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Clarifying Conversations: Understanding Cultural Difference in Philosophical Education¹

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Abstract: The goal of this essay is to explain how Wittgenstein's philosophy may be helpful for understanding and addressing challenges to cross-cultural communication in educational contexts. In particular, the notions of “hinge,” “intellectual distance,” and “grounds” from *On Certainty* will be helpful for identifying cultural differences. Wittgenstein's dialogical conception of philosophy in *Philosophical Investigations* will be helpful for addressing that cultural difference in conversation. While there can be no panacea to address all potential sources of confusion, Wittgenstein's philosophy has strong resources that are helpful for curbing some of our human tendencies to misunderstand another person.

Keywords: Wittgenstein, certainty, communication, cultural differences, education

1. Introduction

Detecting cultural differences would seem to be a first requirement for successful cross-cultural communication, but cultural differences can be detected without being well understood. There are many good reasons to approach Wittgenstein's philosophy in thinking

¹ This essay draws on an earlier paper I presented at the International Forum on Chinese Culture and Cross-Cultural Communication, Beijing Foreign Studies University in July, 2013. I am grateful to audience members for questions and comments on that paper.

about education. One such reason is the need to acquire a set of conceptual tools and a model of philosophy that are both useful for addressing obstacles to cross-cultural communication. Given the diversities present in so many educational contexts today, this apparent utility of Wittgenstein's philosophy would be all the more practically important for faculty.

Differences in cultural background might be less important in courses in academic disciplines that are more empirical or formal in nature, where mastery of empirical methods or formal systems is easily measured; however, because many areas in philosophy make use of interpretation, analysis, qualitative research, and intuition in their investigations, these areas are particularly susceptible to undetected encroachments of cultural bias.

My aim in this essay is to explore some resources from Wittgenstein's philosophy that are relevant for identifying and addressing challenges to cross-cultural communication in educational contexts. Human beings possess commitments to values, beliefs, and/or traditions that are not so easily or readily called into question. In what follows, I will unpack what this means and what role these sorts of commitments might play in educational settings. In the first part of the essay, I explore the notions of "hinge," "intellectual distance," and "grounds" as the expressions are used in Wittgenstein's late text *On Certainty*. In the second part, I explore the self-reflective aspects of Wittgenstein's model of philosophy. In the third part, I draw together these two strands to address their implications for cross-cultural education.

2. Epistemology and Cultural Differences in *On Certainty*

Before proceeding, some clarification of the role the term "culture" plays in this essay would help in avoiding confusion. By "culture," I understand complexes of values, beliefs, traditions, practices, and/or languages that are inherited from one's social context, frequently including family and neighboring community. This is not meant as a definition of "culture";

rather it is a list of some features commonly associated with “culture,” as ordinary language-users (not necessarily theorists) use the term.² What I have in mind by the expression “cross-cultural communication” is an event where interlocutors identify with different cultural backgrounds and where these differences (acknowledged or not) are relevant to the communication ventured. In some cases, interlocutors may self-consciously identify with particular cultural traditions and in other cases, they will not. One’s culture may appear as just common sense, where one might refer to “what we all know.” Appraisals of cross-cultural communication may be one-sided. Even when all parties identify a communication event as being cross-cultural, differences within cultures can easily be overlooked, with a tendency to view all members of a particular culture as sharing a set of values or beliefs. All of this suggests that scholars have good reason to proceed very carefully when trying to understand cross-cultural communication. The words themselves might seem to invite an understanding of “culture” that is static and unitary, where cross-cultural communication would involve the transmission of information from one cultural-linguistic group to another (or vice versa). This is a deficient model in which the particular interlocutors would be incidental to the communication event. In introducing the notion of a language-game, Wittgenstein was not presenting a *theory* of meaning; a *theory* of culture rooted in Wittgenstein’s ideas would be likely to stray far from Wittgenstein’s philosophical purposes.

a. Hinge Propositions

In *On Certainty*, Wittgenstein uses a variety of metaphors to grasp the epistemic dynamics relating to expressions of certainty. While these discussions relate primarily to

² Consider the following definition of “culture” from the *Oxford English Dictionary*: “The distinctive ideas, customs, social behaviour, products, or way of life of a particular nation, society, people, or period. Hence: a society or group characterized by such customs, etc.” (OED 2015)

problems in epistemology (and particularly, G. E. Moore's critique of idealism), Wittgenstein's remarks are helpful for appraising cultural differences especially where these differences involve alternate certainties or commitments.

