Twitter Thread by Cameron Harwick ■



Cameron Harwick ■
@C_Harwick

Thread of the best papers and books I read in 2020, roughly in order.

1. Lewin & Cachanosky, "The Average Period of Production: History and Rehabilitation of an Idea"

Good fisking & constructive replacement of the idea of 'roundaboutness' in capital theory. Even though I think they can go further. ↓ https://t.co/LgxNclt1g2 https://t.co/7yI5eVRuWQ

THE AVERAGE PERIOD OF PRODUCTION: THE HISTORY AND REHABILITATION OF AN IDEA

BY

PETER LEWIN AND NICOLÁS CACHANOSKY

Austrian capital theory tried to capture the intuitive and basically undeniable importance that time plays in economic life, but arguably was diverted down a blind alley with Eugen von Böhm-Bawerk's average period of production, a purely physical measure of 'roundaboutness'—the length of the production process. For the general case, such a measure is a chimera. But the intuition is strong, and the idea survived and reappeared at various points in the history of capital theory. Almost unknown to economists, an alternative value measure of roundaboutness has existed at least since John Hicks's formulation of his average period (AP) in 1939, which, coincidentally, was exactly the same measure discovered by the financial actuary Frederick Macaulay in 1938, called by him "Duration" (D). Macaulay's D, more richly interpreted as Hicks's AP, is a measure that more appropriately captures what it was that the Austrians struggled to express over many years in their capital theory and in their analysis of the business cycle.

2. O'Hear, "Popperian Individualism Today"

Good, concise statement of an important point: https://t.co/tVaVBTDVwk

> Nice essay on Popper's open society. Bare proceduralism isn't enough to hold together a community; a functional open society is "itself a substantive tradition". https://t.co/pkGddGVdIz pic.twitter.com/7CZLZd4dWw
>
> — Cameron Harwick \U0001f3db (@C_Harwick) April 9, 2020

3. Zero HP Lovecraft - "God Shaped Hole"

I enjoyed last year's "The Gig Economy" better, but this still lives up to the idea of Lovecraftian cosmic horror better than anything the actual Lovecraft ever wrote. https://t.co/8cSIyuZ6lk

> The internet is an ocean that we invent as we explore it. In the murky darkness of virtual places, there could be dragons, shoggoths, leviathans...
>
> This is an index of my threads. Start here, with my most ambitious work to date:https://t.co/xd38LvvCxJ
>
> — Zero HP Lovecraft (@0x49fa98) November 16, 2019

4. Keane, "Sincerity, Modernity, and the Protestants"

Interesting case study of the W.E.I.R.D.ification of a south pacific tribe and how the Protestant converts, unlike the Catholic ones, fundamentally change their relationship to ritual. https://t.co/vYTgufbrU1

