10 Sustainability Principle

'All for One, and One for All'

Key Theme: Sustainability
Problem Question: What is it that different cultures can accomplish by collaborating and integrating their resources?
Objective: To help you understand why collaborative behavior is right (ethical) in intercultural communication

Key Concepts: Ethics, globalization, the Golden consequence, the Golden mean, the Golden law, the Golden purse, the Golden Ratio, the Golden rule, metaethic, morality, relativism, resistance, sustainability, tolerance, trust, universalism.

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1 Introducing the Problem Question

The previous chapter showed that synergy is the optimal way for people from different cultures to interact with each other. By collaborating with one another, people can achieve results they cannot achieve separately. With

integration, something crucial is thus accomplished. There must be something about intercultural synergy that people in all cultures can benefit from.

In this chapter, thus, we take up the following Problem Question: 'What is it that different cultures can accomplish by collaborating and integrating their resources?'

2 Ethics in Intercultural Communication

In this book, we have discussed numerous examples of intercultural interactions. For instance, in Chapter 4, we talked about the Masai people who offered their cows to the United States as a gift—one of their most valuable possessions. The gift was duly appreciated by the U.S. people as an extension of goodwill, but, because of the difficulty of transportation of the cows, the Masai were asked to send their beads, instead. In Chapter 7, we talked about what happened between the white inhabitants of Snow Low, AZ, and the members of the White Mountain Apache tribe when one of the members of the Apache tribe was arrested and charged with starting a fire that grew into the largest wildfire in Arizona history. The Native Americans began to keep to themselves, fearing retribution, and among the white communities the feeling of resentment was high. Another example from that chapter was the reaction of people from many cultures to the global spread of English. We mentioned how France and Switzerland, for instance, resist what is sometimes called the 'linguistic imperialism' of English, providing a special vocabulary aimed to replace Anglicisms with their own words, especially in the areas of computing, business, and entertainment. In Chapter 8, we discussed in detail the decision of the Motorola management not to fire a senior East Asian engineer, allowing him to use instead his housing allowance for any purpose as long as local values were implemented. And in Chapter 9 we learned how people from three different cultures managed to work harmoniously at the AMD mega-factory, unleashing its potential.

In each of these cases, people's actions can be judged right or wrong, good or bad. For example, was it the right decision for the Masai to offer their cows as a gift, and was it right for the U.S. people not to accept it, asking for beads instead? Is it good for the Native Americans in Arizona to keep to themselves, and are the white communities right to resent them? Is it wrong for people in France and Switzerland to resist Anglicisms, and can the global spread of English be considered good behavior on the part of the Anglo-Saxon cultures? Was the Motorola management right not to fire a senior East Asian engineer, and was his behavior of using his housing allowance for another purpose good or bad? Finally, was the decision of the people from three different cultures to work together at AMD right or wrong? In every situation of intercultural interaction, people make judgments about what ought to be done under the circumstances, i.e., what course of action is right and what behaviors are deemed wrong. Such judgments have a moral dimension and are traditionally studied by the domain of ethics.

A distinction is usually made between morality, on the one hand, and ethics, on the other. **Morality** generally refers to beliefs, values, and related traditions of a given culture, which regulate relationships by prescribing and proscribing modes and practices of correct behavior. **Ethics**, in its turn, refers to the study of the general nature of modes and practices of behavior and moral choices made by people in relationships with others. As such,

> ethics most often refers to a domain of inquiry, a discipline, in which matters of right and wrong, good and evil, virtue and vice, are systematically examined. Morality, by contrast, is most often used to refer not to a discipline but to patterns of thought and action that are actually operative in everyday life. In this sense, morality is what the discipline of ethics is about.
>
> (Goodpaster, 1992, p. 111)

Moral patterns of thought and action of people from different cultures may collide as they enact different views of what it means 'to do the right thing' in various situations of interaction. Ethical issues are addressed in many books on intercultural communication, where ethics is consistently defined as the study of "the means or moral standards by which actions may be judged good or bad, right or wrong" (Hall, 2002, p. 330), emphasizing that ethical judgments focus "on the degree of rightness and wrongness in human behavior" (Martin & Nakayama, 2000, p. 19).

As we saw from the examples discussed earlier, ethical judgments include such choices as whether to share one's resources (e.g., cows in the Masai example or professional expertise in the AMD example), whether to allow the Other's resources into one's cultural territory or put up resistance (e.g., fighting back against Anglicisms in France and Switzerland), whether to trust people from another culture (e.g., the white and Native American communities in Arizona), etc. As a result of each ethical judgment, a choice is made and meanings are created, reinforced, or changed. This way, cultures are formed as shared systems of symbolic resources. Every culture positions itself toward other cultures, based on its own system of resources. All people want to make sure that the position of their culture is strong and stable, i.e., that their resources allow them to accomplish what they want. Naturally, people from every culture want to determine what behavior is right (good) for them. So, the question that every culture faces is this: What does being moral mean? In this sense, "we must recognize that being moral takes precedence over all other concerns" (Gudykunst & Kim, 2003, p. 407).

2.1 Approaches to Ethics in Intercultural Communication

In the literature related to intercultural communication ethics, several broad and more specific approaches can be isolated.

There are two broad approaches to ethics as it relates to culture—**universalism** and **relativism**. The debate between ethical universalists and relativists has been going on for centuries, and these two views are still held today (Browning, 2006; Jones & Long, 2015). Each approach presents its own understanding of the relationship between ethics and culture, with important implications for the study of intercultural communication.

According to the universalist approach, people's actions must be applicable to all cultures, i.e., there is one correct way for people from all cultures to do something. Ethical universalists try to identify actions that people from all cultures can agree upon as right or wrong: e.g., the Ten Commandments are sometimes presented as a universal ethical code of action. In 1948, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) was adopted, proclaiming the inalienable rights that everyone is inherently entitled to as a human being regardless of race, color, religion, sex, language, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth, or other status. Available in more than 500 languages, it is one of the most translated documents in the world.

According to the relativist approach, people's actions are culture-bound, i.e., each culture has its own ideas about what is right and wrong. Hence, people's actions can be judged only in terms of a culture's ethical system: e.g., a moral judgment about eating dogs can be made only from a certain culture's point of view (as the right behavior in Korea and the wrong behavior in most other cultures). In other words, ethical relativism maintains that "the value of actions and the validity of moral judgments are dependent upon their sociocultural context" (Barnsley, 1972, p. 327).

Both universalist and relativist approaches have positive and negative aspects.

A universalist ethics strives to be a desirable moral option for today's multicultural world because it provides a set of moral standards for all cultures to follow. Yet, any universal moral standards are formulated by particular cultures, i.e., from a certain point of view. For example, even the Ten Commandments present a particular view about what is right and wrong but cannot be considered a universal ethical code. Hence,

> the concept of universal ethics, standards of goodness that apply to everyone, everywhere, and at all times, is the very sort of myth people struggle to hold onto. All moral choices flow from the perceptions of the decision maker, and those perceptions are produced by unique experiences in one person's life, in the context in which the choices are made.
> (Howell, 1982, p. 187)

In other words, people from each culture naturally want to see their own universal moral standards of good behavior as universal. Such a view is potentially dangerous because it leads to imposing one's own moral standards upon other cultures; the most powerful culture "defines and dominates

the criteria by which ethical behavior is evaluated" (Pedersen, 1997, p. 154). Not surprisingly,

> contemporary critics of universalism argue that such ethics turn out to be a form of cultural chauvinism, a way of imposing culturally specific standards upon societies where they would not be useful or appropriate. Even the most seemingly universalist rules – such as injunctions not to harm or steal from other people – are always created by particular cultures or groups to serve their interests . . . Universalism is, indeed, always a form of ethnocentrism.
>
> (Moscovici, 2001, p. 289)

As we can see, "in practice, the search for universal principles leads us either to undermine our own moral norms or to impose them on everyone else" (Fleischacker, 1994, p. 6). Ethical universalism in its extreme form can be identified with ethnocentric reduction, discussed in Chapter 4: in this case, one culture is viewed as imposing its system of moral standards upon all other cultures, reducing them to Self, i.e., to its own moral code of behaviors and practices.

