At this complicated time in human history, the media with a global reach are more necessary than ever. The urgency of a global media ethics that matches the muscle of today's worldwide communication technologies has become obvious. The nearly unlimited amount of digital data is a golden resource, if used for the public good. Given the power of international media corporations and the high speed electronic technologies which now characterize the media worldwide, it is imperative that ethics be broad and strong enough to equal their universal scope. Otherwise the result is a quiescent ethics, echoing the status quo rather than challenging or contradicting it.

In fact, several worldwide models have been developed or are underway. The Eurocentric ethical canon that is monocultural, parochial, and patriarchal is being replaced by cross-cultural, international frameworks.

THEORIES OF UNIVERSALS: PROFESSIONAL APPROACHES

Transcendental metaphysical universals that presume foundationalism have been discredited as imperialistic. Therefore, scholars today doing credible work on universals understand norms to be historically embedded rather than abstract and absolutist. Diversity in culture does not in itself prove philosophical relativism. Relativism is subject to the naturalistic fallacy; that is, “ought” statements cannot be derived from “is” statements since they represent different realms. What exists in a natural setting cannot itself yield normative guidelines. And relativism faces the long-standing contradiction articulated by Karl Mannheim: Those insisting that all cultures are relative must arise above them and in so doing relativism is nullified. The ethical frameworks described below all emphasize cultural diversity while seeking universals that are transcendent. The primary issue is identifying a different kind of universal, one that honors the splendid variety of human life.

Kaarle Nordenstreng opened a pathway by accounting for common values, but diversity also, through professional codes of ethics. Nordenstreng's *The Mass Declaration of UNESCO* (1984) was a pathbreaker in understanding professional ethics internationally through codes of ethics as constellations of media values. A later inventory of 31 codes in Europe identified journalists' accountability to the public, and to their sources and referents, as the primary emphases.
(Laitila, 1995). Christians and Nordenstreng (2004) put codes of ethics in the larger context of social responsibility theory. Social responsibility thinking has been appearing in different parts of the world, from the Hutchins Commission in the United States to the MacBride Commission to the European Union to public journalism in Latin America (Sizoo, 2010). Codes of ethics contribute also in bringing society to the forefront, if these codes are reoriented from media-centered professionalism to social responsibility as a citizen-based paradigm.

Cooper's *Communication Ethics and Global Change* (1989) was the first comprehensive survey of media ethics across cultures by an international network of media professionals and educators from 13 countries. His study of professional morality identified three protoneums as candidates for universal status. He concluded that one worldwide concern within the apparatus of professional standards and codes is the quest for truth, though often limited to objectivity and accuracy. A second concern, based on the available research data, Cooper defines as a desire among public communicators to work responsibly within the social mores and cultural features in which they operate. He also concludes that freedom of expression is a third imperative across professional media practice. Although stated in different language and to different degrees, free speech is an important component in maintaining accurate human expression.

Claude-Jean Bertrand (2000) advocates media accountability systems (M.A.S.) for enforcing ethical practices in the democratic media worldwide. M.A.S. examines every option in the private sector that fosters the media’s responsibility through pressuring media organization and journalists to better serve the public, and thereby depriving the government of a pretext to interfere. All available strategies for media regulation are included—codes of ethics, ombudspersons, news councils (local, regional, national), in-house critics, journalism reviews, accuracy and fairness citizen groups, readers’ and viewers’ panels, and research institutes. Media accountability systems are more necessary now than ever given the unprecedented privatization and deregulation of electronic media throughout the world. Media accountability systems emphasizing freedom and equality already exist in various forms across the globe, particularly in such countries as Japan, the United Kingdom, Germany, France, Sweden, Israel, Estonia, Portugal, and the United States (Bertrand, 2003, pp. 293–384).

**THEORIES OF UNIVERSALS: PHILOSOPHICAL APPROACHES**

There are also several universal frameworks that step outside professional ethics and media institutions to work from the general morality. While having an explicit communication orientation, they are theoretical models rooted in philosophical reflection.

Seley Benhabib (1992) has developed a principled interactive universalism not subject to the criticism of postmodernists that grand narratives are no longer possible. She defends universalist ideals in moral and political life by addressing the contemporary assault on universals. In the process, she takes seriously the contributions of feminism and communitarianism. In her reformulation of discourse ethics, humans are dialogic selves whose moral agency follows the norms implicit in Habermas’ ideal speech situation—universal moral respect and egalitarian reciprocity (Bracci, 2002, pp. 128–130). Her idea of interactive dialogic rationality keeps ethics close to people’s everyday experience, so that diversity in cultures is recognized rather than burying differences under an abstract metaphysics (Benhabib, 2011).

