

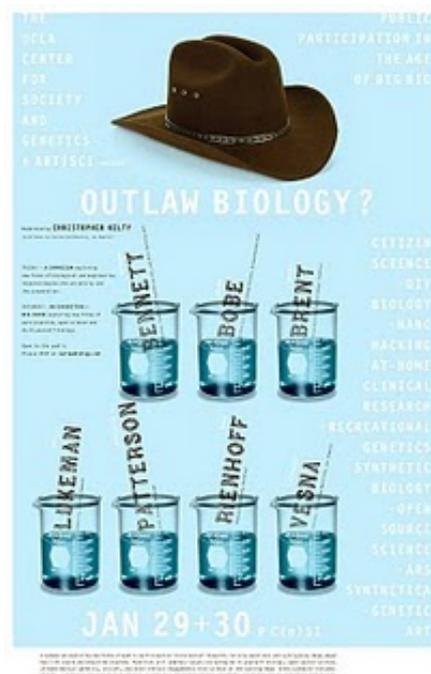
Web gleanings

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By

Some new gleanings and some older ones which we've just discovered:

Biology and its publics



Chris Kelty. “meanings of participation: Outlaw Biology?”

“Outlaws fall outside the system—they are glad to be like Robin Hood, unaccountable but connected, poaching resources and distributing them to people who could never imagine having them. Outlaw biologists love de-mystifying science: ‘did you know you can extract DNA from strawberries using simple household products!? Anyone can do it, you don’t need permission from Science.’ The Outlaw’s motivation is delight, especially delight for those who might not otherwise have access to it. Outlaws can exist inside as well as outside of science. These are the gadfly scientists, the kooks, those with the slightly nutty ideas. They live not so much at the frontiers of science (that’s where everyone wants to be), but beyond them, in no man’s land. Their innovations have yet to be recognized by Big Bio—they may never be,” (Kelty 2010).

Harry Collins. “[Preserving a Space for Science in an Age of Democracy.](#)”

PLoS Biol 8(1): e274. 2010 doi:10.1371/journal.pbio.1000274

“How should scientific advice be incorporated into the political decisionmaking process? Even experts can’t keep up with the torrent of studies published in their own field, and, supposedly, scientific issues—from climate change to biodiversity loss—have obvious political components. How is advice treated in an age when experts are increasingly viewed with suspicion and distrust?

[The Paradox of Scientific Authority: The Role of Scientific Advice in Democracies](#), by Wiebe E Bijker, Roland Bal, and Ruud Hendriks, reveals the political decision-making in a study of the inner workings of the “Gezondheidsraad,” a scientific advisory body to the Dutch government,” (Collins 2010).

Psychiatry

Tejas Patil and James Giordano, [“On the ontological assumptions of the medical model of psychiatry: philosophical considerations and pragmatic tasks.”](#) Philosophy, Ethics, and Humanities in Medicine 2010, 5:3doi:10.1186/1747-5341-5-3

“A common theme in the contemporary medical model of psychiatry is that pathophysiological processes are centrally involved in the explanation, evaluation, and treatment of mental illnesses. Implied in this perspective is that clinical descriptors of these pathophysiological processes are sufficient to distinguish underlying etiologies. Psychiatric classification requires differentiation between what counts as normality (i.e.- order), and what counts as abnormality (i.e.- disorder). The distinction(s) between normality and pathology entail assumptions that are often deeply presupposed, manifesting themselves in statements about what mental disorders are. In this paper, we explicate that realism, naturalism, reductionism, and essentialism are core ontological assumptions of the medical model of psychiatry. We argue that while naturalism, realism, and reductionism can be reconciled with advances in contemporary neuroscience, essentialism – as defined to date – may be conceptually problematic, and we pose an eidetic construct of bio-psychosocial order and disorder based upon complex systems’ dynamics. However we also caution against the overuse of any theory, and claim that practical distinctions are important to the establishment of clinical thresholds. We opine that as we move ahead toward both a new edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual, and a proposed Decade of the Mind, the task at hand is to re-visit nosologic and ontologic assumptions pursuant to a re-formulation of diagnostic criteria and practice,” (Patil and Giordano 2010).

