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Kwang-Kuo Hwang

Foundations of Chinese Psychology

Confucian Social Relations



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*To My Mentors:
Anthony J. Marsella & Kuo-Shu Yang
Who guided me to the path of indigenous
psychology*

Foreword

Professor Hwang Kwang Kuo is a pioneer scholar in cultural psychology, the topical and methodological area of psychology concerned with investigating the cultural determinants of human behavior. Cultural psychology has been particularly interested in understanding and valuing the subjective experience of different ethnocultural groups, especially their cultural constructions of reality. Within cultural psychology, Professor Hwang has devoted much of his professional career to the study of indigenous psychologies. Within the past few decades, indigenous psychologies have become the topic of increased interest among non-Western psychologists, many of who studied in the West and returned to their countries only to be confronted with serious issues about the validity and applicability of the Western psychologies they had so diligently been taught.

Fathali Moghaddam, a distinguished Iranian-American psychologist who is currently a professor at Georgetown University in the USA, raised serious questions about substantive differences in the psychologies of the first, second, and third worlds, and the unbridled exportation of first world psychologies (e.g., North American, Northern European) to the developing nations. He noted the dangers of using concepts and methods that evidenced little sensitivity to the realities of the developing nations, and the possibilities that these nations required the development of their own psychologies (Moghaddam, 1987). Others (e.g., Sloan, 1995, Marsella, 1998, 2010; Pickren, 2009) pointed out the risks and potential destructive consequences of assuming that Western psychology was universally applicable. Professor Girishwar Misra (1996), an Asian Indian, identified the problem and its consequences:

The current Western thinking of the science of psychology on its prototypical form, despite being local and indigenous, assumes a global relevance and is treated as universal of generating knowledge. Its dominant voice subscribes to a decontextualized vision with an extraordinary emphasis on individualism, mechanism, and objectivity. This peculiarly Western mode of thinking is fabricated, projected, and institutionalized through representation technologies and scientific rituals and transported on a large scale to the non-Western societies under political-economic domination. As a result, Western psychology tends to maintain an independent stance at the cost of ignoring other substantive possibilities from disparate cultural traditions. Mapping reality through Western constructs has a pseudo-understanding of the people of alien cultures and has debilitating effects in terms

of misconstruing the special realities of other people and exoticizing or disregarding psychologies that are non-Western. Consequently, when people from other cultures are exposed to Western psychology, they find their identities placed in question and their conceptual repertoires rendered obsolete (Misra, 1996, pp. 497–498).

Within this context of discontent and questioning, Professor Hwang, a Taiwanese-born psychologist, trained in graduate school at the University of Hawaii in social and cultural psychology, began to explore the thoughts and writings of the ancient venerated Chinese sage, Confucius (551 BCE–479 BCE), with special attention to the role of Confucian ideas in shaping Chinese psychology across the ages. Professor Hwang's studies revealed the profound impact of Confucian thought for understanding Chinese psychology and behavior, even within the brief period of Communist and Maoist political domination. In a series of publications that now have important historical implications for psychology, Professor Hwang documented the relationship between Chinese psychology and behavior and Confucian thought, especially the critical role of relationism. Professor Hwang noted that Confucian thought places heavy emphasis on morality, context, and the nature of interpersonal relations. This recognition became the foundation for much of Professor Hwang's subsequent writings – writings that now find their first collected presentation in the West through this compendium of his thought.

Using the Confucian foundations of Chinese psychology, Professor Hwang argued persuasively that Chinese behavior patterns can best be understood and appreciated *not* by using alien Western psychology assumptions and tenets, but rather by grasping the embedded nature of Chinese behavior patterns within the contexts of their own historical and cultural traditions. Indeed, as Professor Hwang points out clearly, the reliance on Western psychologies to understand the behavior of non-Western people constitutes an egregious error that frames the behavior of non-Western people within a template that is not only limited in its validity, but also potentially dangerous in terms of the conclusions that are reached, and the decisions too often made under the guise of Western scientific hegemony.

Based largely on his careful research and scholarship of Chinese philosophical and historical traditions, Professor Hwang was able to develop critical insights into Chinese psychology that were soon recognized and appreciated by psychologists throughout Asia as alternatives to Western psychologies. In 2006, Professor Hwang joined Professor Uichol Kim (Korea) and Professor Yang Kuo-Shu (Taiwan) in an edited volume entitled, *Indigenous and Cultural Psychology* (2006, Springer SBM Publications). The volume included a wide array of contributions from various cultures (e.g., Chinese, Japan, Korea, Philippines), and it immediately became an essential resource for psychologists around the world concerned with developing psychologies that were appropriate and sensitive to their own historical and cultural traditions.

