Toward a Global Media Ethics: Theoretical Perspectives

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Theoretical Perspectives

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Abstract

Theoretical debates about global media ethics have been marked by disagreements about the nature, possibility, and desirability of a global ethics. This article attempts to address those disagreements by developing an "ethics of universal being" as the philosophical basis for a global media ethics, an ethics expressed by such universals as the sacredness of life, truth, and nonviolence. The article aims to explore various theoretical positions on global media ethics by providing an overview of the literature and seeking ways in which common ground may be found between these different positions. This approach is developed in two ways. First, it sets forward a theory of universals as "protonorms" rooted in the fully human. Second, it shows how this conception of protonorms takes account of two facts thought to make a global media ethics impossible—the fact that values change or are "invented" over time, and the fact that values are interpreted differently in different cultures. The article argues that universal values should be understood not as transcendent ideas but as protonorms embedded in particular contexts. In this view, the universal and the particular are intimately linked. Through this exploration of links between theoretical positions, the article provides a theoretical basis that can be developed further through discussion between scholars representing different traditions and for the application of the theory to practical media contexts by journalism practitioners.
Keywords: African ethics, global media ethics, invention, postcolonial theory, postmodern ethics, protonorms, tri-level theory, universal values.

Introduction

This article explores theoretical approaches for the construction of a global media ethics based on universal values—an ethics that crosses physical, political, economic, cultural, and social borders. Journalism practitioners, in Africa and around the world, increasingly have to consider how the ethical framework underpinning their work is influenced by globalization. Are journalism ethics as practiced in Africa distinct from journalism in other parts of the world? Can ethical values developed in the global North be transported to African contexts? Should ethical values for journalism be seen as particular to the sociocultural context in which journalism is practiced, or are there universal values that could guide journalists around the world when they consider the ethical dimensions of their work?

These questions have theoretical and practical implications. This article does not attempt to provide practical guidelines for journalists, but, rather, lays a theoretical foundation upon which further discussion about the application of a global media ethics to particular contexts, such as African countries, could take place. By seeking to find common ground between various theoretical positions, the article opens up a theoretical space for further exploration of the relevance of global media ethics for localities like those on the African continent. It does not presume to provide conclusive answers to theoretical questions about the relationship between the global and the local, the universal and the particular, but puts forward an argument about ways in which
current disagreements about the nature, possibility, and desirability of a global ethics can be resolved. Although the article is concerned with the theoretical basis upon which a global media ethics could be built, it is hoped that the theoretical framework advanced in this article would provide further impetus to discussions that are already taking place between journalism scholars and practitioners in various regions of the world.

This article develops an "ethics of universal being" as the philosophical basis for a global media ethics, an ethics expressed by such universals as the sacredness of life, truth, and nonviolence. This ethics recognizes the diversity of media cultures while avoiding postmodern criticisms about the impossibility (or undesirability) of global media ethics.

The article develops this approach in two ways. First, it sets forward a theory of universals as "protonorms," as part of human communication and of being fully human. Second, it shows how this conception of protonorms takes account of two facts thought to make a global media ethics impossible—the fact that values change or are "invented" over time, and the fact that values are interpreted differently in different cultures. The article argues that universal values should be understood not as transcendent ideas but as protonorms embedded in particular contexts. In this view, the universal and the particular are intimately linked. The article argues that theorists should consider constructing global media ethics around this rich, contextual notion of universal values.

The search for a global media ethics has occupied the attention of increasing numbers of ethicists in recent years due to the fact that news media are now global in reach and impact (Black & Barney, 2002; Ward, 2004; Cooper, Christians, Plude, White, & Thomas, 1989). Global issues and the power of global media organizations
call for a media ethics that is global in its principles and in its understanding of media (McPhail, 2006; Seib, 2002; De Beer, 2009). In the era of globalization, African journalists are also increasingly confronted by questions regarding the universal or particular nature of journalism ethics. When African journalists drew up the Windhoek Declaration on Promoting an Independent and Pluralistic African Press in 1991 (MISA, 1991), they invoked the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as a motivation for the promotion of press freedom in the particular African context. The interpenetration of global media into the African context (for instance, satellite television) and the reach of African media to international audiences (for instance through new media technologies such as the Internet, often aimed at Africans in the diaspora) make it imperative that journalists consider their ethical responsibility within a global context (for contextual approaches to these considerations, see the articles by Camara, Omojola, and White in this issue). Consequently, the debate about how existing norms, practices, and aims for ethical journalism need to be interpreted from a more international, cross-cultural perspective is not one that is conducted in the global North alone. In the African context, probably the most well-known exponent of the scholarly debate around questions of universal versus particular, contextually based ethics is the late Zambian scholar Francis Kasoma. He contributed greatly to the thinking about media ethics from an African perspective (see Kasoma, 1994, 1996, 2000), and his work is being carried forward through the Kasoma Media Foundation (www.kasomamediafoundation.com), which in 2007 hosted a conference in Lusaka on the topic "Global Ethics for Media in the Twenty-first Century." Subsequent scholarly work has engaged Kasoma's legacy, sometimes evaluating it critically for what could
be seen as its romantic notions of an idyllic African society untouched by the West (e.g., Nyamnjoh, 2005, p. 91).

Despite a felt need for a global approach to media ethics, progress in its construction is made difficult due to misunderstandings and disagreement on fundamental issues such as what global ethics are and what theory can provide the necessary framework. While comparing best practices in practical settings around the world by means of comparative case studies—of, for instance, local media ethical codes' useful approaches in illustrating how ethics are practiced in various contexts—the fundamental question whether a global media ethics is indeed possible in a world marked by difference is a theoretical one. This article will, therefore, construct a theoretical framework within which this question can be asked.

Defining and attaining a proper global perspective is a difficult task. On the one hand, it is true that, in a global world, a global-minded media is of value because biased and parochial media can wreak havoc in a tightly linked global world. Yet, on the other hand, a media that claim to be global yet fail to acknowledge the ways in which their ethical perspectives are influenced by their own cultural, historical, or political positioning will be unable to help us make sense of the world we live in (Ward & Wasserman, 2008, pp. 1-4).

Progress in developing a global media ethics is stymied by a number of widespread beliefs and presumptions. One issue is whether there are universal values in media ethics. It does appear that there are universals. Even a cursory survey of the many codes of journalism ethics would find agreement, at least on a denotative level, on such values as reporting the truth, freedom and independence, minimizing harm, and
accountability. Yet, a survey would also find differences. Some media cultures emphasize more strongly than others such values as the promotion of social solidarity, not offending religious beliefs, and not weakening public support for the military. Even where media systems agree on a value, such as freedom of the press or social responsibility, they may interpret and apply such principles in different ways. Questions, therefore, arise: Given the differences within media ethics, do we need to seek universal values outside media ethics? How can universal values recognize the variety of norms and practices across media systems?

Another belief that presents an obstacle to global media ethics is the presumption that no theory of global values can do justice to the particularity of ethical experience. In recent years, this belief has been supported by the view that the project of constructing a global theory in any domain has been fatally undermined by the investigations of critical postmodernist and postcolonial theorists. Postmodernist scholars question the possibility of overarching "grand narratives" in an era marked by increased fragmentation and difference, in part facilitated by global media itself. Postcolonial scholars cast suspicion on global constructions as possibly signaling a return to a formal, Western-centric universalism, an effort that seeks to impose values on the Other.

To reply to these views, the article identifies several promising lines of theoretical analysis. Together, these lines of analysis indicate how the construction of a global media ethics can go forward without committing the theoretical errors of the past. It explores the possibility of a theory of ethics and a conception of universal principles that not only "allow" but also welcome and invite the recognition of difference. It
advocates a form of transnational, inclusive ethical theorizing that brings the universal and particular together.

The article describes this approach across three sections. The article's first section outlines a theory of ethics as consisting of three levels that interact dynamically in ethical experience—the levels of presupposition, principle, and precept. The levels are rooted in a holistic conception of theory, where basic values and ideas emerge from a common humanness in various concrete contexts. Basic common values are not viewed as only formal propositions but as context-influenced articulations of deep aspects of being human.

Sections 2 and 3 develop and apply this theoretical approach, arguing that this approach to global ethics is consistent with the idea of invention in ethics and with discourse in postmodern theory. Section 2 argues that one can use the dynamic theory of section 1 to view change and invention in ethics as expressions of the basic values and commitments of being human. Also, it argues that what is important in ethical invention is not just the content of our ethical systems but how we discourse about and change our ethics, in light of our basic theoretical commitments.

Section 3 outlines one of the critical perspectives on the notion of global media ethics, namely, postcolonialism. Postcolonial theory critiques notions of the universal that have their roots in Western epistemologies. It provides a counternarrative that insists on the incorporation of indigenous knowledge frameworks and locally lived experience into an overarching global media ethics. This incorporation could challenge the dominant framework and insist on alternative interpretations of ethical values. In this section of the article it is argued that the assumption that critical theory is opposed
to the construction of a global ethics is simplistic. There are ways in which both the
global and the local, the Western and the non-Western, the colonizer and the colonized
can be brought together in a critical dialectic that could contribute to the development
of a global media ethics.

Although these issues are theoretical, they have important implications for media
ethics in practice. The article, therefore, concludes with reflections on how the
development of a global media ethics along these theoretical lines would require
changes to norms, practices, and codes of ethics in journalism. For example, to adopt a

global media ethics approach is to raise questions about who is the public that a global
journalism serves. It also asks: What is the value in journalism of parochial values,
such as patriotism? How are we to understand journalistic objectivity and balance
when viewed from a global perspective? How would a global approach change the
coverage of major stories and key issues, such as the representation of minorities and
so-called foreign cultures? How would a global

media ethics deal with the particularities of journalistic practice in localities?

