

LIVING TOGETHER VS. GOING IT ALONE

Most Westerners, or at any rate most Americans, are confident that the following generalizations apply to pretty much everyone:

- Each individual has a set of characteristic, distinctive attributes. Moreover, people *want* to be distinctive—different from other individuals in important ways.
- People are largely in control of their own behavior; they feel better when they are in situations in which choice and personal preference determine outcomes.
- People are oriented toward personal goals of success and achievement; they find that relation-

ships and group memberships sometimes get in the way of attaining these goals.

- People strive to feel good about themselves; personal successes and assurances that they have positive qualities are important to their sense of well-being.
- People prefer equality in personal relations or, when relationships are hierarchical, they prefer a superior position.
- People believe the same rules should apply to everyone—individuals should not be singled out for special treatment because of their personal attributes or connections to important people. Justice should be blind.

There are indeed hundreds of millions of such people, but they are to be found primarily in Europe, especially northern Europe, and in the present and former nations of the British Commonwealth, including the United States. The social-psychological characteristics of most of the rest of the world's people, especially those of East Asia, tend to be different to one degree or another.

THE NON-WESTERN SELF

There is an Asian expression that reflects a cultural prejudice against individuality: "The peg that stands out is pounded down." In general, East Asians are supposed to be less concerned with personal goals or self-aggrandizement than are Westerners. Group goals and coordinated action

are more often the concerns. Maintaining harmonious social relations is likely to take precedence over achieving personal success. Success is often sought as a group goal rather than as a personal badge of merit. Individual distinctiveness is not particularly desirable. For Asians, feeling good about themselves is likely to be tied to the sense that they are in harmony with the wishes of the groups to which they belong and are meeting the group's expectations. Equality of treatment is not assumed nor is it necessarily regarded as desirable.

The rules that apply to relationships in East Asia are presumed to be local, particular, and well specified by roles rather than universal. An Asian friend told me the most remarkable thing about visiting American households is that everyone is always thanking everyone else: "Thank you for setting the table"; "Thank you for getting the car washed." In her country everyone has clear obligations in a given context and you don't thank people for carrying out their obligations. Choice is not a high priority for most of the world's people. (An East Asian friend once asked me why Americans found it necessary to have a choice among forty breakfast cereals in the supermarket.) And Asians do not necessarily feel their competence as a decision maker is on the line when they do have to make a choice.

Most Americans over a certain age well remember their primer, called *Dick and Jane*. Dick and Jane and their dog, Spot, were quite the active individualists. The first page of an early edition from the 1930s (the primer was widely used until the 1960s) depicts a little boy running across a

lawn. The first sentences are "See Dick run. See Dick play. See Dick run and play." This would seem the most natural sort of basic information to convey about kids—to the Western mentality. But the first page of the Chinese primer of the same era shows a little boy sitting on the shoulders of a bigger boy. "Big brother takes care of little brother. Big brother loves little brother. Little brother loves big brother." It is not individual action but relationships between people that seem important to convey in a child's first encounter with the printed word.

Indeed, the Western-style self is virtually a figment of the imagination to the East Asian. As philosopher Hu Shih writes, "In the Confucian human-centered philosophy man cannot exist alone; all action must be in the form of interaction between man and man." The person always exists within settings—in particular situations where there are particular people with whom one has relationships of a particular kind—and the notion that there can be attributes or actions that are not conditioned on social circumstances is foreign to the Asian mentality. Anthropologist Edward T. Hall introduced the notion of "low-context" vs. "high-context" societies to capture differences in self-understanding. To the Westerner, it makes sense to speak of a person as having attributes that are independent of circumstances or particular personal relations. This self—this bounded, impermeable free agent—can move from group to group and setting to setting without significant alteration. But for the Easterner (and for many other peoples to one degree or another), the person is connected, fluid, and conditional. As philosopher Donald Munro put it, East Asians understand themselves "in terms of their

relation to the whole, such as the family, society, Tao Principle, or Pure Consciousness." The person participates in a set of relationships that make it possible to act and purely independent behavior is usually not possible or really even desirable.

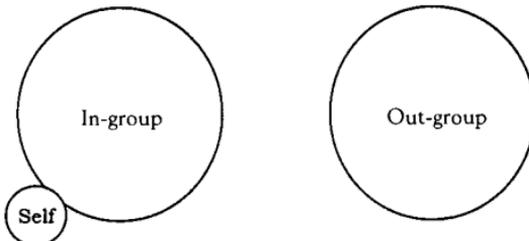
Since all action is in concert with others, or at the very least affects others, harmony in relationships becomes a chief goal of social life. I have presented a schematic illustration intended to capture the different types of sense of self in relation to in-group, or close circle of friends and family; the illustration also conveys relative distance between in-group and out-group, or people who are mere acquaintances at most. Easterners feel embedded in their in-groups and distant from their out-groups. They tend to feel they are very similar to in-group members and they are much more trusting of them than of out-group members. Westerners feel relatively detached from their in-groups and tend not to make as great distinctions between in-group and out-group.

Some linguistic facts illustrate the social-psychological gap between East and West. In Chinese there is no word for "individualism." The closest one can come is the word for "selfishness." The Chinese character *jen*—benevolence—means two men. In Japanese, the word "I"—meaning the trans-situational, unconditional, generalized self with all its attributes, goals, abilities, and preferences—is not often used in conversation. Instead, Japanese has many words for "I," depending on audience and context. When a Japanese woman gives an official speech, she customarily uses *Watashi*, which is the closest Japanese comes to the trans-situational "I." When a man refers to himself in rela-

Eastern View



Western View



Eastern and Western views of the relations among self, in-group, and out-group.

tion to his college chums he might say *Boku* or *Ore*. When a father talks to his child, he says *Otosan* (Dad). A young girl might refer to herself by her nickname when talking to a family member: "Tomo is going to school today." The Japanese often call themselves *Jibuti*, the etymology of which leads to a term meaning "my portion."

In Korean, the sentence "Could you come to dinner?" requires different words for "you," which is common in

many languages, but also for "dinner," depending on whether one was inviting a student or a professor. Such practices reflect not mere politeness or self-effacement, but rather the Eastern conviction that one is a different person when interacting with different people.

"Tell me about yourself" seems a straightforward enough question to ask of someone, but the kind of answer you get very much depends on what society you ask it in. North Americans will tell you about their personality traits ("friendly, hard-working"), role categories ("teacher," "I work for a company that makes microchips"), and activities ("I go camping a lot"). Americans don't condition their self-descriptions much on context. The Chinese, Japanese, and Korean self, on the other hand, very much depends on context ("I am serious at work"; "I am fun-loving with my friends"). A study asking Japanese and Americans to describe themselves either in particular contexts or without specifying a particular kind of situation showed that Japanese found it very difficult to describe themselves without specifying a particular kind of situation—at work, at home, with friends, etc. Americans, in contrast, tended to be stumped when the investigator specified a context—"I am what I am." When describing themselves, Asians make reference to social roles ("I am Joan's friend") to a much greater extent than Americans do. Another study found that twice as many Japanese as American self-descriptions referred to other people ("I cook dinner with my sister").

When North Americans are surveyed about their attributes and preferences, they characteristically overestimate

their distinctiveness. On question after question, North Americans report themselves to be more unique than they really are, whereas Asians are much less likely to make this error. Westerners also prefer uniqueness in the environment and in their possessions. Social psychologists Hee-jung Kim and Hazel Markus asked Koreans and Americans to choose which object in a pictured array of objects they preferred. Americans chose the rarest object, whereas Koreans chose the most common object. Asked to choose a pen as a gift, Americans chose the least common color offered and East Asians the most common.

It's revealing that the word for self-esteem in Japanese is *serufu esutiimu*. There is no indigenous term that captures the concept of feeling good about oneself. Westerners are more concerned with enhancing themselves in their own and others' eyes than are Easterners. Americans are much more likely to make spontaneous favorable comments about themselves than are Japanese. When self-appraisal measures are administered to Americans and Canadians, it turns out that, like the children of Lake Wobegon, they are pretty much all above average. Asians rate themselves much lower on most dimensions, not only endorsing fewer positive statements but being more likely to insist that they have negative qualities. It's not likely that the Asian ratings merely reflect a requirement for greater modesty than exists for North Americans. Asians are in fact under greater compunction to appear modest, but the difference in self-ratings exists even when participants think their answers are completely anonymous.

It isn't that Asians feel badly about their own attributes. Rather, there is no strong cultural obligation to feel

that they are special or unusually talented. The goal for the self in relation to society is not so much to establish superiority or uniqueness, but to achieve harmony within a network of supportive social relationships and to play one's part in achieving collective ends. These goals require a certain amount of self-criticism—the opposite of tooting one's own horn. If I am to fit in with the group, I must root out those aspects of myself that annoy others or make their tasks more difficult. In contrast to the Asian practice of teaching children to blend harmoniously with others, some American children go to schools in which each child gets to be a "VIP" for a day. (In my hometown a few years ago the school board actually debated whether the chief goal of the schools should be to impart knowledge or to inculcate self-esteem. I appreciated a cartoon that appeared at about the same time showing a door with the label "Esteem Room.")

