

Integrating the Emic (Indigenous) with the Etic (Universal)—A Case of Squaring the Circle or for Adopting a Culture Inclusive Action Theory Perspective

LUTZ H. ECKENSBERGER

ABSTRACT

The dualism of *emic* and *etic* plays a crucial role in the emergence of three culturally informed approaches of psychology: cross-cultural psychology (CCP), cultural psychology (CP) and indigenous psychologies (IPs), a distinction largely accepted nowadays. Similarities and/or differences between these positions are usually discussed either on the level of phenomena (data) or theory. In this paper, however, the discussion takes place on a meta-theoretical or epistemological level, which is also emerging elsewhere. In following several earlier papers of the author, first, four perspectives are distinguished that underlie present day psychology. Second, these are used as a framework for linking them to the three “camps”. This analysis will show that these perspectives are characterized by different underlying worldviews, interests as well as methodical preferences. Third, it is claimed that this level of discussion is quite fruitful for the ongoing discourse on the three camps, but also helps one to understand, why the duality between *emic* and *etic* approaches is—implicitly or explicitly—at the core of these discussions, because their relevance turns out to differ in the three camps. In that sense, the *emic/etic* duality is used here as a “litmus test” to exemplify these deeper differences between the camps, thereby highlighting them.

Fourth, in order to overcome not only the dilemma between the unique and general in psychology, but also to clarify the relation between the individual and culture it is proposed that psychology should take *human action* as its *unit of analysis*, thereby connecting historically to the early beginnings of psychology at the end of the 19th century. It will be argued that a *culture inclusive action* theory may overcome this tension and may help to integrate western and other indigenous psychologies, and hence it could be advantageous to integrate CP and IPs as well. This is possible because the proposed theory hopefully provides a universal framework for psychological concepts, yet allows for their culture specific expression.

1. *EMICS AND ETICS IN CURRENT “CULTURE-INFORMED” PSYCHOLOGIES*

*A psychology without culture would be like
Hamlet with the prince of Denmark as the only character*

(Jahoda, 1990, S. 127)

Although Jahoda’s quote as a motto for the following paper seems quite plausible, we will see that the “reality” of modern psychological approaches which refer to culture do not all take this basic truth seriously, and that the aim of *including culture as context* in psychological theories is not realized in principle as easily as one would wish, beyond that, it has serious consequences for the science of psychology as such. The distinction between *emic* and *etic* approaches in psychology is right at the heart of our discussion because this duality represents paradigmatically the tension between the contextualized unique single cultural case (emics) and the decontextualized general laws or principles of a cultural theory (etics).

As is recognized widely, at present three “culture informed” “camps” exist in psychology, which all became salient in the second half of the last century: Cross-Cultural Psychology (CCP), Cultural Psychology (CP) and Indigenous Psychologies (IPs).

Though there are numerous cross-references and activities among the distinguished camps, and variations also exist within these, in fact numerous proposals also elaborate on their differences and similarities. They mostly refer to the cultural uniqueness or cultural variations of psychological concepts or methods. This discourse started rather early in research in foreign non-western cultures (e.g. Cole, Gay & Glick, 1968) or in cross-cultural psychology (e.g. Wober, 1966) and ended up in the conceptualization of indigenous psychologies (e.g. Enriquez, 1990). I will not try to summarize the existing distinctions of the three camps, which are highly systematic on a rather phenomenal level (Kim, Yang & Hwang, 2006; Shweder, 2000; to mention just a few). Instead I will argue that the camps differ quite profoundly on a deeper level because they are formulated around different “*epistemological cores*”, they have different “interest of knowledge” as well as different histories. As far as I see, the following discussion does not contradict the mentioned efforts in principle. On the contrary, they complement or underscore them. Historical arguments will also be referred to in order to demonstrate that the goal of including culture into psychology—particularly in an applied context—is in fact an old concern. This is important for CP as well as for IPs, because both can be linked to some historical facts and thereby strengthen their positions.

Like Hwang (2006) and Liu (2011) I think it is particularly fruitful in this context to argue on an epistemological rather than on an empirical or descriptive level. In doing so, I will take up and continue a discussion I have conducted since the end of the seventies (Eckensberger, 1979, 1990, 1996, 2002, 2011, 2012), which was

first considered rather strange, but which has become much more acceptable today. My basic “diagnosis” as well as the proposed “therapy” is more or less the same. Earlier I only tried to argue for a CP. In the following I will extend these arguments to IPs as well. In doing so, I will first distinguish main “perspectives” on humans, which are implied in present day psychology. If one is open to such a discourse one will realize that it is quite fruitful for a better mutual understanding and acceptance of (not only tolerance for) different theories in psychology. The distinguished perspectives are *ideal types*, and research in reality does not always follow the implied epistemological assumptions exclusively but is often quite eclectic. Second, the three “camps” will be characterized by trying to link them to different perspectives. This logic implies that in the long run it is not fruitful for the further development of psychology to *evaluate* these different special approaches or theories (like action theory) from a perspective or epistemological framework other than their own (as is implied in “mainstream empirical psychology”, anonymous reviewer, AR,¹ Malpass & Poortinga, 1986). Reese & Overton (1970), for instance, showed convincingly that it was exactly this type and level of argument, which finally led to the acceptance that Piaget’s developmental psychology is based on fundamentally different assumptions about the nature of human development (equilibrium between cognitive schemata and reality) than, for example, classical learning theory or mainstream methodologies (focusing on sample sizes, measurement and prediction, testing of developmental achievements by tests). It is my conviction and claim that the present discourse about the three “camps” of culture sensitive psychologies should also take place on an epistemological level. This could be quite productive, because it would go beyond numerous concrete research examples and/or concepts. This does not make the level of discourse an “arm chair” psychology (AR), rather, this discussion in the long run could contribute productively to the self-understanding of psychology as a science in general and IPs in particular. Therefore, the following arguments are understood as an appeal to partake in a scientific discourse, though it clearly (and by necessity) suffers from the fact that it is based on philosophical concepts from western philosophy and history. This does not make them more artificial (or “artifacts”, AR) than other approaches. Fortunately, there are also non-western psychologists, who have started discussions on an epistemological level. Liu (2011) for instance contrasts Western philosophical epistemologies with Asian ones, showing that different cultural traditions really provide different epistemologies. He mentions three Asian epistemological examples: Two based on Confucianism (David, Y. F. Ho and K. K. Hwang) and one based upon Indian traditions (G. Mishra and D. P. S. Bhawuk). These perspectives can be used to look critically at my proposal, to reflect upon its possibilities and limitations. I consider this level of debate as promising, knowing how hard it is to think in a different cultural tradition. I consider myself a Cultural Psychologist. In that sense I try to complement Chakkarath’s (2005) argument that CP may benefit from IP, hoping that IP can also benefit from CP.

1.1. Emics and Etics

As will be seen, it is not by chance that the relevance of this duality differs in the three “camps”. It is used here as a “litmus test” to exemplify these deeper differences between the camps, thereby highlighting them.

This tension between the unique and the general is an old topic in meta-theoretical reflections on science in the West. And, interestingly, from the very beginning, this duality was part of the distinction between different kinds of science or scientific approaches.

In 1894, Windelband in his inaugural lecture as president of the university in Strasbourg, discussed very early the differences between the unique and the general in science. Instead of the emic/etic distinction, he used the terms idiographic/nomothetic (Windelband, 1904). The first represents the comprehensive analysis of the concrete (i.e. special spatial and chronologic) unique phenomena, the second represents the search for general laws, which abstract from the unique phenomenon, and he linked the first of these two aspects of knowledge to the *humanities* (Geisteswissenschaften) and the second to *natural sciences*. Allport (1937) introduced this dichotomy into personality theory in the US. Dilthey (1894) accentuated this distinction by postulating that psychic life has to be *understood* while nature is *explained*. Despite the fruitfulness of this dichotomy, it was soon weakened because idiographic approaches also make abstractions, and their final goal is also to subsume the unique under general concepts or types. Similarly, nomothetic approaches also need interpretation (see Rickert, 1929; Teo, 2008), which unfortunately often is not “straight forward” . . . “mapping between a theoretical statement and data can always be disputed” (Kashima, 2005, p. 32). Windelband (quoted after Sader & Weber, 1996) already interpreted psychology as taking a middle course: in that it analyses *objects* from the field of humanities by *methods* from natural sciences. But this “solution” was criticized already by Vygotsky as a categorical error when he wrote that “*Psychology wants to be a natural science about non-natural phenomena*” (Vygotsky, 1927, chapter 11, [p. 190]). Later Boesch (1971) coined the often quoted phrase that “*it is the dilemma of psychology to deal as a natural science with an object that creates history*” (Boesch, 1971, p. 9). So it is evident that the tension between the unique case and the general law in psychology seems to imply different *interpretations* of reality. This is why I formulate that the “resolution” of this tension is like “squaring the circle” or “transcending” it by changing to a different (meta-)perspective.