Regarding "hinges," it is notable that there are just three references to the notion in *On Certainty* (remarks 341, 343, and 655); however, a growing body of secondary literature has been accruing lately on the concept and its role in epistemology.³ While there is disagreement over how to interpret the expression "hinge proposition" as well as over how to apply the notion in contemporary epistemology, I will focus my attention on how Wittgenstein's remarks on "hinges" can help with appraisals of epistemic differences.

The first two passages from *On Certainty* that concern "hinges" appear in the 340s; yet it is clear from the context that they are part of a series of remarks that ought to be read together as developing a line of thought. Arguably, the relevant line of thought begins at remark 336, where Wittgenstein writes:

"But what men consider reasonable or unreasonable alters. At certain periods men find reasonable what at other periods they found unreasonable. And vice-versa.

But is there no objective character here?

Very intelligent and well-educated people believe in the story of creation in the Bible, while others hold it as proven false, and the grounds of the latter are well known to the former." (Wittgenstein 1972, 43e)

Here, Wittgenstein considers the differences between people in perception of reasonableness of a given claim. What appears to be plausible "alters". The remark may mean at least three things: (1) what a person considers plausible varies throughout their life, (2) what a people

³ Scholarship by Annalisa Coliva, Danièle Moyal-Sharrock, and Duncan Pritchard has figured prominently in this area. See, for example, Coliva 2013 and 2015, Moyal-Sharrock 2007, and Pritchard 2000 and 2001. See also the forthcoming special issue of *International Journal for the Study of Skepticism* edited by Coliva and Moyal-Sharrock on Hinge Epistemology.

considers as plausible changes throughout history, and (3) what different contemporaries find to be plausible may differ.

Wittgenstein continues to explore these themes of differential epistemic plausibility alongside long term themes from *On Certainty* concerning doubt. In 341, he returns to the overarching point about the limited scope of doubt. Wittgenstein writes:

341. That is to say, the *questions* that we raise and our *doubts* depend on the fact that some propositions are exempt from doubt, are as it were like hinges on which those turn.

342. That is to say, it belongs to the logic of our scientific investigations that certain things are *in deed* not doubted.

343. But it isn't that the situation is like this: We just *can't* investigate everything, and for that reason we are forced to rest content with assumption. If I want the door to turn, the hinges must stay put.

344. My *life* consists in my being content to accept many things. (Wittgenstein 1972, 44e)

During an inquiry, some propositions remain “exempt from doubt...like hinges on which those turn.” The exempting of these propositions from doubt, furthermore, is a “deed”, an action. Despite the fact that for the door to turn “the hinges must stay put,” these hinges may and do change over time, and different hinge commitments are perceptible (as indicated in 336).

Wittgenstein returns to the notion of “hinges” in the 650s when discussing reasoning in mathematics and comparing mathematical reasoning with everyday reasoning. He compares the exemption from doubt of certain mathematical propositions with the incontrovertibility of his acceptance of the proposition “I am called L.W.” While both kinds

