

Preface

“I don’t have time for that,” I kept telling myself and my friend Tony Marsella, who has been asking me for quite some time to edit a volume on indigenous psychology. It didn’t work. I finally put my foot down and said “No” to Tony in a roundabout way, so typical of many Asians: “If I ever do a book, I’d rather write a book of my own.” That’ll stop him, I thought. “Fine,” said Tony, “send me the book proposal.” Little did I know that I would be stuck with my own pretense. The result is this book.

What’s This Book About?

名不正则言不顺;言不顺则事不成。(论语)

If names are not correct, language is not in accordance with the truth of things. If language is not in accordance with the truth of things, affairs cannot be carried on to success.
(*Confucian Analects*)

This book is about lived experiences in search of a correct name, as Confucius put it, or in psychological lingo, a conceptual framework that can serve them well. Imagine having certain experiences that have become an integral part of you like your own skin, but somehow they do not fit any given categories. In order to tell yourself as well as others what you have been through, you may try to fit all the ready-made categories, and in the process invent terms and concepts that have a better fit. This, in a nutshell, is the journey of indigenous psychology (Gergen, Gulrerce, Lock, & Misra, 1996; Sundararajan, 2014a, 2014b; Sundararajan, Misra, & Marsella, 2013). Indigenous psychology is a psychological inquiry that subsists in the gap between the canonical terms of mainstream psychology and a phenomenal world that has as its point of reference a Mecca that falls outside the pale of the epistemological universe of Western psychology. For experiences to remain nameless; or worse yet, to have to take on ill-fitting terms and concepts that falsify and distort them is the agony that drives the endeavors of this book.

It is, therefore, not simply an academic exercise for me to weave together phenomenal descriptions and abstract terms and concepts in psychology. In addition to being a personal quest, this book is an invitation to think things through with me. By thinking I mean double thinking—not only to think through culture, as recommended by Shweder (1991), but also to think through psychology. In thinking through psychology, I make subdisciplines talk to each other. For instance, in citing empirical evidence to support theoretical conjectures, I do not mean that the validity of the latter is thereby boosted by the former. Terms—such as validation, truth, and facts—have no purchase in this book. This book is not about apodictic truth so much as cross-fertilization of ideas, especially ideas from different lines of inquiry or different levels of analysis in psychology.

Synopsis of the Book

Part I: Conceptual Foundations for the Analysis of Chinese Emotions

- Chapter 1 focuses on the rationale and methodology of the book. Replacing the ever expanding list of attributes in cross-cultural psychology, I offer an explanatory model of culture to explain the well-documented cross-cultural differences in cognitive styles. More specifically, I use the framework of symmetry and symmetry breakdown, derived from physics, to explain how cultures that differentially privilege relational and non-relational cognition are mirror images of each other.
- Chapter 2 examines harmony as the Chinese version of symmetry. Harmony has been found to help as well as hinder creativity and other important human flourishing. Scholars have also drawn a distinction between optimal and suboptimal harmony, known as deep versus superficial, true versus false harmony, and so on. This chapter uses the framework of symmetry and symmetry breakdown to explain the difference between these two versions of harmony, and to guide a structural analysis of optimal harmony.
- Chapter 3 focuses on an analysis of Confucianism. Once Nisbett (2003) asked a Chinese scholar why Westerners and Easterners had developed different ways of thinking, the scholar replied, “Because you had Aristotle and we had Confucius” (p. 29). This chapter explains this enigmatic answer. More specifically, it shows how in contrast to Plato and Aristotle who privileged reason and logic, Confucius considered the cultivation of emotions (*qing*) the goal of education, and used poetry as a primary means for this goal.
- Chapter 4 focuses on an analysis of Daoism. If Confucianism privileges the coordination games of group living, how does the quest for autonomy and independence fair in the collectivist niche of traditional China? The answer is very well, thanks to Daoism. Daoist values are examined, with special emphasis on the fact that Daoism shares with Confucianism an interest in intimacy in relationships, except that in Daoism intimacy has shifted to the transcendent context of communion with Nature.