As is well known, the emic-etic duality stems from linguistics, and was coined by Pike (1967) in analogy to *phonetics* and *phonemics*. In linguistics *phonetics* refers to the study of general aspects of vocal sounds and their production, whereas *phonemics* studies the sounds used in a particular language. Hence the concepts entail the relation between the particular and the general. When applying this duality to the study of culture, Berry (1969) specified an *emic* approach when behavior is studied from *within* a *system* in only one culture, when the structures are *discovered*

and when the criteria for analysis are relative to the internal characteristics of the single system/culture. The *etic* approach is realized when behavior is studied from a position *outside* the system, when it is studied in many cultures, when the structure is *created*, and when the criteria for analysis are considered *absolute* or *universal*.

2. ARGUMENTATION AT A META-METHODICAL (EPISTEMOLOGICAL) LEVEL

Nowadays in western philosophy of science the notion seems to be increasingly accepted that *metaphysical assumptions* lead scientific theorizing and research. These “are not ‘out there’ in the data, but ‘in here’ as ‘assumptive frameworks’” (Rychlak, 1993, p. 936). These frameworks can be called *paradigms* (Kuhn, 1962), *research programs* or *positive heuristics* (Lakatos, 1971), “*subjective, mystic conceptions which are long forgotten*” (Feyerabend, 1975, p. 106), *narratives* (Overton, 1996) or *groundings* (Rychlak, 1993).

In our first reflections on the role of culture in psychology (Eckensberger, 1979)² we followed, what Little (1972) called “hidden assumptions hunting” in cross-cultural research and theorizing by following and extending the meta-theoretical perspective Reese and Overton (1970) had introduced into developmental psychology. They made extensive use of Thomas Kuhn’s (1962) analysis of the development of sciences. Based on the historical reconstruction of physical concepts, Kuhn concluded that science does not develop by a continuous process of upholding or falsifying hypotheses/theories (as assumed for instance in Popper’s *critical rationalism*), but rather by a *radical change in the perspective* (worldview) on the subject matter of a theory. However, neither Reese and Overton nor I followed the “developmental” dimension (revolution) implied in Kuhn’s point of view. Instead we followed the argument that (a) psychology is a *multi-paradigmatic science* and (b) models are mutually *incommensurable*—meaning that they cannot be reduced to or translated into each other or eradicated by either subsuming one dichotomy under the other or by formulating a “more general substituting position”. This is also true for the theories built upon them. Consequently, (c) paradigms cannot be evaluated as being right or wrong, but rather as more or less fruitful to systematize specific issues. (d) Since theories and methods are represented by *social groups*, the course of science is not rational as such, but rather *culturally rational* (Bickhard, 1992)—they are followed by a “scientific community”. Under this “constructivist” understanding of science, theories are also not neutral with reference to methods, rather theories lead to a preference of some methods over others. These methodical ideals are called “*exemplars*” by Kuhn (1962)³. Nonetheless it also seems plausible to accept at least some common basic values of scientific work (like accuracy). We function within science only because we take these assumptions more or less for granted and do not continuously think about them, i.e. these frameworks are to a large extent self-evident and have to be explicitly reflected

upon. Here, the terms paradigm and “perspective” are mostly preferred. By using “perspective”, it is intended to trigger the association that it belongs to *someone* (the theorist or researcher) and is at the same time *about* something (the human being, culture).

The metaphysical assumptions in psychological theories are already indicated by the variety of “labels” used to characterize the *nature of the human being*, which all more or less focus on only one particular characteristic of humans, neglecting others: *animal symbolicum*, *homo sapiens*, *homo mechanicus*, *homo interpretans*, *homo ludens*, *homo narrator*, *homo oeconomicus*, *homo sociologicus*, to name but the most frequently used. It is thus also comprehensible, why psychology is almost by necessity a multi-paradigmatic science and that probably only simultaneous attention to all these different aspects of the human being enables a more or less complete picture.

In an early analysis of the role of culture in psychology five perspectives were distinguished that more or less cover psychology (Eckensberger, 1979). Three (quantification or multitude and extent [use of measurements and statistics], system theory [e.g. socio-biology] and the model of the “potentially self-reflective” individual) were added to the two Reese and Overton (1970) distinguished (mechanistic [learning theory] and organismic [Piaget’s genetic structuralism]). This analysis focussed on the *incommensurability* of perspectives in (cross-cultural) psychology, which were all evaluated according to their fruitfulness in *allowing both the inclusion of ontogeny and cultural change* (therefore of culture) into psychology in the sense that they could *both* be explained by *the same theory*—a criterion which is also implied in Hwang’s (2006) discussion.

Later I reduced the number of perspectives in psychology to four (Eckensberger, 2002), based on the earlier work but adding a *genuine cultural perspective*. They are compatible with Rychlak’s (1993) four “groundings” of *Physikos*, *Bios*, *Socius* and *Logos* in psychology. In these later arguments the notion of dualisms was the starting point although it is also criticised not only in Western Philosophy (e.g. Dennet, 1991) but is particularly absent in Asian Epistemologies (Liu, 2011).

Despite all criticism it appears quite productive to *start* with the assumption of dualities and then to discuss their interrelationship and possible integration by some general principles while simultaneously also upholding them as complementary perspectives.

Figure 1 not only summarizes the four “models of man” or perspectives I (now) consider relevant to (western) psychology (Eckensberger, 2002), but also distinguishes the general relationships between the four perspectives, particularly highlighting the classical “splits” implied. The upper and lower parts represent the “two cultures” differentiated by Snow in his famous Cambridge lecture (see Frezzo, 2004). The human/cultural perspectives basically deal with the creation of personal and *cultural rules* and meaning systems, and therefore constitute the “realm of reasons”, whereas the natural sciences perspective is based on *natural laws* and the “realm of causes”.

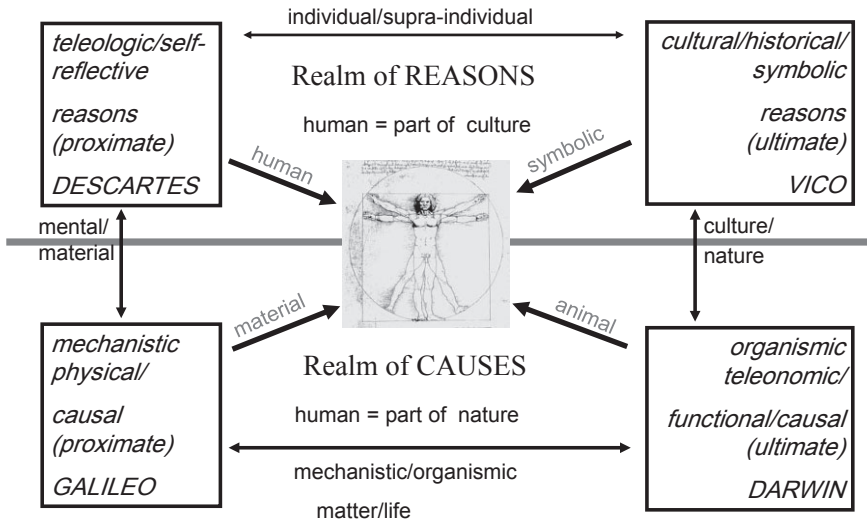


Figure 1. The four distinguished perspectives in psychology and their interrelationship (after Eckensberger 2001, 2012).