Kwasi Wiredu (1996) writes out of an African philosophical perspective. The human species lives by language. Every language is similar in its phonemic complexity and all languages serve not merely functional roles but in cultural formation. All languages are translatable into another
and understood in doing so. Every normal human being can learn another language and some people are purely bilingual. Through the intrinsic self-reflexivity of natural language, we arbitrate our values and establish our differences and similarities. Languages everywhere are communal; they give their speakers particularity, while the shared lingual character of our existence makes intercultural communication possible. Through the commonness of our biologic-cultural identity as *hominessapientes*, we can believe that there are universals while living at the same time in our local communities.

In a study of ethical principles in 13 countries, the sacredness of human life is consistently affirmed as a universal value (Christians and Traber, 1997). The rationale for human action is reverence for life on earth, respect for the organic realm in which human civilization is situated. The veneration of human life represents a universalism from the ground up. Various societies articulate this protonorm in different terms and illustrate it locally, but every culture can bring to the table this fundamental norm for ordering political relationships and such social institutions as the media. There is at least one generality of universal scope underlying systematic ethics. The primal sacredness of life is a protonorm that binds humans into a common oneness. And in our systematic reflection on this foundation of the social order, we recognize that it entails such basic ethical principles as truth, human dignity, and nonviolence (Christians, 2019, ch. 2).

Cooper’s (1998) strategy for understanding our universal humanity is expanding our study from industrial societies to include learning from indigenous groups. He lived with the Shuswap in Canada, Polynesians in Hawaii, and the Rock Point Navajo People to experience firsthand their moral perspectives and modes of communication. He documents the *umwelt*, spirituality, respect, and wisdom of Native Peoples for whom communication is a release of stored power—potential energy becoming kinetic energy. He observes that “what outsiders call ‘ethics’ are derivative from a singular ethic, inseparable from the Great Spirit’s law” (Cooper, 1998, p. 163). The Native Nations’ emphasis on communion and community, the multilayered character of truth in indigenous cultures, and their integration of heart and mind demonstrate the fundamental human commitment to authentic communication.

Hamelink (2002) appeals to international human rights as the foundation of moral standards for the media. Human rights provide the only universally available principles for the dignity and integrity of all human beings. The world political community has recognized the existence of human rights since the adoption of the UN Charter in 1945, and has accepted international legal machinery for their enforcement. Member states of the United Nations have pledged themselves to promote universal respect for and observance of human rights, the dignity and worth of the human person, social progress, and the right of recognition before the law without discrimination. Therefore, in order to ensure democratic participation, all people have the right of access to communication channels independent of governmental or commercial control.

Nussbaum (1999, 2000, 2006) uses extensive research into the lives of women in the non-industrial world to argue for overlapping capabilities that are true of humans universally as they work out their existence in everyday life. The common values that emerge from people’s daily struggles are bodily health, affiliations of compassion, recreation, emotional development, political participation, rights to goods, and employment. All human beings are capable of fulfilling these functions, and the countless ways of doing them overlap and establish standards for the quality of life across cultures.

Ward (2005) develops a philosophical foundation for global journalism ethics in contractualism. The idea of ethics as social contract stems historically from Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, and Kant, with Ward preferring the contract theory of John Rawls as the most productive framework. In Ward’s contractualism, ethical principles are intersubjective agreements produced by rational
discussion in light of common purposes, values, and facts. These restraints on social behavior guide decisions through reasonable dialogue among all interested parties. Ethics is the ongoing project of inventing, applying, and critiquing the basic principles that direct human interaction, define social roles, and justify institutional structures. Ethics for the news media is a set of legitimate but fallible agreements established by fair deliberation between the overarching profession of journalism and the public it serves (Ward, 2013, 2015).

Postcolonial theory is developed by Rao and Wasserman (2007; Rao, 2010; Wasserman, 2006, 2010) into a global perspective on ethics. Normative ideals for the media can only be conceived within the historical and political context that underlies current global power relations. Theoretical ethics ought to be global in their reach but local in conception. Such central propositions in ethics as human dignity must be understood across their symbolic and material axes. Dignity only comes to mean something when radical social change is brought about, otherwise it deepens human dignity for an elite while ignoring the misery of the rest. Ethical principles are not a priori but must include the material and discursive conditions to make them possible. The validity of our moral values for the global media is determined by the extent to which they resonate with the voiceless and vulnerable. Postcolonial theory provides both the critical vocabulary and tools for intervention that situate normative values in history while globalizing them simultaneously.

