All Roads Lead To Rome
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Abstract

Even though Prof. Allwood had conducted a large-scale international survey on the origins and development of indigenous psychologies (IPs) (Allwood and Berry 2006), he has no empathetic understanding of the challenges encountered by most indigenous psychologists (IPists). If he put himself in the situation of non-Western IPists, he will find that my definition of culture — as well as my approach of multiple philosophical paradigms and critical realism (Bhaskar 1975, 1979) for constructing culture-inclusive theories of psychology — is designed to study the morphostasis of a cultural system. It may provide a solid ground for indigenous or cultural psychologists to study the morphogenesis of socio-cultural interaction by people of a given culture in their life worlds (Archer 1995).

In the conclusion of his recent rejoinder to our long-term debate, Prof. Allwood (2014, 45) stated:

To conclude, I argue that people’s understanding that together makes up the cultural understanding in a society, including the societies relevant to the IPs, is located in a fairly open, broad and complicated system of events in a complex and conceptually unbounded reality. This argues for a view where culture is seen as distributed, very open to influence and, partly for this reason, fairly quickly changeable, and against a culture concept where culture is seen as fairly monolithic, difficult to influence and thus fairly stable over time. Some features of reality pointing in this direction are that it may not be realistic to see the natural social systems where understanding is generated, and located, as even quasi-isolated.

Prof. Allwood may or may not have sensed the root of divergence in our debate: while he is talking about a culture concept for cultural or cross-cultural research in general, I am arguing for another culture concept for pushing forward the third wave of psychology in the age of globalization.

Definitions of Culture

In my academic career of doing culture-related research, I realized that culture is an all-inclusive concept that can be viewed from various perspectives. In their famous classical works, Kreober and Kluekhohn (1952) listed more than 160 definitions of culture proposed by previous anthropologists, sociologists and psychologists. Since then, numerous new definitions have been proposed by other social scientists for their own purposes. It seems to me that a culture concept can be considered adequate if and only if it is appropriate for the social scientist’s purpose of research in a specific field.
After several rounds of international debates with me, Prof. Allwood (2014, 41) restated his culture concept in the very beginning of his most recent article:

In this exchange with Prof. Hwang about what is a suitable culture concept for the indigenous psychologies (IPs), and earlier (Allwood 2011), I have, from the perspective of applicable knowledge, argued for a culture concept that is helpful with respect to making the results from research applicable to the society of the IP researcher.

**Spirit of Anti-Colonialism**

This is obviously a pragmatic perspective. As such, we need to understand the problematic situation faced by non-Western IPists of before judging whether a culture concept is “suitable” or “helpful” to making the research results “applicable” to the IP society. What is the problematic situation faced by IPists?

By conducting an international survey on the origins and development of IPs (Allwood and Berry 2006), Allwood may know that non-Western psychologists, in a spirit of nationalism and academic anti-colonialism, initiated the indigenization movements. They argued that mainstream psychology is basically a kind of Westernized or Americanized psychology. Both its theory and research methods contain Western ethnocentric bias (Berry et al. 1992). When the research paradigm of Western psychology is transplanted blindly to non-Western countries, it is usually irrelevant, inappropriate, or incompatible for understanding the mentalities of non-Western people (Sinha 1986, 1988). Such a practice has been regarded as a kind of academic imperialism or colonialism (Ho 1993, 240-259). By ignoring the fact that many Western theories of social psychology are culturally bound, duplication of a Western paradigm in non-Western countries may result in a neglect of cultural factors influential for the development and manifestation of human behavior.

