



Psychology of Coloured People: A Critical Note to the Dominance of Euro-American-Oriented Psychology over the Psychology of Non-Western Countries

Carl H. D. Steinmetz

Managing director of Expats & Immigrants B.V.
Amsterdam, the Netherlands

ABSTRACT

Whether psychology is universally or regionally determined is examined in this article. Implicitly, this question is about the general validity of statements of psychological research, theories and practices (such as testing, therapy, recruitment, etc.). If psychology is culturally and regionally rooted, statements based on psychological research, theory and practice are not universally valid. Moreover, once it is established that psychology is cultural and regional in nature, the underlying question arises: is there a psychology of coloured and white people? The findings of this article are based on a reasoned literature review. First of all, the origins of Western psychology are in broad terms mapped out. In the period between and after the first and second European and Asian World Wars, American and European psychologists made psychology big and important. Psychology had the wind in its sails because the American defence put an immense amount of money into test, social and clinical psychology. This was necessary to be able to select soldiers, maintain an army and take care of veterans. The Americans then used this Psychology to colonise the world (especially the non-Western world). With that, the original psychology from the non-Western world has gone into the 'dustbin'. Only now the non-Western world is rediscovering that their millennia-old psychology needs to be taken out of the 'dustbin'. That ancient non-Western psychology rooted in philosophy is mapped out in this article for China, India and Africa. The tentative conclusion is that psychology is regionally and culturally determined. We could call this psychology holistic psychology. After all, we humans represent and are humanity as a whole, our ancestors, born and unborn children, gods and spirits, mother earth (fauna and flora) and the cosmos. In this psychology there is also room for spirituality and consciousness. In fact, there is a psychology of and for people of colour anywhere in the world. It is not clear whether this also applies to the research methods.

Keywords: universal psychology, regional psychology, psychology of people of colour, western dominance, China, India, Africa, Ubuntu, and holism.

INTRODUCTION

The proposition that psychology is universal is open to question. The core of the discussion runs along many lines. The first line is the observation that psychological knowledge, insights, research and practices are regional in nature, thus rejecting the claim that psychology is universal. The opposite idea is that this psychology is 'colour-blind', i.e. it assumes that it applies to all people everywhere. A painful example is the psychiatric diagnostic manual DSM-5 that

Americans and Europeans have imposed on the world as universally valid. Opponents call this diagnostic manual a colonisation tool with which the United States and Europe want to enforce their view of unhealthiness on the rest of the world.

“Racial and linguistic homogeneity has serious consequences for the discipline. Among other concerns, as a result of colonial and apartheid psychology, the majority of South Africans cannot access therapy in their home language, which could be seen as a human rights issue, since the medium of therapy is language and Europe are trying to colonise the world, even now in the twenty-first century (Ratele, et al., 2018).”

Between regional and universal psychology, there is also a midway. Colour-blind/ universal psychology shows that it does not close its eyes to injustice in society. Fortunately, psychology itself (especially the American APA) expresses its concern about racism of one group of people against another and of one individual against another. The APA (2021) does so in an amendment: ‘APA Resolution on Harnessing Psychology to Combat Racism: Adopting a Uniform Definition and Understanding.’ While this may be regarded as a huge moral step forward, it should not be concluded that psychology has overnight rid itself of colour-blind scientific views and practices:

“WHEREAS, the field of psychology has historically contributed to the belief in human hierarchy through allowing—or not challenging—racial bias throughout the discipline and profession, such as in peer review, publishing, research motivated by racism, racial disparities in psychological research, and the valuation of certain types of research), as well as in Eurocentric models of clinical practice, including psychological assessment, while largely ignoring the contributions of, and adversities facing, BIPOC (APA, 2019; Roberts et al., 2020) (APA, 2021, p. 2);”

Examples of a midway are Racism-Related Stress (RRS): ‘Navigating Coping From Racism-Related Stress Throughout the Lifespan of Black Americans¹ (2020) and COVID-19 Anti-Asian Racism: A Tripartite Model of Collective Psychosocial Resilience (2021).

The idea behind the debate on the first claim (that psychology is universal) is that psychology cannot be seen separately from the context in which people live. This psychology is therefore also called cultural psychology.

“Cultural psychology is an interdisciplinary field that unites psychologists, anthropologists, linguists, and philosophers for a common pursuit: the study of how cultural meanings, practices, and institutions influence and reflect individual human psychologies. It is not a freestanding area within psychology, and most cultural psychologists would like to keep it that way. Rather than cordoning it off as its own subfield, cultural psychologists want to benefit from the breadth of expertise of its sundry practitioners, and to have a broader impact on all areas within psychology and across the social sciences (Snibbe, 2003).

Mainstream psychology is really cultural psychology, dealing with a very particular cultural context,” said social psychologist Virginia Kwan, Princeton University. That particular cultural

¹ In this article, Black American refers to individuals from the African diaspora (e.g., African American, continental African, Afro-Caribbean, Afro-Latinx) residing in a U.S. context.

context is the middle-class, college-educated, predominantly Protestant European-American milieu from which the vast majority of psychological researchers and research participants hail.”

A distressing observation is that psychological theories have been and are being developed primarily by old white men whose research population consists mainly of white students. This challenges the generalisability of psychological theories to other countries, continents and peoples on earth outside the Euro-American continents. Furthermore, there is no structural place in psychology for the consequences of (neo)colonisation and slavery when developing theories, doing research and conducting psychological reflection. In other words, psychology has no structural place for the psychological and physical consequences of the user mentality of mainly westerners of services, bodies and products of non-western peoples anywhere in the world. These consequences affect victims, perpetrators and witnesses (Steinmetz, 2021). This creates the risk of alienating psychology from the institutional abuse of people of colour and their bodies, biasing its research, theorising and treatment practice.

This article discusses the proposition that psychology is universal. This is done on the basis of the (scientific) social science literature. First, we will start with the Western grandfathers of psychology. This will show that there was hardly any focus other than the Western world in developing the main psychological theories. Secondly, attention will be paid to the 'known' psychological ancient old theories of non-Western psychology, in particular China, India and Africa. Between the lines, the criticism of "white" mainstream Western psychology by psychologists of colour is discussed.