These issues are of special importance to African journalism studies and practice.
The practice of journalism on the African continent is often hampered by structural
constraints such as government-imposed restrictions on press freedom, severe lack of
resources, and threats to the personal safety of journalists who seek to tell the truth.

Within this context, where local circumstances for journalists differ greatly from that of
their counterparts in the global North, the question of a universal media ethics becomes
problematic. Within these structural issues impacting journalism ethics in Africa,
individual journalists search for guidelines that would help them meet their
responsibility toward their public within their particular set of local demands and conditions. Nevertheless, many African journalists have been taught to rely on ethical frameworks derived from the global North—even if these frameworks are ill suited for local realities. Nyamnjoh (2005, p. 87) puts it as follows:

> It is hardly surprising, therefore, that when asked about journalism or its ethics, African journalists would immediately reproduce what they have gathered from books on the matter. Most codes of ethics and professional values adopted in the continent are heavily inspired by Western codes or Western-derived international codes, and dwell on ethical issues of relevance to Western concerns in the main.

The process of globalization of journalism ethics (Wasserman & Rao, 2008) means that these Northern/Western values could be appropriated by African journalists and given specific content within the new context which might differ from their original intention. Such an appropriation takes place within training courses, self-regulatory bodies of journalists, and media institutions when African journalists negotiate supposedly universal values such as independence and objectivity within particular circumstances such as hardship and poverty that mitigate against a simplistic takeover of ethical principles that had been developed elsewhere (see Ndangam [2006] for a discussion of such negotiation around the practice of "gombo"—the acceptance of kickbacks and rewards—in Cameroon).

This does not mean a wholesale rejection of theories deriving from the West, nor a homogenized treatment of African journalism as if it were a monolith without vast differences between countries, regions, and news industries. It does mean that the relations between the global and the local in a globalized, highly mediated contemporary world should be scrutinized, and that a contraflow of indigenous African perspectives on media ethics should be recognized in scholarly work on media ethics,
which is dominated by perspectives from the global North. A theoretical model such as the one suggested in this article can therefore at best be provisional and would rely on a critical dialectic with journalism scholars and practitioners in Africa in order to widen its perspective and evaluate its applicability within given practical contexts. What follows is an exploration of the various theoretical perspectives that might be represented in such a discussion.

Section 1: A Tri-level Theory of Ethics

As we insist on an international, cross-cultural, gender inclusive, and ethnically diverse ethics, a foremost challenge is the structure of theory itself. Rigor in and agreement regarding theory formation will enable us to work fruitfully in the transnational mode. A universal theory is not just a system of conduct binding on all rational creatures, the content of which is ascertainable by human reason. Theories of ethics that are credible transnationally are ontological instead, constitutive of our humanness. The critical issue at this juncture of history is the nature of theory. A tri-leveled theory is the centerpiece of a new generation of communication ethics, one that is presuppositional, principial, and preceptual.

Presuppositions

This theoretical world is grounded in first beliefs. We are inescapably committed to presuppositions. As Aristotle established for all thinking beings, infinite regression is impossible. All human knowledge must take something as given. Theories of ethics arise from and explicate our fundamental beliefs about the world. A faith commitment is the very condition through which human cognition is intelligible.
Presuppositional epistemology embodies what Polanyi (1968) calls tacit knowledge. The foundations of our knowing are deeply interiorized. As we integrate particulars, we do not understand them externally but, nonetheless, make value judgments regarding them. When scientists discover new knowledge and accept these discoveries as true, they become committed to them and thereby embody them in their beliefs.

Positivists have been fundamentally mistaken for over a century in believing that tangible particulars offer a true conception of things. Anything explicit presupposes a fund of inexplicit knowing. Biological experimentation on frogs, for example, is impossible unless our tacit knowledge identifies the animals' frogness. Language is recognized as meaningful or it could not be spoken. No news story can be written without a fund of tacit knowledge about the ways humans are not machines receiving data or animals who communicate by signals. Whether someone is a capitalist or a socialist, tacit knowledge of money as economic exchange is essential.

Tacit understanding is not merely an imperfect version of its explicit counterpart. It is not like alchemy, awaiting the liberation of chemistry. In fact, tacit thought is indispensable to all knowing. Thus Polanyi (1968) answers the *Meno*'s paradox, in which Plato made solving problems an absurdity: either you know what you are looking for and then no problem exists, or you do not know what you are looking for and therefore will not recognize it should you discover it. Tacit knowledge, however, intimates something hidden that may yet become manifest. As Polanyi (1968, p. xi) summarizes his argument: "Thought can only live on ground which we adopt in the service of a reality to which we submit." Interpretation is a constituent feature of our humanness, and this cognitive capacity is directed by the primordial. Thinking begins with core beliefs, though human knowing is not restricted by them. Ricoeur (1967, pp.
observes that even philosophers search for an intellectual starting point that carries with it presuppositions to orient their search.

Cartesian rationalism and Kant's formalism presume that theories exist without starting points, contingencies, or worldviews. Presuppositional epistemology does not. For those who recognize the pre-theoretical conditions of knowledge, worldviews are ineluctable, not accidental. Worldviews are the gyroscopes around which thinking and experience revolve, our ultimate commitments at the core of our being. Knowing the humanistic worldview behind democracy and the materialist worldview behind Marxism enables us to understand the political order more astutely. Worldviews give meaning to our consciousness. They represent a set of basic beliefs about human destiny. Religious rituals, ceremonies, and heroism usually make sense to outside observers when the presuppositions behind them are explained. Presuppositions are *sine qua non* in retheorizing moral theory. Absolutes constructed in modernism have failed as universals because they did not take seriously the complexities and richness of the presuppositional. Theorists did not recognize that their categorical imperatives were loaded with beliefs about society and culture, and not pure truth understood in exactly the same way by all rational beings.

**Principles**

The principial is a constituent feature of a theory of ethics that is credible, universal, and futuristic. But this is true only for principles of a specific kind. In the theoretical model of ethics under construction here, principles are not foundational a prioris or metaphysical givens, but propositions about human existence.

Principles are embedded existentially, and they integrate and interpret knowledge without jettisoning natural settings. Principles are a reflexive strategy that turns the ethnographic and
theoretical back into each other. This is an epistemology of grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). These principles yield meaningful portraits, and not statistically precise formulations derived from artificially fixed conditions. They are protonorms that hold our conceptual worlds together.

Theorizing is redefined not as an examination of external events, but the power of the imagination to open an inside perspective on reality. In its understanding of truth, for example, the mainstream media have defined this concept in objectivist terms. Centered on human rationality and reflecting the scientific method, the facts in news have been said to mirror reality. The aim is true and incontrovertible accounts of a domain separate from human consciousness. Truth is defined as accurate representation of reality and impartial reporting of neutral data. However, truth, in the tri-level model presented here, means to get to the core, the essence, the nub of the issue. A truthful account puts events in their context of meaning. In Descartes' mathematical reasoning, the mind alone knows. But here no truth is independent of human beings as a whole. No hard line exists between facts and interpretation, but interpretive sufficiency is the standard. A tapestry of truth is woven from inside the attitudes, culture, and language of the people and events being covered. The reporters' frame of reference is not mathematics, but an inside picture that gets at the heart of the matter.

Principles are not *ex nihilo*. They are not conceptually immaculate, arising out of nothing. Principles are not abstract theorems, noncontingent and decontextual. Instead they are oppositional claims about the world. We identify niches and inconsistencies and conundrums in existing conventions, and theorize how to start over intellectually. Einstein did not formulate $E = mc^2$ in purity, but in opposition to Newtonian physics.
Chomsky's transformational linguistics is contrary to Skinner's behaviorism. Feminist theory contradicts Locke's individualism. Qualitative research opens up worlds closed by the stimulus-response model.

This perspective situates principles as normative phenomena within culture and history. This intellectual strategy shifts transcendental criteria from a metaphysical and vertical plane to horizons of community and being, but transnational principles they remain, nonetheless.

In this view, we possess an irrevocable creative imagination, the unusual capacity to interpret experience, evaluate action, and transmit such to public discussion. Symbols open up reality by making the invisible perceptible. Within the broad constraints of our natural existence, human beings grasp their own outline and implant intelligent systems for themselves. As a species, by definition, humans need food, clothing, housing, and medical care. Skins as covers, domiciles, and raw meat are not given and used by instinct. Within the givenness of the natural order, humans meet their basic needs in different ways, but always in terms of the reality that belongs to everyone defined as a human being (Nussbaum, 2000). People shape their own view of reality and we are under obligation to take each other's cultural worlds seriously. But this fact does not presume that reality as a whole is inherently unstructured until it is shaped by human language. A world that exists as a given totality forms the presupposition of historical existence. This coherent whole is history's source, its beginning, and the intelligible order that makes history intelligible. From a realist perspective, we discover truths about the world that exist within it. To assert that humans are moral beings is not a linguistic construction, but realism—a discovery about a crucial dimension of human beingness. The electromagnetic spectrum has existed as long
as planet earth, even though it was not discovered until the late nineteenth century. Normative principles, though embedded in history, entail realism.

**Precepts**

The third dimension of anti-rationalist theory is precepts. Not a linear next step, that is, application, but one constituent of a composite—precepts.

