Research Article

Towards a Philosophy of Intercultural Norms

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Abstract

Having a better understanding of what cultural norms are and how they function may be able to contribute to the resolution of conflicts which arise when people from different cultures holding different norms interact with each other. This paper begins by locating norms in the realm of what has been variously referred to in the field of intercultural relations as subjective, internal, or deep culture.

The nature of cultural norms is then examined in terms of both their structure and function. The paper argues that norms cannot be derived directly from nature, but are rather individually and socially constructed. Norms can be constructed at a variety of levels, both intraculturally and interculturally, and studied from various disciplinary perspectives, employing the methods of both the social sciences and philosophy.

A distinction is made between social norms, which serve to regulate behavior among the members of a social group, and worldviews, which provide the philosophical scaffolding on which a culture's beliefs, values, and behavioral norms are constructed. Social norms may be either informal or formal, and form the basis not only for folkways and mores, but also for customary, common, civil, religious, and international law. Worldviews include norms about beliefs and values, and may also be either informal or formal, individual or widely shared within and between cultural groups.

The paper proceeds to outline a research program for a philosophy of intercultural norms. Three different approaches to intercultural philosophy are considered: "common ground" approaches, which look for norms that are universal to all cultures; "stand your ground" approaches, which emphasize the plurality of norms across cultures; and "construct new ground" approaches, which attempt to critically examine and integrate existing cultural norms, while also constructing entirely new norms when necessary to deal with emergent problems.

The paper concludes by offering a meta-philosophical analysis of the disciplinary boundaries, goals, and methods of intercultural philosophy, considering the contributions that descriptive, empirical, normative, and applied philosophy can make to a philosophy of intercultural norms and the resolution of conflicts related to differences in cultural norms.

1.   Introduction

Globalization is bringing people from different cultures together as never be-fore. While cultural diversity is generally regarded as a good thing, in some cases cultural differences in beliefs, values, and social norms can lead to conflict. How can people from different cultures get along with each other in a globalizing world de-spite such differences? One approach to this question is universalism, the view that everyone should accept the same norms, with the goal of creating a global, cosmo-politan culture. Another approach adopts the relativist stance that since every culture is different, there is no way to judge which cultural norms are "right." Each culture should simply be accepted and respected as it is. A third approach is constructivism, which suggests that since the norms needed to govern relations between people from different cultures do not yet exist, they can only be created, or *constructed*, by engag-ing in dialogue with others. Rather than simply say, "You have your way of doing things and I have mine," we need to find new ways to cooperate with each other across cultures that enable us to successfully resolve mutually shared problems.

While the social sciences are able to describe cultural differences with respect to norms, they cannot, without violating their own disciplinary boundaries, give us any guidance about how problems that arise as a result of these differences might be re-solved, since this latter endeavor is fundamentally philosophical and normative rather than empirical. The aim of this paper is to develop a specifically constructivist philosophy of intercultural norms, which concerns itself with how differences in norms can be negotiated and dialogued about across cultures. The paper begins by looking at how norms have been treated in the field of intercultural relations (section 2), and then analyzes the structure and function of cultural norms (section 3). A dis-cussion of the normative aspects of both social norms and worldviews is presented next (section 4), followed by an examination of three different approaches to cross-cultural norms from the perspective of intercultural philosophy (section 5), which roughly correspond to the universalist, relativist, and constructivist approaches men-tioned above. The paper proceeds by offering a meta-philosophical analysis of the disciplinary boundaries, goals, and methodologies of a philosophy of intercultural norms (section 6), and concludes by considering how dialogue on norms might be conducted across cultures (section 7). Rather than see cultural norms as being incom-mensurable with each other, the paper argues that it may be possible in some cases to work towards the creation of "third cultures," which combine positive aspects of two or more cultures into a more comprehensive framework.

2.   Norms and Intercultural Communication

It is common in the field of intercultural relations to make a distinction between those dimensions of culture which are observable and those which are not. While

those aspects of a culture which are "visible" and relatively easy to identify are manifested in people's behavior (customs, rituals, language, social relations, institutions, economic systems, and political structures) and cultural artifacts (clothing styles, food, art, literature, music, architecture, and the built environment), those aspects of a culture which are "invisible" and less readily identified relate to how people from a given culture think and feel (the "hidden" dimensions of culture, which include beliefs, values, and norms, as well as attitudes, communication styles, ideas about morality, and so on).

Stewart and Bennett (1993) use the phrase *objective culture* to refer to the tangible aspects of culture associated with visible culture, and the phrase *subjective culture* to refer to the psychological dimensions of culture associated with invisible culture. Weaver's (2000, p. 190) "iceberg analogy" of culture is derived from the distinction made by Hall (1981) between *external culture*, which indicates those aspects of a culture that people are usually consciously aware of, and *internal culture*, which indicates those aspects of a culture which people are often unconscious of. A further elaboration of the iceberg analogy distinguishes between *surface culture*, which denotes the visible elements of a culture that appear above the waterline of the iceberg, and *deep culture*, which denotes the invisible aspects of a culture that appear beneath the waterline (Shaules, 2007; 2010).

Further subdivisions are possible, of course. Hoft (1996, p. 45) divides deep culture into two layers: a top layer, just beneath the surface, consisting of unspoken rules, which people may be aware of but do not articulate, and a bottom, deeper layer, consisting of unconscious rules, which people may be unaware of but nonetheless follow (*rules*, of course, is simply another word for *norms*). Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner's (1998, pp. 21−24) "onion model" distinguishes between an inner core of implicit basic assumptions, a middle layer of norms and values, and an outer layer of explicit culture, consisting of observable cultural products such as language, artifacts, and forms of behavior. Ting-Toomey and Chung (2005, p. 28) make a fourfold division between surface-level culture (identified with popular culture), intermediate-level culture (symbols, meanings, and norms), deep-level culture (traditions, beliefs, and values), and universal human needs. While some of the differences between these models may be significant, one common point they all share is that they place beliefs, values, and norms in the realm of what may be collectively referred to as *subjective*, *internal*, or *deep* culture.

