

BLOCPSYCH, LLC · 2026

# The Blockchain Psychology Reading List

*Curated books, papers, and resources at the intersection of behavioral science and  
blockchain — with annotations by C.J. Carswell*

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## A Note on This List

*The most dangerous person in any domain is the one who has read nothing. The second most dangerous is the one who has read only inside their domain. This list exists to make the behavioral science of blockchain readable across both boundaries.*

This reading list is organized in five categories, moving from the foundational behavioral science that underlies the Theory of Blockchain Psychology, through the social and cultural frameworks that explain blockchain as a human phenomenon, to the specific domain literature, group dynamics, and ethical dimensions that complete the picture.

Each entry includes an annotation explaining what the book contributes to understanding the human element of blockchain technology, read through the lens of behavioral science applied to decentralized systems.

**Books marked with a gold border are particularly foundational to the Theory of Blockchain Psychology and the BE DAO Framework.**

Category 1 ·

# Behavioral Economics Foundations

*The intellectual bedrock — books CJ draws from directly in the Theory of Blockchain Psychology*

## ***Thinking, Fast and Slow***

**Daniel Kahneman · 2011**

*Cognitive Psychology · Behavioral Economics*

### THE ANNOTATION

The foundational text on dual-process cognition — System 1 (fast, automatic, emotional) and System 2 (slow, deliberate, analytical). Kahneman synthesizes decades of research into an accessible account of how human judgment actually works, including Prospect Theory, the Availability Heuristic, Anchoring, and Loss Aversion.

### RELEVANCE TO BLOCKCHAIN PSYCHOLOGY

*Every cognitive bias in the Behavioral Web3 Glossary, every failure mode in the DAO Governance Health Check, and every intervention in the Decision Hygiene Template traces directly to this book. If you read nothing else on this list, read this.*

## ***Noise: A Flaw in Human Judgment***

**Daniel Kahneman, Olivier Sibony & Cass R. Sunstein · 2021**

*Cognitive Psychology · Decision Science*

### THE ANNOTATION

The companion to *Thinking, Fast and Slow*. Where bias describes predictable, systematic error, noise describes unwanted variability — identical situations producing radically different judgments. The authors introduce Decision Hygiene: structured practices that reduce noise without requiring identification of its exact source.

### RELEVANCE TO BLOCKCHAIN PSYCHOLOGY

*The direct intellectual source of the Decision Hygiene framework in the BE DAO White Paper (Carswell, 2024). Understanding noise is essential for DAO governance design — noise, not only bias, is what makes governance decisions inconsistent, unpredictable, and vulnerable to behavioral exploitation. The System Noise concept in the BE DAO framework derives explicitly from this work.*

## ***Nudge: Improving Decisions About Health, Wealth, and Happiness***

**Richard H. Thaler & Cass R. Sunstein · 2008**

*Behavioral Economics · Choice Architecture*

### THE ANNOTATION

The foundational text on choice architecture — how the design of decision environments predictably influences behavior without restricting options or changing financial incentives. Thaler and Sunstein introduce libertarian paternalism: the idea that good choice architecture guides people toward better outcomes while preserving full freedom of choice.

### RELEVANCE TO BLOCKCHAIN PSYCHOLOGY

*Every default setting in a blockchain protocol, every UI element in a DeFi dashboard, every governance proposal template is a nudge. This book provides the framework for doing nudge design deliberately rather than accidentally. The BE DAO Framework nudge integration pillar derives directly from this work.*

## ***Misbehaving: The Making of Behavioral Economics***

Richard H. Thaler · 2015

*Behavioral Economics · Academic Memoir*

### THE ANNOTATION

Nobel laureate Thaler's accessible history of behavioral economics, told through his own research on mental accounting, the endowment effect, the sunk cost fallacy, and the conditions under which humans systematically deviate from classical economic predictions.

