Communication Ethics: The Dialogic Turn[1]

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This essay engages a "community of memory" (Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler, and Tipton 152-155), revisiting the conversation of previous scholarship in communication ethics. Robert Bellah (1985) and Alexis de Tocqueville (1835/1969) in different historical moments outlined the importance of a community of memory. Within this commitment, we begin by revisiting Marie Hochmuth Nichols's 1977 *Central States Speech Journal* article, "When You Set Out for Ithaka …" in which she contended that there was no community of memory in the area of communication ethics inquiry.

> I do not believe that speech communication people are in a position to answer Derek Bok's question, 'Can Ethics Be Taught?' We have not seriously tried either directly or indirectly. We have not seriously studied the various systems of ethics; nor have we seriously studied social norms to which ethics is related. Idealism is not enough either in life or in communication books, nor are idealistic prescriptions. (150)

Nichols's chastisement called for attentive response to communication ethics scholarship. The discipline responded with original scholarship, summary articles, books, conferences, and organizations devoted to the study of communication ethics. This essay outlines how communication scholars answered and continue to answer Nichols's charge, "Where is the body of communication ethics scholarship?"

Introduction

This essay reviews a community of memory about communication ethics scholarship, updating Ronald C. Arnett's "The Status of Communication Ethics Scholarship in Speech Communication Journals from 1915-1985" and outlining the evolution of communication ethics scholarship: (1) identifying metatheoretical surveys of the literature, (2) engaging Kant's metaphor of "ought" (55) to understand communication ethics as a "good," and (3) reviewing scholarly journal articles addressing communication ethics categorized into six separate themes with a significant scholarly article serving as standard-bearer for each theme. This final contribution frames the theoretical and practical movement from a communication ethic to the postmodern reality of a multiplicity of communication ethics. The "dialogic turn" embraces this multiplicity of "goods," seeking to meet, learn from, and negotiate with difference. Communication ethics are central to the dialogic

process of negotiating contending social goods in a postmodern society, an era of narrative and virtue contention.

In an era defined by difference, it is not surprising that both prescriptive and descriptive understandings of communication ethics shape the discourse. Prescriptive imposition of communication ethics works from the assumption that a universal correction communicates a social good that redirects the other person, altering the "wrong" or unethical behavior. An ethical prescription imposed on the other omits the reality of differing standpoints. Prescriptive facilitation of communication ethics represents the move from a universal understanding of truth with the human as the temporal carrier of truth. A descriptive understanding of ethics responds to the communicative practices in place rather than imposed standards. This movement from a prescriptive to a descriptive understanding of ethics provides the theoretical substance of Alasdair MacIntyre's changing character types in *After Virtue*—from the priest who announces truth given *a priori* to his pronouncement to the therapist who assists an individual to describe his or her own values and practices. This essay recognizes the ongoing hegemony of prescriptive and descriptive studies of communication ethics, while outlining dialogic ethics as a third alternative—a turn responsive to a historical moment in which negotiating contending social goods in an era of narrative and virtue contention is normative communicative competence.

Once the Enlightenment presuppositions of paradigmatic stability, progress, and universal certainty collapsed as coordinates of normative agreement, the study of communication ethics became an effort of learning through dialogic engagement of the other. With the ground of universal certainty shattered, petite narratives provide mobility of ground that situates embedded agents, offering temporal footing for meeting and addressing the world, offering a temporal place for interpretive understanding in search of negotiated communication "habits of the heart" (Tocqueville 267).

The Communication discipline's concern for communication ethics reflects the pragmatic currency of ethical questions that emerge in an era of competing narrative and virtue structures. It would be difficult to find anyone unaware of the importance of ethics, from the collapse of Enron to ongoing war to repeated tragedies of violence in our public classrooms. Alasdair MacIntyre in *After Virtue* refers to the "moral calamity" (ix) of our time. This essay sees not a moral crisis but a dialogic opportunity for learning, which is the natural by-product of meeting difference.

Communication Ethics Scholarship

Public evidence documenting an ongoing record of accomplishment in communication ethics scholarship offers a community of memory that constitutes a story of varied approaches to communication ethics. This evidence includes the National Communication Association (NCA) Communication Ethics Division, publications in *Communication Yearbook* and special issues of scholarly journals, presentations by leaders of professional communication organizations, historical surveys, books, and journal articles.

The NCA Communication Ethics Division, created in 1984, currently has 279 registered members. The Division sponsors conference papers at the annual meeting of the NCA and sponsors a bi-annual summer conference devoted entirely to research on communication ethics. Several book publications have emerged from the summer conference (Bracci and Christians; Jaksa and Prichard *Responsible*; Makau and Arnett), in addition to research from the conference appearing in other scholarly outlets.

Communication Yearbook has published scholarship examining ethical issues across a wide range of communication contexts (Allen, Gotcher, and Seibert; Boynton; Cameron, Sallot, and Curtin; Johannesen; Rimal, Fogg, and Flora). Lea Stewart has edited three journal issues dedicated to communication ethics. These include the 1997 issue of *Electronic Journal of Communication* (Jaffe; D. A. Kernisky; I. F. Kernisky; Pym; Tompkins), the 1996 issue of *Electronic Journal of Communication* (Arnett and Arneson; Ford; Lepper), and the 1990 issue of *Communication Quarterly* (Arnett; Bloom; Brown and Singhal; Deetz; Ferré; McEuen, Gordon, and Todd-Mancillas; Tompkins Pribble).

Kenneth Andersen's 2003 NCA Carroll C. Arnold Distinguished Lecture, "Recovering the Civic Culture: The Imperative of Ethical Communication," addressed the topic of communication ethics, continuing his contribution begun in 1983 as the Vice-President and then President of NCA. Andersen gave communication ethics scholarly currency, identifying this area of inquiry as the theme of the 1983 NCA conference. In this era, scholarship about communication ethics works with one "given": there are multiple communication ethics, making the notion of "difference" (Derrida, *Of Grammatology* 36) a trope akin to a first principle of philosophical communication ethics in the postmodern age.

Historical Surveys of Communication Ethics Literature

Five primary surveys of communication ethics situate our understanding of the diversity of approaches to communication ethics (Arnett "The Status"; Chesebro; Jensen "An Analysis," "Teaching Ethics"; Johannesen "Communication Ethics"). Each of these scholarly pieces provides insight into how communication ethics "works" in daily interactions.

J. Vernon Jensen addressed the instruction of ethics in speech communication education. In 1959, he evoked deliberation by one simple question, "Should a teacher of speech teach the ethical considerations in speaking in addition to the techniques of speaking?" ("An Analysis" 219). By 1985, Jensen ("Teaching Ethics") answered this question, framing communication ethics as central to the communication discipline.