Within a dualism that has been trapped in rationalism since the Enlightenment, ethical theory is to media ethics as theoretical physics is to engineering or as microbiology is to medical practice. The connections between pure and applied ethics are normally construed in these one-dimensional terms—first theory and then application to professional conundrums. Reasoning in ethics is similar to deductive logic: first and independently we comprehend the rules, prescriptions, and doctrines, and then secondarily apply them to specific issues and specialized domains. This dualistic view highlights the rational decision making that dominates mainstream journalism, medicine, and law while obscuring the presuppositional underpinnings of ethical principles. Plato has convinced us apparently that if B depends on A for its existence, then B is inferior, and that generic knowledge is superior to the knowledge of particulars. However, for our triangulated model, the theoria-praxis relationship is not linear but dialectical and immensely complicated. Rational calculation and impartial reflection are replaced by our experience with moral issues in everyday life and our interactions with what we have learned as the good.

In Noddings's (1984, pp. 2-3) terms, an ethics that concentrates on deriving conclusions from theories hierarchically is "peripheral to or even alien to, many
problems of moral action. . . . Moral decisions are, after all, made in real situations; they are qualitatively different from" solving problems in mathematics. For Carey (1987), treating ethics as a formal system leaves the character of and rationale for the press untouched. A journalism ethics as rules "seems to me to be beside the point." While preoccupied with rules about gifts, junkets, conflicts of interest, sensationalism, and unattributed sources, "the entire structure of professional life" is accepted as a given. An ethics of journalism driven by prescriptions and codes "often seems to be a cover, a means of avoiding the deeper questions of journalism as a practice, in order to concentrate on a few problems in which there is general agreement." A formalist ethics of rules and procedures will not "solve the real problems of journalism. In fact, those problems cannot be solved" in this format. They can only be resolved by "a new way of conceiving what journalism is and how one ought to go about it" (Carey, 1987, pp. 6, 16).

In the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle limits the heavy rationalism of Socrates and Plato in his description of virtuous action. *Hermeneia* belongs to the higher and purer operations of the mind but is not just theoretical knowledge (*episteme*); nor is it technical skill (*techne*) since it concerns more than utility. *Hermeneia*. Practical wisdom. *Phronesis*. Making a moral decision entails doing the right thing in a particular situation and the concrete needs interpretation. Aristotle confirmed an orienting process beyond instinct yet differing from *episteme*, that is, moral discernment. While he speaks with a Greek cadence, it concerns a universal modality—a dimension that transcends Greek culture to our own time, one without which humans are not human (Shin, 1994, pp. 79, 215-219).
Phronesis is the capacity to relate widely agreed upon values to the practical contexts of everyday decision making. It is not methodological proceduralism—putting theories into practice to gain desired effects. Practical wisdom fuses norms and contexts into one another; dialectically it weaves particulars into a harmonious unity with norms. Moral discernment is not mysterious flashes of lightning as much as submersion into actual traditions, beliefs, languages, and practices.

The domain of precept entails pluralism. Citizenship in a complicated world requires multileveled and multidimensional thinking and phronesis enables it. Diverse and sundry applications of common principles enrich the public sphere. Instead of a unitary Other dominating the political order, decision making is decentralized and a mosaic of people groups influences the social conditions under which they live. The aim in a robust preceptualism is a public made up of publics. Nation-states are polycentric, not an aggregate of individuals under an external standpoint. Within our geographical spaces, the precept expands our framework for debating differences. When various applications of a unifying principle are represented and assessed, a larger universe of discourse emerges in the search for compromise, or a new perspective altogether comes into being, or cooperation continues even with persistent disagreement.

Coherence

This theory of ethics is systemic, and to be credible systems must be coherent. The specificatory precepts are not independent of the more fundamental principle. We can unreflectively presuppose, but if the presuppositions of ethics are true, there is strong antecedent probability that the substance of ethics is also true. Haphazard reasoning from presuppositions or toward precepts may discredit not only the constituents but the
theory as a whole. Internal unity recommends it. Specific precepts ought to be derivable from underlying principles in that the former incorporates the latter. If a moral theory in three dimensions is ultimately to be upheld, "its presuppositions must be validated in appropriate independent inquiries" (Donagan, 1977, p. 233). Practical reason floating in self-made boundaries has no moral leverage. Given the dynamic nature of the triple model, "reflective equilibrium" is a better term than "coherence."

In tri-level epistemology there is no necessary correspondence between cultural phenomena. Phenomena need to be understood in their articulations. We articulate how our experiences map onto ideologies, our political and social lives. In communication ethics, we articulate practices and moral claims to the normative principles they imply, and such normative claims to the worldview or presuppositions on which they are based. Humans live by interpretations. Systems of meaning and value are produced as a creative process. We are born into an intelligible and interpreted universe, and we use these interpretations creatively for making sense of our lives and institutions. The ethicists' primary obligation is getting inside the way humans arbitrate their presence in the world, and, therefore, the presuppositions of human existence are the centerpiece of ontological ethics.

While the preoccupation here is the form of credible universals, an illustration of coherent content will demonstrate how reflective equilibrium integrates the three dimensions into an organic whole. One widely regarded nonrationalist theory of universal media ethics has holistic humans as its presupposition, the universal sacredness of life understood as the golden rule for its principle, and the three major precepts entailed by the principle and presupposition; and feeding back into the principle are human dignity, truth telling, and nonviolence.
As a presupposition, humans are understood to be an indivisible whole, a vital organic unity with multisided moral, mental, and physical capacities. The body, mind, and spirit are unalterably linked and live in concert with one another. Deeper than technical strategies for teaching moral codes to professionals is the profound educational need to awaken our inner being to the higher vision. This is a way of knowing that is nonconceptual or preconceptual, one in which the inner powers of our basic humanity are released. In Taoism this is Tian—an unseen power that leads the world's creatures in a harmonious way. The human species is not simply a biological or psychological entity, but spiritual beings seeking expression within the physical and cultural worlds. Human beings belong to a supersensible world of soul and spirit that always surrounds them while animating them. An ethic is rooted in our whole being—body, mind, and spirit. Ethics' vitality depends on the interconnectedness of life and ultimately exposes us to the larger imaginary of what it means to be humans inhabiting the cosmos.

Holistic humans as beings-in-relation live within and bring to expression the sacredness of life, elaborated as a norm in terms of the golden rule. From a religious perspective, almost all discussions of a common ethics refer to the golden rule as a guide for morally appropriate action. Küng (1990, ch. 5) is one prominent scholar who believes that all the great religions require observance of something like, "Do to others as you would have them do to you." In monotheistic religions it becomes "love you neighbor as yourself." In Confucianism, others are to go the way we would ourselves desire. Acting toward others as we wish others to treat us is clear, unarguable, and the intuitive way to live harmoniously in the human world. It proceeds from an
understanding of human dignity—we regard others as basically like ourselves. Thus when followed, it produces a community of good will.

Precepts in formal terms include all duties to self and to others and to human institutions. In this illustration of a coherent theory, the presupposition of holistic humans and the golden rule as principle yield such precepts as human dignity, truth telling, and nonviolence. They are entailed by reflective equilibrium, and even as the presupposition and principle invoke them and are inscribed in them, the precepts feed into the whole. Nonviolence, not merely as a political strategy but a public philosophy, is a nonnegotiable imperative to live in peace, rooted in holistic humanness and the golden rule. Humans-in-dialogue require that nonviolence be normative. The golden rule presumes human dignity in its formulation and execution. Without the presumption of truth, society is impossible. Authenticity in communication is affirmed across the communication spectrum—interpersonal, between first peoples, the media professions, and human institutions.

*Scientific Theories*

The ontological holism of the presuppositional-principial-preceptual theory that is proposed here is radically opposed to mainstream scientific naturalism. This theoretical trilogy is contrary to the unilateral model of Descartes, the architect of the Enlightenment mind. For Descartes, the essence of the self is rational being.

Descartes insisted on the noncontingency of starting points, unconditioned by circumstance. His *Meditations II* presumes clear and distinct ideas, objective and
neutral. And his *Discourse on Method* (1637) elaborates this objectivist notion in more
detail. Genuine knowledge is built up in linear fashion, with pure mathematics the least
touched by circumstances. The equation $2 + 2 = 4$ is lucid and testable, and all valid
knowledge in Descartes' view should be as cognitively clean as arithmetic.

As the eighteenth century heated up around Cartesian rationality, Kant (1724- 1804)
was schooled in Descartes, mathematics, and Newtonian physics. In 1755, his first
major book, *Universal History of the Nature and Theory of the Heavens*, explained the
structure of the universe exclusively in terms of Newtonian cosmology. Then, in the
*Critique of Practical Reason* (1788) and *Groundwork of the Metaphysic of Morals*
(1785), Kant assimilated ethics into logic. He demanded that moral laws be universally
applicable and free from inner contradiction. Society was presumed to have a
fundamental moral structure embedded in human nature as basic as atoms in physics,
with the moral law the analog of the unchanging laws of gravity. Through the mental
calculus of willing an individual's action to be universalized, imperatives emerge
unconditioned by circumstances. Moral absolutes are identified precisely in the rational
way syllogisms are divided into valid and invalid.

This is a correspondence view of truth, with an extremely narrow definition of what
counts as ethics. Instead of prizing care and reciprocity, for example, moral
understanding becomes prescriptivist, arid, and absolutist. For ethical rationalists with
single-strand theories, the truth of all legitimate claims about moral obligation can be
settled by formally examining their logical structure. Humans act against moral
obligations only if they are willing to endure the illogic of self- contradiction. In
contrast to tri-level ethics, modernity's confidence in the power of reason produces
ethical principles that are considered the same for all thinking subjects, every nation, all epochs, and every culture.

