

(Self-)Conceptions as Social Actions

Curtis D. Hardin

Prologue

My life as a student of social psychology evolved from my identification with a series of mentors who think for a living, including Bill and Claire McGuire, who adopted me as one of a more or less motley group of devotees during my graduate study at Yale from 1988 to 1993. Unlike that of my precocious comrades—especially Irene Blair, John Jost, and Alex Rothman—my appreciation of McGuire's approach came slowly. I fought it and thought I had rejected it as incompatible with science, even as Bill mentored me, with what must have been divine patience, all the way through the completion of my dissertation (under the supervision of Mahzarin Banaji, a miraculously patient and wise mentor in her own right). Indeed, I do not believe I recognized the degree to which I had internalized and accepted tenets of perspectivism until my own students began complaining about the arguments in which they repeatedly found themselves. Doesn't everybody know that theories are inherently incomplete, that experimental effects are inherently conditional, that phenomena are multiply determined and have multiple consequences, that for every empirical yin there is a yang, and that conditional truths are nevertheless meaningfully true? Sometimes it is your offspring who reveal most clearly your debt to your parents. Thank you Stacey Sinclair, Leah Spalding, Terri Conley, Christine Reyna, Lien Pham, John Hetts, Dan Ortiz, Karen Cheng, and Brian Lowery. Thank you, Bill, and thank you, Mahzarin.

The effects of my identification with Bill on my approach to social psychology are especially pronounced, I think, because the Yale school of social psychology at the time was a veritable culture of perspectivism, living and breathing in the work of my fellow graduate students as well as in the approaches of my other teachers. One of Bill McGuire's greatest influences on the program has been his model of methodological, theoretical, and topical eclecticism. There, I learned that one of the glories of social psychology is the view from its perch at the nexus of so many elements of the human condition. (In my

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research, I have focused most on the interpersonal foundations of cognition, with a particular focus on communication and language in the dynamics of attitudes and memory as expressed in social judgment and self-understanding.)

Another *glory of social psychology is that it affords the study of the human condition within the language of science, which, among the great human religions, may be the one most consistently devoted to creating the conditions of common experience.* The scientific experiment, for example, imposes a particular kind of systematic interaction with the world that can be shared. Indeed, the ultimate scientific criterion is that one's experiment is reproducible by others to identical effect. Hence, the benefits of the scientific experiment flow not so much from control over reality as from the creation of a more or less definable circumstance, which, because it is definable, can be reproduced by anyone. The well-articulated experiment is an experience that many people—with their varieties of history, experience, biases, and so on—may share. In short, the experiment is a method for creating that most elusive yet necessary human experience: intersubjectivity, which is sometimes misleadingly called "objectivity." This perspective suggests to me that although as scientists, we may be relatively ecumenical about interpretations or implications of a given experiment (e.g., as it relates to theory or hypothesized generalizability), we might benefit from being somewhat more dogmatic about the integrity of descriptions of our experiments, whose replicability makes them brute facts of a type. Indeed, my guess is that the embarrassing problem of the difficulty of replicating some social psychological experiments, which is usually attributed to the instability of the phenomenon in question, is perhaps more often caused by incomplete understanding of the effective conditions defined by the experiment. Perhaps this supposition reflects the most important thing I've learned from Bill: that the vicissitudes of research results are to be embraced as moments of potential discovery rather than as ephemeral errors of inconvenience.

* * *

What is the sense of one mind thinking?

The Zen koan poses a peculiar kind of question—one that invites exploration yet defies resolution. As such, William James McGuire teaches, the koan is an apt metaphor for another peculiar kind of question—the scientific hypothesis, which is never forever confirmed or disconfirmed but rewards the wise with reiterative riches (e.g., McGuire, 1983, 1997, 1999). From this perspective, the hypothesis is a proposition awaiting the kind of theoretical and empirical exploration that will reveal its conditional truths as well as its conditional falsehoods. 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. As a graduate student, I initially misapprehended perspectivism as a clever variation of nihilism. I was wrong. Perspectivism may be the most scientifically useful expression of epistemological pragmatism to date (Dewey, 1922/1976–1983; James, 1907/1956; Mead, 1936; Peirce, 1903). Perspectivism

facilitates scientific progress by providing tools that help connect one's mind to the minds of others, as well as by freeing the scientific theory from the anchor of metaphysical absolutism to find its most practical applications. To make the case, I first situate perspectivism in its pragmatic roots and conclude with a demonstration of the capacity of the perspectivist method to yield a novel hypothesis in one of the most studied topics of psychology.

