**Intro**

If people really do differ profoundly in their systems of thought—their worldviews and cognitive processes— then differences in people's attitudes and beliefs, and even their values and preferences, might not be a matter merely of different inputs and teachings, but rather an inevitable consequence of using different tools to understand the world. And if that's true, then efforts to improve international understanding may be less likely to pay off than one might hope.

The new research has provided us, as prior evidence could not, with enough information so that we can build a theory about the nature of these differences, including how they might have come about, what their implications are for perceiving and reasoning in everyday life, and how they affect relations between people from different cultures.

The social practices promote the worldviews; the worldviews dictate the appropriate thought processes; and the thought processes both justify the worldviews and support the social practices.

**CH1 Syllogism & Tao**

**THE ANCIENT GREEKS AND AGENCY**

A strong sense of individual identity accompanied the Greek sense of personal agency.

The Greek sense of agency fueled a tradition of debate.

As striking as the Greeks' freedom and individuality is their sense of curiosity about the world. Aristotle thought that curiosity was the uniquely defining property of human beings.

…only the Greeks attempted to explain their observations in terms of underlying principles. Exploring these principles was a source of pleasure for the Greeks.

**THE ANCIENT CHINESE AND HARMONY**

While a special occasion for the ancient Greek might mean attendance at plays and poetry readings, a special occasion for the Chinese of the same period would be an opportunity to visit with friends and family.

The Chinese counterpart to Greek agency was *harmony.*

The Chinese were concerned less with issues of control of others or the environment than with self-control, so as to minimize friction with others in the family and village and to make it easier to obey the requirements of the state, administered by magistrates.

Chinese society made the individual feel very much a part of a large, complex, and generally benign social organism where clear mutual obligations served as a guide to ethical conduct. Carrying out prescribed roles—in an organized, hierarchical system— was the essence of Chinese daily life.

Individual rights in China were one's "share" of the rights of the com- munity as a whole, not a license to do as one pleased.

Within the social group, any form of confrontation, such as debate, was discouraged.

Chinese social harmony should not be confused with conformity. On the contrary, Confucius praised the desire of the gentleman to harmonize and distinguished it from the petty person's need for conformity.

But, as philosopher Hajime Nakamura notes, the Chinese advances reflected a genius for practicality, not a pen- chant for scientific theory and investigation. And as philosopher and sinologist Donald Munro has written, "In Confucianism there was no thought of *knowing* that did not entail some consequence for action."

**ESSENCE OR EVANESCENCE?**

**PHILOSOPHY IN GREECE AND CHINA**

But still more basic to Greek philosophy is its back- ground scheme, which regarded the object *in isolation* as the proper focus of attention and analysis.

A peculiar but important aspect of Greek philosophy is the notion that the world is fundamentally static and unchanging.

The Chinese orientation toward life was shaped by the blending of three different philosophies: Taoism, Confucianism, and, much later, Buddhism. Each philosophy emphasized harmony and largely discouraged abstract speculation.

Aside from Taoism's teachings about opposition, contradiction, change, and cycles, it stood for a deep appreciation of nature, the rural life, and simplicity.

But in reality, Confucianism, like Taoism, is less concerned with finding the truth than with finding the Tao—the Way—to live in the world.

In particular, the deep appreciation of the contradictions and changes in human life, and the need to see things whole, that are integral to the notion of a yin-yang universe are also part of Confucian philosophy. But the dominant themes of nature and the rural life are much more associated with Taoism than with Confucianism, and the importance of the family and educational and economic advancement are more integral to Confucianism.

All three orientations shared concerns about harmony, holism, and the mutual influence of everything on almost everything else. These orientations help explain why Chinese philosophy not only lacked a conception of individual rights but, it sometimes seems (at least after Buddhism began to exert an influence), an acknowledgment of individual minds.

The concern with abstraction characteristic of ancient Greek philosophy has no counterpart in Chinese philosophy. Chinese philosophers quite explicitly favored the most concrete sense impressions in understanding the world.

Greeks were independent and engaged in verbal contention and debate in an effort to discover what people took to be the truth.

Chinese social life was interdependent and it was not liberty but harmony that was the watchword—the harmony of humans and nature for the Taoists and the harmony of humans with other humans for the Confucians. Similarly, the Way, and not the discovery of truth, was the goal of philosophy.

Complexity and interrelation meant for the Chinese that an attempt to understand the object without appreciation of its context was doomed.

**CONTRADICTION OR CONNECTION?**

**SCIENCE AND MATHEMATICS IN GREECE AND CHINA**

The greatest of all Greek scientific discoveries was the discovery—or rather, as philosopher Geoffrey Lloyd put it, the invention—of nature itself.