- The mechanistic/physical perspective:* The most influential historical reconstruction of psychology (Boring, 1929/1959) underlines that physics was the most attractive model for the emergence of the new science of psychology at the end of the 19th century. This choice was strongly supported by Kurt Lewin (1930/31) who—in a classical paper entitled “The transition from an Aristotelian to the Galileian worldview in biology and psychology”—called explicitly for defining psychology as a *natural science*, and chose (classical) physics as the proper model for psychology. Reese and Overton (1970) called this the *mechanistic paradigm*, exemplified in psychology by classical learning theory. To embody this perspective, Lewin chose the Italian mathematician, physicist and astronomer Galileo Galilei (1564–1643). In psychology it represents the *homo mechanicus*. It is characterized by the assumptions of *elementarism* and (*proximate*) *causality* and by the operations of *measurement*, *experimentation*, *prediction*, and the *use of (mostly linear) mathematics*. Development is primarily micro-genesis but also ontogeny. Measurement, prediction and experimentation are essential for the self-understanding of mainstream psychology.
- The organismic/teleonomic perspective:* In 1980 Norbert Bischof agreed that psychology is and should be a natural science, but he accused Lewin of having selected the wrong science as a model to overcome Aristotelian thinking (Bischof, 1981). Instead of physics he proposed *biology* as the proper model for psychology, and used Charles Darwin (1809–1882) as the key

thinker (examples are the organismic worldview/Piaget, socio-biology [Eckensberger, 1979, 2002], which of course differ in some aspects [see Eckensberger, 1979]). It represents the *homo sapiens sapiens*. It is characterized by the assumption of *holism, teleonomy, functionalism (ultimate causality)* and *emergence* and by the operations of *observation* (and to a lesser degree of use of *non-linear mathematics*). Development is primarily defined in terms of functionality, it refers to ontogeny and micro-processes (like instrumental learning), but phylogeny also plays a crucial role.

- *Teleologic / “potentially self-reflective” human being*: The French philosopher, mathematician and natural scientist René Descartes (1596–1650), who counts as founder of modern rationalism (Cartesianism), is proposed to embody this perspective on humans. He is famous for his dictum “*cogito ergo sum*” (I think, therefore I am). Clearly in the present context his dictum is used because it underlines the importance of the *principal* ability of humans to be *self-conscious* or *self-reflective*. This topic also led Descartes to distinguish two different substances: material substance (*res extensa*) and mental substance (*res cogitans*). He is thus one of the “founders” of the duality of mind and matter (“Cartesian dualism”). In any case, Descartes is responsible for an understanding of human nature as “*radically reflexive*”, meaning that humans are not only self-conscious in the usual sense, but uniquely conscious of the fact that we are able to reflect on the contents of our own minds. It represents the *homo interpretans* (Eckensberger, 1993) who epitomises the model of the agency in action theories (Eckensberger, 1979, 1996, 2002, 2012). It is characterized by the assumption of *teleology, potential self-reflexivity, (subjective) free choice, meaning creating* and *dialogical methods*. Development is primarily ontogeny, but also micro-genesis (actual genesis) and phylogeny.
- *The cultural/symbolic perspective*: In the earlier paper (Eckensberger, 1979) culture was used only as a concept that had to be integrated into psychology. Later (Eckensberger, 2002) it seemed useful, even necessary, to distinguish a genuine “*cultural perspective*” in psychology as a perspective in its own right, overcoming the danger of focusing on a single subject in isolation⁴. This was due to the conceptualization of the (sub)disciplines we are dealing with here: a “*cultural psychology*” and the emergence of culture-bound “*indigenous psychologies*”. I have chosen Giovanni Battista Vico (1668–1744) to embody this perspective, because he is considered one of the first in the West to develop a systematic methodic approach to history. He called for an analysis of the “birth” and development of human societies and institutions, and proposed the study of *language, myths* and *tradition*, underlining the symbolic meaning of words. For Vico history was the source to help understand humans because humans are the ones who *create* history, and *form* human rule systems making up the core of culture. This is in line for example with the anthropologist Geertz (1973) who understood culture as “a set of control mechanisms—plans recipes, rules, and instructions for governing behaviour” (p. 44).

It represents the *homo symbolicus*. It is characterized by assuming *the human achievement of man-made environments, social rules/traditions that complement natural laws, symbolically shared meanings*. Development is defined in terms of *history and social/cultural change*.

Because the perspectives are understood as *ways of looking at the world*, they are considered *epistemological*. Therefore one cannot argue that they represent the *sciences*⁵ of physics, biology, psychology and anthropology/sociology, which are primarily and historically defined by *ontological* categories, like the three worlds distinguished by Popper (1978). Rather, the productivity of the argument is that one can, in principle, take all perspectives in each science (see in detail, Eckensberger, 2002). Whereas in earlier times ontology was considered to lead epistemology in theory construction (because in empiricism the results of research “correct” theories), nowadays, with the increasing relevance of constructivism (Mahoney, 2004), epistemology in a sense *leads* ontology, because *theories* determine data collection to a great extent, and therefore the kind of the data themselves. One can even argue that ontology and epistemology can no longer be separated (Eckensberger, 1996; Gülerce, 1997).

There are, however, two important implications of this analysis: First, WASP (Western Academic Scientific Psychology) is not homogeneous, as sometimes suggested in IPs. But beyond that, psychology is based on two “realms” a *natural law* based realm (causes) and a *cultural rule* based realm (reasons). This also means that in terms of western epistemologies humans cannot escape being *dual creatures*, belonging to culture *and* nature. This is so because culture is explicitly understood as an *achievement of humans* that transcends their mere nature. It is built onto nature, but is not nature itself. Gehlen (1940) therefore called culture the *second nature* of humans. For this reason, the classical perspectives, which represent the natural science perspectives, must also be maintained.

Second, detailed analyses of the perspectives also showed that they are *not* neutral with reference to methods or methodical implications: The methods of inquiry as well as the methods of analysis vary depending on the perspectives—in the perspective of the *potentially(!) self-reflective intentional subject* hermeneutic/interpretative/narrative methods are adequate (Ratner, 2007)—but they are neither arbitrary nor intransparent. In fact, the definition of the equivalence of data as well as the conceptualization of universals turned out to be specific to perspectives (see Eckensberger & Burgard, 1983). Even more generally, the relations between basic methodical concepts like *context*, *meaning* and *truth conditions* also vary (Eckensberger, 2011). Kashima (2005) has recently also elaborated on this dilemma. He based his argument on Dilthey (1894) as well and used two “hermeneutic models” of social science (Taylor and Ricoer) as examples, both claiming that hermeneutic social sciences are incompatible with the basic criteria of logical positivism (p. 30). So the dual nature of humans particularly visible when taking culture seriously, poses difficult methodological problems for psychology,

which cannot be solved by simply sticking to nomothetic methods alone and objecting to hermeneutic approaches and *vice versa*.

3. AN OLD STORY RECONSIDERED: ANALYSING THE ROLE OF CULTURE IN WESTERN PSYCHOLOGY⁶

3.1. Linking CCP to the Worldviews Underlying Psychological Theories: Technical Coordination of the Emic/Etic Duality

If we accept these different epistemologies or worldviews that underlie psychological theory construction and research, representing the realm of reasons and the realm of causes, then it is evident that one should consider CCP as primarily embodying the realm of causes as a variation of mainstream psychology (lower part of Figure 1), which is either based on the mechanistic (causal) model or the organismic (functional) one. In terms of the general impact on psychology (defined in terms of organization/journals, bulletins, handbooks, [see Liu, 2011; Kashima, 2005]) CCP clearly is a success story—it is the most established and visible of the three camps. It “*represents the study of similarities and differences in individual psychological functioning in various cultural and ethnic groups; of relationships between psychological **variables** and sociocultural, ecological, and biological **variables**; and of current changes in these **variables***” (bold, LHE)—to use a classical definition from Berry, Poortinga, Segall and Dasen (1992, p. 2). CCP *supplements* intra-cultural studies of mainstream psychology by interpreting cultural difference as an “experiment in nature”, which will help one to understand the possible (cultural) variations of intra-cultural (western) psychology, consequently conducting “differentiation studies” and “generalization studies”. Both of these understand culture as “*cultural conditions*” which can be interpreted as (independent) *variables*, thereby keeping psychology and culture epistemologically apart⁷. So quite consistently most cross-cultural psychologists did not really aim at a *theoretical integration* or *inclusion* of culture and its development as a *human feature* into psychology, or as a *substantial part of psychological concepts*. On the contrary, this position is sometimes explicitly objected to (Malpass & Poortinga, 1986). This is why CCP unfortunately is often used quite “naturally” as an evaluative framework for both CP and IP (AR; Poortinga, 1996).

Because of this “self-understanding” of CCP and its goal of contributing to a natural science based *universal theory*, valid for all humans, taking an *etic* orientation is a logical implication. The unique cultural context (*emic*) was almost by definition not the focus. Yet, it was/is not neglected either. This was clarified particularly by the discussion of the “dualism” *emic vs. etic* in the early days of IACCP, primarily by John Berry (1969, 1989), but also by Kim and Berry (1993) in their early book on IP.