HISTORY OF WESTERN PSYCHOLOGY

Psychology (Pickren et al. 2010) is primarily known as a European and later North-American (neo) colonial centric Western science where one or more scientists study one or more individuals or one or more groups of people. Many scholars, such as Albert Einstein and Ingrid Franck, left Germany in early 1933 after the appointment of Adolf Hitler as Reich Chancellor (the scientific exodus from Nazi Germany²).

“As the threat of Nazism spread throughout Europe, Jews were faced with a difficult decision, whether to leave their homeland or remain in the face of oppression. Many scientists made the decision to leave. In fact, between 1930 and 1941, twelve Nobel prize winning scientists came to the United States because of the threat of Nazi Germany. Seven of these twelve Nobelists were Jewish. These Jewish scientists included physicists Niels Bohr, Albert Einstein, James Franck, and Eugene Wigner, and biologists Otto Loewi, Otto Meyerhof, and Otto Stern. The other five non-Jewish Nobelists were the physicists Enrico Fermi, Wolfgang Pauli, and Viktor Hess, chemist Peter Debye, and biologist C.P. Henrik Dam. Of this group of immigrant Nobelists, Pauli, Stern, Dam, and Wigner would win their prizes after coming to the United States. Upon arriving in the United States, the majority of the scientists worked on the east coast, at universities such as Princeton, New York University, Cornell, Fordham, Carnegie Institute of Technology, and the University of Pennsylvania (Schlessinger, 1996). Bohr, who had been forced to flee Denmark, Pauli, and Dam spent the war years in the United States but left America and conducted their

² <https://physicstoday.scitation.org/doi/10.1063/PT.6.4.20180926a/full/>

research after the war. The nine other Nobelists remained and had a strong influence on the scientific community (Zuckerman, 1977) (Weiss, 1998).”

This was also true for psychologists like Kurt Lewin (1890-1947), founder of social psychology, and Wilhelm Reich (1897-1957), second generation psychoanalyst.

Many left for the United States of America. There, a male dominated money driven psychology was established that would dominate the world, as would American wars, economies, products, scientific magazines etc. After the Second World War, an unprecedented amount of money was made available for psychological research in the United States. This was due to the good and stable ties that had been established between psychologists and federal agencies during the Second World War. Many practising psychologists were then trained in clinical psychology to work with soldiers under combat stress. This period is also known as the golden age of 'Psychology' (Pickren et al, 2010, p. 211).

Opposite European psychoanalysis, Sigmund Freud (1856-1939), experimental psychology, Wilhelm Max Wundt (1820-1920), and Berlin's founder of gestalt psychology, Kurt Lewin (1890-1947), then a professor of child psychology in Iowa and director of the group dynamics research centre at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, stood American (radical) behaviourism, John Broadus Watson (1878-1958) and Burrhus Skinner (1904-1990), human factor psychology (“the design of increasingly complex weapon systems, tanks and aircraft brought with it a higher probability of human error, the costs of which were both deadly and expensive”), test psychology (recruitment, selection, training and retention of military personnel; Van Dyke Bingham; 1880-1952), women-centred community psychology by the NCWP (National Council of Women Psychologists) and relational-social psychology by Gordon Allport (1897-1967) who opposed war psychology.

“American psychology was exported twenty to thirty years after World War II to other countries that could not compete with American scientists. In Europe, this was primarily due to the devastation inflicted by war. In non-European countries, it was due to a complex array of factors having to do with postcolonialism, poverty, and local politics and social customs Pickren et al. (2010, p. 239).”

Psychiatry emerged in the United States in the middle of the Second World War. At first it was assessment, but as large numbers of veterans gradually returned from the European and Asian Second World War to North America, these psychiatric wards devoted attention to psychotherapeutic treatment of veterans, which was mainly done by psychologists.

“Most communication was one way, with psychologists in the United States sending information and receiving little. American trends, methods, and models increasingly became the norm. American journals became the most sought after sites of publication. It was (and is) difficult for a psychologist in a Third World country to publish in a First World journal. This created a huge imbalance in the communication of scientific results. As Danziger argues, if American psychologists are not aware of recent research published in India, they suffer no penalty. If, however, Indian psychologists do not keep abreast of recent developments in

American psychology, then it only confirms that Indian psychology has little to offer (Pickren et al. 2010, p. 239).”

Fortunately, American psychology is also critical of its own biases. An example is the American psychologists Kenneth (1914-2005) and Mamie (1917-1983), who conducted research into racial identity and civil rights as early as the 1930's (Pickren et al, 2010, p. 255).

“Numerous Black and White psychologists and intellectuals in the post-war period made the compelling argument that social institutions as they then existed, whether educational, housing, or vocational, were structured in ways that damaged members of minorities, in particular, children.”

The work of psychologists Kenneth and Mamie (Phipps) Clark led to the Supreme Court's decision (May 1954) that segregation by race in public schools was not constitutional. Furthermore, in New York and its urban environment, social psychologists (Pickren et al, 2010, p. 259) have experimented with black and white residents who do or do not live in segregated areas. In this study, Gordon Allport's contact hypothesis was tested. That hypothesis is: does prejudice decrease when the races live together in the same apartment building? In other words, 'known makes loved'. Prominent American social psychological researchers were Marie Jahoda (1907-2001), and Deutsch and staff members at the Research Centre of Human Relations (1955).

“Marie Jahoda, who had come to the United States after fleeing Nazi-occupied Vienna along with a colleague from Columbia, found that in those buildings where both races lived, tenants reported a higher number of friendships with members of the other race and Whites had more favourable attitudes toward integrated housing.”

“Their data suggested that the intergroup contact found in interracial housing was an effective means of reducing racial tension and prejudice (Wilner, Walkley, & Cook, 1955). Oddly, apparently in none of these studies were the attitudes of African Americans about intergroup contact assessed.”

Another example is the post-war awareness that the quadrant (white tester-coloured tester) versus (white tested-coloured tested) will produce totally different test results. The third example is the American psychology mentioned in the introduction, which has an eye for (institutional) injustice, human rights violations and race-related stress. In short, the psychologist is biased by definition because she/he is a human being who studies another human being or group of human beings according to scientific principles. It is unfortunate that North American psychology has excluded the rest of the world. For the other continents, including Europe, such as India, China, Africa and South America, there was only one psychology, that of the North Americans. (Pickren et al. 2010, p. 235).