A relativist ethics also strives to be a desirable moral option for today's multicultural world because it allows different moral standards, which preclude various cultures from judging one another. Yet, "such a stand is potentially dangerous and untenable as the strong universalist stance" (Hall, 2002, p. 342). Moral relativism in its extreme form—'anything goes!'—leads to the view that any action is acceptable as long as it is judged morally right by a certain culture; in this sense, ethical relativism can be seen as "a doctrine of ethical indifference" (Hall, 2002, p. 342). Moral relativism is dangerous because it discourages "moral discourse and disregards ethical guidelines outside of each cultural context" (Pedersen, 1997, p. 155). In essence, moral relativism in its extreme form is also a form of ethnocentrism and can be identified with ethnocentric negation discussed in Chapter 4: in this case, each culture claims that its actions cannot be judged by other cultures, i.e., it disregards (negates) any other moral standards.

So, both universalism and relativism, taken separately, have an ethnocentric bias. A culture with a universalist stance aims to reduce all other cultures to Self, i.e., to its own system of moral standards, while a culture with a relativist stance aims to negate all other cultures as simply not Self, claiming its own system of moral standards (Self) to be the only acceptable ethical code. As a result, both universalism and relativism approach ethics from the perspective of only one culture (Self), without engaging the perspective of people from other cultures (the Other). However, it is impossible to come up with *the* universal code of behavior without looking at different ways of doing things, for example, such cultural practices as honor killings or what is known as female genital mutilation (FGM).

No universal ethical code, therefore, can be formulated based only on moral standards of one culture without including views on morality that exist in other cultures; hence, universalism presupposes relativism. By the same token, it is easy to see that, without some universal ethical foundation, a multicultural world risks plunging into fragmentation and chaos; "Without universal values . . . the very notion of ethics, or morally desirable codes of conduct, risks meaninglessness" (Moscovici, 2001, p. 290); as such, relativism presupposes universalism.

It seems as if universalists and relativists try to present *the* definitive view of ethics. The view presented by universalism is large, embracing all cultures, while the view presented by relativism is smaller, based only on one culture's code of ethics. Yet, both universalism and relativism attempt to own the truth while also needing each other in order to reveal the true nature of ethical behaviors and practices. According to Georg W. F. Hegel's dictum, 'The Truth is the Whole.' In our case, the Whole must somehow reconcile the large view on ethics with all smaller views. In this sense, intercultural communication can be said to oscillate "between the poles of universalism and relativism, without settling on either" (Moscovici, 2001, p. 290). In other words:

> ethics may be viewed as a compound of universalism and relativism. All ethical systems involve a tension between what is universal and what is relative . . . The challenge, then, is to understand the nature of this compound and its implications in intercultural settings.
>
> (Hall, 2002, p. 343)

Many attempts have been made to understand the nature of this tension; below, five specific approaches are briefly reviewed, summarized by B. Hall (2002, pp. 330–336).

Five golden approaches to ethics are usually identified: the golden law, the golden purse, the golden consequence, the golden mean, and the golden rule. Each approach has certain implications for intercultural communication.

The **golden law** focuses on the inherent goodness or badness of people's actions. All actions are said to be inherently ethical (or unethical), regardless of who performs them. This law applies equally to everyone: what is right (or wrong) for one person is also right (or wrong) for all other people. For example, according to Immanuel Kant's famous discussion of the categorical imperative (Kant, 1959), such laws take on the forms of positive actions (e.g., give aid, show gratitude), and negative actions (e.g., do not lie, do not steal), such that we act as though the end of our actions would become a law of nature.

The **golden purse** is based on the notion of power understood as physical strength, wealth, etc. This approach to ethics can be summed up by the saying 'He rules who has the gold.' While this approach is often used by more powerful cultures in intercultural interactions, "it provides an extremely unstable foundation upon which to build mutually beneficial intercultural communities" (Hall, 2002, p. 332).

The **golden consequence** is grounded in the outcome of people's actions; ethical decisions are based on what will bring the most good for the most people. In this sense, an action generally considered unethical, such as lying, may be deemed the right behavior if it leads to the greater good. This approach allows people to go any way using their ethical reasoning; besides, "humans don't really know what the consequences of certain actions will be" (Hall, 2002, p. 335).

The **golden mean** is traced back to the ideas of Aristotle and Confucius who saw the right behavior as a blending of opposites. For example, neither cowardice nor foolhardiness is right, but courage, as the golden mean between the two, is. Therefore, an ethical choice is a happy medium between two extremes.

The **golden rule** states that we should act toward people from other cultures as we would have them act toward us. The golden rule is upheld not only in the West, but also in the East where it takes on the following Confucian expression: 'Do not do to others what you do not like others to do to you.'

Each of these five specific approaches to ethics tries to resolve the tension between universalism and relativism. It is easy to see that the golden law approach gravitates toward the universal pole of ethics: it claims universality of moral standards. The golden purse and the golden consequence approaches, on the contrary, gravitate toward the relativist pole of ethics: they claim that moral standards depend upon, or are relative to, power or outcome of actions. The golden mean and the golden rule are more successful at balancing tensions between universalism and relativism because they are based on the idea that, in making ethical judgments, "we need to focus on the other culture's perspective as well as our own" (Hall, 2002, p. 336). In other words, these approaches try to reconcile one culture's ethical code (smaller view of ethics) with all other cultures' ethical codes (large view of ethics). These approaches are more successful because they pay attention to both Self (one culture's ethics) and its environment (other cultures' ethical codes).

3 Introducing the Sustainability Principle

Let's now formulate, based on the discussion above, the tenth principle of intercultural communication—the Sustainability Principle. We will isolate three parts that make up this principle. Each part deals with intercultural communication as a process where people must make ethical choices. First, we will discuss the general nature of sustainability and how it can be applied to intercultural communication; then, we will present the main strategies of sustainability in intercultural communication; finally, we will suggest a formula for intercultural sustainability. We will discuss each part separately and then formulate the Sustainability Principle, as a whole.

3.1 General Nature of Sustainability: Thinking about Forever

It can be claimed that "the moral issues that attend intercultural encounters are not simply more complicated, they are of an entirely new dimension. Despite the pervasiveness of cross-cultural contact, these complications remain overlooked and unexplored in any systematic way" (Barnlund, 1980, p. 9). The claim that moral issues in intercultural encounters remain overlooked is an exaggeration; as you see, a lot of research has been done in this area (Asuncion-Lande, 1980; Sitaram & Cogdell, 1976). However, the call for a more systematic study of ethics in intercultural communication is justified. A **metaethic**, i.e., a general foundation for successful (ethical) intercultural communication, is needed to transcend all differences.

Today, globalization creates the need for such a metaethic, more urgently than ever. **Globalization** refers to an intensified compression of the world and our increasing consciousness of cultural processes that extend beyond the collective identity of any one culture. The process of globalization has a huge potential for cultural and intercultural development, but has a dark side in the form of the many challenges facing all people. For example, the book entitled *Introducing global issues* (Snarr & Snarr, 2002) lists such challenges as the proliferation of weapons, migration, health, protection of the atmosphere, etc. These challenges transcend all differences (political, social, economic, etc.) and require an ethical framework that serves the concerns of all people on the planet. And the most fundamental concern is clear—**sustainability**, understood as remaining alive or in existence (Morris, 1982, p. 1296) and proliferating (rather than destroying) new/other life.

There can be no doubt that "cultures—like any other organic system—strive to affirm life" (Rodriguez, 2002, p. 2). To put it bluntly, unless people are in sustainable existence, they cannot meet all other (specific) challenges such as dealing with the proliferation of weapons, migration, health, protection of the atmosphere, etc. In this light, "our newly interdependent global society, with its remarkable possibilities for linking people around the planet, gives us the material basis for a new ethic . . . that will serve the interests of all those who live on this planet" (Singer, 2002, p. B9; see also: Singer, 2001). These ideas are echoed in UNESCO's Charter: "we are beginning to move towards a new global ethic which transcends all other systems of allegiance and belief, which is rooted in a consciousness of the interrelatedness and sanctity of life" (1997, paragraph 116). In 2015, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was adopted by heads of state and government at a special UN summit. The agenda includes 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in three key areas—economic, social, and environmental—to be achieved by drawing on the creative potential of the world's diverse cultures. Sustainability is a dynamic state when decisions are made so that something is constantly maintained and kept in existence. In this respect, sustainability by definition is thinking about forever.