### RELEVANCE TO BLOCKCHAIN PSYCHOLOGY

*Thaler's mental accounting concept explains a generation of crypto portfolio decisions — why airdropped tokens are treated as house money, why DeFi yield is reinvested recklessly while earned income is held conservatively, and why investors hold losing positions long after the rational case has evaporated.*

## ***Influence: The Psychology of Persuasion***

Robert B. Cialdini · 1984

*Social Psychology · Persuasion Science*

### THE ANNOTATION

The landmark study of six principles of influence — Reciprocity, Commitment and Consistency, Social Proof, Authority, Liking, and Scarcity. Each principle describes a reliable psychological trigger that bypasses System 2 deliberation and activates automatic compliance.

### RELEVANCE TO BLOCKCHAIN PSYCHOLOGY

*Every pump and dump, every influencer skill, every rug pull, and every airdrop campaign exploits one or more of these principles. This book is the minimum required reading for anyone participating in Web3. Knowing the principles makes them visible — which is the first step toward rational response.*

## ***Predictably Irrational***

Dan Ariely · 2008

*Behavioral Economics · Consumer Psychology*

### THE ANNOTATION

Ariely's accessible exploration of the systematic ways humans deviate from rational behavior, with particular focus on pricing psychology, the power of free, social vs. market norms, and the role of expectations in shaping experience.

### RELEVANCE TO BLOCKCHAIN PSYCHOLOGY

*Ariely's analysis of free as a psychological category applies directly to airdrop strategy and free resource design. His work on social vs. market norms explains why community-based blockchain projects that shift to purely financial incentive models consistently lose their most committed participants.*

## ***Sapiens: A Brief History of Humankind***

Yuval Noah Harari · 2011

*Macro History · Social Theory*

### THE ANNOTATION

Harari's account of how Homo sapiens came to dominate the planet through the cognitive revolution — the ability to create and believe in shared fictions, which Harari calls Imagined Orders. Money, nations, religions, laws, and corporations are all Imagined Orders: real because sufficient numbers of people collectively believe and act as if they are real.

### RELEVANCE TO BLOCKCHAIN PSYCHOLOGY

*The Imagined Order is the most important concept for understanding what blockchain technology actually is — not technically but socially. Bitcoin is an Imagined Order. Every DAO is an Imagined Order. Web3 is an Imagined Order. This is not a weakness: it is the mechanism by which all large-scale human cooperation operates.*

## ***Homo Deus: A Brief History of Tomorrow***

Yuval Noah Harari · 2015

*Future History · Technology Philosophy*

### THE ANNOTATION

Where Sapiens explains how we arrived at the present, Homo Deus asks where the species is heading as biological evolution is superseded by technological design. Harari introduces Dataism — the ideology that treats data flows as the supreme value — and examines what artificial intelligence means for human agency.

### RELEVANCE TO BLOCKCHAIN PSYCHOLOGY

*Essential for anyone building at the AI-blockchain intersection. Harari's concept of Dataism directly anticipates the cultural dynamics of Web3's data sovereignty movement, and his analysis of algorithmic optimization vs. human experience provides the philosophical context for understanding Automation Bias.*

## ***The Wisdom of Crowds***

James Surowiecki · 2004

*Social Science · Group Decision-Making*

### THE ANNOTATION

Surowiecki's investigation of when groups make better decisions than individuals, and the specific conditions under which collective intelligence emerges vs. degrades into collective failure. The four conditions for crowd wisdom: diversity, independence, decentralization, and effective aggregation.

### RELEVANCE TO BLOCKCHAIN PSYCHOLOGY

*Surowiecki's conditions for crowd wisdom map almost precisely onto the conditions for functional DAO governance — and his analysis of when crowds fail maps equally precisely onto the DAO governance failure modes documented in the BE DAO Framework. Every DAO constitution should be stress-tested against his conditions before launch.*

## ***Trust: The Social Virtues and the Creation of Prosperity***

Francis Fukuyama · 1995

THE ANNOTATION

Fukuyama's analysis of how social trust functions as a form of economic infrastructure — how high-trust societies produce more economic value and more functional institutions than low-trust ones, and why the erosion of social trust has long-term civilizational consequences.