Furthermore, the historians Pickren and Rutherford (2010) make a distinction between psychology with a P and p. With a P stands for big names and movements and p for everyday psychology and 'small' names (such as practice and application). Although Pickren et al. (2010) constantly use the term psychology with a p and P in their historical book, it is not a given that this word has always meant the same thing. First of all, in the West, psychology originated from

philosophy and was subsequently influenced by natural scientific methods (think of the English statistical research methods). Furthermore, what is meant by psychology is dependent on the (historical-human) context and the era (think of the two western world wars). This applies to theory formation, scientific models and applications thereof.

CHINESE PSYCHOLOGY

According to Pickren et al. (2010), in China, psychology has always been considered from a philosophical framework that emphasises human relationships and personality. Unfortunately, this is not elaborated upon by Pickren et al. (2010). According to these historians, modern psychology in China started under Japanese, German and American influence in the early 20th century (Jing et al. 2010, p. 408).

“After the founding of the People’s Republic of China in 1949, Chinese psychology tried to stage a reform by taking the psychology of the Soviet Union as its model”

Euphemistically, this is called the Chinese educational reformation taking place in the twentieth century. Notable Chinese psychologists in this educational reformation are:

“The Chinese educational reformer Cai Yuanpei (1868–1940) studied in Wilhelm Wundt’s (1832–1920) laboratory in Leipzig in 1908. He became president of Peking University in 1917, and during his presidency the first psychological laboratory was established in China by Chen Daqi (1886–1983), who had studied psychology in Japan. The founding of the laboratory was indicative of psychological activity, so by 1920 the first department of psychology was founded, at Nanjing University, and in 1921 enough psychologists were practicing to found the Chinese Psychological Society.”

The next generation of Chinese psychologists were trained in Europe and the United States, such as Zing-Yang Kuo (1898-1970). Chinese psychologists reflecting on their work at the time believed they were copying American methods and insights. Fortunately, in retrospect it was found that this was true for the scientific methodologies driven by numbers, methodology and statistics but not for the content. The content of contemporary Chinese psychological research must be sought some 2,000 years ago (Jing et al., 2001), when Chinese philosophers debated the good and evil of human nature and even took intermediate positions.

To learn more about Chinese psychology, we need to listen to Confucius (551-479 BCE) whose knowledge and expertise can be found in Confucian Analects. According to Jing et al. (2001), Confucius stated that the extended family was the most important social unit in China more than 2,000 years ago and was patriarchally managed at the time. The father is the supreme patriarch in the extended family. Confucius saw a similarity between the extended family and China as a whole, as a state. In short, China as a whole is an extended family. Hence the Confucian philosophy became the state philosophy. Both the philosophy of the state and the extended family were, according to Confucius, sustained by the quiet virtues of patience, pacifism, compromise, the golden mean, reverence for ancestors, the elders, and scholars. The result is a peaceful, stable and harmonious society also because man is seen as the hub of the universe.

Confucius focuses on human nature and its development. This view is supported by words from the Chinese language. These are the Chinese words Xing, Xi and Li. Xing stands for "human

nature," Xi for "education" and "habits" due to environmental influences, and Li for appropriateness, and sages acting as learning role models. According to Confucius, people are equal at birth. Differences between people arise through education, environment and effort. Confucius was not keen on inherited privileges, such as knowledge and skill, land, money and property (Jing et al. 2001, p. 410).

More than two and a half thousand years ago, a psychology³ that would now be called positive family and learning psychology emerged in ancient China. Although this cannot be traced by me as a non-Chinese person, counterparts of positive psychology also emerged during this period. First, the negative psychology to which Mendes (a student of Confucius) refers by saying that water, like human nature, flows downwards.

"In Mencius' view, everyone is born with the sentiments of pity, shame, respect, and justice, and from these develop benevolence, justice, propriety, and wisdom (Jing et al., 2010, p. 410)." The Chinese philosopher Xun Zi (298-238 BCE) went even further, saying that human nature is inherently negative.

"He claimed that human nature strives for the acquisition of wealth, for the satisfaction of the senses. If human nature is allowed to run its course, struggle and violence will result. He concluded "Human nature is evil, the goodness of human nature is false (Jing et al. 2010, p. 410)."

A central pathway enters Gao Zi (c. 300 BCE). He states that human nature is like water, without a preference for East or West.

"That is to say, whether one is good or evil is determined by the path taken in social life and not by innate inclinations (Jing et al. 2010, p. 410)."

Confucius was also responsible for the birth of developmental psychology, which is beautifully expressed in the following quote from *Analects* (Jing et al., p. 411).

"At fifteen, I had my mind bent on learning.
At thirty, I stood firm.
At forty, I had no doubts.
At fifty, I knew the decrees of Heaven.
At sixty, my ear was an obedient organ for the perception of truth.
At seventy, I could follow what my mind desired without transgressing what was right.
(Confucian *Analects*, 1992, Wei Zheng, p. 71)"

In other words, Chinese psychology is rooted in the philosophy of thousands of years ago. Undoubtedly, this is a different psychology than contemporary American & European psychology. In Chinese psychology, more than in the West, attention is paid to the totality of

³ The term for psychology in Chinese is Xin Li Xue, meaning the science of the heart, for then the heart was thought to be the organ of the mind (Jing et al. 2001, p. 411).

connections between the human being, her/his educators, and the context (including nature, earth and universe).

INDIAN PSYCHOLOGY

Psychology is almost always viewed from a Western perspective although today many of the famous psychologists and psychiatrists in the Western world are Indians. See the following quote (Pickren et al. 2010, p. 240).

“Psychology began to be institutionalized in India early in the 20th century. In 1905, Sir Ashutosh Mukherjee (1864–1924), vice chancellor of Calcutta University, included psychology as an independent subject in the postgraduate course. Sir Brajendra Nath Seal (1864–1938) drew up a syllabus for the subject based on courses of study in Europe and America. N. N. Sengupta went to Harvard University where he worked under Hugo Münsterberg (1863–1916), a student of Wundt. Upon his return, he set up the first psychological laboratory in 1915 at Calcutta University. The Indian Psychological Association was formed in 1924; the *Indian Journal of Psychology* began in 1926.”