Conceptions as Social Actions

The term "pragmatism" was coined by William James (1898)—as a tribute to his friend, Charles Peirce (Menand, 2001)—to describe theories of knowledge that postulate that ideas are not metaphysical constants awaiting discovery but socially created tools people use to cope with a dynamic world. From this perspective, the value of an idea is not the degree to which it accurately represents objective reality but rather the degree to which it enables groups of people to understand and navigate their circumstance—that is, the degree to which the idea enables people to productively solve the problems to which it is applied. A hammer is useful for pounding a rusty nail into a board but not as useful for sawing a board in half. Although it makes little sense to ask how "true" a tool a hammer is, it does make sense to ask the degree to which it is useful for the task at hand. Likewise, the idea that the self is an evaluative attitude has proved useful in studying people's responses to failure and success, among other things, but not as useful for understanding the extent and nuance of self-related phenomenology—where the net of free description has captured more than the ball-peen hammer of self-evaluation (McGuire & McGuire, 1988).

To suggest that perspectivism is an expression of pragmatism is not to suggest that McGuire's approach is identical to the classical expressions of pragmatism. At minimum, perspectivism is a concrete implementation of what are largely philosophical abstractions in the writings of James, Peirce, and Mead. However, it is more than a practical implementation of pragmatic philosophy. The smug comfort that one's hypothesis is a provisional tool may make little difference in practice if it remains a mere metaphysical assumption. Positivists, too, assume that the hypothesis is provisional, albeit in the pursuit of some objective "Truth" (e.g., Popper, 1945).¹ Although it is accepted in perspectivism that an idea is a tool, proponents of this theory are encouraged to break out the whole toolbox. Why be content to pound pins into planks with a hammer when one can also pry them out? Why settle for the assumption that one's hypothesis is like a hammer—and then proceed as a positivist—when one's research can benefit from the simultaneous use of multiple

¹Perhaps this explains in part why many scientists believe that they are positivists when their practice is so easily described in pragmatic terms (e.g., Kuhn, 1962/1970). Important however, is that from the pragmatic perspective, scientific positivism is not problematic because it is wrong; it is problematic only to the degree that it inhibits productive scientific work. Perspectivism is perhaps the most powerful demonstration to date of the practical limits of the positivist paradigm, in a tradition begun by Dewey's (1896/1967–1972) reconstruction of the "reflex arc."

hypotheses, like so many pliers, planes, saws, and squares? Perspectivism enhances the utility of the pragmatic assumption by facilitating the scientist's capacity to multiply the number of conceptual tools applied to a given problem, thereby providing a recipe for scholarship in its fullest sense.

There is another sense in which the perspectivist method is pragmatic in character: the way that it liberates the hypothesis or theory from the stultifying burden of being right about life, the universe, and everything—or else doomed to the footnotes of failure in dusty textbooks. Embracing the notion that the scientific idea, like any other idea, is a tool whose utility is determined by the degree to which it enables one to productively address issues of interest, liberates one to make use of many theories (including old theories), as well as to discover and create scientific uses for one's favorite theories—secure in the knowledge that one theory cannot, and hence need not, be useful for every problem. Identifying the conditions in which a theory fails need not be cause for worry—or, worse, for overly defensive attempts to salvage it—but rather cause for celebration. Knowing the limits of a theory's applicability is practical knowledge. Knowing exactly where the theories of others are required to complement one's own theory is practical knowledge. Systematic exploration of the conditions in which a theory succeeds in relation to the conditions in which it fails is a sure route to the identification of new syntheses of scientific understanding.

In sum, perspectivism not only shares the pragmatic assumption that scientific conceptions are social actions—whose values are defined by their practical social (scientific) uses—but also provides a system of exploration that efficiently enables one to benefit from the social nature of scientific practice. Implementing the tools of perspectivism inevitably connects one to the ideas of others in dynamic new combinations, making the method a practical advance over the method of the solitary tiller who plods along one row at a time, for the sense that one mind can make is as elusive as the sound of one hand clapping.

