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Interkulturalna veštačka inteligencija: pomirenje etičkog univerzalizma i kulturne raznolikosti

Ernesta Molotokienė[1]

[1]Klaipeda University, Lithuania, ernesta.molotokiene@ku.lt

Apstrakt: Članak analizira koncept interkulturalne veštačke inteligencije, koji omogućava definisanje univerzalnih etičkih principa na osnovu kojih se mogu donositi interkulturalne odluke i postići sporazumi o razvoju, primeni, upravljanju i korišćenju digitalnih tehnologija. Interkulturalna veštačka inteligencija predstavlja jedan od najnovijih naučnih projekata usmerenih na razmatranje širokog spektra etičkih pitanja koja proističu iz uticaja tehnologija veštačke inteligencije na ljudsku svest, društva i kulture, iz multidisciplinarne perspektive. Etički univerzalizam naglašava zajedničke ljudske vrednosti, kao što su pravda, odgovornost i poštovanje života, dok kulturna raznolikost ističe moralne norme i tradicije specifične za pojedine zajednice. Stoga se u članku tvrdi da različite kulture ne postižu saglasnost oko zajedničkih univerzalnih etičkih smernica za veštačku inteligenciju, jer su one zasnovane na jedinstvenim pogledima na svet i vrednosnim sistemima, kao i zbog nepostojanja univerzalno prihvaćenog, epistemološki pouzdanog načina za rešavanje vrednosnih neslaganja. Članak razotkriva glavne teorijske pretpostavke na kojima se zasniva interkulturalna veštačka inteligencija, a koje omogućavaju stvaranje i primenu zajedničkog sistema univerzalnih etičkih principa koji regulišu razvoj digitalnih tehnologija u različitim regionima sveta i kulturama.

Ključne reči: Interkulturalna veštačka inteligencija, etički univerzalizam, kulturna raznolikost, etika AI, moralni pluralizam.

Intercultural Artificial Intelligence: Reconciling Ethical Universalism and Cultural Diversity

Abstract: The article analyzes the concept of intercultural artificial intelligence, which makes it possible to define universal ethical principles on the basis of which intercultural decisions and agreements on the development, deployment, governance, and use of digital technologies can be made. Intercultural artificial intelligence is one of the newest scientific projects aimed at examining wide-ranging ethical issues arising from the impact of artificial intelligence technologies on human consciousness, societies, and cultures from a multidisciplinary perspective. Ethical universalism emphasizes shared human values such as justice, accountability, and respect for life, whereas cultural diversity highlights the moral norms and traditions specific to particular communities. Therefore, the article argues that different cultures do not agree on common universal AI ethical guidelines because these are grounded in unique worldviews and value systems, and because there is no universally accepted, epistemically reliable way to resolve value-based disagreements. The article reveals the main theoretical assumptions underlying intercultural AI, which enable the creation and application of a shared system of universal ethical principles regulating the development of digital technologies across different regions of the world and cultures.

Keywords: Intercultural Artificial Intelligence, Ethical Universalism, Cultural Diversity, AI Ethics, Moral Pluralism.

1. Introduction

Digital technologies and artificial intelligence are developed within specific cultural contexts, which have a significant impact not only on the users of AI technologies but also on the development of AI itself (Brynjolfsson & McAfee, 2014). Therefore, increasing attention is being paid to intercultural digital ethics and to questions of how AI systems should be designed and deployed in light of their potential global impact on crucial ethical values such as privacy and dignity. Intercultural cooperation is essential for enabling ethical processes of AI development, deployment, advancement, governance, and use. First and foremost, intercultural cooperation aims to ensure that AI is developed, used, and governed in ways that are beneficial to society (Jobin et al., 2019).

Intercultural cooperation in the field of AI development is important for several reasons. First, such cooperation creates conditions for ensuring more balanced AI development across cultures and makes it possible to anticipate, diagnose, and effectively regulate obstacles arising in the development or adoption of digital technologies

Second, intercultural cooperation enables researchers around the world to share experiences, resources, and best practices. This facilitates faster progress both in the development of digital technologies and in the management of ethically problematic situations.

Third, in the absence of intercultural cooperation, there is a risk that commercial ecosystems with greater competitive advantages may underinvest in the safe, ethical, and socially beneficial development of digital technologies (Askell et al., 2019; Ying, 2019).

Finally, ethical international cooperation in developing intercultural AI is also important for more practical reasons, such as ensuring that AI applications, for example, those used in major search engines or autonomous vehicles can successfully interact with other technologies across different legal and ethical regulatory environments in various regions (Cihon, 2019).

