Review of international media ethics

Clifford G. Christians

cchrstns@illinois.edu

University of Illinois-Urbana (USA), Institute of Communications Research
119 Gregory Hall, 810 S. Wright St., Urbana, IL 61801

Abstract

An international orientation has been a primary goal of media ethics, especially since the MacBride Report (1980), as can be seen in cases, issues and codes of ethics that have been adopted in different countries. But work in ethical theory has also been increasingly committed to an international perspective, and three examples of it (besides the classical Habermas' discourse ethics) are discussed in this essay: feminist ethics of care, African communal ethics, and Confucian media ethics. All these theories emphasize, in their specific ways, three major ethical principles – truth, human dignity, non-violence – that emerge from a common protonorm, a kind of first belief that can be found in all religions, philosophies, and cultures: the sacredness of life. Given the dilemmas and moral issues that the media face in today's volatile world, a commitment with these universal values will give communication education and practice long-term vitality.

Keywords

Media ethics; ethical theory; universal values; international; communication

Media ethics has been increasingly international since the MacBride Report was issued in 1980. Much of the work in media ethics before then was Western in its scope and orientation. That tradition continues to dominate, but a world-orientation has become the primary goal of communication ethics.

As president of the International Commission for the Study of Communication Problems, Sean MacBride spearheaded a review for UNESCO of international media policies and practices, communication and human rights, cultural diversity and professional journalism. Published as *Many Voices, One World: Towards a New More Just and More Efficient World Information and Communication Order,* the MacBride Report serves as a framework for ethics during the rapid globalization of media technologies over the past three decades. Its recommendations established the debates since 1980 over the economic concentration of media industries worldwide, the possibilities for democratic politics through the convergence of digital information systems, and the consolidation of free trade in communication products and services under the aegis of the World Trade Organization. The field of media ethics took special note of *Many Voices, One World's* recommendations for establishing quality journalism education in every country of the developing world.

Against the backdrop of MacBride, the International Organization of Professional Journalists produced a document called "International Principles of Professional Ethics in Journalism" at meetings in Prague and Paris in 1983 emphasizing the people's right

to timely information (Nordenstreng & Topuz, 1989). "Mass communication ethics in terms of issues, participation, and setting, both professional and academic—had passed the international watershed" (Christians, 2000: 29-32).

Codes of ethics for professional and academic associations became the standard format in Europe and North America for ethical principles. Of the 35 states that signed the Helsinki Act, professional media organizations in 24 of them had codes of ethics (Juusela, 1991). In 1995, 31 codes of journalism ethics existed in 29 European countries (Laitila, 1995; cf. Nordenstreng, 1995: 85). The first systematic treatment by an international network of scholars, *Communication Ethics and Global Change*, appeared in 1989 edited by Thomas Cooper. Surveys of media ethics from 13 countries were included and integrative chapters emphasized three major areas of worldwide concern: truth, responsibility, and free expression. As the global information order emerged, applied and practical ethics dominated the academy (Nordenstreng, 1998: 124-134). MacDonald and Petheram (1998: 257-349) list over 200 research centers and academic departments around the world committed to journalism, advertising, and mass media ethics. Important advances have been made on the ethics of privacy, gender, integrity of sources, conflict of interest, and social justice. The coverage of terrorism is under discussion but needs further development (Codina, 2013). Marie Jose Canal and Karen Sanders (2005) introduce the important ethical issues in political communication. The comprehensive summary of European scholarship on ethics in Bart Pattyn's *Media Ethics: Opening Social Dialogue* (2000) includes overview essays on computer ethics by Porfirio Barroso, on economic intrusion by Hilde van den Bulck, on codes of ethics by Huub Evers, and on audience ethics by Rüdiger Funiok.

International Theories

While cases, issues, and codes in media ethics are increasingly international, work in ethical theory has been especially committed to the international perspective. There are ongoing efforts in the West to develop a global media ethics perspective such as Habermas' discourse ethics. Three theories originating in different parts of the world are of special importance: feminist ethics of care, African communal ethics, and Confucian media ethics.

Discourse ethics

Jürgen Habermas' discourse ethics has dominated the media ethics literature since the 1990s. The translation of his *Moralbewusstsein unde kommunkatives Handeln* in 1990 and the publication of *The Communicative Ethics Controversy* in the same year set the stage for the most important debates in communication ethics through the late twentieth century. Habermas continues to be read, taught and debated vigorously today in media ethics.

Habermas replaces Kant's formal system—his universalizability criterion for moral imperatives—with a communication community representing their common interests.

He develops a procedural model of moral argumentation: "justification is tied to reasoned argument among those subject to the norms in question" (Habermas, 1990: viii). Habermas understands language to be an agent of culture and social organization; therefore discourses contain in a nutshell the meaning of our theories and beliefs. The overriding question is whether our myriad linguistic forms allow everyone's interests a representative hearing. In Habermas' perspective, competing normative claims can be fairly adjudicated in the public sphere under ideal speech conditions such as reciprocity and openness. Habermas makes a permanent contribution to ethics by recognizing that fallacies and parochialism can be overcome through cross-cultural ideals.

