
Review-Essay

A Grammar of Social Relations

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Structures of Social Life: The Four Elementary Forms of Human Relations by Alan Page Fiske, 1993. New York, NY: Free Press. Paper: \$17.95, ISBN 0-02-906687-5, x+486 pages.

In his celebrated essay on Tolstoy, Isaiah Berlin distinguishes two kinds of thinkers. One kind, the foxes, are fascinated by variety, and travel over a wide intellectual territory in search of it; their thought is diffuse and protean. The other kind, the hedgehogs, have more centripetal ways, bringing the spoils of their more limited explorations home to a unifying system of ideas. With this elegantly drawn distinction, Berlin captures two stylistic poles that characterize individual thinkers and entire disciplines (Berlin, 1992).

Cultural anthropologists have tended to be foxes. Not only has a part of their disciplinary identity been invested in the study of far-flung uniqueness, and the rejection of comparisons to a single, generally western, point of reference; they have also been quick to take up crafty post-structuralist approaches to language, narrative, and the literariness of ethnographic writing. Consequently, culture is understood to be incommensurable, too slippery to be held within our interpretive grids. Attempts to impose such grids, and to assess cross-cultural similarities, are criticized as clumsy, positivist, universalist, and essentializing.

Alan Fiske is a hedgehog who was raised by foxes. His book is an unabashed attempt to find system in social relations, performed with the hedgehog's thoroughness but mindful of the lines of attack that it opens to anthropological critics—and as engaged with human diversity as they are. The book has none of the verbal flamboyance or rhetorical cleverness of some of these critics, but cautiously argues the case for taking cross-cultural similarities in social life seriously, without reduction or the tendentious listing of "universals" that characterizes much work on the subject (e.g., Brown, 1991). The case is

patient, scrupulous, and exhaustively referenced (hedgehogs also tend to write long books).

A PRÉCIS

In bald summary, Fiske's fundamental claim is that everyday social living is undergirded by a small number of elementary cognitive forms or structures, which he calls "relational models." The relational models organize a broad range of social activities: the distribution and contribution of resources, work, social identity, interpretations of misfortune, moral judgment, social motivation, and much more besides. The models are in some sense innate and universal, and emerge in an orderly sequence over the course of development. This sequence corresponds to the increasing order of formal complexity of the models, whose operations can be given abstract mathematical expression. The models do not emerge simply by observational learning, but provide schematic frames for such learning without which it would be disorderly and chaotic. Consequently, cultural learning corresponds more to parameter setting in Chomskyan linguistics; each culture sets which social activities will be organized by which components of a "universal grammar" of models, and socialization therefore consists in the learning of the culture's distinctive rules of implementation of the species' shared social-cognitive inheritance. Socialization is therefore more a matter of the externalization of highly constraining inner patterns than of the internalization of social organization.

DESCRIPTION OF THE RELATIONAL MODELS

Fiske proposes four relational models, to which he gives the names *Communal Sharing*, *Equality Matching*, *Authority Ranking* and *Market Pricing*. These models govern social relationships singly or in combination, so that although actually existing relationships may prototypically resemble one model, the models are not simply types of relationships. The *Communal Sharing* model organizes relationships in terms of collective belonging or solidarity. Members of an in-group are treated as equivalent elements of a bounded set, and consequently individual distinctiveness is ignored. Grounding principles are unity, identity, intimacy, conformity, interdependence, and ideas of shared substance. By contrast, the *Authority Ranking* model

organizes relationships in asymmetrical terms. Parties to relationships governed by this model are hierarchically ordered, ranked transitively according to status-markers such as age, skill, knowledge, class or social position. Higher-ranked individuals ("vertical" metaphors predominate) are authorized to command, protect, dominate, bestow, precede, and show largesse; lower-ranked individuals defer, obey, show loyalty and respect, and yield precedence.

The *Equality Matching* model is in some ways directly opposed to *Authority Ranking*, organizing the construction and interpretation of relationships in strictly egalitarian terms. This model is manifest most distinctly in turn-taking, distributions of equal shares, democratic voting and tit-for-tat retaliation. *Equality Matching* focuses close and unforgiving attention on reciprocity, and upholds fairness as the primary value. The *Market Pricing* model, finally, organizes relationships with reference to a common scale of ratio values such as money. Emphasis is on proportions; earning a wage based on hours worked, getting a good return on an investment of effort, or efficient use of time. Social transactions are reckoned as rational calculations of cost and benefit. Relationships are implicitly or explicitly understood in terms of commodities, with autonomous participants seeking benefit through joint trading.