Digital technologies and artificial intelligence systems may have different impacts when deployed in different cultural regions, where distinct governance approaches may be required (Hagerty & Rubinov, 2019). Nevertheless, it is evident that intercultural cooperation is indispensable in certain aspects of digital technology development and governance. For example, some potential military uses of artificial intelligence technologies may violate fundamental human rights (Asaro, 2012). In the absence of international agreements and standards, the application of AI technologies in the military industry may have destabilizing effects. International agreements are also necessary when AI technologies are developed in one region but deployed or used in another. A major obstacle to building trust in digital technology development between Eastern and Western cultures lies in worldview differences rooted in distinct value systems, which ultimately lead to differing: potentially conflicting views on what constitutes ethical development, use, and governance of digital technologies. By acknowledging existing multicultural differences, it is possible to identify certain cultural contexts that may serve as a sufficient basis for intercultural dialogue. This represents one of the most important initial steps toward addressing the fundamental challenges in the field of intercultural AI ethics.

2. Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative, theoretical, and comparative research design to explore how ethical universalism and cultural diversity can be reconciled in the development and governance of artificial intelligence (AI). The methodological framework is interdisciplinary, integrating philosophical, ethical, sociological, and technological perspectives to conceptualize the notion of intercultural artificial intelligence.

The research is based on a systematic literature review. The literature review aimed to identify major theoretical trends, ethical frameworks, and cross-cultural approaches relevant to AI ethics and governance.

In the second stage, a comparative analysis was conducted to examine how different cultural traditions: Western, East Asian, Islamic, and African ethical paradigms interpret moral principles applicable to AI decision-making. This approach allowed the study to assess the extent to which universal ethical models can be adapted across diverse sociocultural contexts.

Furthermore, a normative analysis was applied, grounded in moral philosophy and conceptual synthesis. This analytical method focuses on formulating a model of intercultural ethical pluralism, which combines universal moral principles (such as justice, accountability, and human dignity) with culturally responsive ethical practices.

Although no primary empirical data were collected, the study relies on secondary data analysis and conceptual reasoning to establish a coherent theoretical foundation for the governance of globally responsible AI. Finally, the credibility and validity of the research are ensured through triangulation of sources, integrating insights from multiple disciplines and cross-referencing international frameworks. This methodological approach enables a balanced evaluation of both the philosophical and practical dimensions of intercultural AI ethics.

3. Cultural Diversity and Contextual Ethics

The development of intercultural AI technologies encompasses a broad field of ethical principles and practices across different societies, historical periods, and philosophical traditions, which strongly influence the social adoption and adaptation of digital technologies. However, as Thomas Taro Lennerfors and Kiyoshi Murata (2021) emphasize, discussions on the adoption of intercultural AI often lack a clear understanding of culture and an

analysis of cultural relativism. In recent decades, the rapidly emerging field of intercultural AI research has shown a pronounced interest in cultural differences, referred to as a "culture matter" (Ess, 2017). One of the most common challenges at the early stages of forming the problematic field of intercultural AI has been the issues raised by ethnocentrism and cultural diversity (Ess, 2017). Recently, due to intensifying global conflicts arising from differing value systems, worldviews, and religious beliefs, a comprehensive reflection on the concept of culture in the context of intercultural AI development has become increasingly necessary (Palm, 2016). Theories of culture applied to AI development have been extensively elaborated by Edward T. Hall and Geert Hofstede, who argued that people belonging to a particular country share common characteristics, as if they possess a collective "algorithm" in their consciousness that distinguishes them from others (Hofstede & Minkov, 2010). Such cultural parameters are essentialist, as people within a specific culture share certain fundamental ways of being, thinking, and acting that set them apart from others.

In the context of intercultural AI development, there are also more marginal, non-essentialist cultural parameters, in which culture is not tied to an "essence," emphasizing the spontaneity, creativity, and diversity of cultures (Dahl, 2014; Langstedt, 2018). These cultural concept parameters represent homogeneous national cultures encompassing multiple cultural expressions and social practices. According to Bielby, even within the same region, there may be a wide variety of religions, subcultures, and philosophical systems (Bielby, 2015). Concepts of individualism and collectivism often differ drastically across cultures, for example, when comparing Japan and Western cultures (Westwood, 2004). This understanding of culture does not account for the hybridization processes occurring due to the impact of technologies, particularly the Internet.

Non-essentialist concepts of culture provide a far more favorable opportunity for intercultural dialogue and creative solutions regarding the normative grounding of intercultural AI. The non-essentialist perspective focuses not on attempting to preserve and defend stagnant cultural identities, but on the ways and reasons people use certain cultural concepts, how they interpret them, and which interpretations are temporarily prioritized over others and why. Therefore, one of the most important questions is how culture is created and understood at the micro level across different perspectives and relationships.