Berry’s early distinctions of the emic/etic strategies in CCP are still accepted and taken for granted. Yet, Berry’s first distinctions (1969) were already discussed

quite critically by Price-Williams (1975) as well as Jahoda (1977). As Jahoda, in part refers to Price-Williams, the latter will not be summarized here (although his analysis is theoretically quite enlightening). Jahoda (1977) also included anthropological literature quite productively. His basic points of critique were that (a) the term “system” is quite unspecific, and CCP mostly deals with variables (p. 59); (b) the dichotomy inside/outside is also opaque, because “there is an important sense in which anyone who studies a system must be ‘outside’ it” (p. 58). Being part of a (cultural) system does not allow one to see it as a whole (that is why Smedslund [1984] later defined culture as “the invisible obvious”); (c) the dichotomy discovery/creation is also a “highly contentious matter” (p. 58) in Jahoda’s judgment, because in relation to social and psychological systems, “structures” are “creations”. And, quite importantly, referring to Levi-Strauss (1963), the term structure can be found on *different levels* (which are not necessarily empirical!). So, Jahoda’s critique aims at quite basic dimensions implied in empirical research and theory-building. He proposed abandoning the distinction emic/etic altogether and argued that on an *empirical* level the contrast between “universal and culture-specific” would be quite sufficient and adequate. The duality survived, however, and is particularly taken up in discussion of IPs, e.g. by Hwang (2006), Chen (2010).

Beyond this criticism, two additional arguments show that these early discussions in CCP did not aim at a *theoretical integration* of the duality but primarily at keeping the *etic* as the main perspective.

But Berry’s stimulating discussion of the etic/emic dimension ended up in a proposal of how this duality can be converted into an *empirical* research program, aiming at universal (comparable) concepts and measurements (Berry, 1989; Berry et al., 1992). According to this influential scheme, CC-research should start (imperialistically?) with research in one’s own culture (*emic* A) (which is rather imperialistic), it is then transported to other cultures (implying an *imposed etic*). Then the other culture is discovered (*emic* B) and both cultures are compared (*emic* A \Leftrightarrow B). Either a comparison is not possible (end of CC-research), or comparison is possible, at least for some contents of cultures A and B, then these intersecting contents form what Berry calls “*derived etic*”. It is evident that this step is the Achilles Heel of the proposal, because it presupposes a common framework for emic A and B which is exactly what is missing, or it represents the smallest denominator (like in statistically defined universals). Chen (2010) interprets the concept of derived etic as an “iterative” process because there is a back and forth between emics and etics. Recalling Jahoda’s criticism of the system concept, however, this process is quite contrary to the system concept, which is holistic, “*gestalt-like*”: Any variable which is included in a system is changed by it, as is the system.

In any case, this procedure suggests that emic information is only *technically implied*, simply to save an *etic* perspective. It is also entirely clear that this whole procedure is descriptive because no *theoretical criteria* were proposed for comparisons. This also means that it *localizes* the problem of comparability, but

does *not solve* it.⁸ In summary, CCP basically takes an *etic* perspective (*implying an imposed and a derived etic*). In that sense CCP downplays one side of the emic/etic coin.

Second, it is telling that the “indigenous approach” was still quite visible in the early days of IACCP, when it first sharpened its profile (at the conferences Ibadan in 1967 and in Hong Kong, 1974). An explicit effort was made to develop ethical standards for doing cross-cultural research, which tried to *embrace indigenous perspectives*, by claiming that methods have to be *ethically acceptable in each culture*. CC-research should use both “*etics*” and “*emics*” and leave “*something of value for the culture they study*”. But attempts to include this code into the ethical standards or the IACCP were *unsuccessful, because the code was deemed to be too restrictive by not allowing sufficient freedom for cross-cultural psychologists* (c.f. Triandis, 2009, p. 10).

3.2. Linking CP to the Worldviews Underlying Psychological Theories: Conceptual Integration of the Emic/Etic Dualism

Evidently CP rather represents the upper part of Figure 1. It follows a different understanding of humans. Its “cores” are *intentionality* and *meaning of human actions*, as well as the *understanding* of culture as a dynamic system which is the result of human actions under certain ecological and historical conditions (and not just an independent variable). That’s why Shweder (1990) can define culture as an *intentional world*. Quite consistently, also from a methodical point of view, Shweder’s CP is an “interpretative discipline” based on the operation of thinking through other perspectives (thinking through cultures). CP evolved from the fundamental criticism of a causal/functional and not intentional understanding of humans in mainstream psychology.

CP’s criticism of CCP refers to the cultural de-contextualization implied by breaking down culture into variables. However, in my understanding, CP does not focus on *concrete cultures* (like IPs) but on the *general theoretical concept* of culture and its relevance to psychology. In contrast to CCP, *culture* in CP is considered to be a *unique feature of humans* which not only has to be maintained in psychological research, but also has to be made *its conceptual basis*. In CP psychological and cultural concepts are assumed to be *intrinsically* and *mutually inter-connected*. CP is therefore critical of nomothetic methods (Eckensberger & Burgard, 1983; Ratner, 2007), which do not fit the humanistic basis of CP.

CP is not a homogeneous perspective, however, although a remarkable common core exists. According to Valsiner (1987) (who in fact speaks of a “culture inclusive psychology”) CP *aims at an integration of culture into psychological empirical work and theory building*. Shweder (1990), on the other hand, elaborates: “Cultural psychology is the study of the way cultural traditions and social practices regulate, express, and transform the human psyche, resulting *less* in psychic unity for humankind than in ethnic divergences in mind, self, and emotion” (p. 72, italics LHE).⁹

Cultural-psychologists largely doubt that the scientific model of a nomothetic psychology (following a natural science ideal), preferred in WASP, is sufficient or *at all* adequate for humans in general, and call for the inclusion of culture *into all of psychology* (Boesch, 1971, 1991; Cole, 1996; Eckensberger, 1979, 1990; Price-Williams, 1980; Ratner, 2007; Shweder, 1990; Valsiner, 1987). This “movement” was admittedly not as successful as IACCP, yet, in Germany a “Society for Cultural Psychology” was founded, and in the late 1960s, in the throes of the student revolt, Holzkamp in Berlin called for a *critical* and *emancipatory* psychology, which was highly politicized at first, but later incorporated aspects of cultural¹⁰ psychology and Russian activity theory. Interestingly, these approaches were later taken up by the *Society for Sociocultural Studies* and the *International Society for Cultural Research and Activity Theory*, which merged to form the *International Society for Cultural and Activity Research* in 2002. Valsiner founded an influential journal (*Culture & Psychology*) in 1995, and edited a comprehensive handbook on the matter (*Oxford Handbook of Culture and Psychology*, 2012).

Skimming through current literature on culture in psychology, particularly of the USA, one gets the impression that CP is a recent “invention”. Greenfield (2000), for instance, observed that the explicit call *to include culture conceptually into psychology* in CP emerged because of western psychologists who worked in foreign cultures for some time and experienced the limitations of their familiar theories and methods from their western background (implying the limits in “exporting” western psychology)—and thus started to work on a CP.¹¹ This suggests that CP emerged in the recent past. In fact it has a history, which is much longer and already starts with one of its founders, Wilhelm Wundt, and at least Karl Bühler and Lew Vygotsky also require mentioning¹² who both wrote—independently—about the “crisis of psychology”, in 1927.

There is agreement that Wilhelm Wundt is one of the founders of psychology in the west, but it is probably particularly due to Boring’s “History of experimental psychology” (first edition 1929) that Wundt is still interpreted primarily as an “experimental psychologist” and that this kind of psychology became the basis of all western psychology.

Of course, there were and are good reasons for this: The *Zeitgeist* in philosophy and the emerging natural sciences (physics, biology, medicine) in the 18th, 19th century represented a very triumphal procession of natural sciences¹³, and this was emulated in scientific work in psychology too. For this reason Robinson (1976) was able to characterize *psychology of the twentieth century as a footnote to physics of the nineteenth century*.

Yet, there were also good reasons from the very beginning to consider the serious limitations of formulating psychology as a pure natural science, modeled primarily on physics (using experiments, measurement and prediction), and interestingly, it was the same Wilhelm Wundt who from 1900 until the end of his life 1920, worked on 10 volumes of a *Völkerpsychologie* (similar to CP). This radical shift in Wundt’s thinking somehow escaped attention or was even suppressed. A recent

publication by Jüttemann (2006) on “Wilhelm Wundt’s other legacy” (translation LHE) deserves attention, in which he and several other authors aim at “dismantling this misunderstanding”.

