Book Reviews/Comptes rendus

JONATHAN H. TURNER, *Face to Face: Toward A Sociological Theory of Interpersonal Behavior*. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2002, 271 p. No price indicated.

Most introductory sociology texts routinely define core concepts such as roles, statuses, norms, values, symbols, networks, groups, organizations, and culture. These concepts are foundational in the discipline, or the building blocks of general theories of social life. Yet rarely are they integrated into unifying theories of interpersonal behavior. Jonathan Turner aims to develop just such a "grand theory of microdynamics¼to see how we can combine, synthesize, and extend the many interesting theories that have been developed on microscocial processes" (231). His goals are ambitious and his efforts laudable, even as he argues for the tentative and preliminary nature of his propositions.

Building upon what he describes as "first principles" articulated in the works of Mead, Freud, Schutz, Durkheim, and Goffman, Turner conceptualizes in a more rigorous and systematic way the embedded nature of encounters, or episodes of face-to-face interactions. The crux of his argument rests on the belief that emotional, transactional, symbolic, role, status, and demographic⁄ecological properties structure the flow of interactions. By the same token, these properties cannot be divorced from the cultural constraints of the encounter, which include the macro-level of a society's cultural systems, the culture of institutional systems, and the culture of corporate and categoric units to which individual actors belong.

His more controversial claims stem from his reasoning that human interactions are constrained as well by "biological embeddedness." Unlike most sociologists, Turner takes seriously the evolutionary history of the human *animal* as a core explanatory feature underlying emergent patterns of face-to-face interactions. He has presented the evolutionary argument in detail elsewhere, but the most intriguing implication suggests that human beings appear to exhibit ape-like propensities for maintaining weak ties, a limited degree of sociality, individual autonomy, and considerable fluidity in their patterns of social organization. As Turner contends, "Rather than begin with the old assumption of the innate sociality of humans, we should begin with the opposite assumption and ask how humans overcome their ape ancestry" (66). While Turner eschews biological determinism or reductionism, he argues nevertheless that to some degree biological embeddedness constrains encounters.

Turner devotes one chapter each to a detailed examination of the aforementioned properties, shifting distinctly to the use of the term *forces* (e.g., emotional forces, transactional forces, etc.) to describe the dynamics of encounters. Each chapter outlines the logic of the six forces and concludes with a summary listing of propositions that, in principle, can be investigated as testable hypotheses. Indeed, the greatest strength of such a dense and comprehensive theory of interpersonal behavior lies in the fact that the work can be evaluated empirically. Yet therein lies a parallel limitation: what does the author intend to explain?

Turner's theory represents a theory of human emotion, though many of the propositions advanced deal with other dynamics utilized to sustain human interactions. The "dependent variables" in most propositions, however, are the various emotions that individuals experience in their face-to-face encounters. For example, Turner argues that the interplay between transactional needs, such as self-confirmation, and the salience of the core self in encounters will produce different emotional reactions based on the degree of verification established. For Turner, the dynamics of face-to-face interactions, in all of their biological, structural, and cultural complexity, produce either positive or negative emotional energy manifested in concrete emotions such as happiness, anger, fear, and sadness. Thus, despite his efforts to develop a more parsimonious theory, his "principle of positive emotional energy" states the following: "When individual's expectations for transactional needs, for normatizing, for making and verifying roles, for establishing status, and for using demography/ecology are realized in an encounter and/or when they are recipients of positive sanctions from others, these individuals will experience and, depending on the attributions made, express positive emotions toward self, others, members of categoric units, or the structure and culture of corporate units" (234). Where exactly these emotional states will drive human behavior, Turner does not say. Rather he discusses broad behavioral outcomes such as sustaining encounters or the smoothness with which human encounters proceed. His schema provides the foundational core of a theory of interpersonal behavior, but without specifying which behaviors are to be explained.

In summation, Turner has succeeded admirably in pulling together diverse strains of sociological reasoning into a coherent and integrated theoretical framework. His work embraces without apology the challenge of developing grand sociological theory that can, in principle, be tested against the evidence. Some will disagree that such theorizing can yield fruitful empirical work. Certain assumptions about human nature and human needs cannot in fact be tested, including the relative priority of the transactional needs identified. Others may quibble with the teleological nature of his theory, with the implications that human beings have particular transactional needs that they seek to realize in all encounters. And, despite his valiant efforts, Turner has *not* produced the parsimonious theory to which he aspires. Yet for those working in the area of interpersonal exchanges, one cannot and should not ignore analytic work of this importance.

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