This ethical formalism has been the dominant paradigm in communication ethics. In mainstream professional ethics, an apparatus of neutral standards is constructed in terms of the major issues practitioners face in their everyday routines. The influential theory—utilitarianism, for example—presumes one set of considerations that is applied consistently and self-consciously to every choice. As a single-consideration theory, it not only demands that we maximize general happiness but considers irrelevant other moral imperatives that conflict with it, such as equal distribution. Since the origins of this model from Mill (1843, 1859, 1861), neutrality is seen as necessary to guarantee individual autonomy, and through autonomous reason, principles and prescriptions are established as the arbiters of moral disputes. This commitment to neutrality made utilitarian ethics attractive for its compatibility with the canons of rational calculation. Rational processes create basic rules of ethics that everyone is obliged to follow and against which all failures in moral duty can be measured.

Ontological-Linguistic

In terms of this intellectual history, Gadamer (1900-2002) identifies the modern philosophical crisis as the contradiction between objectivist dogmatism and subjectivist relativism. The theory of morality in three dimensions proposed herein follows this hermeneutical pathway out of the dilemma:

Gadamer's hermeneutics replaces the foundationalist conception of knowledge with the idea of understanding. The hermeneutical idea of understanding is very
different from a scientistic formulation which is based on the logic of mathematics. . . . Gadamer shows that human understanding must be viewed neither dogmatically nor relativistically, but rather dialogically. . . . He develops hermeneutics into a grand philosophical project which aims to explicate understanding as the mode of human existence. (Shin, 1994, pp. 36, 41, 43)

The essence of understanding is not individualistic and subjective rationality, but interactive dialogue through which humans engage each others' cultures and make collaborative praxis possible. Subjectivity is not understood as Cartesian consciousness or self-identity, but our interpretation of a world already meaningful to us.

This meaningfulness comes not from individual acts of speaking subjects but from language itself as the medium of our historical existence. The dialogic nature of the language experience and the multiplicity of languages do not, how- ever, imply relativity. Instead, they only demonstrate that "our verbal experience of the world has the capacity to embrace the most varied relationships of life" (Gadamer, 1989, p. 448). Understanding is not first of all a human operation governed by rules and procedures, but the "basic structure of our experience of life." Our world orientation is a primordial givenness that we cannot reduce to anything simpler or more immediate (Gadamer, 1970, p. 87).

For Gadamer (1989), theory is embedded in life and is borne along by it. In this alternative, our theorizing seeks to disclose the fundamental conditions of our mode of existence. He calls this broad inquiry "ontological," or it could be labeled "the ethics of being." In other words, tri-level theory represents the ontological domain of human understanding. Language situates our being in the world. Language is all-encompassing, a natural ability across the human race, and language covers the entire
arena of understanding. As with Heidegger, natural language, rather than the artificial language of logic and method, is the way of truth for Gadamer (Shin, 1994, p. 67). As Gadamer puts it:

Language is not just one of man's possessions in the world; rather, on it depends the fact that we have a world at all. . . . Language has no independent life apart from the world that comes to language within it. Language has its real being only in the fact that the world is presented in it. Thus, that language is originally human, means at the same time that man's being in the world is primordially linguistic. (Gadamer, 1989, p. 443)

The ontological-linguistic paradigm opens a pathway for universals and diversity embedded in each other.

Humans are the one species constituted by language. In mainstream epistemology since Locke and Descartes, the self is a "first-person singular . . . disengaged from embodied agency and social embedding" (Taylor, 1995, p. 60). In this view, human agents use language to engage the world outside, with meaning understood as the ways things are depicted. The subject is first of all a mind, "an inner space, capable of processing representations" (p. 60). Rather than seeing human agents separated from the representational domain, our understanding itself is embodied, with the lingual interpretation of ourselves and our experience defining the character of human beings as such.

In Cassirer's *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms* (1953-1957, 1996), humans have no static nature in itself, only history. We know ourselves through our symbolic cultural expressions. No inherent principle defines our metaphysical essence, nor is any inborn faculty or instinct ascertained by empirical observation. As compared with other animals, humans exist in a dimension of reality of their own making. They do not live
in a merely physical universe nor confront reality face-to-face. In creating language and culture through what is given them as their beingness, humans open up a dimension of reality not accessible to other species. We cannot look through language to determine what really occurred, but live at those points where meaning is created in language. Language does not merely reflect reality from the outside; recomposing events into a narrative ensures that humans can comprehend reality at all. Words derive their meaning from the interpretive, historical context humans themselves supply.

"Language is only the locus for the articulation of an experience which supports it" (Ricoeur, 1973, p. 162). Language is the matrix of humanity and, therefore, is inescapably communal, the public agent through which human identity is realized. The social and personal dimensions of language are woven into a unified whole.

With our humanness constituted by language, the Ghanian philosopher Kwasi Wiredu enables us to understand how human beings rooted in native culture are transcultural, too. His philosophy of language is anthro-ontological and provides a theoretical argument for integrating universalism with particularism consistent with the triangular model. In his words, "human beings cannot live by particulars or universals alone, but by some combination of both." Their incompatibility in philosophy and anthropology is illusory. "Without universals intercultural communication must be impossible," while our natural formulations are in the vernacular (Wiredu, 1996, pp. 9, 1).

Wiredu's argument can be summarized this way: All 6,500 known languages are equally complex in phonemic and phonetic 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 speakers of other languages.

In Wiredu's terms, as cultural beings we are sympathetically impartial to other cultures. "Human beings do have a basic natural sympathy for their kind," the difficulty being that "this sympathy is often quite sparse and . . . easily extinguishable" (Wiredu, 1996, p. 41). Universals, therefore, are not epistemic, but a mosaic of cultural habitats that we engage sympathetically and impartially at the same time. One's solidarity with the human race is activated by intracultural engagement, but when humans are defined as linguistic-cultural beings, there is not individuated subjectivity. We embrace an Other with deep personal sympathy, and simultaneously universalize impartiality—wishing conceptually that the whole human race were like the Other, and defining the Other as the universal idea.

Possible Consensus

In summary, various philosophies and religions will disagree fundamentally on their presuppositions about the human, reality, and knowing. But consensus on principles may be possible around the golden rule. Despite their enormous differences in presuppositions, for example, a vast variety of religions require observance of something like loving your neighbor as yourself.

On the preceptual level, one can enter the hermeneutic circle through these precepts and find universal agreement on this level, too. We can reach transnational commonness on a precept such as human dignity, for example, despite differences over presuppositions and principles. In monotheism, humans are created in the
image of God and therefore sacred. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights by
the United Nations General Assembly in 1988 recognizes the inherent dignity and
inalienable rights of all members of the human family. In Latin America, insisting
on cultural identity is an affirmation of the unique worth of the human species.

This triangular theory is normative ethics and not metaethics. Normative
ethics orient our lives within cultural formation. Normative ethics do not fall prey to
the fallacy of rationalistic ethics, where reason determines both the genesis and the
conclusion. In a normative ethics of this sort, the domain of the good is not
extrinsic, calibrated by formal rules that autonomous moral agents must apply
consistently and self-consciously to every choice. Moral theory in three dimensions
enables a new generation of communication ethics, one that is theoretically credible,
transnational, and intercultural.

Section 2: Global Theory and Invention

Invention

Section 1 puts forward a theory that requires a shift in how we think and dialogue
about ethics. This three-dimensional theory is rooted in a rich and holistic view of
humans as relational and communicative. Ethics is not a set of a priori principles
imposed from above by a purely rational mind. Rather, ethics should emerge out of the
lived experience of humans in dialogue. Without such a reorientation in ethical
thinking, we are prevented from adopting new and more constructive approaches to the
development of global media ethics.
This section addresses a major question about this reorientation. Is the three-dimensional approach compatible, in principle, with the fact of change in our ethical values across time and culture? How does the theory understand invention and construction in ethics and elsewhere? This is a question about the explanatory power of the theory—what it can incorporate within its structure.

A theory of ethics that speaks to all humans does not deny human diversity or the diversity of ethical values and ethical experiences. It is not a fixed and dogmatic theory which denies that our ethical understanding cannot be changed or improved. How we articulate our humanness, our "universal being," and what it entails now and in the future, is an open-ended question that encourages enlargement of our ethical understanding and moral consciousness. Talk of a human nature or of fundamental presuppositions does not freeze the content of ethics or abandon the need for ethical inquiry. In fact, the opposite is true. The theory outlined above is able to explain the fact of diversity and guide inquiry because of its conception of universals and its tri-level structure.

The idea of human nature at the heart of the theory includes both our biological and cultural identity. It includes the notion that these identities can and have been expressed in different ways under different conditions. Our humanness, whether understood as basic capacities or basic forms of human relations, expresses and "realizes" itself in many ways. Therefore, the theory leads us to expect that human history will exhibit a variety of ethical values, and a variety of ways of interpreting principles and precepts. The theory leads us to expect that Wiredu's linguistic basis for
cognitive, communicative, cultural, and ethical universals will express itself in multiple ways across the globe and across time.

Our notion of humanness encompasses a dialectic between the universal and the particular. The idea of "universals realizing themselves" refers to a process that is immanent and dialectical, occurring within our world and our lived experience. "Realization" is not to be understood as the imperfect instantiation here and there of examples of transcendent ideas or forms. To the contrary, the universal and the particular are inseparable. We see the universal through the particular and the particular through the universal. We are reminded of Aristotle's notion (Aristotle, 1976, pp. 207-211, 1139b18-1141) that we grasp the universal through intuitive engagement with particulars. The theory encourages us to think difference and commonality at the same time.