By Fiske's account, the four relational models are not commensurable or reducible to one another. Although the kinds of social reckoning implied by them can be arranged, as above, in an order of increasing formal complexity, no model supercedes another. Rather, each model is discrete and autonomous, especially fitted, perhaps, for its own field of social life. By ordering the models "horizontally," in this way, Fiske makes the important point that to privilege one above others is itself a culturally-saturated value judgment. Fiske's theory gives no comfort to those who would argue for any sovereign principle of social organization; cultures forge successful social organization from quite different admixtures of the models. Moreover, each model has its own social pathologies: *Communal Sharing* has the varieties of out-group hatred; *Equality Matching* has the endless cycling of retaliatory feuding; *Authority Ranking* has oppressive domination; and *Market Pricing* has the neglect of losers in the Darwinian game. Fiske is particularly keen to expose the fallacy of elevating *Market Pricing* to preeminence, and makes a good case for it

having too strong a hold on our thinking. Contrary to the economic assumptions that support current evolutionary psychology (Cosmides, 1989; Tooby & Cosmides, 1992), not all social figuring is or should be a matter of cost/benefit calculation. Moreover, selfish individualism is only one, distinctively Western, implementation of the more basic *Market Pricing* model, whose adverse and self-defeating social consequences are legion (see also Fiske, 1992).

Fiske traces the conceptual history of his four models through the writings of a Who's Who of social theorists, as well as an exhaustive assortment of contemporary researchers. The sheer density of citations shows a remarkable breadth of interdisciplinary reading, and also indicates the variety of domains in which echoes of the models can be heard. Fiske's referencing habits recall a story told of the psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan, whose dissertation advisor told him that he was to be pitied if he had read everything in his bibliography. At the same time, Fiske's specification of the models reflects more than magpie-like collection of others' ideas, but a very substantial effort of integration and abstraction. The conceptual schemes that he brings together typically fail to register one or more of the models, conflate some pair of them, apply them to single domains, or frame them in anachronistic ways. Fiske's attempts to find a pattern, extrapolate it to diverse domains of social action and thought, and formalize its central features, are compelling in total, even if they sometimes seem to overreach in some of the details.

Fiske's efforts are rendered more compelling by the absence of totalizing swagger and by a preliminary account of social-psychological research motivated by the theory. This and subsequent work has provided strong evidence for the involvement of the models in a variety of social-cognitive activities (Fiske, 1993a,b; Fiske, Haslam & Fiske, 1991), and for their conceptual integrity and discreteness (Haslam, 1994a,b; Haslam & Fiske, 1992). The most compelling support for Fiske's argument, however, comes from a monograph-length case study of the Moose people of Burkina Faso that composes one section of the book. This study, based on years of personal fieldwork, illustrates the fruitfulness of the four models in making sense of concrete social arrangements. The anthropological reader, especially, will get a sense of what Fiskean ethnography would look like. It is certainly a much more textured exercise than simply labeling specific

arrangements with one of four tags, as the skeptical might imagine. In fact, Fiske shows by example how a culture's individuality can be respectfully grasped in terms of elaborations on a constraining vocabulary of basic structures.

These elaborations are organized by the culture's "implementation rules," which determine which aspects of social organization are to be governed by which models, and according to what parameters. For instance, the harvesting of crops might be realized by a distinctive implementation of *Equality Matching*, in which it must be decided who will be required to perform the equal shares (perhaps low-status post-pubertal females only), and whether these equal shares will be organized by turn-taking or synchronous activity. As the relational models are essentially content-free, they provide a language for comparing cultures without positing substantive universals, and allow wide variation in the details of implementation. Whether the relational models place a constraint on the interpretation of cultures that is perceived to be more enabling than restricting will largely be a matter of conceptual taste. However, the distinction between invariant universal structures and relativising implementation rules is a well-precedented theoretical move that shows the matrix from which Fiske's theory has emerged.

This matrix is in many respects Chomskyan. Fiske's theory shares with generative linguistics a distaste for domain-general principles of learning and a fondness for nativism, cognitive universals, epigenetic development through parameter-setting, and formalist theory construction. Like Chomsky, Fiske is ready to argue that an unconscious cognitive competence of great sophistication underlies everyday social performance, despite all of its "ungrammatical" foibles and frictions. The relational models theory, in other words, presents a universal grammar of social relations, or perhaps four distinct grammars, out of whose rules and representations the myriad local forms of social life can be generated.