As such, many indigenous psychologists have advocated “a bottom-up model building paradigm” (Kim 2000, 265) to promote “the study of human behavior and mental processes within a cultural context that relies on values, concepts, belief systems, methodologies, and other resources” (Ho 1998, 71), and that treats people “as interactive and proactive agents of their own actions” that occur in a meaningful context (Kim, Park and Park 2000, 2). They perform “the scientific study of human behavior (or the mind) that is native, that is not transported from other regions, and that is designed for its peoples” (Kim and Berry 1993) in order to develop a “cultural-appropriate psychology” (Azuma 1984, 53), “a psychology based on and responsive to indigenous culture and indigenous realities” (Enriquez 1993, 158), or a psychology whose “concepts, problems, hypothesis, methods, and tests emanate from, adequately represent, and reflect upon the cultural context in which the behavior is observed” (Adair, Puhan and Vohra 1993, 149).
Challenges to Indigenous Psychology

The indigenous approach (outlined above) has been criticized by mainstream psychologists. For example, Triandis (2000) pointed out that anthropologists have used a similar approach for years, and that accumulating anthropological data with an idiosyncratic approach may not have much significance in terms of contribution to the development of scientific psychology. Poortinga (1999) indicated that the restriction for the development of indigenous psychology is implied in the usage of the plural “indigenous psychologies” by many indigenous psychologists. The development of multiple psychologies not only contradicts the scientific requirement of parsimony, but also makes the demarcation of cultural populations a pending problem. If every culture has to develop its own psychology, how many indigenous psychologies should there be? How many psychologies would have to be developed for Africa? What is the optimal number of indigenous psychologies? What is the meaning of an indigenous psychology developed in a specific culture to people in other cultures?

In order to respond to these challenges, most indigenous psychologists have argued that the development of numerous indigenous psychologies is not their final goal. Rather, their final goal is to develop an Asian psychology (Ho 1988), a global psychology (Enriquez 1993), a universal psychology (Kim and Berry 1993), or a human psychology (Yang 1993). To achieve this goal, they have proposed several research methods or approaches, including the derived etic approach (Berry 1989), the metatheory method (Ho 1998), the cross-indigenous method (Enriquez 1977), as well as the cross-cultural indigenous psychology (Yang 1997). Unfortunately (insofar as I know), no indigenous psychologists developed any such psychology with these methods.

In order to deal with such a challenge, IPists of non-Western countries certainly need a “suitable”, “helpful” or “applicable” culture concept to resolve the issue. But how? Is Allwood’s suggestion plausible?

Cultural understanding is reasonably seen to be generated from the local context of the members of the cultural community. However, in today’s globalized world the local context is no longer limited to the geographical proximity of the culture’s members, but rather to all the environments that they take part of, whether these environments are physically and concretely nearby or realities conveyed through electronic or other means (Allwood 2014, 41).

Self-Interpreting Animal

Prof. Allwood’s statement reminded me of a similar suggestion proposed by two representatives from Social Epistemology during an interviewed (Evenden and Sandstrom 2011):

In your work you also indicate that as a result of globalization, modernization, industrialization processes, and so on, most indigenous culture are no longer “pure” because they have become “contaminated”
with western ideas. What problem does this present for the development of IPs and how are they resolved?

My answer to their suggestion was:

As a result of globalization, modernization and industrialization, cultural hybridization and interpenetration has become so common that traditional cultural differences are being eroded (Hermans and Kempen 1998), and some cultures and languages may even disappear. But, do not forget that language is the most important carrier of culture. Who can believe that the Chinese language will disappear someday (Evenden and Sandstrom 2011, 161)?

I do believe that human beings are “language animals” or “self-interpreting animals” (Taylor 1985), while language is the most important carrier of culture. To me, a “cultural community” should be defined by the language shared by them, while the “geographical proximity of the culture’s members is of secondary importance in today’s world of high mobility.” Therefore, though Kroeber and Kluckhohn (1952) reviewed previous definitions of culture and concluded that it contains all artifacts of human groups as well as various explicit or implicit patterns of behavior which might be acquired or transmitted by the wage of symbols, I am most interested in the cultural heritage of core traditional values which may signify the specific features of a cultural group or community sharing the same language. The importance of those parts of culture can be understood in terms of Vygotsky’s (1927/1987) pioneer works on genetic method that advocated for studying the process of psychological development by both ontogenetic and phylogenetic history of a cultural group. Culture is the total artifacts created by the whole group in its phylogenetic history of progress, while an individual’s ontogenetic history concerns his/her psychological development and mental changes from birth to death. Cultural psychologist Cole (1996) echoed Vygotsky’s advocacy and argued that language is the most important species-specific medium of culture for an individual’s psychological development; it enables human beings to retrieve their past, transmit them to the next generation, and project them to the future.

