

# Culture-Inclusive Theories of Self and Social Interaction: The Approach of Multiple Philosophical Paradigms

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## ABSTRACT

In view of the fact that culture-inclusive psychology has been eluded or relatively ignored by mainstream psychology, the movement of indigenous psychology is destined to develop a new model of man that incorporates both causal psychology and intentional psychology as suggested by Vygotsky (1927). Following the principle of cultural psychology: “one mind, many mentalities” (Shweder et al., 1998), the *Mandala Model of Self* (Hwang, 2011a,b) and *Face and Favor Model* (Hwang, 1987, 2012) were constructed to represent the universal mechanisms of self and social interaction that can be applied to any culture; both models can be used as conceptual frameworks for analyzing mentalities of people in any given culture. Taking research works from *Foundations of Chinese Psychology: Confucian Social Relation* as exemplars (Hwang, 2012), this article illustrates how to construct culture-inclusive theories of Confucianism by multiple philosophical paradigms. The mechanism of culture-inclusive theory can be applied to explain qualitative research findings on lifeworld events of people in a particular society. It can also be utilized to predict results of quantitative research conducted to verify theoretical propositions in the scientific microworld by empirical methods.

**Keywords:** *Mandala Model of Self*, *Face and Favor Model*, culture-inclusive theories, multiple philosophical paradigms

In my first article in this special issue (Hwang, 2014), I discussed the philosophical grounds of critical realism (CR) and analytical dualism for constructing universal mechanisms and culture-inclusive theories in psychology. In this article, I will present my *Mandala Model of Self*, as well as my *Face and Favor* model to show how they may serve as a new “model of man” for an integration of culture and psychology. Both models are supposed to be universal mechanisms containing components that incorporate a certain compelling idea of culture.

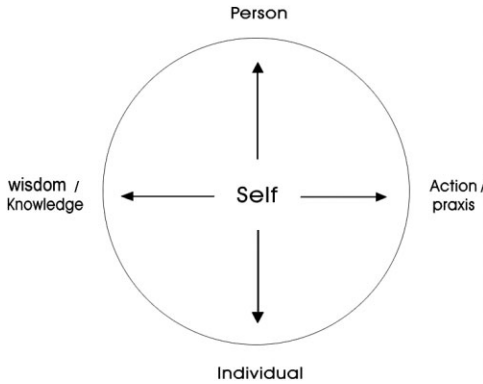


Figure 1. The prototype of self as a Mandala.

### I. MANDALA MODEL OF SELF

The so-called “self” in this model refers to an individual who has been socialized with the ability of reflexivity and knowledgeability, whose life world can be represented by a structural model with a circle inside a square (See Figure 1). In her article, *Symbolism in the Visual Arts*, from the book *Man and His Symbols* edited by Jung (1964), Aniela Jaffe indicated that alchemists played an important role around 1000 A.D., when various sects appeared in Europa. They sought the integrity of mind and body and created many names and symbols to denote this integrity. The core of one of them was called *quadrature circle*. This name appears to be incomprehensible; but, in fact, it can be depicted as a standard model of Mandala.

#### Integration of Mind and Body

Jaffe (1964) showed that whether in the sun worship of primitive people, or in modern religion, in myths or dreams, in the Mandala plotted by Tibetan lamas, or in the planar graph of secular and sacred architectures in every civilization, the symbol of the circle represents the most important aspect of life, namely, the ultimate wholeness; whereas the symbol of the square indicates secularity, flesh, and reality. Therefore, Mandala can be viewed as a symbol for the prototype, or the deep structure of the Self.

The deep structure of an individual’s self represents a universal model of self that may integrate an individual’s action and his/her cultural traditions taking into account Vygotsky’s (1927/1987) calling for intention or spirit.

## Person, Self, and Individual

In Figure 1, self in the circle is situated in the center of two bi-directional arrows: One end of the horizontal arrow points at “action” or “praxis”, the other end points at “wisdom” or “knowledge.” The top of the vertical arrow points at “person” and the bottom points at “individual.” All of the four concepts are located outside the circle but within the square. The arrangement of these five concepts indicates one’s self is being impinged by several forces from one’s lifeworld. But, all the five concepts have special implications in cultural psychology, which needs to be elaborated in detail.

The distinction between *person*, *self* and *individual* was proposed by anthropologist Grace G. Harris (1989). She indicated that these three concepts have very different meanings in the Western academic tradition which holds the *individual* as a biological concept. It regards individual human beings as members of the human species who are motivated to pursue some desired ends to satisfy their biological needs which might be no different from other creatures in the universe. But culture may provide an attribution of what is worth noticing and worth pursuing in the world and assumes “causal autonomy” by influencing “what people want” (Vaisey, 2010). In order to understand how culture affects individual and collective action, Abramson (2012) reviewed literatures in modern social science disciplines such as sociology, anthropology, and political science, and constructed a *context-dependent model of culture in action*, in which he introduced the term *cultural input* to refer to a wider set of attributions that may organize the complete sequence of actions while still pointing towards a preferred outcome.

*Person* is a sociological or cultural concept. A person is conceptualized as an agent-in-society who takes a certain standpoint in the social order and plans a series of actions to achieve a particular goal. Every culture has its own definitions of appropriate and permitted behaviors, which are endowed with specific *meanings* and values that can be passed on to an individual through various channels of socialization. Cultural meanings provide the raw symbolic material that make social and physical realities intelligible, allow inter-subjective communication, and undergird the actions that lead to the formulation of persistent structures (Abramson, 2012; Cohen, 1974; Durkheim, 1893/1894; Searle, 1995; Sewell, 1992).

*Self* is a psychological concept. In the conceptual framework of Figure 1, self is the locus of experience that is able to take various actions in different social contexts, and is able to indulge in self-reflection when blocked from goal attainment.