We must not forget that India was a British colony until 1947. India was discovered by Vasco da Gama in 1498. It was at Calcutta. Vasco da Gama (a Portuguese) was looking for spices. After this, the Dutch and English established trading posts on the Indian coast. The first foreign trading post in India was established at Surat in 1613. Indian psychology -at least what remains of it- must be viewed from the context of the British oppressor. See also the following arrogant quote:

“Indian in blood and colour but English in tastes, in opinions, in morals and intellect”

Ancient Indian thought systems and clinical psychology

“Almost unknown to Western academic psychologists, there is a huge collection of ancient Indian thought systems that attempt to describe and explain human experience and behaviour. By thought systems we mean interpretations of the famous Vedas or reactions to these ancient Indian scriptures that encompass psychology, religion, and philosophy. We will refer to these hereafter simply as systems. Some applied parts of the respective writings are sometimes referred to in Western therapeutic approaches that deal with meditation. However, the theories contained in the Indian systems were not developed to describe (psychological) clinical or therapeutic processes—in fact, they did not include any clinical aspects at all (with the exception of Ayurveda) although they propose methods to improve life and gain wisdom (e.g., Feuerstein, 2001).”

“These systems are basically theories that cover in principle all the main aspects of psychology, such as cognition, behaviour, personality, emotion, and volition. One reason why these systems have never made it into Western textbooks might be that they are not purely psychological: They also contain elements of religion associated with Buddhist and Hindu practice (e.g., mentioning of personal gods) and of philosophy (Sedlmeier et al. 2016).”

By going back thousands of years in Indian history, the perception arises that Indian psychology consists of three currents (Rao et al. 2016). First is pure consciousness which has been central to Indian psychology since the Upanishads. Upanishads are Sanskrit texts or mantras that

unfold the non-dual reality of the individual and the world. They constitute the final part of the Vedas.

“The word Upanishad⁴ consists of two prefixes 'upa' and 'ni', and the word 'shad'. Upa means 'very near' and here denotes the self, ātmā. The self is the closest: there can be no distance other than the 'distance' of ignorance. Ni stands for 'firmly established knowledge'. Upa-ni therefore means: firmly established knowledge of the self. Shad has meanings in the sense of 'destroy' and 'attain'. Upa-ni, firmly established knowledge of the self, destroys ignorance, including the roots and effects of ignorance. What you attain through this knowledge is the unlimited self, brahman, from which you have been separated only by ignorance. In summary, the word Upanishad means: firmly established knowledge of the self along with its result, moksha.”

A second notable current in ancient Indian psychology is the techniques of meditation and yoga which is widely used by clinical psychologists. Meditation and Yoga come from the rich Buddhist spiritual tradition Vipassana.

“Vipassana⁵ is based on the scriptures of the Pali canon of Theravada Buddhism. The word vipassana (Pali) means clear insight, seeing things as they really are, and refers to a deep penetrating understanding of the nature of existence, as taught by Gautama Buddha in the doctrine of the three characteristics.”

“The Vipassana technique⁶ itself is actually very simple, all you do is observe yourself while sitting still. You are mindful with your attention to your feelings and thoughts and you do your best not to judge. So instead of "Ouch, how irritating that back pain is. Is it almost time to take a break already?"

A third Indian trend is positive psychology, which focuses on happiness, fulfilment, and bliss. This positive psychology is at odds with negative psychology and psychopathology. A western definition of positive psychology is: “Positive psychology⁷ aims **to help people identify happiness from moment to moment**. It emphasizes this over only appreciating happy moments when looking back on them. People seeking therapy who desire to experience a greater sense of joy and liberation from their current circumstances may find this approach helpful.

India has two kinds of psychology, that of its former occupier, the British, and that of its millennia-old history. Since this article is about regionally rooted or universal psychology, Indian psychology of thousands of years ago, as handed down to us through the Vedas and Upanishads, will be considered here.

“Paradoxical as it may seem, Indian psychology is not what most psychologists in India teach or practice today. This is somewhat contrary to common sense perception that science is what scientists do. The two centuries of British rule not only had adverse effects on India’s politico-

⁴ <https://www.advaita.nl/geschriften/upanishads/>

⁵ <https://nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vipassana>

⁶ <https://www.happywithyoga.com/meditatie/vipassana-wat-is-het-en-waarom-zou-je-het-doen/>

⁷ <https://www.google.com/search?client=firefox-b-d&q=positive+psychology>

economic conditions, but it also disturbed the educational scenario in significant ways. This may be called the colonial syndrome, which has its most debilitating academic influence on the development of social sciences in the country in general, and psychology in particular. In India, psychology is very much undervalued. Though taught in several universities and many colleges, it plays a very minor role, if any, in national planning and development. Psychological services are not available in much of the country. Where they are available, they are little appreciated. (Rao et al. 2016, pp. 2-3)."

"Ātmānam viddhi, "know thy self," is the central tenet of Indian thought. It is also the cornerstone of Indian psychology from the Vedic times to the present. By knowing yourself, it is believed, you know everything that needs to be known, because the truth is within you. You are the truth. That is you, tat-tvam-asi. If search for understanding the self is the base of philosophical pursuit, study of the ways of self-realization is the subject matter of psychology. This is the classical wisdom. Indian psychology, as we study it, involves a systematic reconstruction of classical Indian thought and native psychological practices. The resulting body of psychological knowledge enables us to understand human nature and to apply that knowledge to fully realize human potentials. (Rao, et al. 2016, p. 1)."

"Indian psychology studies a person as body, mind, and consciousness. The body refers to the nervous system, the senses, and associated structures connected to the brain. The mind is the hypothetical cognitive instrument related to the body on the one hand and consciousness on the other. Consciousness as a non-physical part of the person is irreducibly separated from body and mind. Consciousness is distinct from the body and mind with which it may be associated. Interaction is therefore excluded. The body and mind, on the other hand, can interact and be influenced by each other. By the way, a mind cannot be reduced to its physical components and a body cannot be transformed into a mind, although they influence each other in a person. They function differently. The body disintegrates irrevocably at death. The mind, however, has the potential to survive physical death (Rao et al. 2016, pp. 5-6)."