Self-Conceptions as Social Actions

Just as perspectivism embraces the conditional nature of knowledge at the level of epistemology, one may apply the perspectivist method to find ways in which kinds of knowledge more typically studied by psychologists also operate in the social web. Hence, in the spirit of constructive contradiction, I now outline a specific application of perspectivism to one of McGuire's favorite topics: the self. If ever there were a topic in danger of being fully tapped, it would have to be the self (for reviews see Banaji & Prentice, 1994; Baumeister, 1998). For example, Ashmore and Jussim (1997) identified 31,550 abstracts on the self from 1974 to 1993 alone. Banaji and Prentice (1994) identified more than 5000 articles published from 1987 to 1994 alone. Despite the large number of publications on the self, the application of just a few simple perspectivist heuristics elicits a novel hypothesis yet to be directly tested, though interesting enough to warrant additional empirical exploration. Just as scientific theories represent social contracts, so too may self-conceptions.

Deriving a Novel Hypothesis From a Truism

McGuire (1961) demonstrated that many seemingly deep-rooted values, including cultural truisms, can crumble to pieces with even a cursory challenge because people have rarely had occasion to establish foundations of the values' existence. However, the same is unlikely to be said of one of social psychology's favorite truisms—i.e., that self-conceptions are a function of social recognition, feedback, and interaction—because the literature is replete with demonstrations that the self is a dynamic social construction (inter alia Andersen & Glassman, 1996; Aron, Aron, Tudor, & Nelson, 1991; Baldwin, Carrell, & Lopez, 1990; Baumeister, 1998; Cooley, 1902; Hardin & Higgins, 1996; Leary, Tambor, Terdal, & Downs, 1995; Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Mead, 1934; Morse & Gergen, 1970; Ross, Amabile, & Steinmetz, 1977; Sullivan, 1953; Tice, 1992). Although the hypothesis that the self is a social creation is demonstrably true in many ways, the perspectivist approach revels in contradiction and delights in the empirical sparks that fly when even well-founded dogma is turned on its head in a process that inevitably reveals the connections of one's new hypotheses to the ideas of others.

Hence, McGuire and McGuire's (1988) wry observation that the self is everyone's favorite topic may reflect less about rampant narcissism than about its opposite: the universal human need to establish and maintain interpersonal relationships. Although theorists in both West and East have long contraposed egoistic and social motivations (Allport, 1955; Doi, 1971; Freud, 1933; James, 1890/1955; Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Plato, 360 B.C.E./2003), applying the perspectivist method to the notion that to be true to the self and to society are mutually exclusive indicates that individual expression and interpersonal obligation may not be opposites so much as two sides of the same coin. Not only is self-knowledge a product of social interaction, but the opposite may also be true: To know the self is to affirm some particular interpersonal relationship or set of relationships. The hypothesis is hereby hardly proved but rather derived and briefly considered.

According to McGuire (see Appendix), hypothesis exploration is facilitated by first putting it into a form that is easily manipulated and transformed. Hence, the truism that the self is a social creation may be represented by a simple declarative proposition in which "society" is the independent variable (IV) and "self" is the dependent variable (DV). Here, I employ a verbal proposition to represent the social psychological truism that the self is created by society, although one benefits further by exploring other representational modalities such as graphs, tables, and mathematical formulae, as well as example caricatures and prototypes (heuristic 21²).

Society (IV) creates the self (DV). (P1)

One useful way to explore and refine one's hypothesis is to explore its linguistic representation through strategic searches for concepts related to each element of the proposition (heuristic 15). "Society" is related to many other

²Heuristics are identified by their location in Table 1 of McGuire (1997), which is reprinted in part in chapter 12 of McGuire (1999).

terms, including *people, (in)significant others, friends, enemies, culture, interpersonal relationships, impersonal relationships*, and so on. "Self" is related to many other terms, including *phenomenology, social identity, ego, superego, id, self-awareness, self-esteem, self-understanding, self-conceptions, self-knowledge, self-deception, self-affirmation, self-hate*, and so on. "Creates" is related to other terms, including *causes, structures, affirms, constrains, destroys, enables*, and so on. Generating lists of synonyms, antonyms, and closely related terms—especially boundary terms—often yields modified propositions truer to one's interest while also indicating parts of the conceptual landscape in which the focal proposition may live. Hence, there are many ways to clarify this proposition. Here's mine:

Interpersonal relationships (IV) affirm self-conceptions (DV). (P2)

The senses in which P2 is demonstrably true include research suggesting that (a) self-esteem is a function of the approval of others (e.g., Leary et al., 1995), (b) cognitive representations of the self overlap with representations of significant others (e.g., Aron et al., 1991), (c) self-concepts are actively protected to the degree that they are perceived to be validated by significant others (e.g., Hardin & Higgins, 1996), and (d) self-evaluation is made more negative by thoughts of disapproving significant others (e.g., Baldwin et al., 1990).