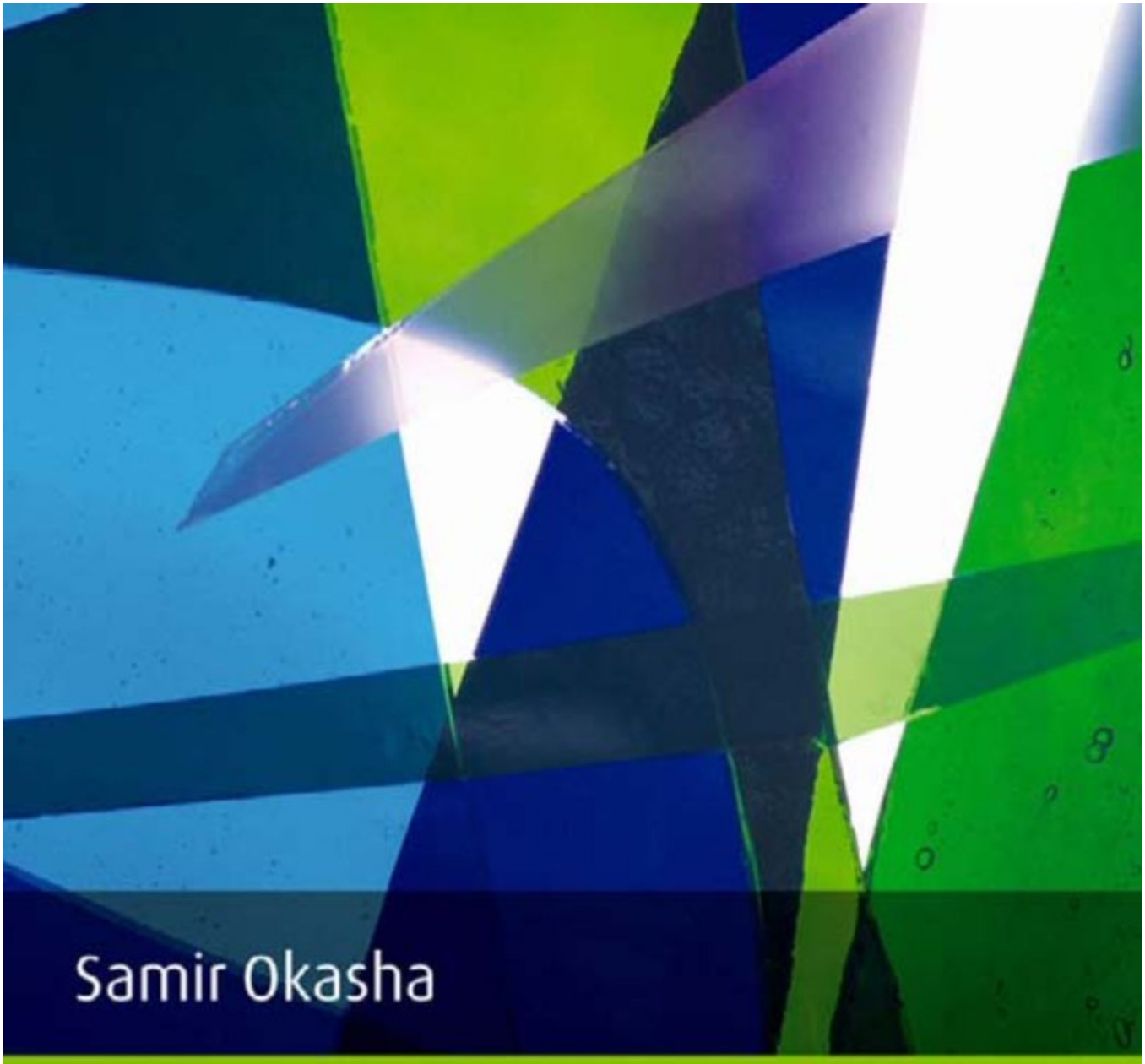
Sincerity, "Modernity," and the Protestants

Webb Keane
University of Michigan

The project of religious conversion commonly proposes a more or less dramatic transformation of the person. To the extent that this project succeeds or fails, it may offer more general insights into the practices by which human subjects are constituted. This article looks at the subject proposed by religious conversion in the context of certain common ideas about "modernity." Drawing on the 20th-century Dutch Calvinist missionization of Sumba in eastern Indonesia, it concerns Protestant efforts to define the subject, especially as it is supposed to transcend this world, and thus to distinguish it from that which might threaten its relative autonomy. My focus is on changes in signifying practices and ideologies within what can be called a representational economy.[1] The article begins with a brief discussion of the effort to reform the subject by redefining its distinction from objects such as material goods. It then turns at greater length to the normative ideal of sincerity in speech as another component of this reform. The concept of sincerity is of particular interest here because of the links it forges among language, social interaction, personal character, freedom, regimes of truth, and some narratives of modernity. I would suggest, though I cannot argue it here, that these links are part of the taken-for-granted background for the liberal tradition out of which have emerged many of the questions, methods, politics, and worries of anthropology and related disciplines at both the epistemic and ethical levels. I draw on the

5. Okasha - "Evolution and the Levels of Selection"

A framework for thinking about when you're looking at group-selected adaptations, and by extension, what counts as "really" rational at any given level (gene, individual, group, etc). https://t.co/vmAUtEd8YV



Samir Okasha

Evolution and the Levels of Selection

OXFORD

6. Frank Herbert - "Dune"

Didn't realize the movie was coming out when I picked it up. Lots of interesting ideas, e.g. on infohazards and institutional evolution. https://t.co/gauakeiBJC



> The Bene Gesserit have an applied science of the cultivation and exploitation of infohazards, both at the individual and the cultural levels. #Dune https://t.co/oXv3hiyIMj pic.twitter.com/0GUWcWyiIl
>
> — Cameron Harwick \U0001f3db (@C_Harwick) July 11, 2020

7. Boehm - "The Evolutionary Development of Morality as an Effect of Dominance Behavior and Conflict Interference"

Talks about human morality as a negotiation between evolved dominance and submission strategies. https://t.co/ANwOc9paA7

The evolutionary development of morality as an effect of dominance behavior and conflict interference

Christopher Boehm

Department of Anthropology, Sociology and Philosophy, Northern Kentucky University, Highland Heights, KY 41076, USA

Morality may be defined as the problem solving activities of a moral community, a primary group which uses a wide range of sanctions directly to reduce conflict, which also sanctions perceived causes of conflict, and defines and controls other deviances judged to be antisocial. So defined, morality is a precondition for law. In comparing human with non-human primates, conflict management is one of the most impressive parallels. This empirical parallel is built upon, to construct an evolutionary scenario for the development of morality and law in their proto-forms.