The Greeks' discovery of nature made possible the invention of science. China's failure to develop science can be attributed in part to lack of curiosity, but the absence of a concept of nature would have blocked the development of science in any case.

The Greeks' focus on the salient object and its attributes led to their failure to understand the fundamental nature of causality.

But the Chinese saw the world as consisting of continuously interacting substances, so their attempts to understand it caused them to be oriented toward the complexities of the entire "field," that is, the context or environment as a whole.

The reluctance of the Chinese to perform surgery is completely understandable in light of their views about harmony and relationships.

The notion that the removal of a malfunctioning or diseased part of the body could be beneficial, without attending to its relations to other parts of the body, would have been too simple-minded for the Chinese to contemplate.

The Chinese tendency to focus on relationships in a complex, interconnected field is exemplified by the practice of feng shui

The Chinese… but their lack of interest in categories prevented them from discovering laws that really were capable of explaining classes of events. The Greeks… correctly understood that it was necessary to categorize objects in order to be able to apply rules to them.

The Greeks were focused on, you might even say obsessed by, the concept of contradiction. If one proposition was seen to be in a contradictory relation with another, then one of the propositions had to be rejected.

… the Chinese lacked not only logic, but even a principle of contradiction. Greek logic and foundational concern may have presented as many obstacles as opportunities. The Greeks never developed the concept of zero…Zero was considered by the Greeks, but rejected on the grounds that it represented a contradiction…An understanding of zero, as well as of infinity and infinitesimals, ultimately had to be imported from the East.

In place of logic, the Chinese developed a type of ***dialecticism…***The Chinese dialectic instead uses contradiction to understand relations among objects or events, to transcend or integrate apparent oppositions, or even to embrace clashing but instructive viewpoints.

In the Chinese intellectual tradition there is no necessary incompatibility between the belief that A is the case and the belief that not-A is the case.

It seeks not to decontextualize but to see things in their appropriate contexts: Events do not occur in isolation from other events, but are always embedded in a meaningful whole in which the elements are constantly changing and rearranging themselves. To think about an object or event in isolation and apply abstract rules to it is to invite extreme and mistaken conclusions. It is the Middle Way that is the goal of reasoning.

**CH2 The social origins of mind**

Greece differed from all contemporary civilizations in the development of personal freedom, individuality, and objective thought. These qualities seem partly explainable by the political system that was unique to Greece, namely the **city-state** and its politics, especially the assembly, in which people had to persuade one another by dint of rational argument.

The city-state was also important because it was possible for intellectual rebels to leave one location and go to another, thereby maintaining a condition of relatively free inquiry.

Another factor sometimes invoked to explain Greece's uniqueness is that its maritime location made trading a lucrative occupation, which meant that there was a substantial mercantile class who could afford to have their sons educated…The drive toward education was apparently the result of curiosity and a belief in the value of knowledge for its own sake.

Contradiction coming from the opinions of outsiders, as well as freely expressed contradiction among insiders' views in the assembly and the marketplace, might have forced the development of cognitive procedures, including formal logic, to deal with the dissonance.

In contrast, even today 95 percent of the Chinese population belongs to the same Han ethnic group. The ethnic homogeneity of China seems at least partly explicable in terms of the centralized political control.

In addition, the face-to-face village life of China would have pressed in the direction of harmony and agreed-upon norms for behavior. Seeing little difference of opinion, and finding disagreement sanctioned from above or from peers where it did exist, the Chinese would have had little use for procedures to decide which of two propositions was correct. Instead, finding means to resolve disagreements would have been the goal. Hence, the push to find the Middle Way.

**HOMEOSTATIC SOCIO-COGNITIVE SYSTEMS**

*Ecology 🡪 Economy and Social Structure*

The ecologies of ancient Greece and China were drastically different—in ways that led to different economic, political, and social arrangements.

**pp. 53 Schematic model of influences on cognitive processes**

Agricultural peoples need to get along with one another— not necessarily to like one another (think of the stereotype of the crusty New England farmer)—but to live together in a reasonably harmonious fashion.

This is particularly true for rice farming, characteristic of southern China and Japan, which requires people to cultivate the land in con- cert with one another. But it is also important wherever irrigation is required. Peasants had to get along with their neighbors and were ruled by village elders and a regional magistrate who was the representative of the king. The ordinary Chinese therefore lived in a complicated world of social constraints.

The ecology of Greece, on the other hand, consisting as it does mostly of mountains descending to the sea, favored hunting, herding, fishing, and trade. These are occupations that require relatively little cooperation with others.