Because "culture . . . has a central place in the complex notion of sustainability" (UNESCO, 1997, paragraphs 111–112), in this text we are concerned

with intercultural sustainability understood "as a term that comprises any attempt of encouraging durable, long-lasting and resilient forms of intercultural communication and intercultural relations" (Busch, 2016, p. 63). Intercultural sustainability is a dynamic state wherein people must make decisions so that their cultures continue to exist. Earlier, it was shown that no culture alone can make such decisions; both universalism and relativism are, in fact, forms of ethnocentrism because they present an ethical code only from one point of view—that of Self. Intercultural sustainability requires that every culture pay attention to its environment, i.e., all other cultures (the Other). When we pay attention to people from other cultures, we decide how to interact with them. In this connection, "ethics and morality are correlative with the purpose of avoiding damage to the rights and interests of people – preeminently *other* people" (Rescher, 1977, p. 80). Intercultural sustainability is not just a matter of morality but also of rationality: a decision is considered right if it helps people to sustain their culture. So, asking the question, 'Why be ethical?' is the same as asking the question, 'Why be rational?' As C. I. Lewis put it, "cognitive correctness is itself a moral concern, in the broad sense of 'moral'" (1969, p. 163).

Thus, this new global ethic, or a metaethic, is found in the idea of sustainability. However, "sustainable intercultural relations will not emerge by themselves" (Busch, 2016, p. 67). Let us see what communicative strategies people must use so that their actions are considered ethical (rational).

3.2 Strategies of Sustainability: Tolerance, Trust, Resistance

Tolerance. While all people living together in perfect harmony is the ideal of intercultural communication, in real life interactions far from harmonious continue to take place. It is not surprising, then, that "the demand for an understanding of tolerance and intolerance seems to be at an all-time high" (Baldwin, 1998, p. 24).

Tolerance is defined as "the capacity for or practice of allowing or respecting the nature, beliefs, or behaviors of other" (Morris, 1982, p. 1351), so in this sense it is akin to decency and civility rather than simply putting up with others who are different. This capacity makes it possible for people from one culture (Self) to allow people from another culture (the Other) to cross the imaginary line separating them into what Self considers its own territory, i.e., its own side of the intercultural continuum. As was shown in Chapter 8, if intercultural communication is based on the flexible-sum perception, people from one culture can move into the space inhabited by those from another culture. This move may be viewed as potentially dangerous because new meanings are brought in, which until now have not been part of Self. It is not easy to deal with practices and behaviors that are different from your own; one may not be accustomed to eating with chopsticks as people do in many Asian counties or standing during a church service as people do in Russia. But, in intercultural interactions we should be capable of handling such challenges, i.e., we should tolerate and even welcome such

different behaviors and practices as long as they do not import any form of violence. Tolerance is not the same as acceptance, which implies agreement; people from one culture may or may not agree with the way things are done in other cultures. However, allowing differences to exist, with an eye toward the *just*, makes tolerance a primary virtue (Barnes, 2001) because no culture owns the truth alone. On the contrary, we must tolerate other people's behaviors and practices because everyone knows something of what it means to be *true*. As was stated earlier, 'The Truth is the Whole.'

Tolerance, therefore, is the capacity of one culture to deal with the presence of another culture on its territory in a sustainable, nonviolent way (Figure 10.1).

Through interaction, every culture establishes a dynamic limit of this capacity: people from every culture decide to what extent they allow a different system of meanings on their territory. It depends, of course, upon

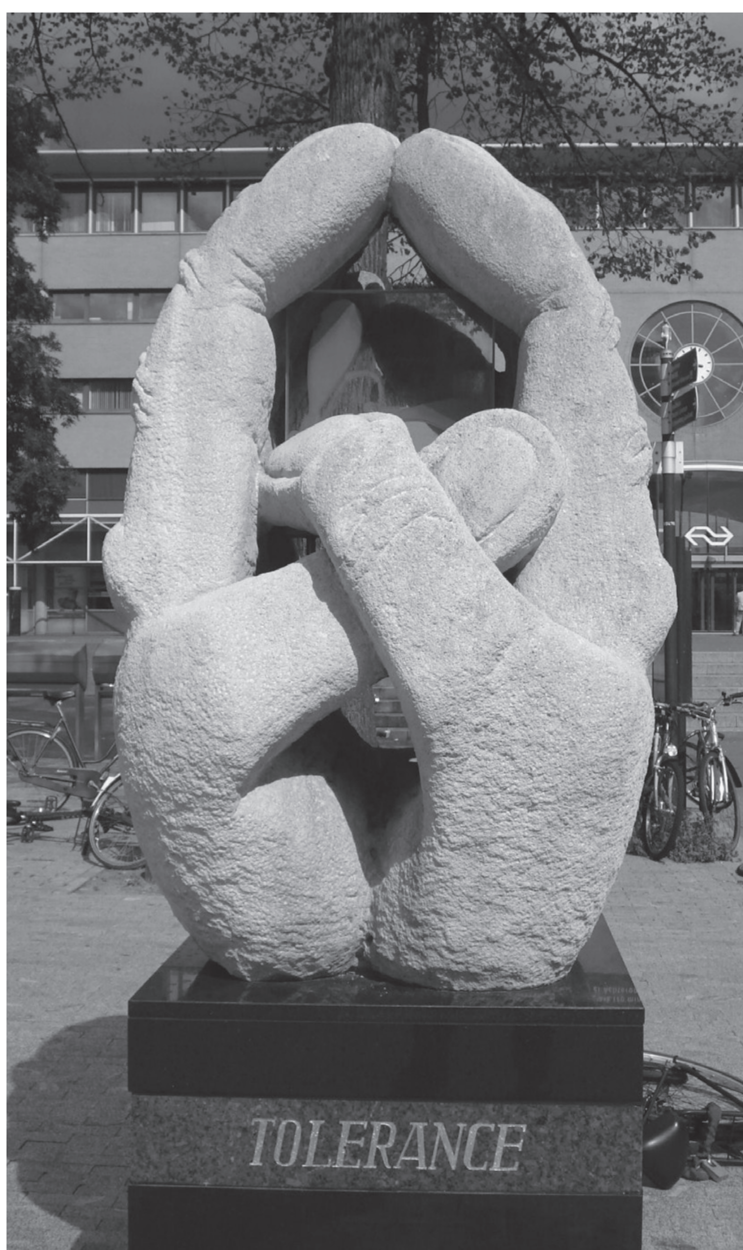

Figure 10.1 Monument to Tolerance in Hilversum, the Netherlands *Source: Wikimedia Creative Commons*

how different another culture's meanings are and what the consequences of dealing with such meanings might be. For example, if the Other brings with itself new eating utensils, e.g., chopsticks, then Self is likely to tolerate such a new meaning and even borrow it. However, if the Other brings with itself new eating habits, e.g., eating dogs or frogs, then Self is less likely to tolerate such new meanings. And of course when one party means to engage in violence, then tolerance of the other will *necessarily* reach its limits. But in the most mundane, nonviolent in each intercultural encounter a dynamic boundary line is drawn between Self and the Other; if both Self and the Other agree on what constitutes this line, it is possible to speak of tolerance as a communicative strategy leading to intercultural sustainability.