To sum up the historical reconstruction of CP, at least the following aspects have to be mentioned: (a) From the beginning psychology was interpreted as a *dual science* (Wundt, 1888, 1921, 1922; Vygotsky, 1927): one “branch” dealing with *mind/intentions/culture* and *understanding* (cultural psychology), the other with *causality* behavior and *explanation* (psychology as a natural science). This distinction of two “kinds” of psychology is important, because by proposing this, Wundt was quite modern, also basing psychological processes on physiology and on phylogeny. But most significantly in the present context, *culture was considered as having been made by humans*. These discussions implicitly or explicitly considered the problem of whether psychological aspects of humans can be dealt with satisfactorily in a nomothetic science, and whether these should not rather be reconstructed ideographically, referring to reasons/intentions (for actions) instead of causes (of behavior) and therefore to history. (b) From early on an *internal relation between the culture concept and action concepts* was articulated. Wundt, Bühler and Vygotsky referred to Brentano (1874), who focused on *intentionality* as a basic feature of consciousness, leading to the concept “*acts of consciousness*”. Twenty years later Dilthey (1894/1968) distinguished between the *explanation of nature* and *understanding the mind/soul*, a duality, which was triggered by Wundt, and paved the way for the on-going discourse on the *duality of explanation and understanding* in modern analytical philosophy as well (v. Wright, 1971). (c) It is of interest that a tension between basic and applied psychology was also articulated early, which could be overcome by action concepts¹⁴. Significantly both Bühler (1927) and Vygotsky (1927) argued that applied psychology is one reason for the early crisis—just as it was behind the emergence of CP and particularly in IPs. Interestingly, at the turn of the 19th century, Münsterberg (1900), a disciple of Wundt and one of the founders of an applied psychology, also proposed *action as the basic unit* of psychology.

Thus, the concept of the *human action* was used as the basis for psychology quite early, not only in Europe, but also in North America where William James developed a sophisticated theory of action at the end of the 19th century, anticipating a remarkable number of action theory concepts (see Barbalet, 1997). Pierre Janet (1859–1947) in France also requires mentioning, who developed an action theoretical framework for the analysis of neuroses (Schwartz, 1951) and influenced most of the early depth psychologists (Freud, Jung, Adler), his theory is also one important basis for Boesch’s Theory (see below).

Although Wundt considered this cultural/historical type of psychology as the most promising one (Wundt, 1921, VIII), it was in a sense *overruled* by the neopositivistic *logic of explanation* expounded by the Vienna circle in philosophy which was quite in line with behaviourism in psychology and in a way became identical to “mainstream psychology”. But it is also true that it in fact survived: The

qualification of the human being as a *homo interpretans* (Eckensberger, 1993) was “reinvented”, it is nowadays called “the human kind” (Danziger, 1997).

Because of the central importance of intentionality and meaning in the realm of reasons, (a) the *family of action theories* is the most plausible one to integrate the person and culture, based on the perspective of the *intentional and potentially self-reflective agency* and representing the *model of man* which is fundamental to the psychological understanding of the subject as *agency* (see also Eckensberger, 1996). (b) The relation between the individual (agency) and culture turned out to be a *dialectical* one because they interpenetrate each other (see Ratner, 2007). In this theoretical approach *human action was located between the subject (agency) and culture*, hence it was proposed that *human action mediates between the individual (agency) and culture thereby “synthesizing” that duality*. Therefore these perspectives turned out as not being incommensurable if the action concept is used as a link. At the same time, it could be clarified what “dialectical” implies in this duality (see discussion of Figure 2 below). Dialectics means that neither one exists without the other—no action exists without a cultural context, and no cultural context exists without human actions (Rosnow & Georgoudi, 1986). Basically we followed the “transformative method” already used by Feuerbach (1804–1872) by saying that “the person is shaped by culture” and “culture is shaped by persons”. Similarly Bandura (1997) claimed later that “people are both producers and products of social systems” (p. 6). This was basic to the program of a “dialectical psychology”

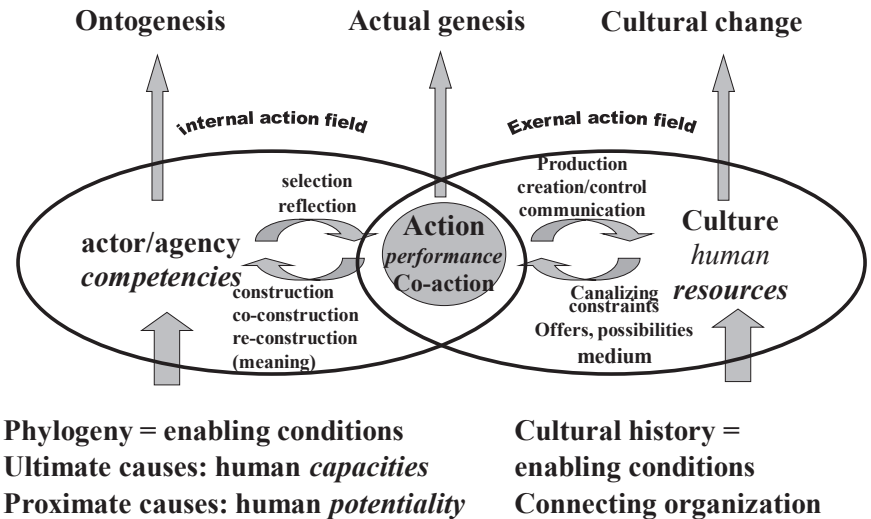


Figure 2. Different kinds and levels of development in an action theory framework that integrates culture and the individual (agency) (modified after Eckensberger, 1979).

(Riegel, 1979), a cultural psychology (Boesch, 1971; Eckensberger, 1990; Cole, 1990; Ratner, 2007) as well as a “humanistic psychology” (e.g. Rychlak, 1993). It can be also found in recent theoretical discussions on the “object” of psychology by Martin and Sugarman (2009) and Smedslund (2009). Thus, although CP was also a “western” creation, it is not mainstream (WASP). Due to the ontological integration of the person and culture into one theory, the *individual/culture duality* not only vanishes, but the *duality emic/etic* as well: *They represent the two sides of the same coin, the person is always interpreted in a cultural context, so that the concrete culture and a cultural theory is integrated.*

From a CP-perspective, the empirical coordination of the emic/etic duality also changes. I proposed (Eckensberger, 1994) that one should start with a *transcultural discourse* of the concepts one aims at studying. This discourse is not only based on mutual respect among the researchers and their cultural backgrounds, it also implies that one is being confronted with cultural similarities and differences, which means that it may lead to a fruitful reflection of the concepts involved and the cultural prejudices one may have about the foreign as well as about one’s own culture. This strategy would not lead to a *derived* etic, but rather to a *consensual* etic, which also indicates that the *validation of theories is a social process*. At this level, however, the problem of understanding (between researchers) exists as well, they not only speak different languages (even if it is English, the connotations will certainly be different in many cases), but also have different cultural backgrounds. This problem is discussed productively in analytical philosophy, where persons like Quine and Davidson deliberate problems of translation. Interestingly these problems are not discussed technically, but rather in moral terms, because two preconditions are proposed (a) the use of *empathy*, and (b) the *principle of charity*, which means ascribing the maximum of truth to sentences uttered in a dialogue (or foreign language) (Quine, 1976).

The relationship of the potentially self-reflective and socio-cultural perspective is illustrated quite generally in Figure 2, *by using the human action as the genuine theoretical and empirical unit of psychology proposed long ago*¹⁵, but more acceptable nowadays (see Kashima, 2005). Action mediates between agency and culture in both directions and thereby synthesizes them, making plausible why it is possible to conceptualize culture as being the *result* of actions and co-actions (Eckensberger, 1979) or as an *intentional world* (Shweder, 1990). The *interpretation* of agency as being *potentially self-reflective*, in addition to being able to reconstruct the world (*homo interpretans*) and to construct culture (*homo faber*) and to a certain extent also to “*create him- or herself*” (thinks of the person he or she wants to be, develops norms about right and wrong), calls for and allows for the integration of individual as well as cultural *rule* and *interpretation systems* (Eckensberger, 1993, 1996). Humans create and shape culture—material, symbolic artefacts and social *rules*, which are in turn preconditions for their actions. Thus these conditions are always saturated with teleological structures. This perspective also implies that they can be altered to varying degrees. So culture not only has a structure, but is also dynamic. An

action theory which includes culture quite “naturally” implies a genuinely *developmental* perspective, because the interrelationship between culture and individual is based on intentional processes *over time*. The emphasis on development in the present discussion deviates from most recent discussions (e.g. Kashima, 2005; Liu, 2011) which underline theories on personality and social psychology. It is important, however, that development is theoretically conceptualized differently on different levels: On the phylogenetic level (phylogeny) it is based on and forms human *capacities*; on the individual level (ontogeny) it is based on human *potentialities* and forms human *competencies*, on the action level (actual genesis or micro-process), the term *competencies* is used; and the cultural level (history and cultural change), is based on and leads to cultural *resources*.¹⁶

This approach not only results in constructions and co-constructions of cognitive and affective (evaluative) schemata in subjects, but also has implications for symbolic (Boesch, 1991), material and social structures in a culture which in turn form *canalizing constraints* (ranging from inhibitions to taboos) and/or *enabling conditions* or *selective pressures* (ranging from support to duties [Eckensberger, 1990]) given in the cultural context or action possibilities (Martin & Sugarman, 1999), which also become part of the schemata. So culture does not only *emerge* on the basis of human actions and reflections (*upward emergence*) but also has a *selective effect* on humans and their development via actions which is called “*downward selection*”¹⁷. The basic dialectical ideas formulated in my early writings are quite compatible with this terminology, which I consider more precise than the terms interpenetration or interdependence. But I am also aware of the fact that both “processes” (emergence and downward causation) are not generally agreed upon (Davies, 2006). A detailed discussion of this discourse is, however, beyond the scope of this paper.

