

## The Role of Reason in Cultural Interpretation: Some Talmudic Distinctions for Indigenous and Cultural Psychology

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When I first encountered Professor Kuo-Shu Yang's writings about Chinese indigenous psychology they prompted me to think more deeply about the discipline of cultural psychology I was practicing. His writings impelled me to address three questions: (1) What are the differences, if any, between cultural psychology and indigenous psychology?; (2) What is the role of reason in cultural interpretation?; and (3) Do the indigenous psychologies of different peoples have psychological relevance and applications beyond their points of origin; or, in other words, might an indigenous psychology with a "Chinese soul" illuminate the "soul" (and "mentalities") of members of non-Chinese populations, and vice versa?

That particular vice versa – the idea of a mutual illumination of different "souls" across cultural traditions reminds me in this context of fond remembrance of a lovely and memorable conversation I had many years ago with Kuo-shu Yang during a visit to the Institute of Ethnology at the Academia Sinica in Taipei. I was the visiting guest lecturer of the day and my talk was followed by a Chinese banquet generously hosted by Professor Yang. He and I and my wife Candy Shweder were seated next to each other at a large round table with an inviting variety of Chinese dishes circulating around its center. Dr. Heidi Fung was seated at the table. She and I recently compared our memories of the conversation I am about to report.

At some point during the dinner the great one, the "father of Chinese indigenous psychology" turned to me and asked the following question: "Rick, could it be that you are Jewish?" I was not totally astonished by his query, which might have seemed out of the blue had I not been asked that question several times in India over the years. On one occasion a Hindu Brahman and specialist in Ayurvedic medicine had even suggested to me that Jews and Hindus are historical cousins descended from the same ancient holy man and then dazzled me with numerous linguistic examples suggesting that link between Jews and Hindus of this sort: "BRAHMAN" is a variation on "ABRAHAM" and "SARASWATI" and variation on "SARAH WATI".

"Yes, I am Jewish but why do you ask?" I responded to Professor Yang; and then he warmed my soul by saying "We Chinese people like Jewish people. We have so much in common: a love of family, a love of food and a love of the type of intellectualism we associate with the Confucian and Talmudic traditions. [His comment even led me to wonder more deeply about my own interest in the Hindu Brahmanical tradition].

So, let me try to live up to his expectations by undertaking a short Talmudic reflection (or at least one aimed at drawing some fine distinctions) about the role of "rationality" or "doing things for good

reasons" in cultural psychology. The philosopher Thomas Nagel once wrote that "an essential feature of reasoning is its generality" and for reasons to be reasons "they would have to justify anyone else (believing, valuing, or) doing the same in my place".

For someone like myself, who seeks to identify and make explicit the good reasons for doing something implicit, immanent within, or inside diverse cultural customs, a great deal turns on how one goes about substantively filling in the notion of generality associated with being "in my place". This approach to interpreting the meaning of a customary practice by spelling out the good reasons that might lead a reasonable and morally sensitive person to embrace the custom presupposes that not every position in the empirical world is a "place" in the sense that would support a claim of reason, although many positions are. That is one way to think about the difference between a "genuine" and a "spurious" culture, as the difference between a "place" that can support a claim of reason and a mere "position", which cannot.

In a moment I will suggest that under certain interpretations of "place", reason can be made one of the foundation stones for both indigenous psychology and cultural psychology as fields of disciplined inquiry. "Reason" can be made so because it is universally true that (for example) any person who does things for good reasons might want their marriage to be arranged, if you are a young male or female living in a rural Indian village. If one could in fact succeed at enumerating some good reasons - I think I could come up with a few - that would justify anyone in such as position wanting an arranged marriage, then one would have also succeeded at establishing the social position of young men and women in rural India as a "place" supportable by reason. It would no longer be merely a position to be understood solely in terms of the contingencies of power, the inertial force of habit, or the weight of tradition.

In other words, cultural psychology, at least as I have practiced it as an anthropologist, can be thought of as the attempt to show that various cultural customs can be rationally justified. The aim of this version of cultural psychology is to show how reason is compatible with genuine diversity in what people believe, value, feel, want and do. If one is to succeed in this type of scholarly pursuit one must start by carefully documenting the existence of diversity in some practice (e.g., love marriage versus arranged marriage, separate sleeping arrangement versus co-sleeping arrangement for children and adults, variations in the sexual division of labor, filial piety, and so forth) and end by being able to convince anyone who is willing to listen that what is done in that society at that time is done for reasons that no rational person must necessarily reject.