Following Weaver's iceberg analogy, in the same way that only the tip of an iceberg is visible above the water, only a small part of a given culture may be visible to outsiders (the surface culture). And in the same way that most of an iceberg's mass is submerged beneath the water, a large part of a culture may remain invisible to outsiders (the deep culture) unless they spend a considerable amount of time learning about and experiencing it. Problems and conflicts that may arise due to cross-cultural differences at the surface level may be relatively easy to resolve. Conflicts that occur at the deep level may be relatively more difficult to resolve. Precisely because beliefs, values, and norms are often hidden, people may be less aware of them and they are harder to change. Collisions between icebergs usually occur not at their tips but under the surface of the water. Most collisions between people from different cul-

tures also occur at the deep rather than at the surface level of their respective cultures.

3.   What Are Cultural Norms?

While the term *norms* is frequently used in the field of intercultural relations in a restricted sense to refer to standards of behavior that are adopted by particular cultural groups, the term can be equally applied to beliefs (what should or should not be believed), values (what should or should not be valued), and actions (what should or should not be done). Norms involve the expectations people have about how both they themselves and others will think or behave. Cultural norms provide the basis for social coordination, and are frequently followed willingly and without question. Individuals who conform to the prescribed cultural norms of their own society are regarded as "normal" ("*norm*-al") and accepted by others, while those who do not may be regarded as "deviant" and subjected to social sanctions. In some cases, of course, deviance may be regarded as a positive, rather than a negative, force in cultural change. If everyone thinks and acts exactly the same, there are no opportunities for the emergence of innovative patterns of thought and behavior, which may be better able to deal with shifting environmental and social conditions.

Norms can be constructed at a variety of levels, from individuals to groups to nations. Following Singer (1987), a distinction can be made between norms constructed at the intrapersonal/interpersonal, intragroup/intergroup, and intranational/international levels. The philosopher, Karl-Otto Apel (1980), similarly distinguishes between micro-, meso-, and macro-levels of norm construction. Norms that are not purely individual but shared with others are *cultural norms*. It is possible to speak of norms that are constructed within cultures (*intracultural* norms) and those which are constructed between cultures (*intercultural* norms). While *intracultural* norms tell persons how to think and act within a given culture, such norms may have no validity whatsoever in *intercultural* situations in which they are obliged to interact with people whose norms may be different from their own. Rather than regard existing norms within various cultural traditions as being beyond criticism and inviolable, it is possible to construct entirely new norms to govern interactions between people from different cultures.

While constructivists of an idealist or subjectivist bent adopt a skeptical attitude towards the existence of a "real" world outside human consciousness (e.g., Edwards, Ashmore, & Potter, 1995; von Glasersfeld, 1995), it is possible to acknowledge with constructivists of a more realist and objectivist persuasion (e.g., Searle, 1995; Wallner, 1994) that while the world itself exists independently of human consciousness, any ideas we form about that world are indeed a matter of individual and social construction. From this latter perspective, although the world itself is not constructed, the norms we adopt to better interact with both the physical world and social others are.

To say that a norm is *constructed* simply means that since the world itself underdetermines how it should be thought about, valued, and acted in by humans,

judgments must be made about what are regarded as appropriate forms of knowledge, values, and ethics. Norms are not given by the world itself but are rather constructed in different ways by different individuals and cultures. If the world did determine how it should be thought about, valued, and acted in, then everyone would think exactly the same regardless of culture and there would be no disagreements. The fact that disagreements occur, however, suggests that there are no universally agreed on norms for determining what is true and false, good and bad, right and wrong, and so on. Rather, there are a variety of ways in which norms can be constructed, and these are often historically and culturally variable. Differences in what people take to be acceptable norms are often the source of conflict both within and between cultures.

Norms can be studied from the perspective of both the social sciences and philosophy (Evanoff, 2014). Whereas the social sciences provide empirical descriptions of actual norms held by different people, philosophy attempts to subject these norms to critical reflection. One task of the social sciences is to determine through various empirical research methods how widely held particular norms are within a given culture. Philosophy, however, attempts to look at the norms themselves, detached from the question of who may or may not actually subscribe to them. That is, philosophers examine norms from the perspective of their internal structure and try to determine whether a given norm or set of norms enable people to interact with each other and the natural environment in adequate ways. Determining what is "adequate" is itself a normative issue, of course, which can be discussed cross-culturally from a philosophical perspective.

4.   Social Norms and Worldviews

There are at least two types of norms that are relevant to intercultural philosophy: *social norms*, which are concerned with how people act, and norms related to *worldviews*, which are concerned with what people believe and value. Each of these will be considered in turn.

4.1   Social Norms

Social norms are the informal and formal rules that govern the actions of individuals, social groups, and nations. Widely construed, social norms can be applied to all areas of human behavior, from norms about fashion or marriage to norms concerning the economic and political relations between nation–states (Bicchieri, 2006; Hechter & Opp, 2001). Norms are ultimately based on *social conventions*, which are agreements among the members of a social group to do things in a certain way in order to make their interactions easier (Ben-Menahem, 2006; Gilbert, 1989; Lewis, 1969; Mamor, 2009). Conventions provide standards for deciding what it is "proper" or "improper" to do in a given situation. How people greet each other in different cultures is an example of an *informal convention* (Japanese bow; Americans shake hands). Which side of the road cars should be driven on is an example of a *legally binding convention* (Japanese drive on the left; Americans drive on the right). Con-

ventionalism in general is the view that norms are based on mutually agreed-on ways of thinking, and can be applied to virtually any field of human endeavor, including mathematics, geometry, logic, linguistics, science, ethics, and law.