We should not be surprised by the existence of both agreement and disagreement on ethical values. We should expect humans as a species to share some values because they live in a common world; face similar physical, social, and ethical problems; share cognitive and emotive capacities; and share a genetic inheritance. Given this commonality, it is likely that humans in different cultures will agree on ways of responding ethically to situations, such as agreement on the value of human life, prohibitions against lying, and praise for promise keeping. However, differences in culture and other conditions also lead us to expect differences. Yet the variety of ethical values and value systems does not show that a universal theory is impossible. Instead, these value systems are viewed as different expressions of ethical universals in different places, times, and cultures. We explain universals by deeper facts about the
nature of humans. Exactly at what level we find these universals is a matter for debate and investigation. One may seek these universals in fundamental human experiences, in the presuppositions of human communication or reasoning, or in the nature of the world, or God. Or, one may seek universal values across cultures, in human rights treaties and elsewhere.

The ethical theory of this article allows for variability on a number of levels. When someone points out a difference in ethical belief, the theory prompts us to ask at what level this difference is manifested. Is it a difference at the level of precept, such as the application within journalism of the precept of news objectivity to a particular context or type of story? Or it is a difference in the interpretation of first principles, or even presuppositions? The theory reminds us to ask whether the difference is a difference in the nonethical values of etiquette or social custom. The structure of the theory allows us to clarify discussions around ethical differences.

Therefore, by allowing for diversity, the theory incorporates the notion of invention. But what else can the theory say about invention? At what level does it consider invention to occur—at the level of presupposition, principle, or precept? The theory recognizes that invention can and does occur on all three levels, and in addition, across the many domains of ethics. A cursory review of ethical history shows that invention has occurred at all levels. Consider the following ethical inventions across history: St. Paul's notion that Christ's message was not just for Jews but also for Gentiles; the ancient Stoic notion of a universal brotherhood of humanity; the movement against slavery in the nineteenth century; the idea of a neutral International Red Cross between combatants and the idea of universal human rights; Ghandi's idea of nonviolent resistance; the enlargement of ethics to include the treatment of gay and lesbians, women, and animals.
On the level of professional ethics, invention is expected since the professions, and their conditions, are constantly changing and evolving. The past century has witnessed an astounding growth in codes of ethics, norms of "best practices" for medical practitioners, journalists, public relations personnel, lawyers, and accountants, and newly articulated principles for the ethical governance of institutions. Within these domains, such as journalism ethics, we have seen the invention, rise, and decline of traditional principles, such as news objectivity and new stress on the transparency of editorial procedures. On a theoretical level, the same invention occurs. The history of ethical theory in the previous century saw the invention of many "meta" and "normative" theories from emotivism and constructionism to entire theories of justice and the human good. Invention, then, occurs at various levels of ethical experience, from concrete intuitions about what is right or wrong, such as racism, to the formulation of new principles of justice. Even the presuppositions of our worldview can be rearticulated or altered.

How does the theory outlined above conceptualize these facts about ethical invention? Ethical invention is regarded as a natural and inevitable part of our humanness, one of our fundamental capacities. Universal human nature is the ground from which invention proceeds. Invention is made possible by the capacity of our species to think critically and to respond to new conditions. Invention is the result of phronesis—the application of practical reason to the challenges of new contexts. Humans are moral agents in the midst of life on this planet, wrestling with issues that require decision, deliberation, and invention. Ethical invention is not unique. It is a form of creativity that occurs in other areas such as science, technology, politics, and art. Conceptual revolutions and reform happen in science. Sometimes invention
involves much systematization as, for example, Aristotle's invention of the science of logic.

Yet, ethical invention is not creation *ex nihilo*. It requires a background of basic human capacities and common needs. Invention benefits from well-conducted research into common values held by people, cultures, and codes. When we consider invention, we do not look into the solitude of our minds, but, rather, we look outward to the world. We investigate facts about shared values, facts about changing conditions, and facts about the common human condition; we examine existing literature. For example, Nussbaum (2006) develops universal principles for her cosmopolitan ethics by looking to common human capacities in different cultures.

What drives invention at any given time can be any number of several factors. It may be the felt inadequacy of existing ethical ideas in light of changing external conditions, or tensions between rival theories, or the experience of encountering a foreign way of living. For example, to live in a global world where humans have increasing impact on one another raises serious questions about the adequacy of our usual way of thinking about ethics of our obligations to others. Ethics, then, are practical, natural, and evolving.

As James (1956, p. 57) wrote:

> There is no such thing possible as an ethical philosophy dogmatically made up in advance. We all help to determine the content of ethical philosophy so far as we contribute to the race's moral life. In other words, there can be no final truth in ethics, any more than in physics, until the last man has had his experience and said his say.

The existence of invention, and the diversity of values that it causes, does not
refute an ethics of universal being properly understood, nor should it lead to ethical skepticism or relativism. Instead, the process of ethical invention should be incorporated into the structure of a universal ethics.

**Open-ended Human Nature**

In this view, we conceive of human nature as an open-ended set of capacities that allow humans to conduct what Mill called "experiments in living." We cannot know in advance what all the possibilities of humankind or human society are, or what we can be.

Aristotle was correct. At the core of human nature is potentiality, not just actuality. Present in any serious thought about human nature are not just established capacities but potential capacities and potentially new ends of action and of life. The world is open to humans and the future. Human nature itself is evolving and not fixed. Human nature is a remarkable set of evolved capacities that keep evolving. We have reached the stage where humans can play a part in altering their nature. Our human nature gives us the cognitive, technological, and other means to use that nature to release possibilities within us, to "produce" ourselves according to our conceptions and aims. Even the ends of life are not fixed. Humans can change and redefine their telos—what flourishing means. With the entry of self-conscious rationality into nature, humans became a species whose telos was not simply given or inherited.

My nature is not opposed to my freedom. To acknowledge that I have a nature is not to deny my freedom. Instead, my nature, with all of its capacities and potential, gives me the possibility of freedom. I am free to the extent that I know my nature and can use it to achieve my goals. Dewey (1994, p. 28) writes, "Nature's place in man is no less significant than man's place in
nature. Man in nature is man subjected; nature in man, recognized and used, is intelligence and art." Dewey's (p. xii) aim was to "elucidate nature in such a way that we would know how to be free in it, rather than be enslaved by it." Freedom is an achievement, a social product of self-control and the enlargement of existing values. To be free is to know what nature allows and affords and the cultivation of definite abilities. For Mill, humans differ from the rest of nature by their freedom to choose and to experiment. The bedrock value, as Mill (1965, p. 149) states in his *Autobiography*, is "the importance, to man and society . . . of giving full freedom to human nature to expand itself in innumerable and conflicting directions."

Therefore, a universal theory can and should take seriously a conception of ethics as evolving, as inquiry and exploration. We must constantly inquire into the adequacy of our views, especially at the edges of ethical discomfort. Rather than see change and evolution as threatening to the authority of ethics, it is better to understand and welcome invention and understand how change is best produced and evaluated in times of rapid change. It is perfectly possible that such a view has a place for universals as a ground for invention and critique.

Ultimately, it is a good thing that a global theory can take invention into account. A global media ethics does not yet exist, at least not in a complete and adequate form. Therefore, the content of a global media ethics will have to be constructed and therefore invented. So the issue is how to construct this ethics and whether this construction can or should be built upon a three-dimensional theory of universal being.

**Dialogue and Ethics**
So far, this section has argued that there is room for change and invention within this article's tri-level theory. It is now time to draw attention to another important aspect of this theory. The holistic and global perspective of our three-dimensional theory implies that it is crucially important how humans discuss ethical issues when they go about inventing or applying principles. A global ethics naturally studies the possibilities and constraints of ethical dialogue across cultures. It seeks to identify ways of discourse that promote its adherence to global principles and presuppositions. It uses these principles to frame the discussion and define the goals of discourse. A number of ways to dialogue and understand other cultures in ethical terms warrant mention at this point.

As noted above, ethical theory favors a form of reflective equilibrium that brings together presupposition, principle, and precept in a dynamic relationship. We attempt to maintain that equilibrium when we consider inventing or altering existing principles and precepts. However, how do these notions work when one is doing ethics across geographic and cultural borders? One possibility is to stress the idea of "sympathetic impartiality" as described above (Wiredu, 1996, ch. 3), wherein we seek to meet and understand Others in their wholeness and in the full context of their lives and traditions. One is sympathetic not in the sense of feeling sorry for someone else's plight, but in using one's full range of cognitive and emotive capacities to understand the Other. At the same time, one is impartial in the sense of being able to rationally and critically assess the beliefs, values, and conditions of people different from oneself. An ethics of universal being promotes sympathetic, open, and respectful dialogue across cultures by recognizing our common humanity. One also seeks to honor, in one's discussions, the principles of dignity, truthfulness, and nonviolence, among others.
An attempt to frame ethical discourse in this manner encounters many obstacles. A global ethics discourse requires a form of deliberation and expression that walks between various dangers and meets many challenges. One challenge is to define and practice a discourse that is rational and deliberative without being Western-centric in terms of the meaning of "rational" and "deliberative." Also, one must bear in mind that, practically speaking, cultures have many nonformal ways in which to express their values that do not necessarily exist in one's own culture, such as distinctive rituals and communal activities. Westerners must be vigilant not to impose their own values on discourse with non-Western cultures. Alternatively, the dialogue must avoid the mistake of allowing a stress on historical and cultural differences to justify non-Western speakers to fall back on an exclusive form of tribalism or a romantic view of ancient traditions. The dialogue should not deteriorate into the assertion of a cultural relativism that precludes criticism or simply adopts a general anti-West attitude. The challenge, at all times, is to keep in mind the presuppositions and principles of our global ethics that call on all speakers to recognize both differences and commonalities, and to see one another's problems as particular expressions of common human interests.