The questions I am addressing here – the role of reason and rationality in the interpretation of diverse cultural practices - I have addressed before, for example in a keynote address at the Asian Association of Social Psychology Meetings in Taipei on August 7, 1999. And much of what I say below directly recapitulates or updates my thoughts from back then, which were published in the Asian Journal of Social Psychology (Shweder 2000). I associate that special occasion and that talk (which was only one of six keynote addresses by eminent scholars addressing the connections between cross-cultural psychology, indigenous psychology and cultural psychology, with Kuo-Shu Yang, who, given the location of the meeting and his status at the time, was the foremost of all the speakers. I began my own talk by juxtaposing the apparently conflicting views of two academic grand masters, one a Chinese social

psychologist and admirer of Confucian insights (namely, Professor Kuo-Shu Yang), and the other an Jewish American cultural anthropologist who had once trained to be a Rabbi and always exemplified for me the critical and interpretive strength of Talmudic reasoning (namely, Professor Melford Spiro). Spiro was a virtuoso at drawing fine distinctions while seeking to construct a picture of the underlying psychic unity of human kind. Professor Kuo-Shu Yang, of course was the widely recognized leader of the “Indigenous Psychology” movement in Taiwan. Professor Melford Spiro was a widely recognized leader of the “Psychoanalytic Anthropology” movement in the United States. I focused on the creative tension in their perspectives – the encounter between parochialism and ecumenism, which lead me to think that while you can’t live be ecumenism alone (which is one reason I study the local), any defensible parochialism is really an example of what I like to call “universalism without the uniformity” (the identification of meaningful and interpretable differences always presupposes some base set of abstract absolutes or universals whose mark one must come to recognize in diverse local manifestations).

Professor Kuo-Shu Yang (1997, p. 65), who always loved to speak on behalf of the parochial or local, had written quite provocatively as follows:

“I finally found the reason why doing Westernized psychological research with Chinese subjects was no longer satisfying or rewarding to me. When an American psychologist, for example, was engaged in research, he or she could spontaneously let his or her American cultural and philosophical orientations and ways of thinking be freely and effectively reflected in choosing a research question, defining a concept, constructing a theory and designing a method. On the other hand, when a Chinese psychologist in Taiwan was conducting research, his or her strong training by overlearning the knowledge and methodology of American psychology tended to prevent his or her Chinese values, ideas, concepts and ways of thinking from being adequately reflected in the successive stages of the research process. Research of this kind resulted in an Americanized Chinese psychology without a Chinese “soul”. Research findings in such an imposed, “soulless psychology” would not do much good in explaining, predicting and understanding Chinese behavior, simply because the imported Westernized concepts, theories, methods and tools habitually adopted by Chinese psychologists could not do justice to the complicated, unique aspects and patterns of Chinese people’s psychological and behavioral characteristics.”

He goes on to say (1997, p. 69),

“I began to realize that North American psychology, the most developed in the world, was an endogenous kind of indigenous psychology (Enriquez, 1989) in the sense that its major concepts, theories, methods and findings have originally and spontaneously evolved partly from the European intellectual traditions but mainly from the cultural and social philosophical matrix of the American society.”

In contrast, Professor Spiro, who always loved to speak on behalf of the ecumenical or universal, often wrote things that added up in effect to a oppositional denial of Professor Yang’s assertions. His following remarks were not explicitly directed at Professor Yang but rather at the famous American cultural anthropologist Clifford Geertz, with special reference to Geertz’s attempt to spell out the

indigenous psychology or local cultural psychology of the Balinese people. Nevertheless, Professor Spiro might just as well have been responding to Professor Yang. Here is what Spiro said:

“I am not sure that if anthropology and psychology had arisen in Bali [read Taipei] that they would have been essentially different from what they are, given their Western origins. I am not referring to folk theories or ethno-self theories because, after all, the theories of the self in psychology and anthropology are not the Western folk theories of the self. I would think that one of the points about science is that it is about demystification – it takes these folk theories and it demystifies them. Although there might be some differences in the contours of Balinese [read Taiwanese] anthropology and psychology, I assume that they too would engage in the process of demystification. And I would like to believe that Balinese [read Taiwanese] and American psychologists and anthropologists would, qua anthropologists and psychologists, arrive at some kind of common view of the nature of human beings and the nature of culture, so that the differences between them would be no greater than the differences within ‘Western’ anthropology and psychology.” (quoted in Shweder and LeVine, 1984, p. 16).

