

"This is another landmark book by Richard E. Nisbett. Nisbett shows conclusively that laboratory experiments limited to American college students or even individuals from the Western Hemisphere simply cannot provide an adequate understanding of how people, in general, think. The book shows that understanding of how individuals in Eastern cultures think is not just nice, but necessary, if we wish to solve the problems we confront in the world today. We ignore the lessons of this book at our peril."

—Robert J. Sternberg, IBM Professor of Psychology and Education; Director, Center for the Psychology of Abilities, Competencies, and Expertise (PACE Center), Yale University; President, American Psychological Association

"Cultural psychology has come of age and Richard Nisbett's book will surely become one of the canonical texts of this provocative discipline. *The Geography of Thought* challenges a fundamental premise of the Western Enlightenment—the idea that modes of thought are, ought to be, or will become the same wherever you go—east or west, north or south—in the world."

—Richard A. Shweder, anthropologist and
William Claude Reavis Professor of
Human Development at the University of Chicago

"The cultural differences in cognition, demonstrated in this groundbreaking work, are far more profound and wide-ranging than anybody in the field could have possibly imagined just a decade ago. The findings are surprising for universalists, remarkable for culturalists, and, regardless, they are most thought-provoking for all students of human cognition."

—Shinobu Kitayama, Faculty of Integrated
Human Studies, Kyoto University

THE GEOGRAPHY OF THOUGHT

How Asians and Westerners

Think Differently . . . and Why

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RICHARD E. NISBETT

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CHAPTER 3

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 will 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.

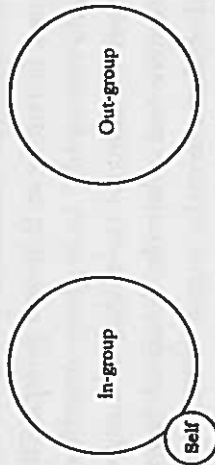
Since all action is in concert with others, or at the very least affects others, harmony in relationships becomes a chief goal of social life. I have presented a schematic illustration intended to capture the different types of sense of self in relation to in-group, or close circle of friends and family; 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 *jên*—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 *Jibun*, 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 attitudes 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 Heejung 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 esutimū*. 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 Tönnies, 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 "collectivist" 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 condemnation 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-

modate 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"; "Ringing 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

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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 independence 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*, a 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.