By remembering our commitment to a universal ethics, we are led, in ethical discourse, to seek advancement not just for the good of my tribe or culture. I also am motivated to discourse more fairly about the "human good" for all members of our species. The ultimate goal of ethical dialogue and action is to advance material, social, and political goods to secure a dignified and hopefully flourishing life for as many people as possible. The key to this approach is to adopt a cosmopolitan approach to life
and to ethics that recognizes all humans as part of a borderless moral community. As Appiah (1992, p. 136) states, about African identity, "We will only solve our problems if we see them as human problems arising out of a special situation."

Cosmopolitanism is a thesis about ethical identity and responsibility. Cosmopolitans regard themselves as defined primarily by the common needs and aspirations that they share with other humans. This cosmopolitan identity is more important to their sense of self and ethical identity than facts about their place of birth, social class, or nationality. In terms of responsibility, Brock and Brighouse (2005, p. 3) write that cosmopolitanism "highlights the obligations we have to those whom we do not know, and with whom we are not intimate, but whose lives touch ours sufficiently that what we do can affect them."

As a wide-ranging attitude, cosmopolitanism supports constructive cross-border ethical discourse in general or in domains such as news media. This is not a superfluous philosophical attitude. It is an attitude that is essential for the future of our common humanity on a small blue planet in deep trouble.

Dialoguing according to a global ethics requires that we offer others a critical form of "hospitality" (Silverstone, 2007). This hospitality invites others to speak and to represent themselves but not to evade critique. Nor does critical hospitality inhibit the desire to speak freely. Ethical discourse is not a form of politically correct and muted speech that avoids differences. Nor does ethical discourse consist only of soothing words. The goal of open-minded ethical dialogue and invention is not the cessation of all tensions and disagreements between humans. Ethical discourse's role is to explore fully and frankly both commonality and difference, and to understand that there may
always be tensions between individuals and cultures. Despite our best intentions, there continues to exist a certain instability and unresolved tension in our relations with other humans.

Nevertheless, despite these limitations, cross-cultural discourse inspired by global ethics can seek to address problems, inequalities, and persistent misunderstandings. It can seek to invent new principles and norms for cross-cultural cooperation. It can strive to narrow the scope of disagreements. It can look to identify deep sources of commonality by which to guide intersocial relations.

**Section 3: Global Ethics and the Postcolony**

Overnight the Negro has been given two frames of reference within which he has to place himself. His metaphysics or, less pretentiously, his customs and the sources on which they were based, were wiped out because they were in conflict with a civilization that he did not know and that imposed itself on him. (Fanon, 1977, p. 48)

The Martinique/French writer Fanon's above characterization of colonialism as an erasure of native epistemology is significant for our understanding of colonialism. Fanon writes later in his seminal book *Black Skin, White Mask* that in the native's "soul an inferiority complex has been created by the death and burial of its local cultural originality." Postcolonial criticism evolved with an acute consciousness of the "death" and "erasure" of the native's (in Fanon's case, Algerian and Caribbean) culture, ethics, and epistemology as created at first by conditions of direct colonial conquest and later by the forces of global modernity. The task of postcolonial criticism, as Bhabha (1994, p. 171) eloquently has stated, is to "bear witness to the unequal and uneven forces of
cultural representation involved in the contest for political and social authority within the modern world order."

Earlier sections of this article refocused discussion of media ethics—through a triple-level theory of presuppositions, principles, and precepts and the open-ended nature of objectivity and ethics of invention—on ways to theoretically redirect our attention to universalization as productively inclusive. In this section, we focus on the political, economic, and material nature of a global ethics and its relevance to discussions of global media and media's ethical practices. Postcolonial theory challenges the coercive universalism of the post-Enlightenment's notions of reason and the modernist-Eurocentric conceptions of universalism. Instead, it insists on the validity of local knowledge, the acknowledgement of difference, and a perspective on the global that includes the history of colonialism and its contemporary aftermath.

The postcolonial perspective, Bhabha (1984, p. 125) has argued, "departs from the traditions of the sociology of underdevelopment or dependency theories" in the sense that postcolonial criticism does not share the belief in the binarism of the North and South, the East and West; instead, "it forces a recognition of the more complex cultural and political boundaries that exist on the cusp of these often opposed political spheres."

Colonial rule, as Mudimbe (1989, p. 118) notes in his book *The Invention of Africa: Gnosis, Philosophy, and the Order of Knowledge*, was established and consolidated on the basis of "the domination of physical space, the reformation of natives' minds, and the integration of local economic histories into the Western perspective. These complementary projects constitute what might be called the colonizing structure, which completely embraces the physical, human, and spiritual aspects of the colonizing
experience." Mudimbe points to colonialism's capacity, as a totalizing and universalizing discourse, to subsume the epistemology, spirituality, and materiality of the native.

Before the 1980s there was no field of academic specialization that went by the name of postcolonial studies. Today, by contrast, postcolonial studies have come to occupy a position of legitimacy—and even privilege—within both the Euro-American and the Third World academy. The establishment of postcolonial studies as a disciplinary field, however, has largely been confined to departments of literature, history, art, geography, and anthropology. Very little of the issues addressed in postcolonial studies has entered dominant discourses of media studies or media ethics. Introducing issues that have concerned postcolonial theorists such as Bhabha (for instance, power, materiality, representation, and history) to global media ethics does not suggest, in Lazarus's (1999, p. 119) terms, "the end of the road for all universalistically conceived projects" of social, cultural, and political emancipation. The study of social, cultural, ethical, and political differences with the aim of finding common ground is unavoidably difficult, as Mohanty (1995) writes; yet it is by no means impossible. As Mohanty (p. 108) explains:

Contrary to relativists, who emphasize almost exclusively the extent to which cultures are distinct, different, and incommensurable, we can understand both differences and commonalities adequately only when we approach particular cross-cultural disputes in an open-ended way: vital cross-cultural interchange depends on the belief that we share a "world" (no matter how partially) with the other culture, a world whose causal relevance is not purely intracultural. . . . What emerges as an alternative to relativism and skepticism is thus a postpositivist conception of objectivity as a goal of inquiry that includes in its possibility of fallibility, self-correction and improvement.
While Mohanty takes to task the kind of postcolonial criticism that has been self-consciously avant-garde and overtly focused against building any universality, one must resist the relentless and almost irresistible tendency of universalization that one has seen in the evolution of global ethics and, subsequently, global media ethics, in recent years. The challenge to develop universals as they relate to global media is to integrate the thorny issues posed by postcolonial criticism in order to fully articulate the complexity of contemporary global media and its ethical practices. Only then would a rich, diverse, and broad-based global media ethics be allowed to emerge.

**Rupture and Globalization**

Recent world developments—most notable the global politico-economic restructuring of the years since the events of 1989—are taken to have marked a rupture of epochal proportions. The era of globalization, driven by unprecedented media interconnectivity, is upon us. Silverstone (2007, p. 5) describes media in the contemporary world as "environmental" in the sense that it is "increasingly mutually referential and reinforcive, and increasingly integrated into the fabric of everyday life." Often for media scholars, there is a tendency to romanticize our present, of what is happening now, with little emphasis on the continuum of history resulting in what Benjamin (1969, p. 10) has called the "dialectical leap in the open air of history." In theorizing about globalization or global media ethics, postcolonial theory enters with a severe stand against antihistoricism and presentism that the post or end not be seen as a putative transcendence or leaving behind but, on the contrary, to a consolidation of the
historical patterns of social, ethical, cultural, and political orders (Lazarus, 1999, p. 129). The current (structural, political, and economic) conjuncture is implicated and shaped by epistemological and historical determinants, as is the study of contemporary media and media ethics. In the opening lines of his book *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, Weber (1989, p. 12) sets up a problem: "A product of modern European civilization, studying any problem of universal history, is bound to ask himself to what combination of circumstances the fact should be attributed that in Western civilization, and in Western civilization only, cultural phenomena have appeared which (as we like to think) lie in a line of development having universal significance and value." Weber, of course, answers his own question by asserting the obviousness and integrity of the connection between Western civilization and rationality. Postcolonial theory takes issue with the (Weberian) collapse of Westernness with modernity, globalization, and rationality.

This is not to say that all attempts to find universals in media ethics are based on the premise of rational deliberation. Protonorms as an ontological basis for global media ethics can, therefore, provide a potential area for exploration that is not based in a (Western) conception of humans as primarily rational beings, but in a holistic view of humanness that cuts across cultural borders. However, the interpretation of these protonorms differs depending on the lived experience of subjects in different parts of the world.

One such experience that still persists in the collective memory of the former colonized and that would shape the way in which protonorms are understood in postcolonial settings is that of slavery. In his book *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and*
Double Consciousness, Gilroy (1993, p. 22) points to the "materiality of historical memory," especially in his astute analysis of slavery and its inherent link to the emerging condition of nineteenth-century modernity. Gilroy refutes the scholarly position of Western rationality as the fons et origo of modernity and globality. The task of theorizing the global condition, argue postcolonial scholars, must be linked to "after colonialism," in which postcolonialism is seen as precursor to our understanding of the modern or global. While globalization is not merely a continuation of colonialism as crude antiglobalization rhetoric would sometimes want us to believe, globalization cannot be understood outside of colonialism. The disparities and imbalances in global power relations in the era of accelerated globalization often map onto earlier patterns of domination and exclusion. For many subjects of the contemporary globalized world, their current conditions are not altogether dissimilar from the subalterns of colonial culture, since "the majority of the postcolonial subjects who live through the experience of globalization cannot speak" (Gikandi, 2001, p. 622). Modernization and globalization must, therefore, not only be linked to decolonization but decolonization must discard antiquated notions of a history-less, culture-less precoloniality that can only be translated through the prism of colonial/Western ethical and epistemological lenses. It is important to understand the globalizing features of world history, media practices, and human societies as not separate or distinct from colonial practices and anticolonial challenges.