The soil and climate of Greece were congenial to wine and olive oil production and, by the sixth century **B.C.,** many farmers were more nearly businessmen than peasants. The Greeks were therefore able to act on their own to a greater extent than were the Chinese. Not feeling it necessary to maintain harmony with their fellows at any cost, the Greeks were in the habit of arguing with one another in the marketplace and debating one another in the political assembly.

*Social structure and social practice 🡪 Attention and folk metaphysics*

The Chinese…Their relations with others provided both the chief constraint in their lives and the primary source of opportunities. The habit of looking toward the social world could have carried over to a tendency to look to the field in general; and the need to attend to social relations could have extended to an inclination to attend to relations of all kinds.

But the Greeks had the luxury of attending to objects, including other people and their own goals with respect to them, without being overly constrained by their relations with other people.

This might have made it natural for the Greeks to focus on the attributes of objects with a view toward categorizing them and finding the rules that would allow prediction and control of their behavior. Causality would be seen as due to properties of the object or as the result of one's own actions in relation to the object. Such a view of causality could have encouraged the Greek assumptions of stability and permanence as well as an assumption that change in the object was under their control.

So the folk metaphysics of the two societies could have arisen directly from the targets of attention: the environment or field in the case of the Chinese and the object in the case of the Greeks. The scientific metaphysics of each society would have been just a reflection of the folk views.

*Folk metaphysics 🡪 Tacit epistemology (beliefs about how to get new knowledge) and processes*

China: a place where relations among objects and events are crucial in determining outcomes 🡪 it will seem important to be able to observe all the important elements in the field 🡪 Processes of attention, perception, and reasoning will develop that focus on detecting the important events and discerning the complex relationships among them

Greece: the world is a place where the behavior of objects is governed by rules and categories 🡪 it should seem crucial to be able to isolate the object from its con- text, to infer what categories the object is a member of, and to infer how rules apply to those categories. Processes would then develop to serve those functions.

Finally, social practices can influence thinking habits directly.

So long as economic forces operate to maintain different social structures, different social practices and child training will result in people focusing on different things in the environment. Focusing on different things will produce different understandings about the nature of the world. Different worldviews will in turn reinforce differential attention and social practices. The different worldviews will also prompt differences in perception and reasoning processes—which will tend to rein- force worldviews.

There is no reason to assume that the sequence ending in cognitive processes must begin with ecology. There can be many different economic reasons that might make some societies or groups more attentive to their fellow humans and many reasons that could make them more attentive to objects and their own goals with respect to them.

**LATTER-DAY SUPPORT FOR THE ORIGIN THEORY**

This economic-social account of cognition happens to fit with some important historical changes in the West. As the West became primarily agricultural in the Middle Ages, it became less individualistic… And in terms of intellectual and cultural achievement, Europe had become a backwater.

Toward the end of the Middle Ages, though, developments in European agriculture created enough excess wealth that new trading centers, much like the old Greek **city-states**, appeared… the rebirth of the city-state form with its wealthy merchant class was associated with a **renaissance of individualism, personal liberty, rationalism, and science.**

… The Grand Eunuch… But the Chinese were quite uninterested in seeing anything that those societies might have produced or known about… This lack of curiosity was characteristic of China… Moreover, there has never been a strong interest in knowledge for its own sake in China. Even modern Chinese philosophers have always been far more interested in the pragmatic application of knowledge than with abstract theorizing for its own sake.

Twentieth-century psychologists have provided evidence that economic and social factors can affect perceptual habits.

An implication of the idea that economic factors can affect cognitive habits is that agricultural peoples should be more field dependent than people who earn their living in ways that rely less on close coordination of their work with others, such as hunting animals and gathering plants.

If the key difference between agricultural peoples… and hunter-gatherers and modern, independent citizens of modern industrial… degree of attention to the social world, then it would be reasonable to expect that subcultures within a given society that differ in degree of social constraint should differ in degree of field dependence, as well.

There is no reason to assume that field dependence can only be the result of social constraints imposed from the outside. We might expect that interest in other people, whatever its origin, would be associated with field dependence.

**IMPLICATIONS FOR THOUGHT IN THE MODERN WORLD**

Summary of differences between Westerners and Easterners on thinking (pp. 64).

**CH3 Living together vs. going it alone**

**The non-western self**

"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… Maintaining harmonious social relations is likely to take precedence over achieving personal success.

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.

American primer: Dick and Jane – individualistic; Chinese primer: relationship -- It is not individual action but relation- ships between people that seem important to convey in a child's first encounter with the printed word.

