

Chapter 1

Epistemic Arena

ABSTRACT

This chapter presents details of the setting that constitute the epistemic context of, not only Confucian heritage and Western cultures, but of all humanity. Both Eastern and Western cultures and civilizations are situated in the context of human existence. Conditions that are common to all of humanity include human-to-human quandaries, cruelty, and other troubles that are in addition to natural disasters, disease, and death. Differences in the perception of the nature and status of individual personhood have meant and continue to manifest universal appreciation and disapproval in societies differentially. Confucianism engulfs the ethical convention of societies that have adopted the dogma of ancestor worship and filial piety, including the family as model of polity. Expressed in biological and sociocultural terms, individual differences pervade all of humanity. The nature of humans accounts for biological differences. In contrast, sociocultural attributes of individual differences are culturally based.

INTRODUCTION

Conditions that are common to all of humanity include human-to-human quandaries, cruelty, and other troubles that are in adding to natural disasters, disease, and death. It is no surprise that Confucius made respect and harmony the keel of society in his doctrine. Characteristic of the human condition are the evils perpetrated against one another. Murder, including infanticide; theft; witchcraft; magic; abortion; lies; deception; jealousy; false witnessing; snare;

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smear; and other lascivious acts. Differences in the perception of the nature and status of individual personhood have meant and continues to manifest universal acclamation and denunciation in societies differentially. The United States, for instance, continues to conduct capital punishment in a judicial system that is fully influenced by the financial status of individuals. Murder is condoned for state actor and condemned for individual actors. Capital punishment often referred to as the death penalty, exemplifies state-sponsored murders. Harmful acts inflate pain and suffering regardless of whether the perpetrator is the state, a group of people, or a single actor. The fact that people are different in the aforesaid terms deemed it necessary to mitigate the threats to peaceful human existence. This chapter explores the global theatre, as might be, in which all of humanity finds itself in competition for scarce resources. The history of human existence is fraught with episodic trials, tribulations. Moments of celebrations transpired when those ordeals are overcome.

Truthless Harmony

All societies exert a certain degree of psychological idiosyncrasy (Hamid et al., 1993; Rijnbout & McKimmie, 2012), which necessitates the application of critical as a remedial factor. Critical thinking entails rational contemplation, an epistemic method rejected in Confucian epistemology that favors didactic pedagogy. Whereas Confucian heritage cultures advocate human emotions and harmony, Western empiricism regards truth as fundamental not only to the discernment of information but also as facilitating ultimate knowledge. Eastern societies ascribing to the Confucian cultural practices tend to give children a false sense of deliberative engagement as well as the capacity to pursue individual initiatives while simultaneously having them subjected to group or communal epistemic lineation. Consider Confucius and Socrates as the embodiments of Eastern and Western cultures. Communal epistemology, human emotions, and harmony are associated with Confucian cultures whereas individualism, critical appraisal, and rational contemplation are associated with the Socratic cultures. When issues involving discussants informed by the Confucian epistemology and those informed by the Socratic method are conterminous, impasse, and disharmony reflecting the cultural differences. The desire for harmony and the role of such cultural elements as communal concord often overtake the necessity to discern dispassionate truth.

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