Habermas emphasizes that national sovereignty must be limited by respect for universal human rights and that different peoples must be allowed to interpret these rights according to their own political tradition. In *The Inclusion of the Other* (1998) and *The Postnational Constellation* (2001), Habermas insists that rights are empty apart from specific constitutional venues. While noting the positive role played by nationalism in struggles for liberation and democracy, Habermas recognizes that nationality today has too often justified illiberal forms of nationalism that suppress dissident minority groups and other sub-nationalities. While advocating the idea that nations represent stable units of collective agency, he concedes that this stability is being discredited by the multicultural migrations set in motion by globalization. Habermas tends to view international justice as an extension of domestic justice, by which relationships of mutual dependency presume something like a basic structure of right order. In that sense, Habermas' work on justice generally centers on advanced, industrial societies.

Habermas' critical theory contradicts the individualism of the traditional approaches to communication ethics. Nearly all the initiatives based on classical theories take for granted the individual-society dualism of liberal democratic political philosophy. For Habermas, moral consciousness must be nurtured, not under the illusions of aggregate consensus-making, but under the conditions of instrumental technocracy and institutional power that stifle productive action in the public arena. Habermas' cutting through our political commonplaces is a major achievement for twenty-first century ethical theory. But there is a crucial issue which discourse ethics must resolve.

Habermas insists that public discourse conform to generalizable interests. The potential ethnocentrism of his public sphere is an ongoing concern. How can he insure that the interests of marginalized subcultures will be included in his generalizable interests? Insisting in discourse ethics on full and open discussion does not itself guarantee that those without administrative power can interpret their own needs and position themselves in their own terms. All normative theories face the same concern. Sometimes they provide an ethical veneer above cultural differences rather than promote ethical dialogue across cultures. Zygmunt Bauman's *Postmodern Ethics* (1993; cf. 2010) challenges moral systems such as Habermas' discourse ethics to offer a revitalized notion of human agency as we face the demise of the ethical in today's contingency and fragmentation. The public sphere must be more than an abstraction, and human identity must not be limited to the private sphere. Discourse ethics continues to develop so that these issues are resolved.

Feminist media ethics of care

Feminist ethics has become a major participant in international media ethics. The feminist ethics of Seyla Benhabib (1992, 2002) has shown that the ethics of relation is particular and universal at the same time. She calls it interactive universalism. As we ground our ethics in everyday human experience, we are speaking, at the same time, about our common humanity. Diversity in culture is not buried under abstractions, but our interactive relationships are given center place. Dialogic relations are rational and principled, so the values we identify in everyday life we generalize as true about ethical interactions throughout the human race. A specialist in Habermas (Benhabib, 1986) and Hannah Arendt (Benhabib, 2003), her work is distinctive in integrating feminist theory with critical theory. A native of Turkey—tracing her family roots to the 15th century Jewish expulsion from Spain—Benhabib is a Professor of Political Science and Philosophy at Yale University. Through her scholarship on diversity, gender, and multiculturalism, she demonstrates how feminist ethics operates transnationally.

Feminist scholarship gives precision and status to central terms in the ethics of relation: nurture, care, affection, empathy, self-sacrifice, loyalty, and inclusiveness. For Carol Gilligan (1983, 1990), the female moral voice roots ethics in the primacy of relationships. Rather than the basic standard of avoiding harm to others, she insists on compassion and nurturance for resolving conflicts among people. 110). In Linda Steiner's work, feminist's ethical self-consciousness identifies forms of oppression and imbalance and teaches us to "address questions about whose interests are regarded as worthy of debate" (1991: 158; cf. 2009) In her scholarship on feminism and information technology, Lisbeth van Zoonen demonstrates the importance of gendered meanings in culture for understanding the human interface with new information technologies (1992, 1994, 2002). "Relationships themselves, and more generally real, lived experiences rather than intellectual and theoretical constructs, are considered the genesis of philosophical feminist ethics" (Wilkins, 2009: 36).

In giving primacy to the relation-in-between, rather than to individual actors, feminist ethics has moved the concept of caring to the center as the most powerful way to describe our moral duty to one another. For Nel Noddings, the "one-caring" and the "cared-for" are the most descriptive terms. The one-caring attends to the cared-for in thoughts as well as deeds. "Caring is not simply a matter of feeling favorably disposed toward humankind in general....Real care requires actual encounters with specific individuals; it cannot be accomplished through good intentions alone. When all goes well, the cared-for actively receives the caring deeds of the one-caring" (Noddings, 1984, ch. 1).

There are three central dimensions to an ethics of care: 1) Engrossment. The one-caring is engrossed in the needs of the other. The one-caring is fully attentive to the cared-for, and is responsive to the other's well-being. 2) Motivational displacement. Those caring move beyond their own preoccupations to an empathy for the situation and thinking of the cared-for. The caring-one rejoices in the successes of the cared-for and suffers in his or her tragedies (Noddings, 1984: 12-19, 69-75, 176-177). 3) Permanence. The commitment of the caring-one is unalterable. This is loyalty that is unchanging regardless of shifting circumstances.

