*A*sian
Contributions To Psychology

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PREFACE

The idea for this book was born in a conversation several years ago among the editors of this volume when they had gathered in the United Kingdom for an international meeting of researchers in the field of cross-cultural psychology. A common interest of this group has been the indigenous psychological thought of Asian cultures, as opposed to psychological models of Euro-American origin. There are two distinct trends in current research on indigenous psychologies: one concerned with classical theories and methods, and the other with contemporary folk cultures and practices. Writings in this volume reflect both these trends. The mere thought of indigenous psychologies raises several questions and issues: Are concepts and methods of ancient origin relevant and useful in modern life? Is the interest in indigenous psychologies guided primarily by parochial pride? Is it an unnecessary diversion from universalist science? It is natural that discussion of such doubts and concerns finds a place in a book devoted to Asian contributions to psychology.

We chose to call this modest volume *Asian Contributions to Psychology* in order to draw attention to a field of studies that we consider significant, not to suggest that this particular book represents a cross-section of the whole field. It is particularly important to say this because we are painfully aware of the limitations of the range of writings we have been able to assemble for the purpose of this publication. A serious shortcoming of the present selection is the absence of even a single essay reflecting the rich tradition of psychological thought in Japan, and its strong contemporary revival. In fact we tried hard to obtain articles on indigenous Japanese approaches to psychology, and very much regret our failure in this endeavor.

The intellectual traditions of Asia are extremely rich; it would take a

series of volumes based on years of work by a group of scholars to reasonably represent even the main currents of Asian psychological thought. Such a project is inconceivable without generous financial assistance and sustained institutional support from major international organizations. The preparation of even a single volume adequately representing a cross-section of the field would require at least some institutional support and substantial funding. The project for publishing the present volume has been a volunteer operation run by academics of modest means. Being separated by continents and oceans, they have had to dip deep into their pockets simply to be able to communicate with one another. The obvious limitations of such a project are bound to be reflected in the scope of its product. There is an old Asian story about penniless connoisseurs who wished to listen to a great master sing. They thought of an ingenious device to help fulfill their wish: arrange for an ill-prepared artist to sing in front of the master. Angered by the poor show, the master demonstrated the proper way of presenting the classical art form, and the poor listeners got a better concert than a generous prince. Hopefully, the limitations of this work will provoke interested colleagues into action. If they put pressure on major national and international organizations, a major program of studies and publications could be undertaken to represent Asian contributions to psychology in a manner and scale appropriate to their richness.

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TO
PSYCHOLOGY

CONTENTS

1

INTRODUCTION

Anand C. Paranjpe

Psychology, as a discipline of modern science, is largely a product of Euro-American culture. The founding fathers of modern psychology, such as Wundt in Germany and William James in the United States, were inspired by British empiricism and by ideas from the development of biology and physiology in nineteenth-century Europe. This western legacy was transplanted to the universities of Asia during the colonial period. Even in the postcolonial period, psychology as taught in most Asian universities bears the mark of its western intellectual heritage—of Plato and Aristotle, Hume and Kant, Darwin and Helmholtz—and not of Buddha, Confucius, or Śaṅkara. No one can doubt the benefits of the transfer of western traditions of knowledge to the east. By and large, Asian universities have wholeheartedly adopted the natural scientific tradition of the west. In fact, it is remarkable that the introduction of the natural scientific world view has been smoother in Asian societies than in the west. Neither Copernican nor Darwinian ideas offended established world views or institutions in Asia as they did in Europe and the United States. However, the social sciences can hardly be expected to have as uniform an appeal as the natural sciences. Although no one would ever doubt that the principles of Newtonian physics are equally applicable regardless of differing cultural contexts, one cannot easily take for granted the cross-cultural applicability of the theories of Marx, Weber, or Freud.

In the early stages of their development, the theories and methods of modern psychology—such as those of psychoanalytical, Gestalt, or cognitive psychology—were simply *assumed* to be universally applicable. During the past two decades, however, complaints about the unsuitability of Euro-American models in psychology have been voiced in Asia. More than 20 years ago, Sinha (1965) charged that much of the psychology in his country is an insipid replica of Euro-American models. In a more recent article (Sinha 1984), he complains about the inadequacy of Euro-American psychological models for fulfilling the needs of developing societies in Asia. He mentions how a research planning group of the Indian Council of Social Science Research decried the "foreignness" of contemporary psychology. Ching (1980), vice-president of the Chinese Psychological Society, voiced the problems encountered in transferring psychological knowledge from its capitalist origins to a socialist society. As Ho reports in this volume, the Filipino psychologist Enriquez has been arguing for an indigenous psychology grounded in the local culture. The quest for indigenous psychology is by no means restricted to nonwestern countries; Heelas and Lock's volume (1981) illustrates the strong interest in indigenous psychologies in the United Kingdom.