To those uninitiated to the perspectivist approach, merely fathoming the possibility that the opposite of one's cherished hypothesis might also be true may seem difficult, at least at first. Yet one of McGuire's most useful analytical tropes is to embrace contradiction by exploring inversions of the relation and reversing the implied causal direction of the relation (heuristic 11). Here the IV and DV replace each other to form a new proposition with reversed causality:

Self-conceptions (IV) affirm interpersonal relationships (DV). (P3)

Another useful way to turn a hypothesis on its head is to invert the IV–DV relationship. For example, interpersonal relationships may disaffirm or subvert self-conceptions as well as affirm them, and self-conceptions may disaffirm or subvert interpersonal relationships as well as affirm them. P3 is therefore just one deserving possibility. Notably, iterating and reiterating the hypothesis-contextualizing process in its entirety adds considerable texture to the theoretical and empirical landscape and may yield a modification of one's initial hypothesis, or inspire new direction entirely.

Quixotic Defense of an Unlikely Hypothesis (Heuristic 32)

A common response to a novel hypothesis is a failure to engage it seriously—often by rejecting it as out-of-hand on self-evidentiary grounds. This may be especially true when the new hypothesis is a product of the kind of bald derivation prescribed by perspectivism. Yet much is gained by scrutinizing novel hypotheses related to one's focal interest, particularly with attention to possible conditions that might cause the novel hypothesis to obtain. This attitude is represented by McGuire's (1999) axiom that "every hypothesis is occasionally true, at least in certain contexts viewed from certain perspectives."

In what sense, therefore, might the proposition that self-conceptions affirm interpersonal relationships possibly be true? The idea suggested here is that the act of endorsing a particular characteristic as true of the self may have the consequence of affirming some particular interpersonal relationship or set of relationships. For example, one conception I have of myself is that I am a cook. The way that social psychologists currently understand such self-descriptions is primarily in representational terms, which may vary in objective truth value but nevertheless are essentially the province of one's cognitive structure as a function of one's social context (e.g., Baumeister, 1998; Greenwald & Pratkanis, 1984; Higgins & Bargh, 1987; Markus & Wurf, 1987; Turner & Oakes, 1986). Why do I say I am a cook? According to contemporary theory, and broadly congruent with P2, it is because I have been given opportunities to cook, have been rewarded for cooking, or have been required to cook as part of my cultural or interpersonal roles. I say I am a cook because "cook" is linked to my cognitive representation of myself, which may be more or less accessible depending on how often I cook or how relevant cooking is to the situation in which I describe myself as cook. However, as derived from this application of the perspectivist method, another function of describing myself as a cook may be to affirm my social connection with somebody else—to affirm my allegiance to, identification with, or liking or love for someone.

It turns out that, for me, conceiving of myself as a cook is relatively new and primarily associated with my role as a father. My young son Simon thinks I am a cook. When he was a year and a half old, he would say things such as, "Daddy cook! Simon cook too! Pour it! Stir it! Round and round and round! Simon see Daddy cook! Simon help Daddy cook!" Clearly, part of the reason I describe myself as a cook is because at least one person in my life identifies me as a cook, congruent with my emerging duties as a father as well as with the proposition that interpersonal relationships affirm self-conceptions (P2). However, this may also illustrate the proposition in which causality flows in the opposite direction, i.e., that to describe myself as a cook affirms my relationship with Simon (P3). For example, for me to deny that I am a cook is to deny what my son thinks about me, thereby betraying my relationship with him by implying that *I think* he is mistaken, deluded, or naïve. Moreover, to deny that I am a cook would be to forsake a trait my son apparently admires in me. Not cooking is to fail to live up to a standard my son has set for me. Hence, despite the fact that I am unlikely to ever run a four-star kitchen, I *am* a cook. I must be a cook to identify with my son and to affirm or respect my relationship with him.