For years, Western psychology – largely rooted within North American and Western European scientific and professional cultures – was applied indiscriminately to non-Western people under the mistaken assumption that its principles and methods were universal. Western premises, assessment methods, and even diagnostic

and therapeutic interventions were not only transported around the world, but were also accepted by many non-Western psychologists as valid and reliable foundations for understanding behavior and for developing policies and procedures that were consonant with the Western views.

Gradually, however, and it was here that Professor Hwang's most important contributions reside, it became clear that Western psychology's assumptions and methods were a function of Western history and culture, and as such, were ethnocentric and biased creations whose worldwide acceptance was based on the powerful influences of Western political, economic, and military dominance. In other words, what became apparent was that Western psychology, in spite of all its appeals to universal validity because of its alleged "scientific" foundations and conclusions, was itself a cultural creation, and that its claims and applications were problematic because it was neither universal nor scientific. Tod Sloan, a Western, critical theory psychologist, captured the sociopolitical dimensions of this problem. Sloan (1996) writes:

... the major problem lies less in the theoretical limits of Western psychology, although these are serious, than in the social functions of Western psychology. As scientific psychology entrenches itself further in industrial nations, its function as a sociopolitical stabilizing mechanism has gradually become more obvious...psychological theory and practice embody Western cultural assumptions to such an extent that they primarily perform an ideological function. That is, they serve to reproduce and sustain societal status quo characterized by economic inequality and other forms of oppression such as sexism and racism. The core operative assumptions that produce this ideological effect both in theory and practice are individualism and scientism. (Sloan, 1996, p. 39)

The essence of "science" – an idea/concept/method much valued in the West – is ultimately about accuracy in describing, understanding, predicting, and controlling the world about us. But the problem is that Western psychology is often *inaccurate* when applied the behavior of non-Western people – indeed, it also has difficulty explaining behavior of Western people – because it too often decontextualizes behavior. The "decontextualization" of behavior, an approach often favored by Western psychologies that locate the determinants of human behavior within the human psyche and/or the immediate situation, fails to acknowledge that all human behavior carries with it the developmental and contextual influences of the culture of any individual or group.

The awakening of non-Western psychology to the reality that every culture – East or West – evolves its own unique psychologies appropriate to and consistent with their historical and cultural roots is the new reality in psychology. Each psychology deserves recognition, development, and application as appropriate as a function of careful scholarship and validation. Today, owing to the work of Professor Hwang and non-Western scholars, the study of indigenous psychologies has become a global movement. Indeed, even within the USA and Northern Europe, cultural psychologists are critiquing Western psychology's dominance and hegemony as reflections *not* of "scientific" legitimacy, but rather as an ethnocentric construction, often oblivious to its own cultural roots and determinants.

This volume, thus, constitutes a major advance for psychology as a global science and profession precisely because it addresses the historical and cultural foundations of all psychologies, even as it demonstrates the determinants of Chinese psychology and its explanatory power for Chinese and other populations. May the trend flourish and become the reality for psychology across the world.

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Preface

In order to provide an example for solving the difficulties encountered by the indigenization movement of psychology in non-Western countries, this book aims to construct a series of theoretical model on Confucian relationalism as *Foundations of Chinese psychology*.

The disciple of mainstream Western psychology (WP) emerged from Europe and America. It is rooted in Judeo-Christian religious-philosophical tradition, passed on through the Greek-Roman tradition, and passed to non-Western countries over the last centuries.

Because many scholars and practitioners have found that the imported WP is irrelevant, incompatible, or inappropriate for them to understand their own people, and because much knowledge generated by WP cannot be used to solve their daily problems, some psychologists began to develop indigenous psychologies (IPs) as a reaction to the dominance of WP.

Challenge to Indigenous Psychologists

The IP movement, however, soon encountered tremendous challenges. Most researchers of IP advocated for the bottom-up approach of building theories on the basis of local phenomena, findings, and experiences by research methods that are appropriate to their cultural and social context. They have conducted numerous studies, accumulated a lot of empirical data, and constructed many substantial theoretical models. But the idiosyncratic findings of IPs were often considered too fragmentary to be understood by outsiders of a particular culture, especially in competition with the dominant and widespread Western paradigms of psychology.

As a result, many indigenous psychology theorists suggested that findings of IPs may contribute to the progress of mainstream psychology, and thus, one goal of IPs was to develop a universal or global psychology. But, viewed from Popper's

(1972) views of evolutionary epistemology, it is philosophically impossible for indigenous psychologists to achieve the goal of universal or global psychology by using the inductive method or the bottom-up approach. The problems continued.