Let’s call his comment “Spiro’s Challenge to Indigenous and Cultural Psychology.” It is a good challenge. Unfortunately, Professor Yang and Professor Spiro never met although I would have loved to observe a conversation between the two of them. Nevertheless, wouldn’t it be a useful exercise and a way to honor Professor Yang for every student of indigenous psychology or cultural psychology to try to point out what he or she thinks is right (if anything) and what he or she thinks is wrong (if anything) with Professor Spiro’s formulation?

What is cultural psychology?

In my view Indigenous psychology and cultural psychology are very similar to each other, although perhaps not identical. If I were to point to any potential difference I might tentatively suggest the two disciplines might have somewhat different estimations of the global relevance and significance of local knowledge. But let me be more specific about my conception of the defining characteristics of each approach. Allow me to start with “cultural psychology”, if for no other reason than the fact that I have been one of its many proselytizers (along with Michael Cole, Alan Fiske, Jonathan Haidt, Steve Heine, Jacob Hickman, Lene Jensen, Shinobu Kitayama, Robert LeVine, John Lucy, Hazel Markus, Joan Miller and many others). What is the object of cultural psychology? What is its proper aim? What is its proper subject matter? In three essays entitled “Cultural psychology: What is it?” (Shweder, 1990), “Cultural psychology: Who needs it?” (Shweder & Sullivan, 1993) and “The ‘mind’ of cultural psychology” (Shweder, 1996) (see also Shweder 1991, 1993a, 1993b, 1999; Shweder and Sullivan, 1990; Shweder, Goodnow, Hatano, LeVine, Markus and Miller, 1998) I described the discipline in all of the following ways, which I shall group into two clusters, namely statements about psychological diversity and statements about the level or unit of analysis for cultural psychology (that is to say, the nature of cultural psychology’s psychological facts). Here, as throughout this brief essay, I reintroduce and recapitulate points from Shweder (2000).

Concerning psychological diversity:

(1) Cultural psychology is a project designed to reassess the uniformitarian principle of psychic unity and aimed at a credible theory of psychological pluralism. (I should note in passing that any theory of psychological pluralism would lack credibility if it staunchly denied the existence of any and all absolutes. That is why a credible theory of psychological pluralism, one that honors our true, deep and significant differences cannot and does not entail the denial of all universals or of our common humanity. Indeed cultural psychology presupposes many universals (see Shweder et al., 1998). However, the search for and the privileging of things that are empirically uniform or universally binding across all peoples and cultures is a project that goes under some other name. It is not cultural psychology, although surely cultural psychology need not be the only game in town.

(2) Cultural psychology is the study of ethnic and cultural sources of diversity in emotional and somatic functioning, self-organization, moral evaluation, social cognition and human development.

(3) Cultural psychology is an investigation that constructs a model of a culture's distinctive psychology by thickly describing the specific sources of non-equivalence and non-comparability that arise when stimulus situations are transported from one interpretive community to another.

(4) Cultural psychology is psychological anthropology without the premise of psychic unity.

So, as you can see, a central claim of cultural psychology is that there may be multiple diverse psychologies, rather than a single uniform psychology. And a central problematic of the field is to make sense of that provocative claim and to do so, as one must, without denying all universals. "Universalism without the uniformity" is the slogan I use to characterize cultural psychology and to insulate the discipline from the careless (indeed reckless) suggestion that it is a form of radical relativism. (see Cassaniti and Menon, 2017).

Concerning the level or unit of analysis issue or the nature of psychological facts in cultural psychology:

(5) Any particular cultural psychology is made up out of socially inherited "goals, values and pictures of the world" that have a causal relationship to and help us understand and make sense of the choices, local action patterns and actual lives of intentional agents or rational meaning-makers who do things for reasons.

(6) Cultural psychologists can be viewed as naturalists who go searching for "mentalities," carefully describing their distribution and form. In this regard cultural psychology is the study of "mentalities" rather than the study of "mind."

Distinguishing "mentalities" from "mind"

The distinction between the study of "mentalities" (the proper unit of analysis for cultural psychology) and the study of "mind" (a non-cultural phenomenon) can be drawn in the following terms (Shweder, 1996), which I recapitulate here, in slight paraphrase.

I use the term "mind" to refer to the totality of actual and potential conceptual contents of human cognitive processes, where "cognitive" refers to any process that enables human beings to represent

“ideas” (conceptual content) and to attain knowledge by deriving or computing the implications of those “ideas”.