It should be clear that tolerance is not a passive process and some form of silent positioning. People from different cultures need not adopt what others do, or challenge others' positions. On the contrary, the value of tolerance is to encourage an open exchange of ideas. In other words, "Fighting for toleration is not a matter of attempting to align other groups with a preexisting order, but a form of dialogue in the course of which the picture of what toleration is and requires gradually becomes clear" (Walker, 1995, p. 112). The practice of tolerance enables people to discover how to negotiate (in both senses of the word) intercultural communicative interactions that may involve something everyday, like eating preferences and practices, greetings and forms of acknowledgment, or more structural and regulative such as gender and sexual hierarchies, or social roles and religious rituals. Such valuable learning takes place only through interaction where both parties have mutual respect, tolerance, and goodwill. In Chapters 4 and 5 we discussed how cultures engage in interactions and measure up against each other and understand better other worldviews as well as their own worldview. This task cannot be accomplished without intercultural tolerance because only by allowing one another to share their codes of behavior different people can determine what meanings must make up their collective identity. The word 'tolerance' is derived from Latin 'tolerare'—'to bear' so, in a way, people from every culture decide what meanings they can bear, i.e., deal with comfortably. Hence, intercultural tolerance is impossible without flexibility. People should be open to an exchange of ideas and flexible to allow such new ideas to be part of their own cultural space. True intercultural sustainability, however, requires not only tolerance, but trust.

Trust. The word 'trust' is derived from Middle English 'truste,' meaning 'confidence' or 'firmness.' **Trust** is firm reliance on someone's integrity; it is confidence that someone will act as previously agreed upon and hence expected. Without trust it is impossible to work toward synergy. Trust is crucial for successful intercultural communication because people from one culture can tolerate another culture only if confident that people from that culture will not cross the boundary line previously established. For example, if people from one culture allow another culture to discuss its cuisine on their territory, including eating dogs, but do not allow selling products made

of dogs, and members from the dog-eating culture still open a store and start selling such products, then trust is broken and tolerance is upset. Trust in intercultural communication is like a promise to share one's behaviors and practices only to the extent agreed upon by those from different cultural backgrounds involved. As long as such a promise is kept, intercultural communication can be successful, and intercultural sustainability can be maintained. Only when communication presupposes integrity of all those involved in interactions does it become possible for people from different cultures to rely on one another and respect their mutual identities.

So, intercultural trust is impossible without firmness. Those from one culture must firmly believe that those from another culture will show their integrity and keep their promise not to cross hard boundary lines previously established. Hence, tolerance and trust form a default mechanism of intercultural communication. It is in effect as long as one culture establishes a dynamic limit on its capacity to allow another culture on its territory and trusts another culture not to cross this boundary line. If that line is crossed, that culture's integrity is questioned and trust is broken. A promise to share one's meanings is now perceived as imposing one's meaning; an invitation becomes an invasion. As a result, intercultural sustainability is endangered, and the default mechanism of intercultural communication switches to a different mode—that of resistance.

Resistance. **Resistance** is any force that works against something; in our case, cultural resistance opposes actions from another culture perceived as dominant and therefore dangerous for their collective survival. A culture must resist, for example, if its people can no longer tolerate the presence of another culture's behaviors and practices on their territory. Obviously, intercultural communication in this case is less successful because it is no longer a collaborative process; now, people from different cultures work not with, but against one another. At the same time, resistance as a communicative strategy is crucial for intercultural sustainability: its main goal is helping people from different cultures to resume harmonious interactions and maintain their collective identities. Ultimately, successful resistance is aimed at bringing intercultural communication back to the dynamic state of sustainability.

So, tolerance, trust, and resistance are all interconnected (Figure 10.2).

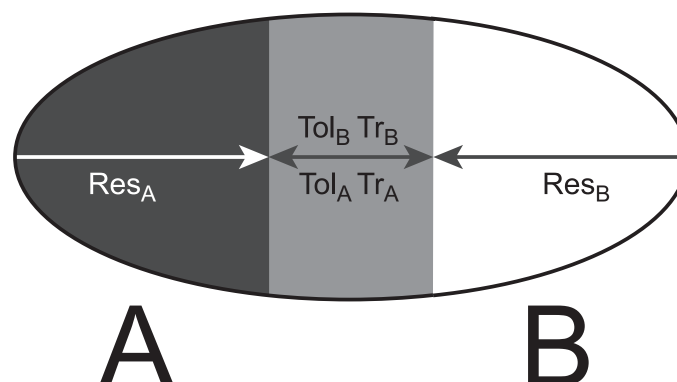

Figure 10.2 Relationship between tolerance, trust, and resistance *Source: Author*

As you can see, in the process of intercultural interactions, a shared zone is created and continuously maintained, based on the strategies of tolerance, trust, and resistance. This zone is bounded on both sides, represented by two points—A and B. Each culture wants to reach the other culture's boundary point as a certain target.

Let's look at the practice of eating dogs in South Korea and frogs' legs in France, as an example (while keeping in mind the growing trend of moving away from eating dog meat and amphibian conservation efforts by such organizations as 'Save the frogs!'). Let's say that people from the Korean culture (culture A) may want to share the practice of eating dogs as part of their cuisine with people from France (culture B), while people from the French culture may want to share the practice of eating frogs with people from Korea. The Korean people try to reach point B (part of the French culture), while the French people try to reach point A (part of the Korean culture). Let us say each side decides to present a lecture on the subject for the other side. If each culture allows the other one on its territory and the other culture keeps its promise, i.e., a lecture is delivered, both cultures' targets are reached thanks to the strategies of tolerance and trust (TOLa/TRa and TOLb/TRb, respectively). This way, for example, the French can learn that, although such dishes as dog stew and canine cutlets are eaten in Korea because of their alleged health-giving qualities, not all Koreans eat dogs as their diet is mainly vegetable, not meat. They eat a special type of dogs raised at special farms; such dogs are killed by electrocution (just like cows and pigs used for eating in many Western cultures). Also, the pet industry is rapidly increasing in Korea. Similarly, the Koreans can learn about the practice of eating frogs' legs in France.

But, suppose each side chooses to add to their lecture a little demonstration, offering their audience a dish made of dogs or frogs, respectively. Or, even worse, what if each side chooses to replace each other's cuisine with its own? In such cases, each culture is seen as moving beyond the boundaries previously set, and the two points A and B immediately change from target points into points of resistance; each side, for instance, may react defensively to the other culture's move with a request to stop their demonstration, ask the audience to leave the room, or choose some other form of resistance. As you can see, the arrows of resistance (ResA and ResB) point in the direction opposite of tolerance and trust.

Earlier, it was noted that intercultural tolerance is impossible without flexibility, and intercultural trust is impossible without firmness. The relationship between tolerance, trust, and resistance is now clear: people from culture A can be flexible and display tolerance only if people from culture B are firm in their commitment to act as agreed upon by both cultures. If culture B is perceived as defecting from that agreement (not as firm), then culture A stops being flexible and becomes firm. That is exactly how tolerance turns into resistance; to resist means to "remain firm against the action or effect of" (Morris, 1982, p. 1106). Resistance is a very important communicative

strategy (Deyhle, 1995; Duncombe, 2002). For example, the practice of Islamic veiling is usually discussed in terms of freedom and presented by Westerners (especially feminists) as a case of gender oppression in Islamic cultures. Yet, many Islamic women are said to participate in this practice voluntarily and claim it as an important part of their cultural identity and a mark of resistance to the Western morals perceived as wrong (Hirschmann, 1997). Obviously, interacting with Islamic women who veil (and certainly not all do) depends to a significant degree upon how one views their practice of veiling—as a form of cultural oppression or resistance.

Notice that we speak of resistance as a communicative strategy opposed to violent or militant resistance. Peaceful resistance is best of all exemplified by Mahatma Gandhi and his technique of ***satyagraha***. This term "has variously been translated as 'passive resistance,' 'nonviolent direct action,' and even 'militant nonviolence'" (Weber, 2001, p. 494). In dealing with intercultural tensions, Mahatma Gandhi focused on issues and not personalities, and saw his opponents as partners and not enemies. He was committed to an open exchange of ideas in search of a fair resolution for all parties involved rather than to have his opponents humbled and destroyed. It is clear that he searched for intercultural sustainability, and if more people in more cultures shared and practiced his technique of satyagraha, the world would be a better place with better chances for survival.

The situation in which the strategies of tolerance, trust, and resistance are in perfect balance is an ideal of intercultural communication that is rarely if ever actualized. That does not mean, however, that we should give up trying to achieve such an ideal of intercultural interactions. On the contrary, if we can envision an ideal, we can present it as an optimum overall strategy. Then, people from different cultures can strive for that ideal, constantly improving their interactions and sustaining their collective identities in a dynamic equilibrium that is open to change.