Part II: Chinese Emotions in the Everyday

- Chapter 5 focuses on empathy-based emotions. A primitive form of empathy, akin to contagion, was promoted and used by the Confucian philosopher Mencius as the building blocks of his moral edifice. This chapter examines a household term—*xin-teng* (heart-aching love)—to show how, consistent with the moral vision of Mencius, Chinese learn morality at their mothers' lap.
- Chapter 6 examines the art of intimacy from Chinese poetics to the everyday. The West tends to define intimacy in terms of the behavioral and experiential characteristics of a relationship. By contrast, the Chinese notion of intimacy focuses on the epistemological and ontological transformations of this relationship. The Chinese notion of intimacy poses to emotion theory an interesting question: Does the self get a boost from positive emotions, such as intimacy, to be grounded more firmly in its self-esteem, or does it thereby vault over its ego and land in a different universe—the “we-ness”?
- Chapter 7 explores the influence of Daoism on Chinese emotions. Spontaneity is considered the hallmark of true feelings. This Daoist doctrine of freedom and authenticity in emotion has far reaching implications for both cognitive appraisal and dual-process theories in contemporary psychology.
- Chapter 8 focuses on hierarchy-based emotions. Fitting in is very important in collectivist cultures, where the individual needs to suppress his or her personal needs and feelings in order to fit in, so the collectivism story goes. Yet, there is room for indulgence in selfishness in the Confucian society, provided that you assume the lower status of being young and immature. The term that marks the site of selfishness reserved for the young and immature is *sajiao*, which refers to the behaviors of young children who act like spoiled brats, and by extension, young women acting childish as a form of flirtation. The focus of *sajiao*, however, falls not on the selfish and sometimes downright manipulative behaviors, so much as on the relational context of intimacy that warrants such behaviors. This chapter examines how the rationality behind this hierarchy-based intimacy fosters gratitude.

Part III: Chinese Creativity

- Chapter 9 examines emotional creativity as exemplified by the lives of hermits. This chapter calls attention to the so far neglected fact that hermits in Asia embody a well-established tradition of social nonconformity and independent thinking since antiquity.
- Chapter 10 focuses on savoring and its implications for emotion theory. In contrast to emotional regulation prevalent in the West, the Chinese privilege refinement of emotions. Overall in the Confucian system, it is difficult to make a compelling argument for the elimination or control of something intrinsically bad in emotions. For instance, desire is not intrinsically bad in the *Analects*. To Confucius a desire is good or bad depending on whose desire it was, a virtuous or a petty person—a refined person would have refined desires. The main thrust therefore is on refinement, or self-cultivation. Refinement sets goals above and

beyond regulation. The goal of regulation/coping/management of emotions is reached once the undesirable consequences are eliminated or held in check. The benchmarks of emotional refinement include more elusive goals such as creativity, personal growth, and development. One consequence of emotional refinement is refined emotions. This chapter examines one of the most common-place practices of refined emotions, namely savoring.

- Chapter 11 focuses on insight-based emotional transformations associated with the Buddhist notion of *kong* (emptiness). It is well documented that the Chinese prefer intuitive over formal reasoning (Norenzayan, Smith, Kim, & Nisbett, 2002). It is also widely known that intuition is more conducive to creativity than analytical thinking (Sternberg, 2006). However, the connection between creativity and intuitive reasoning does not seem to carry beyond the Western hemisphere. When it comes to the cognition of the Asians, their intuitive approach is cast in the dual-systems framework of decision-making (Kahneman, 2003), in which gut feelings and intuitions join the ranks of the unconscious, associative processes that are shown to be fast but error prone, relative to the conscious, systematic processing that are supposedly more accurate and capable of learning. This chapter restores the connection between intuition and creativity in the Chinese context, by investigating the Buddhist notions of *kong* (emptiness) and *wu* (enlightenment), with special focus on associated emotional transformations.

Part IV: Conclusion

- Chapter 12: The term *qing* has been left undefined but introduced piecemeal in the previous chapters. In this concluding chapter, I give a formal definition of *qing* and explore its connotations as candidates for an alternative to the standard answers in mainstream psychology to the question posed by William James (1884) more than a century ago: What is an emotion?

Potential Contributions

This book has the potential to make the following contributions to culture and psychology, and more specifically global psychology, for it is in investigating painstakingly the innards, case by case, of the multiple and diverse mental universes sported by cultures that psychology, in its aspiration to become a global science, can hope to attain a comprehensive understanding of the mental life (Teo & Febbraro, 2003):

- This book is the first systematic study of Chinese emotions from a theoretical framework that seeks not only to do justice to the indigenous perspectives, but also uses the latter to interrogate mainstream psychological theories and research on emotions.
- It intends to enhance genuine understanding across cultures at a level deeper than the utilitarian purposes of tourism and trade. By rendering accessible the episte-

mological universe of a culture, this book makes it possible for an outsider to experience the local culture more fully beyond the level of intellectual understanding, and hopefully to see the world and feel the way the locals do.