Direct tests of the hypothesis that self-conceptions affirm interpersonal relationships would include experiments that manipulate the self-concept and assess consequences on relevant relationships. For example, if I were experimentally induced to describe myself as a cook, my relationship with my son might loom large on any number of interesting assessments—such as judgments of closeness to Simon, response latencies to perceive his little face, persistence on tasks framed to benefit him, and so on. Alternatively, if I were induced to describe myself as a social psychologist, relationships with my mentors, students, and academic colleagues might loom large. This hypothesis might be explored further by testing potential mechanisms of the phenomenon

as well as its conditionality. Are the associations among self-conceptions and interpersonal relationships symmetrical? Is a given association strengthened or weakened if self-conceptions are relevant to multiple relationships? Can self-descriptions be functionally abstracted away from the relationships in which they were originally founded? If so, is there a way to characterize which ones are and which ones are not? What happens under conditions in which one self-conception is associated with one relationship but an opposite self-conception is associated with a different relationship? Might commitment to one relationship be strengthened if associated self-conceptions are validated (or subverted) by others? Of course, these are just a few of the possible ways in which the hypothesis could be empirically and theoretically explored.

Affirming the inherently social nature of the perspectivist method, most of the possibilities would engage extant theory and research on the self, social interaction, and cognitive representation. Yet, to my knowledge, there has been no experimental test of the hypothesis that self-conceptions affirm interpersonal relationships. Hence, a simple, McGuirean twist on a social psychological construct studied tens of thousands of times yields a novel hypothesis rich enough to inspire many plausible basic demonstrations, as well as innumerable elaborations should the phenomenon be captured. This fact in itself demonstrates the utility of the perspectivist method.

The hypothesis resonates in a broader way with the pragmatic character of McGuire's inspiration. It suggests that having self-conceptions is functional, that self-conceptions exist in a dynamic process of living in the web of others' influence, and that self-conceptions facilitate understanding and navigation of the world by connecting us with others (cf. Swann, 1990). This perspective also implies that self-conceptions will be endorsed and acted upon to the extent that they work—i.e., by productively regulating interpersonal relationships: I *must* care for my son. That care may require regular validation that I acknowledge and reciprocate his experience of me and the world we inhabit together (e.g., Hardin & Conley, 2001; Hardin & Higgins, 1996). I care for my son in part by acknowledging that I am a cook. By the same token, because social regulation is not a one-way street, self-conceptions may be cherished for their relation to enemies as well as loved ones. I may identify myself as a cook in part because my enemy believes that culinary artistry is an effete affectation. Also, even though being a cook may be part of the behavioral circuit of loving my son (or hating my enemy) now, it need not be for perpetuity. Circumstances may arise in the future that make my culinary aspirations irrelevant to my relationships—e.g., that make it an ineffective way to act on my relationship with my son. When that time comes, I will be something else to him and for him. Hence, in a sense analogous to James' (1907/1956) definition of "truth," self-conceptions may be as true as they demonstrate themselves to be—for the purposes of acting on the requirements of one's dynamic social environment.

Circumstantial Evidence of Self-Conceptions as Relationship Affirmations

Although no experimental tests of the hypothesis that self-conceptions are interpersonal affirmations exist, there is indirect theoretical and empirical

evidence bearing on its promise. The study of human development reveals that the self-concept is at root bound up with social regulation. Most agree that the self-concept is predicated on social interaction (e.g., Ainsworth, 1964; Bowlby, 1969; Freud, 1933; Mead, 1934; Sullivan, 1953). For example, development of the capacity for self-awareness and the capacity for perspective taking co-occur; this is consistent with the notion that an act of self-awareness may be predicated on perspective taking (e.g., Mead, 1934). It is only upon the acquisition of self-awareness at this age that the child is capable of experiencing expressly social emotions such as embarrassment, envy, empathy, pride, guilt, and shame (e.g., Lewis, Alessandri, & Sullivan, 1992). This is the age at which the "language explosion" occurs (e.g., Golinkoff, Hirsh-Pasek, & Hollich, 1999), in which the child graduates from apishly learned, associative labeling to astronomical rates of lexical and grammatical language acquisition associated with the rudimentary use of communicative pragmatics, on which the cooperative, meaning-making linguistic activity of adults is known to be predicated (e.g., Clark, 1998; Krauss & Fussell, 1996; Sperber & Wilson, 1986). By the end of the second year, social standards are known and the anxiety associated with failure first appears (Kagan, 1984; Sullivan, 1953). Psychodynamic theorists have taken similar findings from case studies as evidence that the self-system emerges as an adaptive outcome of the need to manage the anxiety associated with social disapproval (Bettelheim, 1987; Bowlby, 1969; Freud, 1933; Sullivan, 1953). Moreover, as individuals become strongly identified with others, they tend to emulate the others' thoughts, feelings, and behaviors in an apparent attempt to maintain the social connection, as well as to gain the others' love and acceptance (e.g., Freud, 1933; Kelman, 1961). Hence, although much of this research is consistent with the social psychological truism that the self-concept is a product of social relationships, it is also consistent with the hypothesis that self-concepts may function as affirmations of social relationships.