of proposition are incontrovertible, they are so for different reasons; the mathematical proposition, “The multiplication '12x12', when carried out by people who know how to calculate, will in the great majority of cases give the result ‘144’,” (86e) is exempt from doubt on the basis of what it is to comprehend the relevant mathematical definitions, while the proposition about self-naming is secure because it has a mass of evidence in its favor, and thus would not enter into doubt (doubt for it has no ground). On the basis of these remarks, one has a sense of different kinds of plausibility and of hinges that support senses of plausibility. What we consider to be plausible (propositions that may be the focus of inquiry) depends upon a smaller set of propositions that are exempt from doubt. The example of those who believe the creation story of the Bible is instructive in that it sets the stage for the exploration of “hinge propositions,” but it is different from both the mathematical and self-naming examples; after all, there is not unanimous support for it (unlike the other two examples). It may just be that the Bible example concerns a different sort of incontrovertibility of belief. An axiom must be accepted to perform a mathematical operation, and a grammatical rule must be accepted for one to articulate a well-formed semantic unit in a language, but belief in a narrative from the Bible would be secured by more than mere pragmatic grounds (e.g. in order to speak Chinese, one must pronounce the appropriate tones). The ground of belief in the merit of a sacred text may lie in reasoned grounds, but more likely, it will lie in the context of a life, its relationships, and the commitments that trusted others happen to hold.⁴ What I take from the above is that not only are there different hinge commitments, but there are different kinds of hinge commitments, and there are different ways in which hinge commitments may come to hold fast for one. To help elaborate

⁴ Compare with remarks 159 and 160 (23e).

on these differences, it will be helpful to consider related notions such as “intellectual distance” and “ground”.

b. Intellectual Distance

In the set of remarks that consider the statement “I know that I have never been on the moon,” Wittgenstein contemplates speaking with others who might think they have indeed been to the moon. Wittgenstein writes,

108. “But is there then no objective truth? Isn't it true, or false, that someone has been on the moon?” If we are thinking within our system, then it is certain that no one has ever been on the moon. Not merely is nothing of the sort ever seriously reported to us by reasonable people, but our whole system of physics forbids us to believe it. For this demands answers to the questions “How did he overcome the force of gravity?” “How could he live without an atmosphere?” and a thousand others which could not be answered. But suppose that instead of all these answers we met the reply: “We don't know how one gets to the moon, but those who get there know at once that they are there; and even you can't explain everything.” We should feel ourselves *intellectually very distant* from someone who said this. (17e, emphasis added)

It is not just that one person believes the statement that people have been on the moon and the other one does not; the difference between the two concerns, perhaps more importantly, the relevance of physics. Someone who answers when challenged, “We don't know how one gets to the moon, but those who get there know at once that they are there; and even you can't explain everything,” is someone who does not secure their beliefs by means of the “whole system of physics”; it is because of this that Wittgenstein writes that “we should feel ourselves intellectually very distant from someone who said this.” The feeling of intellectual

distance arises out of the perception that another person does not merely adopt contradictory propositions to oneself but that the methods that the person employs are different than or even incompatible with the methods one uses oneself. There may be greater or lesser distances between people in this way. Perception of intellectual difference is the perception of an alternate epistemological orientation (what might be called “epistemic imaginaries”⁵), from the conclusions reached to the methods used and right down to the very goals that guide inquiry.

c. “ground”

References to “ground” vastly outnumber references to “hinges” and “intellectual distance”. While the latter notions appear, respectively, just three times and once, the notion of “ground” appears at least sixty times. Wittgenstein’s references to “grounds” have to do largely with reasons that have the effect of securing propositions, sometimes from all doubt, but some uses of the notion refer to grounds that can be overridden by still more compelling grounds. The ultimate epistemic grounds, then, would be those that secure propositions from all doubt, but importantly, one might wish to possess objectively certain grounds rather than subjectively certain grounds (Moyal-Sharrock 2007, 76).⁶ Here are a few references to “grounds” that show the variety of epistemic circumstances Wittgenstein entertains (emphasis added):

⁵ Here I am drawing on Charles Taylor’s notion of “social imaginaries.” Taylor uses the term to refer to the way “ordinary people ‘imagine’ their social surroundings”; it is “that common understanding which makes possible common practices.” (Taylor 2007, 171f) An “epistemic imaginary” would be a shared understanding between people about hinges and grounds (i.e. about the practices involved in securing beliefs).

⁶ See also Brice 2014 for an analysis of a similar distinction between “bottom up” (i.e. biologically-grounded) and “top-down” (i.e. culturally-grounded) approaches to achieving certainty.

