A REVIEW OF GARY GALLOPIN'S BEYOND PERESTROKA: AXIOLOGY AND THE NEW RUSSIAN ENTREPRENEURS

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Abstract

This author brings the discipline of formal axiology into his research as an ethnographer to discern the value structures of Russian entrepreneurs during a time of great social change—the collapse of the former Soviet Union. Gallopin advances the discussion of formal axiology in three new directions. First, he discusses the role of values in understanding culture. Second, he uses formal axiology as his lens through which to study the Russian phenomenon known as "blat." Blat can be roughly translated as "networking." Third, and perhaps most originally, Gallopin applies formal axiology to social network analysis. He explores values that are manifested in relationships between or among people. He describes the common ground that needs to be established between any two people who are seeking a relationship as being located at the cusp between extrinsic valuation and intrinsic valuation. He names this cusp the "potential intrinsic."

Gary Gallopin has done a favor to theorists and practitioners of formal axiology by writing a book which brings this academic discipline into his research as an ethnographer. By doing so, it has been rightly said, Gallopin is "the world's first axiological anthropologist." For this reason alone, his book will be of interest to any serious student of formal axiology. But it will also be of interest to more than just "us." You will also find his work interesting if:

1. You want to know more about the sort of field research that results in what anthropologists know as " thick descriptions."
2. You are an historian of the Soviet Union and the Russian way of life.
3. You are a political scientist who wonders what life was really like in Russia at the time of the collapse of the Soviet Union and its immediate aftermath.
3. You are a student of social network theory.
4. You are interested in the connection between value and stress, especially the

role of the HVP in identifying stress.

5, You are interested in the challenges and pitfalls of inter-cultural use of assessments or in how to translate assessment instruments in general.

6. You are an enthusiast of Leon Pomeroy's cross-cultural research and his international validation studies of the Hartman Value Profile.

7. You are a doctoral student—as is this reviewer—and have ever wondered how a dissertation research question is decided upon. Hint: it isn't; it is discovered.

In short, there is a lot here for many different readers. Part travelogue, part dissertation, it's a heady mixture; one not intended for the casual reader.

As the author writes in his Preface, "This book represents an experimental breakthrough in social science, namely the application of a 'hard science' to moral problems encountered in the field" (xvi) .The author confronts head-on the controversy that rages today in academic debate between objectivism and subjectivism; between relativism and cultural neutrality. He takes us—safely and vicariously—along with him into these contested waters in ethnographic detail.

It is Gallopin's nose for detail that lingers most in my mind after reading his book. He describes the stench from passengers' body odors on a crowded city train in Leningrad—observing that deodorant is a luxury that most Russians at that time could not afford. He savors the taste of a fresh bottle of milk for an upset stomach. Though sometimes his details seem too many, at other times they provide remarkable insight. After commenting on the general drabness of the city, the prevailing state of aesthetic neglect, and the absence of what Westerners would call landscaping, he reveals a reason for it: "Though they enjoy well-kept parks, Russians like to see unkempt patches of wildness here and there because it relieves the tedium of civilization" (52).

The details would drag if the author wasn't demonstrating for us the virtue of thick description—a necessary and vital part of ethnographic inquiry. Validity is attained in participant-observation research not from a distance, which might be said to permit objectivity, but from participating up-close—by being "all-in." The bias that arises inevitably from such subjective involvement is then minimized by admitting to, describing, and elaborating on one's personal experience as a participant in one's own research. Gallopin models this process throughout. As a consequence, the book goes into a lot of detail. Two-thirds of this 320-pager, in fact, describes one three-week visit—the author's first—to the Soviet Union. Much of his axiological research, on the other hand, came about in subsequent trips, and is reported later in the book. These latter chapters provide greater interpretation of axiological theory and less detail of a narrative sort.

If you are not already familiar with the precepts of formal axiology, the author does a serviceable job explaining this complex subject. So, don't be put off by the book if you are not an axiologist. If you are one, you will find Gallopin's interpretation of the theory—influenced as he is by Pomeroy and by Forrest—to be of keen interest. Gallopin advances the discussion of formal axiology in three new directions.

First, he discusses the role of values in understanding culture. Here he takes his stand in direct opposition to much of contemporary cultural anthropology which, says the author, tends to look at societies in a mechanistic way (210). Yet, according to Gallopin, "Culture is the cultivation of value" and "without values, accounting for changes in culture becomes impossible" (211).

Second, he uses formal axiology as his lens through which to study the Russian phenomenon known as "blat." Blat can be roughly translated as "networking." Gallopin elaborates:

> I was discovering a vast new landscape of the underground Russian economy, where favors were exchanged much like stocks are traded on Wall Street. Except it was done discreetly, but with the understanding that everyone did it, including those whose jobs were to prosecute illegal trade (214).

Gallopin learns from his host, Dimitri, about how to survive in circumstances where choices had to be made regarding what was valuable and what price was to be paid for those values.

> Russians value social networking differently than Americans. To an American, a social contact may mean the difference between a good career and an average one. To a Russian, a social contact may mean the difference between life and death. Placing so much importance on friendship's practical value often involved destroying its intimate value (215).

Third, and perhaps most originally, Gallopin applies formal axiology to social network analysis. Whereas other scholars of formal axiology have focused on the values ascribed to ideas, things, and people and valuations made by individuals, Gallopin explores the values that are manifested in a relationship between or among people.

A social network is a system of interpersonal relationships. Seen from the model of formal axiology, a network is a systemic valuation of a group of persons in terms of their relationships (Hartman, 1967, 301).

Interpersonal relationships can be analyzed as a play between all three value dimensions, the systemic in terms of prescribed roles, the extrinsic in terms of practical value, and the intrinsic in terms of intimacy. I seek to clarify what is implicit in the approach of network analysts, namely that the systemic dimension of valuation be combined with the three kinds of relationships (prescribed, practical, intimate) they have identified. We may formally model interpersonal relationships by considering them across the entire range of valuation (245).

The possibilities that Gallopin points to from this marriage of formal axiology with network analysis are far reaching. He speaks of the need for any two valuing subjects in a relationship to seek and find a common ground. "This common ground can be described as being at the cusp between extrinsic valuation and intrinsic valuation"

(294). He names this cusp the "potential intrinsic."

An exploration of the mathematics of the potential intrinsic, he notes, would require another book. We should stay tuned.

Works Cited

Gallopin, Gary G. (2009). *Beyond Perestroika: Axiology and the New Russian Entrepreneurs.* Amsterdam - New York: Rodopi.

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