## Habitus and Reflexivity

According to Giddens’ (1984, 1993) structuration theory, the self as agency is endowed with two important capabilities, namely, reflexivity and knowledge-

ability. Reflexivity means that the *self* is able to monitor his or her own actions, and is able to give reasons for actions. Knowledgeability means that the self is able to memorize, store, and organize various forms of knowledge, and make them a well-integrated system of knowledge.

However, it is unnecessary for an individual to reflect on each of his or her actions. Giddens (1993) argued that one's practical consciousness enables oneself to be familiar with and even embody particular practical skills or knowledge in a tacit way. Bourdieu's (1990) constructivist structuralism used the term "habitus" to denote this kind of embodied and structuralized behavioral tendency. Habitus means an actor's disposition toward praxis or action in a specific social context that enables the actor to carry out the dynamic physical and mental practice within specific socio-cultural orders.

### World-Oriented Primary Reflection

In the context of Eckensberger's (1996, 2012a, 2014) action theory, one's knowledgeability enables him/her to learn various knowledge and wisdom, including logical, technical, and instrumental schemata as well as social competence and action competence.

The actor's world-oriented reflection enables him/her to choose the most appropriate method from his/her stock of knowledge and take *primary action of habitus* in the lifeworld to achieve personal goals in social cognition.

The actor's personal stock of knowledge contains all schemas which have been constructed in the ontogenetic history of life. It has been conceptualized as a toolkit, *skills* and *justifications* that people deploy in their daily lives in the pursuit of various ends (Abramson, 2012; Swidler, 1986, 2001). Meanwhile, it also represents the part of cultural resource which have been developed in the phylogenetic history of the cultural group.

Though there are some rules for the actor's practical consciousness, most people may have to learn them through practical experience. They know how to act, but may not necessarily know why they have to do so. However, when an individual reflexively monitors his/her own actions or that of others, his/her discursive consciousness enables him/her to calculate or to evaluate the consequences of action, and to rationalize his/her own or other's actions.

### Action-Oriented Secondary Reflection

Once the actor's primary action in the lifeworld encounters barriers, s/he may experience negative emotion and attempt to make efforts to control the external world. As soon as s/he finds that world-oriented reflection with acquired knowl-

edge from cultural learning is insufficient to overcome barriers in the lifeworld, s/he may engage in action-oriented reflection in search of effective action to restore the equilibrium with the external world. The action-oriented reflection is future-oriented; it has a basic teleological structure that contains decision-making for actions as well as evaluation of consequences.

When taking world-oriented primary action, the actor tends to make objective interpretation about barriers in the external world. When making action-oriented secondary reflection, the actor tends to reflect on meanings of the barrier in the action context in order to find the appropriate way to overcome the barrier, while the direction of reflection might be guided by the regulatory system of normative schemata that contains some convictions, morality, or laws acquired through cultural learning.

Meanwhile, interpretation on meaning of the barrier may accompany the occurrence of a particular type of emotion; the interpretation of the frustration experience may also entail another kind of emotion.

### Agency-oriented Tertiary Reflection

From the perspective of Eckensberger's (1996, 2012a,b) action theory, when the actor faces unsolvable problems in the lifeworld, and his action-oriented reflections are frustrated again and again, he may engage in agency-oriented reflections for tertiary actions, and ask such questions as: "What goals do I really want?" "How important is a particular outcome of action for me?" "What does some moral principle mean to me?"

Answers to questions of this kind may converge and result in the duality of self. First, self as a subject is able to integrate his own behaviors which distinguishes one from others; this is the basis of one's sense of self-identity. In addition, self has the ability to reflect on oneself and therefore knows one's relationship with other objects in the world. Therefore, one may regard oneself as part of a particular social group and acquire a sense of social identity.

An individual's self-identity and social-identity have very important implications for one's self-reflection. In Figure 1, the horizontal bi-directional arrow points at action and knowledge, and the vertical one points at person and individual, respectively. This means that the self in one's lifeworld exists in a field of forces. When an individual intends to act, his/her decision may be influenced by several forces, especially when one identifies with a particular social role. On the one hand, the individual has to think about how to act as a socialized person. On the other hand, s/he is pushed by various desires for s/he is also a biological entity. When one takes action and encounters problems, one may reflect by using the information stored in the personal stock of knowledge. If the problem persists, one may take further steps to search for the solution from the social stock of knowledge.

## Shared Social Reality

When an individual identifies with a particular social group, s/he has to communicate with other group members thereby constructing a mutually shared social reality (Cohen, 1974; Durkheim, 1893/1894; Searle, 1995; Sewell, 1992). As members of a particular social group, the social reality thus constructed may be plagued by certain specific problems. In such a situation, an individual may have to search from the social stock of knowledge for the solution of a particular problem on behalf of the whole group.

## II. FACE AND FAVOR MODEL

The *Mandala* model is supposed to be a universal model of *self*. Because all human beings are relational beings (Gergen, 2009, 2014), nobody can survive without social engagement, a new model of man needs a universal model of *social interaction* in addition to the universal model of *self*. In Chapter 4 of my book, *Foundations of Chinese Psychology: Confucian Social Relations* (Hwang, 2012), I explained how I constructed the model of *Face and Favor* for depicting the universal mechanism of social interaction. In my theoretical model of *Face and Favor* (Hwang, 1987), the dyad involved in social interaction was defined as “petitioner” and “resource allocator.” When the resource allocator is asked to allocate a social resource to benefit the petitioner, the resource allocator would first consider: “What is the *guanxi* (relationship) between us?”

In Figure 2, within the box denoting the psychological processes of the resource allocator, the shaded rectangle represents various personal ties. It is first divided into two parts by a diagonal. The shaded part stands for the affective component of interpersonal relationships, while the unshaded part represents the instrumental component.