**Phylogenesis of Culture**

It is a well-known fact that the most idiosyncratic legacy of traditional Chinese culture is the series of thoughts including Taoism, Confucianism, Legalism and the Martial school as well as Buddhism, which was imported into China around 65 A.D. In my book *Knowledge and Action* (Hwang 1995), I analyzed the inner structure of Confucianism from the perspective of structuralism. Then I used it as a basis to interpret the phylogenetic progress of Chinese cultural tradition from Daoism to Buddhism. Accordingly, with the exception of the imported Buddhism, Daoism was the first developed Chinese cultural tradition. Confucius asked Laozi, the founder of Daoism, about propriety (*li*), before developing his thoughts on benevolence (*ren*). One of Confucius’s students, Mencius, elaborated on his theory of righteousness (*yi*), while another follower Xunzi emphasized *li*. Those three constituted a Confucian ethical system
of ren-yi-li, while Legalism stressed laws, strategies, and power (fa, shu and shi). Subsequently, the Martial School emerged. This development demonstrates the progress of Chinese cultural tradition, within which the later schools inherited some previous thoughts and creatively developed their own ideas. According to Laozi: “When Dao was lost, its attributes (de) appeared; when its attributes were lost, benevolence (ren) appeared; when benevolence was lost, righteousness (yi) appeared; and when righteousness was lost, proprieties (li) appeared” (Dao De Jing, chapter 38). We may further say that, “when proprieties were lost, laws (fa) appeared; when laws were lost, strategies (shu) appeared; when strategies were lost, power (shi) appeared.” Even if power did not work, the final solution would be war. The development of these four schools also represents a process of secularization. Following this order enables an individual to become mediocre in the lifeworld. However, Daoism teaches a person to revert to the authentic state of origin, so that one may be integrated into the Dao and thereby become extraordinary.

**The Recapitulation of the Cultural Phylogenesis**

Under the influence of Daoism, Confucianism, Legalism, and the Martial School, the ontogenesis of an individual almost recapitulates the phylogenesis of Chinese cultural tradition. An individual may re-experience this process even over the course of one day and night. As Wang Yang-Ming (1472–1528) said, “People may not be aware that they are experiencing all the history within one day. Before daybreak, they do not see, do not hear, do not think, do not work, and are as pristine as in King Fu-Xi’s age. In the dawn, they feel as brisk and harmonious as in King Yao and King Shuen’s age. In the morning, they act in good manners with proper order, just as in the Period Xia–Shang–Zhou. In the afternoon, their energy goes downward, and their social activities become complicated, as in the Warrior-States after Spring-and-Autumn Period. When the night falls, it is an empty world in which everything is tranquil. If an intellectual always follow his conscience and is not disturbed by his mental state, he can live as in King Fu-Xi’s age.”