In that sense Boehm's paper similar in spirit to my & @hiltonroot's "Feudal Origins" paper that also came out earlier this year, but for primate evolution instead of institutional evolution. https://t.co/QoPZOoeY1b

> New paper with @hiltonroot in Ordo: "The Feudal Origins of the Western Legal Tradition", with some informal game theory on how feudalism as a smashing together of Roman and Germanic legal systems paved the way for strong-but-limited states. https://t.co/JHibLQZ69S pic.twitter.com/JzN5jvUuxB
>
> — Cameron Harwick \U0001f3db (@C_Harwick) April 1, 2020

8. Grüne-Yanoff - "Evolutionary game theory, interpersonal comparisons and natural selection"

A good warning not to casually mix classical and evolutionary game theory, as many cultural-evolutionary models do. https://t.co/7S2XCqS9eG

Evolutionary game theory, interpersonal comparisons and natural selection: a dilemma

Till Grüne-Yanoff

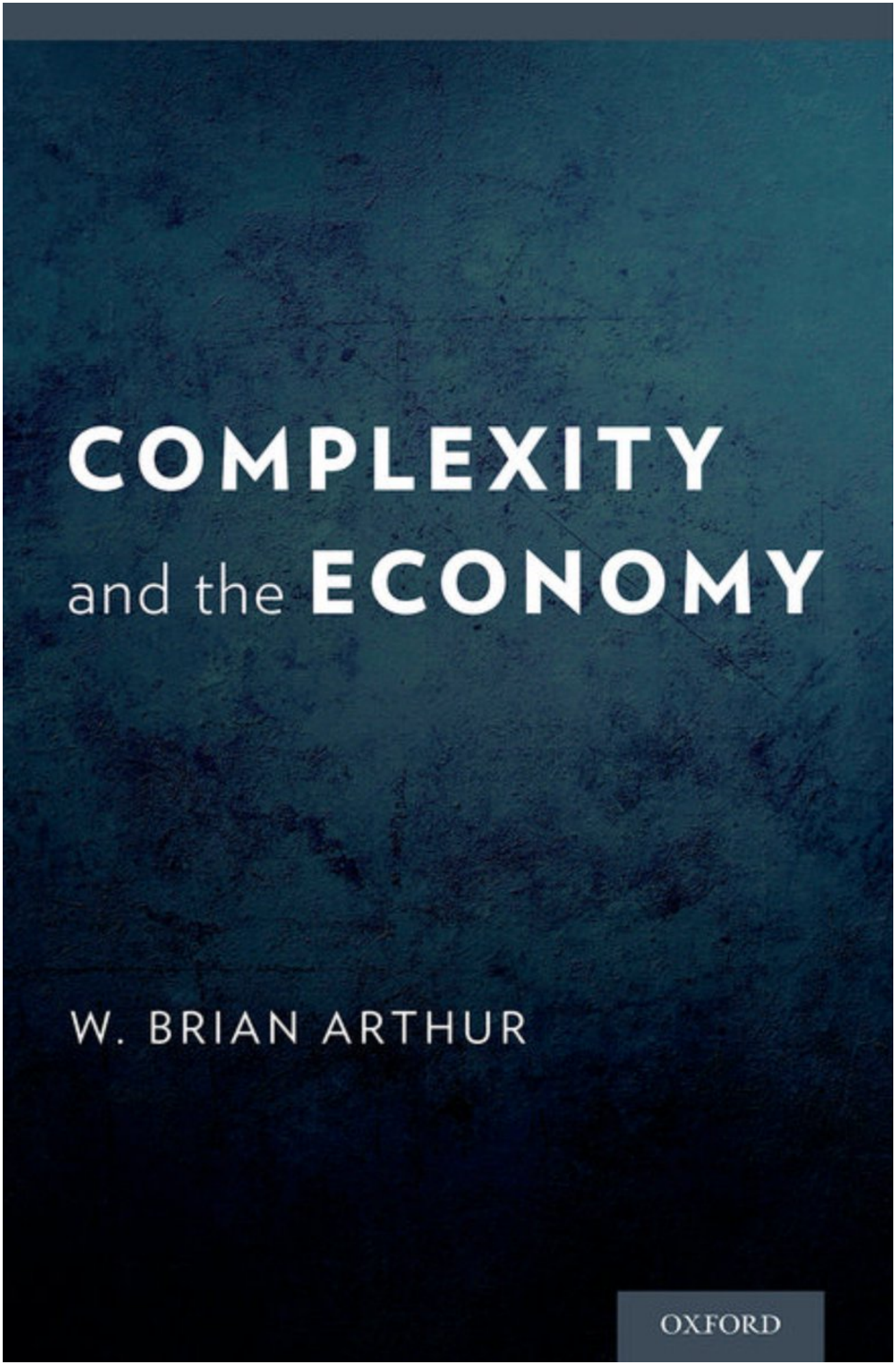
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Abstract When social scientists began employing evolutionary game theory (EGT) in their disciplines, the question arose what the appropriate interpretation of the formal EGT framework would be. Social scientists have given different answer, of which I distinguish three basic kinds. I then proceed to uncover the conceptual tension between the formal framework of EGT, its application in the social sciences, and these three interpretations. First, I argue that EGT under the biological interpretation has a limited application in the social sciences, chiefly because strategy replication often cannot be sensibly interpreted as strategy bearer reproduction in this domain. Second, I show that alternative replication mechanisms imply interpersonal comparability of strategy payoffs. Giving a meaningful interpretation to such comparisons is not an easy task for many social situations, and thus limits the applicability of EGT in this domain. Third, I argue that giving a new interpretation both to strategy replication and selection solves the issue of interpersonal comparability, but at the costs of making the new interpretation incompatible with natural selection interpretations of EGT. To the extent that social scientists seek such a natural selection interpretation, they face a dilemma: either face the challenge that interpersonal comparisons pose, or give up on the natural selection interpretation. By identifying these tensions, my analysis pleas for greater awareness of the specific purposes of EGT modelling in the social sciences, and for greater sensitivity to the underlying microstructure on which the evolutionary dynamics and other EGT solution concepts supervene.