This grammatical approach has already been extended to other domains of human psychology by Jackendoff (1992, 1994), who shares Fiske's belief in the plausibility of a universal grammar of social relations, and less programmatically by Ekman (1989) in the analysis of human facial emotion. The approach is certain to shape future theory design in psychology in the next decade. Common to its claims is the

position, recently fashionable in cognitive science, that the psyche is divisible into more or less modular parts (Fodor, 1983). Each part is understood to have a distinct set of tasks and a distinct way of organizing their processing (Hirshfeld & Gelman, 1994). In the context of a rising recognition of the centrality of social cognition to cognition in general (Byrne & Whiten, 1988; Cheney & Seyfarth, 1990; Tooby & Cosmides, 1992; Whiten, 1992), Fiske's account of one fundamental element of social cognition is particularly timely. However, its value does not simply lie in contemporary cognitive science debate, although its contribution is inseparable from it. Rather, the relational models theory has many implications for social theory generally, and for the understanding of aspects of human psychology that fall outside the domain of cognitive science. The remainder of this essay will consider the implications of the theory for matters of more central concern to readers of this journal.

CLINICAL IMPLICATIONS

Fiske's book rarely addresses the study of psychopathology in any direct fashion, and its relevance to it is currently a matter of speculation only, awaiting the more extensive theoretical and empirical treatment that it deserves. We turn, then, to a discussion of two areas of inquiry that this book opens up: the implications of discrepant implementation for the study of personality pathology, interpersonal conflict, transference, and cross-cultural differences in the milder psychopathologies; and the 'syntactic' approach to symptom morphology.

DISCREPANT IMPLEMENTATION AND PSYCHOPATHOLOGY

If Fiske's models were used in perfectly calibrated ways by all members of a society—each individual mastering all modes of social reckoning in addition to the culture's rules for implementing them for all possible social tasks—then social life might proceed with a minimum of conflict. However, there are good reasons to see this picture as a functionalist fantasy. For one thing, social encounters, apart from the most formalized, necessarily involve a process of negotiation or framing in which the positions of interactants become clarified. For another, new social forms are always in the process of developing, so that implementation rules must be invented and revised, with all of

the resulting ambiguity and space for disagreement that this implies. Beyond this, humans cognitively equipped with alternative ways of apprehending and organizing their social conduct can be expected to experience some desire to resist those relational positionings that disadvantage them relative to others. For instance, although *Authority Ranking* relationships are not simply exploitative, and are therefore potentially stable, subordinates who can imagine equality sometimes have incentives to recreate their relations as they wish them to be. This desire may be especially pressing for the maturing child and for others striving to attain status or power. All in all, a measure of negotiation, disagreement and jostling is to be expected in interpersonal living, and Fiske's theory can be put to work accounting for it.

Two psychiatric domains in which interpersonal conflict looms large are the personality disorders and the psychotherapeutic setting. Fiske's book sketches an account of how individual differences in the implementation of his models might underly some forms of personality disturbance. Sociopaths, for instance, may have a general lack of motivation to engage in any of the four models, although they may be quite skilled in an affectless understanding of the social rules that they undergird. The dependent personality, on the other hand, may have a tendency to implement *Communal Sharing* relations that exceeds the culture's norms of tolerance. Whether for reasons of an increased motivation to seek communal relations or from a cognitive disposition to register social relations in terms of equivalence and shared substance, dependent individuals would tend to enter into social encounters with expectations that are discordant with those of others'. The likelihood of conflict—the other's resentful feelings of imposition, the dependent's dashed hopes of true communion and desperately indiscriminate cleaving to idealized figures—are not difficult to imagine. The role of dependency as a risk factor in major depression makes this issue a crucial one for further research (Bornstein, 1993; Zuroff & Mongrain, 1987).

It is an interesting and revealing exercise to draw further correspondences. It is possible to understand borderline personality as another deformity of *Communal Sharing* relations, and paranoid and passive-aggressive personalities as over-developed tendencies to reckon social relations in terms of authority. Narcissists seem baffled and unmoved by egalitarian relations, and the exaggerated scrupu-