The east–west encounter in psychology is certainly not a one-way affair; psychological concepts of eastern origin have been introduced in the west as well—although their impact on western psychology has hardly been as significant. In his *Varieties of Religious Experience,* William James (1958) speaks about concepts of Yoga. Carl Jung wrote on psychological concepts associated with eastern religions, and Alan Watts did the same thing on a more popular level. But it was in the 1960s that interest in eastern conceptions of psychology really began to increase in the United States. Although such interest was—and continues to be—largely at a popular level, there are some signs of more serious academic interest. For example, starting with the early efforts of Wenger, Bagchi, and Anand (1971) in systematic psychophysiological studies of Yogic states as well as similar studies of Zen (Kasamatsu and Hirai 1972), eastern meditative practices became a serious concern of experimental research. Goleman (1977) presented a systematic theoretical account of the varieties of eastern meditative practices, and eastern concepts began to be an integral part of Anglo-American approaches to consciousness (Tart 1972a; Ornstein 1972; Crook 1980). The 1979 edition of the prestigious text *Theories of Personality,* by Hall and Lindzey, included a full chapter on eastern approaches.[1] This book is a response to such signs of increasingly serious interest in Asian contributions to psychology and is designed to provide a variety of contemporary approaches to the east–west encounter in psychology.

Even a quick look at the history of this east–west encounter suggests some general trends. First, there is an increasing recognition among both eastern and western psychologists that the intellectual heritage of Asia has

much to offer in the way of psychological concepts and insights. Second, in many Asian countries, there is growing awareness of the dangers of uncritical use of western models and a corresponding interest in adopting them to the local current cultural context. This book presents examples of these two trends. In both cases, emphasis is placed on *distinctively* Asian contributions to contemporary psychology. This distinctiveness is the result of the systematic development of indigenous lines of thought and of psychologists' responses to unique features of the sociocultural milieu of contemporary Asia.

This book constitutes an attempt to develop culture-specific approaches to various issues in psychology. Such an attempt challenges the view that regional variations in psychology should be ruled out since, as a science, it must necessarily be universalizable. It is necessary to discuss this problem before introducing the specific contributions included in this book.

The issue of pluralistic versus unified psychology is an aspect of the philosophical issue of relativist versus objectivist conceptions of knowledge. This is an old issue that continues to be debated by contemporary philosophers and historians of science, with no resolution in sight. Feyerabend (1975) is a proponent of an extreme relativism, and has elicited strong objectivist responses from philosophers such as Hesse (1972) and Putnam (1981). In *Beyond Objectivism and Relativism,* Bernstein (1983) has given a detailed account of more recent arguments on the issue. Relativism in the social sciences has been discussed by Gellner (1985).

The problem of theoretical pluralism in psychology has been discussed by Jahoda (1980) and by Royce and others in a recent issue of the *Annals of Theoretical Psychology* (Madsen and Mos 1983). It is not the purpose of the present book to discuss such a complex issue in detail, let alone to try to throw new light on this old problem. Nevertheless, insofar as the book tries to promote culturally variant perspectives in psychology, it is necessary to discuss the problem of theoretical pluralism at the outset.

It is useful to begin by identifying three points that support a pluralistic psychology. First, different approaches are needed because different societies present different *subject matters*. Varied customs, distinct patterns of interaction, and unique sets of beliefs concerning human experience and behavior cannot be properly accounted for by a single common framework. Second, different (and even incompatible) theories are justified either because they measure up equally well against the best available *epistemic criteria* or because different cultures espouse different *epistemic standards*. Third, different types of psychological knowledge are needed to serve different practical *goals* held in different societies. These points will be discussed by briefly sketching the univocalist position to which pluralism is a direct challenge, and then by indicating theories that strengthen the case for a pluralist psychology.

