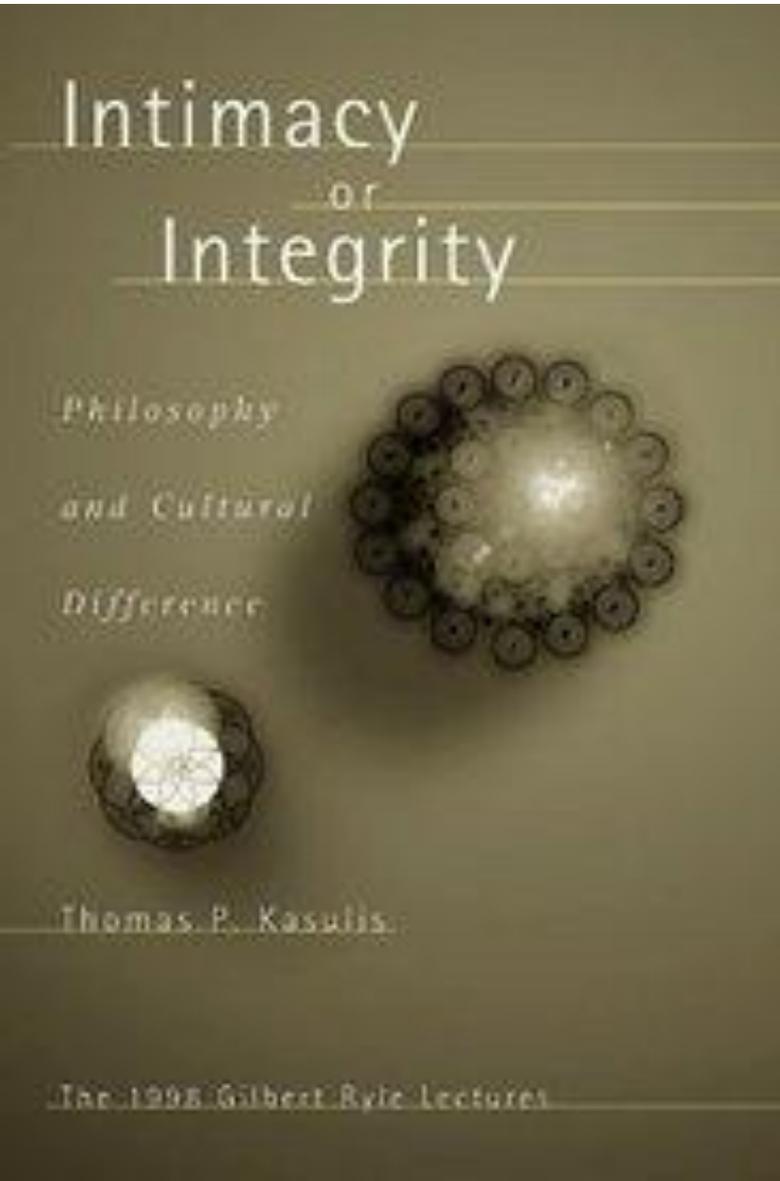


Asian and Western mindsets

comparing intimacy (connectivity) and integrity (autonomy)

Inspired by Thomas D. Kasulis



Prof. dr André van der Braak
Professor Buddhist Philosophy in Dialogue
with other World Views
Department of Religion
VU University, Amsterdam

Fons Trompenaars

Solving moral dilemmas in an intercultural context



- You're in a car with your friend, he's driving 50 where he's allowed 30. Do you lie in court to cover for him?
- American: if our value is integrity, it cannot be any different than my friend not expecting me to lie, and me not lying
- Korean: integrity cannot be any different than me helping my friend
- Cultural values are answers to a problem.

Thomas Kasulis



The problem consists of philosophical questions:

- How can I know something?
- How can I convince someone of the rightness of my position?
- What is moral?

Culture influences not only the answers to such questions, but also how we arrive at those answers

How do we deal with differences in cultural values?

NOT: universalism; globalization, universal acceptance of common values, e.g. human rights (liberalism: hegemony of American cultural values). The superficial acceptance of foreign terminology does not mean actual acceptance of foreign values. For example, the Japanese *kenri* means “rights”.

NOT: cultural relativism (postmodernism): those-who-are-not-us can never understand who we are. Translation IS possible.

BUT: recognize patterns of relation that construct cultural values. Understand non-western cultures. Study intercultural philosophy.

NOT in order to come to a new synthesis between East and West (transcending the differences) but to change our relationship to the differences.

Distinction between understanding and persuasion:

We are often quite able to understand the other (the universalists are right on this) but are often not persuaded by or sympathetic to the other (the relativists are right on this).