Several decades ago, Samuel P. Huntington formulated the idea of the "clash of civilizations," according to which cultural and religious differences worldwide become a primary factor in global conflicts (Huntington, 1996). Most criticisms of Huntington's idea are based on the belief that religious clashes and conflicts are not the most significant factors in global processes. Of course, cultural and religious differences and the disputes arising from them worldwide are undeniable facts, but there are many additional factors and conditions influencing conflicts between civilizations. Another line of criticism is directed at Huntington's position of defining and categorizing cultures and civilizations according to geographic zones. It is evident that, following geographic definitions, one can discuss the influence of different regions on each other in the context of globalization; however, more fundamental processes occur within these regions themselves. In other words, complex internal conflicts take place within specific geographic zones, leading to the conclusion that regions not only affect each other but also constantly change and transform internally. Huntington established the idea that cultural differences are highly significant for understanding the contemporary world.

Due to the impact of digital technologies, global conflicts have become more complex than ever before. Today, information mediated by digital technologies can spread at the speed of light to virtually any location in the world, making intercultural conflicts arising from differences in values, worldviews, and traditions inevitable. At the epicenter of these conflicts lies the unequal distribution of information control or power: information is typically generated and managed by the technologically most advanced countries, which, along with technology dissemination to other cultures, transmit corresponding "cultural codes" (value and worldview systems) that may not be favorably received by other cultures functioning under different value systems and worldview parameters.

4. Ethical Universalism vs. Moral Pluralism

Ethical universalism and moral pluralism represent two contrasting frameworks in the discussion of artificial intelligence (AI) ethics. Ethical universalism posits that certain moral principles are inherently valid for all humans, regardless of culture, geography, or historical context. This approach emphasizes shared values such as fairness, accountability, human dignity, and the protection of life (Korsgaard, 2018; Floridi & Cowls, 2020). Universalist principles provide a clear benchmark for AI development, offering guidance in high-stakes scenarios such as autonomous vehicles, algorithmic justice systems, and healthcare decision-making.

Moral pluralism, by contrast, recognizes the existence of multiple valid moral frameworks across societies. It argues that ethical reasoning is context-dependent and shaped by cultural, social, and historical factors (Wong, 2009). Pluralism highlights that what constitutes ethical behavior in one culture may not align with norms in

another. For instance, in collectivist societies, ethical considerations often prioritize community welfare over individual rights, whereas in individualistic societies, autonomy and personal freedom may be paramount (Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov, 2010). AI systems that ignore these variations risk making decisions that, while technically ethical according to universal standards, may be perceived as morally unacceptable in specific cultural contexts (Jobin, Ienca, & Vayena, 2019).

The challenges of creating a universal ethics applicable across different cultures and traditions are longstanding: both ancient Eastern and Western cultures developed often very sophisticated methods for resolving apparent social tensions between consensus and difference. At the same time, the solutions proposed by ancient Western and Eastern cultural traditions are, in fact, quite similar in several fundamental respects. Plato, Aristotle, and later Aquinas responded to this complex demand in at least two essential ways. Plato develops an approach that Ess describes as "interpretive pluralism" (Ess, 2006). Based on this Platonic perspective, presented in The Republic, it can be argued that there is a possibility of synthesizing shared ethical norms with differing viewpoints, acknowledging that diverse ethical practices can be understood as interpretations of common ethical norms and their different applications. Such differences in interpretation do not necessarily imply, as ethical relativists claim, the absence of universally recognized ethical norms or values; on the contrary, these differences may simply indicate that a particular norm or value is applied or understood in specific ways, as required by the context in which a particular tradition, cultural norms, and practices have developed. Ethical universalism based on pluralism can be found in various religious and philosophical traditions, for example, in the Islamic worldview (Eickelman, 2003) and in Confucian philosophy (Chan, 2008).

Aristotle, in his Metaphysics, draws on Plato's insights regarding the significance of linguistic ambiguities. Ambiguous words represent a linguistic middle ground between homogeneous unification (requiring a term to have one and only one meaning) and pure ambiguity (where a single term can have multiple, entirely unrelated meanings). In contrast, "pros hen" or "focal" ambiguities are terms that have different meanings but are simultaneously related to one another, as both refer to a common or central concept that grounds the meaning of each (Aristotle, 1003b2-4; 1060b37-1061a7). Thus, semantic differences are connected through a single overarching concept. Aristotle links the ability to reflect on these linguistic ambiguities as semantic differences or interpretations with a certain type of practical reasoning - *phronesis*. Just as we can recognize and appropriately understand concepts with different but related meanings, phronesis allows us to act according to a general principle, functioning as a kind of universal ethical analogue between two different decisions. This universal application of phronesis makes it possible to understand ambiguities with different semantic contexts in diverse ways while maintaining a universal perspective. Aristotle's position thus opens the possibility for ethical universalism.