Japanese schoolchildren are taught how to practice self-criticism both in order to improve their relations with others and to become more skilled in solving problems. This stance of perfectionism through self-criticism continues throughout life. Sushi chefs and math teachers are not regarded as coming into their own until they've been at their jobs for a decade. Throughout their careers, in fact, Japanese teachers are observed and helped by their peers to become better at their jobs. Contrast this with the American practice of putting teachers' college graduates into the classroom after a few months of training and then leaving them alone to succeed or not, to the good or ill fortune of a generation of students.

An experiment by Steven Heine and his colleagues cap-

tures the difference between the Western push to feel good about the self and the Asian drive for self-improvement. The experimenters asked Canadian and Japanese students to take a bogus "creativity" test and then gave the students "feedback" indicating that they had done very well or very badly. The experimenters then secretly observed how long the participants worked on a similar task. The Canadians worked longer on the task if they had succeeded; the Japanese worked longer if they failed. The Japanese weren't being masochistic. They simply saw an opportunity for self-improvement and took it. The study has intriguing implications for skill development in both the East and West. Westerners are likely to get very good at a few things they start out doing well to begin with. Easterners seem more likely to become Jacks and Jills of all trades.

INDEPENDENCE vs. INTERDEPENDENCE

The broad differentiation between the two types of societies we have been discussing has been a staple notion of social science since the nineteenth century. The distinction is similar to that made by nineteenth-century German social scientists, notably Ferdinand Tonnies, who made a useful distinction for comparing cultures, namely between a *Gemeinschaft* (a community based on a shared sense of identity) and a *Gesellschaft* (an institution intended to facilitate action to achieve instrumental goals). A *Gemeinschaft* is based on relationships that exist for their own sake and rest on a sense of unity and mutuality: for exam-

ple, relationships among family members, church congregations, or a network of friends. It is based on sympathy, frequent face-to-face interaction, shared experiences, and even shared property. A *Gesellschaft* is based on interactions that are mostly a means to an end. It frequently involves exchange of goods and labor and is often based on bargaining and contracts. Such social systems allow for personal gain and competitive advantage. Corporations and bureaucracies are examples of *Gesellschaften*.

No one thinks a given institution or society is exclusively of the *Gemeinschaft* or *Gesellschaft* sort. They are merely ideal types. But the distinction is of great analytic importance for much of modern social science, especially for cultural psychology. The *Gemeinschaft* is often termed a "collectivism social system" and the *Gesellschaft* is often labeled an "individualist" social system. The terms "interdependent" and "independent," proposed by Hazel Markus and Shinobu Kitayama, convey similar notions, and these are the ones I will normally use.

Training for independence or interdependence starts quite literally in the crib. Whereas it is common for American babies to sleep in a bed separate from their parents, or even in a separate room, this is rare for East Asian babies—and, for that matter, babies pretty much everywhere else. Instead, sleeping in the same bed is far more common. The differences are intensified in waking life. Adoring adults from several generations often surround the Chinese baby (even before the one-child policy began producing "little emperors"). The Japanese baby is almost always with its mother. The close association with mother is a condition

that some Japanese apparently would like to continue indefinitely. Investigators at the University of Michigan's Institute for Social Research recently conducted a study requiring a scale comparing the degree to which adult Japanese and American respondents want to be with their mothers. The task proved very difficult, because the Japanese investigators insisted that a reasonable endpoint on the scale would be "I want to be with my mother almost all the time." The Americans, of course, insisted that this would be uproariously funny to American respondents and would cause them to cease taking the interview seriously.

Independence for Western children is often encouraged in rather explicit ways. Western parents constantly require their children to do things on their own and ask them to make their own choices. "Would you like to go to bed now or would you like to have a snack first?" The Asian parent makes the decision for the child on the assumption that the parent knows best what is good for the child.

Parents who work to create an independent child shouldn't be surprised when the training works so well that their children balk at threats to their freedom of choice. Social psychologists Sheena Iyengar and Mark Lepper asked American, Chinese, and Japanese children aged seven to nine to solve anagrams, such as, "What word can be made from GREIT?" Some of the children were told to work on a particular category of anagrams; other children were given a choice about which anagrams to solve; and still others were told that the experimenter had spoken to the child's mom, who would like the child to work on a particular category. The researchers then measured the

number of anagrams solved and the time spent working on them. The American children showed the highest level of motivation—spending more time on the task and solving more anagrams—when they were allowed to choose the category. The American children showed the least motivation when it was Mom who chose the category, suggesting that they felt their autonomy had been encroached upon and they had therefore lost some of their intrinsic interest in the task. The Asian children showed the highest level of motivation when Mom chose the category.

An emphasis on relationships encourages a concern with the feelings of others. When American mothers play with their toddlers, they tend to ask questions about objects and supply information about them. But when Japanese mothers play with their toddlers, their questions are more likely to concern feelings. Japanese mothers are particularly likely to use feeling-related words when their children misbehave: "The farmer feels bad if you did not eat everything your mom cooked for you." "The toy is crying because you threw it." "The wall says 'ouch.'" Concentrating attention on objects, as American parents tend to do, helps to prepare children for a world in which they are expected to act independently. Focusing on feelings and social relations, as Asian parents tend to do, helps children to anticipate the reactions of other people with whom they will have to coordinate their behavior.

The consequences of this differential focus on the emotional states of others can be seen in adulthood. There is evidence that Asians are more accurately aware of the feelings and attitudes of others than are Westerners. For example, Jeffrey Sanchez-Burks and his colleagues showed

to Koreans and Americans evaluations that employers had made on rating scales. The Koreans were better able to infer from the ratings just what the employers felt about their employees than were the Americans, who tended to simply take the ratings at face value. This focus on others' emotions extends even to perceptions of the animal world. Taka Masuda and I showed underwater video scenes to Japanese and American students and asked them to report what they saw. The Japanese students reported "seeing" more feelings and motivations on the part of fish than did Americans; for example, "The red fish must be angry because its scales were hurt." Similarly, Kaiping Peng and Phoebe Ellsworth showed Chinese and American students animated pictures of fish moving in various patterns in relation to one another. For example, a group might appear to chase an individual fish or to scoot away when the individual fish approached. The investigators asked the students what both the individual fish and the groups of fish were feeling. The Chinese readily complied with the requests. The Americans had difficulty with both tasks and were literally baffled when asked to report what the group emotions might be.

The relative degree of sensitivity to others' emotions is reflected in tacit assumptions about the nature of communication. Westerners teach their children to communicate their ideas clearly and to adopt a "transmitter" orientation, that is, the speaker is responsible for uttering sentences that can be clearly understood by the hearer—and understood, in fact, more or less independently of the context. It's the speaker's fault if there is a miscommunication. Asians, in contrast, teach their children a "receiver" orien-

tation, meaning that it is the hearer's responsibility to understand what is being said. If a child's loud singing annoys an American parent, the parent would be likely just to tell the kid to pipe down. No ambiguity there. The Asian parent would be more likely to say, "How well you sing a song." At first the child might feel pleased, but it would likely dawn on the child that something else might have been meant and the child would try being quieter or not singing at all.

Westerners—and perhaps especially Americans—are apt to find Asians hard to read because Asians are likely to assume that their point has been made indirectly and with finesse. Meanwhile, the Westerner is in fact very much in the dark. Asians, in turn, are apt to find Westerners—perhaps especially Americans—direct to the point of condescension or even rudeness.

There are many ways of parsing the distinction between relatively independent and relatively interdependent societies, but in illustrating these it may be helpful to focus on four related but somewhat distinct dimensions:

- Insistence on freedom of individual action vs. a preference for collective action.
- Desire for individual distinctiveness vs. a preference for blending harmoniously with the group.
- A preference for egalitarianism and achieved status vs. acceptance of hierarchy and ascribed status.
- A belief that the rules governing proper behavior should be universal vs. a preference for particularistic approaches that take into account

the context and the nature of the relationships involved.

These dimensions are merely correlated with one another; and it is possible, for example, for a given society to be quite independent in terms of some dimensions and much less so in terms of others. Social scientists have attempted to measure each of these dimensions, and other associated ones, in a variety of ways, including value surveys, studies of archived material, and experiments.

Some of the most interesting survey material comes from the study of businesspeople from different cultures. Such surveys provide particularly convincing evidence because so much is held more or less constant, including relative wealth and educational levels. In the classic study of this sort, Geert Hofstede provided even more comparability than that: All of his participants, who came from dozens of different societies, were employees of IBM. He found dramatic cultural differences in values even among Big Blue employees.

Similar data have been collected by Charles Hampden-Turner and Alfons Trompenaars, who are professors at an international business school in Holland. Over a period of several years they gave dozens of questions to middle managers taking seminars they conduct throughout the world. The participants in their seminars—fifteen thousand all told—were from the U.S., Canada, Australia, Britain, the Netherlands, Sweden, Belgium, Germany, France, Italy, Singapore, and Japan (and a small number from Spain and Korea, as well). Hampden-Turner and Trompenaars presented their students with dilemmas in

which independent values were pitted against interdependent values.