James Chesebro provided a summary of the primary ethical standards proposed in communication. First, "ethical standards in communication should be patterned after the political structure of the society" (106), therefore consistent with a democratic government. Second, "ethical standards in communication should reflect a more universal, humanistic perspective of humans…consistent with the principles which ensure the development and expanded opportunities for the individuals" (106). Third, "ethical communication should concentrate upon the means used to attain an end. As a result, fairly specific and prescriptive sets of standards that are designed for means evaluation" (106) would emerge. Fourth, "the best framework for ethical communication focuses upon standards which enhance communication itself" (106). Fifth, some writers state they would "avoid the establishment of any universal set of standards for all cases, but argue that the situation or the context in which communication behavior occurred should determine when and if ethical standards of any kind should be employed" (106).

James Chesebro's ethical standards continue to shape communication ethics deliberation. Ronald C. Arnett ("The Status") examined the literature on communication ethics from 1915 to 1985, adopting Chesebro's four categories of communication ethics (democratic ethics, procedural standards and codes, universal humanitarian ethics, and contextual ethics) and adding a fifth category, "narrative ethics" (52-54).

Richard L. Johannesen ("Communication Ethics") examined seven trends in communication ethics scholarship: the proliferation of books on media and journalism ethics, an emphasis both on individual ethics and on social or institutional ethics, the recognition of the interrelationship of

freedom and responsibility, scholarship taking place in ethics in organizational communication contexts, diverse feminist contributions to communication ethics, scholarship from the viewpoint of an ethic of care, and an application of the ancient Greek tradition of virtue ethics to contemporary communication contexts. He also explored six controversies or challenges in the development of communication ethics: "Can we develop a viable concept of the 'self' as an ethical agent in communication?" "Can we develop postmodern ethic or ethics of communication?" "Can we legitimately search for some minimum transcultural ethical standards for communication?" "Can we recognize the roles that diversity and marginalization play in developing communication ethics?" "Can we develop a viable communication ethic for the internet and cyberspace?" and "Can some conception of 'shame' be legitimate for communication ethics?" (216-226). Johannesen's work set forth important trends and controversies that creatively inspire contemporary communication ethics scholarship.

These works by J. Vernon Jensen, James Chesebro, Ronald C. Arnett, and Richard L. Johannesen reveal historical and contemporary considerations in the study of communication ethics. Additional books and edited anthologies augment their theoretical understanding of communication ethics and this area of inquiry. The summaries work at a descriptive level. They are akin to paths upon which people walk that naturally invite an architect to construct a stone sidewalk, offering even more guidance. Johannesen's work moves us to emerging paths: from communication ethics categories of engagement to communication ethics questions. The next section considers book-length treatments of protection: What is the "good" that one "ought" to protect? The communicative action of "protection" shapes a given communication ethic.

Books Addressing Communication Ethics

In this section, we identify how various works revolve explicitly or implicitly around Immanuel Kant's notion of "ought" (55). The changing engagement of "ought" moves the discussion of communication ethics in different and, at times, contrasting directions. "Ought" is the marker that directs communicative attention to a "good," functioning as an engine for a given communicative ethic. The following discussion traces communication ethics with hermeneutic attentiveness to the "ought" and the "good" that a given work

seeks to protect. This brief analysis follows a chronological history by publication dates of selected books and chapters in scholarly anthologies.

George Gerbner, in the foreword to Thomas W. Cooper et al.'s book *Communication Ethics and Global Change*, states "American social authority is divided between public and private spheres. Private owners…are constrained only by their own private interests and those of investors, advertisers, and sponsors. But their own governance, insulated though it may be from public government, sets the terms for a community's pursuit of the common good" (xi). A communicative ethic "ought" to protect both the public and private spheres of communicative life.

Fred Dallmayr in *The Communicative Ethics Controversy* states the essays collected in their volume "do not offer a 'final word' or a resolution of the issues under discussion. Since the essays were written, the controversy surrounding communicative or discourse ethics has gathered momentum, with contending positions being steadily intensified or sharpened in the process" (18). Dallmayr reveals that in postmodernity there is no "final word" on what is ethical. There "ought" to be no "final word" in discourse ethics.

Robert E. Denton, Jr. follows this path in *Ethical Dimensions of Political Communication* when he writes, "The central theme that emerges from the essays is that we cannot depend upon the politicians, their handlers, or even the media or the press to correct real or perceived problems of ethics in American politics. The task is ours. Only as citizens can we alter or affect the quality of the polity" (xiv). Denton seeks a communicative ethic recognizing that we "ought" to protect the speech of the citizen.

J. Vernon Jensen, in his foreword to Karen Joy Greenberg's edited work *Conversations on Communication Ethics*, states "[t]his volume converses with us on a host of ethical concerns in communication. We grapple with the tension between relativistic and absolute ethics, between ends and means, between the 'is' and the 'ought' and between private and public goods" (xi). Jensen recognizes that communication in the public sphere "ought" to advance the public good.

James A. Jaksa and Michael S. Pritchard in *Communication Ethics: Methods of Analysis* note:

> As a normative study, ethics is concerned with determining what values are worthy of our acceptance. Our intent in this book is to assist readers in undertaking a normative study of morality, specifically in regard to human communication. To some

extent it will be important to discuss what moral values people actually accept, but this will always be with an eye on normative questions about what moral values ought to be accepted. (4)

Jaksa and Pritchard understand that the communication ethics scholar attends to the tension between the "is" and the "ought" in communicative life.

James A. Jaksa and Michael S. Pritchard in *Responsible Communication: Ethical Issues in Business, Industry, and the Professions* raise "critical questions about the role of communication in dealing with ethical problems that range from the local to the global.…These chapters serve as an invitation to join the authors in trying to understand and explain the communication challenges facing technologically advanced societies and those whose lives they touch" (13). Jaksa and Pritchard suggest a communication ethic "ought" to be attentive to the simultaneous concern for the particular and the comprehensive, the local and the global.

Fred L. Casmir states in *Ethics in Intercultural and International Communication*,

> the concept of dialogue will be repeatedly used in the discussions and in some of the models included in this book. Such a dialogue is made more difficult when it has to take place across cultural or political lines of demarcation or division. Differences become more readily apparent, or are more readily supposed to exist, when we deal with those who can be easily identified as being *different* from us. Thus important dimensions for misunderstandings, confrontations, and serious conflicts are added to what, in many cases, are already common difficult processes of interpersonal or group interactions within any one culture. (x)

Casmir recognizes that in a postmodern era, communicators "ought" to protect difference.

Clifford G. Christians and Michael M. Traber in *Communication Ethics and Universal Values* noted:

> The multicultural comparative ethics developed here does not aim at geographic representation. The approach is topical and issue oriented. The study process for this book has demonstrated that cultures in all their differences also reflect common humaneness and humanity. This book thus shows the many different entranceways that can lead to a common ethical discourse on a global scale, centered on truth-telling, human dignity, and no harm to the innocent. (xv)

Christians and Traber point to an "ought" beyond the postmodern disruption of narrative consensus, suggesting that part of our conversation "ought" to include minimal, temporal universals for the global community.