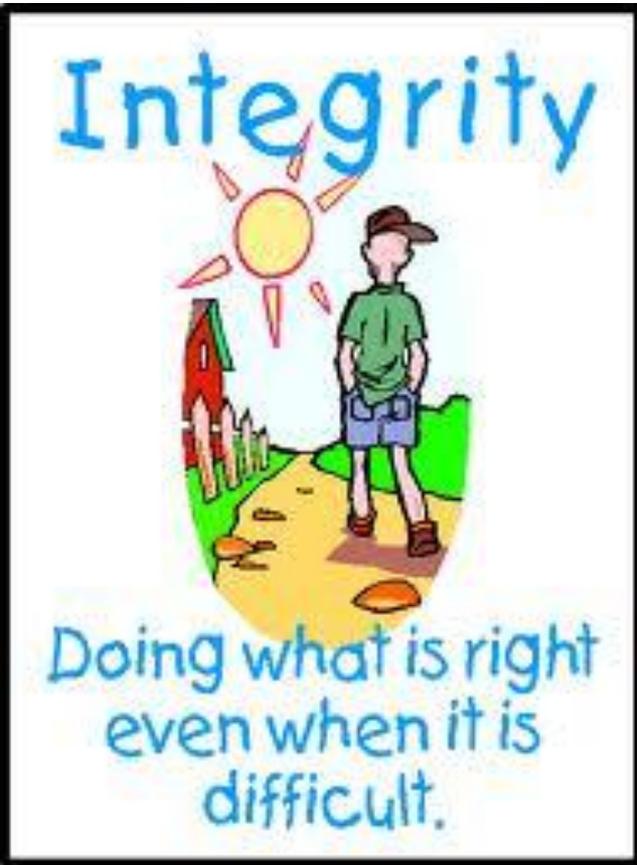
“the boundaries separating cultures or subcultures are often most visible when we understand what the other is saying but do not grasp its relevance” (7)

intimacy (connectivity) and integrity (autonomy)

Intimacy: making known (*intimare*) to a close friend (*intimus* or *intima*) what is innermost (*intimus*). A sharing of innermost qualities. Dominant in Asian cultures.

Integrity: being whole, indivisible and inviolable. What has integrity is untouched, uncorrupted, pure. A person with integrity does not compromise his or her own virtue because of outside influence. Dominant in Western cultures.

Aspects of integrity



1. Knowledge is based on empirical observation and logical reasoning that can be publicly verified. It is impersonal.
2. Self and other belong together in an “external” way (belonging-to). If the relation between A en B is dissolved, A is still A, and B is still B. For example, marriage as a legal relationship.
3. Knowledge as ideally empty of effect.
4. The intellectual and psychological as distinct from the somatic.
5. Knowledge as reflective and self-conscious of its own grounds. It is “bright” and open.

Aspects of intimacy



1. Knowledge is personal rather than public, it is shared by those “in the know” (such as experts).
2. In an intimate relation, self and other belong together in an “internal” way that does not sharply distinguish the two (belonging-with). A is partly B, and B is partly A. For example, marriage as a love relationship.
3. Intimate knowledge has an affective dimension
4. Intimate knowledge is somatic as well as psychological. Knowledge is embodied.
5. Intimacy’s ground is not generally self-conscious, reflective, or self-illuminating. It is “dark” and esoteric.

Consequences for ethics



- Integrity:
 - relationships should recognize and preserve the integrity of all individuals involved.
 - development of formal principles
 - responsibility.
- Intimacy:
 - I open myself to the other and accept the opening of the other to me.
 - I make the suffering of the other also my suffering.
 - Not applying formal principles but entering into the situation of the other (situational ethics)
 - responsiveness.

The case of the friend in the car

Integrity	Consequence	Intimacy	Consequence
Knowledge is impersonal	There is a right choice in principle	Knowledge is personal	People will make different ethical choices
Belonging-to	Loyalty does not affect the choice	Belonging-with	Loyalty is important
Not affective	The choice does not have to feel good	Affective	The choice also has to feel good
Not somatic	Think it through	Somatic	Listen to your gut
Bright and open	You can explain how you come to your choice	Dark and esoteric	You cannot explain your choice well

Managing intercultural communication



- Which orientation best captures reality?
- There is no rational basis for choosing one over the other.
- Integrity and intimacy resemble two natural languages.
- As a bilingual German and English-speaker moves back and forth between the languages, depending on the audience, so too one can be culturally bi-orientational in thinking and valuing.
- We not only use both orientations, but are aware of them as simply orientations. This takes practice and hard work.

Heaven and hell in Buddhism