The same rectangle denoting *guanxi* (interpersonal relationships) is also divided into three parts (expressive ties, mixed ties, and instrumental ties) by a solid line and a dotted line. These parts are proportional to the expressive component. The solid line separating expressive ties within the family and mixed ties outside the family indicates a relatively impenetrable psychological boundary between family members and people outside the family. Different distributive justice or exchange rules are applicable to these two types of relationships during social interactions. In expressive ties, the need rule for social exchange should be adhered to and people should try their best to satisfy the other party with all available resources. In mixed ties, following the *renqing* rule, when individuals want to acquire a particular resource from someone with whom they have instrumental ties, they tend to follow the equity rule and use instrumental rationality.

In my article, *Face and favor: Chinese power game* (Hwang, 1987), I intensively elaborated on the meaning of the *renqing* rule in Chinese society. It is

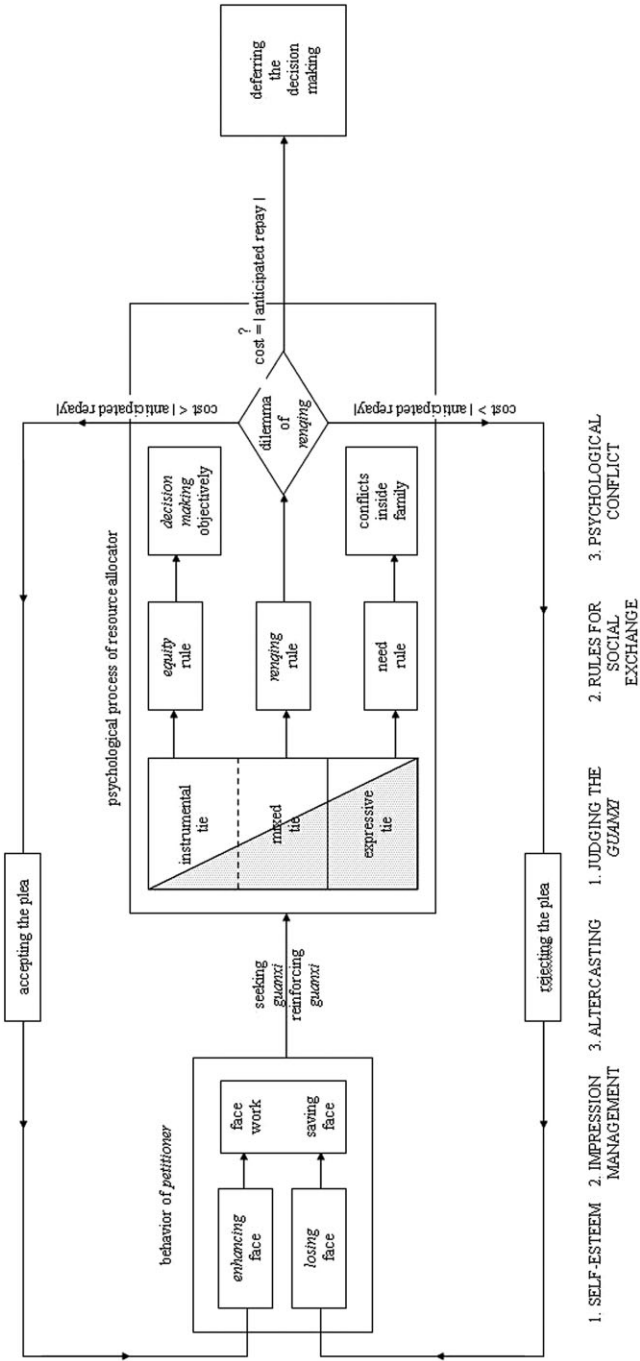


Figure 2. A theoretical model of Face and Favor (Adopted from Hwang, 1987, p. 948).

conceptualized as a special case of equality rule which emphasizes that once an individual has received favor from another, s/he is obligated to reciprocate in the future. Thus the *Face and Favor model* can be viewed as a universal model applicable to different cultures. Is there any evidence to support my argument?

### Structuralism: Elementary Forms of Social Behavior

Following an intensive review of the sociology, anthropology and psychology literature, in his book, *Structures of Social Life*, Fiske (1991) proposed four elementary forms of social life. The four relational models are:

1. **Communal Sharing:** This is a relationship of equivalence in which people are merged together to achieve the goals at hand so that boundaries among individual selves are indistinct. They attend to membership of common identity, but not individuality. Their major concerns are super ordinate goals beyond individuals, membership, and the boundary between the inside and outside of a group. Group insiders have feelings of solidarity, unity, and belonging. They strongly identify with the collective and think of themselves as an identical “we” in some significant aspects, instead of as an individual “I.”
2. **Authority Ranking.** This is an unequal relationship with transitive asymmetry. If the particular hierarchy includes three or more people, the individuals in this relationship perceive each other as different in social importance or status. They can be ordered in a linear ranking, which may not translate across other ranking systems. Their ranking is associated with the extent of extending oneself, and is hierarchical with the high-ranking people controlling more persons, things, and resources. High-ranking individuals are also regarded as possessing more knowledge and mastery over events. People in successively higher ranks dominate greater numbers of subordinates; their authority confers certain privileges of choice and preference. The attention paid to them is asymmetric, with authority figures more salient than subordinates. Inferiors tend to show abeyance and loyalty to their superiors, whereas leaders are entitled to provide protection and support to their followers.
3. **Equality Matching:** This is an egalitarian relationship among distinct and individual peers, each of whom has equal social presence including shares, contributions, and influence. The one-to-one equality matching may manifest in turn-taking, in which everyone in relation takes the same action in temporal sequence. It may imply in-kind reciprocity, where people exchange resources of the same value. The meaning of “sameness” depends on how people conceive of their actions and entities involved, instead of their objective differences.



People in these relationships are supposed to be distinct and entitled with equivalent rights, duties, and actions, so they are in a sense interchangeable. These relationships entail matched contributions of the same kind and quantity. As distributive justice, it takes the form of even distribution into equal parts; all people receive identical parts and are indifferent about their portions. In the case of conflict or assignation, this relationship requires eye-for-an-eye retaliatory vengeance: if a person takes something, s/he has to compensate in equal measure, so that the exchange is balanced.