In anthropology, a distinction is sometimes made between three different types of social norms: folkways, mores, and laws. This distinction was first made by Sumner (1906), but is still widely used in the fields of anthropology, sociology, and intercultural relations (see, for example, Kim, 2008).

Folkways are the typical patterns of behavior adopted by a particular culture, and include norms related to customs, practices, and manners. In a society characterized by a high degree of cultural homogeneity, norms related to folkways may be shared by all, or nearly all, of that society's members. A society characterized by a high degree of cultural pluralism may not only tolerate, but actively promote, a wide diversity of folkways, both to protect cultural diversity and because such diversity leads to a more colorful and vibrant society. Controversies across cultures may nonetheless arise when the customs practiced by tourists, sojourners, immigrants, and cultural subgroups come into conflict with the dominant social, ethical, and legal norms of the society they are visiting or living in. Clothing styles, for example, which many people might think of as being a matter of personal choice, can in fact become a source of cross-cultural conflict. It is legal to wear a burqa in Saudi Arabia, but not in France; it is legal to wear a bikini at a public beach in France, but not in Saudi Arabia.

Mores, on the other hand, refer to more strongly held beliefs about what is regarded as "acceptable" or "unacceptable" behavior in a particular culture, and include norms related to values, morality, and religion. Mores are often expressed as *taboos*, which include proscriptions against certain types of behavior regarded as unacceptable by a social group. Although no taboos are known to be universal to all cultures, some, such as taboos against incest and murder, are shared by nearly all societies. Other taboos may be binding only to members of particular groups within a society, such as taboos against eating certain types of food in various religions. Some taboos may be regarded more as a matter of social propriety rather than of morality, such as avoiding sensitive or controversial topics in conversation.

Norms that govern relations between people in a given society may attain more formal status as *laws*, of which there are several types, including customary law, common law, civil law, and religious law. International law acknowledges the general practices and relations states have historically had with each other, and is based on norms that are mutually recognized or agreed upon. *Peremptory norms*, for example, include prohibitions against such practices as slavery, torture, genocide, wars of aggression, and crimes against humanity, and may not be derogated. International law also involves the coordination of laws between countries through bilateral and multilateral treaties (including agreements, protocols, and conventions), the formation of supranational legal systems (such as the European Union), and the creation of global institutions (such as the United Nations and its related organizations). International laws and the norms they are based on may become sources of cross-cultural conflict when they seem to favor the interests of some global actors, such as international finance and multinational corporations, over the interests of sovereign nations

and local cultural groups.

As this cursory summary suggests, norms related to behavior can take a variety of forms, from local rules of etiquette to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. While some of these norms may be widely shared by individuals, social groups, and nations, there can also be a great deal of diversity in the norms that people from different cultures hold. Conflicts may arise when the norms of one culture are irreconcilable with those of another culture. Child marriage and female circumcision (also called female genital mutilation), for example, may be regarded as acceptable customs in some cultures, but as violations of human rights in others.

Such differences in cultural norms raise questions that have no easy answers. Should the freedom of cultural minorities be suppressed in order to maintain the stability of society as a whole? Can some cultural practices be criticized as violations of universal ethical standards or are such criticisms simply instances of "cultural imperialism," i.e., the attempt of one culture to impose its norms on another culture? Even if there are no universally recognized norms, can other ways be found to resolve disputes that arise when the norms of different cultures come into conflict with each other? Philosophy, it may be suggested, can make a meaningful contribution to intercultural dialogue on all of these issues.

4.2   Worldviews

As already noted, the term *norms* is often used in a restricted sense, especially in the field of intercultural relations, to refer exclusively to social norms. It is nonetheless possible for norms to be applied not only to behavior (how people act), but also to beliefs (what people think) and values (what people regard as important). That is, there can be norms related to expectations about how people should behave in a given culture, as well as expectations about the beliefs and values individuals should subscribe to. Norms about beliefs and values may also be either informal or formal, personal or widely shared both within and between social groups and nations. Norms related to beliefs concern what are regarded as "correct" and "incorrect" ways of thinking: $1+1=2$ (not 3); the earth is round (not flat); people are basically good (or evil); the gods exist (or do not exist); and so on. Norms related to values concern what a given culture regards as being "worthy" or "unworthy." Empirical studies of cross-cultural values frequently referenced in the field of intercultural relations include Hofstede's cultural dimension theory (Hofstede, 2001; Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov, 2010), Trompenaar's model of national cultural differences (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 1998), Schwartz's theory of basic values (Schwartz, 2012), and the World Values Survey (World Values Association, 2016), each of which offer different value typologies.

Many personal beliefs, values, and behavioral norms are freely chosen, but when individuals participate in social groups they may be expected to share certain norms with others. In such cases, whether a given norm is regarded as "acceptable" or "unacceptable" is no longer simply a matter of personal choice, but rather something that must be agreed upon or negotiated with others. Devotees of a particular religion are expected to adhere to the religion's doctrines or dogmas. Members of a particular political party are expected to support the ideals and positions of the party.

Scientists are expected to follow certain standards of scientific inquiry. People in a given culture may be expected to share certain beliefs and values about the world and the society they live in. The philosophical study of *normativity* concerns itself with how such beliefs and values are reasoned about and justified (Dancy, 2000). Philosophy has traditionally been conducted from a normative perspective: rather than simply offer an empirical description of existing beliefs and values, philosophers try to offer persuasive arguments in favor of one belief or value, or another.