Phronesis primarily refers to the capacity to make ethical decisions in specific and complex problematic contexts, as well as the ability to revise previous decisions when confronted with new information. In other words, phronesis is a model of self-regulation that enables the discernment of which general principles can be applied to a particular case within a given context and how they should be interpreted, taking into account the potential diversity of meanings.

In dominant Western ethical discourses to date, there has been an evident promotion of hegemonic Western values as universal and suitable for all cultures, often ignoring and marginalizing local value systems. Intercultural dialogue is based on the crucial premise that the global value system is not monolithic or hegemonic. Ethical universalism should not be understood as a practice that "reduces" cultural differences by imposing a single, unilateral system as a universal standard. The question arises whether, given the pluralistic nature of societies, it is possible at all to rely on any universal value assumptions. Conversely, in seeking to preserve value diversity, does the threat of cultural relativism emerge? The premises of cultural relativism eliminate any possibility of applying a universal method. Ethical universalism grounded in pluralism, however, allows for the preservation of value diversity across cultures while simultaneously recognizing the existence of certain foundational ethical principles, norms, values, and assumptions.

Although ethical pluralism is based on the premise that moral values, norms, ideals, duties, and virtues are inherently diverse, ethical universalism grounded in this pluralism can correlate with different value systems and their interpretations and applications in practice, while preserving distinct cultural traditions and practices. Ethical universalism is inseparable from phronesis, or practical wisdom, which is necessary for negotiation in various ethical and political contexts to achieve sustainable prosperity, human well-being, and harmony in multicultural societies. The intercultural AI project highlights the importance of a gradual transition from pragmatic shared economic interests to ethical universalism, which provides a basis for determining the appropriate ethical course in specific problematic, often radically different, contexts.

5. Ethical Universalism in Artificial Intelligence

We live in the age of AI, where societies develop mediated by digital information technologies. Digital technologies have significantly accelerated the movement of thoughts and ideas and have prompted inevitable clashes of value systems. As a result, intercultural value systems, dialogue, and the search for universal ethical principles are becoming increasingly important areas requiring global engagement. In the context of developing intercultural AI, key questions arise: which universal values can serve the essential goals of digital technology development while aligning with the beliefs and expectations of people representing different cultures? Is it possible to create intercultural AI technology that ensures the existence of universal ethical values without ignoring cultural and worldview differences?

It is impossible to ignore the substantial contrasts between the fundamental ethical assumptions underlying Western digital ethics and those forming the basis of classical Eastern ethical theories, such as Confucianism, Buddhism, and various local traditions and cultures. Unlike the Western mindset, which often grants the individual a central role as ultimate reality, in many Eastern cultural traditions, a person is understood as part of a community, whose identity is defined through relationships with other community members. Traditional African worldviews are based on the concept of ubuntu, in which a person is seen as a social and constantly self-developing being whose character evolves through relationships with others (Paterson, 2007). This concept of humans as relational beings correlates with Confucian philosophy (Ames & Rosemont, 199). These fundamental differences shape our identity as members and participants of culture. It is undeniable that individuals and cultures have an essential right to their own identity (Ess, 2006), meaning that it is necessary to respect and nurture cultural differences that define our personality and cultural identity. Nonetheless, in order to develop intercultural AI technologies, it is crucial to search for an intercultural foundation based on basic universal ethical values.

The pluralistic nature of contemporary societies enables the discourse of intercultural AI ethics. The intensity of AI technology development is evident worldwide, meaning that these technologies are being used by an increasing number of people in diverse cultural contexts. It is undeniable that to avoid a homogeneous global culture, grounded in minimal, pragmatically economic interests oriented toward efficient consumption, a universal ethics is required that preserves cultural differences. There are irreducible cultural differences defining various cultures and identities that remain resilient to hybridization processes, making it practically very difficult to develop and operationalize intercultural AI ethics.

In the context of global processes, it is crucial to consider whether the ethical standards that have predominated so far can be applied to different cultures. Ess (2006) proposed a concept of ethical universalism grounded in interpretive pluralism, rejecting ethical dogmatism and ethical relativism as inappropriate perspectives for underpinning intercultural AI. Ethical and epistemological relativism is based on the assumption that the diversity of perspectives and differences implies a lack of a single truth or value system, while ethical dogmatism relies on the firm belief that only one ethical system is correct, dismissing all other values, worldviews, epistemological methods, and arguments as wrong. Historically, the concept of ethical universalism developed under the influence of increasing tolerance for different value systems and religious beliefs, as well as recognition of the value of cultural diversity (Sartori, 1997).