The ethics of care in journalism has several distinctive features (see Steiner and Okrusch, 2006). First, instead of objectivity, neutrality and detachment, an ethics of care is compassionate journalism. Beyond the limited mission of transmitting information, feminist ethics wants to see public life go well. The vitality of the communities reported on are considered essential to a healthy news profession. Readers and viewers are connected to one another, not just to the press.

Second, there is other-regarding care for the audience and readers. The public is considered active and responsible, with Margaretha Geertsema (2010), for example, researching the important role of women activists in South Africa. Citizens themselves arrive at their own solutions to public problems, and an ethics of care is especially concerned how well that process functions. Carol Gilligan, for example, is studying the role that patriarchy plays in government and social institutions. With patriarchy as deep a contradiction to democratic life as slavery, "the transformation from patriarchy to a fuller realization of democracy will be one of the most important historical events of the next 50 years" (http://www.gse.harvard.edu/news /features/gilligan].

Third, through an ethics of care, we rethink the purpose of the press. The primary mission of journalism is not the watchdog role but facilitating civil society. Public life outside government and business needs special attention. For education, science, communities, NGOs, and culture to flourish, the involvement and leadership of women needs serious development. Geertsema (2009) connects theories of feminism with globalization theories to understand the representation of women in the international media. The Gender Media Monitoring Project (GMMP), in its study of gender in the media every five years across more than 100 countries, has shown that women's voices are only heard 24% of the time in news stories. In reporting expert opinion on various subjects, only 18% are female experts. The data from GMMP are useful to station managers, newspaper staffs and online bloggers who seek to change their hiring policies and upgrade their professional practices [www.whomakesthenews.org/gmmp].

African communal ethics

Kwasi Wiredu, chair of the University of Ghana's Department of Philosophy (from 1963-1985) believes in both culturally defined values and universals that arise from our common humanity. As colonized peoples seek to redefine their identities and rightly insist on the local, Wiredu also wants African intellectual history and concepts to help resolve some of today's pressing problems. While continuing to discuss the important question of whether an African philosophy exists, he does not want his work in philosophy separated off from debates elsewhere in the world (Wiredu, 1980). In his book, *Cultural Universals and Particulars: An African Perspective* (1996), he asserts that our biological sameness is not incompatible with our culture. In his words, "human beings cannot live by particulars or universals alone, but by some combination of both" (p. 9). "Without universals, intercultural communication must be impossible" (p. 1).

Wiredu's argument can be summarized this way: All 6,500 known languages are equally complex in phonetic and phonemic structure. All humans learn languages at the

same age. All languages enable abstraction, inference, deduction and induction. All languages serve cultural formation not merely social function. All languages can be learned and translated by native speakers of other languages; in fact, some human beings in every language are bi-lingual. In Wiredu's terms, as lingual beings we are sympathetically impartial to other cultures. Human beings have a basic natural sympathy for their kind, so that while they live in and celebrate their own languages and way of life, in principle they are predisposed to respect the cultures of their fellow human beings.

One important discussion for media ethics revolves around the Akan concept of personhood. Wiredu argues that his native culture speaks of human beings in universal terms. One's freedom in Akan is rooted in ethics. We have a free will when we have high regard for ethical responsibility, and this integration of the biological and normative makes human beings distinctive as a species (1983). Wiredu reflects African communalism here. In fact, this crucial concept is a key feature of Africa's earliest history to the post-colonial Africa today. The human species traces its earliest movements to the spread of peoples across the African continent. Its food-producing and food-gathering communities built enduring societies by strategies of interdependence and mutual aid. Mutuality has been integral to Africa's character from the beginning, and while urbanization and industrialization challenge it, Africans "from all sides regard community as nothing less than 'the way things are,' a presupposition, a *prima facie* truth. To speak meaningfully is to address social reality in communitarian terms" (Fackler, 2007: 320).

As a normative idea, communalism is guided by *ubuntu*. Wiredu calls *ubuntu* an African worldview, an indigenous belief system, a traditional African concept meaning humanity-toward-others (1980: 36), and he addresses the objection that *ubuntu* calls for "unquestioning conformism" (1983). The word *ubuntu* comes from the Zulua and Xhosa languages, and summarizes the Zulu maxim *umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*, meaning a person is a person through other persons or "I am because of others." *Ubuntu* defines humans as social beings whose personhood is a gift from other persons, and therefore human dignity is the core tenet of communalist ethics. Sympathy, sensitivity to the community's needs, and respect for those with whom one lives and works, are keys to overcoming the great divisions in the world today. Oral cultures normed by *ubuntu* become the standard for evaluating mediated forms of community such as with Facebook, Friendster and Twitter.