Indian thought has many shades that are interrelated. This is, as it were, the Indian identity of thought. That identity is propped up by psychological models and ideas. Those models and ideas are a fundamental basis of thinking (Rao et al. 2016, p. 9).

Indian psychology looks at the body, the mind and its interaction with the environment (material and immaterial). Consciousness is a reference for mind and body. After all, in consciousness lies the 'truth'. Through consciousness, blockages and disruptions in the interaction of thinking, feeling and acting with the environment can be traced and possibly removed. This can be realized with, for example, meditation where object and subject can merge. All this results in ātman, Brahman, or puruṣa, and awareness.

"Mind is the instrument of cognition and manifests awareness in various forms because of its association with consciousness. It is also the seat of emotions and volition. In its interaction with the body, the mind experiences all kinds of emotions and engages in different kinds of action. Thus the mind is the instrument of our cognitions, affections, and volitions. The person, referred to as jīva in Sanskrit, is commonly conceived as a knower (jñātā), enjoyer/sufferer (bhoktā), and agent (kartā). While thinking, feeling, and doing are normal modes in day-to-day

living, they are biased or distorted by a variety of factors and, therefore, they do not truly reflect the real state of affairs (Rao et al. 2016, p. 6).”

Metaphorically, the workings of thought and mind are explained in the following passage.

“Humans are situated in a sea of suffering. The goal is to swim to the shores of bliss, weathering the turbulence that surrounds them. The mind is the force behind the turbulence. The mind is on the one hand the main source of suffering, on the other hand it is also the resource to calm the turbulence and safely take the person to the shores. Suffering arises from the state of turbulence that surrounds the human condition. Bliss consists in calming the turbulence. It involves overcoming ignorance and realizing truth. Consciousness as-such (cit) constitutes the ultimate truth (sat). It is also a state of absolute bliss (ānanda). From a psychological perspective, then, one could say that all the three aspects of human nature - thought, passion, and action - are rolled into one. For this reason, Brahman is conceived as sat, cit, and ānanda.”

CONCLUSION

Indian psychology of thousands of years ago is not remotely similar to Western psychology. Indian psychology looks transactional at the human being (how body and mind work together) and life (reality/environment) and transcendental⁸ with mind and consciousness being the 'absolute' and not easily accessible source of knowledge.

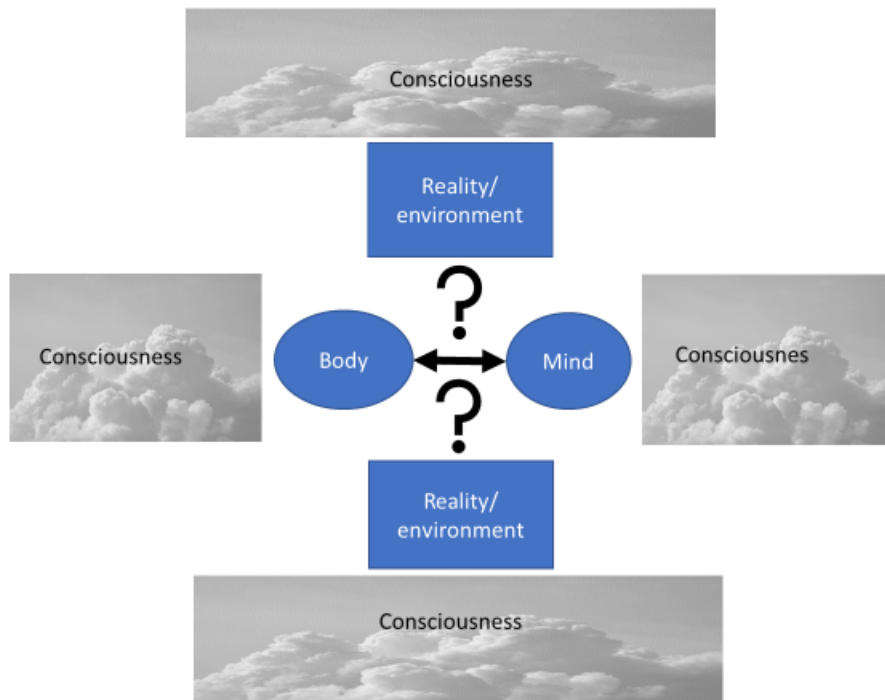


Figure 1: Mind, Body, reality/ environment and consciousness

⁸ 1 : a philosophy that emphasizes the a priori conditions of knowledge and experience or the unknowable character of ultimate reality or that emphasizes the transcendent as the fundamental reality. 2 : a philosophy that asserts the primacy of the spiritual and transcendental over the material and empirical. Link: <https://ap.lc/n1z2Z>

“The metatheoretical base of Indian psychology thus consists of the following assumptions. First, the reality we experience, the so-called empirical reality, is not reality as-such. The empirical knowledge we have of the world is not the ultimate truth. Our cognitive structure is intrinsically incapable of giving such truth. Second, there are methods, other than the brain processes, that give us access to reality as-such. Empirical knowledge is derived from accessing the physical emanations emitted by the objects of knowledge by the sensory processes. In addition to empirical knowledge (aparā vidyā), there is transcendental knowledge (parā vidyā) that arises from accessing consciousness as-such. Parā vidyā enables us to know things-in-themselves. What our sensory processes reveal are sensory images of reality but not reality itself. It is transactional reality (vyāvahārika sattā) as distinguished from the transcendental reality (pāramārthika sattā) (Rao et al. 2016, p. 11).”

(SUB-SAHARA) AFRICA

It should not be forgotten that Africa was colonized by Western countries namely England, Belgium, France, Spain and Portugal and until the first world war Germany. Those 75 years of colonization came to an end in 1950s and 1960s. Furthermore, during the period 1400-1900 CE (Bertocchi, 2016), trade in enslaved people took place in Africa for export and personal use.

