

BOOK REVIEWS

PERSPECTIVISM IN SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY: A FESTCHRIFT HONORING WILLIAM J. MCGUIRE'S WORK AND COLLEGIALLY

CONNIE WOLFE
Muhlenberg College

Perspectivism in Social Psychology: The Yin and Yang of Scientific Progress,
Edited by J. T. Jost, M. R. Banaji, & D. A. Prentice. American Psycho-
logical Association, 2004.

The editors of *Perspectivism in Social Psychology: The Yin and Yang of Scientific Progress* (2004), have gathered a collection of essays that are a tribute to William J. McGuire, a unique review of research from the past and present, and a guide to applying a perspectivist approach to contemporary research. The book also includes intellectual and personal reflections which provide a model of collegiality among researchers from different nationalities, areas and even opposing sides of a debate table.

Indeed, one of McGuire's seven "koans" is to embrace oppositional thinking (Banaji, Chapter 10). McGuire's collected wisdom concerning productive research strategies is called *perspectivism*. According to the book's editors, perspectivism embraces the notion that "all knowledge—including scientific knowledge—is contextualized or situated, that is, it is knowledge *from some perspective*" (p.3). Given this, "it is the task of the researcher [to] creatively generate and critically assess multiple hypotheses, each of which presumably has some domain of truthful application" (p. 3).

The book is a series of 22 short essays. In her essay, "Clapping with Both Hands," Phoebe Ellsworth eloquently analyzes the extent to which social psychology is following McGuire's seven koans. Although we are successfully incorporating more diversity in our data collection and analysis techniques, Ellsworth points out our serious failures to sufficiently attend to the generation of multiple hypotheses. "Ideally, the researcher should actually *entertain* multiple working hypotheses, all of which she considers to be at least somewhat plausible" (p. 270). Ellsworth also convincingly argues that researchers have all but forgotten McGuire's koan urging us to "observe people not data" (p. 266). The result is an essay which, in my view, should be required reading for all

methods instructors. Indeed, most psychologists would benefit from the entire section of essays on “Theory and Metatheory in Social Psychological Science” which includes contributions from Ellsworth, Anthony Greenwald, Norman Anderson, and E. Tory Higgins.

Most of the essays in the book address a specific research topic, and every essay addresses perspectivism. For example, in his essay dealing with the topic of the self, Curtis D. Hardin illustrates that

even cursory use of McGuire’s perspectivist method—such as turning a hypothesis on its head, manipulating its expression, or exploring potential mediating and moderating conditions—proves that each hypothesis is provisional and self-subverting, situated in an ever-evolving web of related ideas. (p. 162)

Hardin then considers the self, one of the most studied concepts in all of social psychology, and uses a “simple, McGuirean twist” (p. 168) to develop an entirely novel hypothesis. John Jost’s essay presents an intriguing review of the swinging pendulum of topics in intergroup relations. Jost organizes the research into “eras” which relate to societal patterns. He considers system justification as a recent swing away from “the ubiquity of ingroup favoritism” which an “astute perspectivist” might have seen coming (p. 220). David O. Sears, presents a selected review of symbolic racism and symbolic politics theory including recent evidence and debate. Sears reviews McGuire’s seven koan and evaluates his own research from the perspective of these “prematurely graybeard pieces of wisdom” (p.243).

Other chapters are less direct in their discussion of McGuire’s perspectivism, but nonetheless still pay tribute to his substantial body of work by reviewing it, extending it, and providing ideas for future research. For example, in “Resisting Persuasion by Counterarguing,” Richard Petty and his colleagues discuss McGuire’s inoculation theory as well as their own attitude strength approach. They present a model that is both contextualized and specified. In the essay “Asymmetries in Affect-Laden Information Processing,” John Cacioppo discusses McGuire’s work on cognitive and affective asymmetries, his own work on the positivity offset and negativity bias, and reviews evidence from social neuroscience. Shanto Iyengar’s essay about mass communications and politics discusses McGuire’s research on persuasion and, in particular, the role that work has played in the field of political communication.

All the essays in *Perspectivism in Social Psychology* are written by top researchers. Indeed, as McGuire himself notes, he, Richard Petty and Alice Eagly “each served a term of being regarded as *numero uno* in attitude

change research" (p. 30). Given how familiar many readers will be with the research programs of the authors, a delightful (and unique) feature of the book is the personal recollections peppered throughout. For example, Mahzarin Banaji remarks that "Bill McGuire has been my outrageously brilliant colleague, silent and kind benefactor, and trusted confidante..." (p. 129). Perhaps the most enjoyable of recollections are those written by McGuire himself and presented in Chapter 3. McGuire calls Curtis Hardin a "happy warrior" (p. 29) and Phoebe Ellsworth a "heavy lifter with a big brain and a heart of gold" (p. 32).

True to his perspectivist approach, McGuire notes that his collegial friendships with both Bob Wyer and Alice Eagly had their roots in opposing viewpoints. Of Wyer, McGuire says "Bob and I became good friends by criticizing each other's work..." (p. 27). After disagreeing about a manuscript in 1968, McGuire states that he and Eagly became "zealous colleagues in research" (p. 30). Indeed the "happy warrior" himself, Curtis Hardin, felt free in this festschrift to disclose his initial impression of perspectivism: "I fought it and...rejected it as incompatible with science...I initially misapprehended perspectivism as a clever variation of nihilism. I was wrong" (pp.161-162). Hardin echoes many of his fellow contributors in saying that McGuire mentored him with "divine patience" (p. 161). Together, McGuire's personal recollections and those of his colleagues paint a picture of what true collegiality can look like.

Perspectivism in Social Psychology is a fascinating read appropriate for faculty and graduate students. Most of the essays are also accessible to those with a more casual interest in cognitive social psychology and/or perspectivism.

REFERENCES

- Jost, J. T., Banaji, M. R., & Prentice, D. A. (Eds.) (2004). *Perspectivism in social psychology: The yin and yang of scientific progress*. Washington, DC. American Psychological Association.

Copyright of Journal of Social & Clinical Psychology is the property of Guilford Publications Inc.. The copyright in an individual article may be maintained by the author in certain cases. Content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.