“But what about such a proposition as "I know I have a brain"? Can I doubt it? *Grounds* for doubt are lacking! Everything speaks in its favour, nothing against it.” (Wittgenstein 1972, 2e)

“"I know" often means: I have the proper *grounds* for my statement. ” (4e)

“Isn't this altogether like the way one can instruct a child to believe in a God, or that none exists, and it will accordingly be able to produce apparently telling *grounds* for the one or the other?” (16e)

“You must bear in mind that the language-game is so to say something unpredictable. I mean: it is not based on *grounds*. It is not reasonable (or unreasonable). It is there - like our life.” (73e)

“Is it wrong for me to be guided in my actions by the propositions of physics? Am I to say I have no good *ground* for doing so? Isn't precisely this what we call a 'good *ground*'?” (80e)

In these passages, we see a variety of roles being played by “grounds”. On the one hand, the word “grounds” is used much the same as the word “reasons” might be used. To have grounds for a proposition is just to have reasons to believe it to be true (or more frequently, Wittgenstein refers to “grounds for doubt” being lacking). This use of “grounds” is justificatory; it is by means of grounds that one is justified in propositional attitudes such as certainty, knowledge, or doubt. Yet, another use of “grounds” appears here as well. This is

the idea of the “background” against which propositions can be understood and subsequently judged true or false.⁷ Many of the uses of “grounds” in *On Certainty* are like this; the word is used to refer to the systematic nature of a person’s epistemic life; “grounds” represent the measures a person may use in maintaining or updating a particular belief. In both of these cases, grounds are subjective in character; that is to say, grounds concern subjective certainty. Whether subjectively certain grounds are enough to ensure the knowledge-status of a proposition is another matter.

The metaphors of hinges, distance, and grounds can be used to help clarify some of the difficulties in cross-cultural communication. For all human beings, something will hold fast in their picture of the world. Obvious examples of these hinge propositions would include some that are similar to those Wittgenstein mentions: mathematics, self-certainty, and beliefs of a religious or traditional nature. The perception of intellectual distance indicates a detected divergence in terms of hinge commitments but also in terms of grounds. Cultural differences may also pertain to the grounds people employ in securing belief. For example, belief in the authority of a tradition would likely be grounded in the relationships by means of which a person is raised into a way of life. What qualifies as a “good ground” depends on the object of inquiry. Some topics (arithmetic calculation, name identification) have very clear grounds, while others (the authority of an ancient text) do not. Taken together, these notions raise a set of concerns an interlocutor can bring to cross-cultural encounters: awareness of the types of hinge commitments, the conditions of their detection, and their connection to what will count in a context as a “good” ground for believing or doubting something.

3. Wittgenstein and Dialogical Conceptions of Philosophy

⁷ On this use of “background,” see Rhees 2003, 38-39.

As indicated above, I do not think it is in the spirit of Wittgenstein's philosophy to develop a theory of cross-cultural communication. Numerous scholars have identified so-called "dialogical" or "therapeutic" aspects of Wittgenstein's approach to philosophy. Key among such readers of Wittgenstein is Stanley Cavell, who wrote half a century ago: "The first thing to be said in accounting for his style is that he *writes*: he does not report, he does not write up results." (Cavell, 1976, 70) While the notions of "hinges," "distance," and "grounds" could be used to develop a theory of communication, it would be more in line with Wittgenstein's overall philosophical output to use these notions to question what it is we think we know about a communicative or educational encounter. Cavell continues in exploring Wittgenstein's approach to philosophical writing:

"In its defense of truth against sophistry, philosophy has employed the same literary genres as theology in its defense of the faith: against intellectual competition, Dogmatics; against Dogmatics, the Confession; in both, the Dialogue. Inaccessible to the dogmatics of philosophical criticism, Wittgenstein chose confessions and recast his dialogue." (70f)

If Wittgenstein practiced philosophy in a dialogical way, he did not do so through the writing of actual dialogues. The dialogues that Wittgenstein would have engaged in would have been dialogues with himself. Philosophical dialogues aim at showing the contradictions (or other logical problems) in an interlocutor's way of thinking. If Wittgenstein writes in the dialogue format, then he explores and challenges the aspects of his own tendencies of mind that would enter into various logical problems. Through philosophical investigation, he lays bare these problems, thus showing as problematic a line of thought.