J. Vernon Jensen in *Ethical Issues in the Communication Process* defines ethics as:

> the *moral responsibility to choose, intentionally and voluntarily,* oughtness *in values like rightness, goodness, truthfulness, justice, and virtue, which may in a communicative transaction significantly affect ourselves and others. Ethics* refers to theory, to abstract universal principles and their sources, whereas *moral* implies practicing those principles of applied ethics, or culture-bound modes of conduct. (4, italics in original)

This definition combines theory and practice in determining how one "ought" to communicate.

Josina M. Makau and Ronald C. Arnett write in the preface to *Communication Ethics in an Age of Diversity*:

> Particularly noteworthy in this regard is the evidence of postmodern influences on the majority of the essays. Many of the authors challenge enlightenment approaches to ethical issues, calling for the abandonment of abstract ideological frameworks. Emotions receive acknowledgment and serious attention in many of the chapters. The chapters also share a recognition that fruitful scholarship on communication ethics integrates theory and *praxis*. The authors reject modernist tendencies to denigrate applied research. Significantly, however, most of the authors in this volume affirm the enlightenment's critique of privatized truth. Most of the authors also reject the postmodern tendency to abandon the quest to find meaningful ways to deliberate across differences about ethical issues. The chapters in this volume are written with the hope of contributing to this critical but difficult search. (x-xi)

Makau and Arnett implicitly suggest that one "ought" to understand and learn the diverse views of the "good" that guides differing communication ethics. They recognize a postmodern "ought" to move from a universal assumption of the "good" to understanding and learning from cultural and human difference.

Matthew W. Seeger in the introduction to his book *Ethics and Organizational Communication* states, "ethical questions, issues, and dilemmas are inherent to our humanness.…Any comprehensive model of organization must incorporate an understanding of the role of values and ethics. Although it is easy to adopt an ethically neutral approach when discussing organiza-

tions and communication, this is simply not an option" (xii). Seeger follows this path, asserting one "ought" to place ethics as a first principle of communication.

Julia T. Wood, in her foreword to Ronald C. Arnett and Pat Arneson's book *Dialogic Civility in a Cynical Age: Community, Hope, and Interpersonal Relationships*, states:

> To replace the therapeutic model, the authors propose a model grounded in historicality, which is best understood as a willingness to meet the demands of a particular moment. Reflecting the authors' long-standing commitment to a dialogic approach to communication, the model they advance respects the preferred stories of all communicators. The model assumes that each individual's previous or established story moves into dialogue with the stories of others, as well as the constraints and commonsense questions of the present moment. Respectful dialogue that opens self and other to the possibility of change is fostered when all communicators embrace the authors' proposed narrative of dialogic civility—with narrative understood as a story held in the public domain by a group of people. (xiii)

Ethical communicators "ought" to attend to the historical moment, answering its call to "keep the conversation going" (Rorty 378).

Elaine E. Englehardt in *Ethical Issues in Interpersonal Communication: Friends, Intimates, Sexuality, Marriage, and Family* noted that communication ethics are important in interpersonal relationships because communication ethics "help the individual with self-understanding; they help the individual think critically about the multifaceted environment; and they demonstrate how self-understanding encourages an approach to ethics that begins with avoiding harm and focuses on doing good for and with others" (vi). The first section in Englehardt's edited book, "What Is Ethics?," introduces the importance of studying interpersonal communication ethics as "a system of guidance that assists each of us in living within a society" (vi-vii). The contributors embrace a Socratic "ought" to "know thyself" (Cornford 28) in order to better assist others in changing interpersonal environments.

Robert E. Denton, Jr. states in *Political Communication Ethics: An Oxymoron?*, "[b]y better understanding our political process and its ethical implication, we hope to empower readers with a sense of purpose and to resolve to protect our civic culture" (xvii). Denton's work suggests communication ethics "ought" to protect civic culture.

Michael J. Hyde in *The Call of Conscience: Heidegger and Levinas, Rhetoric and the Euthanasia Debate* recognized, "With this evocation, this acknowledging call to others, rhetoric demonstrates its 'physicianship' as it helps to promote reasoned judgment and civic virtue and thereby lends itself to the task of enriching the moral character of a people's communal existence" (13). The aspect of "physicianship," inherent in rhetoric, is an "ought" that requires attentiveness and care for others.

Richard L. Johannesen, in *Ethics in Human Communication*, states:

> My primary intentions … are: (1) to provide information and insights concerning a variety of potential perspectives for making ethical judgments about human communication; (2) to sensitize participants in communication to the inherency of potential ethical issues in human communication process; (3) to highlight the complexities and difficulties involved in making evaluations of communication ethics; (4) to encourage individuals to develop thoughtfully their own workable approach to assessing communication ethics; and (5) to aid individuals in becoming more discerning evaluators of communication through enhancing their ability to make specifically focused and carefully considered ethical judgments. (xi)

Johannesen's descriptive analysis asserts that one "ought" to have choice in how one communicates one's thoughts in words and deed.

Josina M. Makau in the preface to Sharon L. Bracci and Clifford G. Christians's edited book *Moral Engagement in Public Life: Theorists for Contemporary Ethics* wrote:

> So called universal principles have proven inadequate (and often counterproductive) to resolution of many, if not most, 'real world' moral challenges. Similarly, pursuit of value neutrality has proven to be both fruitless and undesirable, particularly given the demonstrable role of power in human relations and social structures. Disregarding the key role of the heart in ethical deliberation and action, traditional paradigms have undermined the very foundations of spirituality and other critical resources for ethical interaction. Rich ontological, epistemological, and ethical traditions have been undermined gravely by adherence to such narrow and misguided perspectives. (ix)

She suggests that one "ought" to attend to the "heart" and communication ethics as the first human principle.

Jeffrey W. Murray in *Face to Face in Dialogue: Emmanuel Levinas and (the) Communication (of) Ethics* wrote "ethics is 'announced' prior to communication, this work suggests that that primordial 'announcement' or 'call' often requires communication in order to be effectively and enduringly

heard over the subsequent clamor of cultural assumptions, stereotypes, prejudices, and prejudgments" (vii). The rhetorical "ought" of Murray's work concurs with Levinas—ethics is a philosophical first principle, the first principle of humanness. Ronald C. Arnett in *Dialogic Confession: Bonhoeffer's Rhetoric of Responsibility* and Michael J. Hyde's *The Life-Giving Gift of Acknowledgement* suggest the communication ethics that we "ought" to protect is a pragmatic humility of confession in meeting diversity and the fundamental importance of acknowledging the face of another in human meeting.

