wholeheartedly opposed to "speculative" ideas? The writings of Berzelius, Davy, Berthollet, Ampère, Dalton, Prout, and many others are full of bold guesses. This leaves the objection that Avogadro's hypothesis required what he called "constituent molecules" (our H_2 or O_2) of elementary substances, and at the time no one could figure out how two or more like atoms could stick together to form them. I for one do not see why this objection does not suffice to explain the neglect of Avogadro's hypothesis.

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Social Psychology

Social Cognition. SUSAN T. FISKE and SHELLEY E. TAYLOR. Addison-Wesley, Reading, Mass., 1984. xviii, 508 pp., illus. Paper, $16.95. Topics in Social Psychology.

The field of social psychology has historically been the cognitive vanguard of American psychology. During the decades when mainstream psychology was afflicted with a nearly terminal case of operationalism, social psychology was unabashedly receptive to such "mentalistic" constructs as attitudes, stereotypes, and schemata. How could it be otherwise, since the social environment is a *perceived* environment shaped by the expectancies and goals of the actor? For Kurt Lewin in the '30's, a person's behavior was a response to his or her psychological environment. Never mind that Lewin's solipsism was scoffed at by the behaviorists, social psychology has thrived on its varied attempts to cope with the complex processes of mental functioning. Lewin's student Leon Festinger effectively theorized about cognitions and the relations between them, giving rise to broad empirical advances in our understanding of how people deal with inconsistencies of thought. Lewin's friend Fritz Heider tried to distill the wisdom of naïve psychology with the ultimate result that an attributional approach to mental functioning became the dominant focus of social psychology in the '70's. This approach was based on the premise that people act on their causal understandings of social life and therefore it is important to determine, experimentally, how these understandings are reached.

Meanwhile, disenchantment with the sterility of clearly behavioral approaches, the challenge of the computer metaphor, and advances in measurement techniques were converting perceptionists and learning theorists into cognitive psychologists. It was perhaps inevitable that developments in social and "natural science" psychology should begin to influence each other as they have increasingly in the past decade. "Social cognition" is the result, an outgrowth of the attributional approach that is especially responsive to the information processing conceptions and measures of cognitive psychology. To an extent, social cognition represents an uneasy marriage between the broad contextualism of the social psychologist and the preference of the cognitivist for fine-grain analyses of attention, perception, memory, and inference. The book under review is an impressive summary of this emergent field.

Fiske and Taylor characterize their domain as the general concern with how people make sense of other people and themselves. Such a complex enterprise does not lend itself to a single theory or a limited set of methods. But what is allegedly new and distinctive about social cognition research is that its practitioners are comfortable with mentalistic explanations, committed to the analysis of thinking processes (rather than outcomes), and open to the continued cross-fertilization between cognition and social psychology. One may be skeptical of the claim for the novelty of social cognition research but still be grateful for the rich smorgasbord of ideas, insights, and data that the authors have collected and organized for us.

The book is divided somewhat arbitrarily into sections entitled Elements of Social Cognition and Processes of Social Cognition. Since the elements section includes a treatment of attributional approaches and the processes section focuses on the more recent conceptalizations of attention, memory, and inference, the division makes a certain historical sense. Nevertheless, I find it strangely misleading to treat the complexities of attributional reasoning under the general label "elements of cognition." There is a final section, entitled Beyond Cognition, that presents a discussion of affect, attitudes, and behavior. Such a discussion is essential for a comprehensive understanding of how cognitions function in the active and reactive person.

Three models of the social thinker appear to underlie contemporary research. The first is that of the social thinker as naïve scientist, interested in prediction and control through causal understanding of the surrounding environment. The second is that of the self-oriented information processor, especially attentive to self-relevant information and often processing it in self-serving or self-protective ways. The third is that of the "cognitive miser," pressing toward efficient inferential short-cuts and mindless automatic processing. This last model goes hand in hand with the concept of schema, and the authors devote considerable space to the vast empirical literature that shows how our theories and hypotheses affect the ways in which we process available information. Not to have such schematic processing aids would leave us as paralyzed victims of information overload. Perhaps ultimately we will have a clearer picture of how these three models combine to facilitate predictions of thought and behavior, but one can hardly expect the present authors to do much more than suggest that each of the different processing models is appropriate under different circumstances.

In order to evaluate the contribution of this volume it is important to understand to whom it is addressed. It is one of a series designed for undergraduates lacking any particular background in social psychology. Certain stylistic consequences of this orientation are apparent. Individual research studies are referred to and superficially summarized; they are rarely described in sufficient detail to permit critical appraisal. Strings of references validate (for those already familiar with the literature) the authors' extensive scholarship, but the professional reader may yearn for greater depth and sophistication of treatment. Instead, the presentation is interspersed with hypothetical cases, largely from undergraduate life, and with thought experiments. Most of these are intriguing and pedagogically apt, but some readers may feel patronized or vaguely manipulated by anecdotes intended to "make the point" being considered.

All in all, in spite of the deference to undergraduate interests and concerns, this is an ambitious enterprise that goes well beyond pedestrian textbook standards. It is really the first major effort to consider how cognitive and social psychologists have joined hands, and it is carried out with imagination, good sense, and good humor. The book presents the outsider with a clear picture of the dominant contemporary focus in social psychology. It also deals perceptively and engagingly with problems of social and self understanding that must be a concern of every sentient person. Finally, the book gives the professional scholar a remarkably useful bibliography and

will bring him or her up to date in areas where his or her reading has lapsed.

In short, *Social Cogniton* is timely, balanced, and comprehensive. It may not supplant more general social psychology textbooks, but it will surely be reflected in many a lecture note, with or without acknowledgement of the source. This may not be what the authors and publishers had in mind, but it will be a tribute both to the book's substance and to its style.

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