RELEVANCE TO BLOCKCHAIN PSYCHOLOGY

*Fukuyama provides the theoretical foundation for understanding why blockchain's promise of trustless systems runs counter to deep human psychological needs. Technical trustlessness and behavioral trust are different problems — solving only the technical one produces systems that are cryptographically secure but humanly abandoned.*

## ***The Bitcoin Standard***

Saifedean Ammous · 2018

*Austrian Economics · Monetary Theory*

### THE ANNOTATION

Ammous makes the Austrian economics case for Bitcoin as sound money — resistant to inflation, government control, and the short-term time preferences that lead fiat monetary systems to decay. The book is as much a cultural manifesto as an economic analysis.

### RELEVANCE TO BLOCKCHAIN PSYCHOLOGY

*Essential not because all its conclusions are correct, but because it contains the Imagined Order that animates Bitcoin's most committed community. Understanding why serious people believe what they believe about Bitcoin — the narrative infrastructure, not just the technical architecture — is prerequisite to analyzing adoption psychology at scale.*

## ***The Infinite Machine***

Camila Russo · 2020

*Narrative Non-Fiction · Blockchain History*

### THE ANNOTATION

The definitive human story of Ethereum's creation — told through the personalities, conflicts, governance crises, and ideological schisms that shaped the world's second-largest blockchain. Russo had extraordinary access and the narrative reads as compellingly as literary fiction.

### RELEVANCE TO BLOCKCHAIN PSYCHOLOGY

*The most important blockchain book for behavioral scientists is the one that tells the human story. Russo's account of the DAO hack, the resulting hard fork, and the community schisms that followed is a masterclass in social identity theory, authority bias, groupthink, and the fragility of Imagined Orders under adversarial stress.*

## ***The Internet of Money, Volume 1***

Andreas M. Antonopoulos · 2016

*Technology Philosophy · Accessible Communication*

### THE ANNOTATION

A collection of Antonopoulos's talks and essays explaining why Bitcoin and blockchain matter as social, political, and economic technologies. His ability to make technically complex ideas accessible without sacrificing accuracy is unmatched in the space.

### RELEVANCE TO BLOCKCHAIN PSYCHOLOGY

*Antonopoulos models the Cognitive Alignment that all blockchain education should aspire to: technically accurate, emotionally resonant, and genuinely accessible to non-experts. His framing of blockchain as a protocol for human trust is the best plain-language expression of what the technology does at the behavioral level.*

Category 4 ·

# Social Psychology & Group Dynamics

*Understanding the behavioral ecosystem of communities*

## ***Extraordinary Popular Delusions and the Madness of Crowds***

Charles Mackay · 1841

*Social History · Speculative Psychology*

### THE ANNOTATION

The original text on crowd psychology and speculative manias — documenting the tulip mania, the South Sea Bubble, the Mississippi Scheme. Written in 1841 and still immediately recognizable in every crypto market cycle.

### RELEVANCE TO BLOCKCHAIN PSYCHOLOGY

*The most humbling book on this list. Every speculative mania in blockchain history follows the same psychological script Mackay documented two centuries ago. The specific assets change. The behavioral dynamics are identical. Required reading for any serious investor and a necessary corrective to the uniqueness fallacy that every new market cycle generates.*

## ***Groupthink: Psychological Studies of Policy Decisions and Fiascoes***

Irving Janis · 1972

*Social Psychology · Group Decision-Making*

### THE ANNOTATION

Janis coined the term groupthink studying the psychological dynamics behind US foreign policy catastrophes. He identified eight specific symptoms that characterize groups making catastrophically poor decisions: illusion of invulnerability, collective rationalization, belief in inherent morality, pressure on dissenters, self-censorship, illusion of unanimity, and self-appointed mindguards.