To examine the value of individual distinction vs. harmonious relations with the group, Hampden-Turner and Trompenaars asked the managers to indicate which of the following types of job they preferred: (a) jobs in which personal initiatives are encouraged and individual initiatives are achieved; versus (b) jobs in which no one is singled out for personal honor, but in which everyone works together.

More than 90 percent of American, Canadian, Australian, British, Dutch, and Swedish respondents endorsed the first choice—the individual freedom alternative—vs. fewer than 50 percent of Japanese and Singaporeans. Preferences of the Germans, Italians, Belgians, and French were intermediate.

The U.S. is sometimes described as a place where, if you claim to amount to much, you should be able to show that you change your area code every five years or so. (This was before the phone company started changing people's area codes without waiting for them to move.) In some other countries, the relationship with the corporation where one is employed, and the connection with one's colleagues there, are more highly valued than in the U.S. and presumed to be more or less permanent. To assess this difference among cultures, Hampden-Turner and Trompenaars asked their participants to choose between the following expectations: If I apply for a job in a company, (a) I will almost certainly work there for the rest of my life; or (b) I am almost sure the relationship will have a limited duration.

More than 90 percent of Americans, Canadians, Australians, British, and Dutch thought a limited job duration was likely. This was true for only about 40 percent of Japanese (though it would doubtless be substantially higher today after "downsizing" has come even to Japan). The French, Germans, Italians, and Belgians were again intermediate, though closer to the other Europeans than to the Asians.

To examine the relative value placed on achieved vs. ascribed status, Hampden-Turner and Trompenaars asked their participants whether or not they shared the following view: Becoming successful and respected is a matter of hard work. It is important for a manager to be older than his subordinates. Older people should be more respected than younger people.

More than 60 percent of American, Canadian, Australian, Swedish, and British respondents rejected the idea of status being based in any way on age. About 60 percent of Japanese, Korean, and Singapore respondents accepted hierarchy based in part on age; French, Italians, Germans, and Belgians were again intermediate, though closer to the other Europeans than to the Asians.

Needless to say, there is great potential for conflict when people from cultures having different orientations must deal with one another. This is particularly true when people who value universal rules deal with people who think each particular situation should be examined on its merits and that different rules might be appropriate for different people. Westerners prefer to live by abstract principles and like to believe these principles are applicable to everyone. To set aside universal rules in order to accom-

moderate particular cases seems immoral to the Westerner. To insist on the same rules for every case can seem at best obtuse and rigid to the Easterner and at worst cruel. Many of Hampden-Turner and Trompenaars's questions reveal what a marked difference exists among cultures in their preference for universally applicable rules vs. special consideration of cases based on their distinctive aspects. One of their questions deals with how to handle the case of an employee whose work for a company though excellent for fifteen years, has been unsatisfactory for a year. If there is no reason to expect that performance will improve, should the employee be (a) dismissed on the grounds that job performance should remain the grounds for dismissal, regardless of the age of the person and his previous record; or (b) is it wrong to disregard the fifteen years the employee has been working for the company? One has to take into account the company's responsibility for his life.

More than 75 percent of Americans and Canadians felt the employee should be let go. About 20 percent of Koreans and Singaporeans agreed with that view. About 30 percent of Japanese, French, Italians, and Germans agreed and about 40 percent of British, Australians, Dutch, and Belgians agreed. (Atypically for this question, the British and the Australians were closer to the continental Europeans than to the North Americans.)

As these results show, Westerners' commitment to universally applied rules influences their understanding of the nature of agreements between individuals and between corporations. By extension, in the Western view, once a contract has been agreed to, it is binding—regardless of circumstances that might make the arrangement much less

attractive to one of the parties than it had been initially. But to people from interdependent, high-context cultures, changing circumstances dictate alterations of the agreement.

These very different outlooks regularly produce international misunderstandings. The Japanese-Australian "sugar contract" case in the mid-1970s provides a particularly dramatic example. Japanese sugar refiners contracted with Australian suppliers to provide them with sugar over a period of five years at the price of \$160 per ton. But shortly after the contract was signed, the value of sugar on the world market dropped dramatically. The Japanese thereupon asked for a renegotiation of the contract on the grounds that circumstances had changed radically. But to the Australians, the agreement was binding, regardless of circumstances, and they refused to consider any changes.

An important business implication of the differences that exist between independent and interdependent societies is that advertising needs to be modified for particular cultural audiences. Marketing experts Sang-pil Han and Sharon Shavitt analyzed American and Korean advertisements in popular news magazines and women's magazines. They found that American advertisements emphasize individual benefits and preferences ("Make your way through the crowd"; "Alive with pleasure"), whereas Korean advertisements are more likely to emphasize collective ones ("We have a way of bringing people closer together"; "Ring out the news of business friendships that really work"). When Han and Shavitt performed experiments, showing people different kinds of advertisements, they found that the individualist advertisements

were more effective with Americans and the collectivist ones with Koreans.

Independence vs. interdependence is of course not an either/or matter. Every society—and every individual—is a blend of both. It turns out that it is remarkably easy to bring one or another orientation to the fore. Psychologists Wendi Gardner, Shira Gabriel, and Angela Lee "primed" American college students to think either independently or interdependently. They did this in two different ways. In one experiment, participants were asked to read a story about a general who had to choose a warrior to send to the king. In an "independent" version, the king had to choose the best individual for the job. In an "interdependent" version the general wanted to make a choice that would benefit his family. In another priming method, participants were asked to search for words in a paragraph describing a trip to a city. The words were either independent in nature (e.g., "I," "mine") or interdependent (e.g., "we," "ours").

After reading the story or searching for words in the paragraph, participants were asked to fill out a value survey that assessed the importance they placed on individualist values (such as freedom and living a varied life) and collectivist values (such as belongingness and respect for elders). They also read a story in which "Lisa" refused to give her friend "Amy" directions to an art store because she was engrossed in reading a book; they were then asked whether Lisa's behavior was inappropriately selfish. Students who had been exposed to an independence prime rated individualist values higher and collectivist values lower than did students exposed to an interdependence

prime. The independence-primed participants were also more forgiving of the book-engrossed Lisa. Gardner and her colleagues repeated their study adding Hong Kong students to their American sample and also added an unprimed control condition. American students rated individualist values higher than collectivist values—unless they had been exposed to an interdependence prime. Hong Kong students rated collectivist values higher than individualist values—unless they had been exposed to an independence prime.

Of course, Easterners are constantly being "primed" with interdependence cues and Westerners with independence cues. This raises the possibility that even if their upbringing had not made them inclined in one direction or another, the cues that surround them would make people living in interdependent societies behave in generally interdependent ways and those living in independent societies behave in generally independent ways. In fact this is a common report of people who live in the "other" culture for a while. My favorite example concerns a young Canadian psychologist who lived for several years in Japan. He then applied for jobs at North American universities. His adviser was horrified to discover that his letter began with apologies about his unworthiness for the jobs in question. Other evidence shows that self-esteem is highly malleable. Japanese who live in the West for a while show a notable increase in self-esteem, probably because the situations they encountered were in general more esteem-enhancing than those typical in Japan. The social psychological characteristics of people raised in very different cultures are far from completely immutable.

VARIANTS OF VIEWPOINT

The work of Hampden-Turner and Trompenaars makes clear that the West is no monolith concerning issues of independence vs. interdependence. There are also substantial regularities to the differences found in Western countries. In general, the Mediterranean countries plus Belgium and Germany are intermediate between the East Asian countries on the one hand and the countries most heavily influenced by Protestant, Anglo-Saxon culture on the other. There is more regularity even than that. Someone has said, "The Idea moves west," meaning that the values of individuality, freedom, rationality, and universalism became progressively more dominant and articulated as civilization moved westward from its origins in the Fertile Crescent. The Babylonians codified and universalized the law. The Israelites emphasized individual distinctiveness. The Greeks valued individuality even more and added a commitment to personal freedom, the spirit of debate, and formal logic. The Romans brought a gift for rational organization and something resembling the Chinese genius for technological achievement, and—after a trough lasting almost a millennium—their successors, the Italians, rediscovered these values and built on the accomplishments of the Greek and Roman eras. The Protestant Reformation, beginning in Germany and Switzerland and largely bypassing France and Belgium, added individual responsibility and a definition of work as a sacred activity. The Reformation also brought a weakened commitment to the family and other in-groups coupled with a greater willingness to trust out-groups and have dealings with their members.

These values were all intensified in the Calvinist subcultures of Britain, including the Puritans and Presbyterians, whose egalitarian ideology laid the groundwork for the government of the United States. (Thomas Jefferson was merely paraphrasing the Puritan sympathizer John Locke when he wrote, "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal . . . with certain inalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty . . .")