lousness, money-focus and lack of spontaneous generosity of obsessionals may represent, in part, a hypertrophy of *Market Pricing*. Speculations of this kind are risky, of course, but long overdue. Despite the common acknowledgement that the personality disorders are disorders of interpersonal living, precious little work has sought to understand systematically how they should be characterized in those terms. Fiske's models offer a rich vocabulary for this task, but go beyond mere description to an argument about mechanism. By this account, the interpersonal phenomenology of personality disorders stems from specifiable lacks, excesses or peculiarities in a set of discrete cognitive-motivational structures that have clear functions in everyday social life. Moreover, a Fiskean account of personality pathology, resting on an orderly, epigenetic emergence of the relational models, could hold out a tentative hand to psychodynamic theories of the origins of personality disturbance. Such an alliance seems well prepared at present with the advent of serious concern for relational concepts in psychoanalytic discourse (e.g., Mitchell, 1988). As Schafer (1993) notes, from the standpoint of object relations theory, "character [refers] to the patterning of preferred, customary, real, and fantasied relations with others" (p. 75), a patterning that a Fiskean approach might do much to elucidate.

Before any such alliance can emerge, however, it will be necessary to clarify several aspects of the account of personality disorders that Fiske's theory affords. First, it remains to be seen whether it is better to explain the associated relational peculiarities in terms of cognitive or motivational aspects of the models, to the extent that they can be decoupled. Crudely, do stable patterns of discrepant implementation result from not knowing the rules or living by them to legalistic excess, or by knowing the rules but either having no urge, or an exaggerated urge, to enact them. Second, it will be important to clarify whether stronger or weaker forms of the Fiskean account of personality disorders are preferable. Are disorders caused by deformities of the relational models and their implementation, mediated by them but caused by other factors, or merely characterizable by them without their playing any role in mechanism? For instance, dependent personality might be caused by a disturbance of *Communal Sharing* implementation acquired in the early development of that model, by congenitally extreme social motivation coupled with expe-

riences of severe loss that express themselves through an otherwise normal *Communal Sharing* model, or might just be helpfully described in terms of a four-fold schema having no causal relevance.

Currently questions of this kind are quite unanswerable. However, a Fiskean account is promising for several reasons. It does not simply describe but delivers a preliminary explanation of underlying mechanism. Its explanation is not ad hoc, but invokes a general theory of shared, 'normal' mental structure to account for abnormality. Moreover, to the extent that the models are indeed universal, with rules of implementation that differ between cultures, they offer a way of making sense of personality variants world-wide that can acknowledge the culture-relativity of deviance. In the process, differences between cultures can be entertained in the same terms as differences between people. To take a popular example (Doi, 1981), ordinary manifestations of dependency in Japanese culture might fall within the pathological spectrum in North America because of differing cultural implementations. Similarly, the categories of disturbance or sanctionable conduct in any given culture may be understood in light of the culture's distinctive pattern of elaboration and implementation of the four models. In any given culture, some models will be more richly elaborated and more extensively implemented (i.e., "hypercognized", Levy, 1984) than others, and we might expect that the misimplementation of the more elaborated models and the over-implementation of the less elaborated ones will be culturally marked.

TRANSFERENCE

Another form of discrepant implementation with clinical implications is the psychotherapeutic relationship. From a Fiskean point of view, this relationship is particularly involved, subject to the full variety of interpretive and interactive resources and novel enough for its participants to have to negotiate its terms. Although the therapeutic relationship commands a communal intimacy and a sense of exclusive partnership, it is also, at root, a market transaction organized around equitable benefit to both parties. Similarly, the therapist inevitably holds a position of authority, whether it be as someone presumed to have special knowledge, someone warranted to advise or guide, or simply someone with power to decide and determine the patient's future. In their demoralized condition, patients are typically

ready to submit to this asymmetrical arrangement, although as treatment continues pressure for a more egalitarian alliance will tend to emerge. Although Fiske is quite explicit about how the models commonly combine in the cognitive organization of social relationships, the psychotherapeutic relation seems unmatched in its ambiguity and possibilities for misunderstanding.

The usual name for such misunderstanding is transference. In essence, the term refers to a perceived discrepancy between the implicit relational definitions of therapist and patient, typically accompanied by intense emotion. Following Leavy's (1980) useful definition, "transference is a misrecognition... of the other in the dialogue, more intensified perhaps than in ordinary conversation" (p. 41). The patient is taken to be acting on a mistaken understanding of the therapeutic relationship, with the further inference that the mistake lies in the patient's recreation of relationships from the distant past, operating through an unconscious misrecognition of the therapist. Several questions might be raised about this phenomenon. First, is it best understood as something distinctive to the therapeutic setting, or might its range be broader and more general? Second, is it best understood to involve a mistaking of individuals, or a mistaking of kinds of relationship? For example, is the critical element the mistaking of the therapist for one's father, say, or the mistaking of the therapeutic relationship with the kind of relationship that one had with one's father? Third, are the appeals to its infantile origins and individual pathology, rather than to contemporaneous processes and discrepancies between the expectations of two interactants, well justified? Finally, is the phenomenon necessarily driven by emotion or might it be better to give primacy to the cognitive element of discrepant expectations. To quote Leavy (1980) again, "is [transference] a desire based on a misrecognition or a misrecognition based on a desire?" (p. 41).

