



Chaos, Catastrophe, and Human Affairs: Applications of Nonlinear Dynamics To Work, Organizations, and Social Evolution

Stephen J. Guastello

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Whether talking about steering a wheelbarrow over rugged terrain or plotting the course of international relations, human performance systems involve change. Sometimes changes are subtle or evolutionary, sometimes they are catastrophic or revolutionary, and sometimes the changes are from periods of relative calm to periods of vibrant oscillations to periods of chaos. As a general rule, more complex systems are likely to produce more complex forms of change.

Although social scientists have long acknowledged that change occurs and have considered ways to effect desirable change, the dynamical processes of change have been poorly understood in the past. This volume combines recent advances in mathematics and experimental design with the best available social science theories to produce a new, integrated, and compact theory of work, organizations, and social evolution. The domains of application extend from human decision-making processes to personnel selection and work motivation, work performance under conditions of stress, accident and health risk analysis, the development of social institutions and economic systems, creativity and innovation, organizational development and group dynamics, and political revolutions and war.

Relative to other literature on nonlinear dynamical systems theory (NDS), this book is unique in that it integrates new developments in NDS with substantive psychological theory. It builds on many recent developments in organizational theory to show that nonlinear dynamics were often implicit in those works all along. The result is an entirely new way of viewing social events, understanding change processes, and asking questions about social systems. This book also contains much new empirical work and explains the newly developed methods for testing these new hypotheses.

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