Table 1 Embarked slaves during the trans-Atlantic slave trade

From: [The legacies of slavery in and out of Africa](#)

	Senegambia	Sierra Leone	Windward Coast	Gold Coast	Bight of Benin	Bight of Biafra	West-Central Africa	South-East Africa	Totals
1501–1600	147,281	1405	2482	0	0	8459	117,878	0	277,505
1601–1700	136,104	6843	1350	108,679	269,812	186,322	1,134,807	31,715	1,875,632
1701–1800	363,187	201,985	289,583	1,014,529	1,284,585	904,616	2,365,204	70,930	6,494,619
1801–1900	108,941	178,537	43,454	86,114	444,662	495,164	2,076,685	440,022	3,873,579
Totals	755,513	388,770	336,869	1,209,322	1,999,059	1,594,561	5,694,574	542,667	12,521,335

TAST Database—Voyages: <http://www.slavevoyages.org/>

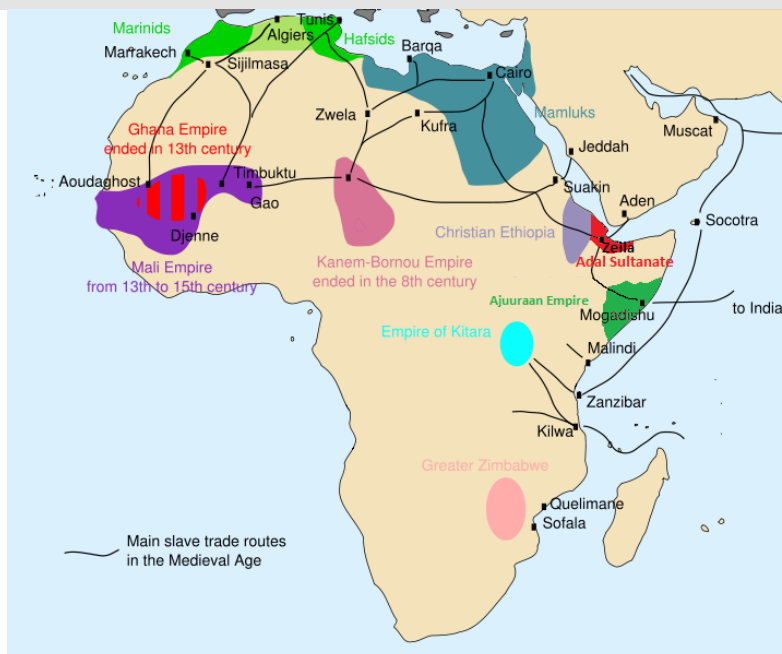


Figure 2: The main Slave routes in Medieval Africa⁹

⁹ Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Slavery_in_Africa

Colonization and the trade in enslaved people has also had its influence on psychology and psychiatry in Africa. See the following citation:

“Scholars have amply documented the application of social Darwinist views of the psychological inferiority of Black Africans and how such attributions were used to legitimate punitive psychiatric practices. Africans in the postcolonial phase, in turn, often rejected the formal disciplinary structure of Psychology, as well as its epistemologies. The question of the relevance of Western psychology to African societies was often raised, as it was in almost the entire non-Western world.

In South Africa, psychology has a different history due to its settlement by Europeans (English and Dutch colonists) and their subsequent domination and oppression of the overwhelmingly larger Black population. Mental testing played an important role early in the development of South African psychology, when questions of mental hygiene and race relations raised fears of a diminution of national intelligence and class wars. Tests were used to sort and bring order to social relations and educational settings. By the 1920s, disciplinary psychology had a presence in South Africa. As in other settings during the 1920s and 1930s, the applications of psychology to industry, business, and education facilitated greater acceptance of psychology, even though the uses of psychological knowledge were in support of a racist state. Test results were used to justify emergent racist policies that contributed to the segregation of work and social life and the minimizing of opportunities for Blacks. After World War II, psychologists played important roles in designing and implementing the apartheid laws and rules (Pickren et al., 2010, pp. 245-246).”

“During the apartheid era, psychology was accused of being irrelevant, and of advertently or inadvertently bolstering apartheid. Since 1994, much has changed in psychology. However, much has remained the same. In a situational analysis of research in psychology over the last five years it emerged that quantitative methods based on 'hard' science theory, as well as the traditional topics of assessment, psychotherapy, counselling, psychopathology and stress continue to dominate psychological research. A minority of studies utilise theoretical frameworks and tackle topics that illuminate the interweaving of the individual with the socio-political context. Knowledge is being generated chiefly about urban, middle-class adults living in the three wealthiest provinces, with university students being the most popular source of participants. Historically white universities continue to dominate the publishing scene, and collaboration takes place chiefly with high-income countries. A comparison of these results with the key issues raised in the United Nation Development Programme's *South Africa human development report 2003* shows that psychology has a long way to go before it can establish its 'relevance' credentials (Macleod, 2004).”

Mogobe Ramose (2018): an intermezzo

The reader of this article is asked not to generalise. In short, this chapter is about the continent of Africa. A continent with many countries and many tribes, a continent that has been torn apart by many rulers without any respect for its history and ancestors. So when the word Africa is used, it is possible that it is only about one country or one tribe. This applies to the whole article, even if it is about China, the western world, and India.

Ramose (2018, pp. 75-80) approaches Africa from the perspective of indigenous African communities in his chapter 'Medicine through Ubuntu'. Central to this perspective are the

extended family and the rituals per age group. The essence of this perspective is that all members of the extended family are part of each other. This applies to the born and unborn children, the known and unknown ancestors and the community. From babyhood until after leaving the earthly body as an ancestor, each member of the extended family has a task in the extended family and the community. Through these rites, the extended family and the community are acknowledged and confirmed; within these rites, the individual is acknowledged by himself and the community. Ramose (2018, p. 76) explains the above as follows:"

"This is the cultural basis of the principle of interdependence of individual and community, as well as the principle of sharing, mutual care and compassion for the other, which characterise most indigenous African communities. Mutual respect is also important in this context. The organic relationship between these principles is summarised in the saying: '*motho ke motho ka batho*'. The emphasis here is on both *motho* and *botho*, thus affirming the primacy of human value on the one hand and the corresponding need for mutual respect and compassion on the other. This means that specific rites and community structures are not worth much without *botho*, mutual respect and compassion for the other."

