Twitter Thread by David R. MacIver



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One like = one* interesting book pairing

* with an option to give up any time after 100 tweets

(Not formally part of @threadapalooza, just a warm up exercise / fodder for if I do give in to the imp of the perverse and do a 100 threads thread.)

1. "Ritual and its Consequences" with "Games: Agency as Art".

Both detailed analyses of social technologies (rituals and games) and how people engage with them by essentially suspending the normal complexities of the world within a structure. Would reward detailed comparison.

2. "The Collected Schizophrenias" with Ratcliffe's "Feelings of Being"

Autobiography of someone with schizophrenia paired with a detailed phenomenological analysis of what it's like to be schizophrenic. The latter would be an interesting lens to read the former through.

(<)3. "All About Love" by bell hooks and "About Love" by Josef Pieper.

The reason for the pairing is fairly obvious, but each of these has had significant and distinct impacts on my understanding of love.

(Both are fairly religious and/or spiritual)

4. "The Courage to be Disliked" with "Conflict is not Abuse"

Both books about our emotional relationship with interpersonal conflict. The combination significantly moved the needle on how conflict averse I was, in ways that were very helpful and neither have would on their own.

5. "Finding our Sea-Legs" with "Voices: The Educational Formation of Conscience"

Nontraditional books about ethics, with a focus on how we experience the world ethically in practice. Even if you know a fair bit about philosophy of ethics, each will probably teach you something.

6. "Experiences of Depression" (Ratcliffe) with "The Emotion Machine" (Minsky)

Detailed phenomenological description of depression and what it's like with a bunch of interesting over-simple mechanical models of the mind. Looking at former through lens of latter was very useful.

7. "Thinking in Bets" with "Games: Agency as Art"

The latter argues that games serve as a kind of "library of agencies" in which we learn different agential modes that we can use to navigate the world. The former is a worked example of doing that with poker.

8. "The Inner Game of Tennis" with "Games: Agency as Art"

Same as (7) but with tennis instead of poker. Also the section on "Competition" in "The Inner Game of Tennis" pairs very well with GAaA's discussion of aesthetic striving play.

9. "Experiences of Depression" with "The Power of Focusing"

Detailed explanation of the subjective experience of depression paired with my current preferred intro book on how to explore your own subjective emotional experience.

10. "Feeding Your Demons" with "Existential Kink"

Both fun and slightly ridiculous self-therapy techniques for getting to the bottom of seemingly intractable emotional blocks. Hard to take seriously, and the better for that. I need to spend more time with each.

11. "Feeding Your Demons" with "Self-Therapy" (Jay Earley)

Self-Therapy is about Internal Family Systems which is like the respectable Western version of Feeding Your Demons. It's better organised, has important features the other lacks, but is less fun and feels less targeted.

12. "Self-Therapy" with "The Emotion Machine"

The Emotion Machine provides a lot of useful mechanistic metaphors for how to think of your mind as organised into independent parts, and Self-Therapy is about how to work with parts of yourself. The former helped me with the latter.

13. "All About Love" with "Feeding Your Demons"

All About Love is about how love allows two people to contribute to each other's spiritual growth. Feeding Your Demons is about how to turn that process on yourself by directing love at neglected parts of yourself.

14. "Feelings of Being" with "Perplexities of Consciousness"

Both are detailed but practical phenomenological studies of the human condition and what it's like to have subjective experience, and how it's much weirder than you might otherwise have expected.

15. "Talking About Machines" with "Two Cheers for Anarchism"

Both teach us interesting and important things about what James C. Scott calls "metis" - embodied practical knowledge about the world - and how it exists in communities.

16. "Perplexities of Consciousness" with "The Power of Focusing"

A significant amount of the former is about expressing scepticism regarding introspection, both naive and trained, while the latter is about how to do introspection. Each a good counterbalance to the other.

17. "How to talk about books you haven't read" with "Domination and the arts of resistance: Hidden Transcripts"

Two extremely different (but complementary) takes on the limitations of encoding knowledge in the written word, and the broader cultural "library" we create.

18. "Domination and the arts of resistance: Hidden Transcripts" with "Epistemic Injustice"

Detailed and complementary discussions of the interplay between power and knowledge - who gets to have the privilege of being able to interact as epistemic equals.

19. "Epistemic Injustice" with "Trans Like Me"

The latter is effectively a detailed first person account of being on the receiving end of a number of the themes of the former, and also includes discussions of epistemic injustices missed out of its taxonomy.

20. "Trans Like Me" with "Rewriting the Rules" (Meg-John Barker)

Pairing because both books contain good discussions of gender from the perspective of a nonbinary author. The former is more autobiographical, the latter a more practical guide that is directly useful to everyone.