In the past it was common in the field of anthropology to make a distinction between an *ethos*, comprised of those moral, aesthetic, and evaluative aspects of a culture that define its spirit, character, and quality of life, and an *eidos*, or *worldview*, comprised of those cognitive aspects of a culture that help it to order and conceptualize reality (Bateson, 1936; Geertz, 1973; Kroeber, 1963; see also Hiebert, 2008; Naugle, 2002). The function of an ethos is to guide the behavior of a culture's members, while the function of a worldview is to help them understand themselves, others, and the world (self, society, and nature). An ethos, thus, includes beliefs about "what ought to be done," while a worldview includes beliefs about "how the world actually is." On the basis of this distinction, worldviews can be seen as providing the intellectual scaffolding for the construction of a culture's folkways, mores, and laws.

In contemporary discussions worldviews are usually defined in a more inclusive sense to refer to the beliefs that individuals and cultures have about both how the world is and how it should be valued and acted in. From this wider perspective, a worldview can be defined as a set of presuppositions, or assumptions, which provide a conceptual framework for both interpreting and interacting with the world. Worldviews attempt to answer questions related to the nature of reality and the origin of the universe, the meaning and purpose of life, and the relations individuals have both with the natural world and with others in society. While people from different cultures may arrive at different answers, the fact that people from all cultures raise similar questions suggests that worldviews can be discussed not only intraculturally (within cultures), but also interculturally (across cultures).

Worldviews may be based on religion, science, philosophy, or other less formal belief systems (see Aerts, Estermann, Fornet-Betancout, & Note, 2009; DeWitt, 2004; Smart, 1999b). They may be comprehensive or narrowly focused, grounded in facts or purely imaginative. Most people have a large number of beliefs on a variety of issues, which are often compartmentalized and sometimes even inconsistent with each other. To the extent that these different beliefs do not come into conflict with each other, it is possible to maintain a degree of consistency in one's life. Worldviews, however, are not simply a jumble of unrelated beliefs, but rather systems of interrelated beliefs that fit together to give the persons who hold them a relatively coherent picture of the world as a whole. Similar concepts frequently discussed by philosophers include *thought styles* (Fleck, 1979), *forms of life* (Wittgenstein, 1958), *conceptual schemes* (Quine, 1963), *paradigms* (Kuhn, 2012), *epistemes* (Foucault, 2002), and *metanarratives* (Lyotard, 1984).

The idea of using *themes* as a way to characterize worldviews has been promoted in the field of anthropology as an alternative to the idea that a given culture has a single ethos which is shared by all of its members (an idea characteristic of the

now widely discredited "essentialist" and "national character" approaches to culture). Rather, themes may be both multiple within cultures and shared between cultures. Redfield (1953) and Kearney (1984) attempted to find themes that are universal to all cultures. Examples include attitudes towards nature, religion, character, lifestyles, morality, society, and politics. While all cultures may indeed develop norms on such themes, the norms themselves are nonetheless often quite different. Moreover, unlike Hoebel (1954), who stressed the manner in which multiple themes are integrated into logical, structured wholes, Opler (1945) contended that worldviews are never perfectly integrated. Rather, there can be multiple themes and counter-themes within worldviews, which, on the one hand, prevent cultures from going to one extreme or another. For example, no culture is purely individualist or purely collectivist; instead, these two themes form a continuum with each other. On the other hand, opposing themes may come into conflict with each other, leading either to social conflict or to the creation of a new worldview. Worldviews change as a result of the dynamic interplay between *dominant* and *minority* themes within a given culture. As minority themes come to be more widely held, they may replace the dominant themes. Changing attitudes towards gay marriage provide a contemporary example. While cross-cultural differences in worldviews can also be a source of conflict, acquiring the ability to consider multiple points of view can lead to the creation of a wider, more comprehensive perspective, which may in turn contribute to the resolution of such conflicts.

5. Philosophy and Intercultural Norms

The themes that make up worldviews roughly correspond to the areas studied by philosophy at their most general level: What is reality and how should it be categorized (metaphysics/ontology)? What is knowledge (epistemology)? What is rationality (logic)? What is value (axiology)? What is beauty (aesthetics)? How should we live as individuals and in relation to others (morality/ethics)? How should society be organized and who decides (social/political philosophy)? This list could be greatly extended by adding more specialized branches of philosophy (philosophy of language, mathematics, science, religion, history, law, education, etc.) and areas of applied philosophy, particularly in the field of ethics (bioethics, environmental ethics, and sexual ethics, as well as various types of professional ethics, such as medical ethics, media ethics, and business ethics).

Each of these branches of philosophy is concerned with normative issues, and, as has been suggested, there can be a great deal of variety among both individuals and cultural groups about what is regarded as real/unreal, true/false, valid/invalid, good/bad, beautiful/ugly, right/wrong, and just/unjust. In other words, virtually any area of philosophy can be approached from a cross-cultural perspective. The emerging field of intercultural philosophy attempts to look at philosophical problems from the perspective of two or more cultures in an attempt to overcome the often ethnocentric positions arrived at by philosophers who are only familiar with their own philosophical traditions. Philosophical reflection on intercultural norms can be en-

gaged in not only by professional philosophers, of course, but by anyone who is exposed to cross-cultural differences in how people think and behave.

Whenever people are engaged in discussions about the assumptions that different cultures make about reality, truth, ethics, and so on, they are in effect engaging in philosophical reflection about intercultural norms. If someone from a given culture says, "This is what should be done" or "This is what should be believed," it is always possible to ask "Why?" Trying to answer that question is precisely what it means to think philosophically about intercultural norms. In attempting to justify cultural norms, it is not enough to simply say: "because they are part of our culture." Rather reasons (*justification* to use the philosophical term) must be given for why particular norms are held and subscribed to.