4. Market Pricing. This exchange relationship is mediated by the price determined in a market system. People evaluate others' actions, services, and products according to the rates at which they can exchange for other commodities. The rates are indicated by monetary prices. Money is the most important medium in market pricing, and people can decide whether or not to trade with each other on the basis of this universal metric. Prior to making purchasing decisions, they can consider potential substitutes or complements, assess the temporal conditions of the market, and bargain with others out of self-interest. Ideally, any honest and capable person can participate in this exchange relationship as long as s/he has money or some items to sell.

In *Structures of Social Life*, Fiske (1991) examined the manifestations and characteristics of these four elementary forms of human relations in various domains, including the aforementioned reciprocal exchange, distributive justice, contribution, as well as work, meaning of things, orientations to land, social influence, constitution of groups, social identity and relational self, motivation, moral judgment and ideology, moral interpretation of misfortune, aggression and conflict, etc. He indicated that the four relational models are methods for human beings to organize their social domains. Manifestations of these four elementary forms of relations can be found in various situations, works, activities, domains of action, substantial problems and attitudes, the fact implies that those structures are produced from the same psychological schemata, or the deep structure of the universal mind.

Sundararajan (2014) compared Fiske's (1991) four elementary forms of relational models with my *Face and Favor* model (Hwang, 1987). It shows that the three relational models of communal sharing, equality matching and market pricing correspond with the expressive tie, the mixed tie, and instrumental tie, as well as the three rules of exchange for the dyad of those relationships, namely, the need rule, the *renqing* rule, and the equity rule in the *Face and Favor* model. The relationship between the petitioner and resource allocator implies the power distance (Hofstede, 2001) or the authority ranking (Fiske, 1991) between the dyad of interaction. Such a comparison shows that Fiske's (1991) model provides a system for classifying elementary forms of social relations in human society, while my *Face and Favor* model was constructed as a universal model of social interaction for human beings. From the philosophy of constructive realism (Wallner, 1994),

the core concepts in these two models can be translated from one model to the other. Therefore, the *Face and Favor* model was constructed to reflect the deep structure of universal mind for interpersonal interactions.

### III. PERSONAL AND SOCIAL STOCK OF KNOWLEDGE

In terms of Vygotsky's (1927/1987) two types of psychology, both the *Mandala Model of Self* (Hwang, 2011a, 2011b) and *Face and Favor Model* are theoretical models of intentional psychology, rather than causal psychology. The psychologistic concept of *self* in the *Mandala Model*, as well as *petitioner* and *resource allocator* in the *Face and Favor Model*, are all endowed with the intentional will to choose and to make decisions, while the process of decision-making will certainly be influenced by one's wisdom or knowledge regarding a particular event.

The wisdom for action is certainly contained in one's personal stock of knowledge. It may guide an individual to conduct intelligent actions in various social contexts. According to the theoretical model of Figure 1, the social praxis of *self* in a certain context is pulled by two forces—person as a social agent and individual as an organism. In order to act as a person accepted by the society, when an individual wants to satisfy his/her own desire, s/he has to learn how to act in accordance with the socio-moral order via socialization. From a psychological perspective, an individual has to learn moral principles which s/he has to follow in the developmental process of increasing interactions with the society.

#### Stages of Cognitive Development for Moral Judgments

Kohlberg's theory of moral judgment development (1984) is an elaboration of Piaget's theory (1932). He also believed that an individual's moral development is basically a kind of transformation of cognitive structure, originating from one's interaction with the environment. Each level is characterized by a specific thinking style which forms a hierarchically integrated structural order, including rules for connecting empirical events and organizing actions that may activate the principle of adaptation, with the purpose of reaching a higher-level equilibrium. More importantly, through the process of individual development, different thinking styles can form a constant order. Cultural factors can only affect the speed or the limitation of development; they are not able to change the order of development.

Inspired by Piagetian theory, Kohlberg (1984) postulated children's cognitive development of moral judgments as three levels and six stages. The first level of pre-conventional morality can be divided into punishment-and-obedience orientation and hedonism orientation; the second level of conventional morality can be separated by "good boy" or "good girl" orientation and social order maintenance orientation. The third level of post-conventional morality is further divided into contract, right, democratically accepted law, and individual principles of conscience orientation.

## Standard Phase

Cross-cultural studies done in different parts of the world indicate that children's development from Stages 1 to 4 is basically universal, as predicted by Kohlberg's theory (1984). However, considerable variation has been found in moral judgment in Stage 5 in different areas of the world, inconsistent with Kohlberg's prediction (Snarey, 1985). Moreover, Kohlberg found that the moral reasoning style of Stage 6 is just an ideal, because few people think in that way. Therefore, Kohlberg considered it a hypothetical construct—only very few people who go beyond Stage 5 can reach this level. In fact, Kohlberg did not measure the reasoning of Stage 6 in the final edition of his book, *The Measurement of Moral Judgment* (Colby & Kohlberg, 1984).

After a long-term collaboration, John Gibbs (1977, 1979), one of Kohlberg's students, found several such issues in Kohlberg's theory of moral development. Therefore, he tried to re-interpret Kohlberg's theory in terms of Piaget's theory of epigenetic epistemology. He argued that the unique feature of human development can be understood in terms of two phases—standard and existential. According to Piaget, the development of human intelligence is an integration of various aspects of social, moral and logical thinking, which follows a certain standard phase, just as in other organisms. However, its maturation provides the foundation for the development of a human's unique existential phase.

## Existential Phase

The four stages of the standard phase in Gibbs' theory of moral development (1979) correspond to Stages 1 to 4 of Kohlberg's theory. However, with the expansion of second order thinking in adolescence, individuals in the higher stages of development are able to use "objective meta-perspective" to understand the complex modern social system. Furthermore, they can reflect on the special circumstances where they exist in the world. This leads to the possibility that they may define a personal moral theory to illustrate the moral principles that they obey, from a standpoint different from other members of the society (Kohlberg, 1973, p. 192). Because the development of existential phase is not affected by epigenetic factors, it does not necessarily follow a standard process. People around the world show different kinds of wisdom when thinking about their own morality, science, and philosophy of living. When individuals in this stage attempt to define their own moral conscience, normative philosophy that circulates in a society may become material for their second-order thinking/meta-ethical reflection.