Wiredu is correct that recognizing "the role of community in making the human world" is not just African, but is "the universal order that conditions the nature of humans generally" (Masolo, 2004: 493). By understanding the community as an integral network of relationships, *ubuntu* helps resolve the freedom and responsibility dilemma in Western individualist democracy. Freedom is not an individual right, but with humans depending totally on one another for their existence, genuine community means that freedom must be realized in a society as a whole. *Ubuntu* represents positive freedom in the deepest meaning possible. Persons-in-community are not empowered one-by-one or through trickle-down empowerment from the elite.

In *ubuntu*, in principle, everyone contributes to society as a unit, typically doing so through storytelling. Through common stories and rituals a community lives as active

members rather than passive consumers. The goal for journalists is to identify representative voices rather than spectacular ones that are anecdotal and idiosyncratic. Blankenburg correctly calls this liberatory journalism (1999: 60). In media ethics grounded in *ubuntu*, we do not construct an apparatus of professional ethics, but work instead within the general morality. Professionals reflect the same moral and social space as the communities they report on. The concept of humans in *ubuntu* presumes that facts and values are intermixed by custom and history. Therefore, the news must unfold dialectically between reporters and the indigenous population (cf. Christians, 2004).

Confucian media ethics

Confucius (551-479 B.C.) established a virtue ethics that is being developed today into an international media ethics. In grounding his theory in virtue, Confucius turned on its head the traditional idea of a superior person born into an aristocratic family. Human excellence is seen as depending on virtue rather than on social position. The idea that human excellence is a function of character rather than birth, upbringing, dynasty, or even achievement was revolutionary then and remains so today.

The Analects, a compilation of his sayings by his students, was compulsory reading in the late Imperial period (2nd century AD) for all who entered government service in China, and was the basis of civil service exams for the next six centuries. Education was dominated by Confucian texts from 960 to 1905. Confucius' view of virtue involves the proper rites, ceremonies, and principles. Later Confucians called these customs *li*, and over time they became rules of conduct for social relations—such as parents and children, rulers and citizens, elder brother and younger siblings. Rules hardened into doctrines have sometimes created generation gaps and made versions of Confucianism unattractive. But understood as a philosophy of life, its core ideas are stimulating active scholarship today in international media ethics (cf. Whitehouse, 2009; Bell, 2008).

Equilibrium and harmony are central to his ethics. They are the axis of one of his four major books, *The Doctrine of the Mean*. "Equilibrium (*chung*) is the great root from which grow all human actings in the world. And harmony (*yung*) is the universal path all should pursue (1.4)" (Legge, 1991). On one level, media ethics is attempting to work out these primary concepts of equilibrium and harmony, summarized typically as the golden mean. Confucius thinks of virtue as a middle path between two extremes. The virtuous person is above all balanced, observing equilibrium and harmony in all things. With Aristotle in the West essentially agreeing with this virtue ethics a century and a half later, it can be argued that finding the mean is a truth about human life East and West, and from ancient history until today.

Reporters often face complicated situations where there are competing obligations and no simple solution. Confucius says to begin operating with the principle of equilibrium and harmony by identifying extremes—doing nothing versus exposing everything, for example, in a question of how to report some controversial event. The journalist's role as practitioner may at times contradict the journalist's role as citizen. In terms of Confucius' equilibrium and harmony, both extremes are rejected—the defect of excluding all

outside involvements and the excess of paying no attention to external affiliations. When two legitimate entities conflict, Confucian ethics seeks the mean—in covering the Middle East and labor/management conflict, for example.

On another level, the idea of *jen/ren* in Confucius enriches international media ethics. Confucius uses *ren* (humanity) as the term for virtue in general. Humaneness (*ren*) is the key virtue in the *Analects.* It has had a variety of translations, such as perfect virtue, goodness, and human-heartedness. However, it does not mean individual attainment—such as generosity or compassion—but refers to the manifestations of being humane. It derives from a person's essential humanity. Before Confucius, the idea of humaneness did not have ethical importance, and its centrality is certainly one of the great innovations of the *Analects.*

Byun and Lee (2002) argue that this Confucian value of humaneness can challenge the narrow Western notion of human rights set largely in legal terms. For them, Confucianism provides a much more expansive and compassionate daily ethics than does individual rights, based as equilibrium, harmony and *ren* are on a holistic understanding of human nature. Whereas the Occident values a rights-based morality, the Confucian tradition is framed by mutual regard and respect toward the social order, that is, toward community-oriented responsibilities (cf. de Bary, 1998).

Jiafei Yin (2008) develops a new model of the world press based on this core idea in Confucian ethics. Instead of press theory grounded in freedom and rights, she makes responsibility central. Instead of competition as the characteristic feature of Western-oriented media, harmony is at the core of Chinese culture for Confucius. Yin constructs a two-dimensional model for press systems around the world in which freedom and responsibility are dynamic coordinates and neither is absolute. While adapted locally, this model opens the door to identifying universal values in journalism.

The Korean philosopher, Young Ahn Kang (2006), favors a third application—the golden rule. Acting toward others as we wish others to act toward us seems to be a natural way to live harmoniously in the human world. It presumes human dignity, that is, we regard others as basically like ourselves. In that sense, it gives direction to media professionals as well as guidance for public life.