Summary

Insights from these scholarly books guide our understanding of the study of communication ethics as seeking to protect the following "oughts" or understandings of the "good" appropriate for a postmodern era: 1) the public and private spheres of communicative life; 2) admission that there is no "final word" in discourse ethics; 3) the free speech of the citizen; 4) the expectation to advance the public good; 5) simultaneous concern for the particular and the comprehensive, the local and the global; 6) engaging difference as the foundation for learning; 7) minimal temporal universals for the global community; 8) theory and practice in determining how one "ought" to communicate; 9) understanding and learning from differing communication ethics; 10) ethics as a first principle of communication; 11) attentiveness to the voice of the historical moment; 12) the importance of Socrates's Delphic injunction to "know thyself" (Cornford 28) in changing interpersonal environments; 13) understanding the assumptions of a given civic culture; 14) "physicianship" (Hyde, *The Call* 13) as attentiveness and care for others; 14) choice in how one communicates one's thoughts in words and deed; 15) attention to the "heart" (Makau, "Preface" ix) in ethics as a first human principle of communication; 16) ethics as the first principle of humanness; 17) pragmatic humility/confession in meeting diversity; and 18) the fundamental importance of human meeting in which one acknowledges the face of another person.

The dominant connection in these works remains Immanuel Kant's notion of "ought" (55), which is a communicative call to attend to a given good. To understand a communication ethic, one must ask "What is the 'ought' that implies a 'good' that underscores the communication?" Stated differently, within the spirit of Jürgen Habermas, we ask "What 'interest' is

being protected and promoted?" Once a sidewalk, a publicly paved path, exists for given categories of communication ethics or questions about communication ethics, the protection of a given communication ethic returns us once again to connecting ethics to "ought"—not as a universal but as a form of ethics lived out in *Communicative Praxis* (Schrag). Calvin O. Schrag outlines communicative praxis as the interplay of theory, action, and contextual discernment. He uses the terms "by," "about," and "for" (viii) to bring communicative praxis into ongoing engagement with ethics. While various understandings of communication ethics privilege action (by), theory (about), and contextual discernment (for whom) in differing proportions, the interplay of this conceptual trinity illuminates the following discussion.

Scholarly Journal Articles Addressing Communication Ethics

This section updates Ronald C. Arnett's article "The Status of Communication Ethics Scholarship in Speech Communication Journals from 1915-1985." That work reviewed 128 articles related to ethics of communication published in disciplinary journals from 1915-1985. This essay reviews an additional 73 articles from 1986-2004. Following Arnett, the primary guidelines for inclusion of articles in this review were the use of the term "communication ethics" in the title and/or that the article was closely connected to human communication ethics. To identify journal articles, the term "communication ethics" was typed into multiple library search engines (i.e., Ebscohost, Communication Institute for Online Scholarship (CIOS) Index, ComAbstracts, and Proquest) at Duquesne University. Media and Journalism ethics were not included; summaries of that work are available elsewhere (Christians "Fifty Years," "Review Essay").

We examined the following journals from 1986-2004: *Argumentation and Advocacy*, *Communication Education*, *Communication Monographs*, *Communication Quarterly*, *Communication Reports*, *Communication Research*, *Communication Studies* (includes previously titled *Central States Speech Journal*), *Communication Theory*, *Communication Yearbook*, *Electronic Journal of Communication*, *Howard Journal of Communication*, *Human Communication Research*, *Journal of Applied Communication Research*, *Management Communication Quarterly*, *Philosophy and Rhetoric*, *Southern Communication Journal*, *Text and Performance Quarterly*, *Western Journal of Communication* and *Quarterly Journal of Speech*. A bibliography of the communication ethics articles published in these journals appears at

the end of this essay. Although additional communication ethics articles appeared in other communication journals (including but not limited to *Business Communication Quarterly* and *Journal of Business Communication*), only the above list of journals were included in this review. Our goal is to provide a representative picture of the state of communication ethics scholarship through 2004.

Following the process used in Ronald C. Arnett's content analysis, the identified articles were reviewed and placed in one of the following categories of communication ethics: democratic communication ethics; universal-humanitarian communication ethics; codes, procedures, and standards in communication ethics; contextual communication ethics; and narrative communication ethics. Responding to Julia T. Wood's ("Foreword") suggestion, we also identify essays that offer a "history" of communication ethics in our discipline (Arnett "The Status"; Chesebro; Christians and Lambeth; Jensen "An Analysis," "Teaching Ethics"; Johannesen "Communication Ethics"; McEuen, Gordon, and Todd-Mancillas; Sproule). Our analysis reconfirmed the five categories and announced a sixth category, "dialogic communication ethics." This new category is central for navigating a postmodern era in which narrative and virtue agreement no longer exist.

A significant work published in the communication discipline was selected to represent each of the six categories of communication ethics scholarship. While identifying a single contribution to serve as a standard-bearer for an approach to communication ethics is an arguable task, what is clear is that each selected work outlines the horizon of that particular approach to communication ethics. We do not suggest that the selections are "the" representative of a given category; however, in these works researchers will find the central theme that frames and shapes the common center for each category. The following section organizes communication ethics scholarship within these six themes, offering a discussion and analysis of each category. We begin with a discussion of democratic communication ethics, followed by universal-humanitarian communication ethics; codes, procedures, and standards in communication ethics; contextual communication ethics; narrative communication ethics; and dialogic communication ethics.

Democratic Communication Ethics

The category "democratic communication ethics" is fundamental in our discipline, consistent with our early rhetorical roots in Greek democracy and previous examinations of communication ethics literature. We utilize the understanding that "Democratic Communication Ethics are based on a public 'process' ethic, an open airing of diverse opinions and control by majority vote" (Arnett, "The Status" 46). "The democratic ethic in communication studies is a 'public' process for forging mass collaboration on ideas, customs, and rights" (48). Additionally, we recognize that a democratic communication rests within an argumentative communicative framework dependent upon a public process, a procedural understanding of rationality.

Karl R. Wallace's article "An Ethical Basis of Communication" published in *Speech Teacher* is identified as a standard bearer in this category. In that work, Wallace outlined four basic habits that comprise a democratic communication ethic: the "habit of search" requiring knowledge-fueled continual learning; the "habit of justice" reminding us of fairness, accuracy, and respect for fact over opinion; the "habit of preferring public to private motivations" in a democracy must trump private impulses—accurate information rather than personal opinion needs to shape the public sphere; and the "habit of respect for dissent" which presupposes that a democracy never concludes but continues by reshaping itself with new ideas, new information, and new insights (6-9). Wallace states, "It is these four 'moralities'—the duty of search and inquiry; allegiance to accuracy, fairness, and justice in the selection and treatment of ideas and arguments; the willingness to submit private motivations to public scrutiny; and the toleration of dissent—which provide the ethic of communication in a free society" (9). For Wallace and for many scholars in the discipline, a democratic communication ethic either explicitly or implicitly guides public and private assessment of fair and just discourse.