UNIVOCALIST VERSUS PLURALIST APPROACHES TO PSYCHOLOGICAL KNOWLEDGE

Psychology in a Scheme of Unified Science: The Logical Positivist Approach

Pluralism is the direct antithesis of the popular doctrine of "the unity of science." This doctrine is closely associated with the philosophy of logical positivism, and particularly with the work of Rudolph Carnap. According to this doctrine, all the disciplines of science were hierarchically ordered in such a way that sociologists could explain social phenomena in terms of the behavior of individuals, and psychologists could explain behavior in terms of biological principles; these, in turn, could be explained in terms of the principles of biochemistry, chemistry, and—ultimately—subatomic physics. In this grand scheme of reduction, the language of physics was to be the ultimate language of all sciences. In the 1930's, Carnap (1959) gave a detailed account justifying the program of psychology in the language of physics. Behavioristic psychology, which was developing in the early decades of this century side-by-side with the philosophy of logical positivism, generally shared such a view. Thus, John Watson's attempt to explain thinking in terms of the muscle movements in subvocal speech illustrates the reductionist approach, and Clark Hull's attempts to use mathematical formulae in expressing the "laws" of psychology suggests the positivist drive toward the language of physics.

This Carnapian model presumes a physicalist world view in which a single vision prevails. Its program of research envisions a single map of the entire field of knowledge, in which each of the sciences, like psychology and biology, chart specific regions—using the same legend, so to speak. This metaphor, which is widely (but implicitly) shared today, is the product of a long series of ideas in the intellectual history of Europe. To sketch the course of its development in broad strokes, we will mention its key ideas along with their dialectical alternatives. Although much of the information presented below may be common knowledge, the risk of repetition seems justified, since it is against this historical background that the significance of objectivism and pluralism becomes most clear.

Rational Empiricism: Foundations for a Philosophy of Science

Descartes provides the most convenient point of departure for our historical account. In his search for the indubitable foundations of knowledge, Descartes doubted everything except the existence of the doubting mind. He implicitly made a sharp distinction between the "inner" knowing subject and the "outer" world of objects. A rationalist of the Platonic tradition and a devoutly religious man, Descartes thought that only reason could provide clear and accurate knowledge—as in mathematics—and that God

Himself had placed clear mathematical ideas in the human mind. Locke, an empiricist and an advocate of religious tolerance, thought that the notion of God-given innate ideas was an invitation for religious dogma. So he conceived of the human mind as tabula rasa—a blank state that receives knowledge through sensory experience. He viewed the process of acquiring knowledge as a rather passive process in which simple ideas join associatively with other simple ideas—gradually leading to complex ones. The empiricism of Locke shared the world view of Newtonian physics, and assumed that immutable laws govern all events in the world. These laws of nature were expected to be revealed through observation and experiment. As scientists continued to collect more and more data, a world map would automatically emerge. In this Lockean empiricist model, the role of interpretation was assumed to be minimal; and knowledge was expected to grow in a linear fashion, both in single human minds as well as in humanity at large. Between Descartes and Locke, a classic and lasting metaphor was born: mind as the "glassy essence" of man, which reflects a facsimile of the world (Rorty 1979).

Hume saw a basic flaw in the Lockean view. He correctly noted that what experience gives is a pattern of events, not "causes" as such. There is no guarantee that the past patterns of events will necessarily repeat themselves in the future; we assume a state of necessity because it is comforting to be able to count on nature. Causality is more like a habit—or even a passion—of the mind than like nature's undertaking. Hume's questioning of causality led empiricism to the abyss of skepticism. As is well known, Kant then rescued science from this skeptical impasse by suggesting that categories such as "cause and effect" and "substance and attribute" are essential a priori conditions for the very possibility of knowledge. Moreover, he suggested, there are unmistakable categories of "pure understanding"— which provide a firm and universal structure for rationality, and make scientific knowledge possible.

From Rational Empiricism to Logical Positivism

Kantian rationalism provided more than just a quick fix for Humean skepticism. It rescued the Baconian program of science from the dangers of relativism by assuring a firm rational foundation for scientific inquiry. This rational-empiricist model assumed that the experimental investigations in science were to be performed under the critical eye of rational principles. Kant thus established the supremacy of a "philosophy of science," which would guide its progress. This view of science prevailed in the nineteenth century. During the twentieth century, however, the logical positivists tried to raise science above and beyond the reach of the philosopher's rationalist supervision. Paradoxically, many (if not all) logical positivists could consider metaphysics useless for the purposes of science only by accepting

physicalism—itself a metaphysical doctrine. Ensconced in the physicalist world view, positivists could dispense with discussion of rationalism like kicking the ladder used for climbing up, and could then get on with the business of setting up experiments and collecting data. Moreover, by declaring its own enterprise "value free," the positivist program of science could protect itself from such other human enterprises as ethics or religion or politics. Severing such ties seemed essential to assuring complete objectivity. There were several ideas and specific historical forces that made it easy to separate science from other cultural enterprises. Here we look at the relationship between science and one of these—namely: religion, for this stands out in the context of east–west comparison.

