

Taleb's Complexity Theory Concept of 'Antifragility' Has a Significant Contribution to Make to Positive Psychology as Applied to Wellbeing

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Abstract : Given the increasingly manifest phenomena, as described in complexity theory, of volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity (VUCA), Taleb's notion of 'antifragility', has a significant contribution to make to positive psychology applied to wellbeing. Antifragility is argued to be fundamentally different from the concepts of resiliency; as the ability to recover from failure, and robustness; as the ability to resist failure. Rather it describes the capacity to reorganise in the face of stress in such a way as to cope more effectively with systemic challenges. The concept, which has been applied in disciplines ranging from physics, molecular biology, planning, engineering, and computer science, can now be considered for its application in individual human and social wellbeing. There are strong correlations to Antonovsky's model of 'salutogenesis' in which an attitude and competencies are developed of transforming burdening factors into greater resourcefulness. We demonstrate, from the perspective of neuroscience, how technology measuring nervous system coherence can be coupled to acquired psychodynamic approaches to not only identify contextual stressors, utilise biofeedback instruments for facilitating greater coherence, but apply these insights to specific life stressors that compromise well-being. Employing an on-going case study with BMW South Africa, the neurological mapping is demonstrated together with 'reframing' and emotional anchoring techniques from neurolinguistic programming. The argument is contextualised in the discipline of psychoneuroimmunology which describes the stress pathways from the CNS and endocrine systems and their impact on immune function and the capacity to restore homeostasis.

Keywords : antifragility, complexity, neuroscience, psychoneuroimmunology, salutogenesis, volatility

Conference Title : ICPPW 2016 : International Conference on Positive Psychology and Wellbeing

Conference Location : London, United Kingdom

Conference Dates : June 23-24, 2016