## Social Stock of Knowledge

Gibbs' (1977, 1979) modification of Kohlberg's theory of moral development has important implications for the development of indigenous psychology. In terms of

the *Mandala Model of Self*, when an individual's cognitive development reaches the formal operational stage, or the moral development enters the stage of postconventional morality, the development of cognitive ability enables him/her to learn not only various kinds of knowledge, but also different concepts of personhood. An individual has to integrate various concepts of personhood to forge his/her own self-identity with a specific sense of conscience. Furthermore, s/he may formulate his/her own social identity when s/he identifies with a particular social group.

When an individual takes action in accordance with a specific socio-moral order and is able to deal with various problems in daily life by world-oriented primary actions, it is unnecessary for him/her to change the cognitive structure. However, when an individual's personal knowledge is not enough to solve the problems encountered in daily situations, s/he may engage in action-oriented reflection and begin to search for solutions from various types of social stock of knowledge.

The social stock of knowledge has been preserved by a specific cultural group in its history. The so-called cultural groups usually have been existed for a period of time; therefore, their way of solving problems in daily life may become a fixed pattern. These patterns may become the so-called cultural traditions (Shils, 1981), which could be passed on from generation to generation. When an individual is in need of this knowledge, s/he may consult experts, books and even search the internet.

## Cultural Groups

In this article, "cultural group" is defined in a very loose way. All those who have identified with a specific group and their daily social practices have become a kind of tradition can be called a "cultural group." For example, Christianity in Europe, Confucianism in East Asia, Hinduism in South Asia, and Islam in the Middle-East and Southeast Asia, are significant cultural groups that exert a definite impact on people in those areas; they may thus become research topics for indigenous psychologists. In addition, business organizations, NGO groups, and even play-groups which have been formed by teenagers via the internet also have their own ideal person, thus can be regarded as "cultural groups" for research in indigenous psychologies (Gergen, 2014).

From this perspective, white American college students, who constitute the major research samples in contemporary mainstream psychology, are no more than a specific kind of cultural group. The psychological knowledge, especially the social psychological knowledge, which has been constructed on the basis of such biased samples, is surely very WEIRD. Thus, the most important mission for indigenous psychology is to understand the major cultural traditions of non-Western countries and study their possible influences on different cultural groups

in their daily lives. In my long-term struggle to overcome difficulties encountered by most non-Western indigenous psychologists, I found that it is necessary to use various philosophies of science to deal with different challenges in each step on the construction of culture-inclusive theories in psychology. Therefore, I advocated that the epistemological goal of indigenous psychology can be achieved by multiple philosophical paradigms.

#### IV. MULTIPLE PHILOSOPHICAL PARADIGMS

The objective knowledge stored in the contemporary social stock of knowledge are mostly products of human exploration through world-oriented reflection after the Renaissance, but every culture has its own traditional wisdom for action. In *Knowledge and Action: A Social Psychological Analysis of Chinese Cultural Tradition* (Hwang, 1995), I used the *Face and Favor* model as a framework to analyze ideas of Confucianism, Legalism, and Martial School. What I intend to demonstrate here is how I constructed culture-inclusive theories of Confucianism by the approach of multiple philosophical paradigms.

##### Hermeneutic: Inner Structure of Confucianism

In Chapter 5 of *Foundations of Chinese Psychology* (Hwang, 2012), I explained how I analyzed the inner structure of pre-Qin Confucianism. The results of analysis showed that pre-Qin Confucianism contained four major parts:

1. Confucian conceptions of destiny
2. Confucian theory of self cultivation with the Way of Humanity
3. Confucian ethics for ordinary people
4. Confucian ethics for scholars: contributing to the world with the Way of Humanity

Confucians of the pre-Qin period classified two categories of ethics for arranging interpersonal relationship, namely, ethics for ordinary people and ethics for scholars. The former should be followed by everyone, including scholars. Since *Foundations of Chinese Psychology* focuses on the study of interpersonal relations among ordinary people in Chinese society (Hwang, 2012), here I will focus on the Confucian ethics for ordinary people. Among classical Confucian works, the following passage in *The Golden Mean* best depicts the relationships among benevolence (*ren*), righteousness (*yi*), and propriety (*li*) in Confucian ethics for ordinary people:

*Benevolence (ren) is the characteristic attribute of personhood. The first priority of its expression is showing affection to those closely related to us. Righteousness (yi) means appropriateness, respecting the superior is its most important*

rule. Loving others according to who they are, and respecting superiors according to their ranks gives rise to the forms and distinctions of propriety (*li*) in social life.

The notion of loving others according to who they are and respecting superiors according to their rank indicates an emphasis on the differential order of interpersonal relationships. The above citation from *The Golden Mean* not only demonstrates the interrelated concepts of benevolence (*ren*), righteousness (*yi*), and propriety (*li*), but also implies the dimensions along which Confucians assess role relationships in social interaction (see Figure 3).