So, it may have become more plausible, why CP does not focus on concrete cultures, but rather on the general *concept* of culture and its relevance to psychology. I have good reasons to assume that this perspective could likewise be attractive for IPs although they primarily aim at research within concrete cultures (like we did with the concept of “regional cultural identity” based on “cultural identity anchors” like the regional dialect, food preferences and preferred kind of humour, etc. [Krewer & Eckensberger, 1991; particularly Krewer, 1992]).

3.3. Linking IPs to Worldviews in Psychology: Unhappy and Uncertain Future of the Love Affair with Emic/Etic Dualism in IPs?

IPs reject WASP because it neglects the importance of the *uniqueness of particular cultural contents on the level of groups as being fundamental in cultural research in psychology*—their norms, values and behaviours (Kim & Berry 1993; Chakkarath, 2005; Kim, 2000; Nsamenang, 1992; Sinha, 1997; Yang, 2000). Kim and Berry (1993) proposed a definition of this approach which can count as being classical today: the

“scientific study of human behaviour that is native, that is not transported from other regions, and that is designed for its people”.

The explication, saliency and justification of the fundamental criticism of decontextualizing psychology differs in CP and IPs, indicating some important differences between these two approaches. While CP tries to include the culture concept into psychology as a *conditio humana*, thus searching for a deep structure of psychology as a *cultural science*, the different IPs focus on the surface structure of *singular cultures* (local knowledge).

Again Greenfield’s (2000) observation on the emergence of CP and IPs is productive. Complementary to limitations of *exporting* western psychology to other cultures in CP, IPs realized similar deficiencies in *importing* western psychology to indigenous cultures. IPs often start with *particular practical problems* existing within a *particular non-western culture* (the broad geographical/political areas like Africa, India, South America, North American Indians etc.) which also relate to the political structures and their developments like apartheid, democratization, but also to poverty, overpopulation, hunger, lack of education, caste-system, women’s discrimination, natural or cultural catastrophes and their consequences for development and trying to do something about these. Apart from a “natural” interdisciplinary orientation of IPs, this is certainly one reason why IPs are keener to include *cultural content* from *specific cultures* (cultural *groups*) into research, theory as well as *practice*. Unlike CP, IPs are clear and explicit in their *moral* refusals/critiques of “mainstream western psychology” or WASP because the export of WASP is understood as an accompaniment of the victory and expansion of *western imperialism and colonialism* over the past few centuries (critique) which has, however, been accepted by and large, by non-western intellectuals with an earnest motivation to modernize through learning advanced western sciences (self-critique) (Evdenden & Sandstrom, 2011, p. 155). This means, unlike CP, in IPs an explicit *political dimension* can be identified, which *even* calls for *the protection of cultural groups*¹⁸ *and for responsibility for indigenous cultures*, it by necessity implies a *normative orientation, dealing with conventions, laws, morality and religion*. Hence the interaction between norms and facts is much more salient in IPs than in WASP (or even in CP).

In CP and IPs different methodical consequences are drawn from the respective critique: While CP as consequence of its ontology (reasons/history) is critical of nomothetic methods or at least fights to justify hermeneutics, IPs are ambivalent in this respect: Although IPs are definitely critical of WASP, this is not as evident with the methodical canon of WASP. The practical focus of IPs does not automatically lead to a critical reflection of *psychology as a natural science and methods modeled on natural sciences* (Kim & Park, 2006)—on the contrary, some psychologists who call for IPs, often explicitly try to stay within the traditional nomothetic (methodical) understanding of WASP, and only want to add some cultural materials/variations to the methods, for instance, some culture specific items into the text revision of “The American Psychiatric Association’s Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, fourth edition, [DMS-IV-TR]

(2000)² (Thakker & Ward, 1998). They are even impressed by the *methodical accuracy* and rigor of western psychology (Sinha, 1993). Kashima (2005), despite his careful analysis of the relevance of hermeneutics in culture informed psychologies, also maintains “that it is too early to give up on quantitative methods” (p. 33). This implicit contradiction between IPs laying claim to recognizing cultural content in research and theory but adhering to western methods can also be seen in the critique that WASP is based upon highly selective cultural *samples* of western research, referred to as WEIRD (western educated industrialized rich and democratic societies) which cover just 12% of the world’s population (Evenden & Sandstrom, 2011, p. 157). This criticism is only valid, however, as long as one stays within the (statistical) natural science model of western nomothetic psychology. In this sense this criticism is also not explicitly formulated against “western theories”, it does so only implicitly—because in WASP psychological concepts are usually defined as *sample dependent* operationalizations of psychological concepts (methods).

There is, however, quite a serious problem with interpreting cultures from an *emic* perspective—also current in discussions in ethnology or anthropology (Antweiler, 2009). The focus on cultural *groups* (instead of culture as a theoretical concept) implies an understanding of cultures as a “*container model*”, suggesting that concrete cultural groups are *homogeneous*, having *sharp boundaries* to neighbouring cultures, which also implies the problem of defining the *size of cultural groups* (tribes, ethnicities, societies, etc.), which then underlines differences between cultures more than similarities almost by implication, which is, however, quite *contra productive* not only for intercultural communication and cooperation but also for theory construction. This approach is in danger of having to develop quite a lot of psychological theories unique to different cultures (Poortinga, 1996; Hwang, 2006). Therefore the main problem of this approach is to downplay the *etics*, the other side of the *emic/etic-coin*.

If IPs want to make this perspective attractive for *all of psychology*, it is certainly not enough to point to some culture specific psychological concepts that do not exist (at first sight) in the West or to introduce some culture specific contents into tests or to adapt the International Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental disorders (DMS) to include a broader scope of cultures, or to underscore the higher impact of *metaphysical concepts/religion* (Eckensberger, 2006; Chakkarath, 2005), by using them as psychological theory or to reconstruct some traditional indigenous psychologies in detail, like Indian Psychology (Chakkarath, 2005) or Confucian Psychology (Hwang, 2006), although it is certainly true that western psychology can learn from these analyses.

Fortunately, nowadays, there seems to be some agreement in the camp of IPs that the final goal of theory construction is also a *universal theory for all people* (Hwang, 2006).

It therefore seems *wise to use IPs as a platform to reflect upon psychology as such*. It is particularly the *reflection* of different culture sensitive psychologies *in relation to*

WASP which is or can be so productive for all of psychology. A “true cultural turn” of psychology is necessary that aims at an overarching *culture inclusive theory* which should include the cultural content mentioned and *theoretical* concepts as human constructions.

From my perspective CP and IPs have only begun to converge theoretically rather recently (Kim, Yang & Hwang, 2006), which also implies an increasing focus on constructing a *general theory* in IPs as well. By necessity this includes reflections on the culture concept (e.g. Kim & Park, 2006). This convergence was practically absent in the first systematic publication on IPs by Kim and Berry (1993). With the exception of Bruner (1990), there was no systematic reference to the simultaneously (re)emergence CP. My basic claim is that IPs can productively benefit from theoretical analyses of CP, and possibly can even use similar theoretical positions and research heuristics. That’s what I will try to illustrate in the following, although much more space is necessary for doing so satisfactorily (Eckensberger, 2012). In turn this would particularly strengthen the perspective of CP, which in return could contribute much to IPs.