What Wang meant by “King Fu-Xi’s age,” “King Yao and King Shuen’s age,” “Xia-Shang-Zhou Period,” “Spring-and-Autumn and Warrior-States Period,” and “an empty world” roughly correspond to the ideal states of Daoism, Confucianism, Legalism, the Martial School, and Buddhism respectively. In spite of the fact that Chinese societies all over the world have transformed into industrial or commercial societies, Wang’s words still resonate in many people’s lives. Viewed from the framework of Knowledge and Action, an individual may create a harmonious King Yao and King Shuen’s time in which he or she feels brisk after getting up in the morning and interacts with his or her family members according to Confucian ethics. In contemporary industrial or commercial society, various organizations have been established, and many people’s positions are situated within these organizations. Some workplace leaders may manage their organizations on the basis of Legalism in order to establish a social order reminiscent of the Xia–Shang–Zhou Periods. Meanwhile, members of the workplace may employ strategies from the Martial School to compete against each other inside or outside the organization, just as people did during the Warrior-States after the Spring-and-Autumn Period. When they return home after work, they can revert to the authentic state of origin.
or the empty world where everything is tranquil, which is the ideal state of Daoism or Buddhism, and thus dwell in King Fu-Xi’s time.

Wang’s metaphor illustrates how an individual may recapitulate the ontogenetic process of traditional Chinese culture within one day. Furthermore, one may recapitulate the ontogenetic process across one’s life span as well.

**Culture-Inclusive Theories**

Following the principle of cultural psychology, “One mind, many mentalities,” in Chapter 4 of my book, *Foundations of Chinese Psychology: Confucian Social Relations* (Hwang 2012), I explained how I constructed the “Face and Favor” model to represent the universal mind for social interaction (Hwang, 1978), then I explained how I used that model to analyze the inner structure of Confucianism. By doing so, I was able to construct a series of “culture-inclusive theories of psychology” to escape Prof. Allwood’s dilemma:

> It is recognized in cognitive psychology that so called *strong methods* that utilize more of the various properties of the local environment (thus also including properties that are more or less unique to the environment) will be more effective in that specific environment than so called *weak methods* that use only features that are common to many environments. The drawback is of course that strong methods generalize poorly to other environments (since they, at least partly, tend to rely on properties that are unique to the specific environment where they were useful) (original emphasis, Allwood 2014, 41-42).

Because my “Face and Favor” model (Hwang 1987) and “Mandala Model of Self” (Hwang 2011a, b) are supposed to be universal, while my culture-inclusive theories of psychology represent properties that are unique to a specific environment, my approach may represent a stronger method.

Even though I have explained how I constructed culture-inclusive theories of psychology in my dialogue with Prof. Allwood (Hwang 2013a, b, c), it may still be hard to catch the essential points of my approach:

> The abstract tendency in Prof. Hwang’s culture concept is evidenced in that his ambitions seem to be more directed towards explanation, as opposed to prediction (2014, 42).

**Cultural System vs. Pan-Cultural Dimensions**

In my book, *Foundations of Chinese Psychology*, I advocated for not only philosophical reflection and theoretical construction, but also empirical research by qualitative methods with explanation as well as quantitative methods with prediction. Thus, Prof. Allwood (2014, 41) may find his argument …
Culture concepts that provide more abstract descriptions of people’s understanding, of which Prof. Hwang’s culture concept appears to be an example, may include pieces of understanding that are held by many people, but may not be very useful for the IPs if their goal is to be easily applicable in their own local contexts.

… to be false. Let me provide a story to illustrate my points. Michael H. Bond is the representative figure who coined the term “Chinese Psychology” with the publication, *The Psychology of the Chinese People*, in 1986. Since then, he has edited and published two handbooks of Chinese psychology successively (1996, 2010). The third book contains 41 chapters by 87 authors with intensive reviews on a variety of topics related to Chinese psychology.

Nonetheless, with his careful review of this book, Lee (2011) indicated that he,

> Was somewhat puzzled and bothered by the fact that the book does not have a clear structure … It is thus difficult for readers to learn quickly about what is included in the book and to identify the chapter on a specific topic unless they go through the whole table of contents carefully. There is a general lack of theory in the whole handbook … The topic-oriented chapters have done a great job in reviewing and reporting extensively empirical findings in the field regarding the Chinese people. However, very few chapters offer indigenous theories of Chinese psychology (e.g. the chapter of Hwang and Han). Most of them stay at the level of confirming/ disconfirming Western findings, referring to well-known cultural dimensions such as collectivism and power distance to explain the variation found, despite the openly stated effort to push for indigenous research. Moreover, most of the studies cited in the book simply dichotomized their findings as Chinese vs. Western, failing to capture the much more refined complexity of the world (271-272).