Like the developmental research linking the self-concept to the social approval of significant others, research on adults is broadly consistent with the possibility that self-conceptions function as social affirmations. For example, at a fundamental level, the hypothesis that self-conceptions are social affirmations would appear to be predicated on the assumption that self-conceptions and interpersonal relationships are represented with some minimal level of modularity. Hence, if the hypothesis were true, one might also expect the reverse association to hold, i.e., that different relationships should elicit different self-conceptions. Several findings corroborate this hypothesis. For example, Baldwin and Holmes (1987) demonstrated that people's responses to failure or to reading a sexually permissive piece of fiction were qualitatively different depending on the cognitive salience of parents versus friends. In subsequent experiments, Baldwin and colleagues found that self-evaluation varied as a function of the cognitive salience of significant others (Baldwin et al., 1990).

More telling evidence in support of the proposition that self-conceptions are social affirmations comes from research demonstrating that effects of interpersonal relationships on self-understanding are enhanced to the degree to which one is required to establish or maintain the relationship. For example, Tice (1992) found that participants internalized their own behavior

(either emotional expressiveness or emotional stability) as more true of themselves when it was expressed to a peer than when it was expressed anonymously. In a second experiment, participants who behaved in an introverted or extraverted manner publicly internalized the behavior more than participants who performed the identical behavior privately. Baldwin et al. (1990) found that negative self-evaluations as a function of subliminal exposure to the Pope's frowning face obtained for Catholics but not for non-Catholics.

My colleagues and I have found evidence for the proposition that self-concepts are linked to particular social relationships, in particular to the degree that they are high in relationship motivation (Hardin & Conley, 2001). For example, we found that self-evaluations of academic ability are related to the degree to which one's ethnic versus gender identity is salient—along ingroup stereotype-consistent lines—and also that this relationship is mediated by the degree to which one thinks one's significant others believe the ethnic and gender stereotypes are applicable to the self (Sinclair, Hardin, & Lowery, 2002). We also found evidence that self-judgment assimilates to the perceived views of interpersonal acquaintances or imagined others to the degree that one is motivated to get along with the other (Sinclair, Huntsinger, Skorinko, & Hardin, 2003). Finally, we found evidence that motivation to excel in school is enhanced to the degree that one takes the perspective of one's parents as opposed to the perspective of a lazy peer (Pham & Hardin, 2003). In short, although the hypothesis that self-conceptions function as interpersonal relationship affirmations has received no direct experimental test to date, circumstantial evidence indicates that empirical exploration is warranted.

Conclusion

One can readily discern the pragmatic principles in the empirical work of the classical pragmatists (e.g., Dewey, 1922/1976–1983; James, 1890/1955; Mead, 1934). To do so, however, is an exercise in philosophy. One contribution of McGuire's perspectivism is the formalization of a systematic approach to any empirical problem, thereby transforming philosophy of science into generative scientific practice. For example, even in rudimentary form, it was used to derive the novel hypothesis that self is everyone's favorite topic because it connects one with others. Yet the most persuasive arguments in favor of perspectivism are found in McGuire's empirical explorations of attitudes, language, and the self (collected in McGuire, 1999). Aside from descriptions of now canonical social psychological phenomena, one finds in them that McGuire's method is characterized by a proclivity for paradox and revelation in contradiction, perhaps not seen in science since Marx. Indeed, a famous Marxian aphorism may be adapted to capture McGuirean praxis: "The hypothesis is dead. Long live the hypothesis!" Embracing the provisional character of the hypothesis liberates it, allowing the scientist to find its most useful and inspiring place, as well as to exploit its potential to elicit genuine novelty. Yet the creativity perspectivism inspires is not empty sophistry; it is the most practical of pragmatisms. This is its signature contribution, for in perspectivism, McGuire offers more than just another philosophy of truth without a capital T. He demystifies scientific genius—his method is a metatheory for the scientific masses.

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