21. "Voices: The Educational Formation of Conscience" with "Self-Therapy"

Odd pairing but a legit one I think. One of Voices's chief metaphors is that of "voices of conscience" who argue amongst themselves. Self-Therapy is good for exploring those arguments.

22. "All About Love" with "Rewriting the Rules"

Both books significantly improved my understanding of relationships, both romantic and friendships, in ways that work well together and more than the sum of their parts.

23. "Sorting Things Out: Classification and its Consequences" with "Seeing Like a State"

Both books about the interaction between the messy reality of humanity and the desire to put us into tidy boxes, and how it interacts with power. Very complementary ideas and examples.

24. "The Inner Game of Tennis" with "Conflict is not Abuse"

The former's chapter on competition pairs very well with the latter. It's tempting to fall into a pattern of being too nice to someone, never trying to "win", but this denies them opportunities to grow.

25. "The Origins of Unfairness" with "The Strategy of Conflict"

Easy pairing. Both are about toy models of positive-sum (i.e. both parties can win) games and what they tell us about human behaviour. Former is about gender, latter about war, but both very informative in general.

26. "The Strategy of Conflict" with "Conflict is not Abuse"

The former helped me have a much more nuanced and interesting view of what conflicts are when reading the latter. Conflicts are anything where goals are misaligned, even when not really "opposed". This happens a lot.

27. "The Origins of Unfairness" with "Sorting Things Out"

Both are about classification schemes as applied to people and how these interact with power. Very different, mostly complementary, takes, with each focusing on different upsides and downsides.

28. "Finding Our Sea-Legs" with "The Courage to be Disliked"

Interesting and quite disparate takes on interpersonal relationships. Not quite sure why I feel this pairing is good, but I feel like a person who internalised both books would be substantially better off for it.

29. "Talking about machines" with "Voices: The Educational Formation of Conscience"

Latter has lots of detailed discussion about norms and how they evolve in communities, and you can see a lot of this playing out in interesting ways in the technical community of the former.

30. "Seeing Like A State" with "Trans Like Me"

Because literally nobody else will ever suggest this pairing.

Err. That is to say, because I often find the frame of "legibility" extremely useful for understanding the complexities of gender and queerness in general.

31. "Descartes' Error" with "How Emotions Are Made"

I like this pairing because they each have interesting and different things to say about the role of emotions, are by respectable neuroscientists, and profoundly disagree with each other about the feeling/emotion distinction.

32. "Descartes' Error" with "The Emotion Machine"

I find the latter a useful set of metaphors to reason about the more biologically informed information presented in the former.

Helped me connect it up to actually practical material.

33. "How Emotions are Made" with "The Power of Focusing"

One of the core arguments of former is that precisely labelling our emotional states is very powerful for improving our experience of the world. The latter is a detailed guide on how to do that.

34. "How Emotions are Made" with "An Invitation to Personal Construct Psychology"

Similar reasons but different toolkit: Latter is about how our emotions derive from how we frame the world, and how we can use reframing to improve our experience.

35. "An Invitation to Personal Construct Psychology" with "Rewriting the Rules"

Very overlapping themes. Former is much more about the psychological theory, latter lots of worked details about how to apply it to your life in specific (especially relational) contexts.

36. "The Righteous Mind" with "Voices: The Educational Formation of Conscience"

Former is about people's actual moral intuitions, latter is about how those develop. I find the former's model unconvincing but the examples are very interesting and illustrate latter well.

37. "Complex PTSD: From Surviving to Thriving" with "Self-Therapy"

Feels like a very complementary set of tools - each can involve investigating "inner children" parts of your mind and pouring love on them.

38. Also "Complex PTSD: From Surviving to Thriving" with "The Power of Focusing" in that you should read the latter before the former because I don't think the former adequately teaches the relevant skillset.

39. "Talking about machines" with "Sorting Things Out"

Each of these have interesting things to say about the interactions of technical communities with those outside those communities, and containing complexity. Not totally sure about this one but it feels interesting.

40. "Thinking in Bets" with "Epistemology and the Psychology of Human Judgement"

I think of these as "The good books about technical rationality". Both overly naive about its limitations, but articulate the viewpoint well and are worth reading for that.

41. "Epistemology and the Psychology of Human Judgement" with "Talking About Machines"

The former has a lot of stuff about how experts are really unwilling to adopt simple rules that outperform their expet judgement. You'll understand why they do that better by reading latter.

42. "Existential Kink" with "A Little Book on the Human Shadow"

Both good books about the shadow (in the Jungian sense) and how to navigate it. Somewhat overlapping, somewhat complimentary, stylistically and aesthetically *incredibly* distinctive.

43. "A Little Book on the Human Shadow" with "Voices: The Educational Formation of Conscience"

Another weird pairing but one I feel quite strongly works. The former is much more enlightening when read through the lens of the latter's discussion of norm acquisition.