4. TOWARDS AN INTEGRATION OF IPs AND CP BY ACTION THEORY

Hwang (2006) argued convincingly that the construction of a theory of IPs that is valid beyond a single culture implies a *transition from IPs to a universal psychology*, which implies “*a significant change in philosophical assumptions*” (p. 74). I agree. But what changes did he have in mind?

Hwang (2006) referred to the later work of Berry et al. (1992) who related three basic philosophical assumptions to the strategies of *imposed etics*, *derived etics* and *emics* in CCP: *absolutism* to *imposed etics*, *universalism* to *derived etics* and *relativism* to *emics*. Without elaborating on these positions, it may be remembered that Jahoda (1977) already considered the concepts of absolutism and universalism as much too general and abstract. In the mean time they are considered insufficient: Fontaine (2011), for instance, distinguishes two types of universalism, namely *repertoire universalism* and *construct universalism*, which primarily differ in their “empirical status”. While *repertoire universals* are defined by their *psychometric equivalence*, *construct universals* are defined by *meaning equivalence* (identical underlying (!) meaning). In the latter case, according to Fontaine (2011), comparisons are either *not possible* or *misleading* (p. 173). This distinction implies (though not quite systematically) the criterion of an *empirical proof* of a universal on a measurement or interpretation level, an argument, which is quite important, but it is insufficiently elaborated. In addition, the relation between universalism and absolutism is quite unusual in Berry’s et al. (1992) text in view of the more precise terminology in philosophy (Schwemmer, 1980). There, *absolutism* is understood as the attempt at *not reducing a phenomenon to something else*, hence universalism is just one position of absolutism (Eckensberger, 1994).

The reflection of philosophical assumptions in psychology, which Hwang (2006) is talking about, would imply that psychology in general has to be built upon a particular “*model of man*” that differs from those in mainstream psychology (e.g. Eckensberger, 1979, 2002, 2012), which not only has implications for the “object/content” of psychology, but also for its institutions and methods (e.g. Eckensberger, 2011; Eckensberger & Burgard, 1983; Eckensberger & Plath, 2003). The following arguments are formulated from a CP perspective, but I propose that it should also be applied to IPs.

Kashima (2005) rightly concludes from his discussion of hermeneutics and natural science that a monist ontology is called for, which is, however, not the natural science metatheory (p. 35): “It is difficult to speculate what it looks like until some philosophical investigations clarify this. Nonetheless, I have hope that Asian social psychology will not be encumbered by this metaphysical struggle. For Asian (at least East and South Asia) ontology is, I think, traditionally monistic and, yet, takes both the inert physical material and the active intentional being as complementary aspects of the ever-changing whole” (p. 36). In the light of my analysis, this monist ontology, still has to cope with the dual nature of humans though. On the other hand, by referring to Ward (2007), he is uncertain whether Asian social psychologists will be able to fulfill the epistemological promise of their philosophical traditions (p. 218). Interestingly, he derives this conclusion from the present day dominance of organizational structures in Asian psychology (conventions of publishing etc.), which mostly follow the WASP model, although they have nothing to do with epistemology. And he ends up saying “it is highly unlikely that Asian academics will be able to produce philosophically and epistemologically autonomous bodies of work” (p. 219). I agree that complementarity is an important first step (see Eckensberger, 2002¹⁹), though it is evident that this is not monistic. Yet this proposal has another important aspect: it presupposes mutual respect, which implies a moral dimension in science as well.

So why not try to argue from the other side of the dual nature of humans by cultivating action theory?

By placing action (co-action) between the subject (agency) and the context (culture)—see Figure 2—it is evident first, that this scheme does not exclude causality altogether. Although actions in the narrow sense are assumed to be intentional, they still “depend” on diverse enabling conditions (proximate causes, which imply human potentialities, and ultimate causes, which represent capacities). Both need research on causality, yet this would be done in a “holistic” model and not in isolation. Second, action consequences (primarily in the material world) represent causality. But again, also these acquire their meaning within an action scheme.

Third, by placing action between the agency and culture, two action-fields are formed: the “external” and “internal action-field”, terms taken from Boesch, (1976, 1991). They overlap and are interconnected by the action, which is not only part of both, but also acts as a bridge (or a pivot) between them

(Eckensberger, 1979, 1990). The “internal action-field” encompasses the subjective meaning people attribute to a situation and the “external action-field” or cultural factors include existing shared cultural concepts such as shared interpretational patterns, scripts and expectations. It is this conceptual status of culture and human action which justifies the term “*culture inclusive action theory*” (Eckensberger, 2012), borrowing a term from Valsiner (1987). This common *deep structure* is assumed to be universal in the sense of Wittgenstein’s “joint human action” (*gemeinsame menschliche Handlung*) (Neumer, 2010). Actions are “construct universals” in the terminology Fontaine (2011) proposed. But instead of criticizing this type of universal as being empirically unproductive, I consider it as particularly appropriate for any psychology that deals with meaning and culture. One has to abandon the restriction that universals have to be empirically defined on the data level by their occurrence and/or distribution (Antweiler, 2009). Instead I consider the human action in cultural contexts as axiomatic.

Since actions can be looked at from the point of view of their structure, organization and process/dynamic, they are considered analytically universal, although they can be realized quite differently content wise (in different cultural contexts). The model postulates that *every* human being as an *agency* can formulate goals, choose means and evaluate consequences of actions. In other words all humans are capable of *reflective processes* within and upon actions (Eckensberger, 2006). The action concept goes far beyond “rational choice theory” though. Its structure and course can be looked at analytically, it can be used as an empirical framework for defining meanings in context, and it implies cognitions, intuitions as well as affects/emotions (Eckensberger & Emminghaus, 1982). Beyond that, three levels of actions can be differentiated analytically.

At the first level of primary actions all humans develop goals (intentionality), choose means and evaluate the processes resulting from interacting with the material environment (instrumental actions) or with others (communicative actions). These choices are not assumed to be fully rational or conscious. They can emerge intuitively, and later, based upon habituations. Therefore by acting in the world, agencies create their understanding of the world during ontogeny. This is basically a Piagetian idea (for details see Eckensberger, 1990, 1996, 2002). Within the person, schemata about the world are constructed, and in the environment material and social consequences of actions are produced, which later form the enabling and constraining conditions for further actions. These schemata are shaped by experiences gained in *different* material, social and symbolic contexts, like exclusively child oriented activities in the west or within co-occurring care structures in some non-western cultures (Keller & Eckensberger, 1998), yet both can be formulated within the very same action theory framework. Action barriers are an important concept. Their relevance may be quite different in different cultural contexts. Sinha (1996) for instance clarifies that the experience of a barrier may be dealt with differently: either overcoming it (western) or somehow

letting it be (Indian). The latter is related to concepts of *harmony*. If *action barriers* occur at this level, action controls or regulations are developed.

As they are structurally also actions, they are called *action oriented or secondary actions*. The action barriers are also not “objectively” given, but based on interpretations. If a barrier is interpreted as being produced by some other agent, this is a conflict, if it is based on some physical circumstances or logical contradiction it is considered a problem. These secondary actions lead to the development of *control beliefs* and *normative frameworks* in the person (agency), and to *control myths*, conventions and laws within the culture. These are equivalent to natural laws although not based on causal deterministic processes. They vary content wise but serve the same function within cultures (as laws do in physics or biology), so the dualism between emic and etic is annulled again. These frameworks in turn define constraints or support for further actions.

Barriers during secondary actions (regulations) lead to *third order actions* which are *agency oriented*. These are reflective processes that are applied to actions and action regulations, to the agency him- or herself (*self-reflection*) as well as to the very existence of the agency (*contemplation*). So *action barriers* and *reflecting processes* which lead to the *emergence* of higher action levels are central to the whole theory.

However, though distinguishable analytically, in a particular action all levels are necessarily simultaneous: In order to understand a simple act (like writing this paper), one has to know the immediate intentions (to make my point within the deadline given), but also the standards or conventions, in which the paper has to be written (APA format), as well as being aware of deviating from some other theoretical positions held. In addition, this may be essential for ones self-identity as a cultural psychologist, etc.

This framework served two different functions in our empirical research: it is an *analytical tool*, in so far as it allows for the integration of psychological and cultural constructs, for instance, defining morality (Eckensberger & Chan, in press) and distinguishing different domains of social cognition (conventions, understanding of law) (Eckensberger, 1996). It quite generally enables the integration of many psychological concepts (cognitions, affects, control beliefs, self-construal, etc. (cf. Eckensberger & Emminghaus, 1982). Apart from this it serves as an *empirical tool* applicable to quite different social contexts (like the analysis of utterances from cancer patients, [Eckensberger, Kreibich, Gaul & Schnurre, 1990]) because it guides the process of data collection (course of actions/interactions), and especially the strategy of data analysis (of utterances) and their interpretation.