Ideas and Power
Western realities have long had the power to realize themselves as general human conditions and travel the world over as dominant universal forms. The ability of the West to conceptualize and theorize its particular, organic empirical reality into a cognitive-epistemic formula on behalf of the entire world has posed a dire threat to other knowledges. As Radhakrishnan (1996, p. 40) writes, Western "epistemology either begins to speak for the human condition the world over or assumes a virtual reality to be devoutly wished for by the rest of the world." Critics argue that the study of ethics, including media ethics, has suffered from an overreliance on Western epistemology.

The cultural, political, and academic ghettoization of non-Western epistemology has led to the "myth of the West," where the autonomy of Western knowledge has been assumed (Abdel-Malek, 1981, p. 36). Ignored are years of creolization of knowledge systems where Western knowledge adapted, enunciated, and appropriated different and differentiated knowledge systems and beliefs in order to arrive at what we conceive to be Western. The repository and archive of Western ethics shared its rules found in different traditions. According to Nandy (1995, p. 21), colonization was a "shared experience" for those who have been colonized and those who have colonized. This means that colonized and colonizers share the language of colonialism and, therefore, the political project of decolonization remains a shared exercise rather than a one-directional rejection. Decolonizing knowledge (metaphysics, ethics, the sciences) must, then, include representing the Other, and their voices, in what is Western. European Enlightenment produced in the narrative of world history a positional superiority of the West as the universal self (rooted in individualism, egalitarian politics, secular science,
and advanced communication), which was representationally in constant opposition to the inferiority of the non-West (native, Other), whose knowledge was seen as rooted in hierarchy, savagery, the religious, and the barbaric.

The recent debates in humanities and social sciences (and among those studying global media) have been over theory: over which explanatory mechanism makes the most sense given the unprecedented changes that are upon us. Such theorizing is connected to questions of representation. How we theorize the global condition is connected to how we represent the globe. "Representation" is a term with multiple and sometimes confusing connotations. It has been used interchangeably with "meaning reproduction," "likeness," "the formation of an idea," "proxy," presence," or "a political speaking for." The manifold resonance has been taken up by postcolonial scholars such as Bhabha, Spivak, and Said. In Spivak's (1988, p. 274) use of vertreten, it has come to denote "to tread in someone's shoes . . . your congressional person, if you are talking about the United States, actually puts on your shoes when he or she represents you."

She also uses Darstellung, in which representation implies "placing there."

Master narratives of modernity born in the context of European Enlightenment represented the premodern and precolonial in a narrow way as to deny them agency, political will, or "textured subjectivity" (Shohat, 1992, p. 99). Such limited scope for and of historically marginalized Others must be redressed in the current global order. Postcolonial criticism as an intellectual movement, driven by critiques of Eurocentrism and patriarchy, has involved pointing to scholars (in and outside the West) who have been culturally limited and tendentiously ignorant of many of the world's most consequential epistemological, spiritual, and artistic traditions.
What could, then, be the relevance of postcolonial criticism for global media ethics, especially if global media ethics are to be concerned with universal values? We believe that the discussion must proceed two ways: the first in representing the Other as ethics, and the second in representing the ethics of Others. Such a stance would be counterhegemonic in the way we represent what we say, write, or visualize about the Other and the way we integrate the (different, radical, marginal) ethics of the Other.

**Other as Ethics/Ethics of Others**

A global media ethics would have to consider the way that subjects who are diversely positioned in terms of culture, economic status, and political power enter and create media discourses. Media today have a global reach, and it seems that nobody can escape the surveillance of what Bauman refers to as the "artificial eyes" of global media (2001; also cited in Rantanen, 2005, p. 123). This new global landscape has far-reaching implications for coexistence and the relationship between the self and the Other:

> We live in a globalizing world. That means that all of us, consciously or not, depend on each other. Whatever we do or refrain from doing affects the lives of people who live in places we'll never visit. And whatever those distant people do or desist from doing has its impact on the conditions in which we, each one of us separately and together, conduct our lives. (Bauman, 2001)

Living in a globalizing world means being aware of the pain, misery and suffering of countless people whom we will never meet in person (Bauman, 2001). In the post-9/11 world, the Cold War has been replaced by a war that is more fluid (Silverstone, 2007, p. 18). Yet, the vocabulary of nationhood and religion, of good versus evil, indicate
"the continuing significance of the pre-Enlightenment in late modernity, of the sustained power of the religious and the mythic, long after it was supposed to be dead and buried" (Silverstone, 2007, p. 66). The global village we live in is increasingly "interdependent and fragile" (Tehranian, 2002, p. 59). The sense of interconnectedness has brought to the fore questions about the relation between us and others in terms of the constructions of sameness and difference, between proximity and distance, between notions of individual freedom and collective justice (cf. Silverstone, 2007, p. 18).

As we acknowledge the centrality of the media in the establishment, maintenance, and reconfiguration of relations between the self and the Other on a global scale, we should also remember that the absence of mediation is as much an indication of these global power relations as is its presence. This absence pertains both to material access to the means of mediation as well as to the forms of representation within the mediation that is taking place globally. We might live in the twenty-first century "mediapolis" (as Silverstone calls it), but not everyone is living at its center. Some are banished to its outskirts or are left outside the city walls. Silverstone (2007, p. 30) describes the problematic nature of the globalized mediated space:

If such a space exists and is becoming increasingly salient for the conduct of public life, then its inclusions and exclusions, systematic or otherwise, and its capacity to enable or disable public debate, are the key issues. And it becomes imperative, if we are to realize its potential, to understand both critically and constructively how it might be otherwise, as well as how it might be wise to the other. The metaphor of the media as a polis, as a global city, should, therefore, not be misunderstood as a neutral space.

As global media are increasingly controlled by big businesses, exerting commercial pressure on public and community media, those perspectives that are included are
starting to look alike. The few media behemoths controlling the world media markets are all based in the global North, with European, American, and Japanese conglomerates taking the most prominent places (Tehranian, 2002, p. 62). Voices from outside this oligopolic mainstream, including those from Africa, struggle to get heard in the din of global mass media—or at least to be heard in their own terms and not as speechless subaltern stereotypes (cf. Spivak, 1988, pp. 272, 279).

The reality of lived experience in the global South should make it clear that the media are not always and everywhere at the center of society (cf. Couldry, 2003; McMillin, 2007). The fact that large parts of the world are excluded from corridors of power in the mediapolis means they do not exist for those who live in more mediacentric societies (cf. Silverstone, 2007, p. 6). The eyes of the media might, in fact, not be everywhere, and when these eyes reach into the far corners of the globe, they see selectively. Accessibility to global media and media globally, and concomitantly, visibility in these media, then becomes an ethical issue. If the Other is to be represented as ethics, the means of that representation have to be interrogated critically.

It could, therefore, be said that a view of global media ethics that takes seriously postcolonial perspectives would foreground the history of ethical thought in non-Eurocentric terms. Thus, such a theory would seek to redress the contemporary inequalities of global media access and production in which certain voices are marginalized. Such global media ethics would be opposed to any one master narrative and recognize Others, Otherness, and difference as integral to any epistemological search.
Three trends

What are the dimensions of global media in the twenty-first century? The development of global media has manifested itself in three major trends (as identified by Tehranian, 2002), namely, transnationalization, tribalization, and democratization.

Transnationalization has meant the disembedding and re-embedding of cultural content across national borders. Examples of transnationalization are the presence of global media networks such as CNN in various nations, and the appropriation (and adaptation) of Western popular culture in non-Western locales.

Tribalization refers to the reaction to transnationalization by reasserting a localized cultural identity. This can take the form of essentialist claims to origins and roots, or the development of local media to counter the dominance of American or European media content. Localization could also be led by global media conglomerates that repackage content for local markets, and are, therefore, not always politically progressive but aimed at broadening audience appeal and maximizing profits.

Under the democratization of media, one could understand the potential for media, especially the development of new media, to foster global civil society, amplify resistance efforts, and open new channels of communication (Tehranian, 2002).

Each of these trends—transnationalization, tribalization, and democratization—has implications for the search of global media. Following Tehranian's (2002) typology of the dimensions of contemporary global media, various approaches to the ethical dimension of global media can be identified. One way of approaching global media
ethics is through the prism of transnationalization. If the search for global media ethics
is motivated by an attempt to globalize ethical principles that have already been
developed in a specific context but whose specificity is veiled through their appeal to
universalism, the global dominance of Northern (especially American and European)
media ethical frameworks will become further entrenched. This will prevent a real
ethics of Others to emerge and challenge dominant frameworks that have their origins
in the West.

A more crude response to the global-local power imbalance would be that of
tribalization. From such a perspective, politically charged appeals to tradition,
community, religion, and culture will collide with liberal individualist ethical
frameworks. Such engagement can include a rejection of ethical theories that have their
origins in the global North and appeals to romanticized versions of indigenous
knowledge frameworks. Such a counterreaction could, however, lead to cultural
relativism, new sets of exclusions, and ultimately, to the closing down of dialogue (see
Tomaselli, 2003, and Fourie, 2007). Such a tribalized media ethic that merely asserts
an ethics of the Other without striving to also view the Other as ethics by engaging in
dialogue with opposing viewpoints, will fail to address the complex moral dilemmas
stemming from increasing global interdependence. This is not to say that there are no
moments in the discussion of global media ethics where a "strategic use of
essentialism" (Spivak, 1990, p. 66) can be useful to assert a lesser heard point of view;
nor does it presume a level playing field upon which the mutual contestation of ethical
frameworks takes place. But a simplistic, tribalistic reversal of the global-local binary
can only hope to provide a short-term refocusing of attention, and cannot provide
lasting solutions. Ironically, this tribalization can be the result of an attempt to include perspectives from around the world toward the goal of arriving at a more inclusive global media ethics. Such a case study-approach to media ethics can also result in culturalizing ethics to the extent that difference is rendered static rather than dynamic, and indigenous cultural values are essentialized rather than viewed within their lived, everyday contexts.