- This book demonstrates how folk theories of non-Western cultures can function as potential competitors and valued interlocutors in the theory construction of emotions. More specifically, it demonstrates how the Chinese notions of *qing* (emotion) can bring greater clarity to existing concepts, can participate meaningfully in the current debates on emotions, and hopefully will tip the balance of assimilation and accommodation in mainstream psychology (Teo & Febraro, 2003), thereby rendering the latter more open to novel and deviant ideas from within as well as without the field of affective science.
- At the practical level, this book enlarges our repertoire of adaptation to a changing world. By mapping out the ecological niches in traditional China with corresponding algorithms for emotional fitness, this book contributes to resources for creative problem solving for the Chinese as well as the non-Chinese, at this particular juncture in history when all cultures are facing unprecedented challenges at multiple levels.

Tips on Reading

Take small bites, with savoring. Inviting thinking and reflection, chapters in this book are not meant to be finished in one sitting. Your best bet is to read a few chunks of ideas at a time, allow time for your mind to play with the ideas, and savor the journey.

Have fun skipping. If you come across a terminology that you either don't know or don't care enough to know, just skip it. Rest assured that there is enough redundancy in this book that you are not missing anything by skipping. I usually say the same thing twice, one in lay terms, and one in psychological jargons. The point made in one chapter will also be reiterated in other chapters, so skip as you like and you may still be able to follow the thread.

No need to start from the beginning. There is more than one way to skin the cat, so it is with reading this book. If you are not a theory person, you may consider starting in the middle—begin with Part II and continue to Part III. When you read about the Chinese experiences in these sections, you will realize that descriptions inevitably come with concepts—you may consider these cultural phenomena as uniquely Chinese, or something universal, typical of all cultures, or a mixture of both, universal and unique. How do you decide? How far do you agree with my interpretation of the Chinese experience? What is the basis of my interpretations? When you start wondering about such questions, you may want to turn to the first and the last sections (Parts I and IV) to address the question of psychological theory.

In case you are a theory person. In case you think the way I do that psychology is all about theory and constructs—the so-called empirical evidence, facts, and behaviors are all consequences of theory, since these are contingent upon sampling,

and sampling flows right out of theory implicit and/or explicit, then you can take a plunge into the first (Part I) and last (Part IV) sections, with no particular order—you can start with the last chapter if you want to. After you have digested these theory-laden sections, you will be able to read the middle sections (Parts II and III) as footnotes to the theoretical investigations.

It would be good to know in advance what to expect—what you will and not find in this book.

This is not a book on Chinese philosophy. I make no attempt to give a comprehensive introduction to Chinese philosophy. In order to map out the conceptual space of Chinese emotions, I focus on early, primarily Confucian and Daoist, texts during the formative period of the Chinese civilization.

Where is emotion? If you are looking for explicit treatment of blue ribbon emotions, such as happiness, anger, sadness, and so on, you will be disappointed. For reasons explained in Chap. 12, Chinese emotions are registered in an implicit code, like salt flavor in the soup, rather than explicitly represented like clumps of salt that spoil the soup. In comparison to the English term emotion, the Chinese counterpart *qing* covers a much broader spectrum, ranging from moods and sentiments to ever so subtle emotional nuances that color everything we see through the affective lens. Furthermore, the following chapters on emotion may contain chunks of discussions based on cognitive psychology, since the Chinese term *xin* 心, which constitutes the heart radical (忄) in the Chinese character of *qing* 情, refers to both heart and mind.

Lastly, you can expect certain peculiarities about books on Chinese culture.

The confusing Romanization system. Anyone who tells you that cultures can be a neat and tidy system is lying. There is no consensus among different Chinese populations, any more than among scholars, concerning the two Romanization systems of Chinese characters—*pinyin* versus Wade-Giles. In this book, the *pinyin* method will be followed, except in citations from scholarly works that employ Wade-Giles.

Chinese names. I will follow the Chinese convention, in which the family name goes first, in contrast to the Western custom of putting the family name last.

No clear demarcation of things. Things seem to be clear only on paper. For instance, it is possible to differentiate the three traditions of Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism, but it is near impossible to find a Chinese who is only one and not the other. When I was a student of Zen Buddhism under the late Master Nan Huai-Jin, I used to participate in parties he gave in honor of a visitor. Master Nan would ask us our preference: “Shall we be Daoist or Buddhist tonight?” Since the former drinks alcohol and the latter does not, we all opted to be Daoist for the occasion.

Now you are on your way. Hope you will have as much fun reading this book as I had writing it. I wish to thank Tony Marsella for talking me into it. Had I known that writing a book could be so much fun, I would have done it sooner.

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