Space limitation does not permit a more detailed explication of all aspects involved, but Figure 3 may give an impression.

A few words are necessary about Boesch's (1976, 1991) important distinction between “*primary*”, and “*secondary structurations*” (for details see Boesch, 1991). The “*secondary structurations*” are the core of Boesch's “symbolic action theory” (1991), and they are probably his most important and unique contribution to the field, explaining the development of *idiosyncratic meaning*, a topic that is notoriously

undervalued in psychology, because of its more or less exclusive focus on general laws and principles. They represents affective structures/schemata, in the sense of “valences of objects” (Lewin, 1951). According to my interpretation, they apply to all action levels. Again this distinction is primarily analytical.

Boesch’s proposals basically refer to *instrumental actions*. I tried to increase the fruitfulness of Boesch’s concept of the *secondary structurations*, by applying it to *communicative actions* (Eckensberger, 2001, 2007) in which other *persons* (the social context) obtain their *idiosyncratic* symbolic meaning for an agency and through which the *affective core* of the agency itself is developed. This phenomenon is classically explained in psychology by the concept/theory of attachment which has explicit roots in phylogeny as well as in psychoanalysis. I speculated how attachment to a specific person can also be reconstructed in action terms.

5. CONCLUDING COMMENTS

Clearly, the present theoretical proposal of an action theory that integrates culture into psychology is also of a western origin. My own work dealt not only with meta-theoretical reflections of the approach *vis-à-vis* other approaches in psychology, particularly in CCR, but my empirical work²⁰ was, with a few exceptions, also done within my own culture. From a CP-perspective this is no disadvantage; because CP does not need to work in other cultures or does not imply comparisons by necessity. This, of course, is exactly what IPs argue for. But from an IP’s perspective it may be considered disadvantageous because it seems to be highly abstract and general. So the whole framework should only be understood as a *proposal*. Discourse is badly needed and called for.

I am convinced that the approach is promising, although I understand that it is difficult to swallow for a CC-Psychologist, who basically follows a natural science perspective. Ten years ago (Eckensberger, 2002) I argued that the different perspectives should be understood as complementary. But this presupposes mutual respect, which implies a moral dimension in science as well.

Beyond this, in a constructive tradition, action theory in a cultural context can be understood as a monist epistemology which is a meta-theory of science, called for by Kashima (2005). This sounds hybrid, but it is (on a general level) easy to defend: If we accept (a) that culture is man-made and originates in actions, and (b) that science is part of culture, then it follows (c) that science is man-made (by human actions). This is true for all the perspectives distinguished. Again the three action levels are helpful: On the first action level the *instrumental action* leads to experimentation; communicative actions imply narrative and dialogical methods taking the “object” as a “subject”. On the second level, reflections of the actions lead to the interpretation schemata of explanations of causality (defined in experiments, e.g. v Wright, 1971) and understanding of intentionality and actions of subjects and rule systems. The third level leads to

defining the identity and responsibility of scientists, a dimension not often made explicit in science.

Lutz H. Eckensberger

German Institute for International Educational Research (Frankfurt/Berlin) and

Johann Wolfgang Goethe University (Frankfurt),

Warschauer Str. 34-38 Berlin, Germany

eckensberger@dipf.de

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NOTES

¹ As this is a revised version I sometimes refer to the criticisms of an anonymous reviewer as AR.

² There were at least two reasons for taking a meta-methodical perspective in analyzing the role of culture in psychology, particularly in cross-cultural psychology (Eckensberger, 1979): The experience of working for quite some time in Afghanistan, a cultural context really different from Germany, and the choice of working on the development of morality, an explicit normative framework for human actions.

³ Rychlak (1993) does not follow this implication.

⁴ It is telling that the exclusion of context was the main reason for the development of an “ecological psychology” at the end of the sixties. There however a biological model was preferred over a cultural one (ecosystem; habitat).

⁵ Kim and Berry (1993).

⁶ Jahoda (2012) has recently added another paper on the culture concept discussing three recent books on the topic. It once more demonstrates the heterogeneous use of the concept and ends stating that the concept is probably indispensable but that attempting to define it in a definite way is futile. He concludes that (a) one should just use it without seeking to define it; (2) one should rather explain the specific manner in which the term “culture” is employed in a specific context; and (3) students should not be presented with a rigid formula or a smorgasbord definition, but given some insight into the ways the concept is useful despite of the impossibility of pinning it down. What is lacking in this analysis as well in his conclusion, however, is any effort to take a meta-perspective that at least allows bringing some analytical order into the variety of approaches and opinions if psychology is to take itself seriously though sticking to a variety of meanings of a concept.

⁷ This argument would need some specification, because the relation between the individual and culture is different in causal and teleonomic world views (see Eckensberger 2002). Space limitation does not allow an elaboration of these distinctions, which are not essential in the present context.

⁸ There are many methodical reflections on how to secure comparability in CCP (selected overviews: Eckensberger & Plath, 2003; Lonner & Berry, 1986; van de Vijver & Leung, 1997). Most of them stay within a nomothetic model of psychology however.

⁹ This definition is quite close to what most IPists would subscribe to; therefore Schweder (2000, p. 209) argues that “indigenous and cultural psychology are very similar to each other (although perhaps [!] not identical, and both I feel [!] quite different from cross-cultural psychology” (exclamation marks, LHE).

¹⁰ Because of his political bent Holzkamp mostly used the term “society” instead of culture. But he had a theoretical goal basically in agreement with CP. Teo (2013) recently called his critical psychology an IP. But I think this is misleading, he did not restrict his claims to the German culture. He was in fact primarily critical of mainstream psychology. This criticism is not enough to relate him to IPs, it is also implied in CP.

¹¹ There is in fact an important link to applied psychology here: Michael Cole started this work, when he evaluated educational programs in mathematics supported by US educational aid in Africa, Ernst Boesch established an Institute for Child development in Bangkok supported by the UNESCO, I evaluated the success of secondary education in Kabul, Chost and Kandahar (Afghanistan) supported by educational aid of Germany.

¹² Some of the arguments were already formulated by Cole (1996).

¹³ A trend towards *founding laboratories* (i.e. *decontextualization* of “reality” was successfully demonstrated); epistemologically *elementarism* was successful (the disaggregation of phenomena into their elements); *measurement* (assigning numbers to phenomena according to specific rules) became a leading procedure (the concept of variable was born in psychology), which also made *mathematics* a basic language of natural sciences. The concept of material *cause* and its demonstration in *experiments*, made *prediction* a leading criterion of a theory as well.

¹⁴ I followed this notion by distinguishing two action types, problem solving and theory construction (Eckensberger, 2004).

¹⁵ This is equivalent to the “ring structure” (Leontiev, 1977; see Eckensberger, 1995) of Russian activity theory, and Haste’s (2008) theoretical position, which relies extensively on Vygotsky.

¹⁶ Abramson (2012) recently took a similar perspective to the relation between action and culture, using action as an integrative construct, as elaborated in the following, although he starts from a different background. It would be worthwhile to work on the differences and similarities of his approach in more detail, though this would need another paper.

¹⁷ In my earlier analysis, I did not accept general systems theory and socio-biology as a solution to integrating agency and culture, because it contains functional but not intentional processes. Since then I came to know “dynamic action theory”, which particularly Juarrero (1999) also applied to action theory and *intentions*. In complex systems theory the terms “upward” and “downward *causation*” are used (Campbell, 1974; Juarrero, 1999). These terms are avoided here, instead the terms “*upward emergence*” and “*downward selection*” are preferred because the former still suggest a reductionist worldview, which is, however, not intended (Murphy, 2010, suggests “downwards constraints”, but I also want to include downward affordances from the cultural point of view, hence I use the more comprehensive term “downward selection”). It is important, however, that the attractors on the different levels are different: competencies, potentialities, capacities, and resources.

¹⁸ UN-Declaration of the rights of indigenous people. N.Y. Sept. 13, 2007; Brush S. B. and Stabinsky D. (Eds.) (1996). Valuing local knowledge. Indigenous people and intellectual property rights.

¹⁹ I thank Jochen Fahrenberg for a personal communication about the complementarity principle.

²⁰ Restructuring the development of morality, contextualizing morality in ecological daily-life contexts, norms and facts in the development of morality, analysis of cancer patients, regional cultural identity.

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