

# I love the smell of vindication in the morning

Yesterday I wrote about Jeremy Rifkin's thesis that our need for social connection and relationship is our deepest need, our most fundamental priority, and the implications of that for the understanding of acting. And this is far from the first time I have written about this.

I heard a teaser this morning for a segment on KPCC, a local NPR station, for an interview with UCLA professor Matthew Lieberman, whose new book *Social: Why Our Brains Are Wired to Connect*. This is how the book is described on Amazon:

*In Social, renowned psychologist Matthew Lieberman explores groundbreaking research in social neuroscience revealing that our need to connect with other people is even more fundamental, more basic, than our need for food or shelter. Because of this, our brain uses its spare time to learn about the social world – other people and our relation to them. It is believed that we must commit 10,000 hours to master a skill. According to Lieberman, each of us has spent 10,000 hours learning to make sense of people and groups by the time we are ten.*

*Social argues that our need to reach out to and connect with others is a primary driver behind our behavior. We believe that pain and pleasure alone guide our actions. Yet, new research using fMRI – including a great deal of original research conducted by Lieberman and his UCLA lab – shows that our brains react to social pain and pleasure in much the same way as they do to physical pain and pleasure. Fortunately, the brain has evolved sophisticated mechanisms for securing our place in the social world. We have a unique ability to read other people's minds, to figure out their hopes, fears, and motivations, allowing us to effectively coordinate our*

*lives with one another. And our most private sense of who we are is intimately linked to the important people and groups in our lives. This wiring often leads us to restrain our selfish impulses for the greater good. These mechanisms lead to behavior that might seem irrational, but is really just the result of our deep social wiring and necessary for our success as a species.*

*Based on the latest cutting edge research, the findings in Social have important real-world implications. Our schools and businesses, for example, attempt to minimize social distractions. But this is exactly the wrong thing to do to encourage engagement and learning, and literally shuts down the social brain, leaving powerful neuro-cognitive resources untapped. The insights revealed in this pioneering book suggest ways to improve learning in schools, make the workplace more productive, and improve our overall well-being.*

This is essential for actors to grasp: every scene has a conflict, but conflict must be understood as the breakdown of an otherwise meaningful, or at the very least potentially meaningful, connection. The vaunted stakes of a scene can only be grasped by seeing the scene in this light.