Historical Origin of the Problem

The difficulties encountered by indigenous psychologists all over the world can be traced to the early days of 1879 when Wilhelm Wundt (1832–1920) established his first laboratory in Leipzig to conduct experimental research on *Physiological psychology* by scientific methods (Wundt, 1874), while he studied cultural issues of *Völkerpsychologie* by historical methods (Wundt, 1916). Cultural psychologist Cole (1996) has indicated the origin of those difficulties:

In recent years interest has grown in Wundt's "second psychology," the one to which he assigned the task of understanding how culture enters into psychological processes ... My basic thesis is that the scientific issues Wundt identified were not adequately dealt with by the scientific paradigm that subsequently dominated psychology and other behavioral-social sciences ... culture-inclusive psychology has been ... an elusive goal. (Cole, 1996, pp. 7–8).

It is all right for Western psychologists to elude the cultural issues because most theories of Western psychology had been constructed on the presumption of individualism. But, it is necessary for indigenous psychologists in non-Western countries to address those difficulties.

Untangling the Link between Individualism and Universalism

In his book *Thinking Through Cultures*, Richard Shweder (1991) indicated that the main finding of a universalistic approach to cross-cultural psychology has been the repeated failure to replicate Western laboratory findings in non-Western settings. This is the crucial problematic situation faced by indigenous psychologists all over the world. With a careful examination over the historical origins, current problems and future perspectives of the IP movement provided by 15 contributors to an international survey conducted by Allwood and Berry (2006), the historian Danziger (2006) made a crucial comment to challenge all the indigenous psychologists:

Adherence to the ideal of "a universal psychology" seems almost as common as a rejection of the "individualism" of Western psychology. Yet, in the history of Western psychology, individualism and the search for universal laws have been closely linked: Psychological laws would be considered universal insofar as they applied to all individuals along a common set of dimensions. Is it possible to break this link between individualism and universalism, as the remarks of several contributors seem to require? (Danziger, 2006, pp. 272.)

Indigenous psychologists in non-Western countries are obligated to untangle the link between individualism and universalism. They are forced to address, to analyze, and to find solutions for the problematic situation without excuses.

Foundation of Western Science

I found myself devoted to the indigenization movement in the social sciences in the 1980s. It soon became apparent that the state of being colonized by Western academic hegemony is not specific to the field of psychology, but is a general phenomenon in all fields of social sciences. I realized that the fundamental barrier for Chinese social scientists was to make a genuine breakthrough in their efforts to establish autonomous social sciences. There was a need to understand the nature of Western philosophies of science, since these philosophies are a key to the ethos of modern Western civilizations.

Virtually all knowledge in Western colleges and universities has been constructed on the grounds of Western philosophy. To help young Chinese scholars understand the influence of Western philosophy of science, I spent more than 10 years writing a book entitled, *The Logic of Social Sciences*. This volume discusses different perspectives on the crucial issues of ontology, epistemology and methodology which have been proposed by 17 major representative figures of Western philosophy in the twentieth century. The first half of this book addressed the switch in the philosophy of natural science from positivism to post-positivism. The second half expounded the more recent philosophies in the social sciences, including structuralism, hermeneutic and critical science.

My experiences in Asian Association of Social Psychology since 1997, including serving president from 2005 to 2007, enabled me to recognize the limited understanding on Western philosophy of science among many social scientists in non-Western countries. Therefore, I decided to pursue this problem through my own research.

Construction of Scientific World for IP

In 2000, I was appointed as the principal investigator of the *Project In Search of Excellence for Research on Chinese Indigenous Psychology*. When the project ended in 2008, I integrated findings from previously related research into a book entitled *Confucian Relationalism: Philosophical Reflection, Theoretical Construction and Empirical Research*, published in Chinese in 2009.

In accord with the principles of cultural psychology: “One mind, many mentalities” (Shweder, et al., 1998), I advocated that the epistemological goal of indigenous psychology is to construct a series of theories that represent not only the universal mind of human beings, but also the particular mentality of a people within a given society.

I elaborated upon the distinction between scientific micro-world and life-world, and used it to emphasize the importance of theoretical construction for the progress of the IP movement.

Because most psychologists of non-Western countries have generally adopted a position of naïve positivism, and assumed that Western theories of psychology represent *truth*, In Chapter 3 of my 2009 book, I compared the ontological, epistemological and methodological switch from positivism to neopositivism by taking *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (Wittgenstein, 1922) and Evolutionary Epistemology (Popper, 1963, 1972) as two representative examples. I argued that theory is nothing more than a conjecture made by a scientist. The epistemology of neopositivism views scientific theory as an *approximation of the truth*, but not truth in itself.

Challenge the Individualism

I constructed a theoretical model of *Face and Favor* on the philosophical basis of scientific realism (Hwang, 1987), intending it to be a universal model that is applicable to various cultures. Later, I illustrated how the four kinds of interpersonal ties discussed in that model, namely, *expressive ties*, *mixed ties* and *instrumental ties*, as well as the *vertical relationship* between petitioner and resource allocator, correspond with Fiske's (1991) four elementary forms of social behavior, namely, *communal sharing*, *equality matching*, *market pricing*, and *authority ranking*.

