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Schilbrack, Kevin. 2003. [Review of] "Intimacy or Integrity: Philosophy and Cultural Difference." *International Journal for Philosophy Of Religion* 54, no. 1: 57-59. The version of record is available from [www.springer.com](http://www.springer.com) (ISSN: 0020-7047) (Aug 2003)

## [Review of] Thomas P. Kasulis, *Intimacy or Integrity: Philosophy and Cultural Difference.*

Kevin Schilbrack

### Book review

**Thomas P. Kasulis, *Intimacy or Integrity: Philosophy and Cultural Difference.*** Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2002, xii + 183 pp. Hb \$45.00; pb \$14.95.

Thomas Kasulis wears his erudition lightly, but he is one of the most original comparative philosophers writing today. He has an unrivaled gift for the illuminating metaphor and for demystifying Japanese philosophy. In this creative and diagram-filled book, he offers a philosophical approach to the question of cultural differences that will be accessible to the general reader. His proposal is that the differences between cultures reflect the particular aspects of human life that cultures tend to emphasize, enhance, and place as central. "What is foreground in one culture may be background in another" (p. 20). Such an approach avoids the absolutely crippling idea that different cultures operate according to different logics or live in different worlds and therefore could serve as an invaluable propaedeutic to comparative philosophy of religion.

Kasulis proposes two basic cultural orientations, which he labels "intimacy" and "integrity." A culture's basic choice between these two orientations is then reiterated in its approaches to epistemology, styles of argument, metaphysics, aesthetics, ethics, and politics, thereby generating broad and mutually supportive cultural patterns. Here are two examples of the ways in which Kasulis traces these patterns out. An orientation of integrity

in epistemology tends to seek publicly verifiable, objective knowledge. The knower maintains his or her own integrity in relation to the known object; each exists independently of the other. An orientation of intimacy, on the other hand, tends to see the knower and known in an interdependent relationship, and this approach leads to an appreciation of the kind of esoteric knowledge that one can only obtain through a particular practice or training. Kasulis illustrates this with the good example of the knowledge of a gymnastics judge. Intimate knowledge, then, is not fully public (unlike knowledge in the integrity approach), though it is still objective. As a second example, acting ethically from an orientation of integrity tends to focus on the agent's responsibility: one ought to respect the integrity and so the rights of others. Acting ethically from an orientation of intimacy, on the other hand, tends to focus on the agent's responsiveness: it involves developing the ability or skill to feel the pain of others. In general, then, Kasulis's point is that although one's cultural orientation may shape one's world view, so that what is commonsense from one orientation may seem inscrutable or beside the point from another perspective, the orientation that a culture does not follow can nevertheless be appreciated and accessible as a background or underemphasized aspect of its own world. The two are not incommensurable conceptual schemes but rather complementary gestalts, and moving from one to the other requires not so much analysis as imagination.

Kasulis thus sees philosophical reflection on culture as an entree to human experience and he sees philosophy itself as a cultural enterprise, and in my judgment these are fruitful roads for the future of philosophy of religion. If I have a criticism, then, it is of the places where I judge Kasulis "takes sides" and tacitly privileges one orientation over the other. According to this book's premise, one's worldview, epistemology, and so on are dependent on one's cultural orientation. But Kasulis is a Western philosopher who has made the linguistic turn, and he seems for this reason to hold to a dualism of mind (or language) on the one hand and the "external" world on the other, a dualism that for him is culturally invariant. Thus the reader finds him speaking of the mind, Cartesian-style, as an "inner" realm; one has immediate access to one's own mind but only mediated access to the minds of others (p. 45). Similarly, whether one experiences the world from the integrity perspective or the intimate perspective, Kasulis assumes that all experience is mediated through language. As a consequence, Kasulis insists on a dualism between

the modes of logic and those of reality. "There is no necessary connection between the way we think and the way reality is" (p. 99; cf. pp. 88–89, 134, 153–157). Unlike, for example, Aristotle, who said for eternal things, to be possible and to be are the same, Kasulis insists on a Kantian split between the way things are thought and the way they are in reality. "[A] consequence of this view is that 'metaphysics' *in either orientation* is understood to be only a form of discourse" (p. 154; emphasis added). This word/world division reflects an integrity orientation in which our knowledge of reality is not intimate knowledge, but Kasulis treats it as a truth that is independent of one's cultural orientation. As he admits, the book is closer to an orientation of integrity than one of intimacy (p. 161).

What Kasulis does not imagine (and, granted, on this point he is today in the mainstream) is a nonrepresentational theory of knowledge in which knowledge arises in the process of embodied engagement with the world. There is no space in a review even to sketch such a theory, though I recommend *The Embodied Mind* (MIT Press, 1992) by Francisco Varela and his colleagues and Warren Frisina's *The Unity of Knowledge and Action* (SUNY Press, 2002). And resources for a nonCartesian understanding of knowledge can also be found in Kasulis's book. As mentioned above, Kasulis makes the interesting point that, from the intimacy orientation, there is an internal relation, an "overlap," between knower and known, so that each is partially dependent on the other. "For intimacy the world is not what it would be without its knowers" (p. 81). As an example of human knowers' influence on the world, Kasulis points to the artificial things in the world like buildings that are artifacts of human activity. The nonartificial world is also human shaped, Kasulis says, since it is perceived via the artifact of human language; "language is part of the world-as-experienced" (p. 83). These are good points, but one can go further, because the contribution of the knower to the world does not wait on language. The world is disclosed to any organism in terms of its purposes, as Merleau-Ponty details; a dog therefore lives in a dog world, but this is not the result of language. Moreover, the perceiver contributes to the experience of the world, both in terms of what are sometimes called secondary characteristics (since there is no color without seeing eyes) and in terms of body schemas. (This is the thesis of George Lakoff and Mark Johnson's *Philosophy in the Flesh* [Basic Books, 1999].) Perhaps Kasulis would welcome these supportive suggestions, but they pull his argument out

of his linguistic fence into an appreciation of an embodied, world-intimate consciousness.

Kasulis's sketch of the intimacy and integrity orientations is detailed and yet vague enough (in a good sense) to be a powerful heuristic device. The two orientations will suggest many applications to scholars of religion: not only to comparisons between East and West, but also between feminine and masculine or between premodern and modern ways of being religious. Philosophers of religion may also find that they shed light on differences between Catholic and Protestant piety or within a single church between mystical and doctrinal interests. The book is proffered as a tool, and it will be useful for a variety of classes, not only in philosophy but also where questions of cross-cultural understanding are central.