Confucius states the golden rule in a negative form in the *Analects*: "Do not do unto others what you would not desire others to do unto yourself" (5.12, 12.2, 15.24). But it is also positive: "Erect others the way you would desire yourself to be erected and let others get there the way you would desire yourself to get there" (6.30). The *Analects* teach throughout that we should not concern ourselves with acknowledgement from others but worry about failing to acknowledge them (1.1, 1.16, 14.30, 15.19).

The golden rule is clear and intuitive and does not require shared theory or religious beliefs. It presumes human dignity, that is, we regard others as basically like ourselves. In that sense, it gives media professionals guidance as well as guidance for public life. When followed within media institutions, it produces a community of goodwill among professionals, and when it is the norm for the press' interacting with the community, it resonates with the public's general understanding of morality. Young Ahn Kang (2006)

sees this rule of reciprocity as a procedure of action that puts to work the common moral wisdom of almost all humanity.

Universal Values

In a study of common values in 13 countries on five continents, Christians and Traber (1997) found that the sacredness of life is bedrock. It is a first belief, a starting point on which various religions, philosophies, and cultures are based. And in elaborating on the sacredness of life as a protonorm, three ethical principles emerged as central to it. This research is in harmony with the work in international media ethics described above. These are the three major principles that the four theories of international media ethics emphasize.

Truth

Truth is a perennial issue in international media ethics. Nearly all codes of ethics begin with the reporters' duty to tell the truth under all circumstances. Credible language has long been considered pivotal to the media enterprise as a whole—accuracy in news, no deception in advertising, authenticity in entertainment. Though interpreted in various ways, media ethics as a scholarly field and in its professional application recognizes the wheel imagery of the Buddhist tradition—truth is the immovable axle.

Historically the mainstream media have defined themselves in terms of an objectivist worldview. Centered on human rationality and armed with the scientific method, the facts in news have been said to mirror reality. Truth is understood in elementary epistemological terms as accurate representation and precision with data. In today's neo-liberalism, journalistic morality is equivalent to unbiased reporting or neutral data. Presenting unvarnished facts is heralded as the standard of good reporting. Objective reporting in the traditional view is not merely a technique, but considered a moral imperative.

The prevailing view of truth as accurate information is now seen as too narrow for today's social and political complexities across national boundaries. Objectivity has become increasingly controversial as the working press' professional standard, though it remains entrenched in various forms in our ordinary practices of news production and dissemination. With the dominant scheme no longer tenable, theoretical work in international media ethics is seeking to transform it intellectually. There is general agreement that instead of newsgathering rooted in the methods of the natural sciences, rigorous qualitative procedures must be followed instead. Reporters aiming to inform the public adequately will seek what might be called interpretive sufficiency, or in Clifford Geertz's terms, thick description (1973: 10). Truth means, in other words, to get at the essence of the issue underneath.

The thick notion of sufficiency supplants the thinness of the technical and statistically precise received view. Details are put in their context of meaning. Truthful accounts entail adequate and credible interpretations rather than first impressions. The best journalists weave a tapestry of truth from inside the attitudes, culture, and language of the

people and events they are reporting. The reporters' frame of reference is not derived from free-floating data, but from an inside picture that gets to the heart of the matter.

Paulo Freire has been helpful for media ethics in defining truth. He introduces the idea of "speaking the true word" or "naming the world" as the specific political dimension of communication. His fundamental theme for oppressed peoples is gaining their voice and thereby promoting their own destiny. Freire wrote, for example, "Learning to read and write ought to be an opportunity for people to know what speaking the word really means: a human act implying reflection and action. As such, it is a primordial human right and not the privilege of a few" (Freire, 1972). So in his literacy campaigns, Freire made naming the world the key to raising consciousness. "Slum" was not taught as a series of vowels and consonants, but as a picture of reality. Who caused the slums? Why is housing a matter of right and not beneficence? Words such as hunger, dependence, and unemployment were included in the first list that new literates learned (Freire, 1970). Most primers used irrelevant sentences, but Freire refused to fill *campesinos* with technical knowledge. The goal was conscientization (Freire,1973). Only by naming the world, learning to speak a true word about it, will people take the decisive step to liberate themselves from a state of dependence, and from naïve acquiescence in the status quo.

Applied to the media, rather than reducing social issues to the financial and administrative problems defined by politicians, public communication discloses the subtlety and nuance that enable readers and viewers to identify fundamental issues themselves and speak the true word. Telling the truth is not aimed at informing a majority audience of racial injustice, for example, but offers a form of representation that fosters participatory democracy. It imagines new modes of human transformation and emancipation, while nurturing those transformations through dialogue among citizens. The nature of truth as the larger context requires continuing debate so that this cornerstone of media ethics continues to have credibility.

