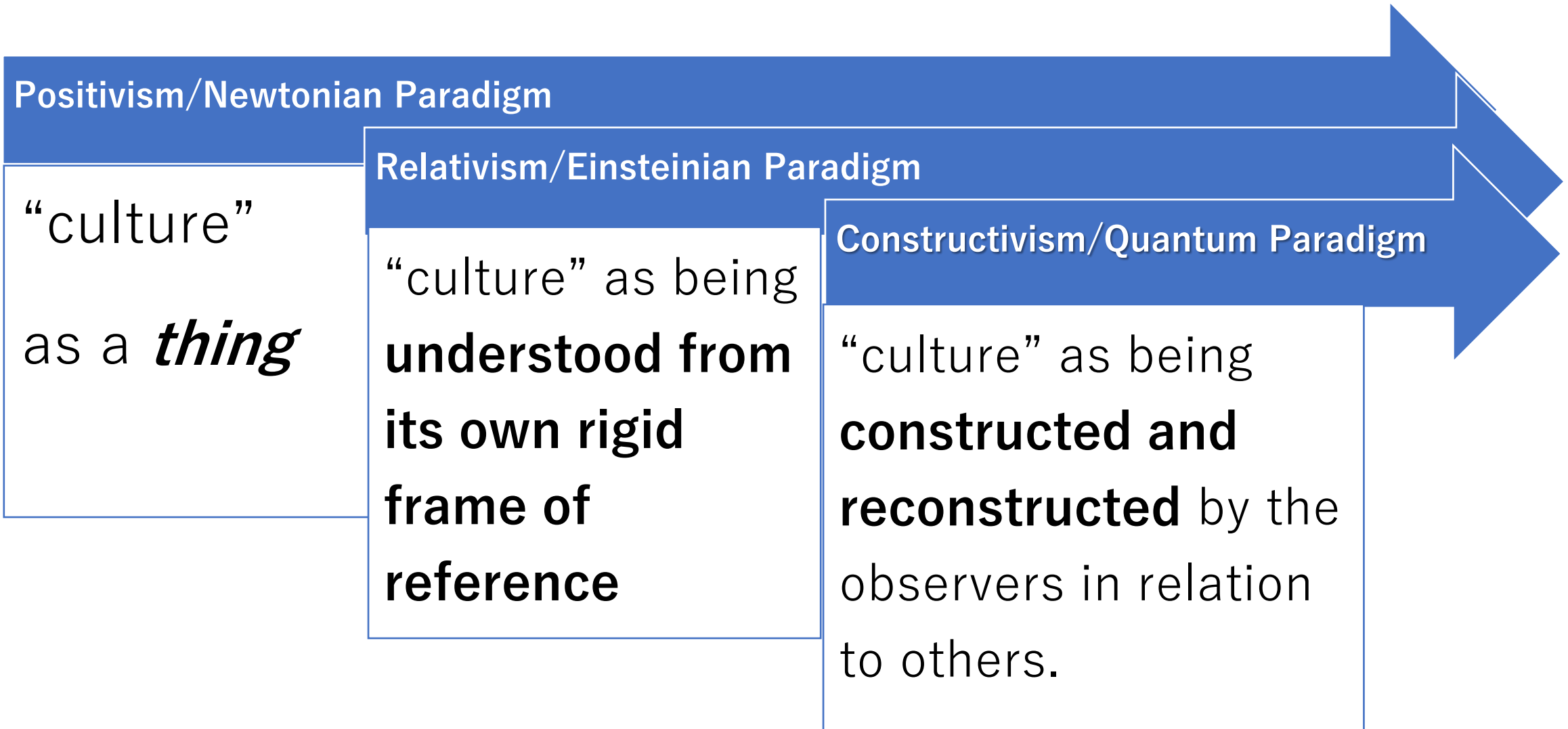


What is perceptual constructivism? (15min.)

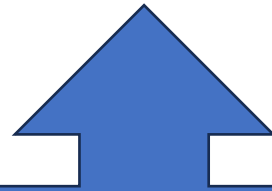


Why do we need to be aware of paradigms?

- Many people often unconsciously mix different paradigms. That is called “**paradigmatic confusion**” (Bennett, 2013, p. 23) .
- It's necessary to avoid paradigmatic confusion to have **coherence between theory and practice** in intercultural education and training.