More recently, scholars have identified therapeutic concerns that run throughout Wittgenstein's philosophical corpus (especially in the work of those associated with the "New

Wittgenstein”). Cora Diamond writes in the introduction to her collection of essays, *The Realistic Spirit*:

The papers are, then, all attempts to think about ethics in a realistic spirit, i.e., not in the thrall of metaphysical requirements. They make two sorts of claims about the effects of such thralldom. The requirements which we lay down stop us seeing what moral thought is like; further, they lead us to construct stupid or insensitive or crazy moral arguments, arguments which are capable of hiding our own genuine ethical insights from ourselves and of giving others good grounds for identifying philosophical argument in ethics with sophistry. (Diamond 1995, 23)

In Diamond’s development of it, Wittgenstein’s philosophy aims at drawing attention to the human tendency to reach for a “God’s-Eye View” of the relationship between language and the world. In drawing attention to this tendency, Wittgenstein’s philosophy does not advise skepticism about humanity’s ability to know its world; instead, his philosophy seeks to show that the aim of wanting to see the world from a God’s-Eye View is a kind of illness, an attempt to rise above the standpoint of humanity.

Indeed, we can see that is because of Wittgenstein’s rejection of a God’s-Eye View that his philosophy eschews a systematic structure and instead proceeds “criss-cross” from localized instances of confusion (Wittgenstein 2003, viii). This drive in Wittgenstein’s philosophy to unravel the sources of our confusion about language (not least in the practice in philosophy) is something I have called an “ethic of perspicuity.” (Carroll 2014, 38) The idea is that Wittgenstein saw philosophy as something that is pursued for the goal of a searching clarity, that to engage in the clarifying of practices was to respond to an ethical duty. Whether these practices of clarification are thought of via the genre of confession, a therapist’s analysis, or a detective’s inquiry does not necessarily matter; each of these metaphors may be

useful at one time or another when considering the aims of philosophy. The important thing to recognize is the recurring tendency human beings have towards conceptual confusion, equivocation, and over-generalization. The task of philosophy as Wittgenstein conceives it is to remind us, when we have become forgetful, about these tendencies and to help identify and unravel confused instances of language. In cross-cultural encounters, it is all too easy for these tendencies to exacerbate communicative problems. Thus, there is all the more reason to engage in critical practices that expose in oneself or one's interlocutors conceptual confusion, equivocation, and overgeneralization.

4. Wittgenstein and Cross-Cultural Education

As was seen with Wittgenstein's practice of philosophy in the previous section, the work of clarification always begins somewhere, and typically, in the classroom, it begins with the particular confusions or uncertainties individual students may have. In the context in which I teach,⁸ an English-language small liberal arts college in Shanghai, I seek to help students identify claims and reasons from philosophical texts originating from a wide variety of places and times, all this in a way that is intelligible to students familiar with elements of Confucianism, Daoism, and Chinese Marxism. The intellectual bridges the students and I seek to build are not very different from those constructed in cross-cultural contexts elsewhere although the background knowledge, assumptions, and recognized methods of inquiry (i.e. hinges and grounds) may vary. Despite our best intentions, three potential sources of confusion recur, but I have found Wittgenstein's philosophy to be useful for understanding and addressing them.

⁸ From 2012-2016 (including the time of writing), I was Founding Faculty in Philosophy at Xing Wei College in Shanghai, China.

The first, and most significant source of confusion has to do with instructors themselves. This is where the dialogical model of philosophy is so helpful. Professors do well to monitor their assumptions so as not to encounter their own prejudices or culturally-specific certainties in their object of study. This dynamic is at play both in cases where faculty study philosophical traditions with which they do not identify as well as those with which they do. For example, as one who studies the philosophy of Wittgenstein, I have my own favored interpretations of his works, but if I do not suspend my favored readings from time to time, then I may miss evidence against my view or, for that matter, other new insights to be gained from his writings. I may also miss or downplay the questions or uncertainties my students have with his writings and be unable to explain his texts in ways appropriate to the students' levels of understanding. Assumptions that faculty may employ can take the form of projections of likely background knowledge that one's students may share as well as certainties that may be uncontested in one's own culture but contestable in cross-cultural contexts.