I authored a chapter that offers indigenous theories of Chinese psychology in that book. I am an old friend of Michael Bond. He has always invited me to contribute a chapter when editing the aforementioned books on Chinese psychology. I thus serve either as an author or co-author. But I have insisted on the cultural system approach that is in direct opposition to the popular pan-cultural approach adopted by most authors. In terms of Lakatos’ (1978) philosophy, the inner structure of Confucianism described in Chapter 5 of my book (Hwang, 2012) constitutes the hard core of my scientific research programme, which enabled me to construct its protective belt with a series of culture-inclusive theories on Confucian morality, social exchange, face, dynamism, achievement motivation, organizational behavior and conflict resolution. If Prof. Allwood compared these two approaches, it is not difficult to judge which approach may result in “pieces of understanding” held by many people, and which approach is easily applicable in the Chinese cultural context.
Morphostasis vs. Morphogenesis

I understand that Prof. Allwood is unhappy about my classification of his philosophical stance:

Although my own specific philosophical stance may not be of central interest to this debate, I note that Prof. Hwang’s fervent classification urge again has produced a different result with respect to my philosophical location; from previously having indicated my stance as in the “qualitative camp” (2013a, 106), and then in Hwang (2013b), as an “empiricist” and a “naïve empiricist” (44), he, in his last contribution (2013c), based on a very loose argumentation, classified my philosophy as “Kant’s transcendental idealism” (46), the second of Bhaskar’s three philosophies of science. He also states that my philosophy of science has an “identity crisis”. However, I don’t agree. If anything, it is Prof. Hwang’s classification activities that by now should be experiencing an identity crisis (Allwood 2014, 44).

He may change his philosophical stance from time to time because he insists on the cultural understanding “in a fairly open, broad and complicated systems of events in a complex and conceptually unbounded reality.” However, I am seeking a way for non-Western IPists to resolve their problematic situation. Conceiving in the concepts of analytic dualism (Archer 1995), I advocate for an approach to study the morphostasis of a cultural system by constructing scientific microworld; so Bhaskar’s concept of generative mechanism must be used exactly and carefully in the context of his philosophy. But, according to Allwood, “anything goes” for studying morphogenesis of socio-cultural interaction in local people’s lifeworlds, so it is unnecessary for him to stick to any philosophical stance:

It is not clear to me why I would not, for example, be able to understand Bhaskar’s concept of generative mechanism even if I should not agree with the philosophical stance in Bhaskar’s third philosophy of science. In fact, as a quick Internet search will support, the concept of generative mechanism is a fairly common and central concept in current psychological research (Allwood 2014, 44).

All Roads Lead to Rome

Nevertheless, Prof. Allwood should not be distressed by the divergence between our perspectives. Despite my efforts (Hwang 2013a, b, c), I understand that we still have our differences. Fortunately, The Institute for Advanced Studies in Humanities and Social Sciences at National Taiwan University sponsored an international conference on “The Construction of Culture-inclusive Theories in Psychology” in June 2012. Bond and other well-known indigenous and cultural psychologists were presenters. Some of their works (including mine entitled Cultural System vs. Pan-cultural Dimensional Approach: Two Approaches for Studying Indigenous Psychology and Culture-Inclusive Theories of Self
and Social Interaction: The Approach of Multiple Philosophical Paradigms) will be published in a special issue for the Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour this year.

As illustrated by that special issue, Prof. Allwood may find that though we walk different paths, all roads lead to Rome. Any IPist who has a comprehensive understanding of the scientific microworld constructed by my approach may find its usefulness for conducting either qualitative or quantitative research in the local lifeworld.

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References