Our review revealed 11 articles that address democratic communication ethics appearing in communication journals from 1986-2004 (Arnett "The Practical Philosophy"; Batt; Dowling and Marraro; Garver "Essentially Contested," "The Ethical Criticism"; Haas; Johnstone "Reagan"; Muir; Schwarze; Tompkins; Ulmer and Sellnow). Those articles privilege the following ideas: evidence, controversy, upholding principles, social responsibility, free speech, competing publics or public, controversies, debate, argument, practical rationality, democracies need free and open debate,

Athenian heritage, rhetorical practice, significant choice, critical publicity, public knowledge of events, and reasoned opinion. These ideas are the "about" (Schrag viii), or the ethical "goods," addressed by scholars who promote or support a democratic world view for persons in contexts resistive or unresponsive to a democratic appeal.

A democratic ethic fundamentally lives upon one basic pragmatic assumption: informed choice matters. Communication strategies that encourage and enhance informed choice underscore the intimate connection between free speech and communication ethics. A democratic ethic is procedural in that it privileges the communicative process of argumentation and debate, which presupposes the existence of rationality that in practice encourages good decision-making. A democratic commitment assumes informed choice. Star A. Muir wrote, "Firm moral commitment to a value system…along with a sense of moral identity, is founded upon unreflexive assessments of multiple perspectives.…We must progressively learn to recognize how often the concepts of others are discredited by the concepts we use to justify ourselves to ourselves" (291). A democratic communication ethic enters a postmodern world of difference with a reminder to not discount the other or the other's ideas. Learning and informed choice must trump unreflective normative agreement. A democratic communication ethic is not alien to universal-humanitarian communication ethics.

Universal-Humanitarian Communication Ethics

Universal-humanitarian communication ethics requires "a select intelligent-sia to announce 'principles' that should guide communication behavior. However, the principles are *not created* by the intelligentsia; rather they are universal, *a priori* principles announced, supported and if necessary, fought for by an 'enlightened' and 'insightful' minority" (Arnett, "The Status" 48). We draw upon this definition with one additional supporting caveat that underscores that a universal-humanitarian ethic rests in an Enlightenment ideology that presupposes an *a priori* understanding of rights and principles for human interaction. This category is the home of Platonic thought carried through the Enlightenment commitment to rational discernment of the truth—discerning and making the "already" (the *a priori*) visible.

Christopher Lyle Johnstone's article, "Ethics, Wisdom, and the Mission of Contemporary Rhetoric: The Realization of Human Being," is a standard bearer for universal-humanitarian ethics. Johnstone frames the necessity of

uplifting inherent human features such as resourcefulness, lovingness, and receptiveness to beauty, emotion, insight, and imagination. Universal-humanitarian communication ethics emphasizes a passionate commitment to the growth of the human being within what could be called humanizing *topoi* that lead one to reason on behalf of the "good." As Johnstone states:

> The humanist commitment demands a dedication to nurturing and treasuring those characteristics in ourselves and each other that underlie our capacity for bringing quality into our lives. There is, I suggest, general agreement on what these characteristics are, at least on how they can be labeled. What is lacking is knowledge of and attachment to them on a personal level. This humane knowledge, moreover, is always a potentiality inherent in the relating of one human being to another. When we attempt to 'reason together' in order that we might live together productively and happily, we lead each other and ourselves to the edge of the human soul. (188)

Johnstone reminds us of universal presuppositions about a human soul committed to beauty, choice, and reason.

Our review identified 12 articles addressing universal-humanitarian communication ethics (Arnett "The Responsive 'I'"; Condit; DiTomaso, Parks-Yancy, and Post; Ferré; Fischer; Ford; Griswold; Gunson and Collins; Herrick; McCaleb and Dean; Pym; Seeger and Ulmer). Those articles privilege the following terms: an *a priori* commitment to the other's potentiality, institutionalizing procedures for discourse ethics' reason or moral understanding, public morality, goodness, creativeness, perfection, and responsiveness to a transcendent ideal. Using Calvin O. Schrag's (viii) language, the "about" casts itself in Enlightenment language "by" those assuming inalienable rights and "for" persons in contexts unresponsive to universal appeals to human dignity.

A universal presupposes value-laden terms about a "good" life that can be rationally made visible, ever connected to an *a priori* conception of the good, the beautiful, and the responsible. The "good" of universal-humanitarian communication ethic protects the *a priori* of rationality; the communicative "ought" is the ethical demand to discern and make visible truth and beauty before us. The connection of truth to the *a priori* of rationality gives way to responsiveness to codes, procedures, and standards, as public announcements that inform choice about participation in a given organizational context. Universal-humanitarian ethics and codes, procedures, and standards as different approaches to communication ethics share a basic commitment to informed choice.

Codes, Procedures, and Standards in Communication Ethics

Codes, procedures, and standards conceptually and behaviorally frame communication in varying contexts. These guidelines are established as the "guardians of appropriate ethical conduct" (Arnett, "The Status" 50). Ronald C. Arnett states, "Standards and codes are important to most organizations in crisis and in beginning identity formation, as long as they are not taken too legalistically. The value of codes lies more in their ability to promote discussion, than in the total regulation of behavior" (51). Codes, procedures, and standards in communication ethics "rely on a select number of guardians of appropriate ethical conduct. The members create the codes and procedures; they are not discovered *a priori* principles" (50). The key to such an approach to communication ethics is two-fold: discussion of direction and enforcement. This understanding is augmented with a stress on prescription and public disclosure. Codes procedures and standards both prescribe (presuppose) and publicly proclaim communicative limits and constraints (public procedure). Restated in another way, codes, procedures, and standards publicly announce contextual "oughts" (the do's and don'ts) of communication ethics.

Kenneth Andersen's 2003 NCA Carroll C. Arnold Distinguished Lecture, "Recovering the Civic Culture: The Imperative of Ethical Communication," is a standard bearer for the category of codes, procedures, and standards. He began his presentation by returning us to two credos or standards adopted by the National Communication Association: "The Credo for Ethical Communication" and "The Credo for Free and Responsible Communication in a Democratic Society." These credos frame communicative respect for persons, information, and difference. Codes and credos are not value free; they rest upon democratic and universal-humanitarian presuppositions. Andersen's lecture reminds us of communicative ethics standards that keep a democratic tradition vigilant against totalitarian action, whether that of the state, a ruler, or oneself.

Our review identified six recent articles addressing codes, procedures, and standards for communication ethics (Anderson; Bloom; Boynton; Jaques; Kirkwood and Ralston; Tompkins Pribble). Those articles privilege the following terms: objectives, ethical conduct, professional communicative standards, government structures, professionalism, ethics codes, professional duty, standards, and effective coordination of action. Drawing upon Calvin

O. Schrag's (viii) understanding of communicative praxis, the "about" suggests public standards "by" those wanting to protect particular professional interests "for" contexts in which those working within or utilizing the services of a given organization are assured of codes of conduct.

