

DESCRIPTION FOR THE GENERAL PUBLIC

It does not take a philosopher to observe that one's culture influences the way one sees oneself and others. A moment's thought on that issue will reveal, however, a question of truly philosophical nature – how much of the way we think about others and ourselves and explain their behavior is rooted in that which is inborn, universal and common, and how much of it comes from that which we acquire, which is locally specific and connected with one particular language and culture?

Efforts to find the answer to that question are taken in the field of philosophy of mind and cognitive science. One of the central, widely discussed issues in this context is the question of the status, functioning, source, and universality of the so-called folk (naive) intuitions (theories). In other words, attention of the current research is drawn to commonsensical and widely-deployed theories that explain various aspects of reality, including mental life that underwrites human behavior. Such *folk theories or psychologies* come with a set of mental concepts – such as BELIEF, DESIRE or INTENTION – and are widely applied to make sense of everyday social life. The problem of universality and commonality of how we explain others' behavior is therefore framed here with a more specific question: to what extent are folk psychologies universal and indifferent to cultural context, and how much of them is actually born within a specific culture and dependent on it? This is the main focus of my project.

To answer the question will entail a systematization of empirical data significant for the issue. Recent data obtained in a number of research fields shows that the ability for psychological interpretations of behavior does indeed depend heavily on socio-cultural factors. Central for the matter is research on cross-cultural differences in folk psychology and the development of theories of mind in children from various cultures. Relatedly, it has been shown that parenting practices influence the development of theory of mind, and the development and form of theory of mind in deaf individuals differ from that of hearing people. Overall, language and socio-cultural context have been shown to influence one's ability to interpret behavior of others – to read their minds.

With the empirical data compiled, I will turn to theoretical issues central to my philosophical approach to the subject. I will compose a critical account of the available theoretical positions and select one that accounts for the empirical data best. The theories on the table can be divided into two general categories: (i) the dominant modular-computational theories, which put most of the explanatory weight on inborn factors, and (ii) systemic theories, which are a completely different theoretical family, and are much more open to cultural factors in their explanations.

Finally, I will offer a thorough description of folk psychology within the selected framework – I will propose an account of the interplay of biological and cultural factors leading to the emergence of folk psychology – and therefore answer the question of the extent to which it is culturally-specific.