While alternative traditions and value frameworks (for instance, ubuntu in the South African context; see Fourie, 2007, for a critique) need to be explored and entered into the discussion of global media ethics, this should be done with full cognizance of the changes and shifts that these concepts undergo over time and between contexts. A global media ethics that represents the Other as ethics and strives to explore the ethics of Others can only be feasible if it fosters the third trend in global media mentioned by Tehranian (2002), and that is democratization. But this concept should also be treated circumspectly. Media ethics codes usually rest on values that are taken to be the cornerstones of democratic communication, such as truth, objectivity and respect for human dignity. The majority of these codes have, however, been developed from a particular history and location, namely, in liberal Western democracies.

In the light of media globalization and the recognition that ethical values have to be found that are similarly universal in scope, attempts have been made to find values that are explicitly cross-cultural and to identify moral principles "that are universal within the splendid variety of human life" (Christians & Traber, 1997, p. viii). The notion of universal ethics, as Christians (1997a, p. 3) shows, has its roots in Western rationalist thought. Traditionally, it was the "logical structure" of moral prescriptions, not their
context, that ensured their legitimacy (p. 3). In the late twentieth century, however, the "paradigm of immutable and universal morality" has become generally discredited as belonging to the dominant gender and class (p. 4).

While postmodernism has critiqued the notion of grand narratives, other critical approaches have exposed the links between these grand narratives and institutions of power. Critical cultural studies have brought an awareness of the relationship between globalized Western grand narratives, formations, and consolidations of capital. Feminism has questioned the link between patriarchy and gender hierarchy within global institutions. Postcolonial criticism has unearthed the intricate links between discourses of modernity, exercise of imperial power, and decolonization. Developments in language theory, particularly deconstruction and poststructuralist semiotics, have problematized the idea of language as a stable and fixed system, making suspect such concepts as universal truths, intercontextual normativity, and rational knowledge of reality. The idea of an overarching universal values framework is criticized by postmodernist and deconstructionist thinkers who emphasize the fragmented and hybrid nature of contemporary cultural formations and view grand narratives with suspicion because they mask their alignment with Western, masculine, and racial powers (cf. Ang, 1998).

Indeed, Western culture and epistemology have experienced a crisis. "Trans-historical certitude has been replaced by philosophical relativism, that is, by the presumption that moral principles have no objective application independent of the societies within which they are constituted" (Christians, 1997a, p. 5). This state of affairs is intensified by the paradoxical counter-effect of the process of globalization,
namely, the assertion of the local in the face of the rapidly expanding global
(Christians, 1997b, p. 187). Regardless of all these developments that discredited the
atomistic liberal individualism inherited from the Enlightenment, this "classic liberal
commitment" to "individual rights and personal decision-making" has been
dominating the media agenda for decades, even though it has been recognized as
unsuitable for the contemporary "age of diversity" (p. 198). For this reason, the notion
of protonorms has been put forward as a way of rooting out universals in ontology,
rather than rationalist epistemology, with its roots in the Western tradition (Christians,
1997a).

Such an ontological approach could be accommodated within a postcolonial
approach, which would see universals in global media ethics emerging "from the
ground up, from the level of lived experiences rather than examining [them] from the
perspective of institutional power" (McMillin, 2007, p. 180). While scholars have
warned against too much emphasis on the experiential, Suleri (1992, p. 49) writes that
"realism is too dangerous a term for an idiom that seeks to raise identity to the power
of theory"; professional media practices (for example, day-to-day newsroom ethics) in
local contexts greatly correspond to global theory. The state, local structures of
patriarchy, history, rhetoric of race and ethnicity, language, and grounded traditions
and daily practices all texture how global media are accommodated and how ethical
decisions are made. Given the complexity of global media production and reception,
thecies of global media ethics must propose universals that would, according to Bahri
(2004, p. 282), not seek sameness (or acculturation, consensus, or simply, the end of
heterogeneity) but, rather, coexistence, or what she calls the "logic of adjacence." A
postcolonial approach to global media ethics would seek to situate universal norms within these everyday experiences, professional practices, and grounded traditions in locales outside of the dominant global North. Furthermore, these norms would be read critically against the background of history and within the contestations of contemporary power struggles. If the search for universal norms is conducted from a perspective that allows for these contestations to emerge, postcolonial theory would have made a contribution to a fuller and richer dialogue about global media ethics.

**Conclusion: Global Ethics and Journalism**

What are the implications of this article's approach for the ethical practice of journalism and similar forms of public communication? Further, we can ask: How might these theoretical issues and reconceptions change media ethics and journalism? The first general implication is that, if news media are to be guided by a universal ethics, then journalists need to reconceive their role as major players in cross-cultural discourse. This is true of journalism in Africa and elsewhere in the world. The first step is to reconsider journalists as active inquirers who should seek to provide nuanced and informed interpretations of their world, while being fully aware of the difficulties of representing others. Journalists need to recognize that, at the core of their identity, is the fact that they engage in active, purpose-driven inquiry. They search and interpret, verify and test, balance and judge. Journalistic inquiry proceeds through the construction of interpretations that are expressed as news reports, analysis, and commentary.
A global-minded journalism needs to see itself as an active inquiry that involves choice and selection. Journalists are also political actors who intervene in the production and making of stories. Journalists must be cognizant of their own political and material influences on the modes of production of news and the power they yield over what stories make news (and, subsequently, what stories don't). Journalists continually understand and critically assess their own location in the political, cultural, and social worlds. Such a contextual awareness will lead journalists to engage with the notion of universal media ethics from within their own set of sociocultural conditions, experiences, and value systems. This article has attempted to provide a broad theoretical framework within which such an engagement can take place.

The discussions in this article converge on the view that a global media ethics requires a much richer and sophisticated theoretical framework than hitherto developed for the ethics of communication and news media. Rather than simply posit universal propositions as standards that all public communicators must adhere to, the article advances the idea that a global approach must take seriously the contingency, history, dialogue, and local voices integral to the process of theorizing. The voices of African journalists are, therefore, very important in helping to shape universal media ethics through a process of dialogue, of which this article can only be seen as a modest starting point. The argument developed here is for a type of pluralism that expects diversity of opinions and epistemological differences. It believes that there can be—should be—room within a global ethics for ongoing search and cooperation, even when there is disagreement. True, there is the fact of ethical disagreement. Yet there is also the fact of human agreement and the ability of humans to transcend their current local
perspectives. Humans, it needs to be noted, have come to ethical consensus on
corelating fundamentals across history, from the condemnation of slavery and the importance of
basic human rights to the personhood and moral agency of women and the utter
incomprehensibility of the Holocaust. Such examples show that it is not useless,
unimportant, or absurd to seek an ethics that crosses the narrow confines of borders,
localities, and communities. Theory cannot remain only a negation; it must also be a
positive discourse that seeks to replace current structures and languages.

To seek commonality is not to pursue absolutism. The authors of this article do not
see their theory as singular or univocal. Instead, their reflections amount to a hopefully
fruitful proposal for how to proceed further in the construction of global ethics. All
theorists work within the *partiality* of all theories. Each theory by nature opens up only
part of a vast domain that we call the human world. Therefore, a theory will always
have its contestants and give us a partial worldview and explanation. By "partiality" we
do not imply the unknown but, rather, a position that allows for ambiguity and
slippage. Within the circumambient *episteme* of modernity, we argue, are moments of
salient universalisms (or protonorms) that defy coercive, Eurocentric explanatory
ethical paradigms. These universals do not represent the totality of all human and
ethical experiences or judgments but instead give us theoretical and methodological
protocols to seek epistemic connections.

The article addresses the most fundamental philosophical issues because the philosophical and
theoretical issues are among the greatest obstacles to advancing the project of global ethics. By
coalescing three theoretical positions, however distinct, the authors hope to expand the
discussions of media ethics and make it relevant for and to global journalism. Once an adequate
theoretical base is articulated, global media ethics can be applied to the many concrete and important issues of practice.

References


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**Notes**

1. This peer-reviewed article stems from a workshop on global media ethics hosted by the Stellenbosch Institute for Advanced Studies, South Africa, in November 2007.

2. This question is separate from the question of how we might evaluate new and invented ideas, or how humans might discuss and reconcile conflicting principles and inventions. The question of how to evaluate inventions and discuss differences in terms of critical understandings of ethical dialogue is discussed later in this section and in the next section.

3. Relativism usually arises from some interpretation of the fact of value diversity. Shomali (2001, p. 53) argues that the fact of diversity is used to justify "descriptive relativism"—the view that there are substantial ethical differences between cultures and time periods that "cannot be explained by absolutists." Fundamental differences are differences that are not the result of different applications of common values or
principles. A fundamental difference is where two cultures or time periods accept two contrary principles of conduct.

4 On cross-cultural values in communication, see Christians and Traber (1997).

5 The most conspicuous case of the human ability to change or control its nature is the development of scientific knowledge of the human genome and techniques to intervene in the genetic makeup of humans. See Habermas (2005, pp. 12-15).


7 For a recent collection of essays on journalism and global media ethics, see Ward and Wasserman (2008).