One unmistakable feature of the intellectual history of Europe is the long-drawn out conflict between faith and reason—between religion and science. "Reason" had to establish itself against "faith" at the expense of thinkers like Abelard, who was declared a heretic in the twelfth century for using reason to point out how the churchmen often contradicted themselves. To help in avoiding these bitter conflicts between the advocates of reason and faith, Siger of Brabant (who flourished around 1260–77 A.D.) suggested a "doctrine of two truths": one for the natural, and the other for the supernatural world. After the Copernican revolution in the sixteenth century had challenged the geocentric view of the universe that was favored by the church, Galileo was led to martyrdom for the cause of reason. That science had to be established in the teeth of inquisition is too well-known a story to be retold here (Russell 1935). By the early nineteenth century, however—when Comte founded positivism—science had not only established itself, but had offered the promise of prosperity through technology. In comparison with the beneficial practical uses of scientific discoveries, metaphysics seemed merely an idle speculation. Comte could thus enunciate his famous "law of three stages" whereby theology, metaphysics, and science represented three successively superior stages in the development of knowledge in any field.

Here, our purpose in introducing the issue of science versus religion is neither to justify religion, nor to raise more dust than has already been disturbed by the current controversy surrounding creationism and evolutionism.[2] Our aim is only to note that this particular aspect of the intellectual history of Europe has been instrumental in separating science out from its human cultural context. This becomes more apparent when one compares the intellectual history of western and eastern civilizations. There was no problem in introducing the Copernican or Darwinian world views into India, for instance, for they offended no established dogma or institution. This is not to say that Indian culture has any lack of dogmatism (note the extreme intolerance directed against violators of caste rules, for instance), but simply that religious dogmas somehow managed not to get offended by

scientific or philosophical thought. At any rate, in the east, psychological thought flourished in association with the quest for spiritual self-development. This sharply contrasts with the world view of contemporary western science, which is strongly alienated not only from religion, but from human spiritual needs in general. This historical contrast between the development of psychological thought in the eastern and western hemispheres poses a major difficulty for mutual understanding. Given the ingrained antireligious stance of modern science in general and of psychology in particular, the religious background and spiritual emphasis of eastern psychologies renders them deeply suspect in the eyes of most westerners.

Turning again to the historical context of modern science, we note that—ironically—certain ideas central to the rational empiricist tradition helped to alienate the pursuit of science from ethics and human action. Hume, for instance, sharply separated the sphere of "is" from that of "ought" (see Hudson 1969). Such a separation is important. On the one hand, it helps us to avoid the error of wishfully thinking that the world is already the way we wish it would be; and, on the other hand, it avoids the "naturalist fallacy"— the tendency to justify the belief that the world ought to be the way it has been. Nevertheless, the Humean distinction also helped to separate "fact" from "values"—assigning the former to science for investigation; leaving the latter to be disputed among the moral philosophers and theologians. Then there was the Kantian separation of "pure reason" from "practical reason"—reserving the former for the philosopher's use in guiding scientific investigations in the laboratory; leaving the latter for the man of action to worry about. The combined effect of these Humean and Kantian ideas was similar in spirit to Siger's separation of the domains of reason and faith. Science had now been fully protected from the intrusion not only of religion, but also of morals.

Logical positivism goes one step even further in trying to immunize science against metaphysics. The separation of science from nonscience continues; it has only been diagnosed or justified in different ways, and seen as having different consequences. Note, for instance, Wilhelm Dilthey's arguments for dividing natural sciences from the humanities, or C. P. Snow's observations about the two cultures: science and technology on the one hand, and the humanities on the other (Snow 1963). At any rate, as far as the positivist approach is concerned, the overall thrust has been to *decontextualize* science. Positivism has tried to take science out of the muddying waters of philosophy, religion, politics, and other such human enterprises, and has sought to enshrine it in hermetically sealed laboratories. Only in this decontextualized state could "total objectivity" be guaranteed. Freed from faith, values and human interests, the undisturbed march of science could be assured of a single, accurate and complete vision of the world.