In contrast, I use the term “mentality” to refer to the actual cognitive functioning of a particular person or people. To describe a “mentality” (e.g., the “mentality” of Oriya Hindu Brahmins or Mandarin Chinese) is to get specific about the particular conceptual contents (the “ideas”) that have actually been cognized and activated by that person or people. To describe a “mentality” is also to get specific about the particular mental processes (the particular senses, feelings, memories, desires, inferences, imaginings, etc.) that have been recruited by this or that person or people to make their cognizing and activation of “ideas” (conceptual contents) possible. As noted above, in connection with the idea of psychological multiplicity, it is the assumption of cultural psychology that neither the conceptual content of mental processes nor the way mental processes are used to cognize conceptual content is necessarily or factually the same everywhere you go in the world.

It follows from this way of defining things that there is only one “mind” and it is a universal mind, but it is universal in a very special way; and it is not the subject matter of cultural psychology. There can be a Taiwanese or Balinese “mentality” but not a Taiwanese or Balinese “mind”. This is because by “mind” I mean all the conceptual content that any human being might ever cognize and activate or represent. Everything that has ever and could ever be thought is there in that universal “mind”. It is universal not in the sense that it is found here and there and everywhere one looks in the world but because it is broader and more encompassing than any one person or people’s actual mentality. In its universality it is not the kind of thing that can be located in space (e.g., in the East or the West) or in time (e.g., premodern versus modern). In contrast, a “mentality” is that cognized and activated subset of “mind” that has become the property of, and has been invested in, by some designated person or people. “Mentalities” do exist in time and space, and as a matter of empirical fact they are not uniform in their characteristics or in their spatial or temporal distributions.

Cultural psychology, thus, by way of this definition, is the study of “mentalities,” of which there are, and always have been, and always will be many on the face of the earth.

This linking of the idea of multiple psychologies with the idea of a “mentality” has a long history, traceable at least to the premise of the eighteenth-century German Romantic philosopher Johann Herder. Herder’s premise was that “to be a member of a group is to think and act in a certain way, in the light of particular goals, values and pictures of the world; and to think and act so is to belong to a group” (Berlin (1976) on Herder). I suspect this is what Professor Yang meant by the “Chinese soul.” Goals include wants, preferences and motives of various kinds. Values include emotional reactions as well as goods and ends that are thought to be preference-worthy or morally desirable. Pictures of the world include local definitions and categorizations, beliefs about means–ends connections and causal connections and metaphysical and existential premises of various kinds.

What is indigenous psychology?

This dual emphasis in cultural psychology on conceptual content (“goals, values and pictures of the world”) as a central unit for psychological analysis and on the multiplicity of mentalities in the world

strikes me as very similar to the aims of indigenous psychology. Compare, for example, what I have just said with Professor Kuo-shu Yang's list of ways to indigenize psychological research. Here are four of Professor Yang's virtues for the aspiring indigenous psychologist of China.

(1) "Give priority to the study of culturally unique psychological and behavioral phenomena or characteristics of the Chinese people."

(2) "Investigate both the specific content and the involved process of the phenomenon."

(3) Make it a rule to begin any research with a thorough immersion into the natural, concrete details of the phenomenon to be studied.

(4) Let research be based upon the Chinese intellectual tradition rather than the Western intellectual tradition.

With perhaps the exception of point #4 (I do think there are some forms and rules of logical and critical reasoning that qualify as absolutes) that sounds very much like what I call cultural psychology.

To avoid misunderstandings, let me be clear that I do not think that the search for multiple psychologies and the focus on what I have called mentalities as a central unit of psychological analysis is the only legitimate game in town. What I have said does not imply that there is no such thing as human nature or that the idea of human nature is worthless. If you want to search for psychological uniformities across all populations you may even find a few, or even many. It is just that this is not what cultural psychology or indigenous psychology are about. Cultural psychology does not look through cultural variations for the absolute or common psychic core. Its focus is on differences in the way members of different communities perceive, categorize, feel, want, choose, evaluate and communicate that can be traced to differences in salient community-based goals, values and pictures of the world.

More Talmudic Distinctions: The Rational and the Irrational

I would now like to deepen my characterization of cultural psychology by considering one of the oldest disputes in the history of anthropology. Namely disputes over the proper answer to the question "What is the best way to understand the thoughts and actions, beliefs and practices of 'others'?" In that question the word "others" refers to peoples whose thoughts and actions, beliefs and practices are not only different from one's own but also seem very strange (even outrageous, barbaric, criminal or disgusting, or at the very least inefficient).