Universalist approaches to justification attempt to grounds norms on foundational principles held to be applicable to everyone regardless of culture. Relativist approaches contend that since there are no foundational principles which can be agreed upon across cultures, the norms of different cultures must simply be accepted and respected as they are. Constructivism concurs with the relativist position that norms cannot be grounded on universal, foundational principles, but nonetheless argues that relativism fails to show how people from different cultures are able to work together and successfully interact with each other in the absence of mutually shared norms. Rather than attempt to ground norms on foundational principles, however, constructivism sees norms as being created, or *constructed*, through dialogical processes, both within and between cultures (for fuller discussions of each of these positions in relation to ethics, see Evanoff, 2004; 2006). By engaging in intercultural dialogue with others on philosophical topics, it may be possible to arrive at a better understanding of cross-cultural differences and, in some cases, even overcome them.

While the term *intercultural dialogue* is sometimes used in an exclusive sense to refer to situations in which individuals from two different cultures exchange views with each other, it can also be used in a more inclusive sense to refer to discussions involving people from more than two cultures, in which case a more appropriate term might be *intercultural polylogue.* The term *polylogue* was introduced into the field of cultural studies by Kristeva (1977) to describe communication processes involving multiple participants having multiple ways of thinking. The concept has also been employed by Wimmer (2004) in the field of intercultural philosophy and discussed by Chen (2010) in the field of intercultural relations. The aim of intercultural polylogue is to discuss issues from a wide range of cultural perspectives in order to promote greater cross-cultural understanding and also to enable the mutual construction of genuinely intercultural norms that allow people from different cultures to effectively cooperate with each other in the resolution of mutually shared problems. Intercultural philosophy can play a role in these processes and several different approaches to the field will be examined next.

5.1   *"Common Ground" Approaches*

Mall (2000) approaches intercultural philosophy from both an Indian and a Western perspective, developing a hermeneutical theory of the "analogous," which rejects the polarity between total difference and total identity. Assuming the exis-

tence of a *philosophia perennis* (a "perennial philosophy" or one universal "true" philosophy; *cf.* Huxley 1946), which different philosophical traditions comprehend in different ways, Mall argues that no single tradition can lay claim to having articulated the whole. Nonetheless, different traditions overlap in many ways and similarities between them provide the basis for cross-cultural understanding. In effect, Mall's approach involves looking for preexisting common ground between the participants in intercultural dialogue. Indeed, it is possible that the participants in any intercultural dialogue may be able to find points in common, which can be useful in getting the dialogue started. Buddhist compassion and Christian love, for example, are not simply the same concept articulated in different ways, but rather different concepts with overlapping meanings. While the two concepts differ in some ways, they also share certain similarities. Such similarities should not simply be assumed *a priori*, however. Moreover, since it is usually the differences between cultural perspectives, rather than the similarities, which are the source of conflict (Bennett, 1998), the "common ground" approach may be unable to tell us how to deal with conflicts that arise in areas that do not overlap (i.e., areas in which there are outstanding differences). In addition, the approach offers little concrete guidance with respect to emergent problems that transcend cultural boundaries (the ethics of climate change and biotechnology, for example), which the ancients who supposedly invented the *philosophia perennis* may not have thought of. Certainly it is not necessary for the participants in a cross-cultural dialogue to agree about everything, but if solutions to problematic areas cannot be *found*, perhaps it is necessary to go beyond "least-common-denominator" agreements toward the imaginative *construction* of entirely new norms that are able to govern relationships between people from different cultures and help them work together towards the resolution of mutually shared problems.

5.2 *"Stand Your Ground" Approaches*

Fornet-Betancourt (2000), writing from a Hispanic, African, and European perspective, adopts an approach which is the opposite of Mall's, suggesting that the goal of intercultural philosophy is to revitalize cultural perspectives that have historically been ignored or oppressed. Rather than attempt to assimilate or integrate various perspectives into a global "world culture," cross-cultural dialogue, in Fornet-Betancourt's view, should proceed on the basis of a fundamental respect for difference. This approach rejects the modernism implicit in any attempt to arrive at a universal set of philosophical norms, in favor of a postmodern stance, which allows a plurality of philosophical perspectives. Certainly fostering a plurality of perspectives encourages a healthy measure of philosophical creativity and avoids the myopia of thinking that one's own philosophical tradition has a monopoly on truth. Nonetheless, the pluralist view does not seem to go much beyond the laudable goals of promoting mutual understanding and respect for cultural differences. As with "common ground" approaches, "stand your ground" approaches do not really provide any insight into how people from different cultures can effectively interact with each other or work together towards the resolution of mutually shared problems. Even if there is no preexisting common ground, as pluralists such as Fornet-Betancourt con-

tend, it is still plausible to consider possible ways in which common ground could be created (i.e., *constructed*) through the dialogical process itself.

5.3 *"Construct New Ground" Approaches*

In contrast to both Mall's search for preexisting similarities and Fornet-Bentancourt's amplification of difference, Wallner (1997; see also Wallner, Schmidsberger, & Wimmer, 2010), who has written extensively on Chinese medicine, develops a constructive realist approach to intercultural philosophy, which queries how different philosophical traditions can inform and enlarge each other. From this perspective intercultural philosophy involves not simply a sharing, but a widening of perspectives in which it is possible to actually learn something new by considering the views of other cultures. Rather than simply looking for common ground or defending our own ground, we seek out and explore new ground. In doing so, there is also the possibility of moving beyond cross-cultural comparisons towards a more genuinely dialectical, *inter*-cultural approach which is able to critically engage different traditions, thus allowing us to incorporate ideas from different traditions into our own way of thinking. The result, when successful, is not a mere eclecticism or bricolage of incongruous ideas, but rather a genuinely new integrated theory. An example is Yuasa's (1987; 1993) attempt to address the mind−body problem by not just juxtaposing, but actively integrating Asian and Western perspectives in the philosophy of mind into a more comprehensive framework. The problem is completely reconfigured by seeing mind−body relations in nondualistic rather than in dualistic terms. One practical consequence of Yuasa's theory is that it lays the groundwork for a reconciliation of Asian and Western approaches to medicine. Integration is not a panacea, of course, since there may be cases in which it is unnecessary, undesirable, or impossible to achieve. Nonetheless, once the dialectical process has been initiated, it may be possible to go beyond simply integrating existing ideas into a new synthesis towards the active generation of entirely new concepts and theories.