Knowledge and the Cultural Context: The Sociology of Knowledge

Attempts to place science back into its human context were spearheaded by sociologists of knowledge like Karl Mannheim. Mannheim (1936) asserted that the search for knowledge is an unmistakably social enterprise guided by human interests, and is often surreptitiously biased by hidden ideologies and agendas. Max Scheler, another pioneer in the field of the sociology of knowledge, criticized Comte's law of three stages by suggesting that theology, metaphysics, and science are not *stages* but distinct *types* of knowledge aimed at satisfying different human needs (see Scheler 1970). Jürgen Habermas (1971) noted that positivism, which tried to make science immune to philosophical critique, had itself started as a historical account and philosophical critique of the development of knowledge. He followed Scheler's lead in relating the pursuit of knowledge to human needs, and identified three major interests in initiating and guiding research—namely: technical, critical, and emancipatory. In light of such a classification of interests (and there are other ways to classify them), behaviorist and psychoanalytical models can be said to pursue different *types* of knowledge. The prediction and control–type goal of Watsonian behaviorism is what Habermas calls a "technical" interest; it leads to techniques of behavior modification, for instance. In contrast, psychoanalysis aims at emancipating us from the unconscious motives that sometimes lead us away from consciously desired goals.[3] The diversity of human goals thus leads us to pursue different approaches to psychology, and the legitimacy of different goals justifies a kind of pluralism. (This "kind" of pluralism follows from the pursuit of different goals, in contrast with another kind—to be discussed later—that follows from logical or cognitive reasons.) The argument defending non-western psychological models for Third World countries is based partly on the distinct needs of developing societies—which most western models do not address. The positivist model made the project for a unification of all fields of knowledge seem feasible by neglecting the critical nature of the social sciences, and by declaring their program to be no different from that of the natural sciences. Behaviorism basically follows suit, by defining the goal of psychology to be no more than the prediction and control of behavior.

Mannheim thought that the role of the sociology of knowledge was to examine the relationship between knowledge in a given field and its sociocultural context. He realized the limitations of this role, for it involves only the criticism of existing knowledge, and not the creation of new knowledge whether by exploring uncharted territories, or by developing new methods or epistemologies. True to this critical role, most sociological analyses tend to expose the biasing effects of the hidden ideologies that underlie a given field of knowledge. For instance, extending sociological analysis to the field of psychology, Buss (1976) points out how Galton's studies of individual

differences reflect the biases of a laissez-faire ideology. Buss argues that Galton's study of hereditary genius reflects his privileged status in the British aristocracy, and that his program of eugenics aims at perpetuating class privileges. Such exposés show the admittedly parasitic character of the sociology of knowledge, and make it seem to serve no constructive purpose.

There are, however, some socioanalytic critiques of psychology that point to strengths—rather than weaknesses—arising from the connections between psychology and its sociocultural context. Paranjpe (1984), for instance, points out how differences in the dominant themes of Indian and western cultures and in the distinctive institutional supports available to Indian and Euro-American thinkers led to the development of distinctive psychological insights and techniques. In India, spiritual self-development and self-mastery have been culturally valued; and, for generations, monastic institutions as well as social customs have supported those individuals who decide to forsake social obligations in the pursuit of self-realization. Wandering monks, yogis, and fakirs can practice mediation for years in a supportive, sociocultural milieu. Many of them pass their insights to ardent disciples, while a few have written treatises filled with psychological insights. The result has been the development—over scores of generations—of a distinctive psychology of consciousness, combined with effective techniques of meditation. In contrast, European civilization has generally valued human mastery over nature, and has developed during the past few centuries an objective science aimed at the effective control of nature. Within an academic context devoted to the study and advancement of science, behaviorist psychology developed its aim of the prediction and control of behavior. While the techniques of behavior modification can be seen as the product of a civilization that nurtured science and technology, the techniques of meditation are the fruit of a civilization that valued spiritual self-development.

The above characterization of eastern and western psychologies should not be dismissed as mere common sense, or as reflecting the stereotype that brands the east as spiritual and the west as materialist. Rather, it can be seen as an attempt to recognize distinctive types of psychological knowledge in a Schelerian spirit of the sociology of knowledge, and as a Mannheimian socioanalysis that tries to relate knowledge to its sociocultural context. Seen this way, the culture-specific psychologies do not sound like biased ethnocentric voices that together produce a cacophony in the tongues of Babel. Rather, they sound like mature voices confidently offering guidance to a variety of destinations. What this suggests is a pluralistic approach to psychology. It rejects a singularist conception of knowledge based on the dogmatic assertion that only a particular goal—such as prediction and control—can be valid. It also rejects stereotypes of cultures: It recognizes that there are spiritual aspirants in the west who could benefit from eastern