Wilkins (2010) develops a universal theory through neuroscience. In her model, the literature of moral development and feminist ethical theory are interconnected and established globally through neuroscientific research on the human brain. Moral development and the ethics of care in its own way assume that all human beings have the capacity for moral thinking. Ethical reasoning, while linked to experience, is considered an organic part of what it means to think as a human being. Neuropsychology documents that through evolutionary naturalism, the human species has a universal sense of right and wrong (cf. Plaisance, 2011; Plaisance, Skewes, and Hanitzsch, 2012). Whether the human moral instinct is a faculty, or hard wired, or best described in other ways still being researched worldwide, this biological inheritance is the ground for universalizing ethics throughout the species.

Universalist positions have discredited themselves over history by breeding totalitarianism. Those who claim knowledge of universal truth typically use it to control or convert dissenters. Universalism is said to threaten diversity, whereas relativism liberates us to reject all oppressive claims to truth. In light of this objection, it must be reiterated that the universalist appeals from Benhabib to Wilkins are not foundational a prioris. Interactive universalism, our common lingual identity, the sacredness of life, authentic communication in indigenous culture, international human rights, overlapping capabilities, contractualism, postcolonial theory, and neuroscience in the theoretical models above are not objectivist absolutes. They are presuppositions to which we are committed inescapably; one cannot proceed intellectually without taking something as given. Cartesian rationalism and Kant’s formalism presumed noncontingent starting points. These primordial generalities do not. Without protonorms of universal scope, ethical theory and politics are trapped in the distributive fallacy, with various ideological blocs each claiming to speak for the whole.

A commitment to universals does not eliminate cross-cultural differences in thinking and belief. The only question is whether our values affirm the human spirit or not. The issue is whether these theoretical models enable the media to build a civic philosophy and thereby demonstrate a transformative intent. This is worldview pluralism which allows us to hold our beliefs in good faith and debate them openly rather than be constrained by a superficial consensus. The universal principles described so far do not obstruct cultures and inhibit their development. On the contrary, they liberate us for strategic action and provide a direction for social change.
To understand how these universal theories work regarding the media and media professions, the sacredness-of-life model can be expanded for illustrative purposes (Christians and Traber, 1997). This study starts from a different premise than comparing codes of media ethics around the world. Codes are distillations of the best thinking practitioners can do together on their standards and ideals, and seeking common themes among them is one way to discover cross-cultural agreement (Christians, 2010, p. 34).

The sacredness of life emerged from a dissimilar strategy. Philosophers, religious thinkers, cultural leaders, and social theorists were consulted instead of media professionals. The question for them was their starting point: What is the first principle that is non-negotiable among your people, in your religion or culture? What is bedrock for you, the presupposition from which you begin? Aristotle taught us that there must be an unmoved mover. There cannot be infinite regression or knowledge is indeterminate. One cannot act or think without taking something as given. All knowledge begins with presuppositions because we must start somewhere, not because they have been demonstrated to be unequivocally true. First principles are not pure truth in isolation but beliefs about what’s best for the world.

Around the question of basic presuppositions, workshops, conferences, and consultations were organized worldwide. Fifty major papers were given in six languages on first principles—ranging from general theories, to communication ethics in Latin America, Africa, Japan, Taiwan, Poland, Brazil, and South Africa, to Arab-Islamic and Judeo-Christian ethics, Hinduism, and Native American mythology. This research on four continents is a limited sample, and ideally the question about basic presuppositions should be asked of all 6,500 living languages in the world and 20,000 people groups. But this study is explicitly international and cross-cultural, and points us in the right direction.

The basic commitment in all the groups they studied is the sacredness of life. Within the natural world is a moral claim on us for its own sake and in its own right. The sacredness of life is a pretheoretical given that makes the moral order possible. The history of how humans have valued their natural world is long and torturous, but the scientific view cannot account for the purposiveness of life. Living nature reproduces itself in terms of its very character. Therefore, within the natural order is a moral claim on us for its own sake and in its own right. As Hans Jonas concludes, “Nature evinces at least one determinate goal, life itself, … With the gaining of this premise, the decisive battle for ethical theory has already been won” (1984, p. 78).

Our duty to preserve life is similar in kind to parental obligation to their offspring. When new life appears, the progenitors do not debate their relationship to it as though their responsibility is a matter of calculating the options with neutral protoplasm. The forbears’ duty to their children is an imperative that is timeless and nonnegotiable (cf. Jonas, 1984, ch. 4). Nurturing life has a taken-for-granted character outside subjective preference. From the sacredness of life perspective, the biological world provides a rich arena for seeing the permanent value of human life in its brilliant diversity.