9. Arthur - "Complexity and the Economy"

This is how you criticize neoclassical econ right: sympathetically, and without just going "BuT iT's CoMpLeX". Ok—so what do we do with that? https://t.co/jQ6Ov7zgQy

I wish SFI had hewed closer to this ethos! https://t.co/lcAEeyODos


COMPLEXITY
and the ECONOMY
W. BRIAN ARTHUR
OXFORD

10. Heiner - "The Origin of Predictable Behavior", which I did a thread on recently. https://t.co/ajYF8QjoDS

> Thread on Heiner (1983). While I'm not sold on its thesis, it's the *kind* of paper I love: laying out a straightforward principle and then applying it in surprising ways to far-flung arenas. https://t.co/6BhQy61SpS pic.twitter.com/QnU0CRSVHq
>
> — Cameron Harwick \U0001f3db (@C_Harwick) December 19, 2020

11. Knight, "Puzzles and mysteries in the origins of language"

Similar to his earlier v good paper, emphasizing the reliability problem in signals, but with lots more connections to other lits, e.g. animal signaling. https://t.co/jiSB0RC9wg https://t.co/GaahKU8RxT

Puzzles and mysteries in the origins of language

Chris Knight

University College London, United Kingdom

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ABSTRACT

Language evolved in no species other than humans, suggesting a deep-going obstacle to its evolution. Could it be that language *simply cannot evolve* in a Darwinian world? Reviewing the insights of Noam Chomsky, Amotz Zahavi and Dan Sperber, this article shows how and why each apparently depicts language's emergence as theoretically impossible. Chomsky shuns evolutionary arguments, asserting simply that language was instantaneously installed. Zahavi argues that language entails reliance on low cost conventional signals whose evolutionary emergence would contradict basic Darwinian theory. Sperber argues that a symbolic expression is, literally, a falsehood, adding to the difficulty of explaining how – in a Darwinan world – systematic reliance on language could ever have evolved. It is concluded that language exists, but for reasons which no currently accepted theoretical paradigm can explain.

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(I should note since the first tweet is ambiguous: this is in chronological order, not rank order!)