The global metaethic, therefore, can be identified with intercultural sustainability. According to this metaethic, the ideal situation of ethical intercultural communication is a balance of the strategies of tolerance, trust, and resistance—a stable pattern of interactions that cultures seek to achieve.

This situation where the strategies of tolerance, trust, and resistance are all balanced, i.e., are in a state of equilibrium, represents the best case of intercultural sustainability. "There is a way to interpret 'best sustainability ethic' that can provide a general formula for an optimum sustainability strategy" (Durbin, 1997, p. 50). If we know the formula for the best sustainability ethic, we can calculate the point when intercultural interactions are the most effective—the Pareto optimality discussed in the previous chapter. As you remember, Pareto optimality is an ideal for which people from different cultures can and should strive in their interactions. So, what is this ideal? What is the best ethic of intercultural sustainability? What is this magic formula?

3.3 Formula for Intercultural Sustainability

Earlier, we discussed five golden approaches to ethics and their implications for intercultural communication—the golden law, the golden purse, the golden consequence, the golden mean, and the golden rule. These approaches can be supplemented with one more golden approach, which takes their ideas further and provides a mathematical formula for intercultural sustainability—the Golden Ratio approach.

You may have heard of the Golden Ratio as the Golden Number, the Golden Section, or the Divine Proportion. While defined mathematically as a number, the Golden Ratio in reality describes a proportionate (harmonious) relationship between different parts of something. Euclid of Alexandria, who was the first to define the Golden Ratio around 300 BC, used the example of a straight line cut into two parts (Figure 10.3).

Figure 10.3 Straight line as the Golden Ratio *Source: Author*

While the whole line AB is longer than the segment AC and the segment AC is longer than the segment CB, the ratio of the length of AB to AC is the same as the ratio of AC to AB! This ratio is represented by the never-ending and never-repeating number 1.6180339887 . . . This number that can be rounded up to 1.6 is the value of the Golden Ratio.

You may be wondering what this number has to do with intercultural communication. To begin with, as just noted, the Golden Ratio is not so much a number as a relationship: it shows a proportion between different parts of something. And these parts, no matter how large or small, can remain themselves and sustain their very existence, as long as the proportion between them equals 1.6. Moreover, this value continues indefinitely as it gets closer and closer to the ideal relationship between these two parts. In other words, the Golden Ratio is the ideal ('the right') way for different parts to build relationships, e.g., for different cultures to interact. Let us take a concrete example and show how all this works.

Instead of a straight line, let us take a semantic space (a continuum, as discussed in Chapter 6), e.g., the meaning of what is right to eat. For the sake of simplicity, let us take this semantic space to include only two meanings (two parts)—eating dogs (Korean culture) and eating frogs (French culture), dividing this semantic space equally between these two meanings (Figure 10.4).

At the same time, people from both cultures must be curious about the eating habits of each other, so they will interact with one another. Let us describe three possible scenarios of their interaction, briefly mentioned earlier in the chapter, and three decisions made in this process.

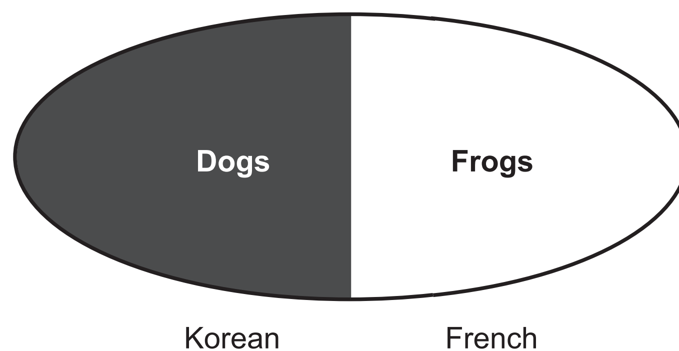

Figure 10.4 Semantic space as the Golden Ratio *Source: Author*

As the first scenario, suppose the Korean people want to introduce dishes made of dogs in your (French) culture instead of eating frogs' legs, in essence replacing your part of the 'eating' semantic continuum with their own cultural behaviors and practices. Then, the whole continuum (all 100%) would be made up of only one meaning, representing one culture—and that is not yours. Would you give up your half of the overall semantic space (your 50%) in your encounter with the Korean culture? Most certainly not! You would resist giving up your part of the continuum since then your own culture would cease to exist.

As the second scenario, suppose the Koreans offer to arrange a food demonstration for you and prepare dishes made of dogs, followed by food samples. This encounter is obviously not as radical as completely replacing your cultural cuisine, but it is still quite intrusive. In your eyes, it would equal 25% of your part of the overall continuum. Would you be willing to allow such a demonstration? Very likely not. In other words, you would still resist, finding it risky to give one fourth of your own cultural space for people from another culture whose conduct you find so different from yours.

As the third scenario, what percentage of your part of the overall continuum would you be willing to let another culture use for its own purpose? You refused to sacrifice your total space of 50% (the first scenario) and then half of that—25% (the second scenario). Would you now be willing to let another culture use half of 25%, i.e., 12.5%, rounded up to12%? Most likely, yes. Suppose the Koreans were to ask you if they could just present a lecture on their cultural cuisine—not a very intrusive action. Would you be against that? Most likely, not. You would allow the Koreans to move into your cultural space and present their lecture.

Now let us see what we have. First of all, we have the overall intercultural continuum that equals 100% (space AB). Next, we have two different parts of this continuum, each representing one of the cultures: the space AC (Korean culture) that now equals 62% (50% of their own space plus 12% of the French cultural space) and the space CB (French culture) that equals the remaining 38%. While the whole space AB is, naturally, larger than the space

AC, and the space AC is larger than the space CB, the ratio of AB to AC is the same as the ratio of AC to AB! And this ratio is represented by the number 1.6 (100 : 62 ≈ 1.6 and 62 : 38 ≈ 1.6). Suppose the Korean culture were to interact with the French culture in the same way, refusing to replace their cuisine with eating frogs and a food demonstration, but allowing a lecture on that eating behavior. Now the French culture is allowed to use 12% of the Korean semantic space. As a result, now the space DB (French culture) equals 62% (50% of their own space plus 12% of the Korean cultural space) and the space AD (the Korean culture) equals the remaining 38%. But, the ratio between the two cultures (DB and AD) is still the same and equals 1.6! (Figure 10.5).

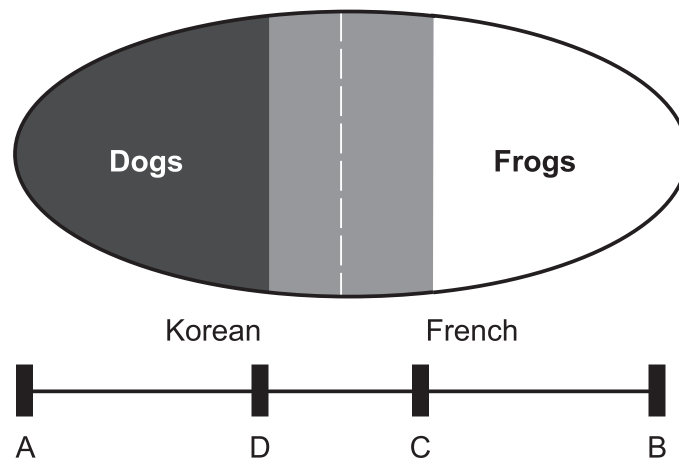

Figure 10.5 Source: Author

As we can see, the ideal point of intercultural interactions where tolerance, trust, and resistance are in perfect balance equals the value of the Golden Ratio (Figure 10.6).

Ideally, people trust and tolerate different cultural behaviors and practices if they occupy only about one-fourth (12%) of their territory. If that line is crossed without any mutual consent, the mechanism of resistance is activated. Naturally, we do not calculate our intercultural interactions with such mathematical precision. Yet, we can usually feel quite acutely when to

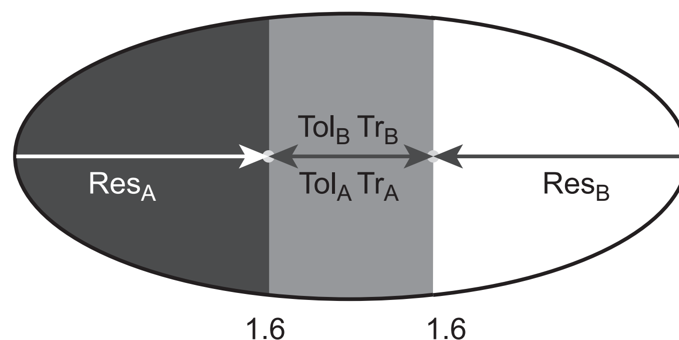

Figure 10.6 Source: Author

tolerate and trust other cultural behaviors and practices, and when to draw a line and resist them.