I am raising this issue because in our cosmopolitan multicultural world majority and minority populations bump into each other with some friction and antagonism. Coming to terms with cultural migration has become a major public policy problem in many countries. Cultural psychologists are increasingly called upon not only to describe cultural differences but to judge them. Thus one cannot avoid engagement with the project of cultural critique. Family life practices (discipline, sex-role differentiation, modes of discipline, socially sanctioned "ordeals" for children, sleeping arrangements, coming of age ceremonies, male and female "circumcision", etc.) are at the heart of recent controversies about the limits of tolerance in modern multicultural societies. So, I am asking: How

should cultural psychologists and indigenous psychologists who study family life in diverse cultural settings react (for example) to a Somali mother living in Seattle or a Shia Muslim Dawoodi Bohra mother who lives in Detroit, Michigan who believes that sons and daughters should be treated equally and both circumcised? How should they react to a West African father living in England who inscribes tribal identity markings on the face of his 9-year-old son? To the Mexican women living in Houston, Texas, who finds it perfectly natural to leave her 3-year-old at home in the care of an older preadolescent sibling? To a South Asian father living in Chicago who habitually grabs his disobedient son by his ear and drags him out of a store, thereby prompting some upper-middle-class Anglo-American shopper to call the police and accuse him of “child abuse”?

Now in the history of anthropology (and in the social and psychological sciences more broadly) there have been two types of answers to the question “How are we to interpret the beliefs and actions of ‘others’”?

The first type of answer is that the best way to understand “others” and their alien beliefs and practices is by means of “rationalizations”, and that one of the aims of a social scientist is to produce them in an attempt to render those practices meaningful. By a “rationalization” I mean an explanation that justifies other people’s actions and beliefs by showing that this is the kind of thing that a person who is morally sensitive and does things for good reasons *might* do or believe.

The second type of answer is that the best way to make sense of the alien beliefs and practices of “others” is by constructing what might be called an “irrationalization.” By an “irrationalization” I mean an explanation that (in a sense) excuses other people’s actions and beliefs. It does this by showing that the action or belief is controlled by some causal factor (such as an Oedipal complex, or an authoritarian personality trait, or a neurological problem, or an unconscious wish, or patriarchal domination, or a fear-based, brainwashed, indoctrinated belief, or simply because of ignorance) that is not, in and of itself, a good reason or justification for action and belief, but only its cause.

I say only its cause because “rationalizations” (the “good reasons” for doing something) also provide a kind of causal explanation for action and belief but they are not only causal explanations.

“Rationalizations” are also *justifications* for actions and beliefs. Rational acts can be both justified and causally explained (by reference to its justification). Irrational acts can only be explained, not justified. An “irrationalization” (e.g., “she killed him because the glucose level in her bloodstream was very high) may mitigate responsibility for an action or serve as an excuse but it can never justify action, because it never engages the “other” as a moral and rational person. In my image of the discipline of cultural psychology its “subject” is an intentional agent, and the agenda for the exegesis of his or her psychology must begin with the assumption of rationality. Where does indigenous psychology come out on this key issue? I am not sure I really know.

The mark of rationality in actions, practices and persons

To clarify the assumption of “rationality” in cultural psychology I must proceed in a Talmudic spirit and draw some distinctions between (1) rational actions, (2) rational practices and (3) rational persons. This is one way to characterize my conception of cultural psychology, by linking cultural psychology to the

issue of “justification” and by defining it in part as the study of the rational psychology of a way of life or set of customary social practices.

In that sense, cultural psychology is a type of interpretive analysis of behavior, customs and social practices, which asks of some traditional way of doing things, “Is that the way someone might behave if they were acting rationally?” Or alternatively it asks, what are the goals, values and pictures of the world with reference to which this social practice might be judged to be rational?

To make sense of this type of interpretive undertaking some definitions and distinctions are in order.

An *action* is rational to the extent that there is a good reason that caused it to happen, which can then also serve as its justification. Hence a rational action can both be explained and justified within the terms of a single frame of reference (the reason that both caused it and justifies it).

A *practice* is rational to the extent that it is the kind of practice that a person whose actions are caused by good reasons might do. Notice that for a practice to be rational it is not necessary that those who actually engage in the practice do so for good reasons. For a practice to be rational all that is required is that it be the kind of practice that someone who does do things for good reasons might do. People can do the rational thing for the wrong reasons or for “bad” reasons but that does not make the practice less rational. It just means that rational practices can be caused or motivated by other than rational reasons and that the terms of reference for explaining why people engage in the practice may be different from the terms of reference for justifying the practice. For example, it is presumably a rational practice to wear a seat-belt when driving in a car, regardless of the reasons (e.g., fear of a traffic ticket or other forms of punishment) people have for doing it.

