational dynamics.

Last, as I was preparing to submit the book reviews and these introductory remarks to the Editors of this journal, I noticed that I had not received a brief biographical note from our final book reviewer. I was surprised to learn, upon doing a brief search, that Alice Ware Davidson, from the University of Colorado, had passed away. A Plexus Institute member, Alice contributed much to the organization, and, here, she contributes a review of *Science and Ultimate Reality: Quantum Theory, Cosmology, and Complexity* by John D. Barrow, Paul C. W. Davies, and Charles L. Harper, Jr. One might reasonably believe that a book on quantum theory, cosmology, and complexity would prove to be somewhat challenging, but Alice assures us that the authors have done a rather good job to make the content understandable for many people who may not have a background in physics.

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.

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