In real life, the Golden Ratio, represented by the never-ending and never-repeating number 1.6180339887 . . ., means that intercultural communication never stops; it always continues, trying to reach, and never reaching, that ideal of perfect balance. The Golden Ratio is an ideal dynamic point that makes it possible for each interacting culture to preserve its relationship with itself (sustain its collective identity), while expending the least energy (symbolic resources) to do so. As long as oscillations continue to take place between two cultures, the result is stable and sustainable intercultural communication. Real oscillations may fall short of, or go beyond, that point; such oscillations are tolerated (if mutually agreed upon) or resisted (if not). Intercultural communication is a process of trial and error, always an exploration.

If people from different cultures make a decision based on the Golden Ratio approach, their interactions are harmonious because neither culture loses; on the contrary, both cultures win as they are able to remain whole, sustaining their collective identities. The value of the ratio between the overall intercultural continuum and interacting cultures is the same as the value of each interacting culture—1.6, and it represents intercultural sustainability. In other words, this value represents the overall intercultural continuum, or intercultural communication, in general, as well as each culture individually: AB ≈ 1.6; AC ≈ 1.6 and AD ≈ 1.6; DB ≈ 1.6 and CB ≈ 1.6. While constantly changing, they all remain themselves, intact, whole. Therefore, intercultural sustainability presupposes not only cultures maintaining their collective identities, but also the whole process of intercultural communication being constantly maintained. That is why we do not simply speak of cultural, but of *inter*cultural sustainability.

Intercultural sustainability is a principle that applies to how people from all cultures ought to interact successfully. This principle can be seen as a general rule that helps people decide which behaviors and practices are right and which are wrong. This principle is not just a matter of morality but of rationality, as was stated earlier. The Golden Ratio, by definition, is a matter of morality and ratio-nality. If we are not moral and not rational, if we reason badly and treat people from other cultures badly, we make poor decisions. As a result, we do damage to them as well as to ourselves: any immoral (irrational) behavior is not only damaging to others, it is self-destructive: it undermines intercultural sustainability. Intercultural sustainability tells us that we ought to build our relationships with other people based on the Golden Ratio. The 'ought' here is not simply "an *ethical* 'ought,' but one of the cosmic fitness of things. It . . . represents an idealized vision of the optimal arrangement of the world. The world *ought* to be a place where things go properly" (Rescher, 1977, p. 82).

When people accept intercultural sustainability as a principle underlying their interactions, their actions fit both the universalist and relativist

approaches to ethics. On the one hand, people's actions are culture-bound; each culture has its own ideas about what is right and wrong. As a result, people's actions are judged in terms of that culture's ethical system, e.g., eating frogs as the right behavior in the French culture. On the other hand, people's decision to base their actions on the Golden Ratio is applicable to all cultures, i.e., this is the correct way for people from all cultures to interact with each other. So, each culture, while maintaining its own practices and beliefs, works for the universal good and, vice versa, the universal code represented by the Golden Ratio makes it possible for each culture to practice its own behaviors. To put it simply, each culture works for Self (relativism) and for all others (universalism), and vice versa. What is good for Self, is good for All. Or, all for one, and one for all!

It must be noted that "in the professional mathematical literature, the common symbol for the Golden Ratio is the Greek letter *tau* . . . which means 'the cut' or 'the section'" (Livio, 2002, p. 5). This meaning of the Golden Ratio reveals the nature of intercultural interactions extremely well: in each encounter, the relationship between two cultures must be 'cut' in a certain way. As in medicine, people from different cultures should learn how to treat one another, 'cutting' their relationship the right way—it is a classic case of 'growing pains.' Similarly, as in gardening, people should learn how to cultivate a plant of their interaction, cutting around its roots so it can bear better fruit. It all comes down to a 'cut,' and the Golden Ratio suggests where this cut could be made in the most effective way for intercultural communication to continue and cultural identities to be sustained. In real-life intercultural interactions, of course, there are many possible 'cuts,' closer to, or further away, from this ideal of the Golden Ratio, and all those 'cuts' teach us about ourselves and others, helping us all to grow. In essence, this cut is a line between interacting cultures, and the success of intercultural encounters depends upon how this line is drawn.

We began our journey in Chapter 1 by asking the question, 'What is in a line?' Now we have come full circle and discovered the best way to draw a line in intercultural interactions. This line is represented by the value of 1.6. In a way, striving toward that point is the overall goal of intercultural communication. But, as was shown many times throughout this text, it can never be reached once and for all. This point is an ideal: it never stops and never repeats itself, it is simple yet complex—like life itself. And all we can do, all we must do, is keep traveling to different places and meeting people from all kinds of different cultures, living this life and keeping it alive.

This principle shows that no culture owns the truth, i.e., knows the only right way of doing things. At the same time, each culture knows something of the truth, i.e., knows its own way of doing things. As long as people from different cultures display mutual tolerance, trust, and resistance, their interactions are sustained, as one whole process of intercultural communication, and each culture maintains its own relationship with itself, i.e., remains whole. As was said earlier, the 'Truth is the Whole.'

4 The Sustainability Principle Defined

Right now, let us give a concise formulation of the Sustainability Principle, based on the above discussion of its three parts.

First, the idea of intercultural sustainability represents the global metaethic for the multicultural world. Intercultural sustainability is seen as a dynamic state where people must make decisions so that their collective identities are constantly maintained. No culture alone can make such decisions; both universalism and relativism are viewed as forms of ethnocentrism because they present an ethical code only from one point of view—that of Self. Intercultural sustainability requires that each culture pays attention to its environment, i.e., to all other cultures with their codes of communication and interaction. In this sense, intercultural sustainability is not just a matter of morality but also of rationality: a decision is considered right if it opens up the possibility for more constructive communication with greater mutual respect and understanding without undermining one's own cultural integrity.

Second, according to the global metaethic of intercultural sustainability, people use the communicative strategies of tolerance, trust, and resistance for their cultures to be constantly maintained. Then, people's actions are considered ethical (rational). The ideal of intercultural communication is a balance of tolerance, trust, and resistance; this situation represents the best case of intercultural sustainability—the most stable outcome of intercultural interactions.

Third, the best sustainability ethic (the optimum sustainability strategy) can ideally be represented by the ratio of intercultural communication, in general, to every culture, and all cultures to one another. This Golden Ratio has the value of 1.6, which is the same for the overall intercultural continuum and for each interacting culture. Therefore, intercultural sustainability presupposes not only cultures maintaining their collective identities, but also the whole process of intercultural communication being enlivened and inviting. Hence, we speak of intercultural sustainability.

In a nutshell, the Sustainability Principle can be formulated as follows:

> *Intercultural communication is a process whereby people from different cultures display mutual tolerance, trust, and resistance, sustaining their collective identities while increasing the effectiveness and fulfillment of their interactions.*

5 Case Study: 'An Ethics of Cultural Exchange'

This case study is based on the following article: 'An ethics of cultural exchange: Diderot's Supplement au voyage de Bougainville' by Claudia Moscovici (2001). As usual, it is recommended that you read the article in its entirety; below, you find a summary of the article. Also, you may have to research how the French and Tahitian cultures have changed over the past two centuries.

Be ready to identify and then discuss the following topics:

1. What stages of cultural exchange as presented in the *Supplement* can you identify?
2. What communicative strategies can help the two cultures to sustain their identities?
3. What do you know about the real exchanges between these cultures over the past two centuries and how they affected intercultural sustainability?