6. Intercultural Philosophy and Meta-philosophy

While cross-cultural conflicts over differences in, say, norms related to table manners can, in most cases, be rather easily resolved, conflicts over differences in philosophical perspectives and worldviews pose much greater difficulties. Such difficulties raise the question of whether it is possible to formulate more general criteria by which worldviews can be evaluated, especially when the worldviews of different cultures turn out to be incommensurable with each other. One possibility is the development of a *meta-philosophy*, which can be defined simply as philosophizing about philosophy (Williamson, 2007; see also Overgaard, Gilbert, & Burwood, 2013). Well-established subfields of meta-philosophy include meta-ontology, meta-epistemology, meta-aesthetics, and meta-ethics. In the field of intercultural communication, Barnlund (1979) has called for the creation of a meta-ethic that could be applied to communication across cultures, while Ting-Toomey and Chung (2005, chap. 13) have suggested that such a meta-ethic would involve taking the total

situational and cultural context in which an action occurs into account.

Meta-philosophy concerns itself with the disciplinary boundaries, goals, and methodologies of philosophy. Each of these concerns will be examined next from an intercultural perspective.

6.1 Disciplinary Boundaries

The boundaries between religion, philosophy, and science are often blurred, a tendency which needs to be taken into account if our aim is to make cross-cultural dialogue on norms as inclusive as possible. Although social norms and worldviews are embedded in particular cultural traditions, they are never fixed but always susceptible to critical reflection and change. To the extent that religious beliefs and norms are held as a matter of faith or dogma, however, they cannot be questioned or subjected to reflective criticism, which is what often makes dialogue between people holding different religious views so difficult. Perhaps the best that can be hoped for in a dialogue between participants who are insistent on their own religious beliefs and not open to the beliefs of other traditions is that they will come away with a better understanding of each other. Of course, some religious tendencies (and religious individuals) are less doctrinaire and more open than others to different perspectives, which provides increased opportunities for the participants not only to share their views with each other, but also to learn something from the views of others. The essays in Cornille (2013) document a trend in inter-religious dialogue away from the competitive rivalry of the past towards a more respectful, cooperative attitude—at least among those who are talking. Fundamentalism, a tendency that can be found in *all* of the world's major religious traditions, is a significant stumbling block to inter-religious (and intercultural) dialogue.

Science concerns itself more with providing empirical descriptions of the world than with making normative prescriptions about how the world should be valued or acted in. Indeed, questions about values and meaning are, as a rule, intentionally bracketed out of scientific inquiry, with the aim of making science as objective and value-free as possible. Unlike dogmatic approaches to religion, science is willing to subject its claims to critical reflection and debate. Much of the conflict between science and religion is related to the fact that science restricts itself to understanding the world in its physical, psychological, and social dimensions, while religion often posits the existence of realities that in some way transcend those dimensions. The methodology of science is based on empirical observation and theoretical explanation, which suggests that if all people observe and reason about the world in the same way, they should be able to reach agreement about how the world actually is. Science, so understood, transcends particular cultures and aims at universality. Nonetheless, science itself is embedded in particular cultures and social practices, and, as studies of traditional and indigenous knowledge systems make evident (Aikenhead & Michell, 2011; Dei, Hall, & Rosenberg, 2000; Warren, Slikkerveer, & Brokensha, 1995), the model of Western science is by no means universal. Harding (1998) provides a survey of work being done in postcolonial science and technology studies, which suggests that all scientific traditions, whether European or non-European, are local knowledge systems embedded in particular cultures that sometimes

converge and sometimes conflict with each other.

Philosophy incorporates elements of both religion and science into its own practice. With science, philosophy is willing to subject its claims to critical reflection and debate, and with religion, philosophy is willing to consider topics related to values and meaning that are methodologically excluded from science. Philosophy is open to all questions, but also open to submitting any answers it arrives at to public scrutiny and dialogue, rather than simply accept them dogmatically. The starting point for philosophy is simply asking questions and trying to answer them and, as we have seen, many of these questions are normative questions related to how people think and act. A philosophy of intercultural norms has both a critical and a constructive side. In its critical dimension philosophy attempts to examine cultural norms in terms of criteria that may themselves be contested and revised. In its constructive dimension philosophy attempts to generate norms that enable people from different cultures to interact effectively both with each other and with the world they inhabit. Of course, arriving at a shared understanding of what it means to "interact effectively" with others and the world is itself part of what intercultural dialogue is all about.

6.2   Goals of Philosophy

Should the aim of philosophy be to arrive at ultimate truth, to pursue knowledge for its own sake, or to help us understand ourselves better and get along with others in the world? Jaspers (1953) famously claimed that the foundations of both religion and philosophy were developed relatively concurrently, but independently, in India (Hinduism, Jainism, Buddhism), China (Confucianism, Taoism), the Middle East (Zoroastrianism, Judaism), and ancient Greece (the origins of the Western philosophical tradition) during an Axial Age lasting from approximately 800 to 200 BCE, a period that has been described by Armstrong (2006) as constituting a "great transformation" in the history of human thought. While there are certainly overlaps in these ancient traditions, as Mall has suggested (see above), each of them nonetheless has different starting points and different lines of development, making it difficult to discern any *philosophia perennis* running throughout the history of human thought and across cultures. The worldview of a contemporary scientific materialist has very little in common with the worldview of an ancient Confucian scholar, and it is questionable how a *philosophia perennis* might be able to resolve the differences between them.