Forms of universalism vary according to different Eastern and Western philosophical traditions, with a detailed analysis provided by Charles Ess (2006). Based on this analysis, we can identify the most significant current forms of ethical universalism grounded in pluralism in Eastern and Western cultures:

Modus vivendi pluralism recognizes existing differences between cultures and individuals but rejects a common value basis across cultures and perspectives, making this type of pluralism inseparable from ongoing value conflicts and worldview confrontations (Ess, 2006).

Robust pluralism is based on Lawrence Hinman's idea that incompatibility and differences are essential properties of the moral field and can constitute a moral advantage over other ethical perspectives (Hinman, 2012).

Liberal pluralism seeks to justify connections between different forms of ethical systems, based on John Rawls's concept of impartial consensus (Rawls, 1993).

Compatibility pluralism is primarily based on Charles Taylor's concept of compatibility, aiming for the reconciliation of different ethical positions, ensuring the possibility of forming a positive ethical consensus among diverse participants (Madsen & Strong, 2009).

Interpretive pluralism, grounded in Plato's theory of ideas and Aristotle's pros hen concept in Metaphysics, supports the notion that more than one ethically valid interpretation is possible, linked to universal ethical norms (Ess, 2006). The pros hen concept makes the connection between universalism and multiculturalism feasible.

Confucian ethical pluralism, based on Confucius's concept of ren, allows for different yet equally tolerable ethical decisions made by various participants. Confucian ethical pluralism aligns with Aristotle's phronesis—the concept of practical reasoning, which gains a diversity of interpretations regarding any matter.

It appears that ethical universalism grounded in pluralism ensures diversity in the interpretation, application, and understanding of ethical standards, which is a crucial advantage in developing and justifying an intercultural AI project. In this way, intercultural AI technology, based on the principles of universalist ethics, enables cultural diversity, grounded in interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary perspectives, and is inseparable from the establishment of a sustainable platform of shared ethical principles. This platform could help regulate human behavior across cultures while simultaneously preserving the diversity of unique worldviews, as there is a serious risk of losing cultural diversity in a globalized world.

One way to overcome the intercultural conflicts arising mostly from the dominance of Western cultural paradigms in digitally mediated information is to create a new hybrid concept of intercultural AI that protects and nurtures different ethical value systems and distinct local cultures. Given the hybrid nature of cultures, a direct correlation in intercultural ethics can be established by comparing and identifying value systems. The search for shared values and ideals could lead to a universal ethical reference framework.

6. Conclusion

This study highlights the critical importance of integrating ethical universalism with cultural diversity in the development and governance of intercultural artificial intelligence (AI). Digital technologies and AI operate across global cultural contexts, producing inevitable clashes of value systems and raising urgent ethical questions that demand interdisciplinary and cross-cultural solutions.

Intercultural AI offers a promising framework for addressing these challenges by combining universal ethical principles such as justice, accountability, human dignity, and respect for life with sensitivity to local cultural norms, worldviews, and moral traditions. Ethical universalism grounded in pluralism, particularly interpretive and Confucian ethical pluralism, provides a theoretical foundation for reconciling shared human values with cultural differences. This approach allows AI systems to be guided by universal moral norms while simultaneously respecting culturally specific ethical practices and preserving local identities.

The study emphasizes that intercultural AI requires both practical wisdom (phronesis) and a pluralistic ethical perspective to navigate complex, context-dependent ethical dilemmas. Phronesis enables decision-makers to apply universal principles flexibly and appropriately, ensuring ethical consistency while accommodating cultural diversity. Moreover, the pluralistic grounding of ethical universalism fosters intercultural dialogue, facilitates collaboration, and mitigates conflicts arising from hegemonic or monolithic value systems.

In practice, the development of intercultural AI should aim to create a hybrid ethical framework that protects diverse value systems and local cultures while establishing a coherent universal reference point for ethical decision-making. Such a framework can support sustainable governance, enhance global cooperation, and safeguard human well-being across multiple sociocultural contexts. It is possible to achieve a balance between ethical universality and cultural specificity in AI ethics, thereby enabling technologies that are globally responsible, socially inclusive, and culturally sensitive. Future research should focus on operationalizing these principles in real-world AI systems and assessing their effectiveness in bridging ethical differences across diverse societies.

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