Human dignity

The ethical principle of human dignity is of primary importance to media ethics across the globe. Different cultural traditions affirm human dignity in a variety of ways, but together they insist that all human beings have sacred status without exception. Native American discourse is steeped in reverence for life and interconnectedness among all living forms, so that we live in solidarity with others as equal partners in the web of life. In communalistic societies, *likute* is loyalty to the community's reputation, to tribal honor. In Latin-American societies, insistence on cultural identity is an affirmation of the unique worth of human beings. In Islam, every person has the right to honor and a good reputation. In Confucius, veneration of authority is necessary because authorities are human beings of dignity. Humans are a unique species, requiring from within itself regard for its members as a whole.

From this perspective, one understands the ongoing vitality of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights issued by the United Nations General Assembly in 1948. As the preamble states: "Recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable

rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world." Every child, woman, and man has sacred status, with no exceptions for religion, class, gender, age, or ethnicity. The common sacredness of all human beings regardless of merit or achievement is not only considered a fact but is a shared commitment.

For three decades now, media ethicists have emphasized human dignity in working on ethnic diversity, racist language in news, and sexism in advertising. Gender equality in hiring and eliminating racism in organizational culture are no longer dismissed as political correctness, but seen as moral imperatives. Human dignity takes seriously the decisive contexts of gender, race, class, and religion. A community's many-colored voices are understood to be essential for a healthy democracy.

Ethnic self-consciousness these days is considered essential to cultural vitality. The world's cultures each have a distinctive beauty. Indigenous languages and ethnicity have come into their own. Culture is more salient at present than countries. Rather than the melting-pot idea for immigration, immigrants now insist on maintaining their culture, religion, and language. With identity politics arising as a dominant issue in world affairs following the end of the cold war, social institutions, including the media, are challenged to develop a healthy cultural pluralism. Human dignity pushes us to comprehend the demands of cultural diversity, and give up an individualistic morality of rights. The public sphere is conceived as a mosaic of distinguishable communities, a plurality of ethnic identities intersecting to form a social bond, but each seriously held and competitive as well (Taylor *et al.*, 1994).

While globalization lays a grid over the globe and pulls it toward uniformity around consumption and media technology, local voices are becoming more strident than ever. International media ethics continues to emphasize the normative principle of human dignity. This principle serves as a safeguard against the tendency of powerful new media technologies to store data and transmit information in their own instrumentalist terms. When this principle becomes a priority in the news media, multiculturalism and ethnic pluralism will be enhanced.

Nonviolence

Nonviolence is an important ethical principle at present, and how to implement it is a major challenge. Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr., developed this principle beyond a political strategy into a philosophy of life. Vaclev Havel and Nelson Mandella were totally committed to it. Along with *dharma, ahimsa* (nonviolence) forms the basis of the Hindu worldview. For St. Augustine, peace is natural to human relationships. In Emmanuel Levinas, interaction between the self and the Other makes peace normative. "The first word from the Other's face is 'Thou shalt not kill.' It is an order. There is a commandment in the appearance of the face, as if a master spoke to me" (Levinas, 1985: 89). In communalistic and indigenous cultures, care of the weak and vulnerable (children, sick, and elderly), and sharing material resources are a matter of course. The public's general revulsion against physical abuse in intimate settings and its consternation over brutal crimes and savage wars, are glimmers of hope reflecting this principle's vitality.

Peace journalism is an illustration of how this principle works itself out for the news in violent conflicts worldwide. The Norwegian scholar, Johan Galtung, has developed and applied the principle systematically through peace studies, concerned not simply with the standards of war reporting, but positive peace—creative, nonviolent resolution of all cultural, social, and political conflicts (e.g., 2000, 2004). As with Galtung, Jake Lynch recognizes that military coverage feeds the very violence it reports, and therefore he has developed an on-the-ground theory and practice of peace initiatives and conflict resolution (e.g. Lynch and McGoldrick, 2005; Lynch, 2008; cf. Obonyo, 2010). Galtung has sought to reroute journalism onto the "high road to peace," instead of the "low road" often taken by the news media, when the only frame is "win-lose" as with two opponents fighting it out in a sports arena. In her literature review of war and peace journalism, Seow Ting Lee (2009) sees three contrasting features of each.

The three characteristics of mainstream war journalism are: (1) Focus on the here and now, on military action, equipment, tangible casualties and material damage; (2) An elite orientation: use official sources, follow military strategy, quote political leaders, be accurate with the military command perspective; and (3) A dichotomy of good and bad. Simplifying the parties to two combatants, them versus us, in a zero sum game (Lee, 2009).

There are three crucial features of peace journalism, grounded in the principle of nonviolence (Lee, 2009): (1) Present context, background, historical perspective following the golden rule. Use linguistic accuracy—not a generic "Muslim rebels" but rebels identified as dissidents of a particular political group. (2) Take an advocacy stance editorially for peace, and focus in news on common values rather than on vengeance and retaliation. Put the emphasis on people's perspective—not just organized violence between nations, but patterns of cooperation and integration among people. (3) A multiplicity orientation. Represent all sides and all parties. Create opportunities for society at large to consider and value nonviolent responses to conflict. Include ways the conflict can be resolved without violence (e.g. as in Dayton and Kriesberg, 2009). Consensus building efforts are considered newsworthy.

