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Metaphilosophy and Intercultural Dialogue on Bioethics

Richard Evanoff

Introduction

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

This paper considers metaphilosophical approaches to bioethics from an intercultural perspective. The paper begins by considering religion, science, and philosophy as disciplines which inform bioethics, and then offers an overview of several methodological approaches to bioethics, including descriptive philosophy, experimental philosophy, normative philosophy, metaphilosophy, and applied philosophy. Three

metaphilosophical approaches to intercultural philosophy are examined next: "common ground" approaches, "stand your ground" approaches, and "construct new ground" approaches, based respectively on perennial philosophy, a postmodern respect for difference, and constructivism. Running parallel to these metaphilosophical approaches to intercultural philosophy are three metaethical approaches to intercultural dialogue on bioethics: realist approaches, which are based on a monistic, absolutist, and universalist view of ethics; idealist approaches, which advocate pluralism, historicism, and relativism; and constructivist approaches, which adopt a relational, coevolutionary, and pragmatic perspective. In accordance with the principle that ethical responsibility is entailed whenever the actions of one culture have an impact on another culture, the paper argues in favor of a constructivist perspective, which contends that people from different cultures may be able to reach agreement on bioethical norms, despite having different metaethical commitments. The paper concludes by suggesting possibilities for creating "third cultures," which integrate the perspectives of two or more cultures into a single framework.

Disciplinary Boundaries

The boundaries between religion, science, and philosophy are often blurred, a tendency which needs to be taken into account if cross-cultural dialogue on bioethics is to be as inclusive as possible. Although bioethical perspectives are embedded in particular cultural traditions, they are never fixed but always susceptible to critical reflection and change. In this section religious, scientific, and philosophical approaches to intercultural dialogue on bioethics are examined.

Religious approaches

For many people religion is a primary source of guidance on ethical issues, including bioethical issues. 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 on bioethics 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 provide 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 interreligious 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 interreligious and intercultural dialogue on bioethical issues.

Scientific approaches

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, whereas 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 (Warren, Slikkerveer, and Brokensha 1995; Dei, Hall, and Rosenberg 2000; Aikenhead and Michell 2011), 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.

Philosophical approaches

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 resolved, since this latter endeavor is fundamentally philosophical and normative rather than empirical. Philosophy incorporates elements of both religion and science into its own practice. With science, philosophy is able 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 many of these questions are normative questions related to how people think and act. A metaphilosophical approach to intercultural dialogue on bioethics has both a critical and a constructive side. In its critical dimension metaphilosophy attempts to examine bioethical norms in terms of criteria that may themselves be contested and revised. In its constructive dimension metaphilosophy attempts to generate bioethical 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 on bioethics is all about.

Philosophical Methods

This section considers five different philosophical methodologies that are relevant to intercultural dialogue on bioethics: descriptive philosophy, empirical philosophy, normative philosophy, metaphilosophy, and applied philosophy.

Descriptive philosophy

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. While descriptive approaches are often comparative (see, for example, Smart 2000), their goal is not simply to describe or compare different philosophical perspectives, nor to reconcile all of them

into a single set of first-order (*a priori,* foundational) 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 be possible.

Experimental philosophy

A rapidly emerging field closely aligned with descriptive philosophy is experimental philosophy (Appiah 2008; Knobe and 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. 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 (2005), 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). Among 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.

Normative philosophy

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? The aim of normative philosophy is to make suggestions for how cross-cultural norms on such issues might be arrived at. Not only within, but also between cultures, people often start from completely different premises and arrive at completely different answers to normative questions. Dialogue 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, the need for metaphilosophy.

Metaphilosophy

Metaphilosophy is essentially the reflexive process of submitting both our own views and the views of others to critical reflection. One task of metaphilosophy 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 (2015a; 2015b) looks at the dialogical process from an intercultural perspective, arguing that since the metanormative principles people from different cultures bring with them to the dialogical process cannot be assumed in advance, these, too, must be negotiated.

Applied philosophy

Applied philosophy proceeds to apply insights derived from normative philosophy to the resolution of concrete problems faced by people across cultures (May, Wong, and 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, climate change, and environmental degradation (Evanoff 2011; Widdows 2011; Hutchings 2018). 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.

Metaphilosophical approaches to intercultural dialogue

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. Three distinct metaphilosophical approaches to intercultural philosophy will be examined next.

"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 existence 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. Although Buddhist compassion and Christian love, for example, are not simply the same concept

articulated in different ways, but rather different concepts with overlapping meanings, they nonetheless share certain similarities. Such similarities in ethical concepts 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.

"Stand Your Ground" Approaches

Fornet-Betancourt (2000; see also Aerts et al. 2009), 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 contend, it is still plausible to consider possible ways in which common ground could be created (i.e., *constructed*) through the dialogical process itself.

"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, and 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.

Metaethical approaches to intercultural bioethics

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 metaphilosophically 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 subscribed to and advocated. In this section, three metaethical approaches to bioethics,

which correspond to the three metaphilosophical approaches to intercultural philosophy discussed in the previous section, are examined.

Realist approaches

Realist approaches to justification attempt to grounds ethical norms on foundational principles believed to be exist *objectively* apart from human consciousness. Realists frequently adopt a *monistic* perspective, which suggests that there is one, and only one, "correct" answer to any bioethical problem. Consequently bioethical norms may be regarded as *absolute,* meaning that they do not change with time but are valid across all historical periods, and *universal,* meaning that they are applicable to everyone regardless of culture. When engaging in intercultural dialogue on bioethics, universalists typically adopt the view that everyone should ultimately accept the same norms, with the goal of creating a global, cosmopolitan perspective on ethical issues (Appiah 2006).