The development of communication standards and codes are often too quickly dismissed as simply a public window for how persons in a position of power would guide communication. However, when codes and standards are formed through repeated conversation, they provide public communicative guidance and assurance for the participants. In addition, they can enhance a communicative terrain of trust, a set of "best professional practices" responsive to persons and a given organization. "L'Etang (1992) presented evidence that deontological, or Kantian, ethics provide the most suitable foundation for the development of ethics codes" (qtd. in Boynton 254) which characterize conduct in various contexts. A procedure, standard, and/or code is a public admission of a given "good" that "ought" to guide communicative life in a given context.

Contextual Communication Ethics

A contextual communication ethic encompasses and "justifies different communication standards for different audiences, cultures, and relationships" (Arnett, "The Status" 52). Contextual communication ethics presuppose "difference." However, the difference originates not from the communicative agent but from the place, the situation, in which the communicative agent engages others. Contextual communication ethics suggest that a given context gives birth to temporal standards appropriate for guiding communication ethics conduct in that situation. The standard for "good" and "bad" communication lives within the context itself.

Perhaps the most famous contextual approach to ethics was Joseph Fletcher's *Situational Ethics: The New Morality*. Fletcher, a pastor, understood the confines of contextual ethics within the Judeo-Christian narrative. Although beyond the scope of this essay, one could conclude that Aristotle's work was a form of contextual ethics, defined within the confines of the polis. Phronesis, practical wisdom, is creative implementation responsive to a background that offers limited options. Today the term "contextual" most often refers to the place of decision; however, its original intent was to take a story-laden set of limits to a given context for communicative engagement.

The postmodern understanding of contextual communication ethics adds a relativistic and "emotivist" understanding of ethics. Alasdair MacIntyre in *After Virtue* states, "emotivism is the doctrine that all evaluative judgments, and more specifically all moral judgments, are nothing but expressions of preference, expressions of attitude or feeling, insofar as they are moral or evaluative in character" (11-12). When emotivism is introduced, contextual communication ethics adheres to "'private' reliance on individual discernment at the moment of decision" (Arnett, "The Status" 51). The term "contextual" is now more akin to the immediate place of discernment that knowingly or unknowingly brackets an ethical *a priori* that one takes to the context, the place of ethical discernment. A contextual communication ethic does not produce objective standards of proof. There is a celebration of the absence of standards of proof, ever-responsive to the importance of the particular—a particular group, a particular audience, and a particular occasion. The context shapes an ethical response or argument.

Malcolm O. Sillars's article "Audiences, Social Values, and the Analysis of Argument" is a standard bearer for contextual communication ethics. Sillars states:

> The development of a system of argumentative analysis for general argumentation requires that we understand argumentation as a kind of communication addressed to an audience, that we abandon objectivist notions and arbitrary designations about proof, that we recognize argumentation as an ongoing process where societal values are vital. It requires, as well, that argumentative analysis return to its grounding in the social sciences and the humanities to learn the potential value systems of the society.…[T]he ways in which we arrange values are not hierarchies in different situations. It is not an easy task, but it is worth taking. (302-303)

Sillars's freedom works within a context that presupposes what is potentially valuable. The contextual approach allows flexibility within limits. Sillars's work, written over 30 years ago, suggests that ethical discernment is not shaped by the routine, but by the unique and the particular.

Our review identified 17 recent articles addressing contextual communication ethics (Arnett and Arneson; Booth-Butterfield and Cottone; Cameron, Campo, and Brossard; Granville and Hermodson; Hallstein; Jaffe; Johannesen "The Ethics"; Lepper; Marin, Sherblom, and Shipps; McGuire, Stauble, Abbott and Fisher; Medhurst; Nkomo; Reinsch; Stablein; Steiner; Winegarden and Fuss-Reineck; Wood "Ethics"). Those articles privilege the following terms: standpoint, context, socialization, responsiveness to the contingent

nature of communication, communicative environment, communicative norms, organizational diversity, situational, community, embedded, situated, culturally embedded, and norms of ethical conduct. Drawing upon Calvin O. Schrag's (viii) work, the "about" of contextual ethics assumes appropriate fit, doing the "right" action at the "right" moment. The "about" requires listening to the communicative context. The "by" emphasizes a communicator who understands the responsive role of a communicative actor attentive to standpoint and context. Standpoint theory (see Harding) shifts the theoretical ground of contextual communication ethics; standpoint and contextual communication ethics, taken together, offer insight "for" ethical navigation of a world of competing narrative and virtue structures.

A contextual communication ethic is responsive to culture and standpoint. The term "contexts" presupposes difference and multiplicity. Sandra Harding discusses standpoint as a socio-cultural action construct that shapes a context from which decisions emerge: "Recall that a standpoint is not a perspective; it takes a science and politics to achieve a standpoint. Standpoints are socially mediated, perspectives are unmediated" (276). Standpoint theory takes us from the naïve assumption that the situation alone offers communicative ethics insights to drawing upon the power and limits of a given context to ethically engage the situation. This approach offers a two-sided understanding of context. The communicative "ought" is listening to the needs of a given context before offering ethical response. The "good" that is protected is attentiveness to the unique. The narrative ethics approach discusses the portability of ethical practices in the meeting of a given context.

Narrative Communication Ethics

This section "includes articles directly related to 'narrative ethics' and others that have paved a conceptual path to this approach" (Arnett, "The Status" 52). Discussion of communication ethics attentive to a speech act, a story, or narratives, all of which guide people and offer insights, reside within this category. "Narrative or story provides a community with a…context for action and rhetoric of practice" (53). We add a cultural component to narrative ethics; a culture functions as an implicit story supported by a web of communicative practices that orchestrate communicative behavior by guiding and delimiting communicative possibilities for a people.

Walter R. Fisher's work *Human Communication as Narration: Toward a Philosophy of Reason, Value, and Action* serves as a standard bearer for a narrative communication ethic. He outlines a narrative as a "good" story that situates "good reasons" (48, 57) for an argument and embraces both probability and fidelity in the implementation of communicative action. The paradigmatic innovation of the focus on narrative is that Fisher implies a form of mobile ground or temporal standpoint. Unlike the universal-humanitarian communication ethic, a narrative is a petite housing of good reasons. The universal presupposes the *a priori* totality of rationality. A narrative paradigm does not abandon rationality, but it does pragmatically situate rationality within a humble story that must compete with other stories. A narrative is not a universal truth but a coherent story of bias. Fisher's theoretical contribution is populist; he makes rationality available to all. He privileges the importance of identity, situated not around the person but around a given story that shapes good reasons that guide a person.

Our review revealed only four articles that directly address narrative communication ethics appearing in communication journals from 1986-2004 (Hyde and Sargent; Mattson and Buzzanell; Struever; Whaley, Nicotera, and Samter). Those articles privilege the following terms: story, from public to publics, interactive play, and living historical entities. Communicative praxis in narrative ethics, drawing upon Calvin O. Schrag's (viii) work, is "about" story, whether petite or long standing. The "about" is the direction of a given story—"Where does it take us?" Narrative ethics is engaged "by" a communicator aware of the muddiness of narrative life; narratives blind us, give us sight, limit us, and offer us new possibilities. Additionally, narratives change as new historical moments and communicative actors affect them. A narrative, unlike an ideology, is ontologically constituted "for" the possibility of change. Competing narratives define postmodernity; they contend against modernist ideology, the metanarrative of progress, and the autonomous self. Modernity houses ideology and postmodernity calls forth the reality of narratives in contention with one another.