Finally, a *person* is rational to the extent they are capable of and are motivated to have good reasons for what they believe, value and do. In saying this I am following Nicholas Rescher (1988), and many other philosophers, in defining rationality as “the intelligent pursuit of appropriate ends” and in suggesting that rationality be based on at least three types of reasoning: (1) scientific reasoning about what is true; (2) instrumental or means– ends reasoning about what is economical or efficient; and (3) axiological or evaluative reasoning about what is desirable or good (which ends are worthy to pursue?; the “rationality of ends”).

The idea of culture as goals, values and pictures of the world made manifest in practice is an extension of this conception of rationality. And the imagined ideal-typical subject or agent of cultural analysis is that fully cultured person who does the right thing for the right reasons. Of course many, perhaps most, members of any actual and particular cultural community may do the right thing for other than rational reasons (their acts may not be rationally motivated or caused but the practices they support may be rational), which is why the study of social control and social motivation is a critical part of any analysis of the cultural psychology of a community.

As you can see, rationality has a lot to do with the relationship between subjective judgments and the objective world, between mental states and the world they represent. The idea of rationality is about the relationship between what you believe to be true (a subjective judgment or mental state) and what

is true (a feature of the objective world); the relationship between what you want or desire (a subjective judgment or mental state) and what is good or desirable (a feature of the objective world); and the relationship between means and ends. Is it true? Is it good? Is it effective? Those are the questions a rational person asks, answers and acts upon. As the sociologist Raymond Boudon has remarked, rational agents are motivated to do things and believe things because of a justified sense of reality (that's true, that's just, that's cost-effective) and not because they are compelled to do things by causal forces that are not reasons or justifications at all. I hit him because I was in an irritable mood is not a justification for the act, at least not in the subcultures I know best, although it might be used as an excuse.

So, what about irrationality?

So, is there any conceptual room left in this classification of the aspects of rationality for the idea of irrationality? I would certainly say "yes": That an irrational person is a person who has lost the capacity or motivation to examine or criticize his or her goals, values and pictures of the world or to get his or her actions under the influence and control of good reasons. Such a person may not be able to act on his or her preferences. They may not be able to recognize the difference between worthy and unworthy preferences. They may not be able to distinguish subjectivity from objectivity in some domain. They may not be able to or care to make use of information they know to be relevant to some issue at hand.

The "irrational" is thus a word for breakdowns of rationality of various sorts, which one could probably classify into types: for example, (1) breakdowns in voluntary control (e.g., compulsive/obsessive disorders); (2) breakdowns in subject/object relations (e.g., hallucinations and reality-testing disorders); (3) breakdowns in means-ends thinking (including, for example, "phobic" disorders); and (4) breakdowns in impulse management.

In any case, whatever the classification of types of irrational action and thoughts, the very idea of rationality (and irrationality) only applies to intentional agents or "persons." The idea does not apply to inherently non-rational entities, such as a micro-organism, or a mechanism, or any other thing categorized by some interpretive community as a mere "thing." Such entities lack the intellectual and conceptual capacity to do things for reasons. They are unable to promote some idea of the good or imagine the future or have a conception of the long-term consequences of their actions. Such entities are not even potentially able to criticize themselves or ruminate over their transgressions or care about being justified in what they do. Thus such entities do not have irrational (or rational) thoughts or engage in irrational (or rational) actions, except metaphorically. They are irrational (or rational) in their actions only in the sense that clouds are "generous" when they give rain to the earth, or that willows "weep," or that a clock "knows" the time of day. That is to say, not at all. It is best not to use the language of rationality or irrationality for explaining the actions of such things, for they are not intentional agents, although if they are properly designed or evolved their behavior may appear intelligent or rational (or even moral), and it may be possible to predict their behavior by pretending that they are rational agents, more or less like us.

I hope this little exercise in reflective thought about the nature of the two psychologies (indigenous and cultural) lives up to Professor Yang's expectations for scholars in the Chinese and Jewish intellectual traditions. He was "trained" in a graduate program in the United States but felt "educated" by his Chinese soul. In addition to food and family and Confucian thought his personal soul is an inspiration to us all. May it travel well but never be distant from our thoughts and affections.

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