Positivism/Newtonian Paradigm(cf. Bennett, 2013, pp. 23-30)

- It's assumed that “there is **an objective world** that exists **independently from our observation** of it (Bennett, 2013, p. 26). When “culture” is described in positivism, “culture” tends to be seen as a ***thing*** (culture is ***reified*** and ***essentialized.***) It's out there and is described in a **static, objective** manner. **Linear causality** (cause and effect) is assumed for **prediction** and control of events(ibid., p. 23)

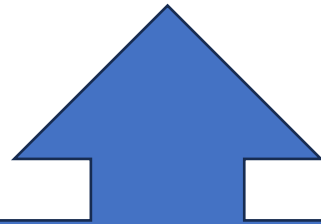


In intercultural communication, **people experience it in many different ways**, so it's **not** always true that an objective, universal understanding of a certain culture is useful, and often times we cannot predict and control an intercultural event as effectively as we hope to.

Relativism/Einsteinian Paradigm

(cf. Bennett, 2013, pp. 30-40)

- In humanities and social sciences, (cultural) relativism emerged as a paradigm **against ethnocentrism**.
- Relativists insist that we should **understand a different culture on its own terms**. “It’s not bad or good, it’s just **different**.” (Bennett, 2013, p. 38)



Relativism with its **clear static cultural boundaries** can cause **more divisions and conflicts**. e.g., not wearing a mask to breathe. → **It’s difficult to have intercultural dialogue.**

Constructivism/Quantum Paradigm

(cf. Bennett, 2013, pp. 41-50)

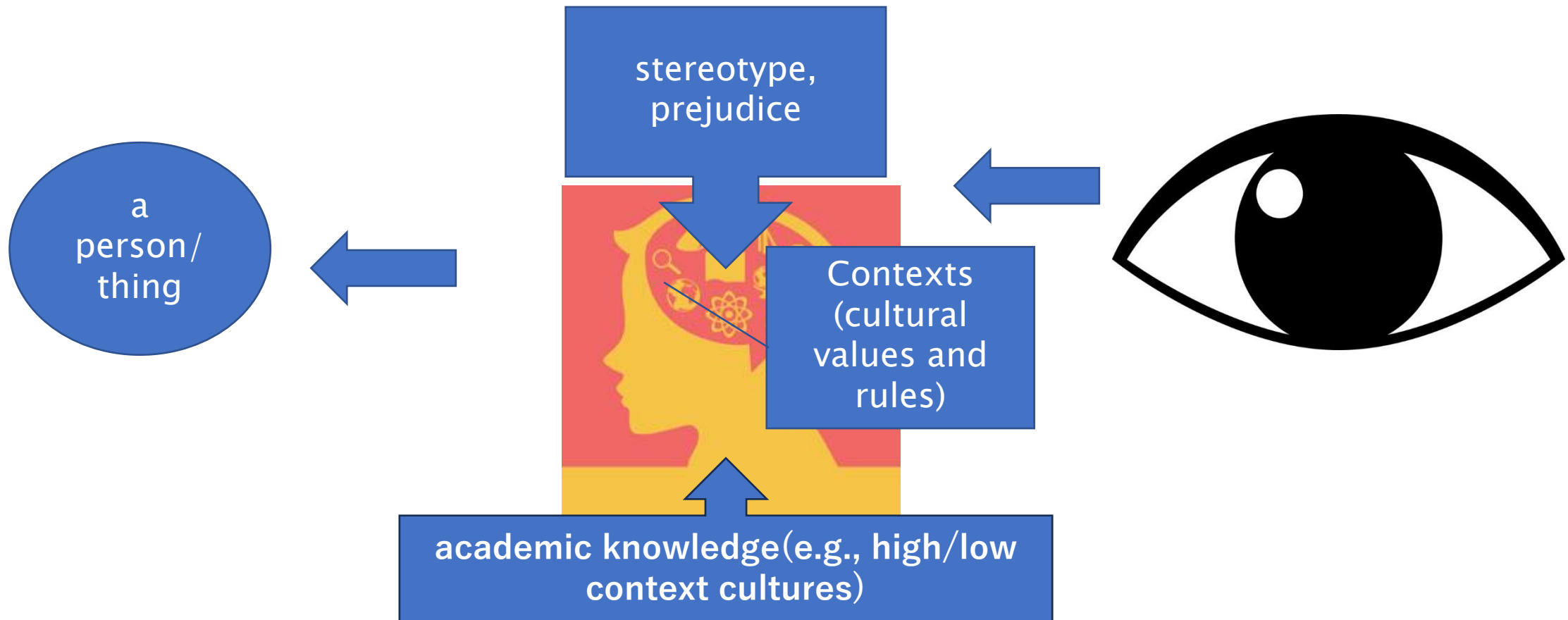
- “our perspective *constructs* the reality that we describe”(Bennett, 2013, p. 42)
- “The basic act of perception is to make a distinction”(ibid.)
- We (Our perspective) ***construct (s)*** boundaries. e.g., third culture kids.
- We are constantly **in the process of constructing our realities** in the here and now **as we are interacting with culturally different others and things around us.**
- In constructivism, we can “**generate boundaries of self that include the experience of others**”(Bennett, 2013, p.)with **empathy**, transcending our own limited experience. →

A meta-cognition of “How we are constructing realities in the here and now?”