Neuroskeptic, [“A “Severe” Warning for Psychiatry.”](#)

“According to accepted DSM-IV diagnostic criteria, close to 50% of people suffer from a mental illness at some point; a large fraction of this being depression. 10% of Americans took antidepressants last year according to the best estimates.... Guess what? Clever people have started asking “Antidepressants are amongst the biggest selling drugs in the world – but do they work?” And their answer is – not very well. The latest such claim came from Fournier et al and appeared in JAMA a couple of weeks ago: [Antidepressant Drug Effects and Depression Severity.](#)”

Julie B. Mallinger and J. Steven Lamberti. “[Psychiatrists’ Attitudes Toward and Awareness About Racial Disparities in Mental Health Care,](#)” *Psychiatr Serv* 61:173-179, February 2010
doi: 10.1176/appi.ps.61.2.173

Rachel Aviv. “[Schizophrenic Memoirs,](#)” Bookforum.com

“While there are countless autobiographies by writers who have lost their sanity, memoirs of schizophrenia are a rarer breed. In moments of florid psychosis, schizophrenics can become so self-conscious about how they use words that they lose the ability to communicate. Everyday phrases seem unfamiliar, threatening, or absurd. As the psychoanalyst Hilde Bruch wrote, “The poet is a master of language, the schizophrenic is a slave to it,”” (Aviv 2009).

The Global

Nicole A. Szlezák et al. “[The Global Health System: Actors, Norms, and Expectations in Transition,](#)” *PLoS Medicine* 7: e1000183.
doi:10.1371/journal.pmed.1000183.

“The global health system that evolved through the latter half of the 20th century achieved extraordinary success in controlling infectious diseases and reducing child mortality. Life expectancy in low- and middle-income countries increased at a rate of about 5 years every decade for the past 40 years... Today, however, that system is in a state of profound transition. The need has rarely been greater to rethink how we endeavor to meet global health needs....We present here a series of four papers on one dimension of the global health transition: its changing institutional arrangements,” (Szlezák et al. 2010).

Fritz Francois. “[A day on the wards: 10:30am,](#)” Blog posts from the [NYU Langone Medical Center’s Haitian Effort and Relief Team.](#)

“Following morning rounds, I moved around the dimly lit ward trying to prioritize patient treatment plans based on available resources. THIS was

suppose to be the critical care unit...sixty patients. There were no monitors with colorful lines and numbers reporting heart rate, blood pressure, oxygenation, and respiration. No ventilators with sing song beeps and whistles to warn of preset highs and lows. No suction canisters to clear secretions from congested airways. Yet, it was clear that so many of the patients would have benefited from such instruments. In a corner there was an old electrocardiograph machine locked into an old movable metal frame. Multicolored wires were intertwined like an intimidating snake pit and it wasn't clear that the machine had been used in the recent past," (Francois 2010).

Frédéric Keck, "[Lévi-Strauss and Bird Flu: How to Do the Structural Anthropology of a Virtual Catastrophe](#)," Centre International d'Etude de la Philosophie Française Contemporaine.

"How can Lévi-Strauss help us in addressing this problem ? We can say Lévy-Bruhl allows us to address the problem phenomenologically: interviewing people in different places to understand how the fear of Bird Flu produces a certain perception of the social world. But this method meets the classical objections against *Einfühlung* or empathy: how can I know the emotions of fear of an other human being if I am not in his position? Here Lévi-Strauss is more useful, since, in a classical Durkheimian, way, he forces us to study the social organization where these emotions appear, and to compare them to see differences. The fear of birds is not structured in the same way in Paris, New York, Hong Kong, Cairo or Djakarta, because the relation to the environment is not the same in these different cities. Although the specter of a worldwide pandemic appears in the same way everywhere, the signification that it takes varies according to the previous experience these societies have of animals and of diseases," (Keck 2009).