The Hampden-Turner and Trompenaars findings for social values, as well as those of Hofstede, track this East-West ideological journey almost exactly. The further to the West a given country lies, the greater, in general, that country's endorsement of independent values. Moreover, these differences among European cultures are reflected in their successor subcultures in the United States, a fact documented in immigrant cultural histories by scholars such as economist Thomas Sowell. I once knew a very distinguished and well-placed social scientist, a crusty Scottish-American Presbyterian steeped in Calvinist rectitude. He had a son who was also a social scientist and who had to struggle from time to time to sustain his career during the 1970s, when jobs were scarce in the U.S. My colleague would sometimes state proudly that, although it would have been easy for him to do so, he had never intervened to help his son's situation. The colleague's Anglo-Saxon Protestant friends would nod their approval of the justice of this stance in the face of the personal pain they knew the colleague had experienced. His Jewish and Catholic colleagues, with their more Continental values, would stare in shocked disbelief at his lack of family feeling. At a level slightly more scientific than this anecdote: We gener-

ally find that it is the white Protestants among the American participants in our studies who show the most "Western" patterns of behavior and that Catholics and minority group members, including African Americans and Hispanics, are shifted somewhat toward Eastern patterns.

There are also major differences among Eastern cultures in all sorts of important social behavior and values, some of which are related to independence versus interdependence.

I was in China in 1982 at the tail end of the Cultural Revolution. The country seemed extremely exotic—in both its traditional aspects and its Communist-imposed aspects. (This was well before a Starbucks was installed in the Forbidden City!) The first Western play to be performed in Beijing since the revolution was mounted while I was there. It was Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman*. The choice seemed very strange. I regarded the play as being not merely highly Western in character but distinctly American. Its central figure is a salesman, "a man way out there in the blue riding on a smile and a shoeshine." To my astonishment, the play was a tremendous success. But Arthur Miller, who had come to China to collaborate on production of the play, provided a satisfactory reason for its reception. "The play is about family," he said, "and the Chinese invented family." He might have added that the play is also about *face*, or the need to have the respect of the community, and the Chinese also invented face.

The Japanese have perhaps as much concern with face as do the Chinese, but probably less involvement with the

immediate family and more commitment to the corporation. There are other marked differences between the Japanese and Chinese. The sociologist Robert Bellah, the philosopher Hajime Nakamura, the psychologist Dora Dien, and the social philosopher Lin Yutang, among many others, have detailed some of these differences. Though social constraints are in general greater on both Chinese and Japanese than on Westerners, the constraints come primarily from authorities in the case of the Chinese and chiefly from peers in the case of the Japanese. Control in Chinese classrooms, for example, is achieved by the teacher, but by classmates in Japan. Dora Dien has written that the "Chinese emphasize particular dyadic [two-person] relationships while retaining their individuality, whereas the Japanese tend to submerge themselves in the group." Though both Chinese and Japanese are required to conform to move smoothly through their daily lives, the Chinese are said to chafe under the requirements and the Japanese actually to enjoy them. The Japanese are held to share with the Germans and the Dutch a need for order in all spheres of their lives; the Chinese share with Mediterraneans a more relaxed approach to life.

It is sometimes argued that one particular type of social relationship is unique to the Japanese. This is *amae*, **2L** concept discussed at length by the Japanese psychoanalyst Takeo Doi. *Amae* describes a relationship in which an inferior, a child or employee, for example, is allowed to engage in inappropriate behavior—to ask for an expensive toy or to request a promotion at a time not justified by company policy—as an expression of confidence that the relationship is sufficiently close that the superior will be

indulgent. *Amae* facilitates the relationship, enhancing trust between the two parties and cementing bonds, though these results come at some cost to the autonomy of the inferior.

The very real differences among Eastern cultures and among Western cultures, however, shouldn't blind us to the fact that the East and West are in general quite different from each other with respect to a great many centrally important values and social-psychological attributes.

AWASE AND ERABI

STYLES OF CONFLICT AND NEGOTIATION

Debate is almost as uncommon in modern Asia as in ancient China. In fact, the whole rhetoric of argumentation that is second nature to Westerners is largely absent in Asia. North Americans begin to express opinions and justify them as early as the show-and-tell sessions of nursery school ("This is my robot; he's fun to play with because . . ."). In contrast, there is not much argumentation or trafficking in opinions in Asian life. A Japanese friend has told me that the concept of a "lively discussion" does not exist in Japan—because of the risk to group harmony. It is this fact that likely undermined an attempt he once made to have an American-style dinner party in Japan, inviting only Japanese guests who expressed a fondness for the institution—from the martinis through the steak to the apple pie. The effort fell flat for want of opinions and people willing to defend them.

The absence of a tradition of debate has particularly dramatic implications for the conduct of political life. Very recently, South Korea installed its first democratic government. Prior to that, it had been illegal to discuss North Korea. Westerners find this hard to comprehend, inasmuch as South Korea has performed one of the world's most impressive economic miracles of the past 40 years and North Korea is a failed state in every respect. But, due to the absence of a tradition of debate, Koreans have no faith that correct ideas will win in the marketplace of ideas, and previous governments "protected" their citizens by preventing discussion of Communist ideas and North Korean practices.

The tradition of debate goes hand in hand with a certain style of rhetoric in the law and in science. The rhetoric of scientific papers consists of an overview of the ideas to be considered, a description of the relevant basic theories, a specific hypothesis, a statement of the methods and justification of them, a presentation of the evidence produced by the methods, an argument as to why the evidence supports the hypothesis, a refutation of possible counterarguments, a reference back to the basic theory, and a comment on the larger territory of which the article is a part. For Americans, this rhetoric is constructed bit by bit from nursery school through college. By the time they are graduate students, it is second nature. But for the most part, the rhetoric is new to the Asian student and learning it can be a slow and painful process. It is not uncommon for American science professors to be impressed by their hard-working, highly selected Asian students and then to be disappointed by their first major paper—not because

of their incomplete command of English, but because of their lack of mastery of the rhetoric common in the professor's field. In my experience, it is also not uncommon for professors to fail to recognize that it is the lack of the Western rhetoric style they are objecting to, rather than some deeper lack of comprehension of the enterprise they're engaged in.

The combative, rhetorical form is also absent from Asian law. In Asia the law does not consist, as it does in the West for the most part, of a contest between opponents. More typically, the disputants take their case to a middleman whose goal is not fairness but animosity reduction—by seeking a Middle Way through the claims of the opponents. There is no attempt to derive a resolution to a legal conflict from a universal principle. On the contrary, Asians are likely to consider justice in the abstract, by-the-book Western sense to be rigid and unfeeling.

Negotiation also has a different character in the high-context societies of the East than in the low-context societies of the West. Political scientist Mushakoji Kinhide characterizes the Western *erabi* (active, agentic) style as being grounded in the belief that "man can freely manipulate his environment for his own purposes. This view implies a behavioral sequence whereby a person sets his objective, develops a plan designed to reach that objective, and then acts to change the environment in accordance with that plan." To a person having such a style, there's not much point in concentrating on relationships. It's the results that count. Proposals and decisions tend to be of the either/or variety because the Westerner knows what he wants and has a clear idea what it is appropriate to give

and to take in order to have an acceptable deal. Negotiations should be short and to the point, so as not to waste time reaching the goal.

The Japanese *awase* (harmonious, fitting-in) style, "rejects the idea that man can manipulate the environment and assumes instead that he adjusts himself to it." Negotiations are not thought of as "ballistic," one-shot efforts never to be revisited, and relationships are presumed to be long-term. Either/or choices are avoided. There is a belief that "short-term wisdom may be long-term folly." A Japanese negotiator may yield more in negotiations for a first deal than a similarly placed Westerner might, expecting that this will lay the groundwork for future trust and cooperation. Issues are presumed to be complex, subjective, and intertwined, unlike the simplicity, objectivity, and "fragmentability" that the American with the *erabi* style assumes.

So there are very dramatic social-psychological differences between East Asians as a group and people of European culture as a group. East Asians live in an interdependent world in which the self is part of a larger whole; Westerners live in a world in which the self is a unitary free agent. Easterners value success and achievement in good part because they reflect well on the groups they belong to; Westerners value these things because they are badges of personal merit. Easterners value fitting in and engage in self-criticism to make sure that they do so; Westerners value individuality and strive to make themselves look good. Easterners are highly attuned to the feelings of others and strive for interpersonal harmony; Westerners are

more concerned with knowing themselves and are prepared to sacrifice harmony for fairness. Easterners are accepting of hierarchy and group control; Westerners are more likely to prefer equality and scope for personal action. Asians avoid controversy and debate; Westerners have faith in the rhetoric of argumentation in arenas from the law to politics to science.

None of these generalizations apply to all members of their respective groups, of course. Every society has individuals who more nearly resemble those of other, quite different societies than they do those of their own society; and every individual within a given society moves quite a bit between the independent and interdependent poles over the course of a lifetime—over the course of a day, in fact. But the variations between and within societies, as well as within individuals, should not blind us to the fact that there are very real differences, substantial on the average, between East Asians and people of European culture.

As nearly as we can tell, these social differences are much the same as the differences that characterized the ancient Chinese and Greeks. And if it was the social circumstances that produced the cognitive differences between ancient Chinese and Greeks, then we might expect to find cognitive differences between modern East Asians and Westerners that map onto the differences between the ancient Chinese and Greeks.

EYES IN BACK OF YOUR
HEAD" OR "KEEP YOUR
EYE ON THE BALL"?