Fiske is a psychological anthropologist. He argued that the four elementary forms of social behavior represent the universal mind in dealing with various kinds of interpersonal relationship which can be found in all cultures of the world. Viewed from this perspective, the Western ideal of individualism emphasizes and exaggerates only the relationships of *market pricing* or *instrumental ties*. It is biased in the sense that it neglects or ignores other kinds of interpersonal relationships. Based on the philosophy of structuralism, I have strong confidence that any theory constructed on such a biased presumption will suffer from a crisis of infinite regress, while a theoretical model of psychology which has been constructed on the deep structure of human mind will be more robust and durable for purposes of empirical examination.

I subsequently used my *Face and Favor* model to analyze the inner structure of Confucianism and discussed its attributes in terms of Western ethics. In the following chapters of this book, I construct a series of theories based on the presumption of relationalism to integrate findings of empirical research on the concepts of social exchange, face, achievement motivation, organizational behaviors, and conflict resolution in Confucian society.

Call for Scientific Revolution in Psychology

The Asian Association of Indigenous and Cultural Psychology held its first international conference on July 24–27, 2010 at Gadjah Mada University in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, where I was elected as its first president. In my keynote speech delivered

at its inauguration ceremony, I mentioned that Hendrich, Heine & Norenzayan (2010, a, b, c) from the University of British Columbia reported findings of their research in the journals *Nature* and *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, and indicated that 96% of samples of psychological research published in the world's top journals from 2003 to 2007 were drawn from Western, educated, industrialized, rich, and democratic (WEIRD) societies, which houses just 12% of the world's population. In fact, the psychological dispositions of such a WEIRD sample are unique.

Therefore, I criticized those theories of Western social psychology which had been constructed on the presumption of individualism as too WEIRD to be applied in non-Western countries. The mission of the Asian Association of Indigenous and Cultural Psychology is to initiate a scientific revolution by constructing a series of theories on the presumption of relationalism to replace the Western theories of WEIRD psychology so as to help people of non-Western countries solve the various problems they encounter in their daily lives.

An Example for Scientific Revolution

I have strong confidence that now is the right time to initiate scientific revolution in psychology. After the first international conference of AAICP, I developed a *Mandala Model of Self*, and I used it to write a book entitled *A Proposal for Scientific Revolution in Psychology* to illustrate my ideas. Any calling for scientific revolution needs examples to illuminate its feasibility. To provide an example for non-Western indigenous psychologists to understand the "scientific" revolution, and to establish their own indigenous psychologies, I decided to translate my book on *Confucian Relationalism* into English with a new title, *Foundations of Chinese Psychology: Confucian Social Relations*.

At this moment of introducing my works on IP to the English-speaking world in a more comprehensive way, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to three major contributors to my discourse on related issues. I finished my PhD training of psychology in University of Hawaii where Professor Anthony Marsella served as my mentor and colleague. Through his studies, he enlightened my consciousness about the cultural determinants of human behavior. Soon after I returned to Taiwan in 1976, another mentor of mine Professor Kuo-Shu Yang began to initiate the IP movement in Taiwan, which further stimulated my consciousness. I met Professor Richard Shweder at the 1999 AASP conference in Taipei. His works provided me with the most important principle of cultural psychology for solving the crucial problem of IP.

In addition to them, I would send my hearty thanks to Uichol Kim (Korea), James Liu (New Zealand), Susumu Yamaguchi (Japan), Girishwar Misra (India), Regelia Pe-pua (Philippines), Kwok Leung (Hong Kong), Faturachman and Kwartarini Yuniarti (Indonesia), and my colleagues of the IP group in Taiwan, who have made efforts with me in developing the IP movement in Asia.

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I wish to express my sincere gratitude to some significant figures for their contributions to my academic career. I finished my PhD training in psychology with Professor Anthony Marsella serving as my master from 1972 to 1976. He enlightened my cultural consciousness during the age when the field of psychology was still dominated by the influence of behaviorism. Soon after I returned to Taiwan, another mentor of mine, Professor Kuo-Shu Yang, began to initiate the indigenization movement of psychology in Taiwan. His devotedness to the movement and his insistence on the positivistic approach urged me to think over the problematic situation faced by indigenous psychologists in non-Western countries. I met Professor Richard Shweder at the 1999 AASP Conference in Taipei. His works provided me with the most important principle of cultural psychology for solving the crucial issues in indigenous psychology. Their stimulation and encouragement have inspired me to accomplish this book; particularly, the long-term support provided by Prof. Marsella, the editor of the Springer book series on International and Cultural Psychology, has made my work available to the Western world.

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