The veneration of life is a protonorm similar in kind to the proto-Indo-European language, a lingual predecessor underlying the Indo-European languages as we know them in history. Reverence for life on earth establishes a level playing floor for cross-cultural collaboration on the ethical foundations of a responsible press. It represents a universalism from the ground up. Various societies articulate this protonorm in different terms and illustrate it locally, but every culture can bring to the table this fundamental norm for ordering political relationships and such social institutions as the press. In this sense, universal solidarity is the basic principle of ethics and the normative core of all human communication (Christians, 2019, pp. 93–100).
Human responsibility regarding natural existence contributes the possibility of intrinsic imperatives to moral philosophy. It demonstrates the legitimacy of concluding that collective duty can be cosmic and irrespective of our roles or contracts. This is a protonorm that precedes its elaboration into ethical principles. And its universal scope enables us to avoid the divisiveness of individual interests, cultural practices, and national prerogatives. The primal sacredness of life is a protonorm that binds humans into a common oneness. Out of this primordial generality basic principles emerge such as truth, human dignity, and nonviolence.

Truth is one ethical principle on which various cultures rest. The most fundamental norm of Arab-Islamic communication is truthfulness. Truth is one of the three highest values in the context of the Latin American experience of communication. In Hinduism, truth is the highest dharma and the source of all other virtues. Among the Sushwap of Canada, truth as genuineness and authenticity is central to its indigenous culture. Living with others is inconceivable if we cannot tacitly assume that people are speaking truthfully. Lying, in fact, is so unnatural that machines can measure bodily reactions against it. When we deceive, Dietmar Meith argues, the truth imperative is recognized in advance: “Otherwise there would be no need to justify exceptions as special cases. … Those who relativize truthfulness, who refuse to accept it as an ethical principle, indirectly recognize it as generally valid” (Meith, 1997, p. 89).

In Aristotle’s legacy, truth and falsehood are permanently imbalanced: “Falsehood is itself mean and culpable, and truth noble and full of praise” (Aristotle, 1947, bk. 4, ch. 7). We ought not to grant truth and lying equal status and then merely calculate the best results. Lying must be justified while telling the truth need not be. In Bok’s elaboration, only in monumental crises or as a last resort, can lying even be considered for moral justification. “Deceit and violence—these are the two forms of deliberative assault on human beings” (Bok, 1999, p. 18). Those who are lied to are resentful, hostile, and suspicious. “Veracity functions as the foundations of relations among human beings; when this trust shatters or wears away, institutions collapse” (Bok, 1999, p. 31).

While Aristotle’s predilection toward truth is Greek in its cadence, he speaks to the world and across history. For Hinduism truth is the highest dharma and the source of all other virtues. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa demonstrated that suffering from apartheid can be healed through truthful testimony. In the Talmud, the liars’ punishment is that no one believes them. For the former secretary general of the United Nations, Dag Hammarskjold, “the most dangerous of all dilemmas is when we are obliged to conceal the truth to be victorious” (Jensen, 2000, p. 7). In Gandhi’s satyagraha the power of truth through the human spirit eventually wins over force. The fundamental norm of Islamic communication is truthfulness. For the Shuswap tribe in Canada, the truth as genuineness and authenticity is central to culture.

Respecting human dignity is another underlying principle about which there is transnational agreement. 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, an interconnectedness among all living forms so that we live in solidarity with others as equal constituents in the web of life. In communalistic African 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 Judaism and Christianity, dignity is God’s irrevocable claim on human beings, not earned, nor bestowed by people or institutions (Moltmann, 1984; Schultzzer, 2006). For Confucianism, correct communication practices derive from the larger social etiquette of li, that is, respecting the dignity of others. Homo sapiens as a species requires within itself respect for its members as a whole.
Nonviolence is a third ethical principle entailed by the sacredness of life, or in negative terms, no harm to the innocent. Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King developed this principle beyond a political strategy into a philosophy of life. For the preeminent theorist of dialogic communication, Emmanuel Levinas, the self-Other relation makes peace normative. When the Other’s face appears, the infinite is revealed and I am commanded not to kill (Levinas, 1981, p. 89). Along with dharma, ahimsa (nonviolence) forms the basis of the Hindu worldview. In communalistic and indigenous cultures, care for the weak and vulnerable (children, sick, and elderly), and sharing material resources are a matter of course. Terrorist attacks around the world, mass shootings in the United States, the bombing of innocents in Syria cut to our deepest being. Along with the public’s revulsion against physical abuse at home and our consternation over brutal crimes and savage wars is a glimmer of hope reflecting the validity of this principle.