If people really do see the world in terms dictated by their social existence, then we might expect modern East Asians to have the same sort of holistic worldviews as ancient Chinese thinkers did, and we might expect modern people of European culture to exhibit the same sorts of analytic approaches that were characteristic of ancient Greek thinkers. Moreover, the different social realities might produce very different patterns of literally *seeing* the world. People who live in a world in which external forces are the important ones could be expected to pay close attention to the environment. People who live in a world in which personal agency produces results might focus primarily on objects that they can manipulate to serve their own goals.

HOLISM vs. ANALYSIS

I was sitting on a plane bound from northern California recently when I heard the voice of a man—a European American—asking questions of his two-and-a-half-year-old son.

Dad: "What shape is the balloon?" No answer. "It's round, Jason."

Dad: "This is a pair of socks. Are they short or long?"

Little boy: "Short."

Dad: "That's right, short."

Dad: "This is a pair of pants. Are they . . . ?"

Little boy: "Short."

Dad: "No, Jason, they're long."

Though this exchange may seem to Westerners to be an unexceptional quiz, by Asian standards it is quite unusual. The father's questions consisted of directing his son's attention to objects and asking about their properties. Whereas this might seem to Westerners to be the most natural way to orient a child's attention, it's not to Easterners, and the reasons for this have profound implications for cultural differences in perception and cognition.

The ancient Chinese philosophers saw the world as consisting of continuous substances and the ancient Greek philosophers tended to see the world as being composed of discrete objects or separate atoms. A piece of wood to the Chinese would have been a seamless, uniform material; to the Greeks it would have been seen as composed of particles. A novel item, such as a seashell, might have been

seen as a substance by the Chinese and as an object by the Greeks. Remarkably, there is evidence that modern Asians also tend to see the world as consisting of continuous substances, whereas modern Westerners are more prone to see objects.

Cognitive psychologists Mutsumi Imae and Dedre Gentner showed objects composed of particular substances to Japanese and Americans of various ages from less than two to adulthood and described them in ways that were neutral with respect to whether each was an object or a substance. For example, they might show a pyramid made of cork and ask the participants to "look at this 'dax.' " Then they showed the participants two trays, one of which had something on it of the same shape as the object presented but which was made of a different substance (for example, a pyramid made of white plastic) and one of which had the same substance in a different shape (for example, pieces of cork). The investigators then asked their participants to point to the tray that had *their* "dax" on it.

Americans were much more likely to choose the same shape as the "dax" than were the Japanese, indicating that the Americans were coding what they saw as an object. The Japanese were more likely to choose the same material as the "dax," indicating that they were coding what they saw as a substance. The differences between Americans and Japanese were very large. On average, across the many trials with different displays, more than two thirds of four-year-old American children chose another object as the "dax," whereas fewer than a third of Japanese four-year-old children did. The differences were equally large

for adults. Even two-year-olds differed. American infants were somewhat more likely to choose the object than were the Japanese infants.

Taken at face value, the Imai and Gentner results indicate that Westerners and Asians literally see different worlds. Like ancient Greek philosophers, modern Westerners see a world of objects—discrete and unconnected *things*. Like ancient Chinese philosophers, modern Asians are inclined to see a world of substances—continuous masses of *matter*. The Westerner sees an abstract statue where the Asian sees a piece of marble; the Westerner sees a wall where the Asian sees concrete. There is much other evidence—of a historical, anecdotal, and systematic scientific nature—indicating that Westerners have an analytic view focusing on salient objects and their attributes, whereas Easterners have a holistic view focusing on continuities in substances and relationships in the environment.

In the turn-of-the-century midwestern neighborhood where I live in Ann Arbor, Michigan, many of the homes are attractive workers' cottages with white clapboard siding and gabled roofs. The homes were shipped by the Sears Roebuck Company and unloaded at the railroad station before being brought up the hill by horse carts to be put together like a puzzle from numbered pieces. Not too long after, Henry Ford, whose motor car company was and is located about forty miles from my town, invented the assembly line. Auto part "atoms" were put together by workers performing a repetitive, identical set of actions over and over again at a fixed station in the line. Iron ore came in one end of the River Rouge plant in Dearborn, Michigan, and, after being smelted and manufactured into

simple parts and put together by workers performing simple operations, came out as a Model A Ford on the other.

Beginning in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, the West, and especially America, began to atomize, that is to say, *modularize* the worlds of manufacture and commerce. The production of everything from muskets to furniture was broken down into the most standardized parts possible and the simplest replicable actions. Each implement, each component, each action of the worker was analyzed and made maximally efficient. Objects that had taken craftsmen months to create could now be produced in a matter of hours. Time itself became a modular entity: three minutes for bolting on the carburetor, two and a half for installing spark plugs.

Starting around the late nineteenth century, retail stores became modular "chains." It was possible to go into a Sears and, a half century or so later, a McDonald's, anywhere in the country—and eventually the world—and see the same rows of merchandise, or the same booths and burgers, in any of them. (One of my favorite *New Yorker* cartoons depicts two older American ladies asking a hotel doorman, "Is this the Geneva Sheraton or the Brussels Sheraton?")

The atomistic attitude of Westerners extends to their understanding of the nature of social institutions. In their survey of the values of middle managers, Hampden-Turner and Trompenaars asked whether their respondents thought of a company as a system to organize tasks or as an organism coordinating people working together:

- (a) A company is a system designed to perform functions and tasks in an efficient way. People

are hired to fulfill these functions with the help of machines and other equipment. They are paid for the tasks they perform,

- (b) A company is a group of people working together. The people have social relations with other people and with the organization. The functioning is dependent on these relations.

About 75 percent of Americans chose the first definition, more than 50 percent of Canadians, Australians, British, Dutch, and Swedes chose that definition, and about a third of Japanese and Singaporeans chose it. Germans, French, and Italians as a group were intermediate between the Asians and the people of British and northern European culture. Thus for the Westerners, especially the Americans and the other people of primarily northern European culture, a company is an atomistic, modular place where people perform their distinctive functions. For the Easterners, and to a lesser extent the eastern and southern Europeans, a company is an organism where the social relations are an integral part of what holds things together.

The holism of the ancient Chinese extended to a sense of the unity of human existence with natural and even supernatural occurrences. What happened on earth resonated with events in nature and in heaven. The same is true of East Asians today. Both Taoism, still influential in China and elsewhere in East Asia, and Shintoism, still important in Japan, retain strong elements of animism: animals, plants, natural objects, and even human-made artifacts have spirits. Advertisements that emphasize

nature have far more success in Asia than in the West. The Nissan corporation discovered this fact, to its chagrin, when it opened its advertising campaign for the Infiniti luxury car in the U.S. not with pictures of its automobile but with scenes of nature—often several expensive pages of nature scenes in a row—with just the name of the car at the end of the sequence. The campaign was a noted flop. ("Although," quipped one American advertising industry wag, "sales of rocks and trees are way up.")

Just as the social attitudes and values of continental Europe are intermediate between East Asian and Anglo-American ones, the intellectual history of the Continent is more holistic than that of America and the Commonwealth. The big-picture ideas are much rarer in Anglo-America than on the Continent. During the many decades that Anglo-American philosophers concerned themselves with atomistic, so-called ordinary language analysis, European philosophers were inventing phenomenology, existentialism, structuralism, poststructuralism, and postmodernism. The largest systems of political, economic, and social thought arise primarily from the Continent. Marxism is a German product; sociology was invented by the Frenchman Auguste Comte and raised to its highest level of achievement by the German Max Weber. In psychology, it is also the continentals who dominate the big-picture theories: the Austrian Freud and the Swiss Piaget are perhaps the most influential psychologists of the twentieth century. In my own subfield of social psychology, two Germans, Kurt Lewin and Fritz Heider, have contributed by far the broadest and most comprehensive theories. And the school

of psychology that I find myself belatedly belonging to is the historical-cultural one established by the Russian psychologists Lev Vygotsky and Alexander Luria.

It's not just that Anglo-American scholars don't tend to create broad-ranging theories; they can seem positively allergic to them. B. F. Skinner, America's chief candidate for the psychology pantheon, was not merely a reductionist of the extreme atomic school, he actually believed theories of any sort were inappropriate—too general and too removed from the unshakable facts. Students in my graduate school cohort who toyed with large ideas were likely to be accused by their peers of engaging in "night-school metaphysics." Even Anglo-American social scientists who are sympathetic to theories don't tend to like the big ones. My sociology teacher in graduate school was Robert Merton, who praised "theories of the middle range" as being the right level to aim for. (To his dismay, this was once translated by an Italian scholar, perhaps tongue in cheek, as "theories of the average level.")