Joseph Masco. "[Bad Weather: On Planetary Crisis](#)," Social Studies of Science, Vol. 40, No. 1, 7-40 (2010)

"How, and when, does it become possible to conceptualize a truly planetary crisis? The Cold War nuclear arms race installed one powerful concept of planetary crisis in American culture. The science enabling the US nuclear arsenal, however, also produced unintended byproducts: notably, a radical new investment in the earth sciences. Cold War nuclear science ultimately produced not only bombs, but also a new understanding of the earth as biosphere. Thus, the image of planetary crisis in the US was increasingly doubled during the Cold War — the immediacy of nuclear threat matched by concerns about rapid environmental change and the cumulative effects of industrial civilization on a fragile biosphere. This paper examines the evolution of (and competition between) two ideas of planetary crisis since 1945: nuclear war and climate change. In doing so,

the paper offers an alternative history of the nuclear age and considers the US national security implications of a shift in the definition of planetary crisis from warring states to a warming biosphere,” (Masco 2010).

Neuro

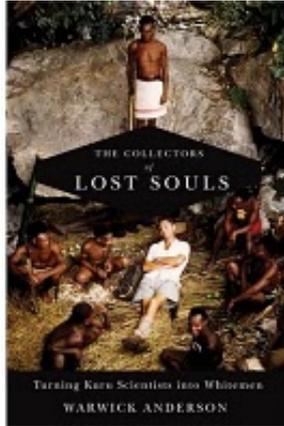
Ewa Hess and Hennric Jokeit. “[Neurocapitalism](#),” Merkur (reprinted in translation on Eurozine).

“The lifting of temporal and geographical constraints on communication nurtures the illusion of unlimited accessibility and mobility. Just as the libertarian phase of capitalism offered ways for the individual to optimise his or her external appearance and status, so the imperative of the future will be to optimise cognitive and emotional resources as well. The availability of an unlimited supply of effective neuro-enhancers, the opportunity to exchange experiences of using them with others via the Internet, and the utilitarian approach to ethics taken by many individuals, are all preparing the ground for the market success of substances that today are still being experimented with in the laboratory.

The psychologically relevant question of how the self will relate to a mood-enhanced, more capable version of itself is rendered irrelevant by the fact that the requirements of the new capitalist reality make an individual improvement of this kind appear a highly desirable option. Indeed, as a consumer and commodity value appropriate to capitalism, it has already been in currency for some time. Alongside globalisation – the capitalist rationalisation of space and time – we are witnessing the epistemic and technical rationalisation of the neuronal foundations of the self, or what Walker Percy called the abstraction of the self from itself,” (Hess and Jokeit 2009).

Tobias Rees. “[Being neurologically human today: Life and science and adult cerebral plasticity \(an ethical analysis\)](#),” *American Ethnologist* 37 (1): 150-166 (2010).

“Throughout the 20th century, scientists believed that the adult human brain is fully developed, organized in fixed and immutable function-specific neural circuits. Since the discovery of the profound plasticity of the human brain in the late 1990s, this belief has been thoroughly undermined. In this article, combining ethnographic and historical research, I develop an “ethical analysis” to show that (and in what concrete sense) the emergence of adult cerebral plasticity was a major mutation of the neurologically human—a metamorphosis of the confines within which neuroscience requires all those who live under the spell of the brain to think and live the human, (Rees 2010).”



Stephen T Casper. "[Book Review: Warwick Anderson, The Collectors of Lost Souls: Turning Kuru Scientists into Whitemen,](#)" The Neuro Times.

"[This marvelous book](#) deliberately forces us to re-imagine the meaning of sojourn, scientific discovery, colonialism, and sorcery, while at the same time providing us with an account of the discovery of Kuru, a lethal neurological disease, and the science that ultimately determined its etiology. In a narrative grounded in sources found in archives in Papua New Guinea, Australia, and the United States, and further developed through oral histories with scientists, anthropologists, and the Fore people, Anderson shows us that the prion – an infectious protein supposedly discovered in the laboratories of Britain and the United States – was a thing constructed first through colonial aspirations and global imaginations," (Casper 2009).

AMA citation

. Web gleanings. *Somatosphere*. . Available at: . Accessed February 20, 2013.

APA citation

. (). *Web gleanings*. Retrieved February 20, 2013, from Somatosphere Web site:

Chicago citation

. . Web gleanings. *Somatosphere*. (accessed February 20, 2013).

Harvard citation

, *Web gleanings*, *Somatosphere*. Retrieved February 20, 2013, from <>

MLA citation

. "Web gleanings." . [Somatosphere](#). Accessed 20 Feb. 2013.<>