Out of nonviolence, we articulate ethical theories about not harming the innocent as an obligation that is cosmic and irrespective of our roles or ethnic origin. When peace is an ethical imperative, it is not reduced to the politics of war, but one of three fundamental ways to understand the sacredness of life intrinsic to our humanness. When considering universals, nonviolence is of epoch-making importance: “No survival without a world ethic. No world peace without peace between the religions. No peace between the religions without dialogue” (Kung, 1991, p. xv). The principle of nonviolence promotes a discourse of peaceful coexistence in community life, rather than a focus on peace making between intergovernmental bodies. In Clemencia Rodriguez’s “social fabric” approach to peace, open communication is essential, “based on mutual respect, solidarity, and collective enjoyment of public spaces” (2004, p. 3; cf., 2011). In terms of this principle understood through the protonorm, “only by invoking the sacredness and inviolability of life, by advocating non-violence and creative resolution, can communicators act morally” (Lee, 2007, p. 52). And the Declaration toward a Global Ethic of the Parliament of the World’s Religions in 1993 connects principle and protonorm in the same way. The first of its four “irrevocable directives” is a commitment to a culture of nonviolence and respect for life.

A commitment to universals does not eliminate all differences in what we think and believe. The only question is whether the first presupposition with which we begin affirms the human good or not. The issue is whether our values help to build a civic philosophy and thereby demonstrate a transformative intent. This is worldview pluralism, which allows us to hold our beliefs in good faith and debate them openly rather than be constrained by a superficial consensus. The standard of judgment is not economic or political success, but whether our worldviews and community formations contribute in the long run to truth telling, human dignity, and nonviolence.

When we build our ethical models in universal terms, we have a framework by which to judge the media professions and practices locally. Of the three ethical principles that have arisen from various sections of the world, in communications we have worked the hardest with the first and second—human dignity and truth. Truth is central to communication practice and appears everywhere in our codes of ethics, mission statements, classes, and textbooks on media ethics. We disagree on the details, not always sure what truth means and how it applies. There is still in news a heavy emphasis on facts and unbiased information that no longer is defensible epistemologically. But the general concept of truth is an unwavering imperative. In entertainment media, we insist on realism, on artistic imagery and aesthetic authenticity, as synonyms for truth. In the persuasive arts, advertising and public relations, we consider its antonym, that is, deception, to be absolutely forbidden.

But if we broaden our understanding of truth from the Western Enlightenment tradition to a definition rooted in the universal sacredness of life, the view of truth as accurate information
is too narrow. With a framework oriented to the universal, the concept of truth is more sophisticated as disclosure. Truthful statements entail a comprehensive account of the context which gives them meaning. Dietrich Bonhoeffer contends correctly that a truthful account takes hold of the culture, motives, and presuppositions involved (1955, ch. 5). Truth means, in other words, to strike gold, to get at “the core, the essence, the nub, the heart of the matter” (Pippert, 1989, p. 11). No hard line exists between fact and interpretation; therefore, 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 actually reporting. Their disclosures ring true on both levels; that is, they are theoretically credible and realistic to those being covered. The reporters’ frame of reference is not derived from a free-floating mathematics, but from an inside picture that gets at the heart of the matter. Rather than reducing social issues to the financial and administrative problems defined by politicians, the media disclose the subtlety and nuance that enable readers and viewers to identify the fundamental issues themselves (Christians, 2004).

And increasingly, human dignity has taken a central position in media ethics (Düwell et al., 2014). For two decades now, we have worked on ethnic diversity, racist language in news, sexism in advertising. We see gender equality in hiring, and eliminating racism in organizational culture, not as political correctness but as moral imperatives. Human dignity that arrives on our agenda from the universal, takes seriously lives that are loaded with cultural complexity. Our selves are articulated within these decisive contexts of gender, race, class, and religion. A community’s polychromatic voices are the arena through which participatory democracy takes place.

The imperative of human dignity grounded in the sacredness of life moves us beyond an individualistic morality of rights to a social ethics of the common good. It enables us to recognize that an urgent issue on the civic agenda at present is to enable the voices of self-discovery and self-affirmation to flourish among a society’s cultural groups. A community’s moral obligation is not merely treating ethnic differences with fairness, but an explicit commitment to what Charles Taylor calls “the politics of recognition.” As he puts it, “Nonrecognition or misrecognition can inflict harm, can be a form of oppression, imprisoning someone in a false, distorted, and reduced mode of being. Due recognition is not just a courtesy we owe people. It is a vital human need” (Taylor, 1994, p. 26). Promoting human dignity does not mean informing a majority audience of racial injustice, for example, but insures those forms of representation from the ground up that generate a critical consciousness for oneself and others. In honoring the human dignity principle, the press reorients multiculturalism from individual rights and political correctness to the larger moral universe of nonhierarchical social relations.