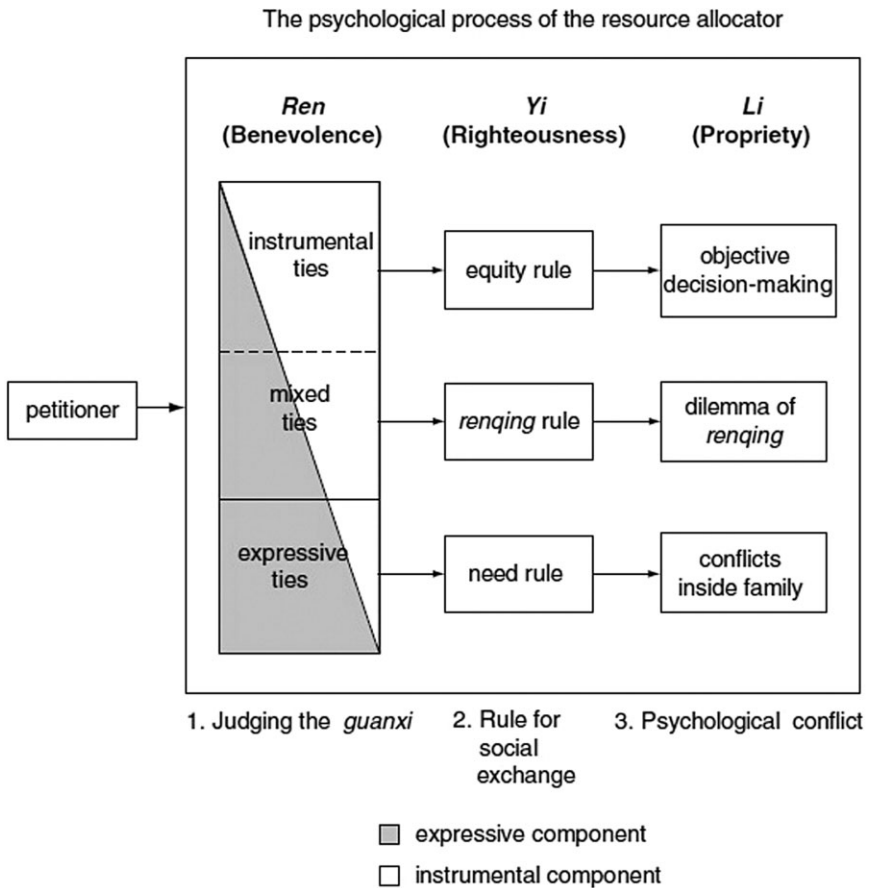


Figure 3. The Confucian ethical system of benevolence-righteousness-propriety for ordinary people (Source: Adapted from Hwang, 1995, p. 233).

## Structuralism and Isomorphism

Specifically, Confucians propose that when interacting with other people, one should first assess the relationship between oneself and the other party along two cognitive dimensions: intimacy/distance and superiority/inferiority. The former refers to the closeness of the relationship while the latter indicates the relative superior/inferior positions of the two parties involved. Once the assessment is done, favoring people with whom one has a close relationship can be termed benevolence (*ren*), respecting those for whom respect is required by the relationship is called righteousness (*yi*), and acting according to social norms is propriety (*li*).

This proposition of *The Golden Mean* has an important implication for comparison with the justice theory in Western psychology, which divides the concepts of justice in human society into two categories: procedural justice and distributive justice. Procedural justice refers to the steps that should be followed by members of a group to determine methods of resource distribution. Distributive justice is the particular method of resource distribution that is accepted by group members (Leventhal, 1976, 1980).

According to Confucian thinking, procedural justice in social interaction should follow the principle of respecting the superior. The person who occupies the superior position should play the role of resource allocator. The resource allocator should then follow the principle of favoring the intimate in choosing an appropriate rule of resource distribution or social exchange. Confucian ethics for ordinary people has an isomorphic relationship with my theoretical model of *Face and Favor* (Hwang, 1987). When the petitioner requests the resource allocator to allocate the resource under his/her control in a way beneficial to the petitioner, the resource allocator tends to interact with the other party in terms of the *need* rule, *renqing* rule and *equity* rule, respectively. In the psychological process of the resource allocator, the judgment of *guanxi*, rule for exchange, and explicit behavior correspond to the Confucian ethical system of benevolence (*ren*)-righteousness (*yi*)-propriety (*li*) for ordinary people: the judgment of *guanxi* corresponds with benevolence (*ren*), rule of exchange with righteousness (*yi*), and explicit behavior with propriety (*li*). All are substantial rules to be considered in taking such kind of corresponding actions.

## Critical Theory: Five Cardinal Ethics and Three Bonds

Confucians consider the relationships between father and son, sovereign and subordinate, husband and wife, elder and younger brother, and friends to be the most fundamental relationships in a society, which are termed *the five cardinal relationships* (*wu lun*). According to Confucianism, each relationship among the five entails an appropriate type of interaction in accordance with the relative superior/inferior positions as well as with the intimacy/distance of the

relationship. In fact, it is along these two dimensions that Confucian scholars of the pre-Chin period evaluated the role characteristics of these five relationships, and proposed the most appropriate ethics for each of them. For example, Mencius maintains:

*Between father and son, there should be affection; between sovereign and subordinate, righteousness; between husband and wife, attention to their separate functions; between elder brother and younger, a proper order; and between friends, friendship.*

Confucians set appropriate ethical principles for a given role relationship according to superior/inferior positions and the intimacy/distance of the relationship. This system can be interpreted in terms of justice theory in Western psychology. When a person initiates social interaction with others, the dimensions of intimacy/distance and superiority/inferiority concerning the relationship between the two parties should be carefully considered in order to achieve procedural justice and distributive justice, respectively.

### Relative Ethics

After an assessment of superior/inferior status in the relationship, the principle of respecting the superior should be adhered to, thus indicating who should play the role of resource allocator:

*What are the things which humans consider righteous (yi)? Kindness on the part of the father, and filial duty on that of the son; gentleness on the part of the elder brother, and obedience on that of the younger; righteousness on the part of the husband, and submission on that of the wife; kindness on the part of the elders, and deference on that of juniors; benevolence on the part of the ruler, and loyalty on that of the minister. These are the ten things that humans consider to be right.*

Although the interaction between each of the five cardinal relationships should be based on benevolence (*ren*), the values and ethics emphasized in these relationships differ due to their various role functions. The reason the ten things of righteousness are specifically defined in *Li Chi* is that there exists a differential order within the five sets of roles involved. In accordance with the ten things of righteousness (*yi*), father, elder brother, husband, the elderly, or ruler should make decisions in line with the principles of kindness, gentleness, righteousness, kindness, and benevolence, respectively. And for son, younger brother, wife, junior, or minister, the principles of filial duty, obedience, submission, deference, loyalty, and obedience apply.