Humans are moral beings, and as international media ethics works on the nonviolence principle, it can inspire journalists to report on a violent world and promote peace at the same time (Mitchell, 2013).

Conclusion

Media codes of ethics and practices, to reflect an international perspective rather than narrow self-interests, need to give major emphasis to these three principles. There are a host of dilemmas and moral issues that the media face in today's volatile world. But to avoid majoring in minors, the media should emphasize the same three norms that the international theories are emphasizing. A commitment to truth, human dignity and nonviolence will give communication education and practice long-term vitality. These issues are of primary importance to the public, and when media professionals specialize in them, the field of media ethics will be sustainable.

References

Bauman, Zygmunt (1983). *Postmodern Ethics.* Oxford, UK: Blackwell.

Bauman, Zygmunt (2000). "As Seen on TV," *Ethical Perspectives: Journal of the European Ethics Network,* 7 (2-3), 107-121.

Bell, Daniel (2008). *China's New Confucianism: Politics and Everyday Life in a Changing Society.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Benhabib, Seyla (1986). *Critique, Norm and Utopia: A Study of the Normative Foundations of Critical Theory.* New York: Columbia University Press.

Benhabib, Seyla (1992). *Situating the Self: Gender, Community, and Postmodernism in Contemporary Ethics.* New York: Routledge.

Benhabib, Seyla (2002). *The Claims of Culture: Equality and Diversity in the Global Era.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Benhabib, Seyla (2003). *The Reluctant Modernism of Hannah Arendt.* Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield

Blankenburg, N. (1999). "In Search of Real Freedom: *Ubuntu* and the Media," *Critical Arts,* 13(2), pp. 42-65.

Byun-Hyun, Dong and Lee, Keeheyung (2002). "Confucian Values, Ethics and Legacies in History," in *Moral Engagement in Public Life: Theorists for Contemporary Ethics,* eds. S. Bracci and C. Christians (Berlin: Peter Lang), pp. 73-96.

Christians, Clifford and Traber, Michael (1997). *Communication Ethics and Universal Values.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Christians, Clifford (2000). "An Intellectual History of Communication Ethics." In B. Pattyn, ed., *Media Ethics: Opening Social Dialogue.* Leuven, Belgium: Peeters, pp. 15-45.

Christians, Clifford (2004). "*Ubuntu* and Communitarianism in Media Ethics," *Ecquid Novi: African Journalism Studies,* 25(2), pp. 235-256.

Codina, Mónica (2013). "The Spanish Meaning of the Murderer's Salute," *Journal of Mass Medai Ethics,* 28, pp. 57-69.

Cooper, Thomas W. (1989). *Communication Ethics and Global Change.* White Plains, NY: Longman.

Dayton, Bruce W. and Kriesberg, Louis (2009). *Conflict Transformation and Peacebuilding: Moving from Violence to Sustainable Peace.* London: Routledge.

de Bary, William T. (1998). *Asian Values and Human Rights: A Confucian Communitarian Perspective.* Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Fackler, Mark (2003). "Communitarian Theory with an African Flexion," in *Mediating Religion: Conversations in Media, Religion and Culture,* eds. J. Mitchell and S. Marriage (Edinburgh: T & T Clark), pp. 317-327.

Freire, Paulo (1970). *Pedagogy of the Oppressed.* New York: Seabury.

Freire, Paulo (1972). "Cultural Action for Freedom," *Harvard Educational Review,* 40 (May), pp. 205-225.

Freire, Paulo (1973). *Education for Critical Consciousness.* New York: Seabury.

Galtung, Johan (2000). *Conflict Transformation by Peaceful Means: A Participants' and Trainers' Manual.* Geneva: UNDP.

Galtung, Johan (2004). *Transcend and Transform: An Introduction to Conflict Work.* London: Pluto Press.

Geertsema, Margaretha (2009). "Women and News: Making Connections Between the Global and the Local," *Feminist Media Studies,* 9(2), pp. 149-172.

Geertsema, Margaretha (2010). "Challenging the Lion in the Den: Dilemmas of Gender in Media Activism in South Africa," *Ecquid Novi: African Journalism Studies,* 31(1), pp. 68-88.

Geertz, Clifford (1973). *The Interpretation of Culture.* New York: Basic Books.

Gilligan, Carol (1983). *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Gilligan, Carol et al. (1990). *Making Connections.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Habermas, Jürgen (1990). *Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action.* Trans. C. Lenhardt & S. W. Nicholsen. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. (Originally published as *Moralbewusstsein und kommunikatives Handeln,* 1983).

Habermas, Jürgen (1998). *The Inclusion of the Other: Studies in Political Theory.* Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Habermas, Jürgen (2001). *The Postnational Constellation: Political Essays.* Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Kang, Young Ahn (2006). "Global Ethics and a Common Morality," *Philosophia Reformata,* 71, pp. 79-95.