In the Confucian human-centered philosophy man cannot exist alone; all action must be in the form of interaction between man and man." To the Westerner, it makes sense to speak of a person as having attributes that are independent of circumstances or particular personal relations.

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.

Language: Japanese and Korean use different words for the same thing in different situations. “Tell me about yourself” – 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.

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.

**Independence vs Interdependence**

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.

There is evidence that Asians are more accurately aware of the feelings and attitudes of others than are Westerners.

Westerners teach their children to communicate their ideas clearly. Asians, in contrast, teach their children a "receiver" orientation, meaning that it is the hearer's responsibility to understand what is being said.

**PP. 80 – summary of differences between independence and interdependence**

As these results show, Westerners' commitment to universally applied rules influences their understanding of the nature of agreements between individuals and between corporations.

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… 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 (“priming).

Students who had been exposed to an independence prime rated individualist values higher and collectivist values lower than did students exposed to an interdependence prime. The independence-primed participants were also more forgiving of the book-engrossed Lisa.

… this is a common report of people who live in the "other" culture for a while. 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.

The work of Hampden-Turner and Trompenaars makes clear that the West is no monolith concerning issues of independence vs. interdependence.

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.

“The Idea moves west,” … The further to the West a given country lies, the greater, in general, that country's endorsement of independent values.

At a level slightly more scientific than this anecdote: We generally 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.

1982; China; The first Western play… *Death of a Salesman*; not merely highly Western in character but distinctly American; "The play is about family," he said, "and the Chinese invented family."… also about *face,* or the need to have the respect of the community, and the Chinese also invented face.

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.

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.

Unique to the Japanese: *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.

**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.

The concept of a "lively discussion" does not exist in Japan—because of the risk to group harmony.

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.

Western *erabi* (active, agentic) style as being grounded in the belief that "man can freely manipulate his environment for his own purposes. To a person having such a style, there's not much point in concentrating on relationships. It's the results that count.

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." 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.

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.

**PP. 96-97: differences between Easterners and Westerners**

None of these generalizations apply to all members of their respective groups, of course. 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 aver- age, 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.

**CH 5 “The bad seed” or “the other boys made him do it”?**

**Gang Lu: shooting and suicide**

… campus newspapers focused almost entirely on Lu's presumed qualities

Chinese reporters emphasized causes that had to do with the context in which Lu operated

The American reporters blamed the perpetrator, who happened to be Chinese, whereas the Chinese reporters, perhaps protecting one of their own, blamed situational factors… whether it was chauvinism or worldview that produced the differences in explanation patterns.

Thomas Mcllvane – postal worker; shooting -- American reporters focused on Mcllvane's personal dispositions—attitudes and traits inferred from past behavior. Chinese reporters emphasized situational factors influencing Mcllvane.

American students, whether explaining the American mass murder or the Chinese one, placed more emphasis on the murderer's presumed dispositions. Chinese students stressed situational factors for both mass murders.

…listed a number of situational factors and asked participants to judge whether, if circumstances had been different, the murder might not have occurred.

The Chinese thought that, in many cases, the murders might very well not have occurred. But the Americans, because of their conviction that it was the murderer's long-established dispositions that were the key to his rampage, felt it was likely that the killings would have occurred regardless of whether circumstances had been different.

**CAUSAL ATTRIBUTION EAST A N D WEST**

… Chinese people are inclined to attribute behavior to context and Americans tend to attribute the same behavior to the actor… the causal attribution differences mirror the attention differences.

Not until adolescence did Indians and Americans begin to diverge in their explanations (the culturally sanctioned behavior study)

Attributional differences: victory vs defeat; accounts for human behavior.

… The Americans reported that they thought the movements were caused more by internal factors than did the Chinese.

**Hong Kong** citizens can be encouraged to think in either an Eastern or a Western way by presenting them with images that suggest one culture or the other

Peng and his colleague Eric Knowles studied Asian Americans and found that they could "prime" either their participants' Asian selves or their American selves… Participants who had their American identity primed rated causes internal to the object to be more important than did participants who had their Asian identity primed.

The Koreans thought that personalities are more subject to change than the Americans did.

Should we assume that Asians have theories of human personality that are fundamentally different from those of Westerners? Do Asians believe that people differ from one another only very slightly? Or do they see differences, but in terms of traits that would seem odd or irrelevant to Westerners?

Probably the answer to all of these questions is no.

Yet within three weeks I found that I was able to gossip with my hosts about other Chinese… Researchers have produced a large amount of evidence indicating that theories of personality in the East are quite similar to those in the West… the Big Five by personality theorists—are repeatedly found in Western populations… found when the Western personality tests are translated and given to Chinese, Koreans, or Japanese, though sometimes only four of the factors are identified… Hong Kong and mainland China… extraversion, neuroticism, and conscientiousness… a factor that does not emerge… the “Chinese tradition" factor, a construct that captures personality descriptions related to maintenance of interpersonal and inner harmony.