### Absolute Authority of Three Bonds

Based on the deep structure of ethics for ordinary people, Confucians of pre-Qin period proposed five cardinal ethics with the core value of benevolence (*ren*),



requesting one to fulfill one's role obligations in dyad interactions (i.e. the five significant relationships) in the lifeworld. Nevertheless, since the Martial Emperor of the Han Dynasty (158–87 B.C.) accepted the proposal of Dong Zhong Shu (179–104 B.C.) and adopted the principles of Confucianism as the orthodox state philosophy for his empire, the three bonds (*sangang*) had been frequently and closely linked to five cardinal ethics (*wuchang*), which delineated the absolute authority of the ruler over the minister, the father over the son, and the husband over the wife, and have had profound influence over Chinese culture in general.

From the modernist point of view, the three bonds are primarily based on power and domination; such exploitative relationships can hardly be redeemable as either social or family ethics. Therefore, Tu (1998, p. 130) suggested that it is necessary to differentiate and to study the complex interaction between the authoritarianism of the three bonds and the benevolence of the five cardinal ethics at the cultural system level. As the politicized Confucian ideology of control, the institution of three bonds was a deliberate attempt to utilize Confucian values for the maintenance of a specific social order. It is detrimental to human flourishing. On the contrary, the five cardinal ethics deliberated by Mencius with the idea of self-cultivation is not only compatible with but also essential to personal growth. Therefore, he argued that a sophisticated critique of the three bonds must involve adequate appreciation of the Mencian conception of the five cardinal ethics.

This is exactly the reason I examined pre-Qin Confucian texts in analyzing the inner structure of Confucianism in Chapter 5 of my book, *Foundations of Chinese Psychology* (Hwang, 2012). Such a synchronic analysis at the culture system level enables us to understand the morphostasis of Confucian culture. On the other hand, the diachronic analysis of agentic groups' or individuals' attitudes or actions toward Confucianism in general and the three bonds in particular enables us to examine the morphogenesis in Chinese history.

The morphogenesis of Confucian cultural tradition at the level of socio-cultural interaction indicated that the traditional belief in three bonds has been destroyed under the impact of Western modern culture since the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, while the other aspects of Confucianism have survived and merged with other cultural traditions to form a new civilization which may save Western individualism and capitalism (Hwang, in preparation).

#### V. ONTOLOGICAL DOMAINS: REALITY, ACTUALITY AND FACTUALITY

Culture-inclusive theories such as Confucian ethics for ordinary people, three bonds and five cardinal ethics are constructed or analyzed at the cultural system (CS) level. In the case that some empirical research hypotheses are derived from them, further analyses should be made at the socio-cultural interaction (SC) level. In order to do this, the ontological realism and epistemological relativism advocated by Critical Realism are of particular use for the integration of natural and social sciences, which should be elaborated here.

## Life Worlds and Scientific Microworlds

Both Critical Realism and Constructive Realism take the same ontological posit of scientific realism. Constructive Realism differentiates three levels of reality, the most important of which is called actuality or *wirklichkeit* (Wallner, 1994, 1997). Actuality or *wirklichkeit* is the world in which we find ourselves, or the given world that all living creatures must rely on to survive. The given world may have certain structures, or may function according to its own rules. However, humans have no way to recognize these structures or rules. No matter how humans attempt to explain these structures, the explanation, and therefore human comprehension, remains a human construction. The structures of the world, its temporal and spatial distances, and causal laws, are all hypotheses proposed by humankind.

The world as constructed by human beings can be divided into two categories: lifeworlds and microworlds. The first constructed reality is that of the lifeworld in which humans live. For the individual, a lifeworld is a primordial world in which everything presents itself in a self-evident way. Before human beings began to develop scientific knowledge, they tried to understand their daily experiences, and to explain, respond to, and delineate structures of their lifeworlds. These explanations and responses belong to a domain of pre-logical, pre-technical and pre-instrumental thinking, and the richness of their roots lies in individual life experiences, which are flexible, penetrable, and yet unbreakable. Human beings can neither exhaust the contents of their lifeworlds nor go beyond their boundaries (Husserl, 1970).

Lifeworlds exist inevitably at a particular point in history. The lifeworld's contents differ by historical age and culture. Economic crisis, war, and civil or political conflict may lead to drastic changes in the lifeworld. However, while people living in the same culture experience change their lifeworlds, their lifeworlds are constantly sustained by a transcendental formal structure called cultural heritage.

The second world construction is that of the microworld. Any scientific construction can be regarded as a microworld. A microworld can be a theoretical model built on the basis of realism, or a theoretical interpretation of a social phenomenon provided from a particular perspective by a social scientist. Within any given microworld, the reality of the given world is replaced by a second order constructed reality that can be verified by empirical methods.

### Domain of Reality

Philosophies of science are delineated to reflect on the construction of scientific microworld. Bhaskar (2008) argued that knowledge constructed by human beings to recognize the nature or the world are structured and can be differentiated. The objects of knowledge can be differentiated into *mechanisms*, *events*, and *empirical* at

Table 1. Bhaskar's three ontological domains (adapted and revised from Bhaskar, 2008, p. 13)

Ontological Dimensions	Domain of Reality	Domain of Actuality	Domain of Factuality
Entity Level			
Mechanisms	✓		
Events	✓	✓	
Empirical Experiences	✓	✓	✓

the entity level (Bhaskar, 2008, pp. 162–163), while their ontological domains can be differentiated into *the real*, *the actual*, and *the empirical* (Bhaskar, 2008, p. 56), which are replaced by *reality*, *actuality* and *factuality* in Table 1; the term *empirical* is also replaced by *empirical experience*.

Critical realism also takes a realist stance in arguing that the world exists independent of our knowledge of it (Sayer, 2000), which is consistent with the ontological position of constructive realism (Wallner, 1994, 1997) as well as Kant's argument that human beings can construct knowledge to understand only phenomenon but not thing-in-itself.