Kunelius, Risto (2009). "Lessons of Being Drawn In: On Global Free Speech, Communication Theory and the Mohammed Cartoons," in *Freedom of Speech Abridged? Cultural, Legal and Philosophical Challenges,* eds. Anine Kierulf and Helge Rønning (Göteborg, Sweden: University of Gothenburg Nordicom), pp. 139-151.

Laitila, Tiina (1995). "Journalistic Codes of Ethics in Europe," *European Journal of Communication*, 10(4), 527-544.

Lee, Seow Ting (2009). "Peace Journalism," in *The Handbook of Mass Media Ethics,* eds. L. Wilkins and C. Christians (New York: Routledge), pp. 258-275.

Legge, James, ed. (1991). *Four Books of the Chinese Classics: Confucian Analects, the Great Learning, Doctrine of the Mean, Works of Mencius,* 4 vols. (Corona, CA: Oriental Book Store.

Levinas, Emmanuel (1981). *Ethics and Infinity.* Trans. R. A. Cohen. Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press.

Lynch, Jake (2008). *Debates in Peace Journalism.* Sydney: University of Sydney Press.

Lynch, Jake and McGoldrick, Annabel (2005). *Peace Journalism.* Stroud, UK: Hawthorn Press.

MacBride, Sean et al. (1980). *Many Voices, One World: Towards a New More Just and More Efficient World Information and Communication Order.* Paris: United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization.

MacDonald, Barrie, and Michel Petheram (1998). *Keyguide to Information Sources in Media Ethics.* London: Mansell Publishing.

Masolo, D. A. (2004). "Western and African Communitarianism: A Comparison," in *A Companion to African Philosophy,* ed. K. Wiredu (Oxford, UK: Blackwell), pp. 483-98.

Mitchell, Jolyon (2013). *Promoting Peace, Inciting Violence: The Role of Religion and Media.* New York: Routledge.

Nordenstreng, Kaarle (1995). *Reports on Media Ethics in Europe.* University of Tampere: Julkaisiya Sara B41.

Nordenstreng, Kaarle (1998). "Professional Ethics: Between Fortress Journalism and Cosmopolitan Democracy." In K. Brants, J. Hermes, L. Van Zooten (eds.), *The Media in Question: Popular Cultures and Public Interests.* London: Sage, pp. 124-134.

Nordenstreng, Kaarle, and Topuz, Hifi, eds. (1989). *Journalist: Status, Rights, and Responsibilities.* Prague: International Organization of Journalists.

Noddings, Nel (1984). *Caring: A Feminine Approach to Ethics and Moral Education.* Berkeley: University of California Press.

Obonyo, Levi (2010). "Peace Journalism Training in East Africa," *Media Development*, 3, pp. 59-60.

Pattyn, Bart, ed. (2000). *Media Ethics: Opening Social Dialogue.* Leuven, Belgium: Peeters.

Pauli, Juusela (1991). *Journalistic Codes of Ethics in the CSCE Countries: An Examination.* Tampere, Finland: University of Tampere Series B31.

Steiner, Linda (1991). "Feminist Theorizing and Communication Ethics," *Communication*, 12(3).

Steiner, Linda (2009). "Feminist Media Ethics," in *The Handbook of Mass Media Ethics,* eds. Lee Wilkins and Clifford Christians (New York: Routledge), pp. 366-381.

Steiner, Linda and Okrusch, C. M. (2006). "Care as a Virtue for Journalists," *Journal of Mass Media Ethics*, 21(2-3), pp. 102-122.

Taylor, Charles K., Appiah, A., Habermas, J., et al. (1994). *Multiculutralism: Examining the Politics of Recognition.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Van Zoonen, Lisbeth (1992). "Feminist Theory and Information Technology." *Media, Culture and Society,* 14, pp. 9-29.

Van Zoonen, Lisbeth (1994). *Feminist Media Studies.* London: Sage.

Van Zoonen, Lisbeth (2002). "Gendering the Internet: Claims, Controversies and Cultures," *European Journal of Communication,* 1, pp. 5-23.

Whitehouse, Virginia (2009). "Confucius: Ethics of Character," in *Ethical Communication: Moral Stances in Human Dialogue,* eds. Clifford G. Christians and John C. Merrill (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press), pp. 167-172.

Wilkins, Lee (2009). "Carol Gilligan: Ethics of Care," in *Ethical Communication: Moral Stances in Human Dialogue*, eds. Clifford G. Christians and John C. Merrill (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press), pp. 33-39.

Wiredu, Kwasi (1980). *Philosophy and an African Culture.* Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Wiredu, Kwasi (1983). "Morality and Religion in Akan Thought," *Philosophy and Culture*, eds. H. O. Oruka and D. A. Masolo (Nairobi: Bookwise), pp. 6-13.

Wiredu, Kwasi (1996). *Cultural Universals and Particulars: An African Perspective.* Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Wiredu, Kwasi, ed. (2004). *A Companion to African Philosophy.* Oxford, UK: Blackwell.

***