(Going to pause for a bit to go do other things, but will resume later)

44. "Two Cheers for Anarchism" with "Democracy in Small Groups"

The latter is a very good cold shower for when reading too much Scott makes you want to to throw everything in and go start an intentional community with all your friends.

45. "Democracy in Small Groups" with "The Surprising Power of Liberating Structures"

The latter has a lot of really good models for how to arrange people in small groups for a variety of purposes, which is interesting to contrast with the near free-for-all of the former.

46. "The Surprising Power of Liberating Structures" with "Games: Agency as Art"

The discussion of differing agential structures and multiplayer games in the latter sheds a lot of light on the tools of the former, which can be thought of as game design applied to meetings.

47. "How to talk about books you haven't read" with "How to read a book"

Partly because the pairing is funny, and partly because they describe two very different relationships with books that I think it's useful to be able to fluidly switch between.

48. "Models: Attract Women Through Honesty" with "Rewriting the Rules"

Two very different takes on dating and relationships, both good in their own ways - the former is very cishet male (but I unironically think it's very good), the latter very queer. Both valuable perspectives.

49. "100 ways to improve your writing" with "Style: Towards Clarity and Grace"

Two books about a particular style of writing (plain, fairly practical and technical, but with a journalistic focus). The former is a great lead in to the latter and much better to dip into.

50. "Style: Towards Clarity and Grace" with "Clear and Simple as the Truth"

Two books about different writing styles (the former more workmanlike, the latter more rhetorical), with the latter providing a

good set of tools for reasoning about different styles and when to use them

51. "Clear and Simple as the Truth" with "Orality and Literacy".

The latter discusses the fundamental differences between spoken and written communication, and how this affects the way people think. Ties in well with the former's comparison of spoken and written rhetoric.

52. "Orality and Literacy" with "Conflict is not Abuse"

A recurring theme of the latter is how "flat" written communication is compared to oral, and how many conflicts are escalated by trying to have them in textual form, when a phone call or face to face would defuse them.

53. "About Love" (Pieper) with "Anam Cara"

Both very Christian (indeed, both Catholic) discussions of the nature of love, which are almost completely unlike each other. The former is very philosophical discussion, the latter more poetic oratory. Each have quite different focuses

54. "Anam Cara" with "Models: Attract Women Through Honesty"

This is a ridiculous pairing which makes no sense, but I stand by it. The justification for it is something like "Positive visions of confident masculinity".

55. "Never Split the Difference" with "The Customer Service Survival Kit"

Social skills learned in two very different scenarios - hostage negotiation (high power, high stakes) and customer service (low power, low stakes until not). Very interesting to compare and contrast.

56. "The Customer Service Survival Kit" with "Nonviolent Communication"

Feels like a lot of overlap between the two styles, with the latter teaching you a lot about how to communicate your needs. The former feels much more practical. Suspect the two synthesise well.

57. "Nonviolent Communication" with "Self-Therapy"

I'm pretty -1 on NVC as a way to talk to people in general (I think it's very useful in some circumstances, but as a set of norms it's a disaster), but talking to parts of yourself seems like an excellent use case for it.

58. "Atomic Accidents: A History of Nuclear Meltdowns and Disasters" with "Behind Human Error"

Two books on safety critical systems and how people behave within them. The former is riveting, the latter is... not. However the latter is very useful, and the former helps enjoy it.

59. "Behind Human Error" with "Talking About Machines"

Both contain important discussions of technical expert communities and how they interact with the world and other people,

each describing an important piece of the puzzle.

60. "Nonviolent Communication" with "The Surprising Power of Liberating Structures"

NVC is best thought of as a particular mode of conversation that you can adopt, and I think in that regard designing group structures around it and similar has a lot of interesting potential.

61. "Clear and Simple as the Truth" with "Learn to Write Badly: How to Succeed in the Social Sciences"

The latter can be thought of as a book about how people weaponise the work of the former, by adopting writing styles that obfuscate your point to impress and deflect criticism.

62. "Learn to Write Badly" with "How to talk about books you haven't read"

Bit of an eccentric pairing, but I kinda like the latter as a guide for navigating a world which is rife with the former. If people write "important" books that are not worth reading, why read them?

63. "Orality and Literacy" with "Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts"

Former is about the difference between oral and literary cultures, the latter about how oral cultures spring up in marginalised populations within literary cultures to protect themselves.

64. "The Shock of the Old" with "Seeing Like a State"

Each about projecting simplifying narratives onto a messy world - the latter about the destruction of that messiness, the former about how new messiness arises on top of the order in order to allow it to function.

65. "The Shock of the Old" with "Talking About Machines"

Both about cultures of maintenance of technical artifacts, with interesting things to say about how ad hoc they have to be and how they tend to depart from the tidy "scientific" realities that occur in service manuals.