The outlines of a Fiskean account should be clear at this point, and it would take clear positions on each of these questions. In the context of a relationship whose ground-rules are particularly ambiguous and plural, it is not surprising that discrepancies arise between patient and therapist over the detailed implementation of the four models. In principle, however, this should be no different in kind from everyday discrepancies, although perhaps magnified by the emotional distress

of the patient and the relational complexity of the setting. Moreover, as we have seen above, patients with personality pathology may be especially prone to systematic deviations from cultural norms in their implementation of the models. On the subject of whether the misrecognition at issue is one of individuals or of relationships, a Fiskean account would argue the latter, citing evidence for the phenomenon in everyday social cognition (A. Fiske, Haslam & S. Fiske, 1991). By such an account, it is more parsimonious to construe transference phenomena as instances of general and well-circumscribed social-cognitive processes operating in the present, than as unusual and highly case-specific connections operating over a deep historical divide. Shapiro's (1989) views on transference correspond closely to this account: "reactions to the boss and to the therapist may well be similar not because one is a displacement of the other but because both derive from the same general attitude towards figures who stand in a certain relation to the patient" (p. 108). Inferences about childhood prototypes may be quite gratuitous; a patient's petulant resistance may be more sensibly ascribed to his tendency to implement *Authority Ranking* relationships where the therapist does not believe they have a place—a tendency that may reflect an enduring, contemporary pattern of discrepant implementation—than to his recreation of a single, distant relationship to his father based on an unconscious confusion of him with the therapist.

Although this account is sketchy, and removes much of what is distinctively psychoanalytic from the concept of transference, it has the advantage of reducing the scope of historical inference and explanatory latitude, and of joining the study of emotionally fraught therapeutic encounter to broader social-cognitive and anthropological thinking. Encouragement for these conceptual directions can be found in recent work on transference that emphasizes the explanatory incompleteness of "one-person" psychologies, arguing that transference is an unexceptional property of relationships rather than a product of deviant individuals (e.g., Gill, 1993). In addition, the account recognizes that transference should not be laid at the feet of patients alone; as a relational phenomenon, discrepancy has two components, and therapists' relational definitions should not be immune to question. For instance, a strong case can be made for the systematic failure of clinicians to recognize the market and authority dimensions

of the therapeutic setting; there is a strong sense that the commercial element of the transaction is a grubby necessity that is incidental to the true nature of the exercise, and a marked discomfort with the role in it of power, persuasion and asymmetry.

Importantly, Fiske's theory predicts the form that transference discrepancies will tend to take. As with all discrepancies of relational definition, there should be a limited number of distinct varieties, corresponding to mismatches of model pairs. Each such mismatch represents an implementation of one set of relational expectations by one party and a different set by the other. These mismatches should be predictably associated with styles of personality pathology (cf. Horowitz, Rosenberg & Bartholomew, 1993, for an illuminating account of connections between interpersonal style and therapeutic outcome). Where the patient construes elements of the therapeutic relationship in a *Communal Sharing* fashion which the therapist understands to involve an egalitarian alliance, the patient may be thought to demonstrate transference of an infantile, boundary-neglecting kind, or entertaining fantasies of merger or maternal love. We might expect that such patients have dependent styles more broadly, and ask whether linking such phenomena to patients' actual or internalized mothers is a confusion of a prototypical example of a communal relationship with the class of such relationships as a whole.

Further hypotheses can easily be developed. The prominence of money as a transference pivot may attest to discrepant implementations concerning the market element of the therapeutic relationship. Similarly, a variety of transference stances, from the idealizing to the narcissistic, may be understood in terms of the patient's tendency to implement the *Authority Ranking* model in ways that deviate from the therapist's. Drawing hypothetical connections in this fashion is an intriguing activity, but it is obvious that much further work remains before we can evaluate the usefulness of a Fiskean account of transference, and of interpersonal discrepancy more generally.