Denis Diderot (1713–1784) was a French writer and philosopher known for his novels, plays, satires, letters, and essays. His *Supplement* is a fictitious essay, describing a French explorer's visit to Tahiti. The text raises the key ethical question: how can one culture treat people from another culture fairly without giving up its own standards of behavior? The text consists of a series of monologues and dialogues between representatives of the French and Tahitian cultures.

One of the main exchanges described in the *Supplement* is between Bougainville and the Tahitian chief Orou, presenting two perspectives on cultural behaviors and practices. The Tahitian leader compares his culture before and after its contact with the French culture. He claims that before the French army and their general Bougainville came to Tahiti, the Tahitians had lived a natural and virtuous life. After contact with the French, this idyllic existence was destroyed and the innocence of the Tahitian people corrupted. To the chief, the French culture represents evil itself. He refuses to learn more about the Europeans and their behaviors, calling upon his people 'to cry misfortune' about the arrival of these mean and ambitious visitors. In Orou's view, the Tahitian culture is clearly superior to the French one.

As an example of ethical behavior, Orou presents the Tahitian practice of exchanging women among men for the purpose of cultural reproduction. He explains that in Tahiti wives and daughters are freely shared among men; as a result, the Tahitian culture is presented as natural and innocent in contrast to unnatural and immoral European monogamy. Unlike the French, for example, the Tahitians make no mistake about gender. In one significant scene from the *Supplement*, Diderot describes how a female European servant, dressed in a man's clothes, was raped by a group of Tahitian men. Corrupted by centuries of artificial morals and no longer able to recognize sexual difference, the European officers had failed to notice the 'true' sexual identity of the servant, but the more natural Tahitian men guessed the gender from the first glance. The Tahitian culture, therefore, is presented as natural and superior compared to the French culture, which is based on arbitrary and conventional moral foundations.

Also, the *Supplement* contains a dialogue between two French men, called simply 'A' and 'B,' who express a typical Enlightenment view. One of these men has read Bougainville's account of his travels to the exotic Tahiti, and the two characters compare cruel and primitive cultural practices of people

in Tahiti with the civilized life in Western cultures. In their view, the savage life of Tahitians lies far behind more complex and civilized life in the West; the two characters praise the rationality, civilization, and morality of the Western cultures. As a result, the characters justify Western expansion because higher and more valuable knowledge is shared with less advanced cultures.

The *Supplement* develops this topic further, presenting a more complex view of different perspectives on cultural behaviors and practices, found in the conversation between the Tahitian chief Orou and the French chaplain. This conversation seems to resemble the exchange between Bougainville and the Tahitian chief; yet, it is different. The chaplain is a guest at Orou's home, and the two persons discuss the issue of the most moral sexual behaviors. The chaplain defends the French culture with its sexual prohibitions, e.g., against incest or extramarital sex. He refuses to engage in sexual relations with Orou's wife and nubile daughters, and Orou and his family feel offended. However, the chaplain eventually gives in to Orou's wishes and engages in sexual relations with Orou's youngest daughter.

The chief claims he does not understand any restrictions because, in his culture, sexuality is not suppressed by any morals. In Tahiti, Orou explains, there is no incest taboo; no rule against premarital or extramarital sex, or single motherhood. Children in Tahiti are welcome because they are seen as the source of material riches, contributing to the strength of the culture. However, the chaplain points out that Tahitian women and men not at the peak of their fertility (because of age or impotence) cannot engage in sexual acts. The chief fails to convince us that the Tahitian culture is natural, non-hierarchical, and free. It becomes clear that the Tahitians have their own moral conventions, i.e., an ethic based on fecundity and age. The Tahitians tie 'natural' behaviors and practices to reproduction in order to remain ethical.

At the end of the *Supplement*, another conversation between characters 'A' and 'B' takes place, but the two Frenchmen appear almost unrecognizable. They admit that both cultures have certain constraints on behavior, e.g., forbidding certain sexual relations. At the same time, both cultures are presented as trying to develop their own codes of conduct, e.g., sexual mores. The exchange between Orou and the French chaplain is seen as an attempt to have an open-minded and mutually beneficial dialogue about the validity of their codes of conduct. In the conclusion, one of the Frenchmen urges the reader to question the ethical norms not only of different cultures but also of their own, and be tolerant toward behaviors and practices of others different from your own culture. As a result, the question of how one culture ought to treat people from another culture fairly, without giving up its own conducts of behavior, is transformed into an open-ended discussion about what constitutes intercultural exchange, in general.

Let us see how this case study can be an illustration of the Sustainability Principle of intercultural communication.

1. What stages of cultural exchange, as presented in the *Supplement*, can you identify?

In the *Supplement*, three views of ethics in cultural exchange can be identified, each representing a stage in the development of intercultural sustainability.

Stage 1: 'One's Bias Displayed.' This stage in the *Supplement* is represented by two conversations—between Bougainville and the Tahitian chief Orou, and between characters 'A' and 'B.'

In the first case, the Tahitian chief claims his people lead a natural and virtuous (ethical) life while the French culture is presented as unnatural and evil. In Orou's view, the Tahitian culture is clearly superior to the French one. As an example of unnatural (suppressed) behavior, the *Supplement* describes how a female European servant was raped by a group of Tahitian men. The French are shown as corrupted by centuries of artificial morals and no longer able to recognize sexual difference. The natural Tahitian men, on the other hand, guessed the gender from the first glance. Hence, the Tahitian culture is presented as natural and superior compared to the French culture, which is based on arbitrary moral foundations. Clearly, the ethical code of the Tahitian people is presented as positive and that of the French people as negative. This view of intercultural ethics can be shown as follows:

Conversation between	View of ethics
Orou and Bougainville	Tahitian+ French-

In the second case, a different view of ethics is represented by the conversation between two French men, called simply 'A' and 'B,' who express a typical Enlightenment view. Based on Bougainville's account of his travels to exotic Tahiti, the two characters compare primitive cultural practices of people in Tahiti with the civilized life in Western cultures. In their view, the savage life of Tahitians lies far behind complex and civilized life in the West with its rationality, civilization, and morality. Naturally, they claim their system of moral standards (Self) as the only acceptable ethical code and justify Western expansion. Clearly, the ethical codes of the French people are now presented as positive and the codes of the Tahitian people as negative. This view of intercultural ethics can be shown as follows:

Conversation between	View of ethics
Characters 'A' and 'B	French+ Tahitian-

The view of ethics found at the first stage is extreme and has an ethnocentric bias. Each culture tries to reduce all morals to Self, i.e., to its own system of ethical standards, claiming its own code of conduct as the only acceptable one.

Stage 2: 'One's Blind Spot Revealed.' This stage in the Supplement is represented by the conversation between the Tahitian chief Orou and the French chaplain. At this stage, a step is made by both cultures toward engaging the other's perspective on moral behavior.

On the one hand, the chaplain defends the French culture with its sexual prohibitions, e.g., against extramarital sex. However, he gives in to Orou's wishes and engages in sexual relations with Orou's youngest daughter. His ethical stance appears self-contradictory: by forbidding certain sexual relations, desire is only enhanced. This blind spot in the ethical code of the French culture cannot be revealed unless there is interaction between French people and people from another culture, e.g., between the chaplain and Orou's youngest daughter. In other words, an important piece of ethical knowledge about themselves is revealed to the French, a piece that has been hidden from their view until this point.

On the other hand, the chief defends the Tahitian culture with no sexual restrictions, e.g., no incest taboo, no rule against premarital or extramarital sex or single motherhood. It appears that sexuality cannot be suppressed by any morals. However, according to Orou, children in Tahiti are welcome because they are seen as the source of material riches, contributing to the strength of the culture. So, it turns out that women and men not at the peak of their fertility (because of age or impotence) cannot engage in sexual acts.

The Tahitian culture, therefore, appears to be just as conventional, with its ethical norms based on fecundity and age. This blind spot in the ethical code of the Tahitian culture cannot be revealed unless there is interaction between Tahitian people and people from another culture, e.g., between the chaplain and Orou. In other words, an important piece of ethical knowledge about themselves is revealed to the Tahitians, a piece that has been hidden from their view until this point.