In the introduction of ideas there are, at times, major theoretical contributions that resituate understanding within the intellectual community. The introduction of narrative to the field of communication was such a contribution. We agree with Jean-François Lyotard who recognized that in a postmodern era we live in a time of petite narrative structures. Confidence in the meta-narrative or a universal is absent; rather petite narratives, that both guide and assume limitations, are the temporal common ground of postmod-

ernity. Within a multiplicity of narratives structures, the conceptual founda-
tion for a given communication ethic becomes a temporal backdrop for
understanding and engaging the foreground issues of communicative
implementation and engagement.

Narrative ethics are carried by a story, even the story of science. "The
scientist's duty is to place herself [or himself] in a community of inquirers
and in this way orient herself [or himself] within a matrix of beliefs, disposi-
tions, and habits of action. The practice is antisolipist" (Struever 103). The
scientist who understands rationality as constrained within narrative limits
experiences a postmodern moment of narrative contention. In a pragmatic
minimalist sense of hope this contention invites the "between" of dialogue—
learning from difference. Instead of a focus on the agent, narrative embeds
the person within the mud of a story-laden life and dialogic ethics. The
narrative paradigm provides theoretical and practical ground for an emerging
approach to communication ethics, "dialogic ethics."

Dialogic Communication Ethics

Dialogue is understood as the communicative exchange of embedded agents
standing their own ground while being open to the other's standpoint,
conceptualizing meaning that emerges in discourse situated between persons
while engaging a common text in their communicative event. A dialogic
ethic assumes an embedded communicative agent, recognizing that a human
being lives within an ongoing conversation that began well before a specific
interpersonal interaction begins. This understanding of dialogue presupposes
the importance of narrative; narrative gives birth to a given set of social
practices, virtues, and understandings of the "good" that are carried forth in a
dialogue. A dialogic ethic begins with the presupposition that we enter into
an ongoing human conversation that is never concluded.

John Stewart and Karen Zediker's work "Dialogue as Tensional, Ethical
Practice" serves as a standard bearer for dialogic communication ethics.
They assert that all approaches to "dialogue" are not the same. Drawing upon
Aristotle's *Nichomachean Ethics*, Stewart and Zediker recognize that
dialogue can be understood descriptively or prescriptively. Prescriptive
approaches to dialogue foreground the relational and tensional qualities of
"human meaning making" and emphasize epistemological concerns. Pre-
scriptive approaches "affirm this relational epistemology *and* foreground
axiological concerns" (239, italics in original).

There are ethical implications in the choice to approach dialogue as descriptive or prescriptive interaction. A prescriptive approach to dialogue

> requires participants to make choices between and among multi-vocal, tensional perspectives and assertions. As praxis, dialogue involves the processes of making and evaluating moral judgments about and through communication. From this perspective…he or she not only becomes an active agent shaping the quality of the relationship, but also assumes responsibility for the ways in which communicative practice facilitates relating. (Stewart and Zediker 240)

Dialogic communication ethics presupposes the importance of situated difference in communicative interaction, ever vigilant and responsive to emergent insight owned by neither party, the communicative result of the dialogue, itself.

Our review revealed 18 articles that address a dialogic communication ethic (Arnett "Dialogic Civility"; Deetz; Engnell; Fenske; Fulkerson; Garvey; Johannesen "Nel Noddings's Uses"; Jovanovic; Lipari; Mattson and Stage; Murray "Bakhtinian," "The Face," "An Other Ethic," "An Other-Burkean," "The Paradox"; Pinchevski; Reich; Stewart and Zediker). Those articles privilege the following terms: invitational not prescriptive, responsive, between persons, responsive to the other, the ethical call of responsibility between self and other, propelled by learning not power, attentive to a human face, cognizant of difference and alterity, interpersonal negotiation, relational ethic, unfinished, emergent, respectful of the text/content, and relationally embedded. From the perspective of communicative praxis (Schrag viii) the "by" of dialogic ethics is emergent; it is not the product of any one communicative partner. The "about" is engagement—the interplay of historical moment, biased ground the communicators bring to the table of conversation. Communicators exhibit a willingness to listen "for" the emergent, the unexpected, what Martin Buber called the "between" (72-88).

A dialogic communication ethic is responsive to a relational space the invites content and insight to emerge between persons. Dialogic ethics lives in creative possibilities invited between communicative partners that have neither prescriptive ambitions nor descriptive roots. A dialogic ethic both invites and prescribes—prescribing an alternative to individualism that precludes attentiveness to the other.

> The primary philosophical and pragmatic goal of…'dialogue' was not just to have people recognize the inherently relational nature of all human being.…[but to urge

> people] to make the ethical choice of changing their dominant monologic communi-
> cation patterns toward more dialogic ones. This is the sense in which Buber's writ-
> ings about dialogue are fundamentally prescriptive. (Stewart and Zediker 227)

Dialogue ethics are, additionally, prescriptive as one understands them as communication implementers of a narrative sense of the "good." Dialogic ethics is both perspective and transcendent in that new ideas emerge "between" persons of difference.

Articles about communication ethics in communication journals from 1986-2004 cluster around six approaches to communication ethics: democratic communication ethics; universal-humanitarian communication ethics; codes, procedures, and standards in communication ethics; contextual communication ethics; narrative communication ethics; and dialogic communication ethics. Each of these approaches contributes to our holistic understanding of ethics in communication. The emergence of dialogic ethics in the postmodern era represents the significance of communication ethics in negotiating competing social goods.

Negotiating Social Goods: The Dialogic Turn

From James Chesebro to Ronald C. Arnett ("The Status") to Richard L. Johannesen ("Communication Ethics"), we learn that there are multiple ways of engaging the texture of communication ethics scholarship. One of the central issues is choice. Johannesen stated the importance of this view of communication ethics. The importance of choice continues with a dialogic communication ethic. Dialogue works as communicative invitation, rejecting the short-term advantage of demand. Aristotle was unwilling to list shame as a virtue; his decision rested with the recognition that ethics and demand are contrary to one another.

The dialogic turn is a form of choice that presupposes that competing positions on communication ethics contend with one another. The dialogic turn privileges choice that requires constant learning, a willingness to engage interpretive understanding of diversity over argumentative condemnation of difference. The crucial element of dialogic ethics is the choice to learn; learning requires content—one needs to learn "something." The ethical content comes from the narrative structure upon which a person in dialogue stands; dialogue requires one to know one's own position and that of the other person.