But the third ethical principle, nonviolence, is still underdeveloped. Flickers of peace are emerging on our media ethics agenda, but only glimmers compared to truth, and of late, human dignity. Johan Galtung has developed and applied the principle most systematically with his peace journalism, concerned not simply with the standards of war reporting, but positive peace—creative, nonviolent resolution of all cultural, social, and political conflicts (e.g., 2004). Peace journalism recognizes that military coverage as a media event feeds the very violence it reports, and therefore is developing the theory and practice of peace initiatives and conflict resolution (Lee, 2010; Lynch and McGoldrick, 2005). But the broad task remains of bringing this third principle to maturity. Our international magazines and newspapers should articulate, promote, craft, and illustrate the ethics of nonviolence. We need a rich venue at present for doing so—addresses, group discussions, news features, educational multimedia presentations, documentaries, theater, and music—together bringing the idea into its own across cultures and from the bottom up (Christians, 2019, ch. 5).
MEDIA TECHNOLOGY

A complicating factor in putting universals to work in communication ethics, is that, unlike many other disciplines, its focus has been changed by technology. While legal, medical, and business ethics, for example, have also been impacted by technical innovation, communication ethics is the only such field in which both the heart and name of the field has shifted from people to machines. As early as 1988, a comprehensive bibliographic study suggested that over 80 percent of modern writing about communication ethics focused upon media ethics (Cooper, Sullivan, Medaglia, and Weir, 1988). There is neither reason nor research to suggest that the four to one ratio has since decreased.

Historically, many ethicists have argued that external technologies only amplify the presence of eternal ethical issues, so media ethics is merely communication ethics in disguise. However, a significant number of important scholars such as Mumford (1934), White (1962), Ellul (1964), and Giedion (1969) have suggested that each technology transforms society and may have unintended consequences that need to be addressed ethically.

For example, research on television effects triggers a debate about whether repetitive televised violence may contribute to actual human violence. Computers and satellites provide the possibility for invading national and global privacy in ways that the naked eye and ear cannot. Arguments can be made that almost every medium transforms previous ethical issues and introduces new ones.

Indeed, Marshall McLuhan (1977), Eric McLuhan (1983), and Barrington Nevitt (1985) claim that there are specific laws of the media which, like the laws of nature, are all but indifferent to human intention and action. Although Cooper (1997) found that there were 40 ethical issues associated with cybermedia by the end of the last millennium, three years later he claimed there were 52 such issues and now has identified 64. Does speed-up in the rate of implementing new technology mean there is also a speed-up in the quantity and impact of ethical issues? Or are such issues old wine in new bottles because there is “nothing new under the sun?”

With the advent of communication speed-up there are many invisible technologies at work which the public cannot detect. Indeed the research presented to the Foundation of Intelligent Physical Agents at their annual conference in Dublin in 1998 indicates that the creators of new communication technology have the greatest ethical responsibility. Their hidden engineering systems may be tested in advance but little attention is given to examining their possible effects until after the new technology has been irreversibly introduced into society. Most of the public does not even know what intelligent agents are, let alone their impact upon individuals and groups.

Moreover, it is the interplay of technologies, software upgrades, plug-ins, formats, and innumerable invisible devices that is most difficult to track. In his ground-breaking Food for Naught (1974), the seminal Canadian biochemist Ross Hume Hall shows the hidden effects of the interaction of food additives. Although tested in isolation, the additives were untested in combination by nutritionists and government scientists. Similarly, the new media ecology, with a multiplication of new interacting species, also enlarges the world of both hidden and observable ethical problems.

However, to observe these phenomena is not to suggest that machines, rather than people, cause or are accountable for ethical lapses and virtues. People invent and maintain the machines, and are thus responsible for them. Nevertheless a globe of interactive talking machines which outlive the people who invented them is very different from the world of Aristotle and Confucius.
As noted at the outset regarding the urgency of a global ethics, we live in an age when information instruments and weapons technologies are closely linked. In such an age we have learned that, if we are not willing to use communication technologies for humane, prosocial purposes, there are those who will use such technologies for their own darker designs. Hitler’s S.S. cameramen, for instance, used film not simply to record Holocaust atrocities but to proudly document their systematic efficiency when introducing accelerated methods of genocide.