Given the wide range of differences among philosophical traditions (well-documented in Smart, 1999a), the goal of arriving at ultimate truths that can be agreed on by the whole of humanity has proven elusive. Rather than look for ultimate truths, a more plausible goal for intercultural philosophy may be to look at what various philosophical traditions have to offer, to identify similarities and differences, to critically examine them, and then to possibly integrate perspectives from different traditions into a more comprehensive way of thinking. The result would not be ultimate truth in any universal sense, but simply a wider point of view that would enable people to create, or *construct*, common ground where none existed before.

As we have seen, norms involve making judgments about the rules and stan-

dards that should be adopted by individuals and social groups. The various norms that people subscribe to may be held either consciously or unconsciously, rationally considered or not. *Implicit norms* are norms one holds "without thinking." They are so much a part of our lives that we rarely acknowledge having them. In some cases, implicit norms may remain totally out of awareness, with the result that they are not susceptible to critical reflection. In other cases, we may only become aware of implicit norms when we interact with someone whose norms are different from our own. *Explicit norms*, on the other hand, are norms that are openly recognized, understood, and talked about. One goal of a philosophy of intercultural norms should be to bring the norms that people may hold unconsciously to a level of conscious awareness, to the extent possible, so that they can be recognized and subjected to critical reflection. When such norms are studied formally, they become part of the subject matter of philosophy.

6.3   Philosophical Methods

Philosophical methodology can be characterized in at least five different ways, all of which are relevant to a philosophy of intercultural norms. *Descriptive philosophy* uses empirical research methods to discover what people from different cultures actually think about a given philosophical topic. Macer (2006), for example, considers bioethical issues related to science and technology, the environment, genetics, medicine and health care, reproduction, and neuroscience from a cross-cultural perspective. Callicott (1994) and Callicott and McRae (2014) see the philosophical traditions of various cultures as providing conceptual resources that can be utilized in contemporary discussions of environmental ethics. The goal of descriptive approaches is not to simply describe or compare these different perspectives, nor to reconcile all of them into a single set of first-order (*a priori*, foundational) philosophical principles or norms, but rather to see what each perspective might be able to contribute to an intercultural dialogue aimed at resolving mutually shared problems. Although agreement on first-order principles may be unachievable, agreement on shared forms of action may still possible.

A rapidly emerging field closely aligned with descriptive philosophy is *experimental philosophy* (Knobe & Nichols, 2008; 2013). Instead of relying solely on the intuitions of "armchair" philosophers, experimental philosophy involves posing hypothetic philosophical problems to research subjects, with the aim of examining a range of possible normative solutions to any given problem, both within and between cultures. The effort on the part of experimental philosophers to determine not only *what* people think about such problems, but also the reasoning processes that underlie *how* they think about them, overlaps with similar research being conducted by cognitive scientists. Nisbett (2003), for example, working in the area of social psychology, provides an interesting case study of cross-cultural differences in how Asians and Westerners think about the self, perception, causation, logic, and other topics. Illustrative examples include the tendencies of Asians to see the self in relation to others, to think holistically, and to acknowledge contradictions (both–and logic), while Westerners tend to see the self as independent from others, to think analytically, and to avoid contradictions (either–or logic). The philosophers Weinberg,

Nichols, and Stich (2001) have conducted actual experiments to see how people from different cultures reason about epistemological issues, which show that Asians and Westerners tend to have different, even opposite, responses to questions about whether they can really know or only believe something to be true. Machery, Mallon, Nichols, and Stich (2004) have undertaken similar research, which indicates that there can be statistically significant differences in how Asians and Westerners think about semantics. (The latter two essays can also be found in Knobe & Nichols, 2008).

Meta-philosophy in an intercultural context concerns itself with the process by which standards and norms are arrived at. One task of meta-philosophy is to consider how it might be possible to arrive at mutually shared "ground rules" for conducting cross-cultural dialogue and evaluating perspectives held by people from different cultures. Holenstein (2003) suggests "a dozen rules of thumb" that can be used to avoid misunderstandings in cross-cultural dialogues, which address, among other things, issues of equity, rationality, racism, personality, homogeneity, and polarization. Vidal (2012) considers possible standards that can be used to evaluate worldviews, including objective, subjective, and intersubjective criteria. Evanoff (2014) looks at the dialogical process from an intercultural perspective, arguing that since the meta-normative principles people from different cultures bring with them to the dialogical process cannot be assumed in advance, these, too, must be negotiated.

Normative philosophy is concerned with which norms should actually be adopted in cross-cultural situations and how these norms might be justified. For example, do individual human rights take precedence over duties to others (as in most Western cultures) or vice versa (as in many Asian cultures)? Might it be possible to reconcile these two perspectives? *Applied philosophy* proceeds to apply insights derived from normative philosophy to the resolution of concrete problems faced by people across cultures (May, Wong, & Delston, 2011). The emerging field of global ethics, for example, is specifically concerned with developing international norms that can be used to address such problems as poverty, war, immigration, terrorism, gender discrimination, and climate change (Widdows, 2011).

7. Conclusion

The outline presented above suggests a research program for a philosophy of intercultural norms. Different cultural traditions often provide very different answers to philosophical questions, and, as has been noted, empirical evidence is accumulating which suggests that the thought processes people use for arriving at these answers are also subject to historical and cultural variation. Further work in descriptive and empirical philosophy would likely produce additional support for the claim that people neither think nor reason the same way across cultures.