The second source of confusion arises from the increasing diversity present in many classrooms around the world. Diverse classrooms may have students for whom English is a second language as well as students of various ethnicities, gender identities, religions, and economic backgrounds. While the focus of the present chapter is on cultural diversity within classrooms, some of the approaches taken here for improving the chances of communication might be helpful for diverse classrooms based on other sources of identification. The second source of confusion is one that I face on a daily basis in my role as a philosophy faculty member at Xing Wei College. There are intra-Chinese differences of ethnicity, religious or non-religious identification, region, and economic background. Furthermore, the cultural differences between students and faculty can make communication difficult.

A third source of confusion has to do with the disciplinary lenses used in cross-cultural philosophical education itself. Some texts claimed by philosophy may be claimed also by other disciplines, disciplines with which students may or may not be familiar. The two disciplines in which I teach are philosophy and religious studies, but faculty in comparative literature, history, political science, and sociology (among others) may also study philosophical texts in their courses. Furthermore, ancient texts such as those attributed to Plato, Aristotle, Confucius, and Mencius are each claimed by a variety of disciplines. When should one draw on academic resources across disciplinary boundaries?

In addressing these potential sources of confusion in the classroom, Wittgenstein's remarks on hinges, intellectual distance, and grounds as well as his model of philosophy will be helpful. Recall the remark quoted above, where Wittgenstein writes of "very intelligent and well-educated people" who "believe in the story of creation of the Bible." Just because there are grounds to believe that story to have been proven false do not mean that a believer in the creation narrative would be persuaded. They would have to be the right sort of grounds to be persuasive (given the hinges to which one may be committed). Here, one finds resonance between Wittgenstein and John Clayton's "counsels of prudence" (Clayton 2006, 2). For example, Clayton's "presumption of competence" — the assumption that most of the beliefs of a community or culture are true, that the people in question are rationally competent⁹ — is a sensible principle of interpretation to apply because it puts the interpreter on par epistemically with those who she or he is interpreting.

Part of recognizing the rational competence of an interlocutor is seeking to understand their mode of reasoning. Clayton also suggests the "practice of empathy," the imaginative

⁹ Clayton likens this presumption to Donald Davidson's principle of charity. There are, of course, disanalogies between the two: Davidson's principle concerned radical interpretation, i.e., interpretive contexts where there had been no previous contact between the interpreters and the people interpreted. Davidson holds that this principle is essential to the process of interpretation for without it, interpretation would be impossible.

participation in the way of thinking of another person. It is not easy, and it may be impossible to do fully, but even a small amount of progress on this will enable the student or scholar to appreciate the interconnections between ideas, values, commitments, etc., in another person. This mode of understanding another's epistemic imaginary would be helpful in so far as it recognizes the deep reach of hinge commitments and the salience of different sorts of grounds.

Wittgenstein also advised a reluctance to leap to conclusions that might be drawn too easily. Scholars ought to be very careful when evaluating the beliefs, values, or institutions of another. One can see this value in Wittgenstein when, e.g. he criticizes Frazer for treating the magical practices of ancient peoples as if they were the proposing of theory about the natural world (Wittgenstein, 1993, 119). In a similar vein, Clayton advises reticence about evaluation. As a hermeneutical principle, its usefulness is fairly clear: it is pointless to evaluate a claim or a practice that is not understood clearly and deeply. To understand a claim is to understand not just the meanings of the words but also the grounds on which it is taken to rest and the hinges on which it relies; to evaluate the claim is to evaluate it with an understanding of the hinges and grounds of that claim.