Given the concerns that are routinely expressed worldwide about the digital divide, censorship, deceptive advertising, information flow, propaganda, privacy, piracy, pornography, cultural erosion, racial and national stereotyping, violence, and many related problems, there is indeed a need for a global communication ethic. Research cited within and beyond this chapter, and written recommendations since Hammurabi, demonstrate that the quest for responsible, truthful, communication practice transcends period and place.

**FUTURE RESEARCH ON UNIVERSALS**

So the question of greater concern is not if, but rather how, a global communication ethic may be created and implemented. Harold Innis (1951) recommended that there must be a balance between communication technologies of space and time. A larger requirement for a communication ethic is that there ought to be a balance between eternal communication ethics (that is, approaches transcending time), and external communication ethics (that is, approaches extending across space). The notion of space must now take into account technologies and codes which leap over continents to weave a multicultural mosaic. Such technologies at present extend into outer space (e.g., satellites), inner space (e.g., our media-filled subconscious minds), and global space (e.g., the wired world of seven continents and 24 time zones). A balance between an ethics of space and of time is now required.

And other types of balance cannot be excluded when building a communication ethic suitable to a new millennium sensitivity:

1. A balance between the indigenous and developed world’s wisdom and vision.
2. A balance between idealized codes which inspire and policies which accurately depict harsh global realities.
3. Input from both the North and South, and the East and West (as in honoring not only Jewish but also Buddhist ethics and noting where they may be parallel).
4. A balance between universal principles and the particular issues and practices of regions.
5. A balance between the professional and the academic; between technical media and the core origins of communication ethics (speech, written, and performance ethics); between the political and the spiritual; between the codified and the intuitive/oral traditions.

In short, a harmonious inclusiveness which honors cultural and other diversity in fact, not as lip service, is required (Cooper, 2016–17).

Within the technical world, homeostasis is also essential. New communication technologies are primarily tested by (1) engineers for effectiveness; (2) research and development departments for competitive value; and (3) sales and marketing forces for target audiences. The teams which pretest not only technologies, but also programming and information formats, must also be complemented by ethicists, scientists, policy experts, parents, and community leaders who consider the potential impact of any new medium or product before it is introduced into the community.
A truly global inclusiveness must inform any communication ethics. Peoples such as the Rapa Nui, Zulu, Old Order Brethren, Amish, Dani, and a wide variety of other cultural groups are not usually consulted about world communication policy. Yet they often provide a valuable perspective because of their media blackouts, single source media, (no) advertising stance, and other atypical approaches which force cultures to rethink the conventional wisdom.

Ethical issues often appear after a technology, new program, communication genre, or software platform is introduced into society. Such problems might have been prevented or better understood if pre-search (preventive research) had been utilized. Before advertisers export feminine hygiene commercials into the cultures of Pacific Islanders, they need to realize that many island women watching TV will leave the room to avoid public embarrassment. Cross-cultural pre-search is necessary. Before Hollywood producers make a film with seemingly harmless initiation rites that will be imitated by hundreds of teenagers (several of whom will be killed), it is wise to involve teens and parents in the test screenings. Before introducing fiber optics communication into the mainstream and unleashing related hazardous waste by-products, multidisciplinary pre-search is necessary to study the toxic side effects.

Consequently, a global communication ethics must also be balanced between safeguarding the future with pre-search and learning from our mistakes in the past via case studies. A multidisciplinary approach must seek and employ the wisdom of many thinkers, professions, schools, and peoples. It must take into account not only the original issues of rhetoric such as defamation and deception, but should now include the growing index of techno-issues from cyberspam and flaming to the Hall effect within an elaborate media ecology.

The global communication ethics that is required must not only be balanced, inclusive, and preventive, but also based on a solid foundation of cross-cultural values. A synthesis of research to date suggests that the theories and studies described above provide a notable starting point for identifying those underlying values necessary to build such a unifying ethics. When combined, an overarching analysis of both the Western and indigenous communication ethics research of these scholars yields a list of 16 primary values. Without these 16 interhuman essences and the related values which they imply, any global ethics document would be strictly ornamental. Although several of these values drawn from the authors above overlap, and although other important values must be inferred from the list, the “group of 16” stands as symbolic of what large global populations expect from both individual and professional communication: accountability, social responsibility, truthfulness, free expression, implementation systems (ombudspersons, codes, news councils, etc.), gender and racial equity, community, respect, reciprocity, spirituality, authenticity, human rights, integrity, nonviolence, dignity, and honoring the sacredness of all life.