PERCEIVING THE WORLD

If East Asians must coordinate their behavior with others and adjust to situations, we would expect them to attend more closely to other people's attitudes and behaviors than do Westerners. In fact we have evidence that East Asians do pay more attention to the social world than do Westerners. Li-jun Ji, Norbert Schwarz, and I found evidence that Beijing University students have more knowledge about the attitudes and behaviors of their peers than

do University of Michigan students. A research team from our labs at Michigan headed by Trey Hedden and Denise Park, and by Qicheng Jing at the Chinese Institute of Psychology, examined how memory for words would be affected by the type of pictorial background they appeared on. Chinese and American college students and elderly people were asked to look at a large number of words. Some words were presented on a "social" background consisting of pictures of people, some on a background consisting of "nonsocial" objects such as flowers, and some on no background at all. After seeing the set of pictures, participants reported all the words they could recall. There was no difference between Chinese and Americans in recall of words initially presented on non-social backgrounds or on no background, but Chinese participants recalled more words that had been presented on social backgrounds than did American participants. Memory for the pictures of people apparently served as a *retrieval cue* for the words emblazoned on them, indicating that the Chinese had paid more attention to the social cues than the Americans.

There is good reason to believe that Westerners and Asians literally experience the world in very different ways. Westerners are the protagonists of their autobiographical novels; Asians are merely cast members in movies touching on their existences. Developmental psychologists Jessica Han, Michelle Leichtman, and Qi Wang asked four- and six-year-old American and Chinese children to report on daily events, such as the things they did at bedtime the night before or how they spent their last birthday. They found three remarkable things. First,

although all children made more references to themselves than to others, the proportion of self-references was more than three times higher for American children than for Chinese children. Second, the Chinese children provided many small details about events and described them in a brief, matter-of-fact fashion. American children talked in a more leisurely way about many fewer events that were of personal interest to them. Third, American children made twice as many references to their own internal states, such as preferences and emotions, as did the Chinese children. In short, for American kids: "Well, enough about you; let's talk about me."

That Asians have a more holistic view of events, taking into perspective the orientation of other people, is also indicated by a study by social psychologists Dov Cohen and Alex Gunz. They asked North American students (mostly Canadian) and Asian students (a potpourri of students from Hong Kong, China, Taiwan, Korea, and various South and Southeast Asian countries) to recall specific instances of ten different situations in which they were the center of attention: for example, "being embarrassed." North Americans were more likely than Asians to reproduce the scene from their original point of view, looking outward. Asians were more likely to imagine the scene as an observer might, describing it from a third-person perspective.

It should be noted that for the studies described in this section, and for all studies conducted by our research teams in which some participants were tested in English and some in another language, we used the method of "back-translation" to ensure comparability. Materials were

composed in language A and translated into language B. A native speaker of language B then translated the materials back into language A. If the native speaker of language A judged that the original and the back-translated version were identical in meaning, the materials were used as constructed. If not, the procedure was repeated.

My new Japanese student, Taka Masuda, was six feet two inches tall and weighed 220 pounds. He was a football player (yes, football—it's the third most popular sport in Japan). Needless to say, he was excited about going to his first Big Ten football game shortly after arriving at Michigan in the fall. He was in fact thrilled by the game, but he was appalled by the behavior of his fellow students. They kept standing up and blocking his view. In Japan, he told me, everyone learns from an early age to "watch your back." Nothing to do with paranoia—on the contrary, the point is to make sure that what you do doesn't impinge on the pleasure or convenience of others. The American students' indifference to the people behind him seemed unfathomably rude to him.

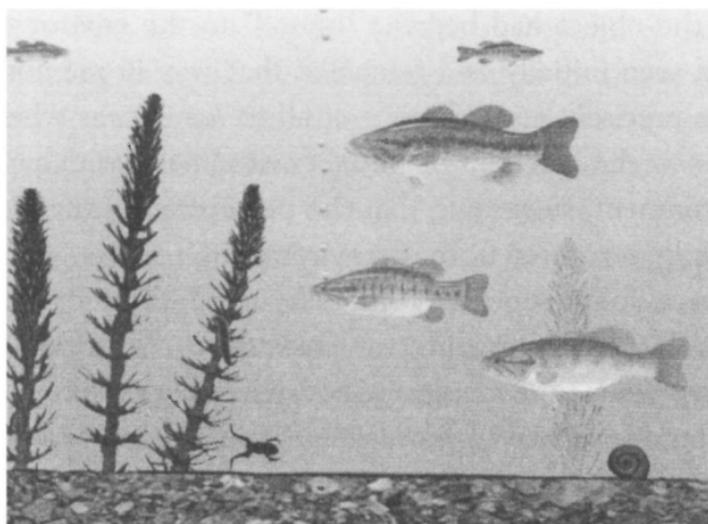
The behavior of American football fans motivated Masuda to test the hypothesis that Asians view the world through a wide-angle lens, whereas Westerners have tunnel vision. He achieved this by using a deceptively simple procedure. He showed eight color animated underwater vignettes, like the one reproduced in black-and-white at the top of the illustration on page 91, to students at Kyoto University and the University of Michigan. The scenes were all characterized by having one or more "focal" fish, which were larger, brighter, and faster-moving than any-

thing else in the picture. Each scene also contained less rapidly moving animals, as well as plants, rocks, bubbles, etc. The scenes lasted about twenty seconds and were shown twice. After the second showing, participants were asked to say what they had seen. Their answers were coded as to what they referred to: focal fish, other active objects, background and inert objects, etc.

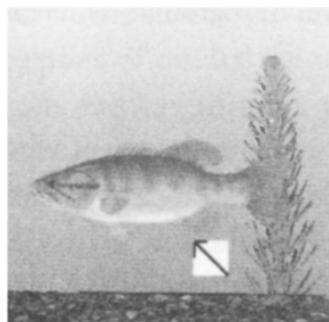
Americans and Japanese made about an equal number of references to the focal fish, but the Japanese made more than 60 percent more references to background elements, including the water, rocks, bubbles, and inert plants and animals. In addition, whereas Japanese and American participants made about equal numbers of references to movement involving active animals, the Japanese participants made almost twice as many references to relationships involving inert, background objects. Perhaps most tellingly, the very first sentence from the Japanese participants was likely to be one referring to the environment ("It looked like a pond"), whereas the first sentence from Americans was three times as likely to be one referring to the focal fish ("There was a big fish, maybe a trout, moving off to the left").

After participants had reported what they had seen in each vignette, they were shown still pictures of ninety-six objects, half of which they had seen before and half of which they hadn't. Their job was to say whether they had seen the objects before. Some of the objects that had actually been seen before were shown in their original environment and some were shown in a novel environment. Examples of both types are shown at the bottom of the illustration. The ability of the Japanese to recognize that

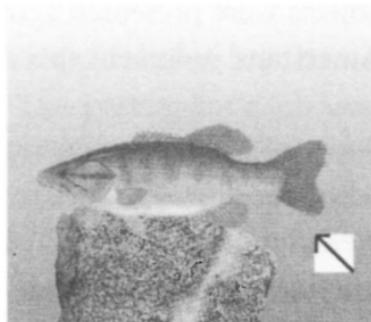
Recall Task



Recognition Task



Fish with Original
Background



Fish with Novel
Background

Examples of underwater scenes. *Top*: frame from film for recall task.
Bottom: still photos for recognition task.

they had seen an object before was substantially greater when the object was shown in the original environment than when it was shown in a new environment, suggesting that the object had become "bound" to the environment when seen initially and remained that way in memory. It made precisely no difference at all to Americans whether they saw the object in its initial environment or in a novel environment, suggesting that the perception of the object was fully separated from its environment.

In a follow-up study, Masuda and I showed various kinds of animals in different contexts to Americans and Japanese, this time measuring not only accuracy of recognition but also speed of processing. Again, the Japanese were more affected by the manipulation of background than were the Americans, making many more errors when the object was presented against a novel background than when it was presented against its original background. Moreover, the speed of Japanese judgments was impaired when the objects were presented against a novel background, whereas Americans' judgment speed was not affected.

Suppose you were approached by a man on the street who asked for directions. As you are talking to the person, two men come between you carrying a large sheet of plywood. The man who was talking to you grabs the end of the plywood and his confederate remains after the plywood procession is gone—as if he were the person you had been talking to originally. How likely is it, do you suppose, that you would fail to notice that you were talking to a changeling? Short of the two men being identical twins, you might guess that there is no chance of such an error.

In fact, it is easy to fool people with this trick. And in general people are remarkably impervious to the fact that some scene they are viewing has been altered in a substantial way. Film editors depend on this susceptibility: actors are standing in a slightly different relation to one another in a particular scene than they were at what is supposed to be a split second before; the cigarette is burned farther down earlier in the scene than later, and so on.

One implication of the notion that Easterners pay relatively more attention to the field than do Westerners is that we would expect the latter to be relatively blind to changes in objects in the background and to changes in relationships between objects. We might also expect that Westerners would be quicker to grasp alterations in salient foreground objects than Easterners would be. In order to examine this possibility, Masuda and I showed brief computer-generated color film clips to Japanese and American participants. The clips were almost, but not quite, identical. The illustration on page 94 shows black-and-white versions of one of the pairs. The scenes shown are frames from partway through the clips. The participant's job was to report in what way the clips differed. It can be seen that they differed in several respects. For example, the helicopter at the bottom has the black rotor to the left in one version and to the right in the other. The Concorde that is taking off has its landing gear down in one version and up in the other. Relationships between objects also differ. For example, the helicopter and the single-engine plane are closer together in one version than in the other. Finally, background details are different: The control tower has a different shape in one version than in the other.