From these conceptions of the unity between the whole and the individual, traditional Africa could or would benefit from a health care system that engages the family and the community. This is anchored in the Bongaka institution. Ramose (2018, p. 76) elaborates on Bongaka for psychiatric patients as follows: a) if someone is afflicted by a mental illness, the family is the first unit to discover it, b) then the family reports the victim to the ancestors (the purpose of this is to inform the ancestors and to ask them to what possible fault the victim is due for this condition), and c) the healthy family members then do everything in their power to reconcile the ancestors with the aim of getting the victim cured.

"In short, medical care, according to tradition, rests with the Bongaka Institute (Ramose, 2018, p. 76)."

The question on the table now is how does Bongaka function? The bottom line is that the extended family is the first to notice that a family member is affected by a mental illness. They, in turn, report this to the ancestors to warn them and to find out from them what "mistake" the victim owes this disease. After this, the healthy members of the extended family make every effort to reconcile with the ancestors. These steps are necessary to ensure that the victim heals. If this reconciliation with the ancestors does not produce the desired result, the family doctor (*ngaka ya*) is called in. The family doctor then tries to indirectly restore balance and harmony between the living and the living dead. Research is done to find out if the ancestors of the victim are angry and if so, how reconciliation can be achieved. Once this is done, the family doctor proceeds to prescribe herbs to heal the body. Through this route, the victim becomes a patient. From this interlude it is clear that psychology and psychiatry are 'hands on'. The core is the assumption that the balance between the living and the ancestors is disturbed. By restoring that balance through reconciliation and/or herbs, the victim can get rid of her/his condition or the patient can be cured.

Back to the question is there a psychology of coloured people in Africa?

For this, based on the work of Ramose (2018), it has been noted that original African psychology is grafted on a gestalt between living people and their ancestors and between living people in

the extended family system and the community. The African concept of Ubuntu goes much further. It recognises that man's spirits and gods, mother earth (flora and fauna) and the universe also belong to the aforementioned gestalt. How this works exactly is explained below. "The Afrocentric conceptual system of the paradigm is truly holistic, because ontologically it assumes reality to be both spiritual and material at once. In this regard everything becomes one thing, spirit manifesting. Spirit refers to that permeating essence that is known in an extrasensory fashion (e.g., energy, consciousness, God). For our purposes, consciousness manifesting will be assumed; and, if the properties of the conceptual system are followed in a highly structured fashion starting with ontology, all is God manifest. This deification process seeks to transform the finite, limited conception of human consciousness into an infinite consciousness that is supremely good or divine.

Nobles (1972, 1980) and Zahan (1979) discuss the African concept of extended self, which is particularly illustrative of the Afrocentric spiritual/material ontology at work. Self in this instance includes all of the ancestors, the yet unborn, all of nature, and the entire community. In addition, consubstantiation was assumed. In other words, they believed "I am because we are; we are, therefore, I am." Holonomy, the whole being somehow contained in each of its parts, may be a universal property of nature and is characteristic here. (Myers, 1985, pp. 34-35)."

Baldwin (1986) introduces black psychology. In addition to everything already mentioned in this chapter, he emphasises the concept of 'rhythm'. Rhythm also stands for the oral African tradition, the soul and the notion of the Extended Self.

"Black Psychology must concern itself with the question of "rhythm." It must discuss, at some great length, "the oral tradition." It must unfold the mysteries of the spiritual energy known as "soul." It must explain the notion of "extended self" and the "natural" orientation of African peoples to insure the "survival of the tribe." Briefly, it must examine the elements and dimensions of the experiential communalities of African people . . . Black Psychology must concern itself with the mechanism by which our African definition has been maintained and what value its maintenance has offered Black people. Hence, the task of Black Psychology is to offer an understanding of the behavioural definition of African philosophy and to document what, if any, modifications it has undergone during particular experiential periods (Baldwin, 1986, p. 238)."

CONCLUSION

This article addresses the question of whether psychology is universal (i.e. colour-blind) or regional and culturally terminated. If psychology is regional in nature, the underlying question is: "Apart from a white psychology, is there also a psychology of people of colour? This question is not easy to answer because Western psychology has, as it were, erased non-Western psychology. Fortunately, man has a memory like an elephant. Fortunately, man still has access to ancient sources of knowledge such as the analects of Confucius, the Vedas and Upanishad and the many African philosophers (Steinmetz, 2020, A).

Our literature study shows that psychology - at least in the non-Western world - has its roots in philosophy. In answering the question "is psychology universal or regional?" it has been established that Western psychology developed in Europe and from there, in the period between and after the two world wars, was forced to "move" to the United States, from where

it then spread throughout the rest of the world. Through this 'move', psychology in the United States has undergone an enormous development. At that time, the United States invested huge amounts of money in the further development of Western psychology. Especially, the US Army facilitated the development of psychology. Some concrete examples are the development of test psychology, for the recruitment of young soldiers, social psychology for the functioning of army units and clinical psychology for the treatment of large groups of veterans. These insights and their further development were subsequently used by the Americans as colonisation psychology.

My intention is not to discredit Western psychology. After all, neurology has had wonderful influences on contemporary psychology. This is particularly evident in social psychology (Greene, 2014; Haidt, 2012). A wonderful example can be found in Professor Dr Susan T. Fiske book (2011, p. 142): 'Envy Up, Scorn Down' in which she states that the Brain makes US Vigilant. This observation in the brain has a parallel in everyday life, namely: "Status insecurity brings the worst in people, individually and socially. Envy and scorn are anxiety syndromes on the sides of up and down (Fiske, 2011, p. 138)."

Another great example can be found in the work of Professor Dr. Jonathan Haidt (2012, p. 73-74). He states that our brains evaluate immediately and continuously. He illustrates this with the following story (see from the rider):

"In practice, affective reactions are so rapid and coercive that they act like eye patches on a horse. They reduce the universe of alternatives available to the thought process, which is following: The rider is an attentive servant who is always trying to anticipate the elephant's next move. If the elephant inclines just a little to the left, as if preparing to make a move, the rider looks in the same direction and prepares to help the elephant move to the left. The rider at that point loses interest in the right."