### RELEVANCE TO BLOCKCHAIN PSYCHOLOGY

*These eight symptoms appear with striking regularity in failed DAO governance. The DAO Governance Health Check's Community and Social Health dimension was built in direct response to the failure modes Janis documented. Essential reading for any DAO founder or governance lead.*

## ***The Crowd: A Study of the Popular Mind***

Gustave Le Bon · 1895

*Social Psychology · Crowd Behavior*

### THE ANNOTATION

Le Bon's foundational study of how individuals behave differently as members of crowds than as individuals — more emotional, more susceptible to suggestion, more extreme, and less rational. His observation that intellectual sophistication provides little protection against crowd psychology remains accurate in digital communities.

### RELEVANCE TO BLOCKCHAIN PSYCHOLOGY

*Le Bon is the intellectual ancestor of everything we know about herd behavior in financial markets and online community dynamics. His analysis of crowd contagion and the subordination of individual judgment to collective emotion directly predicts the behavioral dynamics of crypto market cycles and DAO governance crises.*

# ***Influence Without Authority***

Allan R. Cohen & David L. Bradford · 1989

*Organizational Psychology · Leadership*

## THE ANNOTATION

Cohen and Bradford's framework for building influence in environments where formal authority is absent — through exchange, currency identification, and reciprocity networks. Their model is designed specifically for the lateral, peer-based organizations that DAOs aspire to be.

## RELEVANCE TO BLOCKCHAIN PSYCHOLOGY

*DAO governance is, by design, an environment without formal authority. Every governance failure resulting from unclear leadership, conflicting incentives, or community fragmentation is a failure that this framework is specifically designed to address. Essential for DAO founders building governance systems that cannot rely on hierarchy.*

Category 5 ·

# AI, Ethics & the Digital Future

*The behavioral implications of intelligent automation*

## ***Weapons of Math Destruction***

Cathy O'Neil · 2016

*Data Science · Technology Ethics*

### THE ANNOTATION

The rigorous analysis of how algorithms designed to optimize measurable objectives consistently harm the people they claim to serve — by encoding historical bias, creating feedback loops, and operating at scale without accountability. Her three-part definition of a Weapon of Math Destruction — opacity, scale, damage — is a useful diagnostic tool.

### RELEVANCE TO BLOCKCHAIN PSYCHOLOGY

*The most important counterargument to the "code is law" ideology in blockchain. Smart contracts and DAO governance algorithms inherit the biases of their creators and encode them at scale with the authority of mathematical precision. Essential reading before building any governance algorithm.*

## ***The Age of Surveillance Capitalism***

Shoshana Zuboff · 2019

*Political Economy · Technology Criticism*

### THE ANNOTATION

Zuboff's comprehensive analysis of how the systematic extraction of human behavioral data has become the raw material of a new economic order in which human experience is the product being manufactured, modified, and sold.

### RELEVANCE TO BLOCKCHAIN PSYCHOLOGY

*Zuboff provides the most thorough analysis of what Web3's data sovereignty movement is building in opposition to. Understanding surveillance capitalism is prerequisite to understanding why self-sovereign identity resonates so powerfully with people who understand the alternative.*

## ***Human Compatible: AI and the Problem of Control***

Stuart Russell · 2019

*AI Safety · Computer Science*

### THE ANNOTATION

The leading AI safety researcher's case for a fundamentally different approach to AI design — centered on human preferences rather than fixed objectives. Russell argues that standard AI design creates systems that are technically successful and behaviorally catastrophic because they optimize for exactly what they are told to optimize for.

### RELEVANCE TO BLOCKCHAIN PSYCHOLOGY

*Russell's framework for human-compatible AI directly parallels Cognitive Alignment in blockchain psychology: systems should be designed for how humans actually behave, not for how rational-agent models assume they behave. The Automation Bias problem — central to the Unlocking the Black Box masterclass — is exactly the failure mode Russell is designing to prevent.*

# *Atlas of AI: Power, Politics, and the Planetary Costs of Artificial Intelligence*

Kate Crawford · 2021

*Technology Criticism · Political Economy*

## THE ANNOTATION

Crawford maps the invisible infrastructure of AI systems — from rare earth mineral extraction to underpaid data labelers. Her analysis reveals AI not as a disembodied intelligence but as a deeply material, political, and human system with largely invisible social costs.