Frame from Airport Site Movie: Version 1



Frame from Airport Site Movie: Version 2

Two versions of airport site movie.

As we anticipated, the Japanese participants noticed many more background differences between the two clips and many more relationship differences than Americans did. Americans were more likely to pick up changes in focal, foreground objects.

If Asians pay more attention to the environment than Westerners, we might expect that they would be more accurate in perceiving relationships between events. Exploring this question, Li-jun Ji, Kaiping Peng, and I presented Chinese and American participants with a split computer screen. On the left side of the screen we flashed one of two arbitrary figures: for example, a schematic medal or a schematic lightbulb. Immediately after, on the right side of the screen, we flashed one of another two arbitrary figures: for example, a pointing finger or a schematic coin. For some of the trials, there was no association whatever between what came up on the left and what came up on the right. For example, the coin was no more likely to come up on the right if it had been the medal that had come up on the left than if it had been the lightbulb on the left. For other trials, there was an association, sometimes a fairly strong one. We asked participants how strong they thought the association was on each set of trials and how confident they were that they were right.

Chinese participants reported stronger associations between what came up on the left and what came up on the right than did Americans, their confidence in their judgments was greater, and their confidence was better calibrated with the actual degree of association than was the case for Americans. Most strikingly, Americans showed the usual tendency found in covariation-detection studies

of being overly influenced in their judgments by the first pairings seen. For example, if the lightbulb was frequently paired with the medal on early trials, the Americans tended to report that that had been the rule in general—even when that was not the case. The Chinese participants were subject to no such error.

Ji, Peng, and I also examined whether Americans are more capable of separating an object from its context than Asians. (There should be *some* advantage to the analytic, tunnel-vision perceptual style!) We presented East Asians (mostly Chinese and Koreans) and Americans with the Rod and Frame Test for "field dependence" invented by Witkin and his colleagues. In this test, you present participants with a long box, at the end of which is a rod. The rod can be manipulated independently of the box, which serves to frame the rod. The participant's task is to judge when the rod is exactly vertical, but the position of the frame inevitably influences judgments about the rod to a degree. People are deemed "field dependent" to the extent that their judgments about the verticality of the rod are affected by the context, that is, the orientation of the frame. We anticipated that the Asians would be more field dependent and indeed they were. They found it more difficult than did the Americans to make judgments about the position of the rod without being biased by the orientation of the frame.

CONTROLLING THE WORLD

If life is simple and you only have to keep your eye on the ball in order to achieve something, life is controllable. If

life is complex and subject to changes of fortune without notice, it may not matter where the ball is; life is simply not easily controlled. Surveys show that Asians feel themselves to be in less control than their Western counterparts. And rather than attempting to control situations, they are likely to try to adjust to them. Social psychologists Beth Morling, Shinobu Kitayama, and Yuri Miyamoto asked Japanese and American students to tell them about incidents in their lives in which they had adjusted to some situation and incidents in which they had been in control of the situation. The incidents of adjustment were apparently more common for the Japanese, since the ones they remembered were on average more recent than was the case for Americans. Incidents of control were apparently more common for Americans than for Japanese because remembered control incidents were more recent for the Americans. Morling also asked her participants how they felt in each type of situation. The Americans, but not the Japanese, felt awkward, anxious, and incompetent when they had to adjust to a situation.

Other evidence also suggests that feeling in control is not as important for Asians as it is for Westerners. A survey of Asians, Asian Americans, and European Americans found that feeling in control of their lives was strongly associated with mental health for European Americans, but much less so for Asians and Asian Americans. In addition, feelings of well-being were enhanced more for Asians than for Americans by having other people around who might aid in providing control. And whereas Westerners seem to believe it's crucial for them to have direct, personal control, Asians seem to believe outcomes will be

better for them if they are simply in the same boat with others.

Organizational psychologist P. Christopher Earley asked Chinese and American managers to work on managerial tasks under several different conditions. The managers thought they were either working alone; working with other members of their own group, that is, people from the same region of their country having interests similar to theirs; or working with members of an out-group, that is, people from another region of their country with whom they would have little if anything in common. The situation had been rigged so that the managers were really working alone in all conditions. In the "in-group" and "out-group" conditions, participants thought their performances would be assessed only at the group level and not at the individual level. Chinese managers performed better when they thought they were working with in-group members than when they thought they were alone or working with out-group members. Americans worked best when they thought they were alone, and it made no difference whether they thought they were working with an in-group or with an out-group.

The adage that "there's safety in numbers" may be Western in origin, but social psychologist Susumu Yamaguchi and his colleagues have shown that Japanese college students hold more closely to this tenet than do American students. They told participants in their study that they were interested in finding out the effects of an "unpleasant experience," namely swallowing a bitter drink, on performance of a particular task. Participants would be assigned either to a control condition or to the unpleasant

experience condition. Just which condition would depend on the result of a lottery.

There were indeed two conditions in the experiment, but they were an "alone" condition and a "group" condition. Participants in the alone condition were told that they would draw four lottery tickets, each having a one-digit number on it. In the group condition, all participants believed they were part of a four-person group (whose members they never actually saw) and that each person would draw a lottery ticket. To participants in both conditions it was explained that the sum of the numbers on the four tickets would determine who would have to take the bitter drink. Yamaguchi and his colleagues asked participants how likely it was that they would be among the unlucky ones. (There was no objective reason for participants in either condition to think that the chances were any different in the alone condition than in the group condition.) The Japanese thought they were more likely to escape the unpleasant experience in the group condition. American men thought they were more likely to escape in the alone condition. American women behaved like Japanese, thinking escape was more likely if they were in a group.

The Yamaguchi study, as well as one described later in this section, is one of the rare studies finding that Western males and females differ from one another more than Eastern males and females do. In general, we either find gender differences for both Western and Eastern cultures—of about the same magnitude—or we find gender differences for neither culture. As would be expected, given our theory about the social origins of the cognitive

and perceptual differences, females of both cultures tend to be more holistic in their orientation than males, but we find this only about half the time, and the gender differences are always smaller than the cultural differences. We have been unable to characterize the difference between tasks for which we find gender differences and those for which we don't.

Thus, to the Asian, the world is a complex place, composed of continuous substances, understandable in terms of the whole rather than in terms of the parts, and subject more to collective than to personal control. To the Westerner, the world is a relatively simple place, composed of discrete objects that can be understood without undue attention to context, and highly subject to personal control. Very different worlds indeed.

The world of Westerners, however, is not as controllable as they think. Ellen Langer, a social psychologist, identified a foible she called the "illusion of control," which she defined as an expectation that personal success is greater than the objective probability would warrant. The illusion can sometimes be a helpful thing. In one study, for example, people have been found to perform better on routine tasks when they believe mistakenly that they can control a loud, distracting noise that occurred periodically during the tasks. On the other hand, there are also some demonstrations of the illusion that make us look pretty silly. In my favorite study, Langer approached people in an office building and asked whether they would like to buy a lottery ticket for a dollar. If the person said yes, she then either handed the person a lottery ticket or

fanned out a bunch of them and asked the person to choose one. Two weeks later, she approached all those who had bought a ticket, saying that lots of people wanted to buy a ticket, but there were none left. Would the person be willing to sell the ticket back, and if so, what would the price be? On average, the people she had handed the ticket to were willing to sell the ticket back for about two dollars, but the people who had been allowed to choose their tickets held out for almost nine!

Much of what we know implies that Asians would be less susceptible to such illusions of control than Westerners, as well as less concerned about issues of control altogether. Ji, Peng, and I tested these notions with new versions of our covariation detection test and the Rod and Frame Test.

In a twist on the covariation detection task, in which the goal was to determine how likely it was that one particular object would appear on the right side of a computer screen given that another particular object had appeared on the left, we gave the participants control over which object would be presented on the left of the computer screen and allowed them to choose how much time would elapse on each trial between presentation of the object on the left and presentation of the object on the right. Under these circumstances, the Americans saw as much covariation as the Chinese did and they were as confident as the Chinese. Moreover, the Americans were reasonably accurate about the degree of covariation they saw, whereas the Chinese were actually slightly less accurate when they had control than when they didn't.

In a variation of the Rod and Frame Test, we gave the

participants control of the rod, allowing them to rotate it themselves. Under these circumstances, Americans became more confident about the accuracy of their judgments, whereas East Asians did not become more confident. And American men, who were the most accurate of the groups to begin with, actually became more accurate still. Accuracy for East Asians and for American women was unaffected by being given control.

STABILITY OR CHANGE?

When we think about the future of the world, we always have in mind its being where it would be if it continued to move as we see it moving now. We do not realize that it moves not in a straight line . . . and that its direction changes constantly.

—PHILOSOPHER LUDWIG WITTGENSTEIN

[We tend] to postulate that tomorrow will be the same as today; likewise, when we are aware of movement, we assume that tomorrow will differ from today in the same way as today differs from yesterday. . . . The lifespan of man has become longer; it will become longer still. The number of work hours in the year has decreased; it will decrease yet further. . . . The sharper our awareness of a past movement, the stronger our conviction of its future continuation.