This linkage between psychology and neurology (especially brain neuroscience) could possibly also have produced miraculous results for the original psychology of China, India and Africa. Furthermore, the original psychology in China, India and (Sub-Sahara) Africa is discussed in this article. All three are huge continents with many peoples and countries. This means that the findings in this article should be viewed with some caution. After all, a continent is neither a country nor a region. In other words, a much more detailed study than this article could possibly reveal even more regional differences (Steinmetz, 2020, B).

Two of the three non-Western continents studied here hold a physical, psychological and religious view of man that reflects interdependence with other people: extended family, born and unborn children, ancestors we may or may not remember, gods and spirits, fauna and flora, the earth and the universe, which is diametrically opposed to the Western view that man is independent and autonomous (Kağıtçıbaşı, 2007). This philosophical-psychological outlook is found in the continents of China and (Sub-Saharan) Africa. Existence of interdependence is beautifully expressed by Ramose (2018) who works with the philosophical-psychological African (Bantu-speaking peoples) concept of Ubuntu, which is composed of the prefix ubu- and the root ntu-.

"Ubu evokes the idea of being in general. It is 'being enveloped', until it manifests itself in the concrete form or mode of existence of a particular entity. Ubu- as 'enveloped being' is always

aimed at unfoldment, that is, incessant, continuous, concrete manifestations through certain forms and modes of being. In this sense, ubu- is always directed towards -ntu. On an ontological level, there is no strict, literal separation or division between ubu-and-ntu. Ubu- and -ntu are two not radically separated and irreconcilably opposed realities. On the contrary, they underpin each other, insofar as they are two aspects of being as unity and as indivisible wholeness. Therefore, ubu-ntu is the fundamental ontological and epistemological category in the African thought of the Bantu-speaking peoples. It is the indivisible one-ness and wholeness of ontology and epistemology. Ubu- as a general conception of being can be called distinctly ontological, while -ntu as the junction at which being takes on a concrete form or mode of being in the process of continuous unfolding can be called distinctly epistemological (Ramose, 2018, p. 31)."

Psychology in China leans on the analectic work of the philosopher Confucius (551 - 479 BCE). Confucius sees a similarity between the extended family and China as a whole. The extended family is led by the eldest man, the patriarch. The most important virtues of the extended family and of China as a whole are, according to Confucius, patience, pacifism, compromise, the golden mean, reverence for ancestors, the elders, and scholars. The result is a peaceful, stable and harmonious society also because man is seen as the hub of the universe. Confucius has a positive view of man. He assumes that man is directed towards achieving the "good". A few of his peers, fellow philosophers, do not share this view. Both the reverse occurs, as well as the beautiful middle way derived from Gao Zi (about 300 BCE) which states that human nature is like water, with no preference for East or West.

In short, translated into the present, anno 2022, we might say that millennia-old psychology in Africa and China is gestalt-universal psychology, family and developmental psychology with its emphasis on resilience and sources of strength, personality psychology and ancestral psychology (particularly in Africa).

The original Indian psychology is based on the Vedas and the Upanishads. These writings are also called thought systems, which are psychological, religious and philosophical in nature. Cynically, this Indian psychology is hardly found in Western psychological text books. Possibly this is the ultimate result of the enlightenment where man denies the existence of God.

As previously stated, the origins of Indian psychology can be traced back thousands of years to the Vedas and Upanishads. According to Rao et. al (2016) the perception arises that Indian psychology consists of three currents. First is pure consciousness which has been central to Indian psychology since the Upanishads. Upanishads are Sanskrit texts or mantras that unfold the non-dual reality of the individual and the world. A second notable current in ancient Indian psychology is the techniques of meditation and yoga which is widely used by clinical psychologists. Meditation and Yoga come from the rich Buddhist spiritual tradition Vipassana. A third Indian trend is positive psychology, which focuses on happiness, fulfilment, and bliss. This positive psychology is at odds with negative psychology and psychopathology.

Central to this article is the question of whether psychology is universally valid or whether psychology is coloured by regional cultures, the DNA of the ancestors via methylation (Steinmetz, 2021), norms and values and rules of life. A cautious conclusion is that psychology is regional. However, it must be said that in the non-Western world, the notion that psychology

is universal has acted like a broom that has swept regional psychology into a corner like 'dust'. In short, regional psychology needs to be rediscovered. A good example is South Africa. There, the rediscovery of regional psychology was prompted by South Africa's long history with apartheid. South African black psychologists also ask what effect their skin colour has on their human existence. This way of looking at their skin colour is the direct result of a society where white people position themselves as the 'upper' party.

In short, by reasoning on this cautious conclusion, it can be said that Western psychology is also regionally coloured. It is remarkable that Western psychology does not seem to see it that way. Publications from various Western countries on the same subject hardly differ at all in terms of cultural approach. However, attempts to do so are being made, which can be seen in a movement in psychology that is called cross-cultural. Cross-cultural psychology assumes that the variation in the results of psychological research is caused by cultural differences.

There is also Western psychological work that uses insights from Indian philosophy and psychology. A wonderful example is the work of Professor Dr Bessel van der Kolk, an American-Dutch psychiatrist. Among other things, he wrote the book *The Body Keeps the Score* (2014). Meditation and yoga are discussed extensively in his book when treating traumatised patients. Van der Kolk (2014, p. 266) notes that even with EMDR some traumatised patients cannot be treated. To fill that gap, he employs meditation and yoga. Meditation and yoga improve the functioning of the autonomic nervous system. This approach is based on the existence of the biological marker heart variability rate (HRV). HRV has been shown to be a good indicator of how well the autonomic nervous system is working. In concrete terms, he says:

“The autonomic nervous system is our brain’s most elementary survival system, its two branches regulating throughout the body. Roughly speaking, the sympathetic nervous system (SNS) uses chemicals like adrenaline to fuel the body and brain to take action, while the parasympathetic nervous system (PNS) uses acetylcholine to help the body regulate basic body functions like digestion, wound healing, and sleep and dream cycles. When we’re our best, these two systems work closely together to keep us in an optimal state of engagement with our environment and with ourselves.”

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