There are two main difficulties with realist approaches to intercultural dialogue on bioethics. First, from a purely descriptive perspective, it is difficult to find any existing bioethical norms regarded as absolute and universal in all cultures. While anthropologists have, indeed, documented certain cultural universals (see Brown 1991; Pinker 2002)—all known cultures have norms related to food consumption, sexual relations, kinship systems, and the like—the specific norms associated with each of these "universals" are highly variable across cultures. Second, from a normative perspective, if bioethical norms are indeed objective and knowable by all people, there should be no more disagreement about bioethical norms across cultures than there are disagreements about the existence of the sun and moon. In short, realism is unable to account for why people from different cultures are unable to agree about which bioethical norms are indeed absolute and universal.

Idealist approaches

Idealist approaches to justification argue that ethical norms are in some sense mind-dependent and, therefore, either *subjective* with respect to individuals or *intersubjective* with regard to cultural groups. Idealists subscribe to the *pluralist* view that for any given bioethical question, many different answers are possible. Norms are regarded as being neither absolute, since they are variable across historical periods (a view known as *historicism*), nor *universal,* since different individuals and cultural groups may adhere to completely different bioethical norms. Idealists frequently embrace the *relativist* view that since there is no criteria for judging which norms are "correct," the various norms held by different individuals and cultures should be simply be accepted and respected as they are.

While respect for different cultures is certainly important, cultural relativism provides no guidance whatsoever for how people from different cultures might be able to resolve mutually shared problems in *intercultural* situations. Despite having the virtue of avoiding ethnocentrism (the view that one's own culture is the only "correct" one) and cultural imperialism (the attempt to impose one's own cultural norms on people from other cultures), cultural relativism nonetheless implies that cultural norms should be blindly (subserviently) accepted as they are, thus denying any attempts to criticize existing cultural norms and propose imaginative alternatives. Cultural relativism seems progressive but is in fact conservative and tradition-bound. If we think that current cultural norms should simply be preserved as they are, then no cultural change or social progress is possible. Moreover, cultural relativism easily leads to cultural isolation (nationalism, fundamentalism, identity politics) and the ghettoization of cultures. By

remaining in the "rut" of our respective cultures, we shield ourselves from opportunities to learn something from other cultures and to share our own culture with others.

Constructivist approaches

A third approach to justification 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 engaging in dialogue with others, both within and between cultures (Evanoff 1998; 2006b; 2010). Rather than simply say, "You have your norms 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. 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 commonly shared norms. Rather than attempt to ground norms on foundational principles, however, constructivism contends that norms are actively generated through the transactions we have both with an objectively existing world and with others.

By engaging in intercultural dialogue with others on bioethical issues, it may be possible to arrive at a better understanding of cross-cultural differences and, in some cases, even finding ways to create common ground between people from different cultures. Constructivism adopts the *relational* view that individuals and cultures do not exist in isolation from each other, but rather in relation to each other, indicating the need to find mutually agreeable ways to also cooperate with each other. To the extent that cultures were isolated from each other in the past, they may have been able to maintain distinct ethical norms, but this stance is problematic in a globalized world. There may

indeed be many different answers to bioethical questions, which vary from culture, but coming up with workable solutions to commonly faced problems may still be necessary in intercultural situations.

Constructivists regard cultural change as a *co-evolutionary* process in which ethical norms evolve in relation to the needs of people to better interact with each other and with the environment. No norms are absolute; some may go extinct (e.g., slavery was once an accepted practice, but no longer). Moreover, new norms need to be created to deal with new situations. Emergent issues which did not exist in the past (e.g., genetic engineering, climate change, etc.) require the construction of entirely new norms to effectively deal with them. Intercultural dialogue on such issues involves the ability to effectively critique the norms of both our own and other cultures, and to creatively imagine new alternatives. Any solutions we arrive at can be evaluated on the basis of the pragmatic criteria of whether or not they actually solve the problem under consideration and in a way that is acceptable to everyone who is affected by that problem.

It is not necessary for people from different cultures to reach complete agreement on all ethical norms. While convergence (agreement, consensus) is necessary with respect to mutually shared problems, divergence (cultural diversity) in non-problematic areas may be maintained and even encouraged. Dower offers the following principle for world ethics: "Where the lines of cause and effect run across nation–states, so do the lines of moral responsibility" (1998, p. 165). In other words, if the actions of people in one country (e.g., producing excessive CO_2 emissions) have a negative effective on people in another country (e.g., causing rising sea levels), then the matter is no longer one which the first country can decide for itself. Rather, dialogue is necessary to resolve the issue in a way that is satisfactory to residents of both countries. People from cultures with different metaethical commitments may still be able to agree on practical courses of

action for solving particular problems. Naess (1989), for example, argues that different "ecosophies" (philosophies of the environment) may be able to generate a similar environmental ethic. We do not need to belong to the same religion or share the exact same philosophical perspective to be able to effectively deal with bioethical problems across cultures.

Conclusion

Metaphilosophy in an intercultural context concerns itself with the process by which people from different cultures are able to arrive at mutually shared norms. While it is possible to regard metaphilosophy as a second-order discipline, which is able to evaluate philosophical claims from a position above and outside philosophy, it seems clear that metaphilosophy 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-metaphilosophy*) simply leads to an unfruitful infinite regress. Since metaphilosophy 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.

Metaphilosophy, 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 2006a; 2012). Rescher (2006) adopts a specifically dialectical approach to metaphilosophy, 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.

Metaphilosophy, 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 1997; 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 travel.

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