Returning to the potential sources of confusion noted earlier in this section, the first source concerned the faculty member monitoring her or his assumptions about the topic in question. As we will see, the sources quickly compound one another. For example, the claim "Confucianism is a religion" is hotly denied in China and elsewhere in east Asia, while the claim retains some level of plausibility within the U.S.¹⁰ Which point of view is correct? Any answer to this question depends, of course, on the relevant hinges and grounds. Part of

¹⁰ Plausibility can be assessed in part by the presence of chapters on Confucianism in textbooks on world religions published in the U.S. On this, consider Brodd, et al., 2015.

approaching this question empathetically in the classroom is imagining this question from the point of view of one's students, that is, with sensitivity to their hinge commitments and what qualify as grounds they would accept (i.e. their epistemic imaginaries). Most of my students in Shanghai have been taught that Confucianism is not a religion, that religion has to do with gods and superstition, that religion is incompatible with modernization and national development, and that certain elements of Confucianism contain good moral teachings. Because, for my students, "religions" are not cultural complexes inspiring pride, to call something "religious" is to label it pejoratively. While I hold a different view on the evaluative connotations of ascribing religion-status to something, I am not going to tell my students they are wrong. What I do wish to teach them is how to assess their own commitments to particular definitions of important terms. Furthermore, when I detect instances of intellectual distance, there is an opportunity to learn about my interlocutors, to better understand their hinges and grounds. Some of the hinge commitments may be changeable (especially, if they rest on grounds that may be publicly contested), but not all will be.

As concerns the third potential source of confusion, no one academic discipline has special access to knowledge. Careful interdisciplinary work can contribute to better insights into philosophies or religions (i.e. through better understanding of the background to a claim, authoritative sources for justifying a claim, and possible identification of hinge commitments); yet, performing interdisciplinary work responsibly is no straightforward task. Even for scholars trained in more than one field, it may be difficult to articulate the methods and aims of a field in a way that is intelligible to both fields. It also may be that the aims of different fields are incompatible. For example, religious studies is largely a descriptive field; the goal is to thoroughly describe and interpret religious practices, identification, texts,

institutions, and the theories used in describing and interpreting religious phenomena. When it comes to studying theologically-committed philosophical texts, the descriptive aim of religious studies can clash with the evaluative aim of philosophy; this clash may parallel that between intellectual history and the history of philosophy. If historical study in philosophy does not evaluate that which is studied but only discerns who wrote what and to whom, then it may lead some philosophers to claim that it is not philosophy.

Interdisciplinary work is particularly useful when it supports the aims of one particular discipline. For example, history can help frame the background contexts of philosophical works. That is, history can help philosophy be more responsible *as philosophy*. Consider trying to understand Augustine's *Confessions* without understanding the ends of Christianity or al-Ghazali's *The Deliverance from Error* without appreciating the ends of Islam. Once the historical, cultural, or religious contexts of philosophical works have been uncovered, it will be possible to engage in close reading and interpretation of those philosophical works. Philosophical texts contain reasons, reasons offered in support of certain ideas, principles, courses of action, ways of thinking or being, or interpretations of yet other texts.

In responding to these potential sources of confusion using these strategies, Wittgenstein's philosophical model is that of an attentive, self-scrutinizing interlocutor looking to draw fellow interlocutors' attention to points of conceptual confusion. His texts provoke readers, both teachers and students, to consider if they know what they think they know. While Socrates provides a memorable model of the philosopher as a stinging insect on the body politic (a model not too distant from Wittgenstein's perspicuous philosopher), in the Confucian tradition, there is a different model in the *junzi* ("exemplary person" in Ames and

Rosemont's translation¹¹), a figure who draws others to harmonious living through moral, ritual, and pedagogical virtuosity. Philosophers are sometimes radical critics and sometimes learned servants of their societies. Which ends students will find plausible for philosophy — or for education, generally — depends on the grounds and hinges they possess and the rational felicity of cross-cultural philosophical conversation. So long as they can provide their teachers and their peers in a cross-cultural classroom with good reasons, then their claims will be candidates for knowledge-status. If other students, and their teacher, have sought to understand the intellectual differences present in the classroom community, then they will be in a position to see, and evaluate, differential intellectual achievements. In this way, cross-cultural educational contexts provide an arena in which Wittgenstein's philosophy may be applied, one well beyond the contexts he may have envisioned for it but for which his philosophy appears to be particularly well-suited.

¹¹ See Ames and Rosemont 1998.

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