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BOOK REVIEW

"**Man is by Nature a Political Animal: Evolution, Biology and Politics**." Peter K. Hatemi & Rose McDermott (Eds.). Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011. Reviewed by Julia Elad Strenger [Department of Psychology, Ben Gurion University of the Negev, Israel].

What is the basis of political corruption? How do people form political attitudes and voting preferences? What makes some people more politically involved than others? These and other questions about political behavior have been the focus of research in political psychology in the last decades. While most of the work on these topics has focused on the effects of psychological dynamics, political structures and processes, and broad social and historical contexts on political behavior and attitudes, recent years have seen a growing interest in the application of neurobiological approaches to the understanding of political behaviors and attitudes. In particular, work in evolutionary psychology, behavior genetics, physiology, and brain imaging offer intriguing insights into human political behavior and hold great promise for a more comprehensive and complete understanding of political psychology.

In *Man is by Nature a Political Animal*, Peter K. Hatemi and Rose McDermott present the first serious attempt to provide a systematic overview of these new developments in a book that may appeal to both scholars and general readers. They bring together the most up-to-date theoretical, methodological, and empirical frameworks and perspectives on political attitudes and behaviors, including evolutionary biology and psychology, genetics, physiology, and neuroscience. Their book calls for real cross-disciplinary work on political behavior that will resonate within intradisciplinary and interdisciplinary discourse. For this end, the editors bring together leading scholars and researchers who present empirical findings and theoretical insights that shed light on the biological bases of political phenomena, which were thus far not revealed by existing models of political behavior.

This book's *raison d'être* is clear: by publishing this collection of cutting-edge research and theory, the editors wish to make the case that the methods and theories imported from genetics and cognitive neuroscience will enrich and broaden the theoretical models and methodological techniques for political psychologists and improve and strengthen the accuracy of their predictions. Such statements, made by the editors in the first chapter of the book, may create the impression that they are overselling such work in terms of its implications on the field. Indeed, some scholars (e.g., Theodoridis & Nelson, 2012) have cautioned against overenthusiastically advocating the use of such technologies and overstating their applicability in political psychology and altering the standard of proof in the discipline. The editors do not, however, call for a paradigm change in the study of political behavior, nor do they claim to offer definitive conclusions about the specific nature of the effects these neurobiological determinants hold on political phenomena. Quite to the contrary, Hatemi and McDermott suggest a middle ground: they explicitly acknowledge the essential role played by environmental forces in guiding and structuring these behaviors and attitudes and suggest incorporating technologies and methodologies grounded in biology, neuroscience, and physiology

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into more traditional models of political behavior, rather than replacing them. Thus, consistent with the recommendations put forth by Theodoridis and Nelson (2012), the editors regard findings based on neurobiological technologies as complementary, rather than substitutionary, to existing knowledge in the field. They also explicitly address some potential criticism of the use of neurobiological approaches to the study of human political behaviors and attitudes by discussing the reductionism debate that has dominated so much of the interchange between the social and natural sciences. Arguing against the reductionist view, Hatemi and McDermott assert that exploring the interactional effect of biological and environmental factors on political phenomena will present an ever-broader range of questions and phenomena to be studied in this field of inquiry.

Although most chapters of this book, particularly the ones written in review format, are quite accessible to wide audiences, this volume is based upon scholarly research and is thus primarily directed to scholars whose work engages critically with political studies. The editors' choice to primarily address professional readers achieves an important goal: While many studies applying neurobiological methodologies and technologies to political research are published outside the discipline, this book brings this state-of-the-art knowledge into the disciplinary discourse, encourages scholars to undertake additional work in the field, and provides clear methodological steps for scholars not familiar with these methodologies to explore an ever-growing range of potential research questions in the field.

By bringing to the awareness of scholars the innovative knowledge and technologies available to them, this book makes another important step in marking the development of what is referred to as *the fifth era* in the modern history of political psychology (Elad-Strenger & Mintz, forthcoming). William McGuire (1993) characterized the modern history of political psychology as progressing through three eras, starting from the 1940s, in which researchers have focused on intrapersonal topics such as personality, attitudes, and ideologies. In their book *Political Psychology: Key Reading*, Jost and Sidanius (2004) speculate a possible fourth era, starting in the 1990s, in which most research in political psychology focuses on interpersonal processes, primarily intergroup relations. As Elad-Strenger and Mintz (forthcoming) have suggested, the field has now stepped into its fifth era, in which political-psychological research has broadened into three new areas, one of which is biology, genetics, and neuroscience.

Hatemi and McDermott have been playing an important role in initiating this fifth era. In 2012, Hatemi and McDermott published an article in which they reflect critically on how insights taken from cognitive neuroscience, physiology, genetics, and endocrinological and psychopharmacological approaches and methods might deepen the understanding of political behavior (Hatemi & McDermott, 2012).

The same year, Hatemi and McDermott coedited a special issue of *Political Psychology* dedicated to the political psychology of biology, genetics, and behavior. Studies presented in this special issue included an fMRI analysis of negative stereotyping, race attitudes, and norm violation (Schreiber & Iacoboni, 2012), predicting voter decision making and election outcomes based on nonfacial aspects of candidates' appearance (Spezio, Loesch, Gosselin, Mattes, & Alvarez, 2012), explaining voter turnout based on heritability in a twin study (Loewen & Dawes, 2012), examining the relations between psychological predispositions and political ideology (Verhulst, Hatemi, & Eaves, 2012), a theoretical framework of evolutionary political science (Lopez & McDermott, 2012), and a study of the evolutionary basis of emotions involved in forming attitudes towards welfare (Peterson, Sznycer, Cosmides, & Tooby, 2012).

Hatemi and McDermott have made it their mission to call for an integration of neurobiology and political research. Making the dream of cross-disciplinary work in politics a reality, however, requires more than publishing an edited collection of studies. As Hatemi and McDermott themselves note, this requires "a change in training and incentive structures," in the curriculum and in the way graduate students are educated (Hatemi & McDermott, 2012, p. 22). Nevertheless, not only does this

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book contribute to the field in making its recent achievements and advances known to both scholars and the general public, but also, and perhaps more importantly, it goes a long way in guiding its future research.

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