This list may be easily expanded or contracted into a more detailed or quintessential foundation. Indeed in one sense the most recent commentary by Christians and Nordenstreng (2004), like the previous work of Christians and Traber (1997), suggests the ultimate contraction from 16 into a single protonorm. One implication of their thinking is that the 16th or final value is a bedrock omni-foundation beneath the cornucopia of 15 other values.

This underarching prima-protonorm, which is listed as the final one, might be summarized as “reverence for life” which is also strongly akin to the indigenous emphasis upon “respect for all life.” Christians and Traber (1997) argue that nurturing life is a pretheoretical given that makes the moral order possible. For there to be truth, freedom, rights, and all the other 15 basic values, there must first be the existence of life and an ethics committed to preserving it. The other values cannot survive without it.

Hence in a world populated with instruments of destruction and of communication, the latter must be committed to dissolving the former; that is to the honoring and preservation of life.
A communication ethic for the 21st century must be rich in its ability to encompass complexity. Yet it must also remain morally simple in its unequivocal purpose, which is to nurture and protect the sacredness of life.

Behind this ethic are the spirits of many peoples (cf. Cortese, 1990). From Martin Buber (1965) there is the commitment that when dialog is genuine the speaker will respectfully “behold his partner as the very one he is” (p. 143). Mahatma Gandhi (1947) teaches that “you must be the change you want to see in the world.” From Chief Thomas Littleben (1990) is the advice to “listen with all of yourself and only speak what you know.” In Mother Teresa’s wisdom, “there is no one who does not deserve our caring communication” (personal communication to Cooper, 1983).

A global communication ethics must be more than a hollow skeleton of worldwide codes and rhetorical declarations. It must be more than notions which are balanced over space and time, inclusive, preventive, and built upon a 16-fold values foundation. To be truly effective such a communication ethics must also be constantly lived and protected by people of every background. These are people who are concerned that, depending upon the choices we human beings make, our current modes of communication may either guide destructive nuclear bombs or heal destroyed nuclear families. These are people who are unafraid to accept Horace Mann’s (1859) ultimate challenge: “Be ashamed to die until you have won some victory for humanity.”

Beyond this 16-value model, Cooper (2016–17) presents a new form of universalism in “A Whole Systems Approach to Ethics Inspired by Fritjov Capra.” His proposal renders the human-technology discussion quite small within a cosmic context. He raises the possibility of seeing ethics from the perspective of the universe itself rather than as an anthropocentric endeavor. Inspired by Peter Singer’s work on Sedgwick and by Capra’s opus marrying physics and other sciences to the humanities and arts, Cooper looks at ethics through the telescope and microscope concurrently rather than through a human pair of glasses. Here is one small sample of how he seeks to enlarge the field of universals and ethics:

What if ethics could be seen in a much larger “whole systems” approach that could be informed by disciplines as different as physics and eastern philosophy? What if ethics could be seen as related not only to human behaviour but also to all living species and their container—the universe?

Consider, for example, one Western approach to ethics known as Utilitarianism. Often at the core of this school of thought is a question asked when making ethical decisions: “What is the greatest good for the greatest number?” Typically, this question involves solving the greatest “good” for the greatest number of people. But what if we took (Princeton ethicist) Peter Singer’s concerns about animal rights quite seriously? Although I am not taking a stand here for or against human vegetarianism, what if we sought to determine the human diet that provided the “greatest good for the greatest number” of species? Clearly, more species (cows, chickens, deer, sheep, fish, pigs, etc.) are sacrificed in far greater numbers than the number sustained (just human beings) by raising and eating them. Since humans in most countries each many animals each month, if we listen to Singer, among others, we may think differently about “the greatest good for the greatest number.”

And what if we widened the lens to include all types of insects? In her crusade against the widespread use of the pesticide called DDT, scientist Rachel Carlson was concerned not only about the toxic effect such a poison might have upon human beings, birds, and domestic animals. So what if we sought to determine not only the greatest good for the greatest number of species, but also the greatest number of living entities?

We can widen the aperture of this question even further? Supposing one asked the greatest good for the greatest number of generations? Not only would we need to rethink questions about the treatment of the environment and of many species, but also about the human economy, war, scientific research, and much more. A famous Native American ethic states that one must plan and act for the next four generations.

(Cooper, 2016–17)
Both the microscopic and the macroscopic are used in seeking to enlarge our understanding of ethics. In this larger galaxy, human technology becomes simply an amoeba. Such it is for space. As for time, humanity and its tools are relatively recent microchips in the wide expanse of astro-history, such that one may study “us” from a much more vast perspective. The function, limitations, and goals of ethics may be altered drastically when seen in this larger context.

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