**AVOIDING THE FUNDAMENTAL ATTRIBUTION ERROR**

… a version of the FAE: attributing behavior to a presumed disposition of the person rather than to an important situational factor— namely money—that was the primary driving force behind the behavior.

The target essay and speech study: this illusion is sufficiently powerful that even East Asians are susceptible; but East Asians do not make the error if they are first placed in the target's shoes… Other evidence indicates that making situational factors salient has a greater effect on Asians than on Westerners.

The bus fare study: each one the Koreans were more responsive to the situational information than the Americans were, predicting that a given behavior was more likely if situational factors facilitated it than if situational factors discouraged it.

So the evidence on causal attribution dovetails with the evidence on perception. Westerners attend primarily to the focal object or person and Asians attend more broadly to the field and to the relations between the object and the field. Westerners tend to assume that events are caused by the object and Asians are inclined to assign greater importance to the context.

**BUILDING CAUSAL MODELS**

Differences in causal reasoning between Easterners and Westerners are broader than just preferences for field vs. object. Westerners seem to engage in more causal attribution, period.

"Why" questions are asked twice as frequently in American classrooms as in Japanese classrooms… goal orientation is more characteristic of Westerners, with their sense of personal agency, than it is of Asians.

Consistent with the lesser complexity of the world they live in, Westerners see fewer factors as being relevant to an understanding of the world than Easterners do.

The crossing-out irrelevant factors of Lu Gang’s shooting study: U.S. > Asian American > Korean 🡪 the tendency to see so many factors as relevant to the out- come was related to the degree to which the individual held holistic beliefs about the world… Choi and colleagues found that Koreans were more holistic in their beliefs than Americans. Moreover, the more holistic the individual, whether American or Korean, the more reluctant to assume that a particular item of information might be irrelevant.

**AVOIDING HINDSIGHT**

We tend to have two problems when we try to "predict" the past: (1) believing that, at least in retrospect, it can be seen that events could not have turned out other than they did; and (2) even thinking that in fact one easily could have predicted *in advance* that events would have turned out as they did.

Fischhoff found that if his participants knew the outcome, they routinely overestimated the likelihood they would have assigned to it in advance… it may be easier to avoid the hindsight fallacy if one is inclined to construct explicit causal models of the world.

Explicit models are likely to turn up factors that could suggest more than one outcome and as a result one may be less inclined to be confident that some particular outcome would have occurred.

Moreover, one can be surprised when one's predictions turn out to be wrong. Surprise is likely to prompt a search for possibly relevant factors and to revision of the model that in turn can result in a more accurate understanding of the world

-----------------------------------------------------------

On the other hand, if modeling is less explicit, and if large numbers of factors are considered to be potentially relevant to any given outcome, then it may be easy to think of reasons why a particular event might have turned out the way it did.

The good Samaritan study: Koreans showed a pronounced hindsight bias, with many indicating they thought they knew something all along which in fact they did not。

Choi and I conducted another study that indicates that Easterners are not as surprised by unanticipated outcomes as Americans are not as surprised by unanticipated out- comes as Americans are 🡪 Americans reported being more surprised—and found the study to be more interesting —when we had presented two strongly competing hypotheses, whereas Koreans were no more surprised or interested when presented with two opposing hypotheses than when presented only with the one that predicted the actual finding.

Easterners are almost surely closer to the truth than Westerners in their belief that the world is a highly complicated place and Westerners are undoubtedly often far too simple-minded in their explicit models of the world. Easterners' failure to be surprised as often as they should may be a small price to pay for their greater attunement to a range of possible causal factors.

On the other hand, it seems fairly clear that simple models are the most useful ones—at least in science— because they're easier to disprove and consequently to improve upon… The Chinese may have understood the principle of action at a distance, but they had no means of proving it. When it was proved true, it was by Western scientists who did not initially believe in it and who were actually trying to establish that all motion was of the billiard ball type, with objects moving only because they come into contact with some other object.

When there is systematic testing of the model, as in science, the model can be corrected. But Westerners' models tend to be limited too sharply to the goal object and its properties, slighting the possible role of context. When it is everyday life—all too often a buzzing confusion—that is being modeled, recognition of error is more difficult.

So despite their history of scientific-mindedness, Westerners are particularly susceptible to the Fundamental Attribution Error and to overestimating the predictability of human behavior.