Naturally, these blind spots are revealed to the two cultures gradually: the dialogue between the chaplain and Orou is only a step in that direction. However, it is a very important step because at this stage the representatives of the two cultures come to be aware of an inherent vulnerability of their ethical claims. Clearly, neither ethical code can be presented as positive. This view of intercultural ethics can be shown as follows:

Conversation between	View of ethics
Orou and the chaplain	French– Tahitian–

Stage 3: 'Open Exchange.' This stage in the *Supplement* is represented by the second conversation between characters 'A' and 'B, who now appear almost unrecognizable. The eyes of the two cultures on their blind spots have opened up, as it were; it is now clear that no culture owns the truth,

i.e., no culture can present *the* ethical code of conduct. What seems natural to people from one culture, may not seem natural to people from the other culture. Natural behaviors are conventional behaviors, and these conventions can only be established to each culture's satisfaction through an open exchange.

The first two stages can be seen as steps toward an open-minded and mutually beneficial dialogue between people from the two cultures about the validity of their codes of conduct. Now that the ethical norms of both cultures have been presented (stage 1) and questioned (stage 2), it is time to move on to an open exchange of ideas about what is moral (stage 3). In the conclusion, as you remember, one of the Frenchmen urges the reader to be tolerant toward behaviors and practices of others different from your own culture. Clearly, the ethical codes of both cultures are presented as positive and valid. This view of intercultural ethics can be shown as follows:

Conversation between	View of ethics
Characters	'A' and 'B' French+ Tahitian+

Thus, intercultural ethics are transformed from a biased view ('Self only') through a critique of one's blind spot ('Self through the Other') into an open-ended discussion about what constitutes intercultural exchange ('Self and the Other').

2. What communicative strategies can help the two cultures to sustain their identities?

First and foremost, intercultural sustainability cannot exist without mutual tolerance and trust. Tolerance and trust form a default mechanism of intercultural communication; as long as people from different cultures tolerate and trust each other, intercultural communication is effective.

The initial interactions between the French and Tahitians lack both tolerance and trust. The Tahitians view the French as evil, destroying their natural and virtuous ways of life and corrupting their innocence. The chief Orou does not want to learn more about the Europeans and their practices, calling upon his people 'to cry misfortune' about the arrival of these mean and ambitious visitors. On their part, the French view the Tahitians as primitive people whose savage behaviors and practices cannot be tolerated and who cannot be trusted to build a civilized way of life by themselves. However, further interactions between the two cultures begin to display rudimentary tolerance and trust. For example, the French chaplain's visit to Orou's house builds upon these communicative strategies. Gradually, these two people open up their minds to each other's ways of behaving. The chaplain, while defending the French culture with its sexual prohibitions, e.g., against extramarital

sex, gives in to Orou's wishes and engages in sexual relations with Orou's youngest daughter. And Orou listens to the chaplain's critique of the Tahitian culture, which is presented by the chaplain just as conventional, with its ethical norms based on fecundity and age.

When different behaviors and practices are imposed, intercultural sustainability is in danger; then, the default mechanism of tolerance and trust switches into the mode of resistance. For example, Orou's insistence that the chaplain engage in sexual relations with Orou's wife and daughters could have been perceived by the chaplain as overbearing and dangerous for the collective French identity with its sexual prohibitions. Then, the chaplain would have resisted and firmly refused to engage in sexual relations with Orou's wife and daughters. Or, the female European servant might have resisted the rape by a group of Tahitian men even though, back then, it would have been almost unthinkable. Of course, the European officers could have come to her rescue, putting up a resistance against the Tahitian savage behavior and defending the European morality.

On their part, the Tahitians would have certainly resisted if the French had tried to introduce and enforce the rule against premarital sex on the island. In all these cases, resistance as a communicative strategy is crucial because it is aimed at bringing intercultural communication back to the dynamic state of intercultural sustainability.

Therefore, the two cultures cannot sustain their collective identities without using the strategies of tolerance, trust, and resistance. Let us now see what real exchanges have taken place between these two cultures over the past two centuries and how they affected intercultural sustainability.

3. What do you know about the real exchanges between these cultures over the past two centuries and how they affected intercultural sustainability?

Tahiti is the principal island in the Territory of French Polynesia that lies in the South Pacific. French explorer Louis-Antonine de Bougainville arrived there in 1768 and claimed the island for France. In 1880, Kong Pomare was forced to abdicate, and a French colony was proclaimed. In 1957, the territory was officially named the Territory of French Polynesia.

The Western missionaries did everything possible to eliminate Tahitian culture: temples and carvings associated with native religion were destroyed, traditional dance, music, and tattoos were banned, etc. Not surprisingly, the last two centuries saw a number of nationalistic protests as Tahitians searched more independence from France. Today some people in Tahiti still resist the French influence.

Over the years, culture in Tahiti has undergone many changes due to the French influence, with some old behaviors and practices disappearing

and new behaviors and practices taking root. For example, Christianity is now a strong part of life in Tahiti, and Sunday is a day of worship for many people there. Family is modeled after the Western concept, and incest is no longer an accepted behavior. Due to the French technological and health innovations, life expectancy is now 75 years, and the population growth rate is 1.8%. The French presence is even felt in the local cuisine which is given a French flair. It is possible to trace Tahitian influence on the French culture, as well. The laidback Tahitian lifestyle certainly affected the cold rationality of Enlightenment and helped people in the West to loosen up, so to speak. As a result, people became a bit more emotional and less suppressed. Along the same lines, the influence of Tahiti on the French arts and literature is strong; the best example here is Paul Gauguin, the French painter who chose Tahiti as his home and depicted the beauty of its people and heritage. His art exerted a strong influence on modern painting all over the world. Also, elements of Tahitian dance, dress, and crafts find their way into French culture. Tattoo, for instance, as one of the oldest Tahitian customs, now enjoys popularity in many Western countries. Incidentally, the words 'tattoo' and 'taboo' are said to be Polynesian words that are now part of every European language.

It is clear that the cultural exchange between the French and Tahitian cultures has been quite active over the years. The culture of the island, which still remains highly dependent on France for its survival, has seen a rebirth in recent years. The Tahitian language is now an official language alongside French; it is again taught in schools and used in government meetings. The traditional crafts, music and dance are widely celebrated. Tourism to the island is growing, and local people actively participate in planning and organizing tourist activities.

6 Side Trips

6.1 Seesaws at the U.S.–Mexico Border

A recent article in *Newsweek* (Da Silva, 2019) talks about a set of seesaws built by two California professors through a fence of the U.S.–Mexico border. This allowed children and grown-ups on either side of the border to play together on the seesaws; you can watch this in a video posted to Instagram by Ronald Rael—one of the professors who came up with the seesaw project: www.instagram.com/p/B0iALEOBMfP/?hl=en.

He described the project as an incredible experience filled with joy, excitement, and togetherness.

** Do you think that this project can be seen as a good metaphor for the Sustainability Principle? Can you think of any other similar projects or metaphors?

6.2 Cultures of Resistance Network

Cultures of Resistance.org—https://culturesofresistance.org/content/sound-resistance—is the outreach website of the Cultures of Resistance Network, which aims to promote and support musical practices for a more peaceful, just, and democratic world. Drawing inspiration from various art practices that carry their own strategies of resistance, the network aims to give exposure to various musicians and musical traditions from around the world, including the Middle East, Africa, Latin America, and the United States.

> ** What are your thoughts on turning to music and song as vehicles of successful intercultural communication? Can you think of some specific examples of artists, practices, or traditions as such vehicles?

6.3 The Ship of Tolerance

The Ship of Tolerance is a global public art project by Ilya and Emilia Kabakov, Russian-born and American-based conceptual artists, which aims to connect people from different cultures around the world by planting the seeds of tolerance in their hearts. Drawings and paintings by young people from different cultures are sewn together to form a mosaic sail, which is mounted atop a ship and conveys a message of tolerance and hope. The idea is for young people to create together something bigger than themselves and connect them through the language of art. The first *Ship of Tolerance* was built in 2005 in Siwa, Egypt, and, since then, has been implemented in many other places, including Venice, Italy; Shariah, UAE; Havana, Cuba; New York, NY, USA; Moscow, Russia; and Rome, Italy.

> ** Can you think of other projects to promote intercultural tolerance?

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