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**A brief comment on Prof. Hwang's paper "Linking science to culture:
Challenge to psychologists"**

Professor Hwang has written a new and challenging paper in the ongoing debate on the appropriate culture concept for the IPs (Hwang, 2011). My impression is that the paper more functions as a preview to Hwang's other work and it would have been easier to understand if Hwang had more thoroughly explained what he means by "lifeworlds" and "microworlds" on p. 1.

The paper is divided into (two?) different parts. The first part is: "I will reply to Allwood's (2011b) questions by discussing the nature of his culture concept first." (p.1). However, he never really does this. Instead he just repeatedly asserts that my culture concept "refer to culture in lifeworlds". More on this below.

Then Hwang writes on p. 1: "My major argument in this article is: both his culture concept and that of most IPists' refer to culture in lifeworlds. The real challenge faced by IPists is how to construct theories or scientific microworlds in linking science to culture.

Again, these assertions are not clearly argued later on, just restated. In general Hwang does not clearly elaborate the relation between scientific microworlds and culture and it would be good for the understanding of his approach if he did this. It could be that his example in the later part of the paper about the study of Individualistic and Collectivistic societies might relate to this point but, if this is the case, it would be more informative if the paper had clearly spelt out exactly how it does so.

Then Hwang writes (still on p. 1): "If we are able to construct scientific microworlds that can represent universal human mind on the one hand, as well as culture-specific mentalities on the other hand, we will be able to resolve most questions about culture raised by Prof. Allwood." He does not come back to this very explicitly so he never shows how this resolves "most questions about culture raised by Prof. Allwood." In general, it would be good if Hwang had explained better what he means by "construct scientific microworlds that can represent universal human mind on the one hand, as well as culture-specific mentalities on the other". Is there a methodology for doing this or is it mainly an intuitive enterprise? Without understanding what he means here it is difficult to evaluate the rest of his argument.

Finally, Hwang writes (p.1) and this might be intended as part 2 of the paper: “Finally, I will illustrate my arguments by using my Mandela model of self to discuss the difficulty of theoretical construction for linking science to culture in mainstream psychology (MP), IPs, and cross-cultural psychology respectively.” This appears to be the part that is of most interest to Hwang. It can be noted that he writes (p. 10): “In fact, I am not so concerned with culture concepts as does Allwood, my real concern is how to construct theories to link with the world’s various cultures, and not with cultures of an Individualistic nature only.”

Thus, the main message in Hwang’s paper seems to be that the important issue is linking science to culture not what a suitable concept of culture might be. For example: “The real challenge faced by IPists is how to construct theories or scientific microworlds in linking science to culture.” (p.1).

Hwang misrepresents my position when he claims that the culture concept that I advocate refers to culture in lifeworlds. For example he writes (p.7): “Allwood (2011a, b) criticized such culture concept shared by many IPists. But, it seems to me that such culture concept is exactly the same as that advocated by Allwood (2011a,b) himself, in the sense that both of them refer to culture in lifeworlds.” (this is reasserted in many places in the paper). The reason that I object is that I believe a broader culture concept is more appropriate and I described this concept in my 2011 papers in Social Epistemology (Allwood, 2011 a, b). The *lifeworld* is a phenomenological concept and in this tradition it is important *not* to make superfluous assumptions for example about ontological issues. However, I do make such assumptions as part of the culture concept I suggest. In the Social Epistemology papers 2011 I assumed: 1) that meaning and understanding should best be seen as naturalistic phenomena, 2) that culture can be seen as the sum of the individuals’ understanding in a society, 3) that meaning and understanding are the same or closely related and, 4) that meaning content always needs to be attached to some sort of substrate (e.g., a brain, printed text, etc.).

The argument Hwang makes about the nature of my culture concept is not really an argument but more of a statement of the conclusion. By means of this conclusion he then further concludes on p. 3 that I belong to the “qualitative camp”, presumably together with “most of the IPists“. The other camp (Hwang’s) is the camp where the culture of a society presumably is “theoretically construed”. I find it ironic to be placed in the “qualitative camp” since I have published a paper which argues that the distinction between the qualitative and quantitative research approach is a deeply problematic and vague distinction that preferably should be avoided (see: Allwood, C.M., 2011, The distinction between qualitative and quantitative research methods is problematic. *Quality & Quantity*. Advance online publication. doi: 10.1007/s11135-011-9455-8)

To illustrate: Hwang writes on p. 3: “The main difference between these two camps lies in their concerns focused on either culture in lifeworlds or theoretical construction based on culture in lifeworlds. Concentrating on the culture concept in lifeworlds tends to use methods of “qualitative research” to develop IP as a branch of historical-hermeneutic science

(Habermas, 1968). This approach may lead IPists to endless debates regarding the qualification of IPs as a branch of scientific psychology”.

A minor point: My comment in the quotation from me just before the heading on p. 3 of his paper refers to what Hwang wrote in his comment on my original paper (not to his work as a whole which is what he appears to assume in this comment). In addition, in relation to what is discussed here but on a more general level, it would seem that what Hwang writes in this context on p. 3, if it relates to his culture concept, does not hang together very well with other things he says about this concept.

As noted, Hwang also assumes that “most IPists refer to culture in lifeworlds”. I am not completely convinced that this is true (given the phenomenological associations relating to the concept “lifeworlds”), but maybe other people can comment on this.

At the bottom of p. 12 and broader on top p. 13 Hwang critiques Triandis but what he says on p. 14 top seems to go against this. However, I may have misunderstood this because the paper is not so easily understood.

At the bottom of p. 15 Hwang writes “Fiske is an anthropological psychologist. He argued that the four elementary forms of social behavior represent the universal mind in dealing with various kinds of interpersonal relationships which can be found in cultures all over the world. Viewed from this perspective, the Western ideal of individualism emphasizes and exaggerates only the relationships of market pricing or instrumental ties. It is biased in the sense that it neglects or ignores other kinds of interpersonal relationships.” (my underlining). I do not find this conclusion very convincing, in fact it seems rather far-fetched!

Finally, some observations on references and quotations. On p. 1, line 2, Hwang writes: “In response to Prof. Allwood’s (2011b) paper discussing the foundation of indigenous psychologies (IPs), I wrote an article entitled “Reification of Culture in Indigenous Psychologies: Merit or Mistake?” and submitted it to *Social Epistemology*.” Comment: It should be “Prof. Allwood’s (2011a)”.

In some places Hwang is not exact in his quotations. For example at the bottom of p. 4 Hwang quotes me somewhat erroneously. The start of the quote should be “... the indigenous psychologies [etc]” not “The indigenous [...]” since the quote starts after a few words in the sentence. This is no big matter because the meaning of what I wrote is not much changed, but it is better that quotes are correct.

Again, on p. 7: “For instance, Allwood (2011b, pp.141-142) cited Ho’s definition of IP: ‘An indigenous psychology is the study of human behavior and mental processes within a cultural context that relies on value concepts, belief systems, methodologies and other resources indigenous to the specific ethnic or cultural group under investigation (Ho, 1998, p.94).’” This quote is also wrong. The word “methodizes” should be “methodologies”.

References

- Allwood, C.M. (2011). On the foundation of the indigenous psychologies. *Social Epistemology*, 25(1), 3–14. DOI: 10.1080/02691728.2010.534564
- Allwood, C.M. (2011). On the use of the culture concept in the indigenous psychologies: Reply to Hwang and Liu. *Social Epistemology*, 25(2), 155–166. DOI: 10.1080/02691728.2011.552128
- Hwang, K.K. (2011). *Linking science to culture: Challenge to psychologists*. Paper to be presented at the APA conference 2011.