- Make a **figure-ground** distinction
- Construct **boundaries**
- **Foreground and background** certain categories
- Consciously **use scholarly etic-categories** like high/low context, high/low power distance

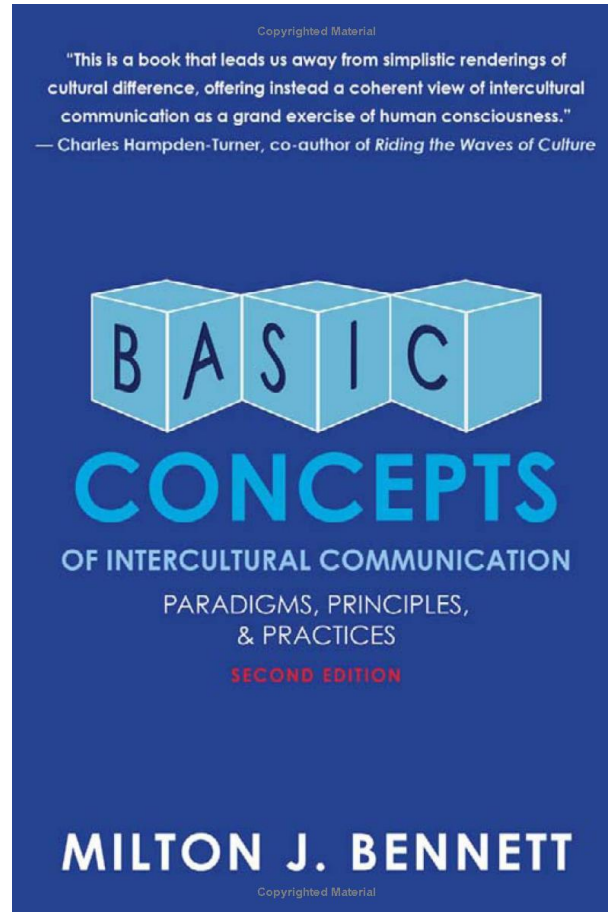
The **self-reflexive** perspective that understands the "self" that understands a certain object

Self-reflexive meta-cognition



Basic Concepts of Intercultural Communication: Paradigms, Principles, & Practice

Milton J. Bennett, Ph.D.



Similarity-based / Difference-based

(Bennett, 2013, p. 5)

“By definition, members of different cultures experience different organizations of reality, and thus **the use of one’s self as a predictor of how others will respond to messages is unlikely to be successful**. Approaches to communication in cross-cultural situations **must guard against inappropriate assumptions of similarity and encourage the consideration of difference**. For this reason, **intercultural communication is difference-based.**”

Similarity and Single-Reality(Bennett, 2013, p. 205)

“The strongest statement of the assumption of **similarity** holds that **all human beings are basically the same**. In this view, physiological, personality, and even **cultural differences** which might be observed are mainly **superficial**.”

“Thus, the observer notes and imputes importance to human similarities while **ignoring or downgrading the importance of differences**.”

Therefore, it's hard to respect others.

Sympathy and Empathy

(Bennett, 2013, pp. 210-230)

Regarding **sympathy**, Bennet mentions that “**we are not the role of another person or imagining how the other person thinks or feels**, but rather **we are referencing how we ourselves might think or feel in similar circumstances**”(p. 211)

On the other hand, “**empathy** concerns **how we might imagine the thoughts and feelings of other people from their own perspectives**”(p. 211).

Taken from the section entitled “Overcoming the Golden Rule:
Sympathy and Empathy”

Etic Categories as **Observational Categories** in Constructivism

(Bennett, 2013, p. 9; pp. 54-58)

Not stereotypes but **cultural generalizations** that show **the central tendency of a population**.

“When cultural generalizations are applied to every single individual in a group, they become **stereotype-rigid categories that are used to label people”**(Bennett, 2013, p. 55).

“Stereotypes also represent paradigmatic confusion. Generalizations are **statements of probability distribution-the “central tendency” of a population- that are generated from a constructivist paradigm**(Bennett, 2013, p. 57)

Etic categories in intercultural learning

“To acquire **general intercultural competence**, one needs to have learned some “**etic,**” or **culture-general,** **categories for recognizing and dealing with a wide range of cultural differences**” (Bennett, 2013, p. 114)