—POLITICAL PHILOSOPHER BERTRAND DE JOUVENAL

As it turns out, "our" is rather too strong a generalization. Ancient Greek philosophers were powerfully inclined to believe that things don't change much or, if they really are changing, future change will continue in the same direction, and at the same rate, as current change. And the same is true for ordinary modern Westerners. But like ancient Taoists and Confucian philosophers, ordinary modern Asians believe that things are constantly changing; and movement in a particular direction, far from indicating future changes in the same direction, may be a sign that events are about to reverse direction.

These differing assumptions about change can be derived from different understandings about the complexity of the world, which in turn are a consequence of attending to a small part of the environment versus a lot of it. If the world appears a simple place because we're not paying attention to much of it, then not much change is to be expected. If change is occurring, then there is no reason to assume that it will do anything but continue in the same direction. But if the world seems to be a highly complicated place because we're noticing so much, then stability will be the exception and change will be the rule. The greater the number of factors operating, the greater the likelihood that some variable will alter the rate of change or even reverse its direction. The specifically cyclical assumptions of the Tao may spring from these theories about complexity. Or it could be the other way around: The belief that the world is constantly reverting to prior states may prompt the assumption of complexity. To be dialectical about it, probably both trends are operative, and feed each other ... in a cycle!

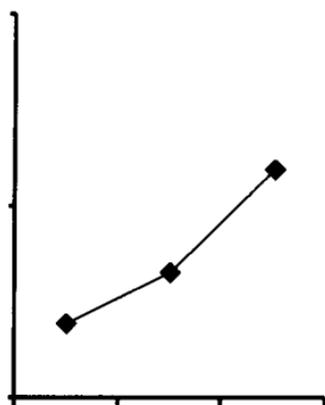
With Li-jun Ji, a student at Michigan at the time and Yanji Su, a colleague at Beijing University, I studied Chinese and American beliefs about change. In one study, we asked University of Michigan students and Beijing University students how likely they thought it was that some state of affairs would undergo a radical change. For example: "Lucia and Jeff are both seniors at the same university. They have been dating each other for two years. How likely is it that they will break up after graduation?"

There were four such items asking about the probability of change. In all four instances, the Chinese regarded change as more likely than did the Americans. On average, Chinese thought change was likely about 50 percent of the time and Americans thought change was likely about 30 percent of the time.

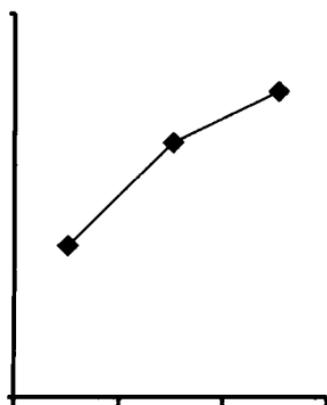
In a second study, Ji, Su, and I showed Beijing and Michigan participants twelve graphs in a booklet. Each graph showed an alleged trend charted over time, such as world economy growth rate or world cancer death rate. For example: The global economy growth rates (annual percentage change in real GDP) were 3.2 percent, 2.8 percent, and 2.0 percent for 1995, 1997, and 1999 respectively.

We asked the participants how likely they thought it was that the global economic growth rate would go up, go down, or remain the same for 2001.

The trends we presented were either growing or declining and the rate of change was either accelerating or decelerating. The illustration shows a positively accelerated growth curve and a negatively accelerated growth curve. We reasoned that the greater the increase in the



**Positively Accelerated
Growth Trend**



**Negatively Accelerated
Growth Trend**

Examples of positively and negatively accelerated trends.

rate of change, the more likely it was that the Chinese would anticipate slowing or even reversal of the trend; as more rapid change in a given direction should signal reversal in the near future. For Americans, however, increases in acceleration might be a particularly strong indicator of continued movement in a particular direction. So we expected differences between Chinese and Americans to be greater when assessing positively accelerated trends than when assessing negatively accelerated trends.

We found that, as expected, Americans made more predictions consistent with the trends we showed them than did Chinese. In fact, this was true for all twelve graphs we showed. If a particular trend went up, the Americans were more likely to predict that it would continue going up than were the Chinese. If the trend went

down, the Americans were more likely to predict decline would continue than were the Chinese. And these differences were, as anticipated, greater for the positively accelerated trends than for the negatively accelerated ones.

In a variant of this study, we showed the same set of twelve graphs with their three initial data points to a new group of participants and asked them to actually plot what they thought the next two data points might be. Americans were likely to continue the trend in the same direction, and at the same rate, as could be extrapolated from the previous points. The Chinese on average predicted a leveling off of change and were several times more likely to predict a reversal in direction of change than Americans were. Again, these trends were more marked when graphs were positively accelerated than when they were negatively accelerated.

Beliefs about linear versus cyclical movement apply to change over very great time spans. Thomas More's 1516 political essay speculated on the form of perfect government. More invented the term "Utopia" to name his society. The word is a pun on a Greek root meaning both "nowhere" and "good place." More's Utopia was scarcely the first and certainly not the last in a long line of Western creations, including Plato's Republic, Puritanism, Shaker communities, Mormonism, the American and French revolutions, communism, and fascism. With the chief exceptions of Utopias modeled on the biblical ideas of the Garden of Eden and the promise of the New Jerusalem, Western Utopias have generally had five salient characteristics—all of which make them vastly different from the conviction of Confucius and other early Chinese thinkers that the perfect world existed in the past and that we

could hope only to strive to move from our current low estate back to that time of perfection.

In Western Utopias:

- there is steady, more or less linear progress toward them;
- once attained, they become a permanent state;
- they are reached through human effort rather than Fate or divine intervention;
- they are usually egalitarian; and
- they are usually based on a few extreme assumptions about human nature.

These attributes are in many ways the very antithesis of the future as it might be conceived by the Eastern mind, which is inclined to find the Middle Way between extremes and assumes reversion rather than advance.

It is worth noting here that the ancient Hebrews were in these respects closer to the Chinese than to the Greeks. Their Utopia—the Garden of Eden—was in the past and they hoped at most for a restoration. Their notion of the nature of change was similar to that of the Chinese—they had a clear notion of the yin and yang of life. Hebrew prophets of the eighth century **B.C.** sold real estate when things were going well for the Jews—because they felt sure that things would soon take a turn for the worse—and bought when things were going badly! This attitude toward life survives in the modern Jewish community, as is conveyed by countless jokes. Son: "Mom, guess what—I won a Pontiac in the raffle!" Mom: "Oy, the taxes alone will put us in the poorhouse."

If the differences in assumptions about the direction of human progress persist, and if people make analogies to the direction of a single human life, we might find that Westerners believe that their own futures will move continuously in a single direction—from bad to good or good to bad. East Asians might expect their lives to undergo reversals of fortune—from good to bad to good, or from bad to good to bad. In order to examine these possibilities, Ji, Su, and I asked college students at Michigan and Beijing to predict the course of their own life happiness. We showed them eighteen different trends to choose from. Six were linear—straight up or down but with oscillations along the way. Twelve were nonlinear—either stopping or reversing the initial direction of life change. Almost half of the Americans chose one of the six linear life courses as the most probable, whereas fewer than a third of the Chinese choices were linear. (Choices were not due to either group having uniformly optimistic or pessimistic assumptions about life course. The two groups were equally likely to feel they would end up happy and equally likely to feel they would end up unhappy.)

Like their ancient predecessors, then, East Asians believe that the world is full of change and that what goes around comes around. Westerners (or at any rate, Americans—we have no data on other Westerners at this point) appear to believe that what goes up needn't come down.

In chapter 3, we saw that the social organization and practices of modern Asians resemble those of the ancient Chinese and the social organization and practices of modern Europeans resemble those of the ancient Greeks. In this chapter we've seen that modern Asians, like the

ancient Chinese, view the world in holistic terms: They see a great deal of the field, especially background events; they are skilled in observing relationships between events; they regard the world as complex and highly changeable and its components as interrelated; they see events as moving in cycles between extremes; and they feel that control over events requires coordination with others. Modern Westerners, like the ancient Greeks, see the world in analytic, atomistic terms; they see objects as discrete and separate from their environments; they see events as moving in linear fashion when they move at all; and they feel themselves to be personally in control of events even when they are not. Not only are worldviews different in a conceptual way, but also the world is literally *viewed* in different ways. Asians see the big picture and they see objects in relation to their environments—so much so that it can be difficult for them to visually separate objects from their environments. Westerners focus on objects while slighting the field and they literally see fewer objects and relationships in the environment than do Asians.

If some people view the world through a wide-angle lens and see objects in contexts, whereas others focus primarily on the object and its properties, then it seems likely that the two sorts of people will explain events quite differently. People having a wide-angle view might be inclined to see events as being caused by complex, interrelated contextual factors whereas people having a relatively narrow focus might be prone to explain events primarily in terms of properties of objects. In the next chapter, we'll see whether the different worldviews are indeed associated with different kinds of causal explanations for the same event.