DESCRIPTIVE PSYCHOPATHOLOGY: A SYNTACTIC APPROACH

A second contribution that Fiske's book might make to the study of psychiatric theorizing and research touches on the way in which we describe psychopathological conditions. Fiske's careful appeal to universal models with culturally variant implementation rules

suggests a possible shape for theories of cross-cultural variation in psychiatric conditions. That is to say, it might be possible to characterize psychopathologies in similar terms without falling into the kind of reductionism that sees cross-cultural differences as nuisance variance or into the extreme forms of 'emic' description that refuse the very possibility of meaningful cross-cultural comparison.

In the Chomskyan fashion described earlier, Fiske's work suggests that it is worthwhile to apportion phenomena in a domain of interest into core and incidental parts. The core contains that which is universal, understood as an elementary set of structural constraints on the observed forms that phenomena may take. The incidental part is that which varies in form across cultures, taking its distinctive coloration from the culture in which it appears, but is at the same time limited by formal constraints that only cross-cultural comparison can suggest. Extrapolating to the psychiatric case, then, it might be possible to characterize descriptive psychopathology in terms of universal templates whose expressions are moulded by cultural rules or parameters of clinical presentation.

It will always be difficult to find consensus on the apportionment of descriptive elements to core and incidental features (is somatization in the context of Chinese depression, Kleinman & Kleinman, 1985, a prominent core feature or simply an incidental display rule?), and even to agree on a vocabulary of appropriate elements, but Fiske's work suggests that it may nevertheless be desirable in several regards. First, it encourages the search for unifying theories of psychopathological conditions, demanding that solid cross-cultural inquiry winnow universals from cultural particulars. The search for variety enables the recovery of core invariances, if these exist, and may allow a less culture-laden grasp of the basic forms of human misery. It need hardly be said how central a role this approach implies for transcultural psychiatry. Second, by developing a clearer sense of the core it should become easier to isolate that part of a clinical syndrome that is best accounted for in terms of the culture's distinctiveness. This isolation, however difficult and contestable, should allow a clearer light to be cast on the culture, and its rules for the display of deviance, as much as on the condition itself. Third, by arriving at a lexicon of elements for the characterization of psychiatric conditions, it becomes possible to see cultural variation in terms of the selection and combination of

such elements, just as a language is, among other things, a system regulating the selection and combination of words. A culture may operate on universal psychopathological possibilities by selecting a subset of elements for elaboration and by dictating how they are to be assembled into a culturally meaningful entity.

All of this is quite abstract, but not without precedent. Some of Fiske's more recent work, indeed, shows how this approach to descriptive psychopathology might be realized. Two papers on obsessive-compulsive disorder (Dulaney & A. Fiske, 1994; A. Fiske, S. Fiske & Haslam, 1994) argue that it encompasses a limited but apparently universal stock of thematic elements that are common also to cultural rituals (e.g., concern with purification, contamination, thresholds, repetition, special numbers, sexual impropriety, and so on). Different elements may be preferentially selected for elaboration in different cultural contexts, and the themes may be differently implemented and interlinked according to local conditions and concerns. Although the interested reader is referred to the papers for a much more extensive treatment of these matters, the work that they report shows how cross-cultural attention to the elementary contents of one psychiatric condition enables a clearer sense of what is essential to it, and by isolating this core assists the deeper understanding of what might unify the condition. Equally, by knowing how obsessive-compulsives in a culture distinctively implement the apparent thematic universals, we may come closer to an understanding of the culture's singularity (e.g., its marked concern for pollution and its linkage of that theme with certain sexual prohibitions).

This kind of account is plainly underdeveloped at present, and it is not possible to do it justice in this review. However, in a field where there is some anxiety over the very act of cross-cultural comparison, and at the same time a dissatisfaction with thick descriptions of singular forms of mental disturbance, Fiske's conceptual methodology can serve as a valuable and sophisticated model for future work. Those embarking on this enterprise would do well to acquaint themselves with Fiske's book, which sets a very high standard for the kind of analysis that it urges.

CONCLUSION

The implications of this book for psychiatric inquiry are perhaps not its most obvious features. Its bearing on current debates on domain specificity in cognition (Hirschfeld & Gelman, 1994; Tooby & Cosmides, 1992), on cultural universals (Wierzbicka, 1992), and on the integration of cognitive and motivational elements in cultural psychology (D'Andrade & Strauss, 1992; Whitehead, 1993) is certainly more direct. At the same time, the book is generous with its intellectual gifts, and encourages its readers to think in new ways about familiar concerns. Whether or not the relational models theory convinces, or can readily be put to service in different fields, at the very least the book exemplifies a bold, innovative but rigorous approach to interdisciplinary social science that deserves close attention.

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