Chapter 5
Culture and Ethics

ABSTRACT

The necessity for global ethics to guide international and intercultural research is by no means new phenomenon. In 1996, James Bretzke wrote about a then-growing appeal for global ethics, which led to a habitude of scholarly employment of hermeneutical and communicative theories that were thought to represent workable models for Christian ethics. The notion of morality has been subjected to descriptive references by socio-anthropologists when they report on the moral comportment of the societies they study. A descriptive explanation should suffice as a micro definition for the purpose of associating the notions of ethics and morality with the conduct of individuals on the basis of membership affiliation. A normative definition that is applicable to all humans would depict a macro or universal account. Gert and Gert specified that a condition of rationality is almost always a requirement for moral agency.

INTRODUCTION

A welcome dawning of the *Asian Century* (Mahbubani, 2014) allows for a contemplative assessment of the ethical and moral implications for the rest of the world. An Asian century (Mahbubani, 2008), which, for all intents and purposes, is dominated by China. An Asian century constitutes Eastern civilization, which is epistemologically and ontologically Confucian in terms of its espoused moral and ethical principles. Some authors, for example, White (2005), have expressed their opinion that can be regarded twofold. The first regards unrestrained emphasis on the abilities and/or debilities of civilizations;

the second pertains to conceived imminent dominance by one civilization over the other. The convergence of economies, technologies, and other academic and sociocultural endeavors should allow one to deny doomsday prophecies as overindulgence. As White (2011) stated, "many people will still see this as conceding too much . . . as it will seem like appeasement" (p. 87).

The need for global ethics to guide international and intercultural research is not a new phenomenon. In 1996, James Bretzke wrote about a then-growing appeal for global ethics, which led to a habitude of scholars to employ hermeneutical and communicative theories that were thought to represent workable models for Christian ethics. Since then, communicative modalities employed by various cultures have failed to curtail misunderstandings in the global arena of intercultural epistemology. In light of the pervasive nature of ethics, which is applicable without exception to all of human activities, this chapter excludes other areas of ethical concern and highlights cultural epistemology as an example of an aspect of human characteristics that tend to distinguish one people from another. Such divisive attributes include geographic orientation, political persuasion, economic ideology, religious doctrine, and language. Such a notion is exemplified in health care (Cooper & David, 1986; LaVeist, 1994) and human biology (Scarr, 1993). Given the unity of humanity, as medical sciences have proven, it is easier to argue in favor of a single morality and ethical epistemology, using the health care domain as justification. Our contemporary civilization, as a global society, bestows different conditions upon humankind compared with the original human condition (Cartwright, 2016; Krutch, 1959) in the Aristotelian animalistic human environment.

The Ethical Context

The current reality of the ethical realm in today's world is that individual cultures, nations, and civilizations base their morality and ethics on their specific sociocultural institutions and histories. Sociocultural institutions, which provide the basis for the moral ethical foundation for its members, include those relating to economy, kinship, religion, politics, law, and education (Ingram & Clay, 2000; Olsen, 1991; Turner, 1997). According to Parboteeah and Cullen (2003), sociocultural institutions "provide individual actors with sense making and taken-for-granted heuristics to know what is legitimate, reasonable, and appropriate" (p. 138). Sociocultural institutions ascribe

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