## RELEVANCE TO BLOCKCHAIN PSYCHOLOGY

*Crawford provides the grounding ethical context for building at the AI-blockchain intersection. Essential for anyone taking the Global Ethics pillar of the BE DAO Framework seriously — and for anyone who wants their blockchain work to reflect genuine values rather than only stated ones.*

# BlocPsych, LLC · Original Works

*The foundational texts of the Theory of Blockchain Psychology*

## ***Blockchain Psychology: Blockchain, Behavior & the Quest for a Better Future***

C.J. Carswell · 2026

*Behavioral Science · Blockchain · Original Research*

### THE ANNOTATION

The foundational text of the Theory of Blockchain Psychology — the first systematic behavioral framework for understanding how humans interact with, adopt, and reshape decentralized systems. Carswell applies dual-process cognition, Prospect Theory, social identity theory, and Imagined Orders to blockchain adoption, DAO governance, and Web3 wealth psychology.

### RELEVANCE TO BLOCKCHAIN PSYCHOLOGY

*Available on Amazon in print and Kindle. The foundational text from which all BlocPsych products and services derive.*

## ***BE DAO: A Whitepaper for Managing Blockchain Communities***

C.J. Carswell · 2024

*Academic White Paper · Peer-Reviewed · Published on SSRN*

### THE ANNOTATION

The BE DAO White Paper operationalizes the Theory of Blockchain Psychology into a deployable governance framework. It integrates Decision Hygiene (Kahneman, Sibony and Sunstein), Behavioral Economics (Thaler, Cialdini, Ariely), and Global Ethics into a three-pillar system for building DAOs that work with human nature.

### RELEVANCE TO BLOCKCHAIN PSYCHOLOGY

*Available free on SSRN. Peer-reviewed. The direct intellectual source of the DAO Governance Health Check, the Web3 Decision Hygiene Template, and BlocPsych governance consulting services.*

# Key Academic Papers

The following papers are the primary academic sources underlying the Theory of Blockchain Psychology and the BE DAO Framework.

—Kahneman, D. & Tversky, A. (1979). Prospect Theory: An Analysis of Decision under Risk. *Econometrica*, 47(2), 263–1291.

*The foundational paper establishing loss aversion and asymmetric weighting of gains vs. losses. The empirical bedrock of behavioral economics applied throughout blockchain psychology.*

—Tversky, A. & Kahneman, D. (1974). Judgment under Uncertainty: Heuristics and Biases. *Science*, 185(4157), 1124–1131.

*The original paper naming the Availability Heuristic, Representativeness, and Anchoring as primary sources of systematic human judgment error.*

—Thaler, R.H. & Sunstein, C.R. (2003). Libertarian Paternalism. *American Economic Review*, 93(2), 175–179.

*The paper introducing choice architecture and libertarian paternalism — the philosophical foundation of Nudge Theory as applied in the BE DAO Framework.*

—Nakamoto, S. (2008). Bitcoin: A Peer-to-Peer Electronic Cash System. [bitcoin.org](https://bitcoin.org).

*The original Bitcoin white paper — the Imagined Order in its founding form. Read it not only for technical content but as the document that launched the largest financial Imagined Order since the creation of fiat currency.*

—Ostrom, E. (1990). *Governing the Commons*. Cambridge University Press.

*Ostrom's Nobel-winning framework for stable commons governance. Her eight design principles should be required reading for every DAO architect before writing a single governance contract.*

—Carswell, C.J. (2024). BE DAO: A Whitepaper for Managing Blockchain Communities. BlocPsych, LLC. SSRN.

*The peer-reviewed source of the BE DAO Framework — integrating Decision Hygiene, Behavioral Economics, and Global Ethics into a deployable DAO governance architecture.*

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