Scientific realism posits that the mechanisms or theoretical models constructed by scientists must deal with some real objects. The domain of reality comprises whatever exists, which may be natural or social in nature, and independent of whether or not we have sufficient knowledge about their nature.

Those objects can belong to the material nature like minerals, or social objects like bureaucracies. All subjects, material or social, have certain structures and powers. In the field of social science, structures are defined as sets of internally related objects or practices which can be used to refer to large social institutions, and also to small structures at the interpersonal level, like my *Face and Favor* model (Hwang, 1987, 2012), or at the personal level, like the *Mandala model of self* (Hwang, 2011a, b). Those universal models or mechanisms deal with something real in our lifeworlds, such as advocacy, which is called *ontological realism*.

### The Domain of Actuality

Collier (1994, p. 62) stated that *power* is “a non-technical term designating what something can do,” while *generative mechanism* is “a technical term, designating a ‘real something’ over and above and independent of patterns of events.” For example, my *Face and Favor* model and *Mandala model of self* are supposed to be generative mechanisms; they can be viewed as the causal powers of things (Bhaskar, 2008, p. 50).

We can examine the structures of those mechanisms that generate powers: To a certain degree, we can also predict the structures generating powers under certain conditions or inputs, leading to a change or event.

The domain of *actuality* pertains what happens if and when powers in objects are activated. In the social sphere, when social structures and humans exercise their agentic powers, *actuality* pertains to what those powers do and what eventually follows when those powers are activated.

In Chapter 5 of my book, *Foundations of Chinese Psychology* (Hwang, 2012), I explained how I used the *Face and Favor* model as a framework for analyzing the inner structure of Confucianism. My analysis is the corpus of sayings by pre-Qin Confucians. My book, *A Proposal for Scientific Revolution in Psychology* (2011a), takes the *Mandala Model of Self* as a framework for analyzing Confucian texts about self-cultivation from the perspective of psychology. Both books examine sayings or speeches made by pre-Qin Confucians when their generative mechanisms were activated by some powers. In terms of the distinction between lifeworlds and scientific microworlds, both the *Face and Favor* model and *Mandala Model of Self* are universal and objective, while the isomorphic Confucian ethics for ordinary people and other culture-inclusive theories are culture specific and fallibilist. Therefore, my research works can be used as examples to illustrate the philosophical advocacy of critical realism on ontological realism and epistemological relativism.

Based on such culture-inclusive theories, we may examine sayings or speeches made by a particular Chinese actor at the socio-cultural interaction level (SC) when his/her mechanisms are activated by some internal or external powers. In terms of the distinction between lifeworlds and scientific microworlds, they refer to events in lifeworlds which can serve as materials for qualitative research in social sciences.

### The Domain of Factuality

By the same token, culture-inclusive theories can also be used to derive hypothesis for empirical research taking into account realistic conditions in Chinese society. The quantitative data collected at the SC level belong to the domain of factuality which can be experienced directly or indirectly by dualist methods of empirical research; thus, they are termed as empirical experiences in Table 1.

In my book, *Foundations of Chinese Psychology* (Hwang, 2012), I explained how I used the theoretical model of *Face and Favor* as a framework to analyze the inner structure of Confucianism, reviewed previous researches on Chinese moral judgments, and discussed the features of Confucian ethics from various perspectives. In addition, I constructed a series of culture-inclusive theories to integrate findings of previous empirical researches on social exchange, face dynamism, achievement motivation, organization behavior, and conflict resolution in Confucian society. The aforementioned analyses indicate that insofar as culture-inclusive theories are constructed by indigenous psychologists, qualitative and quantitative researches should be complementary to each other.

## Anti-Positivism

The ontology of Critical Realism advocates for the stratified reality which is essentially different from the positivist assumption of reality. Both critical realism and the domain of actuality are subsumed within the domain of reality, i.e.  $dr \geq da \geq df$  (see Table 1). In contrast, the positivist ontology assumes a relationship of  $dr = da = df$ , which collapses the three domains of reality into an empirical one and advocates that empirical fact is the only reality.

The difference of ontological stance between Critical Realism and positivism has very important implications for non-Western psychologists. Because most psychologists take the position of positivism or naïve positivism when conducting empirical research, they generally assume that human beings are “passive recipients of given facts” and “recorders of their constant conjunctions” (Bhaskar, 2008, p. 16), without differentiating the three domains of reality or constructing culture-inclusive theories. Eventually, most psychological researches conducted in non-Western countries are merely duplications of Western paradigms of mainstream psychology, resulting in the backward of academic research in non-Western countries as well as the destruction of their cultural subjectivities. It seems to me that this is the most important reason non-Western indigenous psychologists must attune to the philosophy of Critical Realism.

## Conclusion

Once an academic movement finds its philosophical ground, the movement has found a clear “way” for its future development, so it is mature. Findings of many empirical researches can be explained in terms of the theories thus constructed, and the light of possible researches can be casted in the future.

Moreover, culture-inclusive theories constructed by this approach can be used to challenge Western theories of mainstream psychology constructed on the presumption of individualism. Hence the *Face and Favor* model is universal; it can be used to analyze interpersonal interactions in any culture, or related ideas in a specific culture. From this perspective, individualism originating from modern Western civilization overemphasizes the relationship of market pricing in Fiske’s (1991) relational model, or the instrumental tie in Hwang’s (1987) *Face and Favor* model. It ignores or neglects other types of interpersonal relationships; this is thus undoubtedly a biased approach. Many WEIRD theories of mainstream psychology were thus constructed. According to structuralism, any theory constructed on a biased presumption will suffer from the crisis of infinite regress. On the contrary, any theory constructed on the presumption of universal mind may be more robust for practical examination. The arguments stated above have important implications for understanding the roots of the crisis of modern capitalism which should be seriously reflected upon by us all.

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