



Seducing Ourselves: Understanding Public Denial in a Declining Complex Society

Donna L. Armstrong Ph.D.

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Our large human brains evolved some 1.8 million years ago to facilitate social cohesion in small groups, supporting higher-order thinking as well as emotional cooperation as a survival strategy. But when written symbolic language, which developed as a result of agriculture and complexity, made possible the abstract group identity known as “the public,” we were seduced by collective support of the public identity to engage in environmentally maladaptive group “fictive play.”

In *Seducing Ourselves*, you will encounter a wide range of intriguing concepts and ideas concerning complex societies, connecting together a vast multitude of topics—from evolutionary neurobiology and social psychology to the billions of US tax dollars that are going to the energy-intensive agricultural industry to produce the comfort foods behind the obesity epidemic.

An epidemiologist by profession, Donna L. Armstrong’s theories are distinctive within the fascinating literature of complex social collapse in making the important distinction between collective behavior and individual choice, and in the use of the United States as a case study to illustrate the stages of complex development and decline.

A provocative yet hopeful “slow read,” *Seducing Ourselves* is an enormously important work for the sustainability and “transforming communities” movements.

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