Normative philosophy is useful in making suggestions for how norms can be arrived at and justified. Nonetheless, there can also be differences with respect to the normative positions held by people from different cultures. Not only within, but also between cultures, people often start from completely different premises and arrive at

completely different answers to normative questions. Dialogue (and polylogue) between individuals holding different normative positions is often hampered by the fact that arguments are typically made *within* a given position and, thus, can only be validated by those who accept that position in the first place.

Hence, as has been suggested, there is a need for meta-philosophy, which is essentially the reflexive process of submitting both our own views and the views of others to critical reflection. While it is possible to regard meta-philosophy as a second-order discipline, which is able to evaluate philosophical claims from a position above and outside philosophy, it seems clear that meta-philosophy itself is open to conflicting views, which themselves must be evaluated. There is no ultimate objective, *a priori*, foundational position from which philosophical claims can be justified, at least none that is universally agreed upon. Proposing that second-order standpoints should themselves be evaluated by a third-order standpoint (a *meta-meta-philosophy*) simply leads to an unfruitful infinite regress. Since meta-philosophy is unable to provide a second-order (or third-order) standpoint from which first-order norms can be evaluated, it cannot function as a "referee" in intercultural dialogue but is something that itself must be negotiated. The bottom line is that *how* intercultural dialogue on philosophical topics should be conducted is itself a topic which can only be addressed by those actually participating in a dialogue on these issues. If, as we have suggested, the starting point for philosophy is simply asking questions and trying to answer them, then *everything* is open to discussion.

Meta-philosophy, so conceived, involves acknowledging that we are all situated in particular cultural traditions, which may limit the views that we are able to entertain and make it difficult for us to overcome an ethnocentric perspective. Nonetheless, it is possible for individuals to transcend those perspectives by engaging in reflective thought on their own initiative. Indeed, persons who question their own traditions and attempt to come up with alternative ways of thinking play an important role in internal cultural change. It is also possible for us to widen the scope of our understanding by engaging in dialogue with others about our differing views and the arguments we use to support them. By doing so, it may also be possible to adopt a more dialectical, constructivist approach to intercultural dialogue, which allows us to critically reflect on both our own and other traditions, and to integrate what we take to be positive elements from each into our own way of thinking, while discarding what we take to be negative elements (Evanoff, 2009). Rescher (2006) adopts a specifically dialectical approach to meta-philosophy, which suggests that while the world is too complex to be fully understood, by placing different views in dialectical tension with each other, we may nonetheless be able to gain a wider, more comprehensive perspective.

Meta-philosophy, thus, enables the participants in a dialogue to, first of all, clarify whatever similarities and differences there are in the views being discussed and the methods used for arriving at them. It also encourages the participants to step back from their own perspectives, to gain a wider perspective by considering alternative points of view, and to be open to the idea of changing their own views in light of arguments they find persuasive. Even if one side is not persuaded by the other side's arguments, the two sides may nonetheless gain a better understanding of each other.

It is also possible, however, for the participants in an intercultural dialogue to jointly integrate perspectives from each of their respective cultures, leading to the construction of an entirely new, more comprehensive perspective, a process referred to as *third culture building* in the field of intercultural communication (Casmir, 1999; see also Evanoff, 2000). There are no prerequisites for engaging in these processes other than a willingness to participate in the dialogue itself, and no pre-existing guidelines to inform us how intercultural dialogue should be conducted other than those which the participants themselves create. We are obliged to construct not only the final positions we arrive at but also the methods we use for reaching them. We build the road as we go.

Applied philosophy is the ultimate destination for anyone concerned with "what we should actually do" with respect to problems faced across cultures. Philosophy essentially begins when individuals and groups, whether intraculturally or interculturally, confront a problem that must be solved and it ends when a solution to that problem has been found. The standard for success, ideally at least, is when people who are interacting with each other are able to effectively resolve mutual problems in ways that are agreeable to all sides.

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異文化間規範の哲学に向けて

　　文化的規範とは何か、それらはどのような機能をもつかをよりよく理解することは、異なる規範をもつ異文化に属する人々が相互作用する際に生じる衝突を解決することに貢献し得る。本稿は、異文化間関係の分野において主観的、内的、または深層文化といった様々な呼称をもつ規範を特定することから始める。

　　次に、文化的規範の本質について、その構造と機能の両面から検討する。本稿では、規範の起源は自然の中に直接見いだせるものではなく、個人または社会によって構築されるものとして議論する。規範は、文化内/間の様々なレベルにおいて構築されうるものであり、社会科学と哲学の双方の方法を用いて、様々な専門分野の視点から研究することができる。

　　社会的規範と世界観は区別される。社会的規範は習俗、道徳観、慣習法、普通法、民法、宗教法、および国際法の基礎をも形成する。世界観は信念や価値観についての規範を含み、個人または文化集団内/間において広く共有される。

　　次に本稿は、異文化間規範の哲学のための研究について概観する。異文化間哲学には3つの異なるアプローチが考えられる。「共通基盤」アプローチは、すべての文化に普遍的な規範を探求する。「自己の基盤に立つ」アプローチは、規範が文化によって多様であることを強調する。そして「新基盤を構築する」アプローチは、緊急の問題に対処するために全く新しい規範を構築する一方で、既存の文化的規範を批判的に検討・統合することを目指す。

　　結論として、哲学が、異文化間規範とそれらに関連する差異に起因する衝突の解決に寄与しうることを考慮し、異文化間哲学の学問的境界、目的、そして研究方法のメタな哲学的分析を提供する。

　　キーワード：異文化間規範、異文化間哲学、構成主義