AAA Symposium: Co-Organizers
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CULTURAL IDEA SYSTEMS: LOGICAL STRUCTURES AND THE LOGIC OF

INSTANTIATION This symposium will focus on the relationships between the logical structure of

cultural idea systems and the logic of the rules for applying them. We will consider possible

ways to expand on the generating power of a symbolic system by iterative combinations of its

basic elements versus the way in which the elements of the symbolic system become applied to

things or persons and thereby take on a communicative aspect. We work with a notion of culture

as general conceptual conventions that define objects and relations that are also associated

with conventional methods for imputing these general concepts to actual objects and behaviors.

We refer to these methods of association as instantiation. Through instantiation, abstract idea

systems are transposed into forms observable at the level of behavior. Conversely, through

observations of behavior inferences can be made about the structure of an underlying idea

system and the cultural rules for applying the elements making up that idea system. The papers

are concerned with the ways the rules for instantiation are implicit in the basic conventions

themselves, rather than being something added onto them. We suggest that neither the logical

structure of the underlying idea system nor the rules of application should be privileged in

explanatory accounts; rather, explanatory accounts must take into account the interplay

between the logic of the cultural idea system and the logic of the rules for the application of the

cultural idea system.

The papers will avoid accounts that say in effect "well there are rules and then people

follow them." Rather, the papers aim for something at once more observable and whose logic

has been made explicit. Each paper will address the following points: 1) a representation and

brief description of a specific cultural rule/model, 2) a brief exposition of the logic of this model,

3) a description of behaviors taken to instantiate, manifest, or to be explained (indigenously) by the model, 4) an exposition of the logic of the behavior, and 5) the relation between the two logics (or demonstration that they are in fact one logic).