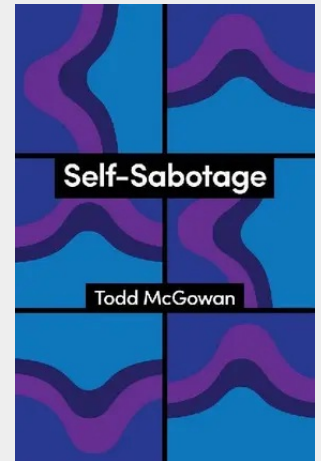


Self-Sabotage

How We Try Not to Flourish

Self-Sabotage contends that an unconscious impulse to undermine our own interests plays a dominant role in our lives. The idea of a primary drive to self-destruction is at odds with the prevailing common sense in a world where almost everyone believes that we strive to flourish. Yet often we fail to flourish not because some people are wicked but because the drive to sabotage ourselves outweighs the pleasures of flourishing. Our tendency to self-sabotage distorts our politics, throws off our romantic relationships, and generally makes human existence difficult. It is why we become involved with partners who continually create unhappiness for us, and also why we elect leaders who derail the nation. Although the act of self-sabotage is clearly self-destructive, it appeals to us because it has a creative power. Through sacrificing ourselves, we create sublime value in the world. Our willingness to sacrifice our own interest elevates the value of the object we pursue and lifts it out of the realm of the ordinary. Self-sabotage leads to immense amounts of social harm. But at the same time, the tendency to self-destruction provides the basis for our ability to act ethically and surmount social pressure in the name of some higher value.

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