The evolution of dialogic ethics owes much to the philosophical and practical discussion of narrative. Narrative ground is the moral source of a person in dialogue. This narrative ground is "prescriptive" with dialogue turning prescription into learning. John Stewart and Karen Zediker stated accurately that Martin Buber's position is prescriptive. Emmanuel Levinas discusses the prescriptive nature of ethics as responsibility for the Other. Narrative ground situates a dialogic ethic, but when one turns toward the Other, understanding an insight from the Other's narrative ground, the insight that emerges "between" persons moves dialogue to negotiating difference and communicative learning.

The dialogic turn toward the Other begins with prescription. One learns from understanding "difference" and negotiating ethical differences that emerge from the narrative ground of communicative partners, from insight emerging "between" persons, and from the communicators' attentive responsive to changes in the historical moment. There is little that is mystical about dialogic ethics—at a minimum it presupposes learning from the narrative or ground of self and Other and, in a larger sense, it implies discovering new possibilities that emerge from the "between" of difference. Dialogic ethics does not guarantee that one will convince another; however, it does require learning if minimum requirements are to be met. An approach to dialogic communication that begins with prescription and then moves to learning from diverse sources offers a beginning for negotiating "difference."

A dialogic ethic acknowledges one's own ground, learns from the ground of the Other, enables insight to emerge "between" persons, and changes in the historical moment. Such learning reveals different social goods—and negotiating competing "social goods" (Arnett, "Paulo Freire" 157). Negotiating competing social goods is the communicative answer to an era in which there is no "one" single communication ethic—there are multiple communicative ethics. A single communication ethic, supported by universal rationality, no longer exists, if it ever did.

Communication ethics from a dialogic perspective is an ongoing negotiating of rival social goods. All approaches discussed in this essay are co-present rival traditions in this historical moment; they compete for the communicative enactment of communication ethics. Dialogically this difference fuels learning—leading us to a communication ethic that begins with narrative ground, a "community of memory" (Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler, and Tipton 152-155), that contains a particular understanding of social goods requiring particular communicative practices in the implementa-

tion of a given set of goods to communication ethics, which then becomes the home of a particular social good and the clashing of social goods. Kant's "ought" (55) and the communicative protection of a "good" continues, only the stress on learning from difference and the negotiating of difference separates a dialogic approach from all the others. This interpretive work understands dialogic ethics as centered in learning, which offers choice while negotiating rival traditions, each of which privileges differing social goods in various contexts.

Alasdair MacIntyre suggests in his book *Three Rival Versions of Moral Enquiry: Encyclopaedia, Genealogy and Tradition* that competing understanding of "goods" shape ongoing philosophical and pragmatic argument. These rival understandings include encyclopedic, genealogical, and tradition; each works as an interpretive grid that frames understanding and learning. The encyclopedic perspective presupposes the possibility of categorizing varying approaches to communication ethics (e.g., Jensen *Ethical Issues*, Johannesen *Ethics in*). The genealogical perspective looks at the intellectual heritage of ideas and authors (e.g., Johannesen "Nel Noddings's Uses"). The tradition perspective presupposes the emergence of ideas from ground under one's feet (e.g., Wood, "Ethics"). The literature of communication ethics engages each of these modes of inquiry.

Jacques Derrida recognizes that this "philosophical tremor" (*Adieu* 11) of contention points to the postmodern turn. According to Alasdair MacIntyre, contending schools of philosophical thought gather their significance from the good of effectiveness and the good of excellence. Modernity privileges the "good" of effectiveness, which is dependent upon implementation of effective strategies. The "good" of excellence is dependent upon negotiating competing incommensurable narratives. We contend that the dialogical turn is responsive to contending with the "good" in the postmodern historical era. Competing narratives bring together a "unity of contraries" (Buber 111): (1) the prescriptive and the emergent, (2) narrative ground and temporality, and (3) competing traditions and attentiveness to the uniqueness of the historical moment. A dialogic call to communication ethics rests in oxymorons such as "restrained freedom," "biased learning," and "fuzzy clarity." Dialogic ethics rests in conviction tempered by Søren Kierkegaard's reminder of *Fear and Trembling*. Dialogic ethics is a communicative call to a postmodern common sense that accepts the necessity of ground and the potential of fallibility of one's choice.

Giambattista Vico's *sensus communus* or common sense rests not upon agreed commonality of communicative practices and narrative commitments, but within a dialogic scope of understanding, learning, negotiating, and willingness to unite fragility of insight with temporal clarity. Dialogic ethics begins in narrative bias that situates an ethic. The dialogic turn takes us to the Otherness of temporality and conviction walking side-by-side with doubt, vulnerability, and a willingness to learn. The doing of dialogic ethics is akin to Mahatma Gandhi seeking truth:

> But how is one to realize their Truth.…By single-minded devotion (*abbyasa*) and indifference to every other interest in life (*vairagya*)—replies the Bhagavad Gita. In spite, however, of such devotion, what may appear as truth to one person will often appear as untruth to another person. But this need not worry the seeker…there is nothing wrong in everyone following Truth according to one's light. Indeed it is one's duty to do so. Then if there is a mistake on the part of any one so following Truth, it will automatically be set right…[if] one takes to the wrong path one stumbles, and is thus redirected to the right path. (Duncan 42)

Dialogic ethics unites ground and the temporality aptly stated by Maurice Friedman with the metaphor *Touchstones of Reality*. Dialogic ethics begins with conviction, engages differences, and engages learning that recasts the conviction—sometimes ever so slightly, sometimes dramatically, and sometimes standing firm upon one's own ground—ever aware that the ground of conviction is a "touchstone," a temporal fragile place to stand.

Summary

This essay engaged a "community of memory" (Bellah, Madson, Sullivan, Swidler, and Tipton 152-155), revisiting scholarship including publications in *Communication Yearbook* and special issues of scholarly journals, presentations by leaders of professional communication organizations, historical surveys, books, and journal articles. We followed the process used in Ronald C. Arnett's "The Status of Communication Ethics Scholarship in Speech Communication Journals from 1915-1985" for reviewing communication journal articles from 1986 to 2004.

We outlined communication ethics as the process of protection and competition among competing goods that "ought" to shape discourse. Immanuel Kant's metaphor of "ought" (55) is a marker that focuses communicative attention on a "social good" (Arnett, "Paulo Freire" 157) that drives a given communicative ethic. Differing approaches to communication ethics engage

action ("by"), theory ("about"), and contextual discernment ("for") in different ways (Schrag viii). This interpretive work suggests a communicative ethics responsive to "negotiating social goods." Negotiating goods coalesces around the term "dialogue." Communication ethics is central to the dialogic process of negotiating contending social goods in a postmodern society. The dialogic turn privileges choice that requires constant learning and a willingness to engage interpretive understanding of difference over argumentative condemnation of difference. The ethical content comes from the narrative structure upon which a person in dialogue stands. Communication ethics from a dialogic perspective suggests the "ought" of learning and significance of negotiating "social goods" in a time of competing narrative and virtue structures.

Note

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